

MPHEC meets student reps

by Paul Creelman

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) has no concern for the situation of students faced with a recommendation of a ten percent increase in tuition next year, charges Loretta Mullen, the Chairperson of the Student Union of Nova Scotia.

"Katherine Wallace made the position of the MPHEC very clear", said Mullen.

"Their primary concern is to make a recommendation that the provincial government will accept. The student doesn't really come into it at all."

Accusations of insufficient student involvement on MPHEC and a lack of information flow between universities and the MPHEC follow a meeting between representatives from the MPHEC and student representatives from various organizations. Dr. Katherine Wallace, chairperson of the higher education board, and Larry Durling, the financial officer of MPHEC, met last Thursday with Mullen, Gord Owen (Dal's Student Union president), Mike McNeil (Student Council President at St. Mary's University) and other student council representatives. The session, which was described by several attendees as primarily "an informational forum", did not result in any consideration of the students' viewpoint, according to Mullen.

"We asked them to clarify the factors that led to their recommendation", said Mullen.

She also says that 75% of the recommended 10.3% in-

crease is the average increase in Canadian salaries, and the remaining 25% of the figure is the cost price index plus 3% because the cost index is rising faster for the universities than society as a whole. Mullen feels that this shows the lack of regard the MPHEC have for student input, instead basing their figures on purely political and economic considerations.

The direct consequence of the MPHEC funding recommendations is that the average student is going to have to "dip into his wallet a little deeper" next year to pay for tuition, says Dal Student Union President Gord Owen.

"There are going to be some students who will have the money," says Owen, "but there are some that won't. Unfortunately the number of jobs available to students is not always enough for everybody, resulting in the fact that education is not always accessible."

Owen also states that this problem does not seem to be in the "terms of reference of the MPHEC", and the cost of tuition should rise with the cost of living in the opinion of the MPHEC.

Caroline Zayid, member of the Campus committee, is doubtful that MPHEC is getting effective feedback from the universities in general.

"The MPHEC would say, well we don't really see any trouble with cutbacks, all we see is expansion, expansion everywhere. So this is where you start to wonder how well they are really talking to the

universities. For instance, if the number of places in a course are decreased, that isn't the same as dropping the program as a whole. Or if the student-teacher ratio is increased, that is something else that affects everybody."

According to Mullen, the only way for the students to represent their point of view on funding arrangements is to lobby the provincial government on the final funding decision.

"We have to put some influence directly on the provincial government. This is what we've been trying to do lately. For instance, the government employees association has recognized the need for accessibility of education. The faculty associations are starting to realize that they have an interest in cooperating with us on funding issues, so we are making some progress."

Mullen says that the aspect of funding that SUNS is most concerned about right now is the federal-provincial cost-sharing arrangement. Mullen says that, although the province receives a sum of money allocated to higher education from the federal government, the province doesn't spend it all on the universities.

"I don't know what they're spending it on", says Mullen, "but it isn't higher education. I know that they say in Nova Scotia higher education includes grade twelve and vocational schools. This makes it easier to make cutbacks, but it's clearly not the intention of the original agreement."

Mullen also emphasizes the value of the university experience for society as a whole and the need to have technologically trained people ready for the expected boom in offshore oil and other developments.

On the Dalhousie campus, the campus committee is organizing a postcard campaign similar to the one which SUNS ran last year. Caroline Zayid, campus committee member, says that the most important aspect of the Dal Student Union's funding campaign will be a community communications campaign aimed at fostering greater awareness of the universities' role in the wider community. (This is the 'three-piece suit' approach made notorious in recent council meetings.) Council President Owen says that an attempt is also being made to convince the faculty association that it is also in their best interest to cooperate with the Student Union's efforts.

"The faculty cooperated pretty well last year when we had the postcard campaign", said Owen, "so I don't see any problem there". Owen and Zayid said that if cutbacks and tuition hikes decreased the number of students in a section to nothing, then there was no job there for a professor either.



Soon after starring in the movie "A Change of Seasons", in which she played a Boston University student, Bo Derek became so enamored with her intellectual image she decided to temporarily forego her screen career in pursuit of a college degree. But, faced with the inevitable mobbings at any large American institution, Derek, who raised feminist anger and male blood pressure in "10", sought out a low profile university where her presence would be virtually unnoticed. This location thus became one of Hollywood's best guarded secrets; that is until eagle-eyed photographer Tom Higgins and hawk-nosed reporter Greg Dennis spotted the actress-cum-student outside the Dalhousie Student Union Building Friday. Derek, pictured here at a Tug-O-War contest, said she enjoys the unpretentious atmosphere at Dal, adding that Super SUBs "are a gas."

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