

450 march

# Students protest cutbacks

Dalhousie University students were among the more than 400 vocal and angry students who marched to Province House last Thursday to protest inadequate government funding for Nova Scotia's 11 post-secondary institutions.

The students gathered in front of the Dalhousie Student Union Building and marched through the streets to the legislative building where they listened to representatives of faculty, support staff, the Atlantic Federation of Students and Nova Scotia Premier Gerry Regan.

At the same time, demonstrations were taking place at two other centres in the province.

In Yarmouth, 130 of the 170 students at Université Ste. Anne in Church Point bussed 50 miles to march on the provincial government building and boycotted classes at the university.

In Cape Breton, about 70 students from the College of Cape Breton marched with placards in the streets of Sydney and entered the provincial government building, where they paraded up and down stairs chanting slogans.

In New Brunswick, students from St. Thomas University in Fredericton showed solidarity with Nova Scotia students and held a funeral for post-secondary education, placing a coffin containing documents from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) on the steps of the legislative building.

A mock murder inquest into the death of higher education, with representatives from the administration, MPHEC, students and the provincial government was held at the University of New Brunswick, also in Fredericton.

At Mount Allison University in Sackville, students placed posters around the campus and set up an information booth to explain to students the effect poor government funding is having on post-secondary institutions.

AFS secretary-co-ordinator Tony Kelly said he thought the Halifax demonstration was excellent, and that students made a loud statement to the public and the government. However, he added he was a little disappointed at the turnout, which was smaller than at a similar demonstration last year, when about 1,700 students marched in Halifax to protest tuition increases of six per cent.

Gene Long, Atlantic fieldworker for the National Union of Students, said that for the second consecutive year, "visible protest action proves students aren't willing to give in."

Fee increases are expected for



Dal Photo / Delaney

the coming academic year at some institutions in New Brunswick, although they have not yet been announced. It is unlikely that tuition fees will increase again next year at Nova Scotia institutions.

Kelly said one of the reasons the turnout was smaller than last year was a lack of co-operation and a certain amount of obstructionism from student councils at some institutions.

The march from the Dalhousie campus to Province House was excellent, he contended, and the session at the legislature indicated the kinds of questions people want to raise about these issues. The fact students took to the streets this year rather than the sidewalks, demonstrated their strength and eagerness in voicing their concerns, he claimed.

Graham Mackay, organizer for the demonstration at the College of Cape Breton in Sydney, said he was also disappointed in the number of people who turned out, but believed students had made their point to the public of Cape Breton and the provincial government.

Mackay said students just did not seem to have the will to do it. Public response was not what he would have liked, he added, because there are other issues such as unemployment that are of more concern to the people of Cape Breton.

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## Dalhousie considers proficiency tests

by Bruce Grant

The Faculty Ad-Hoc Committee on language proficiency is considering "something like entrance examinations" in its recommendations to the Dal faculty council, said Tom Sinclair-Faulkner of the religion department.

The committee, which has been surveying faculty members in an attempt to get a reading on the campus intellectual climate, met Tuesday to consider the results. Sinclair-Faulkner said while over 90% of students graduating with bachelor degrees from Dalhousie are acceptably literate, the committee feels that in many cases too little written work is required in undergraduate classes.

The Ad-Hoc Committee on Language Proficiency was formed several months ago to determine what, if any, standards of literacy are in force in the various departments. The issue of the illiterate college student has received much attention of late as universities are becoming aware that significant numbers of graduating university students are insufficiently skilled in the use of the English language.

"The result of the survey was that we did get general agreement on what is superior and what is inferior written work," Sinclair-Faulkner said. "A minority of professors, 16%, have what seem to be unrealistically high standards, while about 4% accepted items on the survey that normally would be considered unacceptable."

Although entrance exams are a distinct possibility, the committee feels there are other issues to be

settled first. "Entrance examinations would have the effect of screening out certain students, and we're not sure we want to do this," said Sinclair-Faulkner. "A large number of students are coming out of high school now with a diploma that looks good on paper but has not in fact prepared them for university. We're not sure we want to screen these people out. We should provide all students with the opportunity to learn to write well."

Sinclair-Faulkner said an alternative to entrance examinations would be "additional classes on how to write well." He had earlier indicated to the *Gazette* that remedial reading and writing classes were undesirable because of the cost—up to \$300 per student.

The Ad-Hoc committee will now meet to decide exactly what course of action it will recommend to the faculty council. Sinclair-Faulkner said that, over the summer, faculty council will prepare a "very brief" report addressing the problem of university-level illiteracy and suggesting strategies for dealing with it. One thing that seems certain is that in the future both arts and science courses will make greater demands on the student's command of the language; that means term-papers, lab reports, and the like will be graded with more emphasis on composition and grammar.

"We have to make sure the courses we offer evaluate literacy," Sinclair-Faulkner said, "we're not persuaded that they do that job now."

## Textbook prices up

WINNIPEG (CUP)—Textbook prices in Canada will probably be 10 to 15 per cent higher in September, University of Manitoba bookstore manager Helen Garlicki said March 27.

The bulk of textbooks used in Canadian colleges and universities are imported from the United States, she said, and the declining value of the Canadian dollar will mean higher prices in Canada. "We'll have to add whatever the exchange rate is to the price of books when we buy them," she said. "Our major buying is in May, June and July so it depends mostly on the exchange rate at that time."

She said Canadian distributors will already have some books in stock or may order some earlier

from the U.S. parent companies.

Elementary and secondary school texts won't be affected because most of them are produced in Canada. However, according to publishers, the Canadian market is too small and fragmented to permit domestic production of most books and materials used in post-secondary schools.

Higher tuition fees and cutbacks in education (particularly library) spending will further restrain the market.

The executive director of the Canadian Publisher's Council, a trade association, has said he expects a government announcement before summer on a proposal to end import duties on some materials.