

SUNS plan of action



Dal Photo / Morris

by Paul Clark

Dalhousie Student Council supported on Sunday most of a "proposal of action" to lobby for student interests in post-secondary education, but postponed for three weeks the decision whether to give their blessing to a march on legislature to protest expected government funding cutbacks.

The "proposal of action" co-authored by Student Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) representatives Atul Sharma and Caroline Zayid, outlines a cumulative plan of education and political pressure, starting with button and pamphlet distribution and leading up to public presentations and co-operation with other university groups.

The decision on a march was deferred because councillors generally did not feel they knew at that time how much support they would receive for it.

"In Quebec they can get 4,000 students for a march with no problem," said Howe Hall rep Larry Nelson. "But in Nova Scotia, I'm dubious. With only 300 students out it might hurt our credibility."

Councillors also emphasized the need for long-term education and lobbying on post-secondary educational issues, and the need for a more low-key solicitation of community support.

"Starting a campaign five weeks before the government's funding announcements is not enough," said student union president Gord Owen. "We have to look down the road and begin working 52 weeks a year".

Science rep and "proposal of action" co-author Atul Sharma argued that it would be difficult to mobilize student support against funding cutbacks without concrete goals and that therefore it was important that council support SUNS' Dalhousie Campus Committee's proposal for a march that evening.

Grassroots student support is necessary before SUNS will have any credibility with the government, Sharma said, and a march is a way of getting students involved in the political process.

"Our intention was never to be militant, but we've been ignored, assaulted and abused by the government and unless we demonstrate it could happen again. For no other reason, we have a responsibility to demonstrate out of outright indignation."

Sharma cited what he said were two important instances showing government contempt for student groups.

First, last year's government funding announcements were made just hours after student presentations on them were heard, indicating a total lack of respect for student input on these, Sharma said.

Second, Sharma pointed to the government's appointment last year of Kirk Sievert to sit on as a "student representative" on a committee on student-aid. This "appointment of students to student-aid bodies without the knowledge of any duly elected student group is an affront to all democratic principles and a slap in the face to every student in this province", Sharma had written earlier in the proposal.

Ken McFarlane, a new Board of Governors representative, emphasized as well the need for going outside the university and explaining student needs to the public. "We have to go out and meet the retired pensioner and the truck driver," he said.

Council later decided to adopt McFarlane's suggestion to the SUNS proposal.

Discrimination again

TORONTO (CUP) — Continued discrimination against women in the legal profession was the major finding of a recent report on employment opportunities for articling students and Ontario Bar Admission course graduates.

The report was based on a survey sponsored by the Ontario Law Deans and the Law Society of Upper Canada.

The survey showed women lag behind men in attaining career objectives such as area of employment (General, Criminal, Civil, Taxation, etc.), size of firm, time taken to find employment and salary.

The author of the report, University of Toronto Faculty of Law Assistant Dean Marie Huxter, found the section dealing with 'Objectionable Questions' asked during job interviews to be "particularly upsetting."

Approximately 11 per cent of the male respondents believed they had been asked objectionable questions while 39 per cent of female respondents reported objectionable questions.

Questions considered objectionable by the men were primarily concerned with political affiliation, religion and marital status.

Women reported questions concerning marital status, present or planned children and "sex as a factor in dealing with lawyers, clients, staff" as objectionable.

Among the offensive questions or comments were:

Why wasn't I married at my age. Do I date? Was I on birth control pills? What do I think of lesbians?

One male interviewer asked whether I wouldn't prefer to stay home and "be happy."

"I dislike women lawyers on principle" one senior lawyer remarked.

What would you do if our fattest, richest client pinched your rear end?

Racial background of my wife!

Why the hell did you take Jewish history in undergrad?

Whether I had a "girlfriend" followed by a pronouncement that the firm in question had no interest in "fruits."

Why I wanted to do litigation which is a difficult man's job.

Huxter said she hoped the law society would bring the comments to the attention of their members.

"Those lawyers doing this should be reminded that there is a code of professional conduct governing them," she said, including a rule against discrimination. "It wouldn't hurt to remind them of that."

Among other questions was one asking what personal factors helped or hindered the graduates in finding employment. The most helpful factor, according to both men and women, was "family, social, business or other contacts." This was followed by "race, creed, colour and national origin" and "work experience" among men and by "work experience" and "sex" among women, one of whom repeated, "My sex helped me because the firm I articled with hires one female articling student per year."

Hindering factors include sex (mentioned by 0.1 per cent of the men and 44 per cent of the women), contacts (or lack thereof — cited by 18 per cent of graduates), marital status (20 per cent women compared to 9 per cent men) and race, creed, colour, and national origin (mentioned by 23 per cent of males compared with six per cent females.)

The survey was based on a questionnaire sent to all lawyers called to the Bar in Ontario from 1977-79 and to all 1978 and 1979 Ontario law school graduates.

Approximately 59 per cent of the nearly 6,000 questionnaires were returned.

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DALHOUSIE INFORMATION MEETING

January 20, 1981 7:30 p.m.
MacMechen Auditorium, Killam Library
Guest Speaker - KEN TRAYNOR who
will be showing slide on his
recent trip to Zimbabwe