

Referendum called on deficit

by M. Allain

Facing a deficit of \$17,000 for this year's Student Health Drug Plan, the Dalhousie Student Council has decided to call a referendum to put the plan on a break-even basis.

Council acted on recommendations proposed by treasurer Gail Rudderham in her July report on prescription drugs. According to Rudderham's report, either a direct increase in fees or cutbacks in services currently offered are needed to keep the drug plan solvent. Since there is a large amount of money involved, and the services quite extensive, council felt the decision should be made by the students. The referendum will be held to coincide with the election of a new Council next February.

The Drug Plan is operated by the University Health Service in conjunction with M. K. O'Brien's Pharmacy (6199 Coburg Rd.). Instituted in September of 1970 as an in-

surance plan to cover the cost of prescription drugs for full time Dal students the plan has since expanded to include students from both Mount St. Vincent and the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology. Originally limited to the fall and winter sessions, coverage has recently been extended throughout the summer session (May 1 to August 31).

With the exception of birth control pills all drugs prescribed by the Student Health Clinic are dispensed by O'Brien's free of charge to eligible students. The plan's latest feature was last year's inclusion of a dental plan to provide protection for students who sustain accidental damage to natural teeth.

Up until the current fiscal year the plan broke even with the revenue from the \$5.00 per student fee taken out of the \$50 student union dues paid at registration. This was possible because of a low par-

ticipation rate during the early years of the plan (1970-1975) which resulted in a surplus of revenue drug expenditures. This surplus was carried over from year to year as a provision fund and used to postpone an increase in fees when in 75-76 and again in 76-77 the per capita costs of the plan exceeded the revenue from fees. According to John Graham, SUB general manager, the increases in expenditure over the last two years can be attributed to a marked increase in the participation rate, larger enrollment, spiralling drug costs as well as minor epidemics (fungus infection outbreak in 75-76 and a flu bug last year). With the provision fund nearly exhausted the current trend of expenditures promises a deficit of \$16,905 for the present fiscal year.

The referendum proposed by Council will contain the following four options for liquidating this

deficit:

1. Increase fees to \$7.50. The per capita expenditure expected for next year is estimated at \$7.27. With a possibly stable enrollment, cost should not exceed that provided by \$7.50 per student.
2. Discontinue the Allergy Service, Dental Plan and Summer Service which had expenditures of \$2,500, \$4,500, and \$10,000 respectively, constituting a total saving of \$17,000 thus no increase in fee would be necessary.
3. Increase fees by \$1.00 per student and withdraw summer services.
4. Student pays \$1.00 per prescription and summer services discontinued.

According to Rudderham the plan should be seen as an insurance policy "in case of need for medical attention" and not an investment for which one might expect a return. "Getting your five dollars worth" is not the purpose of the plan. However an average of 1.33 prescriptions per Dal student last year at 59% of the market cost per prescription we certainly have been getting our money's worth.

Engineers given new room

by Peter Moore

The Dalhousie Engineering Society is more than satisfied with the new common room given to them by the university, according to Society President Doug Day.

The old common room in the Sir James Dunn Building was made into an extension of classroom 304 by the administration this summer. It had a variety of functions since being first acquired by the Society last year. It was the organizational office for the Engineers' Ball and Banquet, a hockey tournament, and an annual play performed at the Children's Hospital. As well, it was a mail room, canteen, study area, storage area for trophies, draughting kits, sweaters and other articles that the society sells to its members.

The loss of this room at first appeared to be a rip-off comparable to the Commerce Society losing their house (last week's *Gazette*). However, Day, council Engineering rep Dan Edgar, and student council president, Robert Sampson quite easily convinced L.G. Vagianos, vice-president in charge of university services, that the common room was much more than a place to drink.

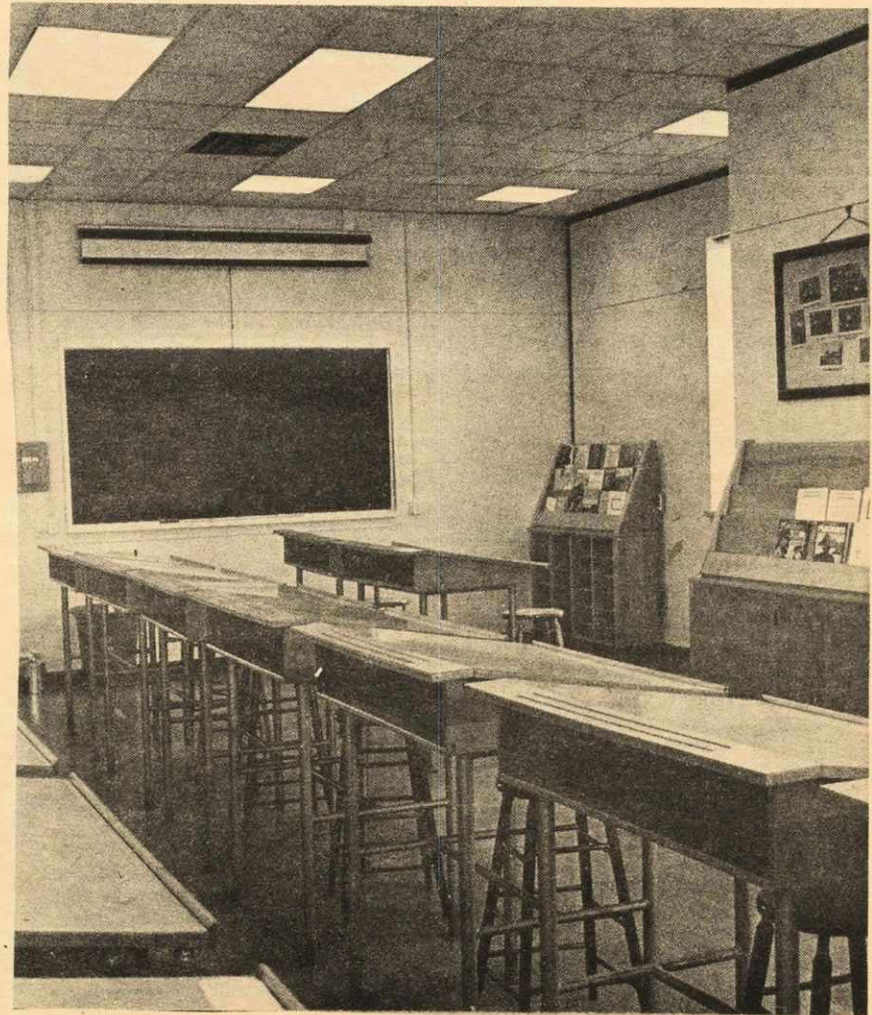
Vagianos arranged to have a

section of the old Dalhousie Bookstore in the chemistry building partitioned off to form a new room for the engineers. The Student Union will provide a carpet and some furniture.

"It was a fair exchange," said Day, "but I wish that we had been notified before our old room was taken. Some valuables were stolen when the partition was torn down. Also, it was an inconvenient time to start renovating. But we are glad to have the new room. The Society has existed since 1914, and it sure isn't going to fold now. If anything, it will get bigger."

The new meeting place, however, may only be a temporary arrangement as Day is anticipating another move next spring. "A house may be available at that time, but the society would not want the responsibility and expense of maintaining one. A room is adequate."

Commenting on the situation, Vagianos said, "the engineers presented a fair case to me, so I did my best to arrange something suitable. I'm willing to listen to any group that goes to me with problems such as this." He added that he had not been approached by a Commerce Society representative.



The Engineering Society at Dalhousie is getting a new common room since the administration turned their old room into a classroom.

Let them know we are here

Dalhousie students will soon be joining 27 other universities and college campuses in a National Union of Students "mail in campaign" against unemployment.

Student Council Arts Representative Janet Cameron, emphasizing the need of full student participation, said that cards will be distributed in classrooms, residences, and cafeterias.

The cards, which are addressed to Prime Minister Trudeau, read: "I am gravely disappointed that your government has let unemployment climb since 1975 hurting millions of Canadians, when massive job cre-

ation could have improved the situation of the unemployed, of whom half are students and the other, young people."

"Also, I ask that your government move quickly, with full opportunity for public and student participation, to establish a new Federal student aid plan which operates on the basis of students' actual costs and resources, meets the unique situations of part-time students and is no disincentive to needy students."

"All you have to do is sign the card and drop it in one of the mailboxes around campus that will be set up for this purpose. Since

they are addressed to the Prime Minister they won't need any postage," Cameron said.

At its May conference, NUS decided its first priority is fighting jobs, unemployment and next improving accessibility to student aid. Dan O'Connor, NUS executive secretary, said "the mail-in campaign was planned during the summer and set for the beginning of the school year to provide "concrete, visible demonstration of the fact that this year, right across the country, there is going to be activity on these issues."

The mail campaign will be followed by provincial and local work to provide more information about the issues and to determine the most pressing issues in student aid.

