

DSA disillusioned

HALIFAX (CUP) — The staff association at Dalhousie University has "overwhelmingly" rejected the latest administration contract offer, and according to the association's president, the vote "indicates that problems with management are serious."

"The major problem is the university's attitude to staff," said DSA president Delphine du Toit, who was astounded that 83 per cent of the 513 members who voted rejected the contract offer.

"Even the DSA didn't realize how fed up people are," she said.

Du Toit said staff want more say in planning and organizational changes to the university. She said staff are rarely represented on departmental committees and "always in a rush" because they're informed of changes only at the last minute.

An efficiency study conducted by the California-based company

Ritchie and Associates "triggered the concern about lack of staff input," du Toit said.

The Ritchie study recommended that staff record routine tasks, including marking time spent answering questions. Du Toit said such "degrading" procedures have caused staff "an enormous amount of pressure."

Personnel services director Michael Roughneen contends that the university has never been against "appropriate consultation" with staff. He also defends the Ritchie study, saying it will save the university more than \$1 million over the next three years.

And saving money is important these days at Dalhousie — to make up a budget deficit, President Howard Clark has called for cuts, including a review of all requests for replacement of staff and faculty positions.

But according to du Toit, staff "have taken the brunt of the

budgetary blows." Du Toit, upset that Clark recently spent more than \$100,000 of university funds to renovate his house, said "the belt-tightening exercise is not being spread evenly."

The DSA, most of whose members earn between \$9,500 and \$32,000, want more than the university is prepared to offer them. The university put forward a three per cent increase over the first year of the two-year contract, while staff are looking for a five per cent increase.

With 750 members, the DSA is the largest union at Dalhousie. The workers, who mainly provide clerical, secretarial or technical services, have been working without a contract since July.

Negotiation between the two sides will continue, and a strike or work slowdown is not imminent, although du Toit has not ruled them out.

Council pushes Senate reform

By TOBY SANGER

A dismal degree of interest in student elections for senate will not stall council's plans to push for increased representation to the university's academic governing body, says DSU president Jamie MacMullin.

All five students who were nominated for senate seats were declared acclaimed by DSU returning officer Layton Dorey. Four of the five senators for the 1987/88 year are members of the fraternity Phi Delta Theta.

MacMullin admits he has no answers for this year's lack of political enthusiasm — especially after nine people applied for a vacant senate position in January.

But he says one of the reasons may be a lack of communication between senate representatives and students in different faculties.

"A number of students are not getting the information they need from the senate. I can only venture a guess that was one of the reasons there was little interest."

MacMullin and vice-president academic Ava Czapaly presented a draft proposal to senate chair Bill Jones last December that would more than double the number of student senators.

Under the plan, each of the seven faculties would elect at least one student senator with additional seats distributed on the basis of enrollment in each faculty.

MacMullin says with the five students who are now elected at large to senate, it is impossible to effectively represent students' concerns to the 350 member body.

"With more students on senate, we can have greater representation on committees, too," he adds.

MacMullin discussed the proposal with Dalhousie president Howard Clark, other senate members and with DSU council.

Nobody seems to oppose the plan — yet.

The changes will require amendments to both the student union constitution and to the

senate constitution, the latter of which is a complicated and lengthy process. Changes to the senate constitution must have the approval of over half the 350 senate members. Rarely more than 40 turn up for meetings so mail-in votes are conducted.

MacMullin hopes the proposal will get the steering committee's approval for a constitutional vote next month.

But senate chair Bill Jones told the *Gazette* "the earliest it could be discussed in senate is probably two months". He says "the steering committee is sympathetic to changes but I haven't seen a concrete proposal yet".

Senate will likely vote on the changes when it considers other proposed changes to the constitution dealing with elected faculty representatives.



Students bemoan loans

HALIFAX (CUP) — Mike Corkum is considering dropping out of Mount Saint Vincent University, even though he has only two months left to finish his business degree. Corkum is one of many students whose special circumstances place them in a precarious financial position.

"I can't afford to pay both my tuition and my rent," he said.

Corkum, who has accumulated an \$11,000 debt in student loans, has no family and receives a pension from the Department of Veteran Affairs. This made him ineligible for the government bursary he expected to receive.

The pension "doesn't replace the security a family can give to you," said Corkum, who believes the Nova Scotia student aid program isn't effective for students with such special needs.

Gordon Steedman, director of Dalhousie University's Awards Office, agreed student aid doesn't provide sufficient funds for students who don't have family support or don't find well-paying summer jobs. He said the government needs to "take a serious look at the student aid program", which doesn't account for the "real cost" of going to university.

Sue Drapeau, executive director of the Students' Union of Nova Scotia, said "there are plenty of cracks in the system." One problem, she said, is that student loans are designed for the traditional student — the single, childless, 18-24 year old who has financial support from her or his family.

Drapeau said student aid application forms should be redesigned to account for child care and other special expenses of the non-traditional student.

But not just the non-traditional student faces increasing financial hardship. More and more students are taking out student loans, which themselves are becoming larger.

In 1981-82, the average cumulative debt load for a graduating student was about \$6,500. This average will rise to about \$11,000 for students who started university in 1985-86.

In Nova Scotia, 51 per cent of students received student loans in 1985, compared to 38 per cent four years before. During this time, money for student loans almost tripled from \$15 million to over \$40 million. Bursary money, however, crawled from \$9.6 million to \$10.2 million.

Jeff Ryan, a student at Memorial University in St. John's has a debt load of between \$12,000 and \$15,000, and has never received a bursary. "it's ridiculous having that sort of debt load without having had a grant," he said.

Ryan, who comes from Grand Falls, Nfld., thinks grants should be larger and given more freely, especially to students who live outside university towns. The system "is unfair to (out of town students) because they can't live at home, and often people from small towns don't go to university."

Lois Corbett, a graduate student at St. Mary's University in Halifax, is the first person from her hometown of Johnville, New Brunswick, to receive a university education. She said some high school classmates who had taken college preparatory courses were forced to enter the work force because the cost of university was insurmountable.

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