

Internet conspiracy to invade your PC

BY PHILIP LEWIS

Could there be a conspiracy to invade your computer hard drive? The internet seems like a safe and easy place to explore information on any topic. But according to a recent e-mail in general circulation, there may be people using it to explore information about you.

The e-mail is being distributed in the form of a chain letter similar

to other chain letters many internet users are familiar with receiving. However, instead of asking you to send copies to 10 of your friends, or a house may fall on you, this is an urgent distress call.

The letter describes, in typical conspiracy fashion, a plot by the top executives at American Online (AOL) to tap into your PCs hard drive to look at anything

they want to (financial information, personal documents, etc...). This letter is supposed to be sent by a former AOL employee who was subsequently fired after he brought this "bug" to the attention of the executives.

"As me and my colleagues discovered, with the new version, anytime you are signed on to AOL, any top AOL executive,

any AOL worker, who has been sworn to secrecy regarding this feature, can go into your hard drive and retrieve any piece of information they so desire," reads the letter.

In response to these accusations, Segun Oladimeji, on behalf of America Online replied, "none of the allegations are true".

Oladimeji went further to say that AOL has submitted this hoax to the US Department of Energy's Computer Incident Advisory Capability Group for its Internet Hoaxes Web Page.

On the web page of the Internet Hoaxes there is a statement similar to Oladimeji in regards to the fallacy of the allegations as well as a reprint of the entire letter sent by the "former AOL employee".

In a recent article on the ZDNET news channel, Steve Atkins, a long time follower of Internet hoaxes states, "it's just another of the bogus e-mails."

Atkins says that the author of the letter brings in the issue of privacy loosely based on real issues to add to the realism and shock value of the letter. In this respect it is similar to common chain letters that cite tragic events that happened to people who didn't send it in on time.

ZDNET news reports that the validity of the letter is also threatened by a number of technical mistakes in its language and the melodramatic way it tells the story. The letter adds drama (the writer has lost his job and is going through a divorce) to draw the reader into the story, but at the end of the letter he writes "Enjoy America Online (just kidding!)."

This hoax is unusually detailed which allows it to play up the fear and ignorance of its readers. Atkins reports that "corporate security departments spend a lot of time stopping people from sending out these warnings...it's the warnings that are the real problem."

No action for Dal students

Why fight tuition when you can negotiate

BY LAURA DAVIS

Dalhousie students have taken no action to ensure that they get their fair share of the pie when money is allocated to provincial schools later this year.

Saint Mary's University (SMU) has been working on a post-card campaign petitioning the government for more money. Each student can sign a post-card to let the Nova Scotia government know that SMU wants more cash.

When one looks for a similar demonstration at Dalhousie, there simply isn't one.

According to Dalhousie Student Union president (DSU) Chris Adams, this doesn't mean that Dalhousie is not working hard to get the most money it can for its students.

"There are plans in the works," he said.

Last year the Nova Scotia Council for Higher Education (NSCHE) researched a fair way to allocate funds to Nova Scotia schools. The process included comparing

universities and student bodies. After its investigation, the Council stated how much each university could receive if the plan came into fruition. This plan included an increase in the millions to SMU's funding and no change to Dal's current funding.

"Dalhousie receives half of the [total] funds out of all the schools in Nova Scotia... [Dal is] the biggest school, [we have] more expensive programs and [we are] research intensive," Adams said.

The formulas that the Council created saw increased funds in some areas this year, and decreases in others. Dalhousie's medical program, for example, suffered a staggering \$3-million cut just this year.

"[The DSU] are strongly against that," Adams said.

Dalhousie's administration has also done little to directly change the situation. According to the draft minutes of the October 27 senate meeting, university president Tom Traves stated: "the NSCHE was

considering further options concerning the funding formula. In the endless process of submissions to the government and lobbying in this matter, Dalhousie continued to argue for a formula more sensitive to Dalhousie's distinctive needs.

"This would remain a challenge, as we attempted to argue against the perception of many that Dalhousie was the rich university which should relinquish funds to other institutions."

Despite opposition, Adams says that Dal has no protests in the works. In regard to Dal's "style" of negotiating funding, Adams says that negotiations will take the form of discussions. To date, these negotiations have taken place through the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations of which Dalhousie is a member.

"What it comes down to," says Adams, "is that the two universities are different. What benefits St. Mary's might not benefit Dal."

Grits win two, lose two

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The Premier has demonstrated that he has his own mandate to lead the Liberal party," said Kinley at his party headquarters Tuesday night.

Most observers seemed surprised the NDP, seen as the ones to beat going into the elections, did not do better. However, Delefos seemed upbeat about the results.

"I haven't had a chance to analyze the numbers, but it seems we took about thirty-seven per cent of the popular vote, up from twenty-two per cent [in the 1993 election]," said Delefos.

Tory leader John Hamm felt differently about the results.

"I thought the NDP would be stronger than they were," said Hamm. "The resurgence of the NDP... is sputtering."

Despite its win in the traditionally conservative Cumberland North riding, which Hamm attributed to anger over the Highway 104 toll

road, the Progressive Conservative party was surprisingly weak in these elections. The Conservative candidates in Cape Breton only managed to garner 10 per cent of all ballots cast, while Carmichael ran a distant third behind Delefos in Halifax Citadel.

Premier MacLellan will be

TAs get serious

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said that he "was concerned about the possibility that the TA's might go on strike, particularly in light of the fact that Dalhousie paid its TA's at a rate only slightly higher than that offered by McDonald's."

In response, president Tom Traves said that "negotiations with CUPE had been conducted for an extended period of time, but that that was not unusual in a first contract which required all issues to be addressed."

entering Province House for the first time. Before becoming leader of the provincial Liberals this summer, MacLellan spent 18 years as a Member of Parliament for the Sydneys. He must call a general election by May which gives him only six months before he has to defend his seat again.

He said that although he was not on top of the issue, that he believed most financial issues had been resolved.

Traves added that "in his experience at this University, all financial claims had a logic and merit; but the University has to balance conflicting claims for limited resources."

"I see no reason why we cannot come to an agreement. A strike is not imminent."

NEWS-IN-BRIEF

CASA WAITS TO RELEASE STUDENT LOAN PLAN

BY LILLI JU

Two weeks after the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations met in Halifax with federal government officials to redraw the student loan program, a document containing details on how the new program would work has yet to be released from that conference.

"The report will be coming out in mid-November," stated Hoops Harrison, National Director of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).

"We want to release a professional report that presents all sides, including opposition to it, and provides a thoroughly researched background."

CASA is expected to announce details of a national income-based remission program for the repayment of student loans — where loan payments would be based on a graduate's income. This plan originated from the joint efforts of the student unions at Dalhousie and the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton).

"We've been very excited that our loan program has been discussed and is being used for the national model," said Kevin Lacey, Vice-President Academic & External for the Dalhousie Student Union and Atlantic Director of CASA.

On October 22, when CASA was originally going to release its student loan document, the Canadian Federation of Students released the draft of its own document titled, "Compromising Access", which denounces an income-based remission program for student loans.

DAL GETS NEW INTERNET PROGRAM

BY JENNIFER LAMONT

"Most people don't even know they're using [CA*net II]," said John Sherwood, director of communication services of Dalhousie, of the new Internet system that has been launched at Dalhousie. The planning stages for CA*net II first began in October of 1996, the system was implemented at Dalhousie for the first time in late June.

CA*net II is a closed community of universities and government organizations. There are fewer users than on the commercial Internet and as a result it is faster. Being on CA*net II allows Dalhousie to "try new protocols," Sherwood said.

It is enabling "academic and research" development she explains. CA*net II allows you to connect to other institutions, so it is now possible to watch a live shuttle launch, or see a researcher working in a lab across the ocean.

Institutions in the US, Europe, and Singapore are already hooked up to CA*net II.

Some institutions (not including Dalhousie) have made use of CA*net II to implement distance education classes. By connecting to other institutions, information can be sent from one point to another.

Despite the many advantages of CA*net II can offer, Sherwood says that it is "automatic and transparent" to its users. This is because traffic that is destined for the CA*net II is able to travel there automatically, while the rest of Dalhousie remains on the commercial Internet network. Dalhousie is one of few institutions that can do this.

The costs of the project were absorbed by two organizations outside of Dalhousie; CANARIE Inc. and InNovacorp.

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