

Tuition increases likely Governments cut back funding

by Mark King,
Atlantic Region, CUP

Confirming the fears of many Maritime students, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) announced Friday funding levels for Maritime institutions will be substantially less than recommended next year. The commission said in a release that the basic operating grant will be increased 6.7% with the Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island governments boosting grants to institutions in their provinces an extra 1%.

The MPHEC had asked the Council of Maritime Premiers for a basic increase in operating grants of 11% and two allotments of 1.5% each for funding equalization within the region and with the rest of the country. The grant shortfall will almost certainly mean tuition increases at maritime universities next year according to most sources. Although the exact amount will not be known

until the institutions have finalized their budgets, increases are expected to be tied to cost of living increases.

The Atlantic Federation of Students and the National Union of Students expressed anger and disappointment at the decision. AFS Secretary-coordinator Tony Kelly, said the premiers have displayed a blatant disregard for the objective needs of post-secondary education. "By approving an increase which amounts to only 6.1%, well below the rate of inflation, and the recommendations made by the MPHEC, they have assured massive tuition increases, faculty and staff unrest, and extensive cutbacks in services provided."

The Atlantic Association of Universities expressed disappointment at the announcement but have accepted further belt-tightening as a matter of course. Following a regular meeting in Halifax last week, Presidents from three Maritime provinces agreed they would not know precisely where they stand until they are informed of subsidies for non-space and renovation costs and special grants later this month.

Father Malcolm MacDonnel, President of Saint Francis Xavier University and chair of the AAU said although the decision puts the universities in a difficult position, he was happy to have the information earlier.

Owen Carrigan, President of Saint Mary's University said that the Saint Mary's budget committee will have to consider the final figures once they have been notified of complete funding assistance. Carrigan, who was also chair of the Nova Scotia sub group of the AAU said the final decisions will have to be made by the institutions but he expects tuition fee increases are a certainty.

The President of the University of Prince Edward Island, A.B. Baker, said he expects their residence and other fees would have to be in-

creased as well to keep in line with expected inflation increases. Baker said universities can no longer afford to subsidize the cost of students living on campus.

In a press release announcing the funding levels, the MPHEC said that the Council of Maritime Premiers' decision was "appropriate in the present circumstances". The commission said it recognized the fiscal pressures facing government at this time and agreed with the premiers' assertion that a failure of the economy to take an expected upturn since the recommendations were made in September does not warrant a substantial increase.

The commission also noted the federal contribution was significantly less than anticipated. The federal government contributes most of the portion of post-secondary funding through a combination of tax points and straight per capita grants.

Kelly said he was very surprised with the commission's reaction to the government decision. "It is difficult to understand why a neutral advisory body would label reasonable funding levels well below the recommendation. The response destroys the credibility of the commission as an objective impartial group."

Atlantic NUS representative Gene Long said that the refusal to adequately support the institutions will result in decreased accessibility with more and more students unable to afford an education beyond high school. Long said it was frustrating to see the institutions refuse to challenge the priorities of spending set by the provincial governments. "They all feel the incredible strain on the quality of education as a result of cut-backs but backed down when the government imposed its mis-directed results," he said.

Scores 2000 th



Dal Photo/Morris

"This is a very special moment in Dalhousie sports history," said head basketball coach Al Yarr. And indeed it was, for Bob Fagan had just scored his 2000th point in AUA competition, a feat accomplished only twice before in CIAU history. It happens that Fagan's predecessors were also Atlantic conference stars: Mickey Fox from St. Mary's and Steve Pound of Acadia.

The moment came during the first half of a Munro Day contest with the SMU Huskies, when Fagan's 14th point also became number 2000. The game was stopped, and in a brief ceremony in front of a full Dal gym Bob Fagan was presented with the game ball, as well as a standing ovation.

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Dal Photo / Grandy

University presidents restrained their enthusiasm over government announcement of meager funding for 78-79

Halifax students organize

by Scott Vaughan

In response to the Council of Maritime Premier's funding announcement last week, students from the four Halifax area post-secondary institutions have initiated plans to organize students, faculty and university support staff in order to fight the inevitable tuition increases and university cutbacks.

At a meeting Tuesday evening, representatives from Dalhousie, St. Mary's, Mount St. Vincent and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design discussed ways in which they could best co-ordinate their efforts in opposition to the tuition increases. The meeting, organized by the Atlantic Federation of Students (A.F.S.) and the National Union of Students (N.U.S.), laid plans for the formation of a committee, composed of students from all four institutions, which would organize student action against tuition increases.

Last year students from Nova Scotia institutions marched on Province House in response to tuition increases, and, according to NUS representative Don Soucy, were successful in forcing the government into increasing its post-secondary education spending. "Nova Scotia became one of the most organized provinces in

Canada," Soucy said. "We were successful last year because we worked together. Collectively as a voice we held down tuition increases."

The CMP announcement will not only affect the students at universities in the Atlantic region, but also the faculties and support staff, according to Tony Kelly, secretary-coordinator of AFS. "We need to form alliances with support staff unions and various faculties, for they will equally be affected by the restraints as will be the students," Kelly said. At Dalhousie, there was a strike before Christmas by the Operating Engineers, and threat of strike from the maintenance workers, the Dalhousie Staff Association and the Dalhousie Faculty Association.

"The university administration was barely able to meet the demands of its various staff this academic year. Next year there will again be threats of strike action, and in the light of the CMP announcement, the administrations will be unable to keep up with the various staff demands for salary increases," said Gene Long, Atlantic fieldworker for NUS. "The issue is not only tuition increases, but also university cutbacks. These cutbacks will effect all facets of the

university, including the basic quality of the level of education, in all institutions in the Atlantic region."

Government statements that they are the victims of economic restraint are not reflective of the real situation, according to Lou-Anne Meloche, A.F.S. member. "Nova Scotia is making money on education grants from the federal government," Meloche said. "Nova Scotia received a 22% increase in its post-secondary education budget last year, but was not required to spend all that money on education. There was more money spent last year than this on education by the provincial government, a fact most people overlook. Governments are siphoning money off the education budget and putting it into 'development' projects, such as the Mercator."

It was agreed that the best way to oppose the increases and cutbacks was through collective organization and demonstration. A petition will be circulated throughout the Halifax area, and plans for a general meeting with Council of Maritime Premiers was discussed.

Another meeting will be held next week. Announcements will be posted throughout the campus, and all students are urged to attend.