

Dal students work with Nader

by Michael Donovan

Three Dalhousie law students worked in Washington, D.C., this summer with consumer advocate Ralph Nader. Kenzie MacKinnon, Elizabeth MacLeod and Ian MacLeod conducted research and gathered data on different problem areas of the law and government policies affecting the people of Canada. They looked closely at American experiences in the field of consumer advocacy and focused their attention on specific issues which affect the Canadian situation.

Kenzie MacKinnon concentrated his efforts on secrecy and disclosure of government documents. He looked at progressive and active American legislation in the area of secrecy, particularly the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, studying its effectiveness and applicability to the Canadian government and bureaucracy. At the end of the summer he produced a 38 page report assessing the implications of governmental secrecy. Included in his report were specific recommendations for change. Among these were proposals that the public have a right of access to all government information not falling under several narrow exemptions, and, more importantly, that "the final arbiter of all of what the public may or may not see be an independent arbiter, probably the courts."

The practice in Canada now is to leave the discretion to release vital information such as information on security matters or even information concerning meat inspections, in the hands of the Cabinet. For example, a Canadian cannot obtain the results of meat inspection from the Minister of Agriculture in Canada, but can easily obtain the results of the tests on meat from the same plant after shipment to the U.S. by simply writing to the Department of Agriculture.

Elizabeth MacLeod also conducted research on Canadian Government reluctance to release important information. She concentrated her efforts, however, in the same area of nuclear construction.

In the course of her work, she made many interesting discoveries with regards to nuclear construction in Canada. For example, she obtained strong evidence that nine hundred megawatt nuclear reactors were planned for construction in Manitoba. The government of that province has released no information to the public on this matter. On the basis of her information, Ralph Nader challenged the province, in a recent visit, to deny or make public information on the project.

Elizabeth also discovered, in the course of her research, a general tendency on the part of the builders of the nuclear reactors to "gloss over the dangers", particularly the dangers inherent in the problem of waste disposal. She added, "how low level routine releases of radioactive substances are a far worse problem than the possibility of a larger accident". She applauded the Liberal caucus resolution sponsored by Lloyd Francis, M.P. (Ottawa-West) to sponsor a public hearing in order to acquaint the people of Canada with the hazards and benefits of nuclear power. Unfortunately nothing further has been done on the matter of this resolution.

Ian MacLeod conducted research on a massive irrigation scheme currently under construction in the Northern part of the United States. He said the project is designed to divert water from the Missouri River into North Dakota. Begun in 1967, the project is 20% complete and is expected to cost between 500 and 1000 million dollars. It is being built by the Bureau of Reclamation,



One of the three Dalhousie students that worked in Washington with Ralph Nader last summer. Elizabeth MacLeod

Dal Photo / Gagnon

an agency of the U.S. Government, is funded by Congress and set up to construct irrigation schemes.

Manitoba slopes down from North Dakota and there is strong evidence, Ian MacLeod says that "Manitoba will be the sewer for the project". He elaborated by saying that, "the problem is that return flow water - about 25% of total volume - will be highly polluted in terms of salinity, herbicides and pesticides".

Further research revealed that Canada has done virtually nothing to prevent the possibility of damage due to return flow water. Ian says, "All Canada has been doing is sending little diplomatic notes to the U.S. State Department and they aren't even building the thing". Ian sent a letter to the Prime Minister's office alerting the Canadian Government to the dangers of easy compliance. There has been no response.

In the past, students who have worked with Ralph Nader in the summer have formed Public Interest Research Groups (P.I.R.G.) on their return to campus for the purpose of carrying on research on issues relevant to the locality or state.

These groups, according to Kenzie MacKinnon, are financed by contributions from the student body. All research is done by students but full-time staff are hired to provide a measure of continuity, and to produce legislation and act as a lobby force in local legislatures.

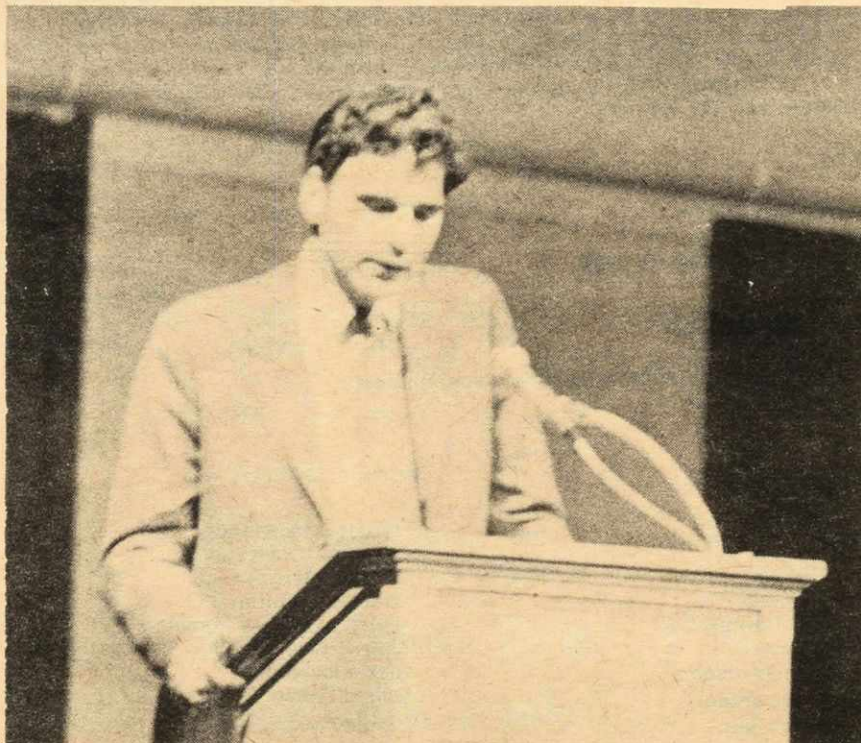
The Nader organization, according to Law students, has a budget of 1.3 million dollars. This is raised from Nader Lecture fees and books sales as well as grants from the Carnegie and Ford Foundations. Nader, himself, has a yearly salary of \$5,000. Each of the students working with Nader received \$100 for the three months.

Union onto chemicals

WASHINGTON (ENS-CUP) — Ralph Nader's Health Research Group has petitioned the Labor Department, asking that employers be required to provide their workers with the generic names of all chemicals used and produced on the job.

The Nader petition comes in response to a survey conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which found that most workers don't know what kinds of chemicals they handle in the workplace.

In surveying 5,200 factories nationwide, NIOSH discovered that workers in 90 per cent of the factories knew only the trade names of their products, and not the generic names of the chemicals contained in them. As a result, the NIOSH report concluded, they "cannot participate in the vital decisions of whether or not to accept or continue employment, or whether or not to seek union or governmental action against an employer."



Ralph Nader visited Halifax last spring and spoke at Saint Mary's University.

Fulton / Photo

No reprisals-MacKay

Dalhousie Vice-President W.A. MacKay in a letter circulated this week, announced that "there would be no reprisals" against members of support staff participating in the 14 October Day of Protest.

The letter signed MacKay, CUPE President William Kelly and CUPE Vice-President Robert Power an-

nounced that this was the decision of a meeting of the three held Friday 8 October.

The letter stated "that there would be no reprisals such as members being fired for their participation in October 14, 1976 day of protest."

On October 2 CUPE workers had

the wage increases of last year's contract rolled back some 10%. The letter is seen as a move by administration to shore-up a shaky relationship with support staff, and a move by union leadership to show strength.

Faculty and non-unionized support staff will also be observing the day of protest. At an emergency meeting held last week, faculty members voted strongly to support CLC day as individuals.