

Youth Board criticizes Robertson's attendance

By LORNA PITCHER

Social Services Minister Brenda Robertson was criticized by the Youth Advisory Board at a meeting on Tuesday. Members of the board complained about Robertson's lack of attendance at the meetings, and also the fact that the younger members of the board are not paid the \$50 per day allowance granted to the adult members.

The Youth Advisory Board, a 21

member group of policy advisors appointed from N.B. youth organizations, met for the last time prior to the expiry of its term of office, on March 2 and 3. They met without the requested presence of Robertson.

Robertson had attended only one meeting in the present Board's two-year existence, so her lack of attendance was conspicuous and disturbing to Board members, who could only assume lack of interest on her part.

Board Chairman Frank Carroll informed the members that Robertson would meet with a committee of the Board on March 12 to discuss their concerns and recommendations. The Board then began to prepare a brief expressing their concern for the future functioning of the Youth Advisory Board and chastising the Minister for her constant absence and failure to communicate what she expected these advisors to do. The brief was to be presented to her at the March 12th meeting.

The Board expressed in the brief their frustration over the past two years. They had not been informed of departmental programs and were therefore unable to suggest improvements, or future programs. They had never been officially informed of their role, so

they wasted many meetings trying to implement programs for youth, a job reserved for the Dept of Youth and out-of-bounds to the Minister's Advisory Board.

They were plagued by poor attendance because members, once appointed by order-in-Council could not be forced to resign until their term of office (usually two years) had expired.

Many young members did not attend because they did not receive the \$50 per day allowance granted to adult members of the Board. This amounted to discrimination against youth, in their view, and for this to be allowed within their Dept. of Youth was even more insulting.

Unlike other government-appointed Advisory Boards, the Youth Board's committees were not reimbursed for their meetings, held between the meetings of the Board as a whole.

These concerns were presented to Robertson at the March 12th meeting by a six-person committee of the Board. Robertson was asked to accept them as a whole; she accepted all except two recommendations which were not relevant to Board operation. These recommendations were as follows:

1. "That capital funds be made

available for the construction of recreation facilities for organizations other than those under municipal government control. Robertson explained that this could be done outside of unincorporated city areas, but was impossible within."

2. "That the minister of social services set up a special committee to study the present system of granting loans and bursaries in this province and make recommendations to implement a new program that will better serve those who wish to further their education."

The minister stated, "Something has to be done about the Youth Assistance Act. I'm not at all pleased with it, myself. I've contacted all the ministers across Canada who deal with these programs to organize a meeting to discuss how they deal with them."

"The system in N.B. is a contradiction in principles. The New Brunswick student has to borrow more, but lives in a poorer province than say, the Ontario student who attends UNB. Then, when he goes to work, the New Brunswick student loses again because his wages are generally lower. He is made into a second-class citizen."

She agreed with the recommendation but did not support the Post Grad Grant Board as an authority on how the Act should be changed to make loans more equitable to all Canadian students.

Robertson said she felt all Board members should receive the \$50 a day allowance granted to other Boards and to the adults of the Youth Advisory Board. However, Board members pointed out to the press that the present Board had

recommended that all members be paid, almost a year ago, and no reply was received.

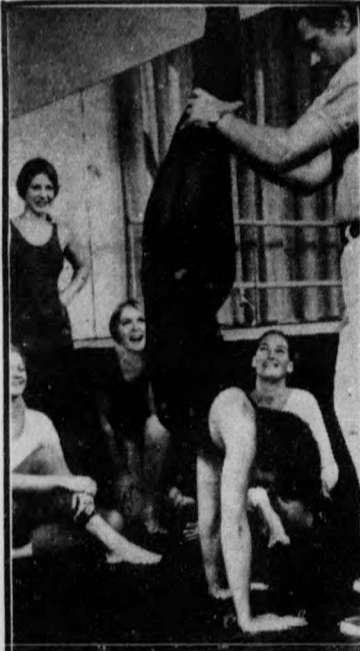
Also, Robertson explained her absence from almost all Board meetings by stating, "almost all the Advisory Boards I deal with don't want me around. They feel I would slant their discussions and influence their decisions. I felt the Youth Advisory Board would react the same way."

Board Chairman Carroll replied that he had "repeatedly asked her to attend the Board's scheduled meetings, and that if the dates were inconvenient, members would be pleased to hold their meetings at another time and in a place convenient to her."

However, Robertson replied that "speaking engagements made it impossible for me to be with the Board."

Robertson accepted the Board's proposed restructuring plan, their criteria for membership, attendance regulations, financing stipulations for committees, and per diem allowance for all members, as set out in the brief. She explained to the press that the proposals will be implemented as soon as she tells her Department staff to set it up.

Chairman Carroll summed up the Committees feelings. "It's out of our hands now. We can only hope she implements these proposals before spring is over, because the present Board ceases to exist on April first. This is one of the few channels youth of the province have to address their concerns to government. I only know if we had had such guidelines before us when we took office as a Board two years ago, we could have served much, much more effectively."



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Bedford Institute lends UNB a research launch

A research launch measuring 32 feet and weighing seven tons has been put at the disposal of the University of New Brunswick by the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Announcement of the new acquisition was made today by UNB President John M. Anderson at a Saint John Rotary Club meeting held at the Admiral Beatty Hotel.

President Anderson said, "I am pleased to announce that because of a co-operative program with the Atlantic Oceanographic Laboratory of the Bedford Institute of Oceanography in Dartmouth, N.S.,

the BIO has put at our disposal a 32 foot diesel-powered seven ton research launch."

During the address Dr. Anderson spoke of the university's considerable opportunities to assist the province. In particular he discussed the research functions the university could perform in the aquatics field in the Saint John area.

"Much research needs to be done", he said. "But in order to pick up the challenge, we need some tools."

He spoke about the recreational potential of the Saint John River Estuary and its commercial as well sport angling possibilities.

"The effect," he said, "that this recent acquisition (the research launch) has had on UNB has been nothing short of galvanizing. Now for the first time we are free to engage in research and teaching activities on the Bay of Fundy, Passamaquoddy Bay, and the Gulf of Maine."

The launch, complete with a small laboratory on board, will be based in Saint John along with two 16 foot Boston Whalers acquired by the university for research purposes last year.

The launch has spurred the establishment of an 18 member marine and estuarine interdisciplinary research group under the direction of two professors on the Saint John campus, Martin Thomas and Alan Logan. The research group hopes to eventually involve disciplines from engineering through the humanities and social sciences to the natural sciences.

The research launch will also assist several studies already in progress at UNB.

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