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Arsonist sets Howe Hall ablaze

by Ken Burke

When most Howe Hall residents heard the fire alarm ringing at 4:00 last Friday morning, they thought it was just another false alarm. It wasn't.

A curtain fire in the Howe Hall cafeteria caused \$4-5,000 damage before it was finally extinguished. Arson is strongly suspected as the cause, according to the Halifax Police Department.

There have been no arrests in connection with the suspected arson, according to Inspector Edwin Grandy of the Police Department. Grandy added that there is "almost nothing to go on" in the investigation.

The fire started as the bottom of a curtain in the cafeteria was set ablaze at approximately 4:00 a.m.

The seriousness of the fire is magnified in the eyes of the authorities with the Halifax firefighters currently being out on strike.

All Howe Hall residents were evacuated soon after the alarm was sounded. Warren Chase, a Howe Hall resident and Don of Bronson House Main floor, helped fight the fire until other help could arrive. According to Chase, "The fire had gotten about four or five feet up the curtains. It wasn't really all that bad."

Chase and several other Howe residents used fire extinguishers to control the blaze before physical plant workers patrolling Howe lent assistance with a large canvas hose located near the Cafeteria. Within five minutes, a fire truck from the Halifax Fire Department arrived, staffed by supervisory personnel.

The Physical Plant workers were at Howe Hall as the University is

paying four people to patrol campus buildings at night and watch for fires during the ongoing firefighters' strike.

Director of University Housing John Graham thinks the fire may have been related to the firefighters' walkout. Graham said the arsonist was likely "someone sympathetic to the strikers or simply trying to make a point".

Graham also cautioned that, "If it had gone on (the fire) for a few more seconds, it would have gone through the roof."

"Although we have taken extra precautions, there's no way we can cope with the withdrawal of the firemen's service."

The cost of the damages will likely have to be paid by the University, as Dalhousie's insurance plan only covers damage over and above \$10,000. Dean of Men Pat Donahoe said the university had that form of insurance because, otherwise, insurance would be too expensive.

Donahoe urged students who don't already have insurance which covers personal belongings to get that type of insurance.

Because of the arson and the firefighters' strike, the Howe Hall cafeteria is now closed between 7:30 p.m. and 7:30 a.m. According to John Graham, "the cafeteria probably should have been locked up before, but it's inconvenient for people who want to walk through the building."

The fire's only impact on the cafeteria, aside from two blackened windows, was to cancel Friday's breakfast and lunch. The cafeteria is now operating at its normal hours.

Faculty strike talk increasing

by Gary P. LeBlanc

Strike talk is rising among Dal Faculty Members.

A petition was recently passed amongst professors at Dalhousie asking members of the DFA to back an arbitrator in the possible event of a strike. The faculty of Dalhousie has been working without a contract since the first of July, although contract negotiations began last April.

In a nutshell, the Dalhousie Faculty Association is discontented with progress in the negotiations. There are plans to picket certain forthcoming Dalhousie functions. If the pickets and other moves do not show any effect on the bargaining table, the DFA feels it will have no other choice than to strike.

The DFA say they do not want to follow through with strike action, as the possible effects on the educational year are enormous. However, the union is in a legal position to strike. No details are presently available on the conditions under which a strike would be in effect.

The administration has been unavailable for comment on the issues surrounding the DFA-Board of Governors negotiations.

The issues causing a delay in settlement include salary increases, equal treatment of women, and the Rand formula for union security.

The DFA decided on Friday, September 17 to circulate its petition among faculty. The petition went around the following Monday, and in two days, 442 faculty signatures were obtained (there are approximately 850 bargaining and non-bargaining members in the faculty union). The petition was then presented to the Board of Governors on Thursday.

Om Kamra, Faculty Association

President, said the DFA would like to attain an agreement which is "comparable to those reached by neighbouring Universities". St. Mary's and TUNS faculty got twelve per cent increases as well as promotional considerations this past year. A salary increase of seven per cent was offered to DFA members, while the inflation rate sits at twelve per cent. Over the last four years, salaries here have fallen behind the inflation rate by 16 per cent, says Kamra.

Dalhousie may well be experiencing financial difficulty but the DFA charges it is not as bad as the Administration would make one believe. The DFA maintains that Dal is the second richest University in Canada with a budget of about \$64 million. Its houses, with a total estimated value of over \$17 million, could be sold in some cases, claims the Association.

According to John Graham, Manager of University Services, the \$17 million figure cited by the DFA covers "all the property belonging to Dalhousie". The houses themselves are valued at a total of about \$8 million. Also, five houses have been sold to date, netting an amount just over \$1 million which was directly attributed to easing the University's financial difficulty. Mr. Graham stated that Dalhousie is presently running an accumulated debt of \$10 million.

In a letter sent to faculty members, the DFA also claims that provisions suggested to "improve the chances of women being appointed to the bargaining unit, if their qualifications are at least as good as the men applying", were rejected outright by the Board of Governors. The DFA would like to see the Collective Agreement worded in such a way that equal treatment of women would be a

requirement.

In January 1979, a "report on the status of women at Dalhousie University" appeared in the University News and it was disclosed that women in the faculty were paid less on the average than their male counterparts.

The "Rand formula" is another contentious issue in the negotiations. The Rand formula provides the "minimal provisions for union security", where a staff member has the option of belonging to the union or not. Under this agreement, non-union staff must pay union dues, as they also benefit from the bargaining of the union. The 'formula' was named after Justice Rand, who held office in Ontario in the 1940's.

Other issues include job security for professional counsellors and the inclusion of Instructors in the proposed Collective Agreement.

The Board would like to have the option to make cuts in the Psychological and Counselling Services rather than in academic areas, while the DFA wishes to obtain job security for the counsellors. The Instructors, numbering about 35, have been ruled to be in the same Bargaining Unit as the DFA by the Nova Scotia Labour Relations Board, but the Board of Governors do not want to recognize them as actual members of the DFA.

Delays in the contract negotiations have been cited by the DFA executive as allegedly being union-busting tactics by the Board, as well as trying to separate the bargaining power of the counsellors and the instructors from the rest of the DFA. Om Kamra, the president of the DFA, would not disclose any information on the state of the negotiations themselves, and no one from the Administration would comment or verify the issues.

Security force reduced in half

by Tom Morrison

A process of attrition has left Dalhousie Security with half the staff it had two years ago. Staff is down from 18 persons two years ago to nine this year.

The current number of full time staff members is "inadequate" to effectively patrol the campus, said Max Keeping, Director of Security at Dalhousie. He added the situation may get worse before it gets better.

Keeping attributed the decrease in staff entirely to budget cutbacks. Nobody was cut from staff, he pointed out, but patrolmen who

resigned were simply not replaced.

This process could continue, said Keeping, because the annual budget is designed to cover the number of staff as it exists rather than the number required. This could result in a small budget if staff members were required to leave.

John Graham, Director of Services, said the security situation is no cause for concern. Dalhousie is simply using "a different kind of security".

The full-time staff are being replaced with part-time student guards, said Graham. This change

is designed to create employment for students as well as save on operating costs, he explained.

"Only last week, I signed over 20 forms for the hiring of students," Graham said.

Keeping maintains the hiring of students is not a complete solution because they are generally unavailable to work late-night shifts due to their academic schedules.

As a result, Keeping feels that Security remains too understaffed to cover campus as effectively as is desirable and necessary. "How can the job be done with only half the required staff?" he asked.

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