

cross-canada briefs

Memorial profs vote to strike

BY DAVID COCHRANE

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld (CUP) — After months of failed labour negotiations, faculty members at Memorial University have voted to strike.

After several months of bitter arguing, the two sides finally sat down at the bargaining table last Nov. 13.

At that time, both sides agreed to resume using the old collective bargaining agreement and resume negotiations with no threat of a strike or lockout before Jan. 31.

But with negotiations going nowhere, the union held a strike vote on Jan. 23.

Student leaders, however, have promised not to take an interruption of classes lightly. Mike Carley, vice president of Memorial's student council, said that the student body may decide to take some action of its own.

Social justice groups prepare alternative budget

BY STU CLARK

TORONTO (CUP) — Instead of waiting to see what social services the federal government cuts in its next budget, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and CHOICES — a social justice coalition — are putting together a budget of their own.

"The idea is to put together, in a credible well-documented form, some alternative budget proposals — alternative to the present government's policies," said Ed Finn, a researcher working on the budget.

Finn argues that the government's deficit cutting measures do more harm to the economy than good.

"Slashing government spending will increase government debt, not lower it," he said.

The alternative budget's framework document blames the government's last budget for Canada's current economic slowdown.

The document states: "The 1995 economic slowdown will increase the federal deficit by \$1.5 billion or more this year, and by a total of between \$9 billion and \$11 billion over the next five years."

Finn is sceptical of the government's motives when discussing deficit reduction.

"We suspect the right-wing ideology behind the government's approach is one that there is no real expectation that it will reduce the deficit, because, let's face it, the debt and deficit are one of the main sources of revenue for the bond holders and the banks and the people who own government debt," said Finn. "The last thing they really want is to have the debt and deficit reduced, because that reduces their incomes."

Finn says that the cause of the deficit is not social spending, but high interest rates, unemployment, and an unfair tax system.

Break in HIV/AIDS research a fortunate fluke

BY SEAMUS HEFFERNAN

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CUP) — Dr. Paris Geourghiou, an organic chemist and a professor at Memorial University, stumbled upon a compound that has, in its early stages, shown to be effective against the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the retrovirus commonly linked to AIDS.

"Many compounds have been shown to be effective against HIV [in a lab environment]," he explained. "Our research is at the very early stages, and there are a lot of such compounds at this stage of discovery."

"It's almost impossible to predict what kind of reaction a compound will have on something else in drug discovery. A 'hit' can be pure fluke. Look at aspirin. A stroke of luck, and we still don't know how it has the properties that it does."

AIDS research is no stranger to luck, both bad and good. Dr. Luc Montagnier and Dr. Robert Gallo, the co-discoverers of HIV, readily admit that isolating the virus was the result of a break.

"The combinations and permutations possible are horrendous," Geourghiou agreed. "What we had [in 1991], a graduate student of mine and I were working on a very applied problem. We were trying to measure formaldehyde in indoor air pollution."

In trying to help 80,000 home owners who wanted to monitor their indoor air pollution safely, Geourghiou's student established some structures that had never before been identified. Their findings were eventually published in the Canadian Journal of Chemistry, and that was almost the end of it.

Shortly thereafter, though, information emerged from the sixth international AIDS conference in San Francisco, in which some new therapeutic agents against HIV were being reported.

"One of the structures that had been reported looked amazingly like the compounds that had come out of the formaldehyde work," said Geourghiou. "I thought: 'Wow. Is this worth testing? Are these molecules worth evaluating?'"

They had them tested by a drug firm in Montreal, and what they initially thought would be active against the virus was not. Others, however, were.

Wolf research funding cut

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

Some students and faculty of Dalhousie's psychology department are crying wolf; in this case, it is the wolves who are in trouble.

Funding cutbacks by both the federal government and Dalhousie University may mean that 13 wolves kept at the Dalhousie Animal Behavioral Studies Centre in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia could soon be without a home.

The federal grant will expire at the end of this year, and the psychology department has been informed that, as of April, Dalhousie will no longer provide funding for the centre.

The centre has been receiving about \$100,000 per year, most of which comes from three sources — \$35,000 from a federal infrastructure grant; \$30,000 worth of dog food donated by Iams; and, \$25,000 from Dalhousie.

Jocelyn Watson, president of the Dalhousie Association of Psychology Students (DAPS), explained that many students are troubled by the plight of the centre and its wolves.

"We are concerned that ongoing research will not be completed and...students who are doing their thesis work on the wolves may be left out in the cold," she said.

The wolves — the third generation kept at the centre in its 20 year history — live in an enclosed four-hectare plot of land that is as close as possible to their natural habitat. Members of the project try to study discreetly so that human presence does not influence their behaviour; the wolves are also studied in classes



such as behavioral ecology and biology. There is a full-time caretaker who is responsible for veterinary duties and overseeing ongoing research.

The research done at the centre is unique, and as a result, beneficial to Dalhousie's academic

reputation, said Watson.

"There is nowhere else in the world to do research like this, people come from all over to study these wolves," commented Watson.

Without funding from Dalhousie, the psychology department will be unable to pay the salary of the caretaker, and the wolves will be out of a home.

This presents researchers and caretakers with a serious problem — there aren't a lot of places to ship semi-wild wolves.

"They can't be released into the wild because there are no wild wolves in Nova Scotia. We have found a possible placement with another pack, but because wolves operate by a hierarchy system, only the younger females would survive integration," said Watson.

Dr. John Fentress, the research centre's Academic Director, has been stepping softly around the media. He explained that members of the Dalhousie administration have expressed their displeasure with all of the media attention. He has decided not to comment until after attending meetings scheduled for this week with Dalhousie president Dr. Tom Traves.

Dr. Robert Fournier, the Associate Vice President of Research at Dalhousie, commented briefly.

"We are trying to keep this under wraps right now. Both sides are talking about the situation, and we hope to reach a resolution," he said.

Both groups met to discuss the issue this past Monday, but neither Dr. Fentress nor the administration could be reached for comment.

A source in the psychology department said no progress had been made at the meeting.

DSU general meeting highlights

BY MARCUS LOPES & PATTI WALLER

The Annual General Meeting held by the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) on Sunday, January 28 saw the following activities and motions of the acting council:

- DSU President David Cox expressed his dismay at the poor turn-out for the meeting, and said he would have liked to have seen more council support.

- The next general meeting will be held at Shirreff Hall on Feb. 15 at 6:30 p.m.

- Bret Leech, treasurer of the DSU, reported that Sgt. Greg Mosher of the Halifax Police Department is in the middle of an ongoing investigation. He will be conducting interviews with both the president and treasurer of the DSU, as well as with the new Bar Services manager, Wayne Cross, and the accounting firm of KPMG Peat, Marwick and Thorne. KPMG was responsible for the forensic audit that discovered there was inventory "unaccounted for" and a sum of cash missing from the Grawood. Previous Bar Services manager Deborah Brown was fired three weeks ago.

- The DSU vice president of External Affairs, Erin Ahern, reported that the CASA scandal still needs to get sorted out. CASA is in the process of trying to salvage

the organization, but the DSU executive speculated that their efforts are a smoke screen, trying to cover up what may have happened.

- The Financial Committee gave a directive to audit the books of five societies that have received grants. One society, B-GLAD, has been non-responsive, apparently confusing the committee. They have attempted to write to the registered B-GLAD president and received no response. In an attempt to receive the correct information, the Financial Committee has directed the treasurer of the DSU to seize B-GLAD's books and report back to council on the results of the audit.

- There has been a motion made to add a referendum question relating to the SUB's new anti-smoking policy. The question has been proposed to read: Whereas currently in the SUB, smoking is permitted in the Grawood, Corner Pocket, and one designated section of the Union Market cafeteria; as well, smoking may be permitted in the McInnes Room for special events: Do you support having smoking continue to be permitted in one designated section of the Union Market cafeteria in the SUB?

- The next meeting of the council is scheduled for February 11 at 2 p.m. in Council Chambers.