

now it's your choice

CKDU-FM : "The \$200,000 gamble"

An open letter

Dear Student Union Members:

I am writing this letter in an attempt to explain why I suggested that a CKDU referendum be held, and why I think you should exercise your right to vote for the option that you prefer.

The question of converting the present Dalhousie AM radio station to an FM broadcast station is one which began as far back as 1974, when the students were asked through referendum, to provide funds for the transition. The referendum lost. Last years council, in an effort to "test the waters", put forward a plebiscite during the general elections which offered three alternatives: expansion of CKDU service with a possibility of FM broadcast; continuance of the AM station at its present level of operation; and discontinuance of CKDU AM as a union operation. With a voter turnout of 1,136 (17.5%), 66% voted in favour of expansion of CKDU services.

This year's council investigated the feasibility of converting CKDU-AM to an FM broadcast station. We are now in the position of asking the students if they are willing to provide the additional funding necessary for this transition to occur. In order to purchase the necessary capital equipment, and to provide the operating expenses for the new station, a fee increase of between six and eight dollars will be required. If accepted by the students, the Student Union will begin collecting the extra fee in the 1981-82 academic term.

A positive decision in the referendum will allow the communications network of the Student Union to develop in a rather unique way. Alternatively, a negative decision will see the money presently spent on CKDU, redirected into other areas of the Union's budget, in order to provide additional monies to increase the visibility of other media services on campus, and the development of new approaches for the dispersal of information. Some pro and con arguments which you should be aware of, are as follows:

1. FM broadcast would give the Dalhousie Student Union wider exposure to larger audiences for Dalhousie talent, and promoting activities (eg. Cancer Research, Student Union events, and meetings).
2. A awareness — radio is constantly available, and would provide a better line of communication for the Dalhousie Student Union.
3. CKDU-FM would provide a professional training environment for students at Dalhousie and King's.
4. CKDU-FM would be an alternative media source on campus.
5. FM radio would aid in the general education of students and the Halifax community.
6. FM radio would be a step towards a national student radio network.
7. CKDU-FM will reach one-half of the population in the metro area, with a potential for reaching one-third of the population of Nova Scotia.
8. The expenditures will be \$100,000 in capital costs, and an additional \$75,000 per annum in operating expenditures, which will be offset partly by advertising revenue and private donations.
9. CKDU-FM would provide a diverse programming schedule.
10. Student fees will have to be increased by between \$6.00 and \$8.00 to cover the start-up costs and operating deficit.
11. CKDU-FM will require additional space within the SUB, already at a premium.
12. There are, at present, four AM and three FM stations in the Halifax-Dartmouth area.
13. CKDU will discontinue operations as they presently exist, should the conversion to FM not be possible.

The Council of Students, in exercising its fiscal responsibility to the students, is asking you to decide on this issue. The communications media must be reorganized for greater efficiency, and to enable their scope and standards to be permanently improved. A referendum is binding on Council, and therefore, a minority can effectively dictate their wishes to the majority. **THERE IS NO MINIMUM VOTER TURNOUT NECESSARY TO MAKE THE DECISION BINDING ON THE ENTIRE STUDENT BODY.** We urge you to vote, so that at least the results of this election are truly representative. The decision made on March 11 and 12 will almost certainly be as important for the future as the past decisions are important for us today.

Gord Owen,
President,
Dalhousie Student Union

...or should we pull the plug?

by Theresa Reno and Susan MacKinley

Is a mandatory Health Plan Insurance Program really catering to the needs of the students? We don't think so.

We, the students of Dalhousie, are faced, this year, with three alternatives regarding our University Health Insurance Plan. These three alternatives are

1. Keep present Health Plan provided by Dalhousie Student Union, where fees are automatically included in student union fees.

2. Subscribe to a Health Plan on a voluntary basis, where this plan will be provided through Dalhousie student Union.

3. No Health Plan, therefore relying on provincial programs i.e. MSI and personal insurance.

Our choice would be alternative No. 2. We don't feel that a Health Insurance Plan should be forced on us. It should be our choice.

There are a large amount of students already insured under their parents Health Plan — why should they end up paying for a program twice? Throughout High School no one makes you buy a Health Program so why should you have to buy one in University.

University, as we understand it, is a place to obtain a good education and prepare one for the "world out there". Spoon-feeding the students with a Health In-

urance Program that may or may not be needed will not achieve this. We feel a student should be able to make his decision as to whether an insurance policy is necessary for him.

During times, like now, when every penny counts, can we afford to pay \$14.50 for a plan we don't necessarily need? Last year the Health Plan cost \$8.50, this year it costs \$11.50, next year it will be \$14.50. That's a 75% increase in the past 2 years! We must stop and think about where our money is going. What about the students who already have a Health Plan — should they have to pay \$14.50 for nothing?

A voluntary Health Plan would cost just over \$20.00 — but not everyone would have to buy it. It would be your choice.

We are not saying that Health Plans are bad — they are very good and the John Ingles plan is the best one available for the price Dalhousie Students are paying. What we are concerned with is the fact that many students are paying into a plan they don't need.

I would suggest to you, the students of Dalhousie, to seriously think of these points when marking your X in the plebiscite which will be at the polls on March 11th and 12th. With tuition fees increasing wouldn't it be nice to see a decrease in student union fees?

MAKE THIS YOUR CONCERN!!

For the past two years now our student union and in particular CKDU have attempted to address the question of whether a CKDU-FM station could or even should ever become a reality here at Dalhousie. Since that time a great deal of information has come forth and in our opinion, as representatives of the committees for the "no", such a venture by the Dalhousie Student Union is not feasible.

You are being asked to support what we believe to be nothing more than a "\$200,000 gamble". As one may well appreciate, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), of whom we must apply to for an FM license, has set up very strict criteria in which we must first meet before we ever hope to acquire this FM license. As such, before even making our application, literally thousands of our dollars must be spent on preparations and equipment with no guarantees of ultimate CRTC approval.

But most importantly, the real question to address here is the actual sum of money being asked of you to spend. At a time when our Student Union, like most other businesses, is suffering from high inflation resulting in decreases of both our existing services and operations, should something like going FM be a priority? One need only look to the Student Unions Entertainment and Bar operations this year to find the answer and readily foresee very serious financial problems ahead. To date, these operations alone are down over \$30,000 in revenues. Coupled with declining enrollments and changing entertainment markets within the city itself, our problems have only just begun.

If one were to assess this project in relation to other existing and alternative projects, one can easily see areas within our Student Union that have lagged behind over the years and are in more immediate need of our financial resources than an FM station.

The need for renovations within the student union building, the needs of those individual societies throughout campus, continuing our subsidies on health care, running adequate counselling services, and most importantly, simply trying to maintain the status quo are surely far more important today to Dalhousie students than training King's College students how to speak on radio.

Presently our CKDU operations serves you by carrier current. It operates on a budget of approximately \$14,000 with a net deficit of approximately \$11,000. You're being asked to contribute over the next 3 years, approximately \$6.00 in addition to the \$59.00 you are presently paying. This \$6.00 figure is based on an initial \$100,000 capital investment with \$65,000 operating costs in its first year. Like everything else, these figures will undoubtedly grow and so must our contributions. This annual \$65,000 figure represents outrageously low salaries, minimal yearly operating expenses and a lot of unanswered questions.

In a recently commissioned study by the Student Union on the question of CKDU-FM feasibility, the recommendation made with respect to this venture was no, should it have to be funded by the students themselves. And this in fact is what we're being asked to do. In that report questions such as the need for increased space within the SUB, increased power costs, increased SUB Technical support, decreased Student Union control had all been raised but left unresolved. For one reason or another no one seemed to know or want to answer these costly questions!

Finally, what we would like to emphasize most to you is that our Student Union is not in the position to finance this project nor will it be within the foreseeable future. We believe also that most students are not in the financial position to support this project either and it is primarily for that reason that we ask that you support a "no" vote. It would seem odd for we as students to increase one small aspect of our Student Union 10-fold when in fact every other area of our operations stands threatened with cutbacks.

In conclusion, it's your decision, however let us remind you, "He who calls the tune, must PAY the piper."

Respectfully,
Robert Sampson, Past President (DSU) 77-78
Dick Matthews, Past President (DSU) 79-80
Nancy Tower, Past Treasurer (DSU) 79-80