

President □



**Scott
MATTHEWS**

What is your experience in student politics and how has it prepared you for this position?

This year particularly I'm a student senator and by virtue of the position I'm on numerous committees such as the Academic Student Affairs Committee and the Library Committee. I'm also the Grants Committee chair which gives me a position on the executive of the DSU. I'm also a member of setting up a society called the Off Campus Freshmen Society and we're trying to get that ready for next year.

Both of us are involved in this School Spirit Society which is devised ad hoc so we can improve school spirit and last year I was Winter Carnival chair and was involved as a volunteer on CFS's National Week of Action and that's mainly my experience there. My experience on the executive, I would say, would be the most important reason why I'm prepared and I think I would be an excellent choice for the position of president of the DSU. My experience has given me a lot of insight of the way things run and I'd like to change a few things and maintain certain things.

Nova Scotia elections are coming up soon. The government has made some changes in student aid such as raising the bursary maximum and increasing the funding for student jobs by 10 per cent. How important do you think these changes are and why?

I think the changes are important for a lot of reasons. One of my main platform issues is to increase accessibility to postsecondary education (PSE). I agree that everyone should have a chance at PSE, class, color or creed and one of the most important issues right now is financial restraints. Most students can't go to university because of financial restraints. That's ridiculous and it should not happen and I think that is the main job of the president in cooperation with CFS and SUNS to have a strong lobbying force against the government to give us better bursaries. We really should be on them all the time to make sure that bursaries come out on time. This is a ridiculous fiasco which is going on right now with these bursaries not coming out. I know students who can't eat.

Also, the problems of student loans, costs versus resources. The whole thing is just atrocious so now it's election year which is important. Now we can get them. They want votes from students so it's a very important year. Edmond Morris has announced his increase, which I think is 23 per cent, in student bursaries which is ridiculously low. If you put on the inflation rate from 1985, which is the last time the bursary rate rose, it's not even close to what is required.

And the summer job thing, enough cannot be said about how much they should be funding summer jobs. It makes sense for the government to put money into summer jobs because it costs less than student aid. So, I support that we should hit them hard. I believe in going at them really hard. I've worked closely with SUNS and CFS, not directly with them but I plan to work with them next year because they are strong tools which could be really good.

Many students do not even know what CFS is. Why is Dalhousie a paying member of CFS?

CFS, I think, is an important issue. I've been reading past newspapers from Saint Mary's and in the archives here at Dal looking at the old Gazettes and stuff and CFS has had a hard time getting together as a lobbying group (they are the national lobbying group). They're starting to lose some accountability with SUNS. Set up by the students of Nova Scotia, I think they are important tools to use to get what we want. The \$4 we pay for CFS and the \$1.50 for SUNS is a good price to pay for what we get from them. They are respected highly as a lobby group and when we take them and become part of the CFS it makes us even stronger.

I believe in a union to lobby and we can't go to Ottawa every week or two to know what the federal government is up to. And we don't know what they're doing all the time so CFS is that communication line as well as being a strong lobbying force for us. Also they are going to be setting up a computer network and stuff like that without increasing our fees. I think this is a good way for students to get what they want, mainly in the funding aspect and the elimination of this silly differential fee. I think they are essential and I do support them and I think students should be aware of them.

What are your plans for restoring the financial health of the DSU, taking into consideration this year's deficit situation?

Sitting on the executive we've debated this and talked about this quite extensively and we came up with a final agreement that it is necessary, not because of our debt (we ran into debt this year because of extraordinary expenses), nor that I think there was massive mismanagement. I think it's finally showing that fees haven't increased in the past five years. Inflation is rising and our biggest cost is salaries and those are rising even more than inflation.

The only solutions that could possibly come out of it, not just to pull us out of debt but to maintain the services we want to keep for the students, we thought that the fees should be raised.

This year was particularly bad. The Grawood is going to be closed all summer. The budget is a pessimistic one because I think operations next year will increase by inflation but we'll be taking in a lot more revenue. So, my answer to that is, I agree in context with the student union fee but I think it's in every purpose of the student union to work extremely hard next year. Working with the treasurer is essential to make revenues higher because we have this new bar and we have a chance to make quite a bit of money. To get students to come to our bar instead of going downtown is a good hope and I think it will happen a lot more and just to try to tighten our belts and see what we can pull out of the resources so next year we could drop our operations costs and drop this increase. Why do we have to take it this year when we think we can cut it next year? Of course my response to that is, how will we pay off, not just the debt but maintain the services, without running into debt and having to borrow from a bank or, I hate to say it, the university. Right there we would lose our autonomy as a bargaining power with the university if we had to borrow money from them. I think financial independence is an important source of independence and we would just lose our meaning to the students. So, I think we're asking the students, since we haven't had an increase in a while, of you want to maintain the services then go for the increase. If they don't, that's fine, we'll cut some services that we think are adequate. I'm in business now and I can see that there are some things that can be made efficient and not lose money.

How effective do you think the DSU administration has been this year?

This year on the executive level, it's been a very scary year for them and they've done a tremendous job. Caroline has done a lot for the DSU. I'm a big fan of hers and I think she's a wonderful person. There are some things I don't agree with, which is fundamental when you get into the executive and you're throwing things back and forth. I think the VP is very well run over all.

I think that if I did come in as president next year I'd try a little harder in a few situations with communications and with societies on campus to pull them together. I think over all to follow in Caroline's footsteps and to work harder because she's doing Law this year so she's not doing a full output. What she does is very well but she's not doing a full output.

The administration part of the SUB has been, to state intimately, disastrous this year. We've had major problems with the general manager and the technical. If something goes wrong with the general manager it's a domino effect, everything else starts sliding. That has been corrected now and we're going to reap the benefits of that next year a lot better because it's been taken care of. I don't see any inaccuracies right now with the administration and the tough subject of who's going to go next from the DSU is a very serious subject. I think you should never get rid of a person unless it's completely 100 per cent necessary and I don't see that. Dal administration is altogether another thing.

The Gazette adheres to Canadian University Press principles which oppose racism, sexism and homophobia. What stand should the DSU take on these issues?

I think they should take the stand they have been taking ever since they were created. It shouldn't make any difference in the university and it shouldn't make any difference in the DSU. It's silly to say that this society may have someone on it from a different culture, "Oh, we can't accept them". That's ridiculous. That's the whole idea with any kind of government is not to have those biases to racism or biases to any kind of class, color, creed or physical handicap. There should be no hesitations there and it's ridiculous for anybody to even think otherwise.

What do you think is Dalhousie's responsibility on AIDS education?

I think it should be extremely high. Dalhousie should take an even more serious stand, though I've seen those pamphlets and stuff. I just got a biology degree last year and I've done a lot of study in virology and I understand this epidemic. It is an epidemic we're facing, of humungous proportions, and it's going to be a lot more serious than people think, especially the ignorant people who think only those type of people get it and they deserve it. Those people just don't realize the true impact of this disease.

The university, being an institution of education not just for the people within it but as well the society and the community, has to take a very firm stand on it and say, "Listen, this is a serious issue and we have to do something serious about it," i.e. put out lots of promotional stuff. Education is the best prevention of AIDS, as far as I'm concerned. It should be plastered all over the place. There should be academic enrichment on AIDS, more than there is now. I'm very strong on that and on education. There should be more.

What would you like to see come out of the President's Symposium on Undergraduate Education?

I think it's good because a lot of issues arise which will affect everybody. It's something we should do across the board, as far as I'm concerned, for all students. Right now this is raising the community's and the university's awareness of education. It's like a promotional tool and people are realizing it. So the things I think are going to come out of it are greater awareness on all people's behalf — graduate students, undergraduate students — and a realization of where Dal is headed.

I think Clark was kind of smart by doing this whole thing, a good PR tool, and he's getting himself known and he's saying what he mainly wants to do and he's getting it across to people. I just hope students realize it's the time to speak up. They can benefit from it to better their whole life. I'm just the student advocate. I just want to get out there and say, 'Yeah, I know, but you should be doing this now.' Students will have a chance to get in there and say, 'Yeah, that's right', and they get to voice their opinions to the administration and faculty members. I sit on committees which faculty members are a part of, and they do listen to students' views.