

A colossal preoccupation with reorganization

It is frustrating to watch the Canadian Federation of Students clumsily grope its way through yet another national meeting without coming to terms with itself as a national student movement.

In one of the worst crises in Canadian post-secondary education, they remain as divorced from the issues that face students as ever.

For the last three years the organization has had a colossal preoccupation with reorganizing itself. You may remember that the organization was born out of a reorganization of the National Union of Students, the Association of Student Councils and the regional student federations.

At their most recent meeting their focus was on—you guessed it—reorganization.

Never mind that the Canada Summer Works programme has been scrapped, adding more hardship for students seeking employment. Never mind that transfer funds to post-secondary education have been severely reduced. Never mind that academic freedom is once again becoming an issue as professors find tenure harder to

achieve. Never mind tuition fees in places like British Columbia have skyrocketed, further restricting accessibility to those institutions. Reorganization, dammit—that's where it's at for these pseudo-student-bureaucrats who prefer gazing at their own navels than facing the real issues that concern students.

It is inaccurate to suggest that CFS leans to the right or the left. They lean nowhere. They are merely spinning their own wheels, burning up large quantities of dollars collected from you.

It is frustrating to watch because we need a students' federation. We need an active voice at all levels.

To form an alternate organization for those interested in really fighting for change is next to impossible. A fight over who really represents student interests would only incapacitate the organizations.

Activists interested in change can only now sit on the sidelines while CFS fiddles. Some wait like vultures for its imminent demise. Others still hope that after three years of reorganizing, CFS might get its act together. Either way something has to happen before it's too late. □

Acts of solidarity

Too often people-oriented organizations fail to make the links of solidarity with groups of similar backgrounds. The fractionalization of progressive groups has resulted in a conceding of the nation's real political power to those whose interests are more economically-oriented than people-oriented.

An exception to that rule has been a recent donation of produce from the farmers of P.E.I. to the striking trawler workers in Lunenburg.

The workers have been out since April 2. No negotiations have taken place with the employer—Pierre Fisheries Ltd.—since July 27. The company has cancelled six scheduled negotiation meetings and has been found in violation of Section 33A of the Nova Scotia Trade Union Act for failing to make every reasonable effort to conclude a collective agreement. Individual workers have been called by ship captains and offered the items in dispute with the union provided they drop their affiliation with it. Clearly there is an attempt to break the union.

It is hard to fathom why greater support for the union hasn't been forthcoming under such conditions.

The failure of organizations to make the links is not just restricted to the scallop fisheries.

Recently South African police seized Kate Philip, president of the National Union of South African students, as part of its most recent rounding up of anti-government figures.

We hope the Dalhousie Student

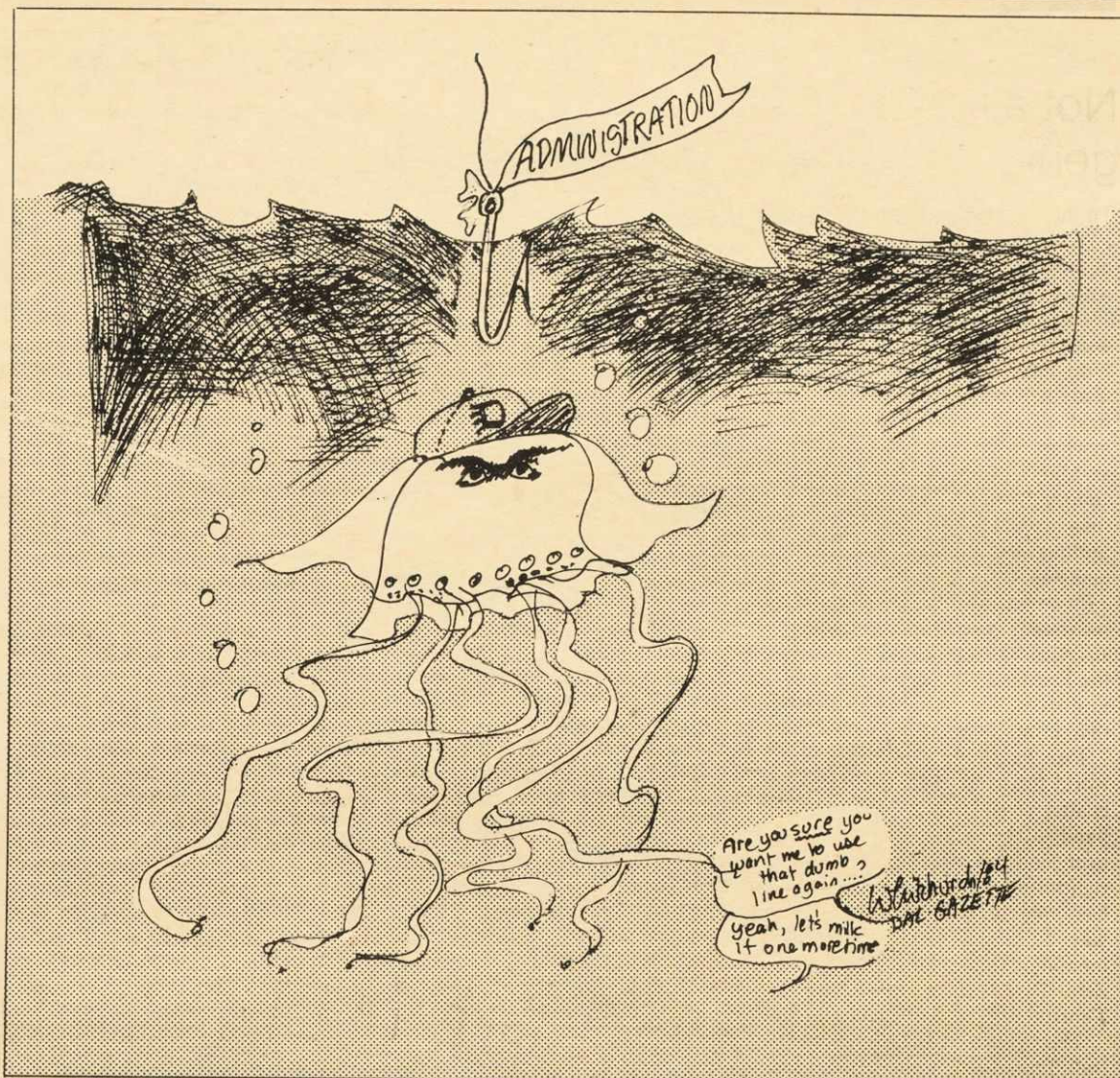
Union, the Students' Union of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Federation of Students are all prepared to at least take a stand, if not directly petition the government in Pretoria for her release.

To stand by and do nothing is a betrayal of all students' interests, whether they reside in South Africa or Nova Scotia. □



Letters

The deadline for letters to the editor is noon, Monday before publication. Letters must be signed and include a telephone number where the author can be reached (although telephone numbers will not be printed with the letters). Letters are subject to editing for style, brevity, grammar, spelling, and libel. Letters can be dropped at the SUB enquiry desk, mailed to our address (on page 2), or brought up to the *Gazette* offices, third floor, SUB.



Council's "neutrality" inaction

The ongoing dispute between the Dalhousie Faculty Association and the Board of the Governors requires a student council prepared to take action of behalf of the students it represents. This year's council has chosen to remain neutral throughout the dispute.

The last few issues of the *Gazette* have included letters from DSU councillors—notably Dave McCann and Alex Gigeroff concerning their position on the Faculty-Board contract negotiations. These letters were supposed to clarify DSU's position of neutrality. They were indeed illuminating though perhaps not in the way McCann and Gigeroff would want. The letters show clearly that cowardice and political naivete abound on this year's council.

McCann suggests that the DSU may not continue to remain neutral "should a faculty-board confrontation occur" (*Gazette*, Nov. 15/84). Just what does McCann think has been going on if not a confrontation? If McCann means that DSU will remain neutral until a strike by the faculty then he shows a serious lack of foresight. If council was really concerned about students they would realize that low salaries and benefits will drive professors away from Dalhousie. By supporting the DFA, council could help assure students of a quality education in the long term. In the short term support from the student union would enable the DFA to bargain from an even stronger position and hopefully reach a settlement. With a little imagination the student council might be able to avert strike action by helping the DFA put pressure on the administration in other ways.

The letters from both McCann and Gigeroff show clearly that they are not willing to rock the boat. They seem very reluctant to antagonize the administration which just limited tuition increases to four per cent for three years. This means that the administration has succeeded in playing the DSU off against the DFA. What council does not seem to realize is that students and faculty share the same interests. This is evidenced by Gigeroff's comments like "We don't want to see a strike any more than the DFA or the Board, but we're in an awkward position, because we're the ones who are hanging in the balance."

What Alex forgets is that the

professors who voted in favour of strike action did so with the knowledge of how this could affect their financial security.

At the last council meeting some councillors suggested that they couldn't take a stand on the issue without hearing from both sides in the dispute. Prior to this they said they had only heard from the DFA. Presently the DSU is considering hosting a forum for students with the DFA and the board. Not only should the DFA and the Board have to explain their positions, but the student councillors should be prepared to justify their inaction to the students they are supposed to represent. □

Women fight for centres

By SAMANTHA BRENNAN

On a day-to-day basis women are separated by the structures of our university. We are divided first into departments and faculties. A woman in engineering can feel very alone. The only woman professor in a department is again locked within the boundaries of structure. Finally we are all divided as professors and students, undergraduate and graduate students, and honours and general students.

For me at least half the pleasure of attending the recent Killam lecture series *Feminist Visions* was meeting women from all corners of the university at the reception afterwards. I felt a sense of reunion standing in the sculpture court talking to women I knew existed but

who I seldom got to meet. For the weeks that the lecture series lasted we, the women of Dalhousie, were a community in the best sense of that word.

But a community needs a home.

We need a place where women can gather to address the problems we share as members of a larger community. It's easy to feel isolated on a campus this size and think of your own fears as personal and not political problems. But fear of walking home at night and anger at a professor who uses sexist language are shared concerns.

We need a room for reading, for collecting resource material, for bringing speakers to and for spending time together. A women's centre at Dalhousie would take time, energy and money but I believe it is a necessary and worthwhile goal. □