The Dalhousie Gazette

## **Skirt Lengths Burning Question**

Student Government History # 47

The crusading spirit of the **Gazette** bloomed in 1930, starting with the publication of a "programme" for the year. This was a list of objectives that the newspaper devoted itself towards achieving. The list revived several issues that had been forgotten. One of these was construction of a SUB, for which \$10,000 had been collected in 1914. Free admission to sports events, and a \$10.00 Council fee were two more goals. There was nothing in the newspaper to indicate that a great depression had begun. Indeed, the New Years editorial said, "Let 1930 be another wonderful year of progress!"

In the same month the Students' Council received the good news that society heads and team managers welcomed better financial reporting. The boxing team finally got some funds, and the King's Council was asked to reply by February 4 to the latest suggestion for settlement of the students' dispute. As the swing towards strong support of athletics continued, the Council approved a programme of Pep Rallies, to replace the sporadic pep meetings that it had held. However, the Basketball team was not allowed to hold dances following home games. In line with the newspaper's suggestion, a fee increase was discussed. Two Council members and Angus L. MacDonald (still a Law professor) were asked to revise the Council constitution.

A few days after losing their attempt to hold dances the basketball team got the front-page treatement from the newspaper. The same issue carried strong support for an increase in the fees. Money problems were accused of being the source of poor co-operation between the team managers and the Council.

As January 1930 ended the **Gazette** polled Dalhousie students on a burning question of the day - how long women's skirts should be. In a rehearsal of the mini/maxi war, Paris designers wanted lower skirts for the new decade. The Dalhousie students, predictably, voted for the retention of shortness. The newspaper's publicity made it apparent that the success of Hart House of U. of T. was the source of new agitation for a Dalhousie SUB. A further impetus was that the Carnegie \$400,000 was probably going to pay for a permanent gymnasium, and students felt that a SUB could be built at the same time.

The fee increase became a topic of much discussion when Council members began to discuss the topic with their constituents. The newspaper made its inclination even clearer by using the front page to list the advantages of increased income. The athletic manager wrote to the newspaper expressing their support for an increase. The basketball manager, Gordon MacOdrum, went so far as to claim that his sport's general decline was due to the low funding, only one third of that given by Acadia. Council President Jennings pointed out that the Dalhousie Council fee was the lowest in the country, and only one half the Maritime average. An open debate was to be held on the fee increase. The co-ed's support was promised for an increase although some felt that they were not getting a fair share of the \$7.00 benefits

The impact of radio on communications continued, with the Sodales Debating Club holding series at the Lord Nelson which was broadcast by CHNS. A 14 year old controversy was settled when the newspaper asked the former Dean of Law, John Read, to interpret a clause of the Council constitution. Read said that although in the chair, the President could vote on all issues, and that in case of a tie the President could vote twice. That particular clause remained unchanged until November 1973. The newspaper's concern was that due to the parliamentary style of government, Presidents not voting had deprived their constituents of representation.

A month before the actual referendum it was

clear that the fee increase would be accepted. The breakthrough was a vote by the Medical Students' Society in favour of the increase, followed by similar support in Dentistry. This meant that Law was the only group opposing the increase. In the previous referendum the three professions had combined to narrowly defeat an increase. The **Gazette** was criticized by some for favouring the increase so strongly, and it was clear that the Law students intended to fight to the last.

The King's Student Council was not about to accept the latest offer for settlement of the fee question, so the Dalhousie Council suggested formation of a three-member board of arbitration, whose decision would be final. The Council asked that Birchdale Residence, which had been loaned to King's be returned to Dalhousie accomodation because "housing conditions in many cases are poor". This was one of the first occasions on which the Council took an active interest in housing. Once it was clear that a fee increase would be approved the Students' Council decided to hold a referendum on the subject. The public debate on the increase attracted few students, except for a group of Law students making a last ditch attempt to save their \$3.00.

The nominating committee was becoming a popular device, as Council created another one to suggest the next assistant NFCUS representative. Each meeting now spent considerable time making appointments and approving requests to use the temporary gymnasium.

As had been expected, the referendum gave approval to the fee increase, with a three to one margin. A surprise in the election was the defeat of President Jennings in his Medicine constituency. Two other members of the outgoing Council also lost to newcomers. The traditionalist voting pattern still existed however, and was seen in re-election of the Secretary-Treasurer, Thomas Goudge. The election results were interpreted as vindication of the Gazette's 1930 programme.



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