

CROSSCANADA

Uniting for real justice

TORONTO (CUP) — Black law students across Canada formed a national association last summer to put an end to systemic racism within the legal profession.

The Black Law Students Association of Canada was created to provide support and a forum for addressing issues of interest to Black law students.

Last summer, association representatives presented their demands to the Toronto Mayor's Committee on Community and Race Relations.

Among their demands was a call for an end to racism in the legal profession. Members asked the Council of Law Deans to improve present curricula to address the issue of race and its impact on the law.

The students asked the council to promote hiring law professors of African descent, encourage law firms and corporations to increase hiring of Blacks and other minority groups while encouraging law schools to develop programs for visible minority students.

The student group's demands were endorsed last summer.

Rudy Clarke, a York University articling student and external affairs officer for the organization, said members are pleased with the endorsement.

"The support of the Mayor's Committee and various law societies, provides a strong backing for our cause," he said.

The association said systemic racism runs rampant throughout the legal profession. "Unavoidable obstacles for Blacks, both male and female, who have chosen law as a career continue," the group's first newsletter says.

It also notes that certain admission requirements favour privileged Canadians, placing an unfair burden on those without the means to attain such advantages.

The heart grows fonder

MONTREAL (CUP) — McGill University graduate students can now officially take a leave of absence for up to a year for parenting or health reasons, thanks to the school's senate. The policy was approved last week, but has been used in the graduate faculty for most of this year.

Students taking a leave of absence will have access to their supervisor and library facilities without having to pay tuition fees, and a 'K' will appear on their transcripts. The number of years spent in the graduate program which appears on the transcript will not include time spent on leave.

"Now graduate students will no longer be penalized for taking leave. This policy means that the university environment will become friendlier to those with family responsibilities," said Tamara Myers, president of the McGill post-graduate students' society. "It makes the university aware that its constituents are not all single young people."

The policy will enable students funded under government programs to have more flexibility. The two major federal agencies providing funding for graduate students, the National Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), already have provisions for students to take leaves of absence, suspending their scholarships until they return to school.

Myers said graduate students who need to take leave will be able to take the year off without their "funding clock ticking".

"Grants at McGill are only available for Ph.D. year one to four, so losing a year can considerably shrink funding opportunities," she said.

Leaves for parenting and sickness reasons require a doctor's certificate. The length of each leave is to be decided individually, by the student's department.

The policy will allow for both male and female parenting leave.. About eight students went on parenting leave last year.

"I think that it's a good policy," said graduate student Patty Gonias. "But McGill is so decentralized that the supervisor has unfair control. I know a master's student who became pregnant half way through her studies and was being pressured by her supervisor to sign a weird contract stating that she'd return to finish."

news

Talking head...

Start making sense

by Marie MacPherson

President Howard Clark. For some students, the name evokes pride for an important figurehead who embodies Dalhousie's strong traditions and reputation. Others might feel resentment for an entity who represents the university's "brick wall" of administration. And still others might wonder "Howard...who?"

Since 1986, Howard Clark has served as President of Dalhousie University. Located on the second floor of the Arts & Administration Building, his office door greets visitors with a "Please Walk In" sign. The inside of the office is comfortable, surrounded by wood-encased walls and pictures depicting Dal's changing scenery over the years. Sounds inviting, yet the average student at Dal with a concern or complaint does not usually think of President Clark as the first person to turn to. Even if you did want to see him, expect a 2-3 week wait.

This interview was thus conducted with the hope that students might have a little more insight into one of the most powerful and prestigious individuals on our campus.

Do you have an open door policy regarding students?

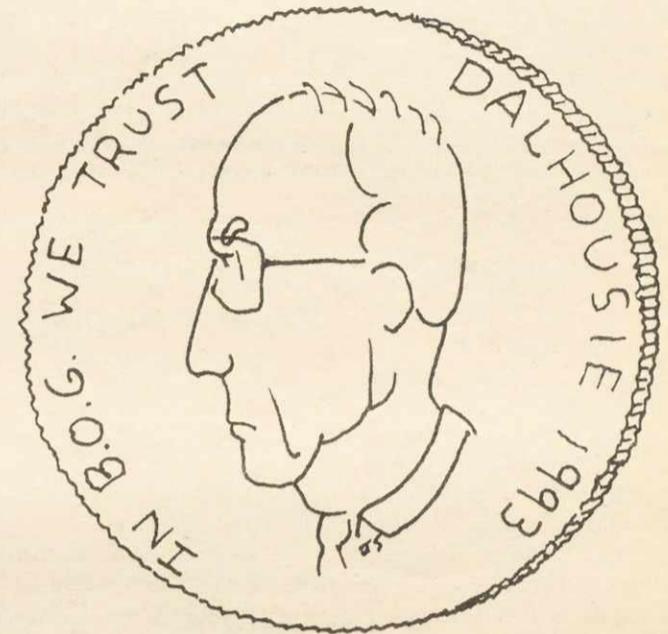
If somebody phones up and wants to see me I will almost invariably say "fine", I will see you. The question is when. But, yes, generally my door is open and I would probably be far better off and be able to get a lot more done if I didn't see so many people.

So you do have regular interaction with students?

I try to and have also tried, over the years, a number of steps to encourage those interactions. For a year or two I announced that every Friday there would be an hour when I would be over in the pub of the University Club. Nobody came! Last year, Peter Pottier and I set up four similar occasions when we were both available in the cafeteria in the SUB. Virtually nobody came. So, yes, I am available. The difficulty is much more; to put it bluntly, nobody wants to come talk to me.

How do you perceive your role as President of Dal?

In the private sector the role of the president would be seen as that of the Chief Executive Office. But people in universities don't like that term, because the university is obviously not a company. But, nevertheless, the President does have the responsibility for seeing that ultimately the academic programs that Senate has approved are in place and presumably functioning. He has the responsibility to the Board of seeing that the administrative and financial responsibilities of the university are well conducted in accordance with good business practice. But beyond that, I think, there is the responsibility of trying to provide some sense of leadership and direction to the university. That doesn't amount to the presi-



dent telling everybody where the university is going, but finding means to ensure that there is discussion, debate and ultimately agreement on the university's direction and what our long-term strategy will be.

What would you say now to the students that participated in the Freeze the Fees Campaign and in particular to the so-called Tent Collective?

My first words would be that you [the tent collective] are extraordinarily courageous. How on Earth could you sleep out there in such frigid weather? (Laughs). I simply wouldn't be prepared to do it. (Laughs). No, I respect the position

can say we are being elitist if you mean elitist in the sense of the accessibility question. I don't think that anyone can state that about Dalhousie. We're probably number one in the country in terms of the amount we put aside for student aid and student support. And the policy we have of putting 25% of the tuition increase into additional bursaries and student employment is unique in the country. We're doing far more than anybody else to address accessibility! If you mean elitist in the sense of high standards and high academic quality, I would hope that Dal has and always will be elitist.

The proposed anti-harassment policy, or so-called "politically correct" statement has recently received a lot of attention. What is your reaction to the policy?

Look, I don't think I'll say very much about that now. It was I who created the task force to advise on the policy. The policy will come to Senate for discussion fairly soon. All that I will say is that it is a very difficult and delicate issue. I don't sense that anybody at Dalhousie disagrees with the idea that we should have here an environment that is free of harassment. I think everybody would agree with the principles of general academic freedom and with the concept of there not being any censorship at Dal. The problem is that those two things at some point clash. And what we as a community have to do over the next few months is find a way of striking the right balance between those two. It will require a lot of very thoughtful and considerate discussion in Senate and elsewhere.

Where you ever involved in any student protests?

Student protests... no, not when I was a student. There were the usual episodes involving a dispute between the university administration and the student newspaper, usually because the student newspaper was viewed as obscene or unfit to be published. I had nothing to do with student newspapers. (Laughs).

"I hope Dal has and always will be elitist."

that the students took, I just don't agree with them. I think it just has to be recognized that even with the tuition fee increases here and at all of the universities in Nova Scotia in the last 2-3 years, that in an absolute sense tuition fees now are not much higher than they were, say in 1960. And yet, in that intervening 30 year period, the cost of providing education has gone up astronomically. So that relatively speaking, even with the higher fees students are paying a smaller cost of the share of their education and their mothers and fathers did. And I don't think that any of us can avoid the fact that governments, federal and provincial, do not have the money. And they're not going to have the money for quite a substantial period of time. If students want a reasonably high quality of education, then fees are going to be a part of covering the cost. The universities will also have to put a lot of effort into finding other sources of income.

Do you think there is a concern that Dal will become too elitist?

Well, it depends on what you mean by elitist. I mean, I don't see that you