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NSCAD fee strike foiled



NSCAD members discuss plans at Tuesday's meeting.

The Students' Union at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (SUNSCAD) is revising strategy today after an attempt to withhold tuition fee payments was foiled by administration pressure tactics early Wednesday.

About 25 per cent of NSCAD students voted at a general meeting Tuesday to pay the full fees, including the six per cent increase, to SUNSCAD rather than the administration as a protest against continuing fee increases and financial cutbacks at post-secondary institutions throughout Nova Scotia.

The students had planned to pay the fees into a trust fund administered by the union, and turn the fees over to the college once the fee increase had been rolled back.

First year students, who began registering Wednesday morning, were told by the administration that if they withheld their fees their registration would not be recognized by the college and they would lose their privilege to take preferred courses.

SUNSCAD spokesperson, Don Soucy, said yesterday students were refused registration unless they paid their fees and handed a deadline of 12:00 noon to either pay or not enroll this term.

Soucy claimed that the administration had gone back on their word by threatening the lockout, saying that at a meeting Tuesday evening, NSCAD president Gary Kennedy promised classes would begin as usual regardless of a fee

strike. Soucy said SUNSCAD knew the administration was not supporting the move, but was left with the impression they would not make any serious attempt to stop it.

After the administration's refusal to register them, the students, who Soucy commented were solidly behind the action, held a meeting in the registration area, and agreed to pay their fees and enroll as usual. They also decided to hold a later meeting to discuss the fee "fenagle," as it was called, and look at new ways of fighting fee increases and cutbacks.

Soucy brushed aside a comment by NSCAD president Kennedy that there were only a few students involved, retorting that the first year students were behind the protest but left confused by the administration's pressure tactic.

"The administration capitalized on the Intro students' confusion," he said. "Many of them were aware the administration was bluffing, but being unfamiliar with a situation of this kind they were not prepared to risk their education."

Soucy admitted the first year students made the decision for the rest of the college, but noted their enthusiasm to meet again and devise new ways of opposing increases was encouraging. He also felt the inexperience of the organizers contributed to the failure of the fenagle, since none had ever organized a fee strike, but believed their attempt was a valuable learning experience.

N.S. job coalition formed

by Valerie Mansour

This summer in Nova Scotia students and labor leaders joined together to fight against the country's increasingly high unemployment.

Following protest action on Cape Breton Island a public meeting of over 150 students, workers and unemployment met in Halifax to plan action to press the federal government into finding more jobs for Nova Scotians.

"It is no surprise that things are exploding here," N.S. Federation of Labour President Gerald Yetman told the audience. "Whenever any prosperity comes we are the last to feel it and when hard times come we are first to get it in the friggin' neck."

There are 60-80,000 unemployed in Nova Scotia, more than 15,000 of these from the Halifax area. Another 12,000 are on unemployment in Cape Breton Island, where some labor leaders estimate unemployment to have reached 40 per cent.

"Though the youth unemployment rate is twice as high as unemployment in general, it has become quite clear that there is no

one solution for youth unemployment and another for general unemployment," said Don Soucy, Nova Scotia Central Committee member of the National Union of Students (NUS).

The same economic conditions which are causing one are also causing the other. To change those conditions for the benefit of all workers is what is going to change them for the benefit of students."

NSFL treasurer, J.K. Bell expressed hope for organizations to branch out across Canada. "Government's inaction on this problem is affecting all Canadians", he said. "What is a more basic democratic right than your right to work!"

Committees have been set up in Pictou and Trenton, Nova Scotia with the objective of uniting organizations, community groups, and individuals on the broadest possible base to fight for jobs.

As well as NUS and the NSFL, the Halifax coalition has members from the Voice of Women, the Halifax-Dartmouth Trades and Labor Council, and the Nova Scotia Labor Research and Support Center.

A group of people from this

coalition have met together to discuss demands and the action that will be taken. So far they are reluctant to release any details.

It is expected that the Halifax strategy will differ from that of the Cape Breton coalition who staged a series of peaceful occupations of federal buildings. A precise list of demands will be drawn up before any protest actually takes place.

"We could be losing a whole

generation of youth to unemployment," said Soucy. "An increasing number of students are unable to continue their education because of lack of summer jobs. Countless others are graduating into a world that is telling them that there is no place for them or their skills. The ramifications from this imposed feeling of us uselessness is pretty damn scary. Something must be done."

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