

# EDITORIAL

## Government bypass of SUNS deplorable,

Everyone who needs student-aid, who knows someone who might need student-aid or who cares about the thousands of Nova Scotians who need it should be incensed at the provincial government's recent appointment to a Maritime provinces student-aid advisory committee.

At first sight, the appointment boded well for students. Here was the Minister of Education Terry Donahoe magnanimously choosing a student (in place of another lawyer) to sit on a committee dealing specifically with a student issue. But was the token student in any way qualified to represent student interests? Did this person have any grass roots electoral support? Or at least any endorsement from elected student organizations?

Unfortunately, Donahoe, or whoever actually picked Kirk Sievert (the buck is being passed around nowadays), seems to have drawn a blank on all three counts. Sievert has no experience in student politics and, judging from reports, little information or conviction about these issues from the perspective of the student movements. Although he is actively involved with the young Progressive Conservatives (no, we are not suggesting political patronage), Sievert holds no elected office. Further, the Student Union of Nova Scotia never heard of him until a few weeks ago.

If the government really cared about getting student input on student-aid they would have gone to the people who have broad-based student support and who have been thoroughly studying the issue for the last two years. That is, it would have been appropriate to ask SUNS to select a representative on the advisory committee.

More important, if they really want student input into higher education they should ask SUNS to select a representative to sit on the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission — the government's permanent advisory body on higher education.

Instead, they bypass truly democratic channels and give us third year commerce students with no experience, no student support. It makes one wonder how badly the Buchanan government wants to be re-elected. This certainly isn't the way to woo the student vote!

## SUNS acquiescence equally deplorable

This move doesn't just reflect badly on the provincial government, however. If SUNS had a stronger voice the government would not have dared ignore them, nor would they have been permitted to stand by their decision.

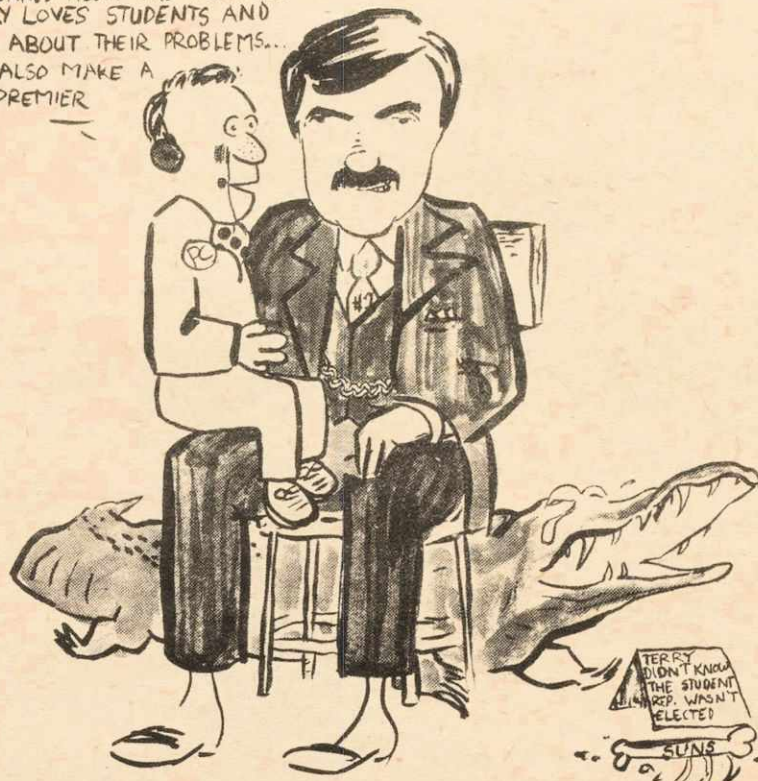
Strong student organizations are respected by governments both for their expertise on student issues and for the political clout they command. Student protests take the form of petitions, mass letter writing, rallies and marches, not wimpy, half-apologetic entreaties to the Minister of Education.

Many of Nova Scotia's student politicians have a backward attitude toward student politics. Rather than asking for programs to maximize student interests and leave it to the government to see what they can spare, SUNS reps are often as conservative in their demands as the government to whom they are petitioning. SUNS is also not hungry enough. One wonders how many of its members are actually on student-aid, how many are foreign students, how many come from working class backgrounds. There seems too little inertia, too much complacency, too little in the way of a burning desire to achieve a more accessible, more equitable system of higher education.

These attitudes are put on display for us every second Sunday night at Dalhousie Student Council meetings. Discussions of SUNS plenaries is postponed on council until weeks after they actually occur. Important student events like National Student Day are not even brought to council's attention. Councillors become inflamed over SUB Ops and fall asleep over student-aid. Provincial student issues have so low priority that everyone is content to let an overworked president and vice-president carry the ball for them during the few hours they can spare every week.

Students should not be satisfied merely to bitch at a provincial government that has ridden roughshod over student organizations. They should be seriously concerned about organizations which allow themselves to be so badly trampled.

... HONEST, HARDWORKING. A MINISTER CONCERNED ABOUT HIS PORTFOLIO TERRY LOVES STUDENTS AND CARES ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS... HE'D ALSO MAKE A GOOD PREMIER



J. W. WIERS  
1980 GAZETTE

## the Dalhousie Gazette

The Dalhousie Gazette, Canada's oldest college newspaper, is the weekly publication of the Dalhousie Student Union members, and is a founding member of Canadian University Press.

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The deadline for articles and letters-to-the-editor is noon on Monday. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted on request. Letters should not exceed 500 words and must be typed on a 64-character line and double spaced.

Local Advertising is handled by DAL-ADS—the advertising department of Dalhousie Student Union: Tel. 424-6532. Ad copy must be submitted by the Friday preceding publication.

Our office is located on the third floor of the Dalhousie Student Union Building. Our mailing address is the Dalhousie Gazette, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S. You can reach us by telephone at (902) 424-2507.

The subscription rate is \$10. per year (26 issues) and our ISSN number is 0011-5819.

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