

THE PRESIDENCIES



Message from the President of the Union

Asking someone to describe the position of president is somewhat like asking a blind man to describe an elephant, (please pardon the analogy). It is difficult to know where to start and almost impossible for one person to have a perspective which would allow a precise, objective conception of what the beast is all about.

But perhaps this is not quite accurate. There is bound to be a conceptual distinction between what the position is all about and what the individual in the position thinks the position is all about. I fall into the second category. Consequently my description is going to be subjective. But, in essence, so is the position. There are very few objective restrictions influencing the substantive aspect of this job. The constitution provides a procedural guideline for the Student Union but in no way inhibits the direction policy may take. In short, then, how things are to be done is somewhat objectively defined in the constitution but what is to be done is left largely to the imagination and initiative of individuals in the various offices. The supreme decision making unit is of course the council.

In very general terms the president has the responsibility of ensuring that the Union provides its members with what they want. It is a matter of soliciting opinion from the members through council and then formulating and directing appropriate policies. This very broad description sounds pretty simple; however, achieving a satisfactory end entails countless meetings, phone calls, a lot of haggling, a lot of talking, and in short a lot of detail which never seems to end.

Students are not dealt with in the abstract. Problems are always encountered in relation to some other body, for instance, the University Administration, the faculty, or even the City of Halifax. So, the coin of dealing with people has two sides - what is to be done and how. And each year the currency changes, (we are trying to avoid inflation). With each change of office there is a different approach, a different methodology. Each president has his own ideas on direction and policy, and how carefully to tread the thin line between the practical and the ideal.

So, as was pointed out above, apart from some constitutional guidelines which are largely delimiting, the individual who is president in fact defines the office to a great degree. Obviously then, in light of this, the most definitive description of the position lies in what direction policy takes and what in fact is accomplished. Ultimately these are the responsibilities of the President of the Student Union.

No form of government can operate efficiently and effectively if its constitution is functionally inoperative. In its present form the Constitution of the Dalhousie Student Union is somewhat out of date.

Rather than try to comply with a document which is at least mildly anachronistic, we took it upon ourselves this past summer to review and rewrite the constitution. This has meant a number of substantive as well as procedural changes. The result, we hope, will be a more structurally coherent and effective form of government.

The Union is expanding in new directions. We are trying to get more involved in the Community surrounding the University. This takes time and results are not easily quantifiable.

A number of changes are taking place in the Student Union Building itself. We hope to have a more effective communications system set up by the end of September. Once again the success of this idea is not easily quantifiable. It depends on student input and initiative.

We are trying to put together a more varied and interesting entertainment package for the up-coming year. This also requires your support. There is a great deal of flexibility in these programs -- your input would be greatly appreciated.

However, to be a truly functional Union, one which is relevant to more than those interested solely in passive forms of entertainment, we must get more involved in the academic aspects of student affairs. This requires the cooperation and support of all students. Dalhousie students are paying one of the highest prices in Canada for a product over which they have little control. This situation is ridiculous.

The quality of courses offered at Dal varies from department to department and certainly from professor to professor. It is up to us to take a more active role in shaping course content and to become far more critical of the quality of courses presently being offered. But this criticism must be channeled through an organized body representing the interests of students -- only one such organization presently exists on campus -- the Student Union.

It is the responsibility of the elected representatives of the Union to see to it that you as students get a fair return on the money you invest in your education. To do this we need your cooperation. We must become more demonstrative in voicing our dissatisfaction.

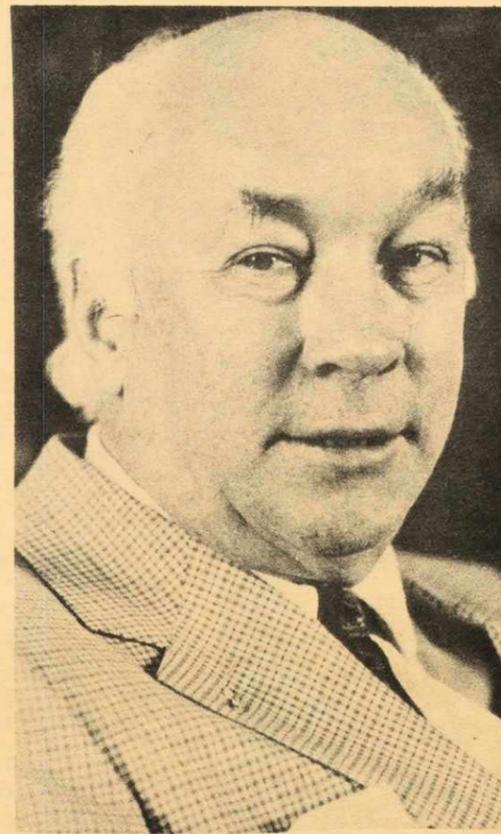
Hopefully this will be the major development of our year in office. To establish the machinery which will give effect to the opinions of students. Complaining to a friend is not enough. No change will be effected that way. Complaints, criticism, opinions should be channeled through the offices of the Union if they are to have any effect.

A system of course monitoring is presently being devised which shall be under the aegis of the Academic Affairs Secretary. This system will be explained in the Gazette early in the fall. Watch for it and use it.

The Student Union is growing in size. But it must grow in strength -- in short it must become more unified. For this we need the support of all students. Join us.

Michael Gardner
President

Dal Student Union '73-'74



The Editors of the Dalhousie Gazette have kindly invited me to greet new students through the pages of its first issue this fall. This paper is using its means of communication to assist in the orientation programme and I am pleased at this cooperation and hope that newcomers to the University will make use of this source of information.

Dalhousie may appear large and impersonal to you, especially if you are not a Haligonian. I can assure you that there are many persons on the campus who are qualified and prepared and want to assist you in any number of ways. I believe the Dalhousie Gazette will help to keep you informed of the services we have to offer you.

If, during the year, you have a problem that can't be solved by your own efforts, do not hesitate to ask someone to give you advice: the Dean of Student Services, the Dean of Freshmen, the Chaplains, the Director of Awards and Student Aid, the Director of Student Health Services, the Director of Student Counselling, the Dean of Men, the Dean of Women, or the Ombudsman and there are others with less formal student advisory roles who can be helpful. Indeed, you will find that the Deans and Professors can produce some interesting ideas and the President, himself, might even have a good suggestion!

Welcome to Dalhousie! I hope you profit by your experience here.

Henry D. Hicks

The Union is governed by a Council composed of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, two members at large and representatives of the various departments and faculties, Shirreff and Howe Halls and the Transition Year Program. The Council members are elected, except for the Treasurer and members at large, who are appointed by the Council.

The members of the Council Executive are the President, Vice-President, Treasurer (the officers of the Union) and two members of the Council who are chosen by the whole Council. Its purpose is to assist the officers in the formulation of policy. The Union Executive consists of the Council Executive plus the SUB Affairs, Communications and Community Affairs Secretaries. The Union Executive assists the officers in the administration of the Union's activities.

Students in the Faculty of Arts & Science have the opportunity for form experimental classes for credit towards their degree. Any subject or combination of subjects to which the Arts and Science are relevant and differing in conception from any of the classes regularly listed in the departmental offerings may be formed on the initiative of students or of faculty members.

Details and guidelines may be found on page nine of the calendar. Students are advised to contact the Curriculum Committee with their proposals early. Advice may be had by contacting the Chairman of the Curriculum Committee, Gordon B. Jeffery, Department of Education, 424-6431.