

Graham edges Owen in SUNS election

by Paul Clark

Dalhousie graduate student Greg Graham was elected chairperson of the Student Unions of Nova Scotia (SUNS) at a conference in New Brunswick this weekend.

Graham, who replaces Loretta Mullen as chairperson of the organization which represents post-secondary students across Nova Scotia, defeated Dalhousie Student Union president Gord Owen for the position on the third ballot.

In other elections, Mike McNeil of Saint Mary's was re-elected as the Nova Scotia rep on the Central Committee of the National Union of Students, Sean Houlihan was chosen as SUNS external officer and Kevin Sullivan of the Technical University of Nova Scotia was selected as SUNS internal coordinator.

"I think Greg will do a good job as chairperson, he's keen and has a good understanding of provincial and national issues", said Don Perry, Atlantic fieldworker for the National Union of Students.

Graham said one of his main objectives next year is to involve the whole SUNS executive in decision-making, rather than just the chair and PR officer as has happened in previous years. "This year we have two vice-presidents who have a lot of ability and are really capable," he said.

Another priority for Graham is to ensure that every institution has an active SUNS campus committee. "Otherwise, we'll just have that institution's representative's view of student concerns," he commented. "If SUNS is to really do something, we need strong campus committees."

In upcoming months Graham expects to be spending a good

deal of his time planning a symposium at St. F.X. in June on the Federal government's proposed stoppage of Established Program Financing (EPF). As the Federal government is now providing an average of 70 percent of operating assistance for post-secondary institutions in the Maritimes through EPF, Graham sees this as an issue of paramount importance.

"With pending cutbacks in EPF anyone in a position of responsibility in student government will see the need for pulling together at this," he said.

SUNS is encouraging faculty associations and university administrations to participate in the symposium and intends to invite someone from the federal cabinet as a keynote speaker.

Elsewhere, Graham also anticipates spending a lot of time working with a SUNS committee formed at the conference to provide a response to the Federal-Provincial Task Force's paper on student aid. "I'd like to see a really good response," he said.

In addition to bread and butter issues affecting student's pocketbooks, Graham expects SUNS next year to be addressing itself to other concerns. In particular Graham said he is seriously concerned about the quality and academic standard of education students are receiving.

SUNS will remain primarily a political organization, however, said Graham, with the Council of Student Union Presidents of the Atlantic Region dealing with services on an intra-provincial level.

Student representatives attending the joint conference

for SUNS, the New Brunswick Coalition of Students and the Council of Student Union Presidents for the Atlantic Region said it was a successful one, with productive work done on women's issues, educational funding, student aid and student representation on government committees affecting higher education.

At a workshop held on women's issues a motion was passed to encourage member institutions to look into forming women's committees on their campuses and present briefs on this at the next SUNS conference. Earlier this month a women's committee was formed at Dalhousie, one which SUNS reps hopes will provide direction to other institutions.

SUNS delegates were also made aware at the conference that, after an extended lobbying campaign, Minister of Education Terry Donahoe has said that SUNS will now be consulted on appointments to government committees on higher education.

"I consider it a victory for SUNS, though not a complete victory," said NUS fieldworker Perry. The victory was not total according to Perry because while Donahoe said students would be "consulted" about appointments he did not actually specify that they would be able to choose themselves.

Regardless of the uncertainty of Donahoe's statement, however, Graham said SUNS plans to elect representatives to the Student Aid Advisory Committee and to the Student Aid Appeals Board at their next conference at Mount Saint Vincent. The terms of the government appointed "student" reps for these positions expire shortly.

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BIRTHRIGHT serves community

by Del Atwood

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Student Work Abroad Programmes 1981

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