

Dalhousie hosts Prime Minister

by Juanita Smith

The groups gathered outside the Dalhousie Law Building to protest. The anti-abortionists were there, as were students protesting cutbacks in educational spending, a group of citizens from Canso seeking a solution to their region's economic problems, and others opposed to the government's cutbacks to women's programs. The Grim Reaper was among the protestors, walking around with a sign that said, "Brian, let's do lunch."

Inside, speaking to Dal Law students and faculty was the man they wanted to reach: Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Aware of the problems he faced, he was self-derogatory in a confident manner, commenting on the protestors but stressing that he remains popular at the polls. "Even members of my own family are thinking of voting for me," he joked.

Mulroney was quick to bring to his audience's attention Canada's positive position in comparison to Eastern Europe. He talked of political stability and the desire of many of these newly-reforming countries to model themselves after Canada. But he could not avoid the real issues of what our country's problems are.

At the root of Mulroney's speech lay what has been bothering many Canadians — and certainly many Tories — in respect to government spending: the deficit. Regional disparity already makes the Atlantic provinces the poorest in the country. Now budget cuts threaten to make an already bleak situation worse, as the Canso protestors would attest.

When questioned on why education was being cut back, Mulroney was quick to spout statistics. Provincial transfer payments, he says, have increased by 6.5 per

cent per year while he has been in office, which is twice the increase in federal programs. "Canada spends more on education than any other industrialized nation except for Sweden," he said.

Whether or not this is any comfort to students facing a back-breaking load of student loans and overtime is another question. Many students are wondering why, if Canada has to strengthen itself to repay its debts, is the country not investing in its young people.

Later, questioned about the problems of ratifying the Meech Lake Accord, the constitution of '81 was brought to attention. Mulroney wanted to know how

any province would fail to support an accord that brings Canada's tenth province into the Constitution. He also dealt with the "notwithstanding" clause which he considers a major threat to the rights of minorities as well as the general population.

While the constitution failed to unite the country and protect individual rights, the Prime Minister feels Meech Lake will accomplish both these ends, even though it has not yet been perfected to suit the needs of all Canada's provinces.

Mulroney faced both criticism and support inside the Law building. Outside he faced a crowd of hostile protestors. Two

questions remain: what will he face at the next federal election, and more importantly, will his plans to bring down the deficit

destroy the already fragile maritime economy, and sow the seeds of his own political death? Only time will tell.



photo: Rochelle Owen

While Prime Minister Brian Mulroney spoke to Dalhousie students in the Weldon Law Building, angry protestors picketed outside. The demonstrators were criticizing Tory policies on the GST, Canso, Meech Lake, free trade and the Tory abortion law.

Advisory council on women

by Stuart Flinn

The advisory council on the status of women was established in 1977 with the dual mandate to advise the provincial government on matters that relate to women and to act as an independent agency and aid programs that are of interest to women's equality.

The advisory council itself is comprised of twelve individuals appointed by the provincial government, with an effort to represent the regional, cultural, and ethnic diversity of Nova Scotia. The council is primarily involved in researching women's issues and proposing legislation, policies, programs and practices which will enhance equality in the province.

The council "tries to help with the red tape that women often face when dealing with the government. It is a type of ombudsman office for women,"

said one of the council volunteers. With the exception of the president, Debi Forsyth-Smith, all members of the council are volunteers.

At present, the advisory council is investigating the effectiveness of the government's voluntary affirmative action program in regard to black women. It has submitted a report to the Minister of Health and Fitness on the status of family planning and sexuality education in Nova Scotia, and it has rejected the government's proposed Bill C-43 on abortion.

On March 89, the council will help celebrate International Women's Day by running workshops, lectures and seminars to culminate on March 10 with a march in honour of the advances women have made in the fields of pay equality, affirmative action, affordable child-care, adequate social assistance, and reproductive choice.



photo: Rochelle Owen