

Some students this year are going to have to tighten their belts a few notches too tight to make ends meet.

## The government plays catch-up on student loans

by Samantha Brennan

While the federal government's recently announced plan to up student loan funding by sixty million dollars is a seeming boon for Canadian students, student leaders in Nova Scotia are far from satisfied.

The increase to the student loan program is, in fact, no increase at all according to the Student Unions of Nova Scotia (SUNS).

"The increase is deceptive," explained SUNS Deputy Chair David Joliffe. It fails to take into account there has been no change in the amount of money available for loans since 1977, he continued, while costs to students rose 12-15 per cent every year.

Dalhousie Student Union president Peter Rans echoed Joliffe's statement saying, "While on the surface it looks like a great favour to students, the federal government is merely catching up on something long overdue."

Both Joliffe and Rans expressed concern that the increase in loans will do little to help students from low income families.

"It discriminates against students who don't want to face that debt load," said Joliffe. He added the

government is "reducing the accessibility of education" by its plans to support increased loans, not bursaries.

Another factor worrying SUNS is the source of the money the federal government is planning to direct to student loans.

The sixty million dollars that would be used to boost the Canada Student Loan Program is part of the 102 million dollar savings realized by the federal government's decision to apply its six-and-five restraint policy to Established Programs Financing (EPF) transfers to the provinces.

Traditionally EPF transfers are the means by which the federal government supported post-secondary education in Nova Scotia.

"This change represents a shift in the way the federal government plans to fund universities. Rather than giving the money to the universities, the government is lending it to the students, putting the burden of university financing on their shoulders," said Joliffe.

Joliffe perceives the federal government's plan as "a philo-

sophical change in policy." It rests on the faulty assumption the prime beneficiary of post-secondary education is the student, he said.

Not only does this faulty assumption deny the social benefits of technological advance, it fails to recognize higher education as a resource for creative solutions to pressing social problems.

A third, more mercenary fact, is that a better educated populace is more materially and financially viable, providing a larger tax base for government on both personal and entrepreneurial levels.

Unlike an earlier proposal to direct extra funds to a federal bursary program, this plan will not help the really needy.

The SUNS executive feels students are being used as "a political football" in a dangerous power struggle between the federal and provincial government.

"The entire situation is indicative of the fact that the provincial and federal governments can't reach agreement on how to finance universities," said Joliffe, "and this inability to agree is screwing universities and colleges."

## Grads await voting results on a Senate seat

by C. Ricketts

By the end of the month Dalhousie's graduate students may realize a dream they have held for three years.

That's when a tally will be made of a mail-in Senate vote to allow the Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) a representative on the Senate. A total of 161 "yes" votes is needed to open up the position to them.

"We need a seat on Senate because graduate students are in a situation unique from any other part of the university," says DAGS president David Joliffe. Grads are on campus year round, sometimes for six or seven years, and some are simultaneously students and employees of the university as instructors, said Joliffe.

A Student Union document entitled "Notes on Restraint and Renewal" states grads are "doubly affected" in their student/employee role. With the university's current financial bind, contracts of instructors "are most vulnerable to termination".

Joliffe says grads have little access to either Senate or Board of Governors committees where the

real decision-making on policies takes place. Representation through undergraduate Senate reps "however committed and effective they may be, has little familiarity with the situation of graduates," he says.

Dalhousie Faculty Association president Om Kamra agrees the grads' case is a special one encompassing particular problems, and recognizes grads form a large portion of students on campus. There are currently over 1400 graduate students comprising nearly 18 per cent of the student population at Dal.

Although he has urged other Senators to vote, and has himself voted, Kamra said some Senators are worried other student groups will copy the grads' efforts. "This could develop into a problem," he said.

The alternative route to representation on Senate is for DAGS to negotiate with the Student Union a guarantee that one of the five student Senate reps is a grad student. But both DAGS and the Student Union have problems with this proposal.

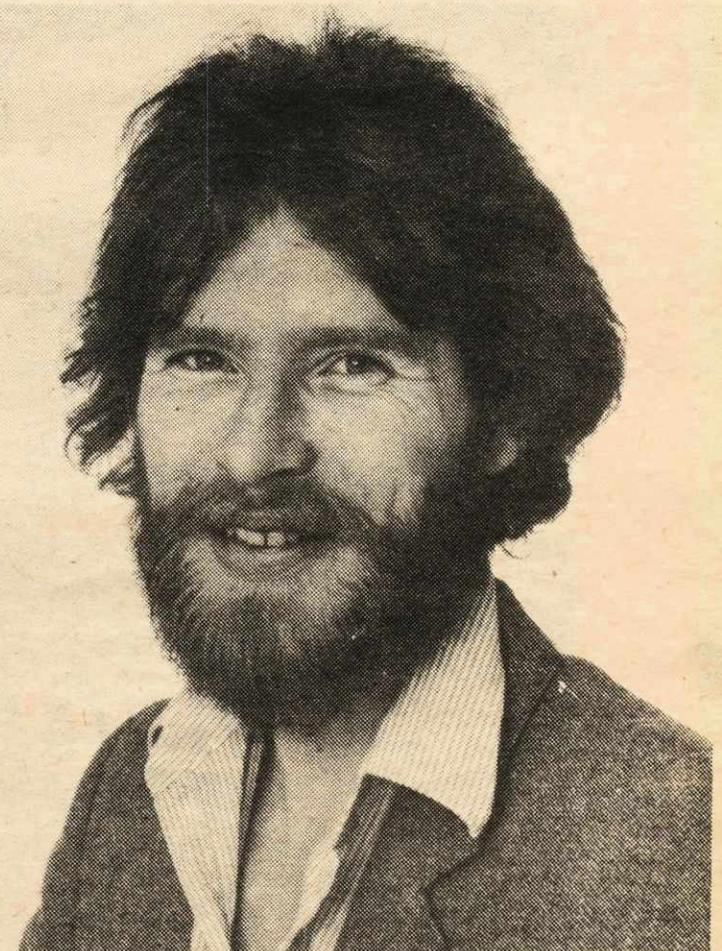
At the January 17 Senate meeting, student union president Peter Rans highlighted some of these concerns. Undergraduate students would be reluctant to yield one of their Senate seats to DAGS, he said. Although grads are encompassed by the Student Union, they are virtually autonomous from it in campus activities, and both national and provincial student organizations.

Rans said DAGS has become increasingly active in its own right as indicated by high voter turnouts and work on issues such as Research and Development funding, differential fees and international student affairs.

Failing Council granting a Senate seat to them, Rans said grads running in spring Student Union elections would stand less of a chance of winning a seat, being lesser-known than undergrads opposing them.

Noting the Senate membership to be 321 members, Rans said "One more seat won't make that much difference to Senate, but it would be a big difference to the Graduate students. They're eager to try it."

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David Joliffe: DAGS president