

The Student Week of Information tangle

by C. Ricketts

Only a last-minute effort by organizers kept the Student Week of Information in Nova Scotia from being a flop.

Communications breakdowns and poor timing are cited by Student Unions of Nova Scotia (SUNS) executive as the main reason for the problems.

Sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) and organized by SUNS, the week of October 11-15 had been in the planning stages since last May. Its purpose was to show provincial governments that student solidarity exists against the lack of concern for post-secondary education.

In Nova Scotia, the week was to culminate in a march on Province House, with university students, faculty, and staff from across the province participating. Representatives from most universities did participate, but definitely not in the hoped-for numbers.

"In terms of numbers it was a disappointment," says Christine Soucie, CFS rep for the region. Other student leaders agree with her.

Students from seven institutions, faculty from the Atlantic Institute of Education, the Dalhousie Faculty Association and the Dalhousie Staff Association numbered only about 350 people at the protest.

A Halifax student march last year drew approximately 5,000 students to a similar event.

Dalhousie student union president Peter Rans contends organizational problems resulted in the poor turnout. "People expected to play a larger role did not play up to par, not only on this campus, but others as well," he says. Less than half of

Dal's student councillors marched. VP External Dave Rideout was among the absent. Unspecified "personal reasons" were cited as his excuse.

Rideout issued his resignation to Student Union President Peter Rans several days after the march. Rans will be accepting the resignation.

Very few councillors marched from Saint Mary's University as well. Says Soucie, a Saint Mary's student, "There has to be more than three people doing the work."

Eric Walker, chairperson of SUNS, struck an optimistic note.

"I think the march was a success from the point of what it set out to do," he says, referring to the publicity it attracted. A picture of students demonstrating dominated the front page of the October 16 issue of the Halifax Chronicle-Herald and Mail-Star.

Coverage of a mock marriage and lottery draw for a year's free tuition highlighted the difficulties students face trying to get student aid and meet higher tuition costs. Lottery tickets sold through the week raised over \$1400.

However, \$200 had to be returned to the Acadian students because they arrived at the march 10 minutes after the draw due to car trouble.

At SMU, a United way drive was organized on the same day as the march. Neither SMU's student union VP External Charlie MacArthur nor United Way campaign coordinator Sue Falconer was aware of the other event until the Wednesday of Information Week.

Almost 20 people were involved with the campaign. MacArthur thought most of them would "probably have marched"

otherwise.

Disorganization and poor timing began when CFS chose the dates for the National Week of Information, say SUNS representatives. "Thanksgiving was overlooked at the national level," says Soucie. The first day of the week fell on Thanksgiving Monday. She also felt October midterms should have been considered as a factor.

"I was personally disappointed with the week, especially with the organization from SUNS and poor assistance from CFS," said MacArthur.

Peter Kavanagh, Executive Officer of SUNS, feels CFS played no role in organizing the week. "I thought, perhaps rather erroneously, they would be releasing material to provincial organizations which dealt with broad issues," he said.

Pamphlets, posters and buttons were limited in quantity, not relevant and not ready to use, says Kavanagh. They arrived late, midway through the week, and extras ordered would have had to be paid for, he says. According to Walker, the posters and square buttons also said nothing about the week.

MacArthur found the pay-cost policy annoying. "SMU already pays more than \$10,000 in dues annually," he says.

Mike Crystal, Services Representative for SUNS, thought some problems could be explained because the current SUNS executive was just elected in mid-September's conference in Halifax. With the National Week of Information one month away, Crystal says, "There was no real chance to develop an exhibition like we wanted to put on."

Another problem stemming from

had gone through residences, put up posters, put a notice in the *Picaro* (the school paper), and raffle ticket sales had gone really well.

Sue Drapeau, a *Picaro* staffer, disagrees. She only found out about Information Week at a

council meeting last Tuesday during the week, and said posters were "Gestetnered pieces of paper" and "were not terribly prominent". She did agree raffle tickets sold well, however.

Responding to Drapeau's state-the-September conference was that St. Francis Xavier University almost missed the week entirely. Peggy O'Shea, VP External for the St. F.X. Student Union and the only representative at the September conference, says she didn't relay information about the week because she didn't know when it was going to take place.

O'Shea says she missed sessions because the original intent of her trip to Halifax had been personal. She was attending some sessions of the conference because she had been asked a few days before to "sit in on a few information sessions". "I must have missed the one on Information Week," O'Shea says.

When asked why she neglected to find out what was missed in the sessions, O'Shea replied, "I thought we'd get a package in the mail."

President Danny Graham of the St. F.X. Student Union didn't find out about activities of the week until Wednesday of the week although he "knew it was coming". He had not been in touch with SUNS since the September conference and assumed someone would contact him about it. "It was not my obligation to find out when it would happen," he says.

On-campus promotion for the week was limited to the week itself because "people would forget about it over the long weekend," says Rideout. This meant several conflicts of scheduling.

A letter dated October 6 circulated to Department heads at the request of the Nova Scotia Colleges and Universities Faculty Association (NSCUFA) had asked each professor to reschedule classes to free both students and faculty for the march. However, Engineering and Commerce courses had scheduled midterms the afternoon of the march at both Dal and SMU.

Leslie MacDonald, VP External

of Mount St. Vincent University's Student Union, didn't think promotion was to blame. She said she thinks MacArthur said off-campus students were difficult to notify, and Drapeau was an off-campus student.

SUNS encountered some problems distributing raffle tickets and pamphlets. There was confusion over who should get them to SMU. MacArthur said he did not receive tickets from Kavanagh until Thursday morning. About \$150 worth were sold in residences Thursday night but "we could have easily sold \$600," said MacArthur.

Kavanagh said he took the raffle tickets to SMU when he learned the person who was supposed to have done it had overlooked it in the last minute rush.

Pamphleting did not work as scheduled at Dalhousie as the original pamphlet was originally to be printed on both sides. It would have taken two days to be printed, so on Tuesday a revised one-sided pamphlet was designed, printed, and readied for distribution that night.

The main problem with the march seemed to be either disinterest or an objection to that kind of protest. Delphine du Toit, Executive Director of the Dalhousie Staff Association, thinks students seem to be taking classes more seriously this year. "When times are hard, people are too involved in individual survival and they lose sight of a necessary collective action," she said.

With a record unemployment rate, record numbers of students returning to school, and no increase in active concern, the government sees no opposition to its policies and feels it has a free hand because students don't care, says Mike Crystal.

"It's a crisis - how many institutions do they have to close before they (students) will see that the AIE is not an isolated incident?", he said.

A.I.E. programs not dead

by Alec Bruce

Seventy students dispossessed from the Atlantic Institute of Education by the provincial government's late summer purge of post-secondary education policies may find a home at Dalhousie this year.

The university senate voted last Friday to accept the students of AIE with their interrupted programs intact. The senate passed an amendment to the motion officially condemning the government's fiscal restraints in post-secondary education spending.

From the standpoint of administrative involvement, Dalhousie will supervise the AIE programs, and degrees granted to graduate students will indicate Dalhousie's hosting role. However, intra-academic matters will be the sole domain of

program supervisory staff. This support staff will be appointed from the various educational institutes throughout the Maritimes. Moreover, students in the AIE programs will be bound by the rules and regulations established by the Atlantic Institute, not Dalhousie.

Dr. G.A. Klassen, Vice-President in charge of academic affairs, confirms Dalhousie's role in the AIE programs will be purely directional. According to Klassen, "These programs will mirror the activities pursued by students of AIE before the Institute was closed. The programs will be conducted separately, and will have no connection with our regular programs in education."

In an effort to define the official position of the administration with

regards to the new programs, the senate voted only to accept those students of AIE already enconced in educational programs. No new students will be enrolled. According to Klassen, "We have not made any commitment to continue the programs at Dalhousie after these students graduate. This will be a wind-down system. It is definitely not self-sustaining."

The administration's approach to the AIE programs may be explained, in part, by the severe lack of funds available for academic activities such as these.

Dalhousie will run the programs on a cost-recovery basis on the understanding the province will pick up the expense. But as yet, Education Minister Terry Donahoe has agreed to this only in principle.



Jordan/Dal Photo

A concerned cop explains the virtue of longer parade permits to an equally-concerned Eric Walker (SUNS Chairperson). A parade permit was only issued for a half hour march.