

# Crunch is on at Computer Centre

by Richard Bertrand

Overcrowding and five to ten minute interruptions in service are part of worsening conditions plaguing students using the Dalhousie Computer Centre.

The administration-run Centre, situated in the basement of the Killam Library, provides computing services for students and various departments and also handles registration.

Aidan Evans, assistant to the director of the computer centre, has isolated two factors causing the increased down time: increasingly heavy loads and, more recently, a software problem. Control Data, the manufacturers of the computer, in conjunction with the computer centre, are presently looking into the software problem. To date only the symptoms are known.

"The frequency of the breakdowns is the most frustrating thing," claims one student. "It takes longer to do assignments which just adds to the problem. There is a definite need for more terminals."

Many students feel that many of the interruptions are avoidable and self-inflicted. The computer is very sensitive to temperature, and if too many people are in the computer room the system will go down until the temperature drops. Other abuses include overly eager users pulling on printer paper as it comes out, causing it to jam.

A number of students complained about Appointment Booking, claiming that students

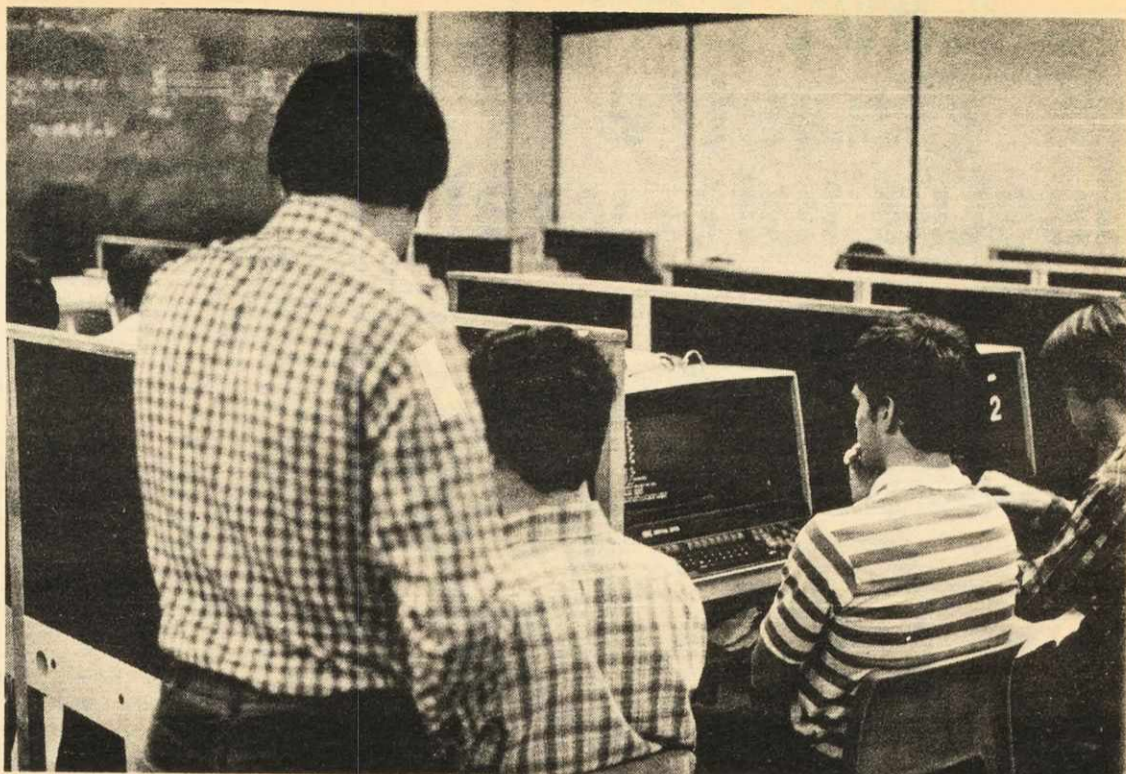
are booking too many time slots or crossing out names and inserting their own. "Sometimes I have to book more time," admitted one student. The system goes down and I can't finish my work."

"The university will have to find a way of alleviating the overcrowding," said Dr. Sedgwick, president of the Dalhousie University Computer Users group (DUCUG). "The computer centre has not been expanding with the increase in introductory computer courses. There has been a 78% increase in computer science enrollment over the past year alone."

DUCUG is presently organizing a campaign to increase funding for the computer centre. Sedgwick blames budget restraints for the Computer Centre's inability to expand with demand. A letter is presently being drawn up by DUCUG for vice president Shaw illustrating the present situation.

A short term solution to the increased demand for terminals and what the computer centre calls 'changes and not expansion' is the replacement of the keyboard machines with terminals. In addition, a new piece of hardware called 'Pax' will be installed, allowing more terminals to be hooked up to the present system.

As of yet students have had little difficulty in getting assignments in on time, says one student. "They're usually assigned well in advance and with a little foresight, students can get them done ahead of the crunch."



Dayal/Dal Photo

Dalhousie's Computer Centre can resemble Grand Central Station at times, and that doesn't please a whole lotta people. Here are some picturesque terminals and frazzled students.

## Feds reverse decision pump money our way for summer jobs

OTTAWA (CUP) -- After announcing in December that it would freeze funding for summer student job creation at \$100 million, the federal government has pumped another \$20 million into the program.

Lloyd Axworthy, minister of employment and immigration, said the extra funds would hire 10,000 more students, bringing the total employed by the program to 53,000.

Cyril Keeper, the NDP

employment critic, said it was no coincidence that the increase was announced March 11, the day before Statistics Canada revealed that unemployment had risen to 8.9 per cent. Student unemployment is about 16 per cent.

Keeper said the increase is welcome, but still provides a small percentage of the jobs students need to pay for their education.

Keeper said student unemployment is rooted in the

broader economic crisis in Canada. He said that during the five months to January Canada lost 20,000 jobs each working day, and the trend is expected to continue.

"What we really need is to turn around the economic policies of the government," said Keeper. He said students will have a better chance of finding a job if the government lowers interest rates, increases spending, and invests more in the economy, especially in housing.

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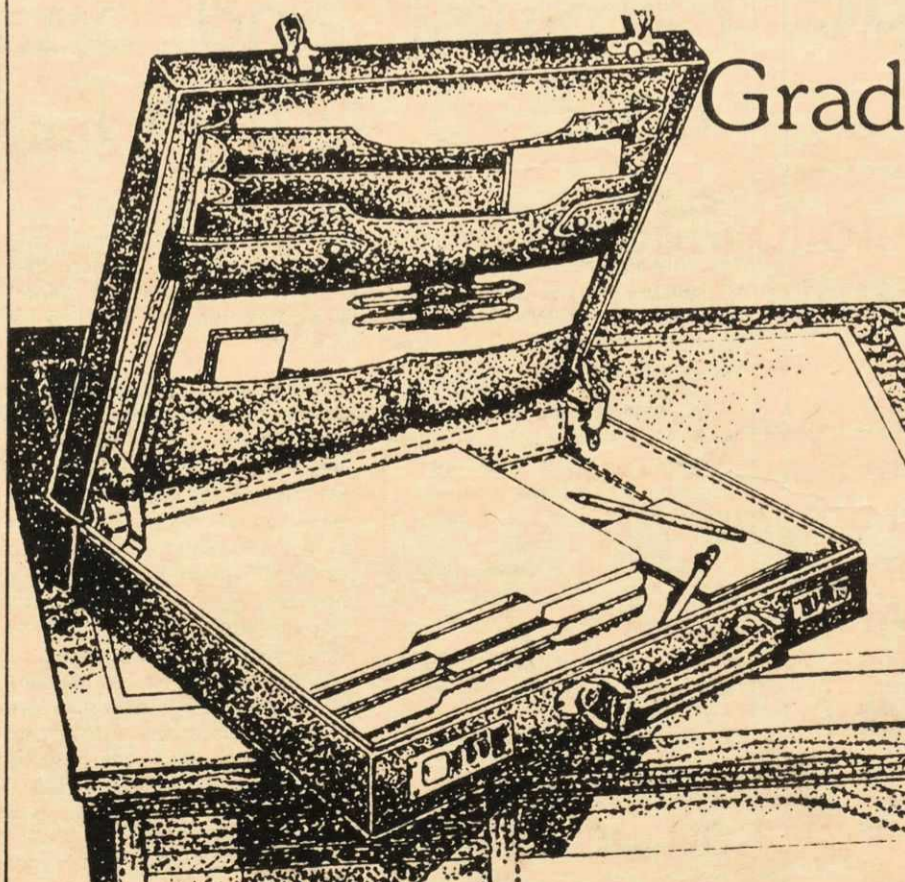
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