

# Dal adopts new environmental policy

by Shaune MacKinlay

Environmentally-conscious Dalhousie students will be pleased to know the university is now equipped with an environmental policy.

However, the five-point policy, which has been accepted by both the Senate and Board of Governors, has received mixed reaction from other organizations.

Dalhousie's environmental policy was developed by the University Environment Committee, consisting of representatives from various faculties, the Dalhousie Student Union, the Dalhousie Staff Association, as well as the Senate Environmental Committee. It recognizes that the university should take "a leadership role in regard to environmental management", and that the university should function in a way that does not cause "unacceptable degradation of the environment".

The policy lists five primary environmental objectives. These broad objectives which pertain to research, education, grounds and buildings, working environment, and corporate operations, have been the source of some criticism.

Raymond Coté, Associate Director of Dalhousie's School for Resource and Environmental Studies, was a member of the

Policy Subcommittee. He says the policy was derived from a number of model policies, and refers to the policy as "an umbrella" under which specific plans of action can be developed.

As a policy statement, it is to be applicable on a wide scale, and does not, therefore, address particular issues. Coté's says it was necessary to start with a flexible policy statement in order to have it accepted by the university. He does not count out the possibility of having the policy reviewed at some future point.

Other specific campus environmental issues that could be addressed, Coté says are comprehensive paper recycling efforts, food wastage, and education about the environment. Several subcommittees have been created to deal with these problems.

Coté says there is also a need for an environmental audit procedure to ensure that the policy is being adhered to, as well as the possibility for a "state of the environment"

report to be released on an annual or biannual basis.

Joan McGregor, a member of CEAG (Campus Environmental Action Group) says the policy is "ambiguous" and "vague."

McGregor says a stronger commitment on behalf of the university is needed with regard to on-campus recycling. CEAG, which plays an integral role in coordinating the recycling of aluminum cans on campus, also organizes letter-writing campaigns, offers environmental workshops, and puts pressure on the university's Senate. McGregor thinks that CEAG could play an essential role in making sure that the university lives up to the goals laid out in its environmental policy.

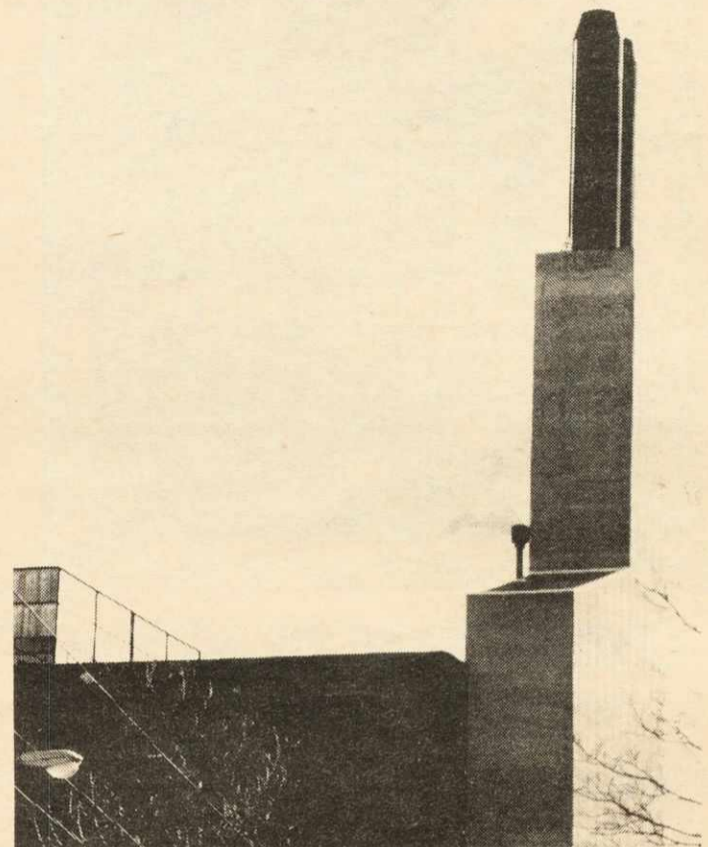
Anna-Marie Larsen is the Managing Director of Dal-PIRG, the Public Interest Research Group. She refers to the policy as "incredibly general", and notes the recurrence of the phrase "will strive" throughout the policy.

"I don't see a 'we will'", she says.

While she agrees with the policy that the academic setting should be used as a vehicle for environmental awareness and education, Larsen fears that this policy is "politically correct, not politically active."

Like McGregor, Larsen would like to see the issue of transportation addressed by the university, as well as an increase in the number of bicycle racks on campus.

Although the ambiguous phra-



Dal Photo: Michael Devonport

seology of Dalhousie's environmental policy may be interpreted as a safety net for the lack of an environmental initiative, there appears to be a number of concerned people behind the policy.

Organizations such as CEAG and Dal-PIRG, as well as individual efforts on behalf of students and faculty may aid in bridging the gap between policy objectives and positive action.

## Arab-Canadians fear discrimination

by Heidi Modro

**MONTREAL (CUP)**—Now that war has broken out in the Persian Gulf, Arab-Canadians may face increased discrimination across the country, Arab community activists fear.

People of foreign origin very often become objects of suspicion and hatred during times of war, said

Ali Yassir, vice-president of the Canadian Arab Federation.

"It is very possible that if Canadian lives are lost in the war, there may be people who seek to express their anger by attacking people of Arab origin both physically and verbally," Yassir said.

Yassir said that there have already been a few reports of Arab bashing across the country.

"So far there have been a few isolated incidents," he said. "We know of one case in Edmonton where a student was beaten with a bottle."

A former Armed Forces general also shocked Arab-Canadians across the country earlier this week when he described Arabs as "fanatics". The general has since apologized, but community members believe that there are many

other people across the country who may hold similar racist opinions.

There have also been other cases in the Toronto area in recent weeks where pupils have been abused because they were of Arab origin.

"It's hard to tell how far the discrimination may go. It was already bad enough before this war started."

Yassir said that Iraqi-Canadians are especially afraid for their safety.

"We really don't know what could happen, but we are doing our best to promote the idea that they are not linked or connected to what Hussein is doing," he said.

The media very often inadvertently helps in promoting negative images of Arabs, said Rachad Antonius of the Centre des études arabes pour le développement, a Montreal-based group.

"It usually happens because journalists are careless in the way they are presenting their information," he said. "They promote negative stereotypes where they equate Arabs with terrorism and war."

Palestinian-Canadians could also be especially vulnerable to discrimination in the coming weeks, said Abdul Malik al Jabir, spokesperson for the McGill University's general Union of Palestinian Students.

"We're very worried about the treatment of Palestinians in Canada," al Jabir said. "Many people think that we support Hussein in his occupation of Kuwait. But that's not true. We all have family members in the Middle East who are close to any hostilities that may break out."

## Architects will use student input

by Alex Burton

Dalhousie may be entering into a new era of enlightenment. Over the past year, Nova Scotia universities have been making moves to clearly define their roles in the education community. One aspect of these new roles will be the method by which universities plan any future growth.

Last fall, the president of Dalhousie appointed an advisory committee to develop a plan for the physical environment of the university.

That committee announced last week that the Halifax firm of Brian Mackay-Lyons has been hired to develop a 'Campus Plan'. James

Cowen, chair of the Campus Plan Steering Committee, said the idea of a campus plan has been in the works for some time and the need for a plan "Arose out of the Financial Strategy Committee and academic planning process."

The firm chosen to develop the plan is renowned for its 'Participatory design' process.

Brian Mackay-Lyons says his team of international architects "share a common approach to urban design."

"In order to design a place you must understand the place," he said.

He stressed a number of aspects that he feels should be respected in any future development at Dal-

housie. Included in these was an emphasis on urban and human scale.

In keeping with the philosophy of participatory design, Mackay-Lyons' firm will set up their office in the sculpture court of the Rebecca Cohn Arts Centre between Jan. 29 and Feb. 3.

The firm is soliciting comments, suggestions and visions from everyone in the Dalhousie community and the surrounding areas. Bill Lord, director of Physical Plant and Planning at Dalhousie, said, "you don't have to be an expert (to contribute). Everyone knows what they like, and don't like, about the campus."

Lord compared the plan to a

budget. "It's like setting a budget in terms of space," he said.

Mackay-Lyons stressed the importance of the space between buildings. "Buildings are often designed as objects isolated in space, the rest is residual." We want to design places people want to be in, he said.

Lord said the sculpture court was chosen as the spot for public input because it is centrally located. "It is also in a theatrical environment that allows for access as well as observation (from the first floor of the centre)."

Now the precedent has been set for total participation. Can the university decline to make such efforts on other issues in the future?