

# Student Government History: No. 25

The different rates of turnover in student and university government was illustrated well on January 13, 1920. The Students' Council voted to thank the university for refurbishing the Forrest Building smoking room. The refurbishing had been requested six years earlier by a Council none of whose members remained.

In that January the latest student activities had wireless clubs. These groups operated a "receiving station" so that weather reports from Cape Race and the Press News from Virginia would be instantly available at the particular college. War veterans with the proper certificates instructed. Dalhousie soon had its wireless club.

The Council decided to reimburse students up to \$100.00 for injuries received while playing sports. This can be viewed as use of the student fee as a crude form of insurance.

At the end of January 1920 the Students' Council was criticized for its management of the students' building. A telephone had not been installed, despite promises. In addition, the heating proved to be inadequate. There was general concern since the record high enrollment had not brought a revival of the many organizations which had faded during the war.

Concern over the rapidly increasing number of dances was evidenced by a Council decision that it be notified before any organization made definite plans. Action was started to get better publicity of Dalhousie dances in the local newspapers.

On February 12th the Council agreed to assist the Million Dollar Committee which was in the midst of a large fund-raising campaign for Dalhousie. Also, two critics of the operation of the students' building (Murray Homestead) were appointed to the committee that managed it. Security of the students' mail was the latest problem.

At that time came the disastrous King's College fire which eventually forced that university's move from Windsor to its present location. Within a few days the GAZETTE saw this as an opportunity to achieve the elusive union with King's that Dalhousie had been seeking.

Smoking was still prohibited at Dalhousie and late in February Professor Bronson brought charges against four students. The Council heard the case and gave reprimands. Then it decided that in the future there would be a \$7.00 fine for the first offence.

The large number of students had swelled the Council treasury so it instituted extra sports events and remuneration for some officials. The editor of GAZETTE received \$100.00 for the year's work.

As the Council elections came around once again the GAZETTE commented editorially on the continuing sexual conflict exhibited, especially in Arts and Science. There were groups who wished to prevent the election of any women, although there had been at least one on every Council since 1916. In 1917 a woman had been Vice-President. The GAZETTE proposed that the student government be split into two, with the women's fees going to a Girls' Student Council rather than the Students' Council. It presented this as an inevitable outcome of the battle.

In March the Council called a mass meeting of students to hear a proposal for a rink. It also started an inquiry into a GAZETTE/Engineers controversy. Meanwhile, the Editor was told to consult with his Associate Editors when appropriate, and to use the GAZETTE office.

March, 1920, also saw the problems with the Murray Homestead come to a head. It was Dalhousie's first students' building, and was used by the Council as a men's social centre. On top of some inefficiency and minor discipline problems

had come fighting and disturbances which the House Committee could no longer control. The Students' Council pledged its "whole Support" to the House Committee and resolved to impose \$10.00 fines on those creating a disturbance.

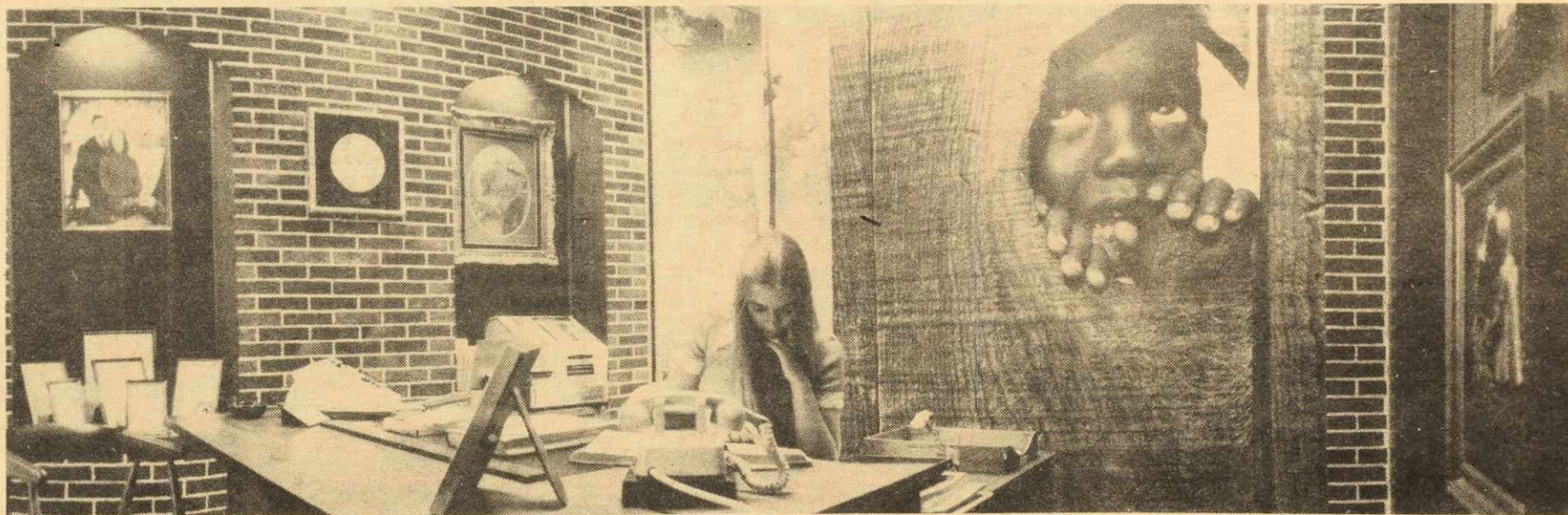
Shortly after passing the resolutions Council began a trial of those involved in the most recent disturbance at the Murray Homestead. A group of students had locked out one of their friends as a joke, and as they made a lot of noise, ignored the knocking at the door. After several minutes they discovered that it was the University's President, Dr. Stanley MacKenzie, who was knocking, not their fellow student. The discovery led to fighting and soon afterwards all but one of the occupants jumped out the windows and ran away. That one person was left to let the President in.

At the first day of the Council trial it was revealed that one of those who had jumped out the windows was a member of the House Committee. The trial took several days, and while it was continuing the Council election results came in. Only one woman was elected, and the large number of veterans combined with the representation by population formula to swell the size from 14 to 26 members of Council.

Since the old Council was to sit until the end of the 1919-1920 academic year, the Murray Homestead trial resumed before it. The next discovery was that no one admitted to having heard any noise, to seeing anybody else or to knowing who locked the door. Not surprisingly, no one admitted to knowing that the President was outside.

As the affair dragged on GAZETTE started to call the Homestead the Children's Home. Only one of those present during the disturbance was ever fined. After that matters bogged down in the sudden amnesia of all concerned. Some started to suggest that the building be closed.

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