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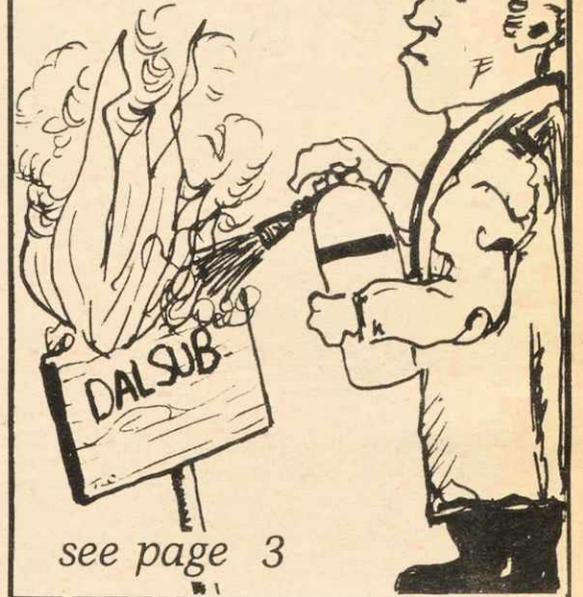
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the Dalhousie **Gazette**

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EDUCATION MINISTER GRILLED BY STUDENTS

by Paul Creelman

Terry Donahoe, provincial Minister of Education, spoke to a small audience in the Green Room of the Student Union Building on Tuesday night. Facing a barrage of questions, the minister was occasionally at a loss for words in the question period following his opening remarks.

A highlight of the forum was the presentation of 400 postcards to the Minister of Education by Gord Owen, Dalhousie Student Council president. The postcards, which were collected in less than six hours on one location on campus last week, are part of a campaign the Student Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS) Campus Committee is waging in expectation of the provincial government's funding recommendations to be announced this spring. The postcard, which states in part that

"insufficient funding to universities will inevitably mean increasing financial restrictions in every department", criticizes the government's policy of making university funding a lower priority.

On the defensive several times during the questioning about declining government priority on university funding, Donahoe grew increasingly frank with subsequent questions, stating that he was doing his utmost to ensure his department had the maximum amount of funds to support post-secondary education.

"The reason that we can only fund maintenance in the universities is that we only have maintenance—no, we don't even have maintenance

in the province right now. As you well know, we're on the dole to Ottawa, and we'll probably be on the dole to Ottawa for some time to come. If I had every dollar we needed to fund the department, we wouldn't be talking the way we are now," said Donahoe in reply to SUNS chairperson Loretta Mullen.

One especially penetrating question came from Atul Sharna, a science representative on Student Council. When asked to justify his implementation of differential fees after campaign statements that he was opposed to the principle of differential fees, Donahoe explained that the provincial Cabinet over-ruled him on the issue.

"At the time, I was accurately reported as saying that I opposed the differential fees," said Donahoe. Later, however, he was made aware that they



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Donahoe in dialogue with students

were substantial reasons to implement differential fees.

"I had most of the administrators and governors saying that there were valid reasons to impose differential fees. I indicated to the cabinet ministers my position on the subject, but the overwhelming consensus was that I was wrong. I would simply offer the hope that we won't mess around in that area for some time yet."

Although this apparent

break from Cabinet solidarity was one of the more dramatic statements made, Donahoe also clarified his policy in the light of the future of education in the province. One of the recurring themes was the elimination of duplication and competition in post-secondary educational institutions at Dal. Another strong concern of the Minister of Education is the cost-sharing agreement with the federal government.

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