

Notes from the underground



Bob Rix — Dentistry
(photo of Vicki Adamson unavailable)

Vicki Adamson — member at large

Role:
"It's difficult because I'm supposed to represent every student. So I have to vote in the best interests of everybody and not from the particular point of view of a faculty."

"I really don't know how effective a member at large really is, because you are voting as an individual when it boils down to it."
Council, she feels, should act as a channel of involvement, bringing non-Council people into the operations of the Union. She believes members see their position as a prestige position and not a function. "They are supposed to do a job and not just be a figure-head."

"Ideally the job is to represent students in voting and decisions that students want; to help their constituents familiarize themselves with the Union and its facilities, and help them get in touch with the people who can solve their problems. A lot of people are intimidated by the structure and the building. But Council members tend to put themselves on a pedestal."

On Council:
"Council has turned into a rubberstamp. The Executive by-passes Council as often as they can get away with it — it's a shame but it's understandable when you sit through hours of fruitless debate."

To improve Council, she suggests having fewer people. It could also be more representative if more information was provided during elections "because students tend to vote for the peoples' names that they've seen often and not what they stand for."

Free admittance to social events should be removed, she says, as then Council would get more people interested in doing things. The members should also be better informed as to what topics and issues are to be discussed at the meetings.

A more effective Council would balance the power with the Executive, she says.

Role of the Student Union in the University:
"Since it is a Union, it should make communications between students and the university easier and more powerful, and it should create a community atmosphere... It should be more than a social institution."

On the university decision-making bodies, "we have more representation than other universities, but it wouldn't hurt to have more say — if you make sure you have effective people in these positions."

She says an effort should be made to bring non-Council people to sit on these university committees as well.

Tom Tanner — engineering

Tom Tanner is the Engineering representative on the Student Council.

On his role on the Council:
"My job is to inform the engineers what is going on, and to inform council what the engineers want."

On the role of the Student Council:
"The Student Council's job is to ensure that students get a fair shake from everybody."

On the responsibility of students to the community:
"As long as we don't do anything to hurt the community, everything works out all right. There are some organizations such as Outreach Tutoring (sponsored by the Student Union) that work in the community."

On the lack of student participation in student government:

"The people who go out for council and vote are the ones who really worry about things. It's up to the rest of the students to come out and get involved. Engineers show more spirit than anyone else. If everyone could show the same kind of spirit, everything would be great!"



(photo of Tom Tanner unavailable)

Ed Miller — Science

On his job:
As I see it, it is impossible to represent all of the Science students. I am forced to rely upon my own opinion as well as the advice of some friends who are also Science students. Thus, only a very small minority actually gets represented because I have no way of knowing what the majority of Science students want.

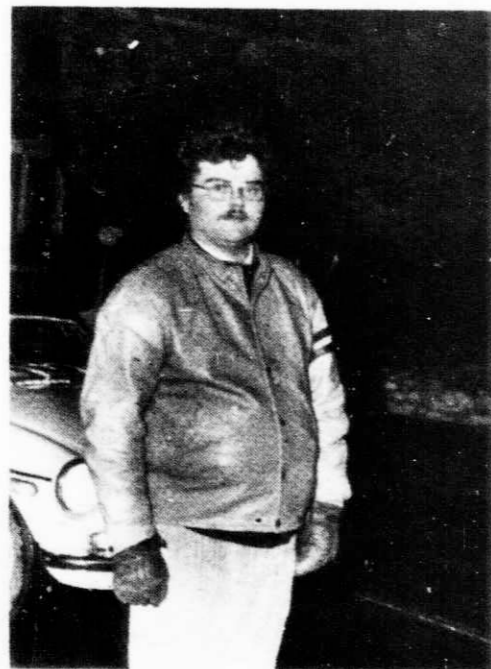
On Council and student government generally:
Council represents itself. I believe that the various reps do try to represent their respective faculties, but since feed-back is so limited, it is impossible to do so.

I think that Council is outdated and more suited for a high school than a university. This is because of the size of the university itself. It is very hard to represent 6,000 people — all having different ideas and belonging to different faculties.

Faults with student government:
I believe that the Executive needs the power it has to cut through the lethargy of the Council. Ultimately, however, Council does have power over the Executive. But, again, Council simply does not represent the students. At least I know that I am not succeeding.

There is too much bloody red tape in student government. However, the SUB is very well run. I also believe that the Student Union does have quite a bit of influence on the administration. Brian Smith especially has helped many students to solve their problems with the University.

Possible improvements:
I think that the present form of student government is the best possible. However, Council must be more representative of the students. Reps should have offices. Better communication must be obtained. Of course, most students don't give a shit. They believe that student government doesn't really affect them and they couldn't care less.



Tim Matthews — Science

On his job:
My job is to represent the Science students. But, because there is no science society to report back to, I find it almost impossible to fulfill my responsibilities. I can only attend Council meetings and do what I think is best for the science students. Since there is no feed-back, I have no way of knowing if my opinion is the correct one to take on any issue.

On his role in student government:
So far I've spent most of my time just running elections. I ran for Council because I thought I could do something. But it is a frustrating experience to sit at Council meetings where you don't really do anything for the students.

I've joined a little society which talks once every week and hands out money. They could do that without me. One person could do that.

On Students' Council:
Council can exert some influence on the administration in a quiet, persuasive manner by making suggestions to the administration. With the support of the students, it could do almost anything.

I don't think you will get a more interested Council until you get a more interested student. The problem is that students don't care who makes the decisions. Thus, a small group of people can run things. The President and the Treasurer make most of the major decisions.

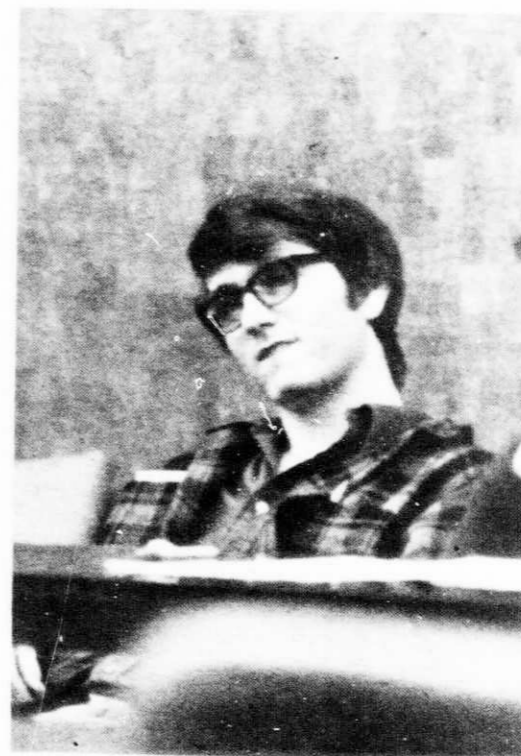
General Comments:
A university should be some place where you come to grow into a better position. It's not that way here.

The university should have a lot more respect for the people in it. There are some very serious people on Council who still think they can act and do something meaningful. As long as students don't think it can act, then the Council can't.



This is our second supplement on Student Council and its members. Due to the number of Council reps, the views of twelve appear this week; the remainder will be printed next week. For the views of one other Council member, the

Chairman Andy Watt, please turn to page 3.
Once again we must explain that we are attempting to increase understanding of Council and the Student Union, as well as the university as a whole.



Scott Proudfoot — Science

Scott Proudfoot describes the Dalhousie Student Council as "useless" and Council Meetings as "exercises in ego-building and bull-shitting". He feels that it would be possible to "wipe out Student Council and not make a bit of difference."

Proudfoot points out that this is not caused so much by a deficient Council but rather because the "student body doesn't give a damn". They "want to be entertained and care little about the government of the Student Union".

Proudfoot feels that the only useful role of the Council is as a "shit-disturber", in other words, as vocal opposition to the excesses of the executive.

Dan O'Connor — member at large

Role:
As a member at large, I see generally what students want. Though it is pretty hard when I don't represent any particular people. Therefore, I have to use my own judgement.

On Council:
Council should concern itself with anything that affects students. No matter how petty it is, if it affects students, then Student Council should involve itself.

Council is basically a legislating and policy-setting body. It cannot do the day-to-day work but these operations should be reviewed by Council. The Executive should tell Council what they've been doing.

Council obviously needs revamping. It is not deliberate, but Council is used as just a body for things that need to be passed — there is no comprehensive review of things now.

As long as the university administration power exists, Council will have to counter-coerce and counter-balance the administration as much as it can, by building up trust and bringing students together.

The Student Union and the University:
As for more reps on the university decision-making bodies, first we must make sure they are more directly elected, more visible, and give it status so that people will be willing to do some work and be in touch with the students.



Barbara Franks — Sherriff Hall

Role:
Barbara Franks represents her constituents through the Residence Council meetings and the individual floor representatives. She gets in contact with the residents through these reps and through posters. The minutes of Student Council meetings and specific items of interest are posted in all the washrooms and by the elevators, so everyone can see them.

She attends all Residence Council meetings and reports to them. And the floor reps report back to the individual floor meetings. "If there is anything that the Residence Council thinks is important and that I can help, then I take it to Student Council."

Role of Student Council:
"It's all so vague and difficult to define. It is essential — as a liaison between students and the university. It also serves as a buffer and a sounding board."

"Council can reflect student opinion, maybe a minority of opinion, but this is a starting point — it can be passed along the lines of communication



Bob Rix — Dentistry

on his position:
"I'm still trying to get to know the system. It's a difficult job to get organized."

on student's council:
"It's still too early for me to make any judgement. Any opinion I'd give would be premature and inaccurate."

on the Gazette supplement:
"It seemed to be accurate and was impressive."

within the university." Council people know and are able to get in contact with people within the university, she says.

She says she doesn't know if the Executive is the source of power. But it is, generally, more in contact with the university scene, and "usually things will come before the executive first. But I know of no decisions when Council has not had to give its approval."

"Council is large and unwieldy," she says, but the committees are effective. As with the Course Evaluation Committee, which she is sitting on, the committee generally is the place to "ally the groundwork and to get ideas implemented. This is where real concrete suggestions will come from and Council can act on these things."

Role of Student Union within the University:
She says students could have more representation on the university decision-making bodies. "When you have very small representation, you have less variety of student opinion. In order to put forth the opinions of students, you have to have a greater number of students."