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Library fire was Canada's worst

By DAVID OLIE

THE SPECTACULAR BLAZE in the Weldon Law Building on Aug. 16 promises to place further strain on Dalhousie's finances and facilities.

The fire destroyed the fifth floor of the building and caused heavy damage to the fourth. Water and smoke damage extends throughout the building. Estimates by Dalhousie's department of finance place the total cost at between \$5 and \$7 million.

Officials of the Halifax Fire Prevention department said last week the fire was caused by lightning striking the roof of the building at about 4:30 a.m. The lightning strike ignited a small, smoldering fire between the fifth floor ceiling and the roof. Hot gasses generated by the fire burst into flame when a member of the cleaning staff switched on the lights in the library two and a half hours later.

Although men and equipment of the Halifax Fire Department arrived on the scene within minutes of the outbreak, there was little they could do to save the fifth floor.

The law library, which occupied most of the fourth and fifth floors, was hardest hit by the blaze.

In a meeting on Aug. 20, the Dal Board of Governors voted to send a letter of thanks to the Halifax Fire Department for its prompt response to the alarm and its efforts to save the building.

Fire Department officials have, however, been critical of the university's fire protection measures.

Fire chief Don Swan says the

library may have been saved, or at least less heavily damaged, if it had been equipped with a sprinkler and smoke detection system, or if security guards had been on duty to do fire watch.

John Graham, Dalhousie assistant vice-president for university services, says sprinkler systems were not recommended for libraries when the building was constructed in the mid-1960's because the benefits were felt to be outweighed by the danger of damage to books if a system was set off accidentally. Graham says opinions have since changed, especially now that inert gas systems are available.

Robbie Shaw, Dalhousie vice-president of finance, says smoke detectors were not installed because they are intended more to protect people than property, particularly people asleep in their residences.

According to W. Andrew MacKay, president of Dalhousie, the university's administration will conduct a complete review of fire protection measures in all buildings on campus in the next year.

Shaw says the Law Building and its contents were insured for their full value, as part of an insurance plan involving 11 other universities in Atlantic Canada.

He adds that while insurance will cover the assessed value of the facility, the cost of replacement will inevitably be greater.

"There will be a shortfall," says Shaw. "I would not be surprised to see a fund drive started." He says the university has already issued an appeal to the friends and alumni of the Law School for

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Firefighters battle Weldon blaze, result of lightning strike. The fire destroyed the fifth floor and caused heavy damage to the fourth.
Dal Photo: Valerie Berryman

Fees pile up for visa students

By KIMBERLY WILLIAMS

NEW VISA STUDENTS IN Nova Scotia are reeling from a 29 percent increase in differential fees, raising fears of reduced accessibility to higher education for foreign students in the province.

Differential fees, first implemented in 1979, are a surcharge levied on visa students in addition to their tuition. The amount is established each year by the provincial government.

Presently in Canada all provinces with the exception of Newfoundland, Manitoba and Saskatchewan exercise the right to levy these fees.

Despite the large amount of money the visa students must pay they are not covering the total cost of their education.

Dr. Peter Butler, Senior Policy Advisor for Post Secondary Education in Nova Scotia, says, "No student on campus today is paying for the total cost of their education."

A Canadian student pays for about one-third of the total cost of their education. Through differential fees visa students will be paying about one-half.

Karanja Njoroge, Overseas Coordinator at Dalhousie, says universities are tied into the differential fee system. The provincial government subtracts the number of visa students from the total enrolment and the difference is the basis for the per capita funding. Therefore the university loses provincial grant money with each visa student enrolled.

"Every time Dalhousie complains about lack of funding the government suggests differential fees," says Njoroge.

Last year at Dalhousie these fees were approximately \$1375.

Earlier this year the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) recommended an increase comparable to their recommended 4 percent tuition hike. As usual their recommendations were ignored by the province and a 29 percent increase was established.

This year, first time, full time foreign students will be required to pay \$1700 in addition to tuition fees.

Dr. Kenneth Leffek, chair of the AAU (Atlantic Association of Universities) MPHEC, believes the increase is a direct result of Ontario and Quebec increases.

"It's supply and demand," says Leffek.

Students unable to afford the Ontario and Quebec fees are expected to create an increase in Nova Scotia's visa student applications, says Leffek.

Although these foreign students have not been paying income taxes their differential fees and tuition are not the only monetary contributions they make. Recent statistics show that foreign students contribute about \$24 million to the regional economy, while it costs only about \$14 million to educate these students. See "Visa students", p. 4

City drops charges against vendors

By BRUCE FANJOY

In a sudden about-face, Halifax city council now appears ready to ease restrictions on street vendors.

Controversy arose when vendors, including Phil Alberstat, a Dalhousie student, were charged with unlawfully operating mobile canteens after 10 pm. Alberstat could have been fined \$75.00.

"We're trying to get a better handle on the situation," says Alderman Art Flynn, one of three on City Hall's 'Use-of-Streets' committee.

"If the vendors would use their common sense and not block pedestrian traffic we wouldn't need the regulations," says Flynn.

The Halifax Board of Trade was quick to come to the vendors aid.

"These people are young entrepreneurs and should receive support from the business

community," says Susanne Rath, communications manager for the Board. "The vendors are a major asset to the type of atmosphere we want downtown," says Rath. "It seems slightly ludicrous to discourage an atmosphere that other major cities are envious of." The vendors and the Board of Trade would like to see restrictions on the canteens, particularly the 10 pm curfew, relaxed.

In light of this criticism, Council has withdrawn all charges and is reviewing the Mobile Canteen Ordinance. There will be a public hearing Sept. 5 and a decision should be reached sometime in October.

"They (City Council) say we make too much noise but it's the drunks who make all the noise... how much noise can someone make with a hot dog stuffed in their mouth?" says Alberstat.

Union bashes student scabs

By LOIS CORBETT

THE 600 STUDENTS WHO worked for Air Canada this summer as replacements for the airline's striking flight attendants slowed down the negotiating process and set back union officials' hopes for an early settlement.

John DeMoss, vice president of the Halifax local of the Canadian Airline Flight Attendants Association, said the students helped staff around 75 flights each day, "and that means a lot of money for Air Canada."

"It certainly takes away the pressure to settle when they're bringing in that kind of income," said DeMoss.

The union is striking because Air Canada wants the attendants to increase their maximum work week from 75 to 80 hours, and start at a lower salary.

The Halifax local president,

Nina Nolan, said the students and the other workers who crossed picket lines took away the union's power without understanding the implications of their actions.

"I don't think they know what it means to be scabs," said Nolan.

"They don't realize that by taking the job now, they are jeopardizing their chances for work in the future. We have the names of the people who crossed, and we are circulating them to other unions," said Nolan.

Kathleen Cochrane, a 21 year old accounting student from Victoria, B.C., who started work as a flight attendant on August 22, said Air Canada management officials warned her she would not be able to look for work at that airline "for at least two years," but she is confident she can find employment at "non-

See "Student scabs", p. 4