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DSU employee seeks revenge

BY LYNN DECKER

A former employee of the Dalhousie Student Union is preparing a lawsuit against the union that could amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages.

Andrew Younger claims that the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) ruined his professional reputation by not rehiring him this fall.

Younger worked at the DSU for three consecutive academic terms and claims that he "had already been guaranteed the job" for this academic term.

He claims that Pat Martin, director of facility operations, had asked him to return as an employee in September. Pat Martin was

unable to be contacted to confirm this claim.

Younger says that based on the assumption that he would be retained, he upgraded his technical skills at his own expense over the summer. He says that he was shocked when he received a letter in the last week of July, stating that he was not being offered a position for the upcoming school year. Younger said that he immediately attempted to contact Pat Martin, but was unable to reach him.

Younger says that at this point he contacted Amy MacIsaac, executive administrator of the DSU. He says that MacIsaac told him that he was not qualified for the position. Younger says that he felt this explanation was unsatisfactory,

as he had successfully retained the position for three years and had trained most of the technical staff employed in the Student Union Building (SUB).

He says that he felt the real reasons he was not retained were personal problems between himself and MacIsaac. Younger was the president of the Student Union Public Service Alliance (a SUB staff support organization). He claims that this position put him in constant conflict with MacIsaac.

"I was the one who made Amy's [MacIsaac] life difficult. She wanted to get rid of me last year."

Younger says that he then attempted to contact DSU president Chris Adams and DSU executive vice-president Bridgette McCaig. Younger claims that he left several messages that have gone unreturned.

At this point, Younger retained a lawyer who wrote a letter to MacIsaac, with copies to Pat Martin and the DSU executives. The letter requested an explanation for why Younger was not rehired, or immediate reinstatement.

"Their [DSU] lawyer responded... basically tough," said Younger.

Younger claims that his lawyer is now preparing a lawsuit to be filed against the DSU within the next few weeks. According to him, the lawsuit will be for the amount he would have made during the year and the lost revenue from his decreased value as an employee.

A representative from the Nova Scotia Labour Board said that there are many complexities to this case, but if it had been clearly specified in writing by the DSU that the position was for a specific term that ended in May 1997, then the DSU was under no obligation to hire Younger for this academic term. If Younger feels that he was not employed due to discrimination then it is a matter for the court system and not the Labour Board.

Both MacIsaac and Adams were contacted for comments on the potential lawsuit, but responded, "We cannot comment because it is a legal issue."

Adams did say that Younger had to apply for employment with the SUB along with any other applicants regardless of whether or not he had worked for them before.

When asked if they would normally respond to requests from a student as to why he or she had not been a successful candidate for employment, MacIsaac said, "We have no official policy on that."

Health Plan fees double

BY KAREN DOWNEY

Doubled fees — that's what Dalhousie students are faced with this fall if they are interested in purchasing the university health plan.

Last year, Dalhousie students paid \$90 for the health plan, but this fall it costs \$199 for the same coverage.

In the spring of 1996, Dalhousie students voted in a referendum to axe the mandatory health plan. Many students were already covered under their parent's health plans and felt that paying \$55 each year for duplicate coverage at Dalhousie was unnecessary. At the same time, there were students who weren't covered under an existing plan, or just wanted the option of purchasing a student health plan through the university.

In an effort to meet the needs of all students, the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) formed an agreement with Blue Cross for a health plan which would cost interested students \$90. Approximately 1,200 students purchased the plan in 1996/97. This number was significantly lower than Blue Cross had expected, and as a result the insurance company decided to pull out of Dalhousie.

"Back in March, Blue Cross told us [DSU] that they lost a bundle of money on the optional plan because the nature of an optional plan is that the people who sign up for it are people who are going to use it," said Carl Getto, DSU executive assistant.

"So Blue Cross said, 'If we are going to come back this year,

September 1997, we will have to raise the price from \$90 to about \$360.' And of course, this is unacceptable to us, so we decided to shop around."

Getto said that the best deal the DSU could find was with Taleski Insurance. Taleski also provides coverage for students at Mount Saint Vincent, Memorial and Daltech.

The plan costs \$199 per student, or \$398 per family. It provides the same coverage that was previously offered by Blue Cross. This coverage includes: prescription drugs; paramedical services; medical equipment and appliances; dental accident benefit; ambulance benefit; tutorial benefit; and accidental death and dismemberment insurance.

To help reduce the cost of the student health plan, the DSU is exploring the option of a mandatory/opt-out health plan. Under this plan all students would pay the insurance fees in the fall as part of their student fees. If students wished to opt-out of the health plan, they could bring in proof that they were already covered under another medical plan to receive a full refund.

Getto says that if the DSU decides that this proposal is viable, then it will be presented to students in a referendum this spring. The referendum would also include the newly incorporated Daltech.

Students have until 31 October to purchase the current health plan. There will be a table set up in the Student Union Building until the end of October for students' convenience.



Cramming already? These students were caught in the act outside of the Killam Library. Photo by Katie Teed.

TAs talk strike

BY STEVE PETRIE

Contract talks between Dalhousie University and the Teaching Assistants/Part-time Instructors Union broke down early last week.

After an unsuccessful meeting on 8 September, the university and Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 3912 broke off talks. The main stumbling block was sighted as the issue of pay.

While Dalhousie has the second highest tuition in Canada, its teaching assistants (TAs) and part-time instructors are the second lowest paid in the country.

According to Mike Earle, secretary treasurer for CUPE 3912, the union has had problems with Dalhousie in the past.

Earle says that the university and the union have also clashed on the issue of job security for TAs and part-time instructors. He says that it took two and a half years of negotiating to reach an agreement with Dalhousie's administration on that issue.

Earle says that a strike is possible, as early as November, if the union and Dalhousie can't reach an agreement.

Currently, annual wages of CUPE 3912 members at Dalhousie differ from department to department. This means union members are being paid different amounts of money for similar work.

The university is proposing a standard salary of about \$2,350/yr to all TAs, with pay increases at three year increments. The union feels this is unjust as TAs at York University in Ontario are currently making close to \$10,000/yr for similar work.

With the gradual increase proposed by the University, pay would reach about \$2,470/yr by 2000-01, a rate which is substantially lower than the other provinces.

By implementing a standard salary, TAs in certain departments would also be forced to take a pay cut. For example, TAs in Dalhousie's History department earn \$3,000/yr. Under the University's proposal they would face a pay cut of close to 22 per cent.

CUPE Local 3912 can legally strike when the Provincial Conciliators who are reviewing the situation have given their reports.

According to university officials, talks are still proceeding and there is no indication of a strike. The university was unwilling to comment further on the situation.

If the TAs and part-time instructors do strike, it could have a large impact on Dalhousie students. There are approximately 600-800 TAs and 200 part-time instructors on staff at Dalhousie. Without TAs, there would be fewer people to grade papers, and without part-time instructors, some classes would be left without instructors.

Pre-packaged ponderance

"The day it's not tense, the day I don't get cramps before I have to photograph someone, is the day I'll start doing something else..."

— Annie Liebovitz,
Rolling Stone

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