

Local reaction

Alberta's striking nurses

by MARK STEVENS

Alberta's striking nurses are getting moral support from their colleagues at UNB.

Jan McWhirter, UNB's Dean of Nursing, says that she wholeheartedly endorses the walkout. "Both the government and hospital administrators have never recognized the dollar value of nurses," she said.

"As professionals, nurses should regard a strike as the last possible resort," she added. "But, in this case, a strike was the only way to make progress. They've been forced into a position where they were left no alternative."

McWhirter went on to explain that nurses' salaries are held in check by restraints that aren't realistic. "The true experts at the bedside should be paid for the quality of their work," she said.

These sentiments were echoed by Lisa Thorburn, a fourth year nursing student. "With the right to strike taken

away from them in '83, going against the existing legislation was the only way they could make themselves heard," she said. "However, it's unfortunate that their patients might suffer."

But Laura Achorn, another fourth year student, was openly critical of the decision to take industrial action. "I think it shows where their values lie," she said. "They shouldn't walk out on their patients"

Alberta's nurses have now been on strike for nearly two weeks. Criminal contempt charges have been filed against the union by the provincial government, but the threat of possible fines and jail sentences doesn't seem to worry the striking nurses. Union president Margaret Ethier told 500 cheering nurses at a rally in Calgary last Tuesday night that nothing but a negotiated settlement will bring the nurses back.

"They can call in the army but only a negotiated settle-

ment will stop the strike," she said.

The union is asking for a one dollar an hour raise retroactive to Jan. 1 and 50 cents an hour as of Oct. 1. The Alberta Hospital Association, which bargains on behalf of 104 hospitals, has offered 46 cents an hour for nurses at the bottom end of the rate scale and 53 cents an hour for nurses at the top of the pay scale (starting April 1).

Many nurses feel that Alberta's striking union members are fighting for the future of their profession. The general consensus of opinion among UNB's student nurses is that their qualified colleagues are overworked, underpaid, and unrecognized. "Even here in New Brunswick, nurses are expected to work 12 hour shifts with only half an hour for a meal break and another 15 minutes for a cup of

coffee," said Lisa Thorburn. "And if you're working the night shift, you can't take a break at all."

McWhirter neatly summarized the dilemma facing Canada's nurses by looking at the problem from the patient's perspective. "If you were critically ill," she asked, "would you want to be looked after by an overworked and tired nurse?"

Africa Week '88

by Ronald W. Carver

Last Saturday evening the African Student Union (A.S.U.) presented to the pleasure and delight of many (including myself) a night of cultural festivities.

The evening started with the President of the A.S.U., after which Mr. Leblanc on the behalf of the Hon. David Crombie, Secretary of State and Minister for multiculturalism, gave an address.

Then came dinner; a dinner of which I tried many things I'd never tasted before e.g. Chapati, Moi-Moi, and Mupunganyama. They proved to be very good.

In addition to the food I got to experience the night of some African dances (the Rhumba-Chachacha and the Pantsula) as well as two poem readings by Kwame Dawes and Jessie Sagawa.

The event of the evening in



President of A.S.U. Ganiyu Jalyeola gives opening speech on Africa Nite.

Photo by Ronald W. Carver

my opinion was the fashion show. I was able to envision the different styles of dress from different parts of the African continent.

In all I would say the night proved to be a complete success and I would like to extend my personal congratulations to the A.S.U. for a job well done.

Depending on success

Continued from p. 1

One thing the station is depending on is the success of a mail-out campaign, used this year for the first time.

"We're hoping to bring in another couple of thousand from former members and people who gave last time," says Whipple. "We've had several cheques come in already. We sent letters to everyone we have addresses for."

Whipple is also optimistic that Fredericton's ethnic community will be willing to help the station.

"Last time, the people on the program 'Student Circle' brought in over four hundred dollars in just a couple of hours. We'd like to get that sort of support again."

'Student Circle' was created by Chinese students at UNB. The students put together a half hour program in Mandarin on Saturday mornings and another one in Cantonese on Sunday.

The station is giving away prizes to those who pledge. Local businesses donated more than \$2000 worth of merchandise to the cause, a fact Whipple finds encouraging.

"The support in the city is cer-

tainly there. The business community has been very good to us."

The funding drive continues today with a live broadcast from Fredericton Mall. Tomorrow, CHSR-FM is staging a concert in the Student Union Building with three bands: Montreal's *Condition* and Fredericton's *Scream Theatre* and *Stradivarius*. Sunday is the last day for the fund-raiser. A winner will be drawn for the station's raffle prize of a portable compact disc player.

The station's 453-4799 pledge line will stay open until midnight Sunday.

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