

AFS gets it together

Co-operation at Acadia

"I will recommend to the Dalhousie Student Council that we release our \$7000 fees to the Atlantic Federation of Students", said Sandy McNeill, a Dalhousie delegate to last weekend's emergency AFS meeting at Acadia University in Wolfville. McNeill's present view is contrary to his position at the last Dalhousie Student Council meeting where he was a main supporter of a motion to withhold the committed student funds from AFS.

McNeill felt that every delegate made some concessions and co-operated on the issues facing the conference.

Delegates resolved their differences and breezed through business remaining from the earlier conference held at Mount Saint Vincent University the weekend of November 17. The students at Wolfville approved a budget excluding Dalhousie's fees, passed a number of unemployment resolutions, and elected a new executive. The seven other institutions present guaranteed AFS that their delegate fees would be paid before the new year.

Delegates agreed one of the major short term objectives of the federation for the coming year would be to seek student represen-



Dal Photo / Grandy

Tony Kelly was elected last weekend to succeed Don Soucy as secretary-coordinator of the Atlantic Federation of Students.

tation on the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, and to carry out research on each campus to determine the real effects of funding cutbacks on the quality of education. The MPHEC is the agency that governs post-secondary education policy for the three Maritime Provinces.

The Federation will also actively

undertake to support the efforts of groups in the region to organize the unemployed, and condemned the federal government's anti-inflation program as a "system of wage controls."

After four tied ballots the delegates elected Tony Kelly, a Dalhousie Graduate History Student, as AFS secretary-coordinator. Kelly was selected on the fifth ballot over his only opponent, Howard Bashinski, a graduate student from Acadia, who was later elected treasurer.

Kelly said he intends to immediately begin the hiring process for the organization's staffperson, and is optimistic that AFS can make strong progress this year. "We have to go to the governments united with the faculties, the staffs, and even the administrations", he said, adding there is a definite crisis in post-secondary education in the region, making the need for a regional student federation more evident than ever."

Debate did stall, however, over the question of where the AFS office should be located in Halifax. The Dalhousie delegation proposed that to save money a rent-free office could be found on campus. At a general meeting in Sydney last May delegates agreed that it would be best if the regional office was not

associated with any particular campus. After lengthy debate, Dal's suggestion was brushed aside. Later, the Memorial delegate said, "considering Dalhousie's notorious reputation with AFS, it would be absurd to have the office right in their midst."

The other two Dalhousie delegates, both of whom had strongly opposed Dalhousie's move of holding back fees, were not pleased with the conference. Janet Cameron, who was in attendance for about an hour on Saturday felt that AFS has yet to get its act together. "I was looking for good solid organizational guidelines which I did not see happening. I now have reservations about us paying our funds. We can't live on ideals."

Tom Rose felt that AFS was not democratic. "The principle of AFS is good but the federation isn't organized. I wouldn't give a dollar of my money to that organization." At the last Dalhousie Council meeting, Rose had told council reps that it was "preposterous" for them to hold back the students' money.

Last February Dalhousie students voted to pay one dollar each for membership in the Atlantic Federation of Students. The Dalhousie Council has since held back that money because of AFS's "financial instability."

Fee hikes avoidable

by Don Soucy

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission's prediction of last August that "tuition fees (for 1978-79) can be expected to increase with the cost of living" may have been premature, the *Gazette* has learned.

"All of us across the country were believing that tuition would be increasing at the same rate as government funding," Deric Burton, an official of the Nova Scotia Department of Education, told the *Gazette*. "Now with Ontario and some other provinces announcing a tuition freeze, everybody is having second thoughts."

"The Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) secured the government promise that fees wouldn't be increased," said Marc Allain, N.S. caucus chair for the Atlantic Federation of Students (AFS). "This shows how a victory for students in one place can have beneficial spinoff effects for all of us."

"The provinces may consider conditional grants, giving money with certain stipulations," Burton said. "We will have to watch for who is going to get excited about these things."

Last June, the Nova Scotia government provided a conditional grant equaling 6% of the institution's tuition revenue. Its stated purpose was to offset tuition increases.

"Students have shown that they are getting pretty excited about the high tuition and the increasing difficulty of continuing our education," said Allain in regards to Burton's statement. "Both AFS and NUS are going to have to organize some type of manifestations of this student concern."

"We also have to make sure that the administrations do not attempt to get off the hook," continued Allain. "There are too many indications that they are going to try for another fee increase next year."

Dalhousie president, Henry Hicks, said in last week's *University News* that to increase the total

university revenue, "we would have to resort to increasing tuition fees."

In October, John Anderson, President of UNB and vice-chairperson of the Association of Atlantic Universities, (AAU), the organization for the regions post-secondary administrators, stated that tuition fees must maintain a certain percentage of the operating grant.

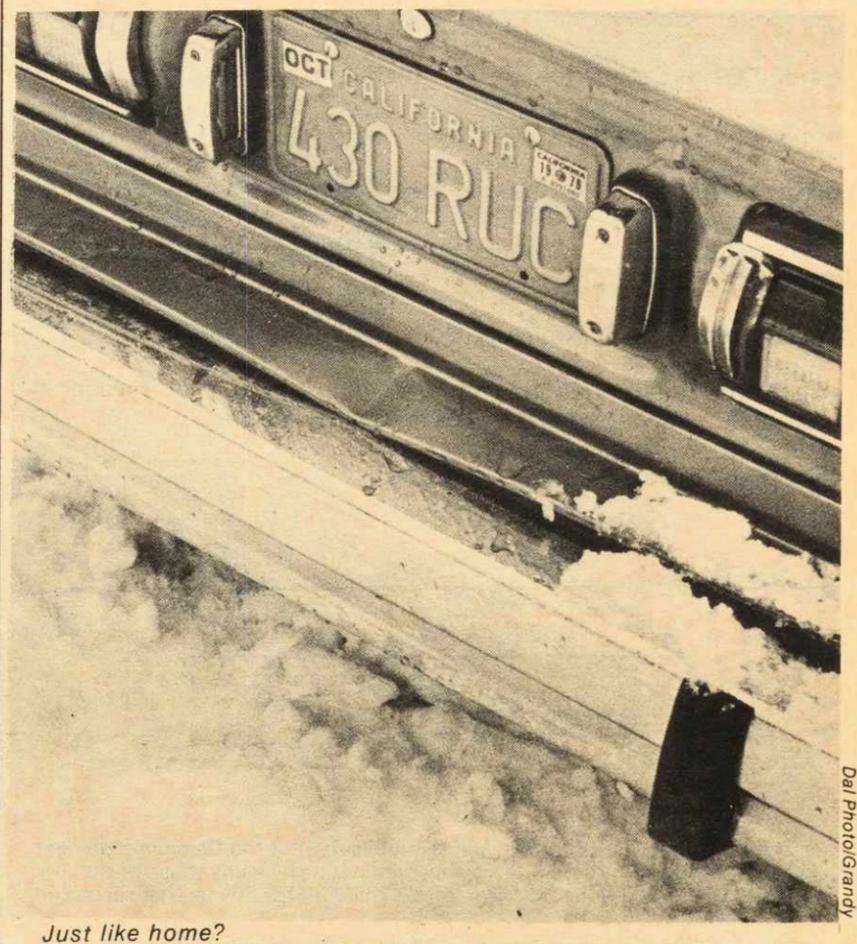
"Such a scheme, like the MPHEC's 'geared to the cost-of-living' increase, would mean a built-in yearly tuition hike," said Allain. "These types of regressive systems are being suggested from too many sources."

According to Mary Thauberger, a central committee member for NUS, the Saskatchewan Universities Commission, (that province's version of the MPHEC), has already moved to have Saskatchewan's tuition fees indexed to the institutional rate of inflation. Harry Parrot, Ontario Minister of Colleges and Universities, said recently that the 17% which students now pay through tuition fees is "not far from being adequate" for the regular percentage of institutional costs.

Student leaders are also alarmed at the growing number of reports calling for a user-pay system. One which was recently prepared for the Ontario Economic Council by York University economics professor John Buttrick, calls for the government to "push tuition fees up as rapidly as is politically possible to the point where they equal the average (adjusted) marginal cost of instruction."

This echoes the 1974 Nova Scotia Graham Report. It recommended that "students should be charged the full instructional costs of their university education."

The Graham Report goes on to state that Nova Scotia could not implement user-pay without similar policies in other provinces. In the interim, the report suggests that "tuition fees should, in our opinion, be increased annually by at least the approximate percentage in-



Dal Photo/Grandy

Just like home?

crease in university expenditures."

"The intentions expressed in the Graham Report make the MPHEC's cost-of-living increase all the more hideous," said Allain. "Canadians must increase the pressure to stop this trend. Burton's statements indicate short term gains. But we must always remain aware of the future."

"We will have to reconsider our plan to increase fees," said Burton. "If other provinces are not going to

raise them, we will have to be darn careful before we start raising them. As you know, we already have some of the highest fees in Canada."

"We have a chance to beat the tuition hikes for this year," concluded Allain. "The key will be the students' and public's willingness to fight for accessibility to education being determined by ability and initiative instead of socio-economic status."

CUPE can strike

At a strike vote held on December 4 by Canadian Union of Public Employees [CUPE] Local 1392, 90% of the 136 union members voted in favour of strike action against the university administration. The union, which represents Dalhousie's cleaning and maintenance staff, broke off contract talks with the administration after calling in a conciliator when the university refused to exceed a 5.5% pay increase offer.