

# University faces 'dilemma' over residence system

By J. DAVID MILLER

The residence system at the University of New Brunswick has lost over \$1.5 million in the last five years.

Translated into exact figures this loss has been \$365,703 in 1974-75, \$363,120 in 1975-76, and is budgeted to be at least \$302,078 for the 1976-77 term.

A loss is usually defined as excess of expenditure over revenue, and this case is no exception. The total budget this year for the whole residence system is some \$2.6 million and total revenue amounts to about \$2.3 million.

The pertinent questions therefore, come down to: (1) where does the money come from to make up this loss, and (2) what effect does this loss have on the entire body of students.

To answer the first question, it is necessary to appreciate the circumstances of the funding of the university. Almost 70 percent of the budget of the university comes from the government through the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC). This money comes mostly in the form of a direct grant and some of it comes from a grant based on the total number of students and upon what faculty they are in.

Although the MPHEC has never made any statements as to whether they would fund residences, they are currently operating under the policy set down by the former New Brunswick Higher Education Com-

## New Democrats

to meet

The UNB New Democratic Youth will meet Monday, October 26, in room 102 of the Student Union Building at 8:00 p.m.

A report will be given and discussed the National Day of Protest, reports will be received from the delegates who attended the recent provincial meeting held in St. John, and plans will be made for National Student Day.

New members are welcome.

## Festival to be celebrated

The UNB India Association will celebrate the Deetavali Festival tonight in McConnell Hall at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome.

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mission. The policy of this body was, according to University Comptroller S.S. Mullin, that they (NBHEC) would not pay for any residence operations directly, but the university could "go short somewhere else" within the total university budget, about 15 percent of which is tuition money.

In other words, the university receives no funds directly for the loss on the residence system, but it can allocated unrestricted parts of the budget (such as tuition fees and part of the government grant) to make up the difference.

It is important to note at this point, that if there were no losses on the residence system, the university would still receive the amount of money presently used as subsidy for the residence system.

To provide some comparisons to a loss of an average of \$350,000 per year on the residence system, a look at the costs for running whole academic departments is useful. It is interesting to see that the budgets of the Chemical Engineering, Classics, Computer Science, Economics, German, History, Mechanical Engineering, Nursing, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, and Physical Education departments are comparable or smaller than the figure constantly lost on the residence system.

The justifications for this rather surprising situation have been discussed at some length in Senate and Board of Governors meetings.

The first argument that crops up is the fact that the buildings have mortgages which are worth about \$350,000 per year. The thesis here is that the whole university should be willing to pay to acquire a capital asset. This argument is absurd when one considers that the university does not depreciate its property and generally acquires buildings either by direct grants (academic buildings) or by private donations (STUD, Aitken Centre). This would put the residence system on the same level as the bookstore, the Aitken Centre, and MaGee House. As a result any mortgage costs should be figured in when considering a budget.

The second main justification for the loss on the residence system is the fact that the university has an obligation to provide a service to those students who wish to live in residence.

What this subsidy means in real terms is about \$200 to every student in residence. It is clear that the university is favouring the 1440 students in residence over those off campus, as no subsidy is given to these students.

The Board of Governors has recognized this drain on university resources as intolerable. Some three years ago, this body passed a motion requiring that "within a reasonable period of time, the residence system should be self supporting. Since that motion was passed, over \$1,000,000 will have been lost on the residence system.

There is no evidence, given the current philosophy of running the UNB residence system, that costs

could be cut in any way. "Budgets were thoroughly examined and reduced," according to Dean of Students Barry Thompson. This statement is backed up by the comptroller.

One can point out, however, that the system of Dons, Proctors, and Residence Fellows costs the university nearly \$800,000 per year. In addition residence students enjoy clean sheets, floors swept, and meals cooked for a price which is almost identical to the costs borne by off-campus students.

For a range of opinion on this loss it is interesting to note the reactions of various people interviewed for this article.

University Comptroller Mullin said of the loss that "the University can well use the money elsewhere".

Assistant Vice President Eric Garland noted "there is no reason why we should subsidize 30 percent of the students at UNB".

He went on to point out that the University, none the less, should provide "the option of a residence system for students."

Dean of Students Thompson maintained that the loss is "justified" as "anyone who really wants to can live in residence." This latter statement is somewhat questionable in view of waiting lists this summer to get into residence.

SRC President Jim Smith said of the loss that "it doesn't make any sense at all" to subsidize 30 percent of students at the expense of the majority. Engineering rep Mike Bleakney said, "If they would subsidize my rent by \$200 that would be OK."

It is clear that the University faces a dilemma. The Board of Governors have issued instructions that are not being acted upon. The MPHEC has not made any decisions on funding of residences.

In Ontario last year, the government definitively ordered that "no money from government sources can be used for residence operations." Were this to happen at UNB, the students in residence

would be faced with a sudden increase in fees and a cut-back in services. In any case it seems clear that a percentage of students are being favoured over the majority.

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