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Marching to futility

by Catherine Ricketts

"Christ, where are all the people?" muttered a Dalhousie Faculty member at last Friday's student-community protest march on the Legislature. The march was sponsored by the Students Unions of Nova Scotia (SUNS).

The answer was clear. Most people weren't there.

Approximately 350 students, faculty and staff turned out for the demonstration against provincial education policies.

Last year, over 5,000 students participated in a similar march which was held on September 30.

Dalhousie Student Union President Peter Rans voiced disappointment at the number of people attending the march, although he seemed buoyed at the press coverage it received. "We had good coverage locally, especially focussed on the 'marriage of convenience' and the lottery for free tuition," he said.

At the culmination of the march at Province House, two Dalhousie students were married in a mock ceremony staged to satirize new changes in the Province's student aid plan. The changes make it difficult for students to claim 'independent status' without being married or fulfilling other rigorous qualifications.

SUNS had also sold tickets throughout the week with the prize being a year's free tuition for any university in Nova Scotia. The winning ticket was drawn at the close of the demonstration.

Rans said many students didn't attend the march due to organizational problems and because some students feel marches are not an appropriate form of protest.

Many factors contributed to the low turn-out at the march, Rans said. Among these factors was the scheduling of the march during mid-terms at most universities.

The Nova Scotia Colleges and Universities Faculty Association (NSCUFA) sent a letter to the Dalhousie Faculty Association suggesting a rescheduling of classes to allow more students and faculty to attend. However, this letter was only mailed on October 8, and many faculty only learned of the letter at a Faculty Association meeting two days before the march.

Dave Rideout, Dalhousie student council's VP External and chairperson of the SUNS campus committee, thought the numbers were low "mainly because people didn't want to march."

Rideout did not participate in the march for unspecified "personal reasons". He has also issued his resignation from the Dalhousie student council.

Some of the organizational problems stemmed from unclear division of responsibilities. SUNS

organized the Week of Information province-wide with the responsibility lying on the SUNS reps on individual campuses to motivate and organize activities for each university.

"A number of individuals worked extremely hard and deserve a lot of credit for trying," said Rans. "Without them, the week would never have come off."

Promotion was limited to the week itself because "people would have forgotten about it over the long weekend," said Rideout. But pamphlets and signs were supposed to have been prepared by the beginning of the week.

Printing delays meant pamphlets weren't ready and distributed until two days before the march.

Heather Roseveare, chairperson of the Communications Committee, the body responsible for getting the word out to students about the march, felt information had been adequately distributed. Students didn't turn up because it was a Friday and they wanted to get home, she said. There had also been a SUB event the night before, she noted.

Responsibility for making placards for the march had also not been clearly delegated. Although final responsibility rested with the SUNS committee, by Thursday afternoon students who had volunteered to pamphlet shopping malls were delegated instead to help with placards. Rideout was not seen helping in the mad scramble to get things ready in time for the march.

Rans had hoped university President Andrew MacKay would march with students and lend greater credence to the protest.

At the Senate meeting a few hours after the march, MacKay was pressed for reasons why he did not attend. "I didn't go because I didn't have much to gain by being there," he responded. MacKay indicated that his own position would be better if he was not involved.

"A march is one way to draw attention to politicians and what they are doing," said Delphine duToit, executive director of the Dalhousie Staff Association. The DSA had approached Rans because they were worried students would blame all paid staff for financial difficulties at hand. Seven DSA members joined the march.

"We wanted to show support for a student-identified issue," said duToit.

A faculty member of the Atlantic Institute of Education said about eight faculty from the Institute had gone on the march. He said he was "very pleased" and pleasantly surprised to see Dalhousie faculty and staff out with the students. The AIE had approached SUNS after

receiving the NSCUFA suggestion to join in the protest.

A professor from the school of medicine was not so enthusiastic with the results, but said that marching was a personal thing. "There's an inhibition threshold which must be broken before people feel comfortable enough to demonstrate," he said.

Another oversight by organizers was getting a demonstration permit for only a half hour, insufficient time to march from the Dalhousie SUB to City Hall, down to Province House and back to the university. There was a possibility the march would be fined for exceeding its allotted time, but the police were lenient.

Some Dalhousie engineers seemed unconcerned when students were rallying in front of the SUB. They didn't think the reason for marching "was that important" and pointed to astronomical tuition fees in the States for comparison. When asked if they would like to pay those costs in Canada they responded "If you have to pay, you have to pay."

President declares state of financial restraint

by Doug Whittall

Dalhousie students and faculty alike are bracing themselves for a new round of cutbacks after President Andrew MacKay issued a declaration of fiscal emergency last Friday.

Citing "continuing diminishing real resources" at Dalhousie, President MacKay declared a state of "financial constraint" to the university senate last Friday, and implemented an immediate freeze on hiring and replacement of faculty and staff.

The university has adopted a two-phase plan in addition to the immediate hiring freeze. In phase one, taking effect in 1982/83, the following is proposed:

- no new replacement appointments or limited term renewals will be approved before December 20
- increased class sizes
- a reduced number of course sections
- the elimination or staggered scheduling of classes with small enrollments
- 'more efficient' use of existing staff
- a review of tuition policy, student services, scholarship and aid policy, enrollment policy and Dalhousie's policy on admission of visa students.

The second phase will be conducted over the next year to develop priorities for maintaining excellence. Each programme will be



Not quite a mass, or even a throng, these were the only students to participate in the march on the Legislature last Friday. The government probably wasn't too worried.

examined for overlap with similar courses offered elsewhere in the Atlantic region.

Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) president Om Kamra says while it's "premature to say anything at the moment" concerning the declaration, "we don't think the university is looking hard enough" for ways to alleviate the fiscal emergency.

Dal student council president Peter Rans says council will sit down and try to construct a series of responses to the declaration through the senate and board of governors.

"The DFA and the administration are going to get involved in a life and death struggle," said Rans. "It's our position to become an honest broker between these two groups."

Dal's financial problems are blamed on falling revenues, provincial funding cutbacks, and high interest rates. The current operating deficit is estimated at \$10.4 million. Last year the university paid out an estimated \$4.1 million in interest costs. This, combined with provincial shortfalls of \$2.1 million, has put a squeeze on the school's operating funds.

In a brief from Dr. MacKay to the senate, the president states "We must change delivery of programmes and services and we must begin to set priorities for programmes and services that will be

maintained and those that should be phased down or abandoned."

According to the brief, the university must pare down courses and services in the short term in order to maintain a high standard of education in the six and five world.

The hiring freeze will be reassessed after the university receives input from the academic planning committee, the deans and the DFA.

Kamra says the DFA will have to examine their collective agreement governing the planned freeze with the university before they act on Friday's announcement. The onus will be on the administration "to show an attempt to find and collect additional revenues," said Kamra.

Student council will also watch developments closely over the next 45 days before actively participating in the university's rationalization process.

"We are the consumers of education," said Peter Rans, "and as such we should have, and I hope we will have, input to what we will consume in the future."

Rans says the council's major priority objective for the rest of the year will be to aid in a settlement of the fiscal crisis the university faces.

"We need to form a think tank of students to deal with this problem," says Rans. "It's a pretty weighty task."