

Forget talks, Dal students and profs want action

BY PAUL MANSFIELD

With drums, noise makers and a giant shoe, students at the National Day of Action made it clear that tuition increases must stop.

Between 200 and 300 students attended the protest held Tuesday, Jan. 27. The atmosphere was energetic as the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)

rallied the troops and marched from King's College to the Provincial Legislature chanting, "Hey-hey, ho-ho, tuition fees have got to go".

Although Dalhousie students were not officially involved, many attended the protests.

Prior to the event, the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) released a statement saying they were not participating in, or endorsing, the

protest. But many Dalhousie students, instructors and faculty were there waving signs and shouting slogans.

Told about the DSU's decision not to support the protest, Ian Dares, a first-year Dalhousie student, was surprised.

"How does the DSU know what 10,000 students want?" he asked.

Bernice Martin, another Dalhousie student at the protest, agreed.

"I'd like to see where [the DSU] gets its polling information from," she said.

DSU vice-president academic/external, Kevin Lacey, explained the DSU's position.

"We at Dalhousie have worked hard this year to build a relationship with the government, so that students can be part of the process," he said.

"It is time to build bridges to the government, not barriers."

But some people feel that the DSU's membership in the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) — the CFS's main political rival — and Lacey's role as CASA's Atlantic regional

director, clouded the DSU's judgement regarding the protest.

Dalhousie Economics professor, Mike Bradfield, sees the protest as an important step towards change.

"You only get things from politicians by getting their attention. The only thing that gets their attention is the possibility that they will lose votes," Bradfield said.

Andrew Wainwright, an English professor at Dalhousie, was in attendance and said he supports the protest.

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Students participating in the National Day of Action protest fuel a fire in the driveway of the Provincial Legislature. (Photo by Matt Barrie)

Prof strike still a possibility

Negotiations down to the wire

BY KAVERI GUPTA AND SHELLEY ROBINSON

Negotiations between the University and professors' remain stalled as the final deadline for settlement draws near.

Jan. 30 is the last scheduled meeting between the Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) and the Board of Governors. If an agreement is not reached on that day, a one-day conciliator will be brought in. And if the conciliation fails to bring about agreement the process for potential lock-outs and strikes is set in motion.

The negotiations, which hinge on professors' salaries and avoiding cuts to faculty positions, reached an impasse Jan. 19 following the DFA's rejection of the Board's latest

financial offer.

Dr. Ismet Urgusal, president of the DFA, says the welfare of students is central to assessing the costs of a strike.

"Strike is an undesirable choice, [but] it may be necessary."

"The faculty don't want to strike because we care about the students...our main objective is to give a good education to them," he said. "We would hope...students realize our position and support us."

Urgusal says that competitive wages are needed to attract and retain good teaching staff, and that in the long run uncompetitive salaries are as much of a disruption to quality education as a strike would be.

"It's disgraceful that we are so dimly paid," he said. "Nova Scotian teachers are amongst the highest paid [now that they have reached their agreement] and Dalhousie professors

are among the lowest in Canada with comparable schools."

With talks coming to a close, Dr. Michael Cross, chief negotiator for the DFA, says the time available for settlement is "very down to the wire".

University spokesperson Michelle Gallant disagrees.

"It is absolutely premature to be talking about strike...both parties are working towards a settlement."

The DFA executive says it is waiting until all options of settlement are exhausted before setting a strike vote. Should an agreement fail to be reached, the association executive will meet Feb. 2 to discuss further action.

Gallant says talks so far have been productive, and she is pleased with their progress. Gallant refuses to address the possibility of talks breaking down.

"You're asking me to speculate and it's inappropriate to do that."

Acadia faculty, administration negotiate under pressure

BY MICHAEL NASH

WOLFVILLE (CUP) — Following an overwhelming rejection of the administration's latest offer by the Acadia University faculty, contract negotiations have resumed at a heightened pace.

On Jan. 20, 97 per cent of the 171 faculty members voting rejected the latest offer. And 95 per cent of 163 participating faculty members cast ballots in favour of setting a strike vote for Feb. 2 and 3, providing a tentative agreement is not reached by that time.

According to Jim Sacouman,

president of Acadia's Faculty Association, the tallies indicate "overwhelming support" for the faculty negotiating team and its executive.

Talks between faculty and representatives of the Board of Governors resumed Jan. 24, and are expected to continue until today. The sides had previously been at a standstill. A provincially-appointed conciliator was called in earlier this month to help the two sides reach an agreement, but left after just two days when the sides deadlocked over what was on the table for negotiations.

As with previous talks, no

details are being released to the media.

"All I can say is that talks are continuing, and that's information in itself," Sacouman said.

Acadia students have been frustrated with the lack of progress in contract negotiations, which started last fall. Earlier this month they staged a day-long sit-in at an administration building, and there have been calls for the resignations of both Sacouman and Acadia president Kelvin Olgilvie.

Acadia Student Union president Paul Black says he welcomes the resumed talks. And while he says he is concerned

about the tight time frame under which negotiations are taking place, he adds that the looming deadline could spur action.

"[It] may lend some urgency to the matter," Black said.

Acadia's president says it is important that the two sides are talking.

"The only way progress can occur is if the two teams are at the bargaining table and we will hope that progress can be made," Olgilvie said.

The two main issues of contention between faculty and administration are salaries and the language of the new contract.

The faculty is calling for a five

per cent raise retroactive to last November and for each of the next two years. The administration is only willing to give faculty the five per cent retroactive raise, with smaller increases in each of the next two years.

Faculty also say the wording of the new contract may radically alter some of the fundamental operations of the university, such as grievance procedures and tenure.

"The Board of Governors is attempting to eliminate Acadia's traditional collegial process of university governance and academic freedom," Sacouman stated in a press release last week.

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—Robertson Cochrane

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