

Controversy rages in first council meeting of year

Council Briefs
By Paul Clark

Student union president Gord Owen's welcome was scarcely over when the controversy commenced last Sunday, ushering in a long awaited new year for Dalhousie student council.

Before councillors finally departed from a chilly council chambers at 1:35 debate had ranged from grass roots issues like food in the Green Room to the ethical questions regarding discrimination by sex in fraternities. The profit levels of campus food suppliers, squabbles over budgets, an apparent gesture of goodwill from the minister of education and student course evaluation were other key topics of discussion.

Executive to be "above board"

Owen opened the meeting by urging councillors to get involved, and to ask questions about subjects of which they are ignorant. He said in previous years much of council's work had been conducted only through the executive, but that this year he planned to present as much as possible to council. "We will be above board, not below it," he stated. "It will be an enjoyable year if we work together," he concluded.

Society criteria-problematic

Debate first began to peak when vice-president Jeff Champion introduced some problems with the criteria now being used for society recognition. According to the student union constitution, "the Dalhousie Student Union and any organization under the jurisdiction of the Dalhousie Student Union shall not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, sex, religion or social status."

This bylaw's points of contention were two fold: first, it permits societies to discriminate on the basis of national origin or descent; second (fraternities and sororities which limits membership to males and females, respectively, are alleged to be unconstitutional. . .)

On the first point, Champion noted that the Nova Scotia Human Rights Code forbids discrimination on the basis of national origin or descent but the letter of Dalhousie's constitution does not. He said he thought the spirit of the constitution forbids such discrimination, however. This being the case, he said a few societies on campus, which he declined to name, were breaking the constitution by using ethnicity and nationality as criteria for membership.

Councillors seemed sympathetic to his point, but some argued there was no real need to change the regulations.

"Who besides a Lebanese person wants to join a Lebanese society? Who besides a Jewish person wants to join a Jewish society?" asked science society rep Carolyn Zayid.

It was thought, however, that there might be reasons for others to join. "Perhaps someone's very interested in



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Lebanese culture," responded chairperson Steve Campbell.

No decision on women and frats

Resolution was more difficult on the question of sexual discrimination.

In introducing the conflict between Dalhousie's constitution and the practices of fraternities and sororities, Champion seemed puzzled as to what action to take.

"I don't know whether it's harmful or benevolent or whether we should even worry about it. I don't know what I should do?"

It was then claimed a similar extension of the constitution would wipe out segregated residences and even washrooms.

It was countered that it would be hypocritical to follow the constitution in cases of discrimination by race or nationality by not regarding sex. "I wonder how you can say equal rights are important without applying them to sex," said Zayid.

Law rep Burt McCann maintained this was a case of justifiable discrimination. Champion favoured continuing to recognizing fraternities and sororities until "malevolent discrimination on the basis of sex" is proved.

Finally it was moved that these questions be taken to the constitution committee as first priorities of business.

No Food in the Green Room

Ian MacKay presented a petition to council on behalf of 102 students who were protesting council's decision of last spring to prohibit food and drink from the Green Room. MacKay admitted that cleaning the Green Room is very difficult, but that the student demand to use it is more important.

Law rep McCann supported him, saying the vast number of people using the SUB do so primarily to relax and that this regulation interfered with this.

Champion replied that council did not like imposing rules but that sometimes it simply had to be done. He said they would have to pay up to 25 thousand dollars in a year to clean up the garbage and food and drinks in the Green Room. Further, the garbage detracted from the environment in the room, he and others maintained.

Sunil Ummat suggested a compromise: that drinks but not food be allowed in the room.

Council finally moved to have the SUB Ops Committee review the decision.

Information lacking on food suppliers

Under a discussion of SUB Ops Owen revealed council had been notified during the summer that Beaver Foods would be raising their prices within the SUB this fall. This led to a series of questions which resulted in a motion to obtain the financial records of Beaver and Major Foods for the last year.

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Animal house in Kitchener?

KITCHENER (CUP)—Alleged "animal house" antics by Conestoga College students may lead to a denial of off-campus housing for students in the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

Peter McBryan, president of a 62 unit condominium project in Kitchener, said an article in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, that he would like to see the condominium board pass a resolution denying rental to students.

McBryan said students from Conestoga's machinist course had made life miserable for the tenants in his neighborhood.

He said youths snapped off young trees, urinated and vomited on neighborhood lawns, put holes in walls and littered garbage on the floors.

"It is too bad the good often suffer for the bad," said Jean Noemer, of Kitchener's Redwood properties. The agency is looking after the rental of an apartment which specifies no students.

Noemer told of instances of noise and damage. "No one

needs problems," she said, sympathizing with her client.

Bob Perks, franchise owner of Homelocators, said his staff is trained to question apartment owners who wish to specify no students. Owners may consider students with good references or parents who will co-sign a lease.

Eric Sanderson of Dubrick Realty Ltd., said he can understand students' housing problems but first year students are not accepted in buildings rented by his agency. It very much depends if the students' parents will hold responsibility for the lease, said Sanderson.

Two female Conestoga students had to resort to renting an apartment infested with cockroaches. One superintendent said he would rather rent to male students because they are cleaner than females.

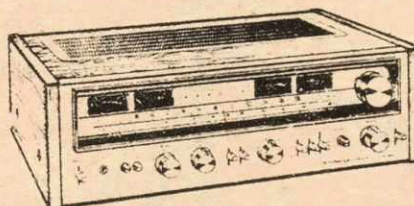
A student who looked unsuccessfully for a place since July had a door slammed in her face when the superintendent saw she was a student.

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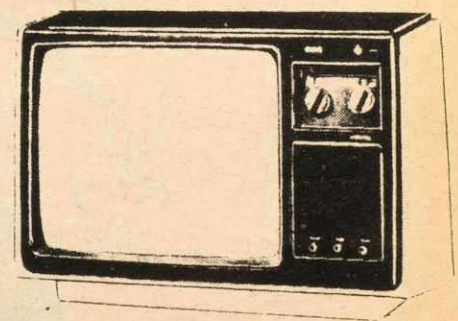
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