

## Protesters force their way into president's office

BY PAUL MANSFIELD

Dalhousie President Tom Traves had an unexpected meeting with protesters last Friday.

Invading Traves's office was one way the protesters from the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) local 3912 demonstrated their frustration with the unfair working conditions many of them say they face.

The union represents the three main universities in the Halifax area — Saint Mary's, Mount Saint

Vincent and Dalhousie.

On Feb. 18 and 19, union members voted on the question: "Do you authorize the executive of CUPE 3912 to call a strike of its members at Dalhousie University (or Saint Mary's or Mount Saint Vincent) to commence on or about Mar. 4, 1998 if the Dalhousie (or Saint Mary's or Mount Saint Vincent) administration does not come forward with an acceptable offer on the outstanding contract issues before the 4th of March?"

Results of the strike vote were not

available at press time, but passion was high amongst the protesters at Friday's rally.

"We are being pushed around by all three [universities]. But by far the worst is Dalhousie who has never seriously negotiated with us. They don't think that we have the power to unite and force them to listen to us," said Mike Earle, secretary/treasurer CUPE local 3912.

Although the other two schools were officially involved, the protest was largely aimed at Dalhousie's administration.

"It's a public protest and not just for the Dalhousie members. The issues facing the part-timers [at all three] are very similar, but the bulk of our membership is from Dalhousie," Earle said.

Marvin Silver, vice-president of CUPE 3912 agrees.

"How far can five thousand bucks go in a year? Dalhousie is the most [stubborn] and the least willing to negotiate," Silver added.

Currently the wage for part-time instructors is \$5,000 at MSVU, \$5,187 at Dalhousie and \$5,280 at Saint Mary's. The Union is asking for a standardized rate of \$7,200 per course for all three schools.

The protest started at the DalTech quad at 11 am. Initially, turn-out was low — with only 45

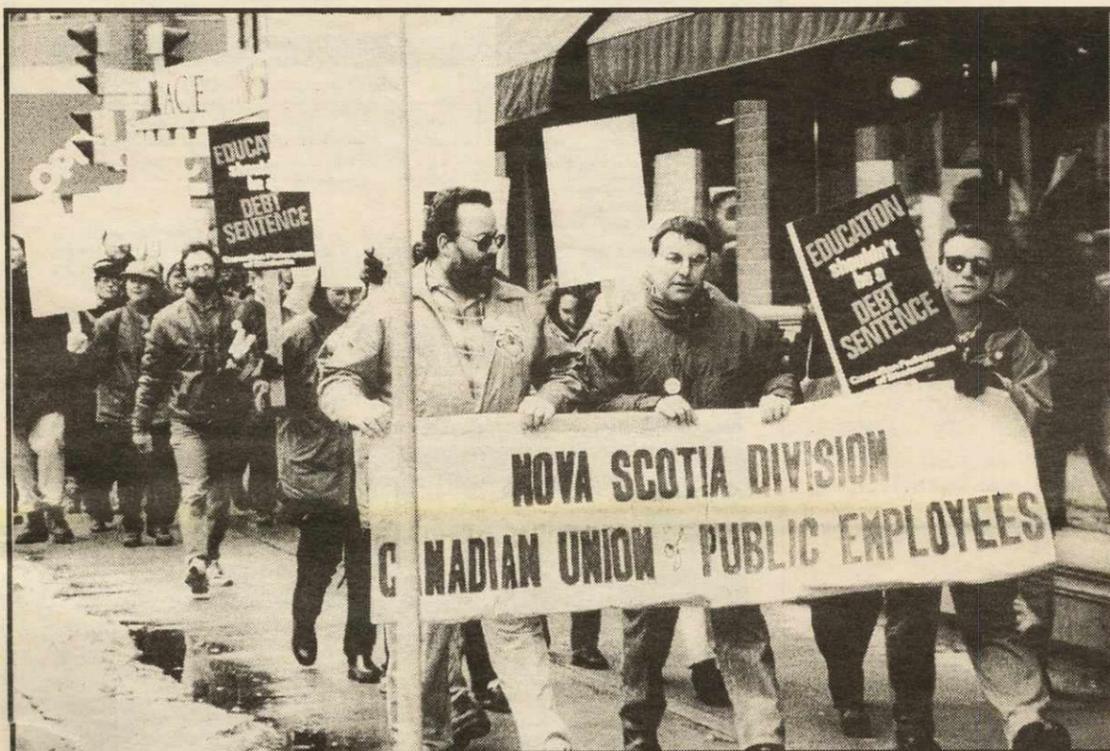
to 50 people in attendance.

"A lot of them are teaching right now and they can't just skip classes. They have responsibilities and we respect that. We are expecting to meet up with a lot more [protesters] at Dalhousie," Silver explained.

The protesters handed out pamphlets and caught a lot of attention because of the large number of people walking around at lunch time.

By the time the group reached Dalhousie, there were about 100 protesters. They proceeded to the Arts and Administration (A&A) building. Once in front of the A&A building they began chanting,

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TAs and part-time profs on their way to Dr. Tom Traves' office. (Photo by Matt Barrie)

## Provincial election date falls during academic year

BY ANDREW SIMPSON

For the first time in over a decade, Nova Scotia students will vote in a provincial election during the academic year — and student leaders say they plan to take full advantage of the opportunity.

Premier Russell MacLellan announced Feb. 12 that Nova Scotians will go to the polls on Mar. 24.

The provincial Liberals have been in power since 1993 and MacLellan — appointed Premier seven months ago — faces the difficult task of returning his party to power in a province which did not elect one Liberal MP in last

July's federal election.

"This [election date] will force candidates to play to students. If they don't, they risk a swing vote in their riding that could cause another candidate to be elected," said Acadia Student Union president Paul Black from Wolfville, where 3,000 Acadia students will have an impact on the outcome in their riding of King South.

"[The politicians] can't just pay us lip-service, I want to see concrete ideas and plans from the candidates," Black added.

The leaders of student unions from around Nova Scotia are working together during the election

campaign, most notably to organize a leadership debate on education issues, Black says.

Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) president, Chris Adams, says the DSU was aware that this election was coming and has been working towards it for some time.

"We have been talking to the education critics of all the parties and helping them to formulate policy," he said.

Adams is not overlooking the significance of an election during the academic year. He says the DSU will ensure that the government knows there are 14,000 voters on the Dalhousie campus.

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## Conciliation may avert strike

Province appoints mediator in faculty/admin negotiations

BY KAVERI GUPTA AND SHELLEY ROBINSON

A provincial conciliator has been appointed to help settle the continued negotiations between faculty and administration.

Set for Feb. 19, the conciliation comes in the middle of a faculty strike vote which, if passed, would enable the faculty association executive to call a strike.

Dr. Ismet Ugursal, president of the Dalhousie Faculty Association, says that while he is confident both sides will settle without a strike, it never should have taken this long.

"I am disappointed that we have to go to a conciliator, it should have been settled at the table," he said.

"There is a difference between a university and a factory — to be treated as a labour union and push everything to the last stage is in bad taste... it is bad for morale."

The talks, which have been going on since September, came to a temporary standstill on Jan. 30. Both sides agreed to third party involvement to help resolve the issues of faculty size and salary increases.

The Nova Scotia Department of Labour appointed Robert Durdan as the conciliator.

Although both sides originally agreed to a one-day negotiation period, Durdan is currently booked

for two days. Negotiators have agreed that conciliation will not go past these two days.

A strike or lock-out is possible if talks fail. The conciliator files a report, and either side may take action after a fourteen-day waiting period. Settlement is also possible during those two weeks.

But a strike is only possible after a successful strike vote supported by more than 50 per cent of the faculty. Strike vote dates have been extended — now Feb. 18 to 24 — to allow more profs to vote.

Professors' concerns centre around what they say are uncompetitive salaries, which they say hurt the university, as much as they hurt professors.

"We're not looking for the sky," says Michael Cross, the faculty's chief negotiator.

Ugursal agrees. "Can we continue to pay our professors peanuts and expect them to stay? It is not possible for [the university] to say no to our proposals and appear reasonable about them," he said.

He also says the recent success of negotiations at other universities, like Acadia, have set the tone for settlement.

Michelle Gallant, a spokesperson for the university, agrees.

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"When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro."  
—Hunter S. Thompson

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