

Graham Commission again and again

Graham Commission Debate

by Stephen Syms

Dr. David Cameron, Director of Faculty of Public Administration, delivered a presentation on the general principles and major recommendations of the Graham Royal Commission to an audience of one hundred participants on Tuesday evening, January 14. This was the second meeting of a scheduled total of nine, designated to provide a forum for public debate on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the provincial Royal Commission on Education, Public Services and Provincial Municipal Relations. The meetings will cover a range of topics on the Commission and will be held every Tuesday at 8:00 p.m. in Rm. 21, in the A. and A. building.

Dr. Cameron said that the natural course for Royal Commissions tends toward inertia. Therefore, considering the magnitude and significance of the report, the public is obliged to push and press the report if they are to benefit from applications of the Commission's more valuable findings.

The speaker reinforced the challenge emphasizing that the report tinkers with major elements of the province's constitution. Principles and recommendations must be assessed keeping in mind the constitutional arrangement envisaged.

"Undertaking to alter the constitution is the single most critical act a political community can ever undertake", stated Cameron. One can treat the report as the first input into the process of revising the constitution. The commission report is 'peculiarly useful mechanism' in this regard.

One main principle distinguishes between General and Local services; this lays the basis for allocation of function between the province and municipalities. General services will be provided and financed by the province for those services are defined as services which are of benefit to the people of the whole province. Local services (Fire Protection), the responsibility of municipalities, can be provided "according to the needs and preferences" of the community.

Dr. Cameron noted that the above principle suggests that the totality of governmental responsibility is to the "provision of services". In fact, the report avoids the issue of treating municipalities as "governing municipalities". The role of government involves much more than this. Indeed the public expects more from government. Dr. Cameron cited other areas of government responsibility as "the regulation of the collective welfare" of the community and the responsibility for "resolving conflict" within

the community. The principle then is 'short of being adequate' in this regard he said.

Those who receive and benefit from a service will pay for them. If benefits accrue to the people of the total province, then the province picks up the tab. Dr. Cameron queried, "What about ability to pay?" A fine point considering that the commission proposes that students

pay the full instructional costs of education since the student is clearly the recipient of the benefits of education.

The speaker expressed reservations about the incorporation of the "those-who-cannot-pay-ought-not-bloody-well-receive" argument, he said.

Nova Scotia will be divided into eleven municipalities. The present structure consists of twenty-four rural municipalities, thirty-

eight towns, and three cities. One participant wondered what principles were employed in the drafting of boundary lines. He cautioned that larger size is not necessarily equated with improved efficiency. Dr. Cameron replied that the issue of boundaries may become one of the most contentious of commission proposals. He also expects that greater responsibilities would attend large size. This is not the case with the proposed eleven counties since the province will assume major responsibilities as the administration of justice, housing, health, education, and social services.

The commission proposes a one-tier government structure. The danger here is that too many aspects government may overload the capacity of a one-tier system to function efficiently. One questioned whether or not it might be more rational and reasonable to

advocate a two tier system. Dr. Cameron suggested that the "circumstances peculiar to the province" may warrant such a consideration. Indeed, it is imperative that a structure best fit the nature and needs of the province.

Asked when the province would act on the report, Dr. Cameron projected a time frame of three years. The time will be needed, he said, for "we, the public, not the Royal Commission, that will be affected by the report."

Public meeting No. 3 will deal with the proposed change in the control and finance of education. This should be of particular interest to university students. The sessions are informative and promise to be more than lively on certain of the program topics.

Those interested in attending please call Peter Aucoin for registration at 424-2400.



Photo by: Tom Mooney

Dal-Mount agreement signed

by Roger Metcalf

The student unions at Mount St. Vincent and Dalhousie have finally entered into a written agreement of co-operation.

The occasion was the signing of a second five year agreement between the two universities. Both events took place in Rosaria Hall at the Mount on Tuesday, January 14.

When the original university agreement started in 1969 the student unions agreed informally to co-operate, and in a referendum the Mount students imposed a \$7.75 per student fee to the Dalhousie union.

The details of the co-operation were never worked out. This led to belief at the Mount that Dalhousie was holding back benefits, and a belief at Dalhousie that the Mount refused to co-operate.

The difficulties reached their worst point in 1972-73 when the Mount withheld their fees, and President Lois Hartnet called for a reevaluation of co-operation at the student level. She was not convinced that use of the Dalhousie S.U.B. was worth the money demanded.

There is some suspicion that extravagant promises made by Dal President Brian Smith were the real cause of Mount disenchantment.

The withheld fees were paid in 1973-74, but the thaw in relations was still slow. When the present Councils at each institution were elected negotiations had been started by the Mount, with no conclusion.

The new presidents, Anne Derrick and Dan

O'Connor, completed the negotiations over the spring and summer of 1974. Last fall both Councils approved the draft agreement, enabling the January 14 signing.

The chief value of the agreement appears to be that it is now clear exactly what obligations and privileges it creates. Unlike the university agreements, this one has an indefinite term.

The new universities agreement changes little from the original. The most notable change is abandonment of hopes for joint registration.

At the signing ceremony Mount University President, Sister Mary Albertus, expressed her institution's gratitude. Dr. Hicks responded by saying that he felt Dalhousie had actually gained a great deal since 1969, especially in nursing and education.

For the moment, it would appear that in Dal-Mount relations everything is sweetness and light.

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