

Research squeezed by funding cuts

OTTAWA (CUP) — The federal government's commitment to funding quality research is eroding, warn scientists and research groups.

The National Research Council has been told to cut \$20 million from its budget, and find another \$74 million during the next five years as part of Canada's \$800 million share of the American space station project.

NRC president Larkin Kerwin said as many as 200 scientists could lose their jobs, while some NRC departments and facilities will be either shut down or sold.

Kerwin, calling the government decision "regrettable," said council administrators have tried to minimize losses. "We have looked carefully at all our programs and have had to make some very difficult decisions," Kerwin said.

The NRC cutback follows a decision this winter to freeze guaranteed funding to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, which fund most research on Canadian campuses. As well, the government last year cut 50 per cent of the budget of Science Council of Canada, a policy and advisory board.

Science and technology minister Frank Oberle, who has been attacked almost daily in the House of Commons by opposition critics, staunchly defends the government's move to reduce the federal deficit, and said reported damage to Canadian research is exaggerated.

"There will be no layoffs and no pink slips (at the NRC)," said Oberle, even though senior NRC

officials say layoffs are inevitable.

And even if layoffs are avoided, they say, research will suffer because of insufficient funding for equipment, supplies and support staff.

"Of what I can see, budgets are dropping, and support is disappearing," said NRC scientist Zbigniew Basinski, a member of the Order of Canada who studies metal strength and fatigue.

"Funding restraint (is making) my research impossible," he said.

"From our point of view, the really terrible thing is that morale is going below sea level," he said.

Mosur Sundaresan, chair of Carleton University's physics department, said scientists outside the NRC have also lost heart. "Although we have not been directly affected, we are very concerned about the future," he said.

"We are not convinced the government is very concerned about the future. We are not convinced the government should be putting so much money into the space station project on such a long term basis," said Sundaresan.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers is not opposed to Canadian participation in the space venture, but CAUT president Allan Sharp said the cut "is another wrong step to take."

"Canada provides too little money for research in Canada. Mr. Oberle seems to be of the view that science policy in Canada can be improved without new funds," said Sharp.

"We think improving science policy will require new money. Mr. Oberle is going to have to accept that fact somewhere along the line," said Sharp.



FRASER MUSTARD



MARCIA OZIER

Fraser finds competition on campus. Fraser Mustard (left) and Marcia Ozier (right) were two of the speakers at last Friday's symposium marking the installation of Dalhousie's new president. Photo by Scot Campbell Dal Photo

University banks on hi-tech

By TOBY SANGER

Dalhousie doesn't need to be co-opted into a high-tech future by government and business, said Marcia Ozier, president of the Dalhousie Faculty Association, at last Friday's symposium marking the installation of President Clark.

Ozier said Canadians have a choice whether to enter a technological race with the US and Japan and suggested Canada should carve out a different and unique role for itself.

Ozier was responding to scientists and businessmen who spoke at the "Toward the Information Economy" symposium advocating the establishment of "centres of excellence" in basic and applied research at selected Canadian universities.

Fraser Mustard, president of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, said that for

the Canadian economy to compete internationally, specialized research and educational institutes must be established in Canada.

"When in competition, concentration (of educational resources) becomes essential," said Mustard.

Mustard said Canada has little choice but to shift from a resource-based economy to a research and development-based economy in the coming information age.

He likened scientific advance to a powerful river, saying, "you can shape the river, but you can't hold it back."

John Sheppard, chairman of Leigh Instruments, agreed with Mustard's prognosis, but said a change in the structure and outlook of universities was needed, rather than an increase in public funding.

"We are only gradually resolving the solitudes between university and private sectors," he said. "The research and development culture must be a function of demand from an entrepreneurial community" rather than foisted upon the country.

Ozier criticized Mustard's view, saying, "the urgency we see today is the urgency of corporations. It is not for the government to prescribe the role of universities. That should be for the students to decide."

Other speakers in the session included Cedric Ritchie, chairman of the board of the Bank of Nova Scotia and Roseann Runte, rector of Universite Ste Anne.

The session was one of three in the symposium in which participants examined the university's role in the new economic era and the social implications of the information economy.

New drug deal at King's

by Sandra J. Goodwin

The students at King's College, who have in past years used the same medical plan as Dalhousie, have finally made an agreement with a new medical services agency, through which they intend to get more for their money.

The Dalhousie plan which King's previously fell under is that of M.H. Ingle Insurance Ltd., to which students each paid \$20.00 per year. This cost per stu-

dent was significantly higher than that of Dal students, chiefly because of the smaller population at King's. The new plan, by Taleski Insurance Inc. and the Canadian Federation of Students, offered "a saving of \$4.50/student... with slightly better benefits."

These benefits include: a \$10,000 reimbursement for hemiplegia; \$10,000 for loss of both speech and hearing; \$6,000 for loss of either speech or hearing; \$5,000 for loss of hearing in one

ear; \$3000 worth of visits to masseurs, naturopaths and speech therapists; and \$300 worth of tutorial expenses due to an illness. None of the above are covered in the current Dal plan. Furthermore, the CFS plan has several options. First, there is an option within the workings of the drug plan. Students (as a unanimous body) may decide to receive either 100 per cent coverage, using the claim-form method of the Ingle plan, or, to avoid the paperwork, may decide on an 80/20 plan whereby each student has a card which absorbs 80 per cent of the cost. The student pays a flat sum of 20 per cent, and the card can be used at 95 per cent of Halifax area drug stores. Mount St. Vincent currently has a plan with CFS and Buckley's by which even 100 per cent of the drug cost is absorbed on the spot.

Further options include dental insurance and a birth-control option. (King's and the Mount, incidentally, opted out of the birth control coverage, some suggesting religious aspects as a possible reason.)



Pills or band-aid?? Photo by Ariella Pahlke/Dal Photo

Dr. Who? cares

Who's Doctor Who? Has the time lord invaded the Dalhousie campus? If you've had a distant connection with Who mania, or you've never heard of a Dalik in your life, be prepared.

Under the cover of dull university students lurks a small band of followers. Under the title of the Doctor Who Society, this group of sixteen students watch, talk about, and read about the famous British sci-fi show.

Under president Peter Jarvis, the group talks about the 24-year-old show and they are preparing to honor the time lord in a Who Day taking place one week from Saturday in the SUB.

While Peter Jarvis maintains that the group is not absolutely absorbed in the Who show, he admits that on the whole, "We are all Who fanatics."

Most likely, this mania started as a result of the great human qualities of the show. With an

eccentric Englishman as time-lord, and special effects that don't always quite work, who can resist the sense of something put together with heart, but little finesse.

The all day festival is expected to be a sci-fi extravaganza. There will be footage of the Dr. Who shows, including many of the older shows that are more attractive to some of the Who followers.

Peter also stated, in his calm, collected sci-fi enthusiast voice, that the Who members are trying to get some big names in sci-fi to speak at Dal, including Douglas Adams, author of another sci-fi cult book, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

In case you don't get a ride in the phone booth, you'll have to wait till November 22 for Dr. Who Day. But however you get there, the Dr. Who society would love to see you.