

2,500 students hurt by student aid delays

by Gretchen Pohlkamp

* Law I student Sheila D. had her student aid application in by August 4. She still has not received her loan as of October 1.

* Last year King's School of Journalism Frank M. applied to Quebec for his student aid. It was November before he finally received his money.

* Charles S. applied late for his student aid. He has no idea when the completed forms will be returned to him.

What's the hold up? Why are 2,500 students in Nova Scotia still waiting to receive their loans? How much longer will they have to wait?

Gerald Knickle, director of student aid, said that they are a bit behind this year but he expects to have the remaining applications processed in two to three weeks.

"The Minister (of Education) is aware of the problem and has authorized overtime to allow us to get through these applications as quickly as possible," said Knickle.

He said there are two reasons for the delay this year. One is a change in office procedure which allows for an extra check of all applications.

"There is a human factor involved here," he said. "We have to make sure our work is accurate." The checking procedure has taken two people off the normal processing thus slowing down the work.

The second reason for the delay was an unprecedented 2,042 applications received in the last two weeks of July. "It was impossible to process that number in one month," said Knickle.

The student aid office has

an unwritten policy which says that any application received by August 1st will be returned to the student in time for registration. This year they had only gotten as far as July 23rd applications by registration time, while last year all applications received to August 15 had been sent out.

"Part of the problem is that 34 per cent of the applications received this year had to be returned to the students for further documentation," said Knickle. He said this is up from 20-25 per cent last year. Because of the high returns, the process slows down and as they get behind, students phone wondering where their money is.

"It's a Catch 22," said Knickle. "If applications are out late, students call, which makes the loans late, which makes the students call."

It seems the best advice would be to starve quietly, because the less you hassle the student aid office, the sooner the work will get done.

Knickle said that many

universities will allow students to register as long as they have their file number. He said he does not expect that universities will be penalizing students for late payment of fees, since the delay was unavoidable.

He said that although they decided to implement the checking procedure in mid-June, it was not possible to know what effect it would have on the process.

"I could anticipate problems with it, but I had to prove it," said Knickle. Since the office studies have been rearranged and overtime authorized to make up for the adverse effects.

Knickle said he expects to begin work processing bursaries in November. He said there is a snag with that as well, since the government has allowed an extra \$500 per student in bursaries this year. Over 6,000 applications will have to be reprocessed to review bursaries.

"Being human, we could miss some applications where

more money should be allocated," said Knickle. "We depend on the students to come to us and ask for the extra money, if any mistake is made."

Knickle said banks will loan students money until their loans come through but this also slows the process, since the student aid office must verify that the student has applied for student aid.

Of the 20,260 students in post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia last year, 40 per cent received student aid and of those, 35 per cent were independent or married students. It is that 35 per cent who are caught without funds should their applications be held up.

People like Sheila D. depend on family and friends to help them until their loans are received.

"It's a worry to us," said Knickle. "We're doing all we can to catch up."

Until then, tighten your belt, or tell them to put it on your tab.



New Dal rink mired in red tape

by Greg Dennis

Construction of Dalhousie's new \$2 million ice rink is at an impasse as the application awaits final approval from Halifax city council and will begin no sooner than the end of this year.

With an anticipated two months' wait for Council to approve the plans and a sticky insurance policy hanging over their heads, university administrators will be scrambling to start construction even by that time.

The new arena, if given the nod from the city, will be located atop the grave of the old rink on the corner of South and LeMarchant Streets. The old rink, an antiquated wooden structure, burned to the ground in May, 1978 and has been sorely missed since. For the last two seasons the varsity hockey team has played its home games in the Halifax Forum, one mile north of the campus on Windsor Street and the Tigers will do so again this season.

Under the terms of the old rink's insurance policy, the university had to begin construction of replacement facilities before 1980. An extension

of one year was granted at that time and it is unknown whether or not another extension would be given should construction be delayed past the new year.

"Some think we could (obtain an extension), some think we can't", said Jim Sykes, Dalhousie University's director of planning and development. "I tend to be optimistic, but I think we'd better get going."

Meanwhile, the application, not submitted until July 25, 1980, lies in City Hall and Sykes estimates it will be December 20 before it cuts its way through the red tape. Before council gives final approval, the application is circulated through various departments (that is, planning, development, power commission, Maritime Tel & Tel, water and sewer commissions, et cetera), studied by city engineers and forumed at a public hearing. The hearing, given in the construction of any building over 5000 square feet, presents an opportunity for pros and cons to be aired.

After council's decision, the city grants a 30 day appeal

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See page 15 for an account of how a "nice, little store" has been accused of paying sub-human wages and union busting, all on the way to becoming the second most lucrative foodchain in Halifax.