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DSU election a real yawner

by Gazette staff

Howe Hall residents say shabby voter turnout in the recent student union elections proves the student council is out of touch.

Students stayed away in droves when the DSU elected its new leaders two weeks ago. Barely 12 per cent bothered to vote, and pre-election candidates forums were poorly attended. One forum in the Tupper Medical Building attracted only three onlookers.

"It sucked," said Jennifer Hockey, the DSU's Elections Returning Officer, when asked about student interest in the elections.

In stark contrast, however, was Howe Hall, home to 495 men and women. In Residence Council elections, run at the same time, over 80 per cent of residents voted. Bronson and Henderson Houses had better than 90 per cent turnout.

Andrew Younger says it's because what their leaders do actually matters to Howe Hall residents.

"In residence people can actually see what their council's doing for them," said the second-year student who organized Howe Hall's elections.

"I'm very disillusioned with student government. The DSU is looked at as a protest machine that'll never get anywhere."

Bob Pritchett, newly elected President of Howe Hall, agreed.

"Residence is a community in and of itself," he said. "We're such a tight knit group, if a decision is made we want to know how it'll affect us."

Pritchett said residence-dwellers have lost interest in attending tuition fee protests. In past years, he said, Howe Hall produced the bulk of those who came out to rallies and demonstrations. "This year," he said, "we had a really hard time getting people out."

"It's because students are fed up with skipping their classes when they know nothing is going to be accomplished. You become habitualized."

Both Younger and Hockey agree that getting students to care is difficult. "I think the DSU's got to re-work their whole election machine

if they're going to get people interested," said Younger. "People look at it and say, 'What does the DSU do for me?'"

Hockey said she publicized this year's elections more than ever, but it made little difference. "It's the way people view the DSU," she said. "I know a lot of people see it as a clique. That's got to be changed."

Younger also said the DSU elections made many people in Howe Hall angry because they crowded out Howe Hall's own. He said DSU candidates routinely ignored rules on where they could put up posters.

Younger said the DSU should have known better than to schedule their elections at the same time as Howe Hall's. "Our election has always been the Wednesday and Thursday before February break. They knew that."

Both Younger and Pritchett said the student council takes residence for granted. They said last September, the DSU raised the price of frosh packs without consulting the Howe Hall frosh week organizers. "That created a lot of tension," said Younger.

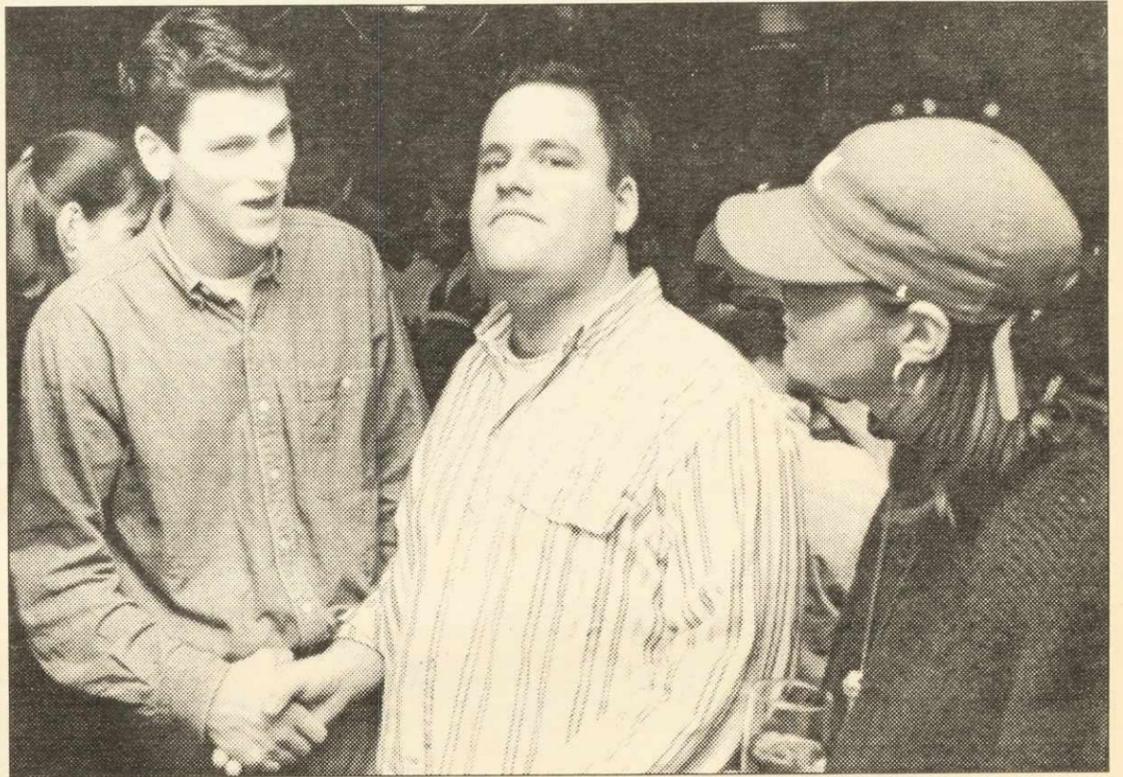
Hal Maclean, the student council member from Howe Hall and the incoming DSU Vice-President External, said this kind of problem comes up every year and probably won't go away.

"We don't communicate as well as we should," he said. "I don't think [Howe Hall residents] are whiners. The rumblings are always going to be there."

He agreed with Younger that campus politics hold little interest for most students, and that residence leaders are more relevant to the people who live there.

"Nobody cares about the debates, the motions, the procedure. The things that the Residence Council decides affect us a great deal. Students are looking for day-to-day problem solving."

"You know student politicians — you've gotta love them, but they all want to change the world in one day."



Outgoing Student Union President Jeff Rappell looks serene as he congratulates his successor, Rod MacLeod.

DALPHOTO: MIKE DEVONPORT

Programs safe — for now

by Ryan Stanley

It's official. Five months after Dal's President called for four programs to be closed and their professors to be laid off, a labour arbitrator told him last week it can't be done.

But a news release from Dal says the administration is already considering other ways to save money without firing profs.

The ruling by Daniel Soberman says Dalhousie's financial problems can't be solved by closing the Theatre and Music Departments or the Public Administration and Library and Information Studies programs. In a controversial speech last September 22, Howard Clark recommended these programs be shut down to help fight Dal's ongoing budget problems.

Colin Stuttard, the head of the professors' union, said he was pleased with last Monday's ruling. "It means the proposals that Howard Clark has been making simply can't be carried out."

A week later after Clark's speech

the Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) launched a formal grievance against the university, claiming their contract forbids the Board of Governors to cut professors' jobs just to save money. The DFA argued cuts could only be made if the programs were judged to be substandard academically — a matter to be decided by the university Senate, not the Board.

Soberman agreed with the DFA's interpretation of the contract.

In response to the ruling, the administration issued a media release saying it accepted Soberman's decision. It added that Clark is examining other proposals to save money in the Faculties of Management and Arts and Social Sciences, proposals which avoid cutting programs and jobs. It said Clark would respond to them by the middle of March.

Administration officials could not be reached for comment.

Board votes against Clark

by Lana Larder and Crystal Levy

Despite strong objections from Howard Clark, the Board of Governors voted overwhelmingly on February 15 to direct the Dalhousie President to place a student representative of his choice on the Budget Advisory Committee.

Clark expressed concern the motion was "directing the President on how to run the university". He also argued a student representative would only "add another layer on top of what we already have.... a process that already involves one, two, three, four layers."

The four student members of the Board were pleased the Board listened to their appeals.

"We don't expect to overthrow the Budget Advisory Committee with one student. We just want someone to present the student's perspectives and concerns," Lewis Jacobson, a student representative on the board, said after the meeting. "The most frustrating thing about this fight was that Dr. Clark really

avoided the issue."

The student council first recommended having a student on the BAC in September, when the committee, which advises the President on financial matters, called for sweeping budget cuts and tuition increases.

The committee already includes eight professors and university administrators.

Jefferson Rappell, Student Union President, said Clark at first seemed receptive to the idea of a student on the BAC, but later said no. Rappell said taking this proposal directly to the Board of Governors was their "only alternative."

To ensure the motion would be passed, Rappell and the other student representatives contacted Board members before the February 15 meeting to argue their case.

"We worked our asses off to get this," said Rappell. "I was on the phone with one member for an hour and a half."

"As far as I know, this is an unprecedented step," said Jacobson.

For what it's worth...

In case you didn't hear, the Dalhousie Student Union has a whole new slate of student council representatives, to take over May 1. A whopping 12 per cent of students swarmed to the polls to endorse them two weeks ago. Here they are.

President: Rod MacLeod
Vice-President Executive: Tiffany Jay
Vice-President Academic: Beth Owen
Vice-President External: Hal Maclean
Communications Coordinator: John Yip
Board of Governors Representatives: Lisa Lachance, James Connor
Science Senator: Natalie Archer
Arts Senator: Chris Lydon
Management Studies Senator: Nathan Laurie

Make them work for you.