

Role of medical clinic

Band-aids not social change

by Ron Stang

A community clinic's purpose should be to provide medical services, not to take stands on political issues.

That's the opinion of Len Wilson, an official of the Halifax Infirmary Hospital. The Infirmary sponsors the North End Community Clinic, a medical facility serving the city's predominantly working-class North End.

Wilson made the comment during an interview with *The Gazette* last week. He was responding to questions regarding an incident which took place involving the Infirmary's board of directors and the North End Community Health Association. The latter group provides overall direction for the clinic and is composed of residents in the neighborhood the clinic serves.

The incident revolves around an issue the association debated last summer. At its annual meeting in June one of its members brought to the floor a motion seeking support for the right of the people of Quebec to political self-determination. Because of a lengthy agenda, the motion couldn't be discussed at the meeting. Instead, it was tabled for debate at the association's July board of directors meeting.

Between these two meetings, however, the Infirmary's board of directors,

hearing of the motion, contacted the clinic's coordinator, Wayne Edgar, and warned him that if the motion should pass, the hospital's sponsorship of the clinic would be in question.

Wilson said he told Edgar the association would be "ill-advised to become involved in a (political) situation that was none of their concern." He said he told him that if the motion did pass the hospital board would have no choice but to "reconsider its support" of the clinic.

Asked if reconsidering its support meant cutting off funds to the clinic, Wilson paused and said, "you're asking me to remember something that happened a long time ago." He then added, "funding is very important and we can't have a renegade group (endangering it)."

But, according to Edgar, the threat of curtailing funding was "put in fairly direct terms."

Wilson emphasized he has "no regrets" about intervening in the matter, saying he'd do exactly the same again if the situation arose. He said in cases like this the hospital board would be obliged to step in. Otherwise, he said, it would be "politically embarrassing for us (the hospital)."

Asked if he considered such action on the board's



part limiting freedom of speech, Wilson replied he had no objection to people making any political statement they wanted so long as they made then in an individual capacity. But, as operators of a government service (which the clinic in effect is since its funds come from the province and its trustees (the hospital board) are responsible to the government), he said it would be contravening public service policy to take such political stands.

"As a Crown Corporation answerable to the people of Nova Scotia we don't get involved in political affairs," he stated.

The motion was discussed anyway by the health association's board but was rejected for reasons unrelated to this.

Following the incident, the association sent a letter to the Infirmary board defending its right to take political positions and demanded the board cease interference in association matters.

This intervention on the part of the board would appear to be anomalous to past relations between it and the health association.

Although Wilson said the association has no business involving itself in matters of a political nature, the com-

munity group in the past has publicly criticized government policy without any interference by its sponsors. Edgar mentioned one recent instance when the association spoke out publicly against the provincial government for the way it funded a community employment project.

Edgar said he believed the reason the Infirmary became involved over this issue and not the others was because it dealt with Quebec.

"It was because of the hype on the (Quebec) nationalism this one entailed," he said.

Physicists say

Universe still intact

Dalhousie and St. Mary's Universities hosted the four-day national conference of the Canadian Undergraduate Physics Association last week.

Over 200 delegates came to hear guest lecturers and other students give papers. They also toured local research labor scientific facilities, such as the Dalhousie physics and psychology laboratories and St. Mary's observatory and radio-astronomy facilities.

The conference began with the Guptill Memorial Lecture given by Dr. Freeman Dyson of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N.J. In his speech on "The End of the Universe", Dyson explained that it would take a very long time for the universe's supply of energy to exhaust itself.

If a living creature can be represented by a large but finite number of states, Dyson said, these states could be replicated at lower temperature levels, so that consciousness could continue after temperatures dropped below the level needed to support human life.

Dyson said that his speech assumed that the universe would continue to expand, with galaxies moving farther and farther away from each other, and with the earth constantly cooling down. His predictions would not be valid if the "closed universe"

theory, which says that eventually the universe will collapse, was true.

Three interpreters provided translation services for most lectures, including Dyson's.

Student papers varied

Donald LeBlanc, a Dalhousie undergraduate, explained how deep water transducers can be used at greater depths if they are filled with fluid and compliant tubes.

Mary Richardson, an undergraduate at Université de Moncton, demonstrated the use of microprocessors as musical instruments.

A Simon Fraser University student, Kevin J. Keen, spoke about meteorological rocketry — getting information on the upper atmosphere with rockets.

Other undergraduates discussed various theoretical and experimental work that they had been involved with.

Professional physicists

Professional physicists who gave lectures included Nobel prize-winner Dr. Hans Bether,

SMU astronomer Dr. David DuPuy, Dr. Alain Caille of Université de Sherbrooke, nuclear physicist Dr. John King from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, SMU physics chairperson Father William Loñc, and three Dalhousie professors, Dr. Christopher Garrett, Dr. William Archibald, and Dr. B.E. Paton.

Next year's undergraduate physics conference will be held in Edmonton.

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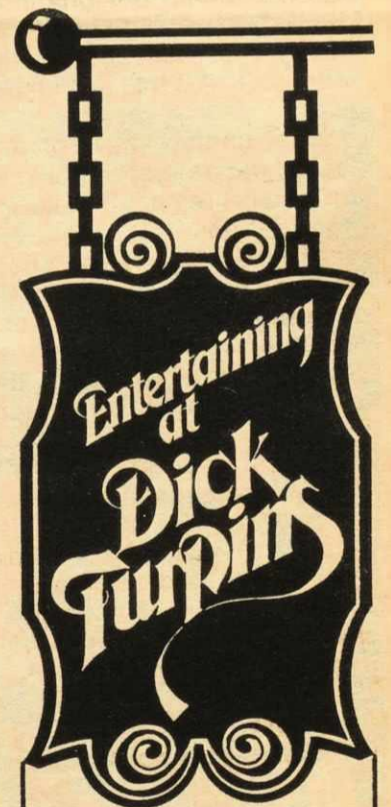
The Dalhousie Curling club is holding a meeting, **Wednesday Oct 25 at 7:00 in room 318 of the SUB.** to discuss how its members will receive a portion of allotted funds towards their membership fees. Everyone interested is welcome to attend. Present delegates are requested to send at least one delegate from their team as we need a head count. This will be the last meeting before curling begins so please attend.

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