

Anderson under attack about residence fees

By DERWIN GOWAN
Managing Editor

Residence students are worrying over possible fee increases and service cutbacks, and members of the UNB administration were fired with a whole series of questions on this issue at a forum in Lady Dunn Hall last Wednesday night.

Negotiations for next year's food contract with Saga Foods are presently underway and some students, particularly from Lady Beaverbrook residence, are concerned that their dining hall may be closed. Others claimed that if fees go any higher, UNB residences may be priced out of the market.

University vice president (finance and administration) James O'Sullivan defended the deficit budget for the residence system, saying residence fees counted for approximately 88 per cent of the residence costs and even higher for MacGee House, which is significantly higher than the 15.5 per cent of university operating costs covered by tuition fees.

O'Sullivan said the problem with residence financing was that the provincial government allowed no special grants for residence costs. O'Sullivan said increased residence costs, according to official government policy, are supposed to be met by increased student aid to individuals.

He said the pattern over the last ten years was for a gradual deficit to pile up over a number of years until there was a serious problem. Then there would be a drastic fee increase and the deficit would drop. However, as costs rose, the deficit would build up again. The present debt, said O'Sullivan, was approximately \$350,000.

O'Sullivan said 38 per cent of residence costs are taken up by food costs, 14 per cent by the mortgage, 19 per cent by janitorial services, 11 per cent by maintenance, 8 per cent by security services, and 8 per cent by heat, light and water.

There are two ways to reduce the deficit," said O'Sullivan. We can increase revenue or we can reduce costs. I find that students resist both."

The problem is further complicated by the fact that there are presently about 45 vacancies in the residence system, causing further financial problems. However, Dean of Students Barry Thompson pointed out that other universities in the Maritimes have 100 and 300 vacant rooms, although their costs are slightly less. He said he believed this was because of superior programs offered here.

University president John M. Anderson said enrolment was expected to rise until 1981 and then fall off.

Aitken resident Allan Eddie said a basic problem with residence financing was that mortgage costs continue over a twelve month period while revenue came in for only eight months. O'Sullivan agreed that better use should be made of the residences in the summer if revenue could be realized.

He said any new student housing projects would have to be planned to break even.



Anderson said no final word on fee increases can be expected until the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission lets the university know how much money will be available next year. It is expected that the decision will be made at the next Board of Governors meeting, planned for April.

Residence students at the forum were critical of the prices and services offered by Saga Foods, but O'Sullivan said the university planned on remaining with that company.

O'Sullivan said that even if another company offered a better price, the university would have to take into account the general level of service provided regardless of the price.

If the food contract was put to public tender a lower bid might be received by someone "attempting to get his foot in the door," explained O'Sullivan. However, he said they would probably run at a loss for a year, then demand a price hike, leaving the university where it started.

O'Sullivan admitted to a questioner that after Saga found out last May that the food contract would not be let to tender, they claimed they miscalculated labour costs and demanded a \$50.00 per head increase. This was not resolved, he said.

Eddie, however, claimed the consumer price index showed a drop in food prices, although Saga budgeted for price increases since the increases did not materialize, he said this amounted to a profit for Saga, and suggested the university press the company to moderate any price hikes.

Thompson said later another factor in food costs was the number of meals offered and under what conditions. For example, he said UNB offers resident students 19 meals per week with no limit on "seconds". Others offer 21 meals with no seconds, some 14 with seconds, and so on.

Thompson opposed reducing meals from 19 to 14 per week as it would only amount to a \$20.00 per student price drop. He said Saga takes a missed meal factor into consideration when determining costs, and, if only 14 meals per week were offered, the number of meals missed would drop appreciably, necessitating a price per meal increase. The basis of this system is that students pay for 19 meals per week whether they eat them or not.

Thompson said UNB residence students pay less for food than they would at Mount Allison, Carleton, or Moncton, although some questioners disputed this.

Lady Beaverbrook students are concerned their dining hall may be closed despite the fact that the Board of Dons oppose the idea and the Food Contract Committee passed a resolution making this non-negotiable at their last meeting. Anderson, Thompson, and Dean of Men's Residences Peter Kent said the cut would not be made unless students would directly by reductions in fee increases.

Thompson agreed with Kent that it would be cheaper to have one big dining hall instead of the present seven, but Ken said total costs of the residence system would have to be taken into consideration before it was decided where cuts should be made. Thompson said if a meal hall was closed it would be the one where the least amount of people would be affected.

LBR Food Contract Committee representative disputed the claim

that money would be saved by closing the smaller dining halls, and said if Saga was losing money they would not stay here.

The lineups at McConnell Hall are long now at lunch," Lynch said, and suggested the fire marshal would not allow more people to eat there.

Food eaten at LBR is prepared at McConnell Hall, he said, so the only saving would be on serving costs.

About 40 people from LBR ate dinner at Maggie Jean on February 24 and at McLeod House on March 8, and Saga manager Bob Lloyd of Lady Dunn Hall had to be called in on both occasions, Lynch claimed.

He said some residents of Maggie Jean had to eat in the lounge, despite the fact that large numbers of them had left for March break. He predicted LBR residents would eat at Maggie Jean should their own dining hall be closed.

Lynch rejected the notion that other residence students subsidize the LBR dining hall, saying that the residence students pay approximately \$230 per head on the mortgage, including Lady Beaverbrook residents, although this residence has no mortgage.

Predicting cuts in services next year, Lynch said, "The whole university position towards running this thing seems to be makeshift. It's rapidly approaching the situation where the residence system is no longer viable due to costs."

Other queries on the residence system included co-ed residences, summer residences for nursing

students, students who move out after first term, and janitorial services.

Anderson said he was "hopeful" that other residences would become co-ed if the experiment at Victoria House works out next year, although it would be "premature" to make predictions at that time.

A nursing student asked why McLeod House and not Maggie Jean was reserved for students of that faculty in May and June, since it was much nearer the hospital. Dean of Women's Residences Joy Kidd said this house had already been rented to the learned society for their convention this summer, although she agreed with the nurses' position.

University comptroller Sam Mullin said students moving out of residence at Christmas were entitled to a slight refund and those moving in after had to pay slightly more than half a full year's fee since the first term is slightly longer than the second.

Kidd said proposals for students to take over resident janitorial services were not favourably received in the past as the money saved would be slight as wages would still have to be paid. She added that although some students might be willing to do this one year, this may not be the case five years hence, if it was on a volunteer basis.

She said she would be willing to consider setting up a system like that of Harrison House, where residents have been paid for doing their own janitorial services for the last three years.

NOTICE

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GREEK FOOD ORGY

Entrees - Mom's Pastijo

Greek Meatballs over Rice Pilaff

Leg of Lamb

- Roasted with Rice Pilaff

- Avgolemono

Vegetables - Broiled Tomato Halves
with Feta Cheese

Dessert - Assorted

SUB Cafeteria

Thursday Lunch March 24th



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