

Letters To The Editor

March 8, 1962.

Dear Mr. Editor:

I wish to congratulate you both on the format and content of the Winter Issue of the Dalhousie Students' Medical Journal. It is a good publication and I hope it will receive increasing support from the student body and alumni.

The lead editorial criticized the Dalhousie Medical Alumni for their apparent disregard "of the disgraceful financial status of the medical student". There is no doubt that scholarship support is very inadequate in the Medical School compared with some of the other faculties of the University. The editor has indicated a serious problem and has suggested certain solutions I agree with him on both. However, I think he may have been a little severe in placing the responsibility solely on the shoulders of the medical alumni. They have done much to assist the Medical School in other ways which have been of direct benefit to the medical students. Probably most of your readers are not aware of this, and I thought it might be desirable for me to supplement the editor's statement with the following additional information.

In the Dalhousie University campaign conducted in 1956, the medical alumni who were approached pledged more than \$140,000. Ten per cent of this went toward the new Men's Residence and the remainder to the Medical School. The major portion of these pledges have been fulfilled, although some installments are still to be paid.

From this fund, \$7,000 was allocated to augment the Student Loan Fund and an additional \$10,000 was obtained from the Pfizer Pharmaceutical Company. These gifts more than trebled the amount of money available for loans to medical students. We have directed most of our efforts towards increasing the available money in Student Loan Funds, rather than providing additional bursaries or scholarships. I note that this procedure is in line with the recommendation of the Canadian Association of Medical Students and Internes to the Royal Commission on Health Services. We have been acting on the assumption that most medical students will be able to repay the University for assistance received during their student days. However, I am sure the faculty as a whole would be delighted if more money could be made available to assist the students in bursaries and scholarships as well as loans. The loan fund is so small that we are not able to provide more than ten or twelve loans a year of \$300 to \$400 each.

The rest of the alumni fund collected in the campaign was used to remodel the teaching laboratories and to re-equip them. The first change was in the Medical Sciences Building, where the teaching laboratories in Bio-chemistry, Physiology and Pharmacology were modernized and several new research laboratories set up. Completely new teaching laboratories in Anatomy and Microanatomy were later provided in the Forrest Building, when the Faculty of Dentistry moved to its new quarters. This year, the new laboratories, lecture rooms and other facilities in the Pathology Institute were furnished from the alumni fund.

During the past seven years, the budget of the Medical School has increased from approximately \$350,000 per year to almost \$950,000. This sum is expended on undergraduate teaching alone. Research grants from the Medical Research Council of Canada, National Cancer Institute, Department of National Health and Welfare, Defence Research Board and other national bodies have also increased during the same period from approximately \$80,000 to \$340,000. These figures do not include any of the money used for postgraduate training programs nor for clinical services, such as those operated in the Public Health Clinic, and it also excludes the cost of buildings, or remodelling. The undergraduate budget, eliminating the research grants and these other items, when divided by the enrolment in the Faculty of Medicine,

gives an average figure of approximately \$3,240 per student per year. Of this amount, the student pays \$500 in tuition in the first four years and less than \$400 in the fifth year. One might, therefore, say that every student in the Medical School is receiving a bursary or scholarship of the amount of \$2,700 per annum. This is the amount by which the University, the Provincial Governments, the Federal Government and private foundations are subsidizing each medical student.

Those of us who have been concerned with the finances of the school have directed most of our efforts to obtaining these larger grants for the Medical School itself, and have been unable to give adequate attention to the search for assistance for students as well. However, the increase in funds available to the Medical School has allowed us to maintain tuition fees at a relatively low level. There will be an increase in the fees for other faculties of Dalhousie this year, bringing them almost up to the same level as the Medical School. In the Faculty of Arts, the cost will be \$465 as compared with \$500 in Medicine. Many American universities have tuition charges \$1,200 to \$1,500 per annum in Medicine.

About half of the increase in the general operating budget of Dalhousie Medical School came from the four governments of the Atlantic Provinces. However, the University had to obtain the remainder from foundations and other sources. The Federal grant of \$186 per student per year constitutes less than five per cent of the cost per student and is grossly inadequate. The system of allocating this grant to each province on the basis of its population, rather than allocating it on the basis of the number of students in university, is grossly unfair to the Province of Nova Scotia. Our Federal grant is the lowest of any Province in Canada when calculated on a per student basis.

In order to keep abreast of the times and to forge ahead, the Dalhousie Medical School requires still further increases in the operating budget. Unless the Federal Government will assist the Provincial Governments in meeting part of the operating costs, we will have a serious problem. In addition, there will be heavy capital costs involved in enlarging the Medical School so that we may take in more students. There are more than 70 applications on file for admission to the September class of 1962. These are all residents of the four Atlantic Provinces. There are several hundred additional applications from other parts of the world. Even if we limit our enrolment solely to residents of the four Atlantic Provinces, we will require a larger school in the very near future. It is hoped that the Federal Government will assist with construction grants, but there has been no indication that this is likely. It has also been suggested that the Federal Government should provide a system of loan funds, scholarships and bursaries to recruit more students into Medicine and to assist the present students with the cost of their education.

I wish to thank the writer of the editorial for giving me the opportunity to pass this information on to the students. At the same time, I am throwing out a broad hint to you who will be the future alumni. I think very few medical graduates would find it a financial strain to provide one gift of \$1,000 at some time during his medical lifetime, to assist the building fund, and also an annual gift of \$100 towards the operating expenses. With approximately 1,500 living alumni at the present time, Dalhousie could receive from gifts of this order approximately a third of the cost of the new Medical Building and could set up a fund of \$150,000 a year toward the operating cost, including a much more generous system of loans and scholarships for student assistance. Your editor is completely right in suggesting that alumni support is required now, and more will be needed in the future, for the Medical School itself as well as the students.

Yours very truly,

C. B. STEWART, M.D.
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