

SRC to censor CHSR. Bruns next?

Censorship. It's a word that was used at last Monday's meeting of the SRC. It's a word that Forestry Rep. Wade Prest. and Rep-at-Large Peter Archibald tried to avoid. They tried to avoid it even as they introduced a motion, the enactment of which, will bring the media of this campus one step closer to the censorship of the SRC.

The motion in question (which was passed by council) reads as follows:

Motion 3: Be it resolved that the SRC delegate one (1) SRC member to attend all CHSR executive meetings.

There will undoubtedly be some who will question whether having an SRC delegate attend all CHSR executive meetings constitutes censorship or not. It is the opinion of the Brunswickan that it most definitely does. While CHSR Director Doug Varty has expressed a lack of concern about the effect of this motion, his feelings are not shared by the staff of the Brunswickan. We feel that this is a form of censorship and that it has established a precedent which may be applied to the Brunswickan.

Censorship is an attempt to "restrict public expression of ideas, conceptions, and impulses which have or are believed to have the capacity to undermine the governing authority or the social and moral order which that authority considers itself bound to protect. Censorship usually takes two forms: Prior, which refers to the advance suppression; and Post Facto, which involves suppression after publication or pronouncement has taken place".

Only two years ago the Brunswickan was subjected to an attempt at Post Facto censorship by the SRC. The Brunswickan issue of January 21, 1977 was attacked by the SRC of the day because the cover ridiculed the campaign being run by Steve Whalen, an SRC Presidential candidate at the time. Whalen's campaign had been based on a comic approach that employed religious mockery as a device. (The Brunswickan cover had been designed to criticize the style of campaigning for a position as consequential to students as SRC President.) On January 24, 1977 council passed a motion demanding that the Brunswickan apologize to Mr. Whalen. The Brunswickan adopted a policy of passive resistance by simply refusing to comply. This issue simply died out.

The case we have before us

now is one of prior censorship. By having a sitting member at CHSR executive meetings, the SRC will be privy to the contents of CHSR editorial policy before broadcasts are aired. Since CHSR is in effect owned by the SRC as is the Brunswickan, they have the power to prevent any broadcasts from being made. They can close the station and or remove the personnel involved.

The motion allowing the SRC delegate to attend all CHSR meetings gives the SRC the means to exercise a form of prior censorship. It may be argued that it does not necessarily follow that this weapon will ever be used. The example of the Brunswickan of two years ago is offered as an illustration of the naivety of such thinking. The people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would probably testify that there are very few weapons that are never used.

The affect of this motion will be to alter the current relationship that exists between the SRC and the media of this campus. SRC president, Dave Bartlett, who voted against the motion pointed out the undesirability of interfering with the independence of the media. No less an authority than Lord Beaverbrook, the noted benefactor of this University has said in reference to the relationship between politicians and the press "that the two forces are infinitely better in separation because they check each other

when divided and are irresistible in union." While the media of this campus are financially and constitutionally wards of the SRC they have made every attempt to maintain an independence of attitude. The motion just passed goes a long way in trying to destroy that independence.

It is especially difficult to determine the reasons for passing such a motion. The rationalizations offered were vague and poorly articulated. Councillor Prest mentioned at the previous weeks SRC meeting that it was designed to improve the flow of communication between CHSR and the SRC and felt that this was desirable in light of the increase in funding by the SRC that would be required should the station go FM. The fact of the matter, however, is that council has had, for quite some time, all the power they could possible need to insure that flow. They have access to the books at CHSR at any time. They can also require the CHSR executive to attend council and provide information.

Prest and Archibald also made much of the fact should CHSR go FM they will be broadcasting off campus thus presenting to the neighboring communities an image of the student community. They felt that the best way to ensure that the image they put forward is a desirable one, would be to have an SRC member involved in CHSR executive meetings. This reasoning makes no sense whatsoever.

If CHSR goes FM they will be subject to a host of very stringent CRTC regulations. These regulations are in part designed to ensure that radio stations do not offend the standards of the community. Further more, CHSR has a very long, respectable history and it would be difficult to recall an instance of their having projected an undesirable image of the student community. Besides these considerations the Brunswickan has been distributed off campus for some time. There is no evidence to suggest that we have ever projected an undesirable image to the people of Fredericton.

What is most disturbing is the assumptions underlying this rationalization and the motion. It is quite simply an elitist assumption, for it assumes that the members of the SRC are better qualified to recognize and less likely to put forth anything that would offend local community standards. It would be difficult offhand to assess the competency of council in such matters.

If it is of the same level as in areas more properly within their own jurisdiction, however we might be in trouble. In reacting to the possibility of tuition hikes, council moved slowly. They were beaten to the punch and prodded into action by the activities of the non-council, Freeze-the-Fees Committee. In Archibald's own words they were "caught with their pants down". Given this demonstrated inability to run their own show properly, it is difficult to see what kind of a constructive role they could play at executive meetings of CHSR.

At least try to keep your pants up from now on councilors. Remember you will be presenting our image for the citizens of Fredericton.

