

# Manitoba student newspaper threatened with shut-down

## Engineering students angry after removal of comic strip, move to cut paper's funding

BY JEREMY NELSON

WINNIPEG (CUP) — University of Manitoba students may soon be without their campus newspaper thanks to a controversial motion passed at the student union's general meeting.

The motion orders the University of Manitoba student union to cut the \$6-per-student levy the newspaper *the Manitoban* presently receives to \$4-per-student for the 1999-2000 publishing year, and to \$2 for all following years.

The motion was introduced last week by engineering students' representative Chad Silverman, who began by saying *the Manitoban* "sucks."

The general meeting is the

only event where average students can make direct motions, providing a quorum of 200 is reached.

"I voted in favour of the

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motion because I just wanted to cut," said Silverman. "I felt I was paying out too much to different student organizations that needed money," said Silverman.

Silverman added that many engineers were also angry about the removal of a cartoon the paper used to run. The syndicated comic strip was pulled after several students expressed concerns that it was sexist.

Under the newspaper's budget for the 1998-1999 publishing year, \$2-per-student would not even cover the cost of printing the paper.

The motion received little discussion. It is now before a student council committee before being sent for final approval by the student union.

But the motion may be retroactively ruled out-of-order because it may have violated student union by-laws. The

regulations state motions must be posted well prior to meetings so students have an opportunity to express their views before a vote.

"We are talking to our lawyers to discover whether the motion was appropriate and a legal motion, and then they'll take it from there," said Kelly Friesen, director of public relations for the student union.

*The Manitoban* will also consider legal action against the student union and those involved in the motion if it is not ruled out-of-order, said editor Ed Janzen.

He says the motion not only violates student union bylaws but also flies in the face of a 1997 referendum in which 1,814 students voted in favour of both the \$6 levy and giving the *Manitoban* full

editorial and financial autonomy.

"I was struck by the disorganization and the contradictory nature of the [motion] organizers' complaints with *the Manitoban*," said Janzen.

He added the \$6 each student pays to finance the paper isn't that expensive.

"The six-dollar levy works out to 25 cents per student per issue, which is a very small amount, especially when you take into account that we are charged with the responsibility of covering events and issues at one of Canada's largest universities," he said.

"UMSU collects 30 times the amount students pay to *the Manitoban*," he added.

# Microsoft, Industry Canada sign deal

BY CARLA TONELLI

TORONTO (CUP) — Bill Gates, chairman and chief executive officer of Microsoft Corporation, has announced a new educational partnership with the Canadian government.

Gates and Minister of Industry Canada John Manley announced the new SchoolNet GrassRoots Program in Toronto on Monday.

The initiative aims to equip classrooms with 20,000 online learning projects facilitated by computers and software from the world's leading software company.

It was Gates' first appearance in Toronto since 1996.

With an objective of raising \$15-million from private and public sources over three years, Industry Canada scored the first million from Microsoft, thereby securing a founding partner for the program.

The program has been tested in 600 studies using Microsoft software and Canadian kids.

The money from Microsoft is earmarked to provide teachers with software, funds and training to develop web-based curriculum for use in their classrooms.

"It's fun to be here to talk about the work we're doing with the Canadian government," said Gates. "We want to make sure that

technology is accessible to everyone and it becomes an integral part of the education process."

Gates added that the SchoolNet program is ahead of its time and should be applauded.

But questions have been raised about just how ahead of its

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time the program is.

There has not been an independent study into integrating computers and the Internet into Canadian classrooms, concedes Industry Canada.

"This isn't the result of a pedagogical study of some sort, this is being a little bit entrepreneurial to try to really jump-start the use of technology in the classrooms," Manley said, adding the 600 pilot projects conducted so far have cost the Canadian government about \$2-million.

But critics of the program say there may not be enough data to prove that computer-integration in

the classroom will advance learning.

Brian Greenspan, a University of Toronto professor in Technology, says computers in the classroom change the dynamic of education and affect attention spans and cognitive thinking processes.

The potential impact of computers on the learning process shouldn't be overlooked, he said.

"I don't see how [the new SchoolNet Program] will offer students anything


they can't get already," he said. "Computers train people to be typists. There doesn't appear to be any study results suggesting they see computers as some kind of panacea."

"This isn't the same as buying a new set of encyclopaedae," he added, adding computer software becomes outdated quickly.

Graeme Hirst, a Computer Science instructor at the U of T, says Industry Canada might be better off opening its eyes to research.

"There appears to be a lot of blind optimism out there, especially with people who don't know [how computers work]," he said.

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