

EDITORIAL

Innovative projects and sponsorship

by Allan Carter

Innovative projects. That is what the Student Union is claiming they will be looking for when they decide what to do with the \$60,000 which they have attained through the university's sponsorship agreement with Coca-Cola. The agreement is for five years and the Union has \$40,000 available for distribution and \$20,000 in promotional material and product. Recently, the Finance Committee sent letters to Student Union recognized groups and clubs requesting proposals for innovative products that must include an outline describing "how the sponsorship will benefit the constituency/interest group and the university community in general".

Obviously student groups are limited in the type of proposal that they can submit to the Finance Committee. It is doubtful that the committee is interested in capital equipment projects or any projects which would only benefit the group. The challenge to each student group is to try to develop a project which will make Coca-Cola's sponsorship prevalent to the public. This type of commercialism may seem repulsive to some. After all, very few people want to "sell out" to a multi-billion dollar corporation. But in order to ensure that Coca-Cola is getting their "bang for their buck" the Student Union is encouraging groups to develop projects that will not only benefit the group members, but also the rest of the university community. This is truly a challenge for many groups. For instance, here at *the Brunswickan* it was quite clear from the Finance Committee's letter that it would be a waste of time and energy to submit a proposal which was asking for additional equipment. Instead, we had to seriously think about a proposal that would directly benefit the entire community. New equipment indirectly benefits the community because it enables the Bruns staff to produce a better newspaper. But, asking for new equipment was not "inno-

ative" since it is something we do every year. Instead, we decided to submit a proposal in which funds could be used to pay for the printing costs of both an academic page and a residence page. Each week, the academic page would highlight various students and their achievements in a particular faculty. This has been an idea that's been discussed at the Bruns ever since it was suggested in a letter to the editor a few years ago. Further, a specialized space for announcements about upcoming residence events and a location in the newspaper for the resident members to continually discuss problems, new projects, and other issues in the residence system has also been battered around the Bruns office and at editorial board meetings. However, developing both of these pages would result in extra costs for printing, something which the Bruns could not afford without cutting back another section of the newspaper. So the Finance committee's announcement that there is funding for innovative projects may just solve Bruns' dilemma.

Of course the Student Union must take the role in encouraging student groups and students in general to develop new and innovative projects. Certainly, the Union is not depending solely on the student groups to develop the projects. The Union itself should be setting an example.

Presently, it is unclear as to where the money will be used, since the Finance committee will be accepting submissions until January 29. One must remember that over a five year period, \$60,000 amounts to \$12,000 per year. It is probably safe to assume that the committee will receive a number of proposals and many will have to be eliminated. The Student Union should seriously consider spending some of that money to evaluate the Union's mandate and how the Union will have to adapt and change within the next ten years in order to be a driving force in address-

ing student needs.

Such a project should be two-fold. First of all, such a project should include an analysis of the Union as it presently exists and then, secondly, it should analyze the needs of the university student. It could be determined, through such a study, whether or not the Student Union's present activities are addressing student concerns. In areas where it is clear that change needs to take place, input could be attained from students and other interested parties in order to help the Union decide how to effectively make those changes. Such a project should not be designated to summer student employment, but individuals should be chosen who could analyze the Union during the entire year in order to fully evaluate its role in student life.

Of course, the Union would have to make a commitment to actually follow the recommendations and also ensure that the focus to change would not be lost when the a new council is elected. Such a project is indeed an ambitious one and it is quite clear that the recommendations should not only state how new roles for the Union should be implemented, but also contain suggestions to where, if needed, financial support could be sought to develop such roles. For instance, the report may recommend a ten year plan for the Union to develop better public relations and more effective links with the Fredericton community.

If such a project was undertaken the Union would then have concrete data to help it establish new roles which would benefit the entire student population and address all student concerns. Further, while each year a new council may take over with fresh ideas, mandates which the students feel are important would already be set in place and the council would have an obligation to maintain those mandates. Innovative, indeed.



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