editorial

UNB Student Union needs mature, realistic government

This past two weeks has seen the UNB campus inundated with controversy surrounding the recent SRC election. A number of faux-pas by the chief returning officer have come to light during this period, but rather than dwell on those in detail, perhaps it's time we looked at the broader message that these incidents seem to be conveying: that is, a number of people involved holding influential positions in the SRC have an attitude of nonchalance toward the functioning of a group and the Student Union which it governs.

Granted, not all of the people involved with the Student Union affairs take their responsibiltiy lightly; but, a number of them do, and that has been only too well illustrated the past few weeks. Perhaps it is not entirely the fault of the people involved - perhaps the system itself needs to be re-examined and revamped. But the apparent lack of seriousness and effort to instruct election-workers in the proper performance of their duties has to make one wonder about the purpose served by our elected officials, and the extend of their interest in serving the people which elected them.

The running of the UNB Student Union involves a significant amount of money, student's money to be more precise, and this by itself demands that such an organization be run efficientely and ethically. This is not a simple junior high school student council, where the biggest decision may be choosing what type of decorations to use for a school dance; it is a business, and should be run as such, especially when the consequences of the elected officers affect so many people - and we're talking here about the careers of the candidates as well as the student body at large. One person's whim may influence another's career, but it appears that a number of people have failed to take this into account.

And while on the matter of accountability, that is another item that some people involved with the Student Union seem to have overlooked - when you hold public office, you have to be accountable for any action you take while performing your duties; and if, through laziness, apathy, naivete, or whatever reason, a person fails in any regard, he or she must be ready to "face the music" - it's part and parcel of the job. Skirting the issues, rationalizing one's actions, and shifting the blame does nothing to rectify the situation. It would be nice if our elected officers could publicly admit,"Okay, I screwed up. Now here's how I plan to avoid such mistakes in the future..." That would certainly gain more respect from the public than all the pussy-footing around that seems to be the current method of dealing with such issues. In the "real world", such behaviour is usually not tolerated for very long without changes in the status quo.

Perhaps it is time that the mistaken belief apparently held by most university students that they are above the pitfalls of the "real world" was replaced by a more realistic, mature attitude which includes an awareness of the responsibility involved with running something of the magnitude of the Student Union. Without this kind of a change, student government, for the most part, will continue to be a joke.

mugwump journal

BY MIKE MACKINNON

IN MEMORIAM: STUDENT FREE PRESS

This week we saw the myth of a free press on a university campus was shattered. In a move that would surprise even those on the ***Brunswickan*** who went through last year's conflict with the UNB SRC the Saint Thomas Student Council dismissed the editorial board of the ***Aquinian***.

It would require a grave error of judgement by the Aquinian to warrant such action. The reasons given to justify the dismissal is that the editorial board was irresponsible financially and editorially. To back the charge of financial irresponsibility Barry Power cited the $1800 debt of the ***Aquinian*** incurred through printing costs. Despite the guarantee of revenue from CUP (Canadian University Press) and the advertising, the Saint Thomas Student Union will not provide the money, in advance, for printing.

Having been involved with a student paper for a number of years, I realize just how ridiculous it is to expect a paper to pubish only on ad revenue received. How can one expect a paper to publish two weeks later on revenue raised through ads in the most recent issue. Most businesses pay on their accounts monthly at the minimum and many accounts require more than one month to be paid in full.

I have to question the council's authority to dismiss the entire editorial board. The constitutions of most student councils and newspapers are designed so that only the Editor-in-Chief can be removed. If the consititution of the Saint Thomas Student Union does indeed allow for the dismissal of the entire board then this is a situation that requires immediate rectification.

Out of this issue rises an even larger and more important issue. The purpose of a newspaper, whether it be student or community, is to provide unbiased information. Part of this information is the activities of the Student Union and these **MUST** be reported to the students becasue they are directly affected by these activities. Without free press how can the students learn just what their Student Union does?

We have here an important issue for the autonomy of student papers. As long as student councils have the right to dismiss a paper's editorial board at will, we will **NEVER** have free press and students will NEVER know what their representatives are up to.

Saint Thomas students have just voted; thereby unwittingly taking part in the democratic charade played at universities. As long as their student council has the right to remove their paper's editorial board, democracy will never exist at Saint Thomas. Having the government play the role of publisher and thereby possessing the ability to control what is printed reeks of the state controlled press in communist and facist regimes. This MUST be changed.

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Liquor fees are about to rise. SUB Holdings is about to increase the administration fee from 8 to 18 per cent. Despite the fact that it will be the students who are going to feel this increase the most no public notcie was given. Why not? This is just one more example of students at this university having no say in what happens here.

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When I was attending high school, I was constantly faced with the prospect of travelling through storms to get to classes. I arrived only to have classes cancelled at some later point and be forced to travel back home in conditions even more deplorable. Upon arriving at UNB I was informed by my fellow students with a year or two under their belts that the university never cancelled classes. So I diligently trooped off to campus no matter what the weather conditions were. Imagine my shock to have classes cancelled at one o'clock in the afternoon.

I now know that this will happen continually but still I rise on storm battered mornings to go to classes. Why? Because those classes will still be in session. Only afternoon classes are cancelled. Is it too much for the administration to close the university in the morning and save us from any travel in storms? I think not.