

# EDITORIAL

## CHSR yet again

by Lynne Wanyeki

This academic year has witnessed much debate regarding the financial and structural problems at CHSR-FM, the campus/community radio-station. Unfortunately, such debate, which is perhaps warranted at present, began when debate as to CHSR's actual programming also seemed to be at issue. Jeff Whipple, CHSR's Station Manger, has stated that the Student Union has two main concerns: that students are paying for a service that the majority of students do not listen to; and that CHSR itself has not done enough to promote itself among the student body.

With regards to the first concern, during the summer, the UNB Student Union initiated a survey intended to ascertain the feelings of the student body in relation to CHSR. Unfortunately, this was done without consultation with either the members, the Executive Committee, or the Board of Directors at CHSR. This obviously created some concern within CHSR, for to frame the survey solely in terms of user-utility (ie. Person X pays \$Y to subsize the station and therefore should listen to Z hours/week) simply does not work for radio-stations in general and campus-community radio-stations in particular. CHSR's position was that such terms of reference failed to account for the cultural importance of campus-community radio-stations, whose mandate it is to provide "informative, educational and entertaining" programming. Such programming is marked by a strong commitment to Canadian and local artists of all genres as well as to providing media access to disadvantaged groups - a commitment which is neither present nor expected to be present in mainstream radio-stations. CHSR wished for questions reflecting this commitment to be incorporated into the survey. Accordingly, it was decided that the survey would be reworked by representatives from both the Student Union and CHSR.

Yet the split in perception remains. A CBC program which aired on Prime Time in December attempted, in the words of Steve Staples, CHSR's Programme Director, to "deal with reactionary Student Unions and campus radio stations in general using CHSR as a case study." The program drew in a letter from as far away as Vancouver. James Goodman, a Professional Engineer and Senior Partner in a consulting engineering company, expressed concern to Dr. Robin Armstrong, UNB's President, that "[our] Student Union is exerting pressure to reduce the amount of ethnic and alternative programs broadcast on [our] campus radio and replace it with more mainstream to 40 music type shows". He further expressed the opinion that "today's global market requires people who have open minds and can communicate with people of all races and lifestyles" and stated that "when universities such as [ours] are unable to convey the need to tolerate and interact with other cultures etc. industry will continually bring in 'imports'." This week, Dr. Armstrong responded to that letter, stating clearly although he is is "committed to a campus which is free from racism and [...] that celebrates that diversity of ethnic backgrounds that make-up Canadian society", "the real issue [regarding CHSR], as is often the case, is one of money and control."

Derek Dunnett, Student Union V. P. University Affairs, is of the same opinion. He feels that "there is a difference between being concerned about the way CHSR is fulfilling its mandate and being unhappy with ethnic programming." Greg Lutes, Student Union President agrees. He says that he is not interested in changing CHSR's programming policy because although "you have to plan when you want to listen to it - it's not like a commercial radio station, where you can hear top 40 music 24 hours a day- you can't look at CHSR and say it's not good. But that doesn't mean it can't be improved on." By improvement, Lutes referred to the second concern mentioned by Whipple above: that of promotion within the student body.

CHSR has made some effort to promote itself this year. Soundcheck, the monthly program-guide and entertainment magazine, is one such means of promotion. However, Soundcheck experienced some problems with distribution, being distributed for the first time to the campus residences only last month. And now, given the financial bind that CHSR is in, it is uncertain that Soundcheck will be able to be produced until May (which marks the beginning of the next budgetary year) unless it can be done solely through advertising.

What does come out of this, then, is that although financial and structural problems are not to be confused with programming problems, the ability of CHSR to maintain and justify its programming is, to some degree, dependant upon its ability to deal with its financial and structural problems. The split in perception referred to above can all too easily spiral into suspicion on both sides that prevents those concerned from listening to and realistically dealing with the issues that are really at hand.

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The University of New Brunswick

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The Brunswickan, in its 126th year of publication, is Canada's oldest official student publication. The Brunswickan's offices are located in Rm 35 of the University of New Brunswick's Student Union Building, P.O. Box 4400, College Hill, Fredericton N.B., E3B 5A3. Tel. 453-4983.

The Brunswickan is published by Brunswickan Publishing Inc. and printed with flair by Global Printing & Binding Inc., Fredericton, N.B.

Subscription is \$25 per year. Second class mail is in effect - #8120.

Local Advertising rates are available from The Brunswickan, (506) 453-4983. National advertising rates are available from Youthstream Canada Ltd., 1541 Avenue Road, Suite 203, Toronto, Ont. M5M 3X4, Tel: (416) 787-4911.

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