

The fine art of spending

On January 12, I attended an Arts Society meeting. Wait until you get a hold of what I discovered.

But first, why did I go? The reason was that the Arts Society had decided to do an audit of all the B-societies, such as Political Science, French, etc. Very honourable intentions. The problem is with the way it was carried out. In one word: childish. Having been involved with the finances of one of the societies, I was not very impressed. But I doubt I was alone, for all but one society was deemed fit for audit.

The Arts Society Treasurer deemed our books "unacceptable." In his own words, he wrote: "There is a certain sense of responsibility that must be taken by the executive members who are entrusted with the moral and legal responsibility of your peer's funds."

Having both Cape Breton and Acadian blood flowing through my veins, the treatment we received from the Treasurer did not sit very well. Like many Capers before me, I left my fists at home and picked up my pen and paper and off I went to the meeting. I thought that maybe I would learn what "moral and legal responsibility" meant by following the example of the righteous Treasurer. So, hold on, because this was the meeting at which the Treasurer presented his expense report. Keep in mind that morality speech. It turns out to be the worst hypocrisy I have seen in a long time. What follows is a list of what I learned:

1. It ends up the Arts Society had a big surplus from last year. Everyone who was involved with B societies last year will get a kick out of this.

Remember passing in your budget for last year's second term and having the Treasurer (this year's President) cut it in half? Well, it turns out that she had \$19,000 remaining at the end of the year! I would like to know why she and last year's executive withheld that money? Was it not allotted to be spent on students last year? The fun is just beginning...

2. Hear about the ill-fated Art Society J.J.'s Night held last term? I understand that those who attended

\$700 spent

on liquor

the meeting would get 2 free drinks. I was informed that the executive had passed a motion to spend \$700 on food and drink prior to the evening. Anyway, in the end, a total of \$1045.55 was spent that night, with over \$700 spent on liquor!

What happened? Let me first point out that some members of the executive did not seem very pleased with my probing questions. In fact the secretary stated: "It was passed at the last meeting — it's over!" That was not good enough for me. I figured that maybe more than just Art students attended this evening, and that was why it cost so much.

In fact, I asked the Executive three times to make sure they understood my question: Did anyone other than

Art students attend this party? And three times they answered that only Arts students attended, along with some members of the Science Society executive. How can they be sure about this? I was told that the President and the Treasurer stamped people at the door. Did they ask to see student I.D.'s? No, they replied. But they are sure that there wasn't any members of other faculties or universities in attendance. At that point, one of the society representatives sitting next to me at the meeting told me that I was being lied to. What do you think?

So then, what happened that it cost so much? The President answered my question by telling me that a certain number of drinks had been ordered for the evening, but at one point in the evening, the "bar was opened up!" Why did this happen? Did they realize that it was your money that was paying for their drinks? What authority did they have to do this? Do the President and Treasurer have some sort of overriding financial powers? I think every student has a right to know who gave the orders for the bar to be "opened up" and that action should be taken against the responsible parties.

As if this wasn't bad enough, the Executive proposed at the meeting to hold another J.J.'s night! The Treasurer pointed out that he had put in enough money in his budget to buy several hundred drinks! Can you imagine! Do they have no shame? This is your money these people are spending! Fortunately, the society reps at the meeting voted against the executive and defeated the motion.

Is this what the Treasurer meant by his morality speech?

3. Your Arts Society Executive spent \$1,700 on office furniture! Have any of you ever seen this office? Just picture the offices from the great television show, WKRP in Cincinnati. The fact is that they share this office space with two other societies. The partitions that they have between the so-called offices are about as effective as the masking tape Les Nessman had around the floor of his desk! Yet, your Arts executive thought it wise to spend \$1,700 of your money on office furniture. What does this include? Well, I was told that they bought a computer desk for \$500, two chairs and a bookcase with the remainder. My accounting is not very good, but I figure that leaves \$1200 for the two chairs and a bookcase. So when you

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ably with your money.

In fact, I actually got to see this furniture. They sure didn't hold back! We're talking top of the line stuff here. I had the pleasure of visiting the office of one of the Provincial Ministers here in Halifax, and I assure you he does not sit in the comfort that the Arts executive does! Was this luxury really necessary? In fact, while asking questions about this spending, one of the DSU reps for the Arts Society got fed up with me and said that all of these expenses had been approved earlier by the full executive.

Is this the "moral and legal responsibility" that the Treasurer was referring to? Is it ok for the executive to spend money as they wish, as long as they get it passed at a meeting? By the way, the DSU rep did not pose a problem in my pursuit for answers, as she later bowed her head in shame when informed that it was she who seconded the motion for the "race-for-the-trough" J.J.'s party.

4. Your Arts Society executive, in all its wisdom, purchased a \$3,500 computer with your money. As I said before, nothing but the best. But wait — it gets better. That \$3,500 does not even include a printer! In fact, the Treasurer had something like \$1,700 marked down for a printer "and supplies"! Chalk that one up to morality also, I guess.

5. Finally, your Arts Society, when handing out grants to the B societies, gave \$1075 to the Greek Council, with one of its executive members being your Arts Society Treasurer. (Could this be a conflict of interest? Should they be considered a B-Society?) I was told that the Arts Society later reversed its decision to grant the money, but then decided not to ask for the money back. So, in trying to save face, they ended up just falling flat on it.

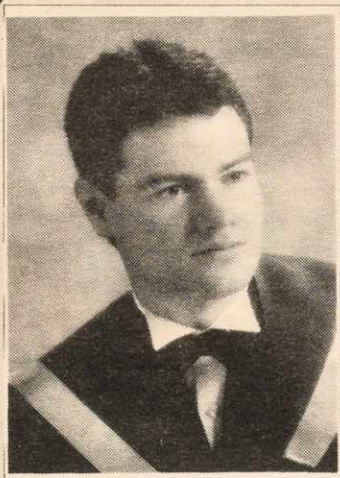
In conclusion, I want to make it clear that this is information was retrieved by me on my own accord. It is my solemn wish that no parties be begrudged in an attempt to retaliate. I believe what I have stated above is appalling. I find it sad to think that an executive could take students' money and spend it so carelessly.

How hypocritical of them to talk of a strike to protest proposed changes to the education system when they are spending students' money so lavishly. And to think that even the Board of Governors is softening the blow by lowering the tuition hike from 10% to 6%. Before we go down to Grand Parade and protest, we should clean up our own backyard.

I call upon the DSU to immediately investigate the spending of the Arts Society executive. I call upon the Treasurer of the Arts Society to publish his expense report in this paper and to give a written explanation of his expenses. By that, I mean when he gives a foolish total for photocopying, I want to know exactly what he has photocopied. At the same time, he can probably explain to us what "moral and legal responsibility" really means.

I hope students will attend the next Arts Society meeting and demand the answers to the questions that arise from what I have revealed. Someone must accept responsibility for this waste of your money.

Yours in pursuit of justice,
Michel P. Samson



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