

Jeff Clark – President

by Gordon Loane
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Jeff Clark is a fourth year Biology student and Acting Vice President External of the UNB Student Union. He is one of the six candidates seeking the office of President of the Student Union in next week's election. He cites experience as Vice Chair of Orientation '95 and election to the Executive of Grad Class '96. He sat down for an interview with *The Brunswickan* last week.

What do you see as the issues in this campaign and what are your priorities for the next year? One priority will be tuition levels for the upcoming year. We'll find out about these at either the April or May meeting of UNB's Board of Governors. The hints from the UNB Administration are a lot heavier than they need to be, given the amount of cuts to the operating grant passed on from the provincial government. There are certainly a lot of areas at the university where spending cuts could be made before increases in tuition fees are needed.

A second priority will be to get the voice of the Student Union out across the university. We do quite a lot in the SU but students don't really know about it. A Student Union newsletter every couple of weeks would help in this regard, and I consider it a priority. We also might be able to use the SU page in *The Brunswickan* for this purpose as well (similar to the efforts begun this year by VP University Affairs Chantale Walker).

What do you see as the role of the President in providing leadership to Council and the Executive? The President's role is very important, and the person filling it should have some experience within the SU. Someone walking in off the street and running for SU President could cause a lot of trouble for this organization. I believe a person seeking the office should have at least a year's experience or so in another executive position before running for President. I think I have been around enough to know the politics a little bit and I've sat on Council, the Senate and the UNB Board of Governors. A President should have an understanding of what goes on around a university. I believe a good President should be able to communicate well with other SU executive members and function well as part of a team.

Do you intend to renew the Union's three year funding commitment to the College Hill Day Care? I believe our commitment for three years of \$3,000 per year has been very worthwhile. I think the day care is very well run. I think it's a worthwhile amount of money to spend on an organization that is going to provide for students' children, especially when we have a lot more mature students coming back to university who have children.

What are your ideas about internal restructuring of the Student Union? There are a lot of different ideas including restructuring the Student Resource Centre, Employment Centre and Help Centre. We need to look closely at the size of the Student Council. We need to look at residence representation on Council. We need to get councilors more involved other than attending SU meetings once a week. We need to get them more involved in their faculties and perhaps appoint some of them as Chairs of Council Committees. It would give them extra responsibility and they might feel like contributing more. I don't see changing the number of SU executive members [currently five] or any big changes in full time staffing.

There has been some discussion of compensation levels for Executive members. Where do you stand on this issue? The President's job should be full-time just like any other large organization. I don't think it is reasonable to pay someone just \$9,000 for a full year's service, including the summer. I think it is reasonable to ask for a wage of nine or ten dollars an hour for forty hours per week. I don't think an annual salary of \$15,000 to \$18,000 a year is too much money for working full time. As far as the Vice Presidents' pay goes, they should be required to work 20 to 25 hours per week during the school year and should be limited to taking four courses per term. Overall, compared to other Student Unions across the country, UNB pay is low for SU Executive positions.

Given the fact that tuition rates will be increasing this year, and that the Student Union fee has kept pace with tuition in the last few years, do you feel that the fee should increase this year? I'm not sure that fees should increase this year. I think if we need to raise them, they certainly will need to be justified. I think our student fee is reasonable at the moment. If the fee is increased by, say, two or three dollars, it will definitely be justified in the upcoming 1996-97 SU budget. But if there is a slight increase, students will need to see benefits ensue from the extra two or three dollars.

What will your priorities be for the summer months? I have not yet been involved in the SU during the summer months so it will be a new experience. The Executive will need to work around conferences that must be attended in the summer. I will ensure that Executive members get the job done, and do their jobs well. I will also ensure that students hired by the Union for the summer months are well supervised and get their jobs done well.

I am not yet sure what should be done this summer, but obviously we need to get certain things ready for the beginning of the academic year in September. The President should see that the Executive team is working together to accomplish the tasks over the course of the summer.

What immediate concrete steps will you take, as President, to reassure the students of UNB that the SUB Expansion project is proceeding forthwith? By May or June university officials are supposed to let us know how much money has been raised privately for SUB Expansion (in addition to the annual student fee of \$25). It's a definite goal after this to get this project going. SUB Expansion is a wonderful idea and we need to build on the work of previous SU administrations. Students may not see the effects of their money today, but down the road they certainly will. If the students in the 1960's and 1970's had not built the SUB using a student levy, we would not be benefiting today.

Is it your intention to get agreements in writing from CAMPUS and the GSA regarding SUB Expansion? This is a definite area to look into. It certainly would be good for them to



have space here like every other Student Union. Every student group would then be centralized in one building. If there is a willingness to do so, perhaps a funding arrangement could be worked out.

What steps do you intend to take to improve the media relations of the Student Union? It certainly has been a unique year. It is part of the Vice President External's job to undertake media relations, not only through campaigns on various issues but everyday issues as well. We obviously need a good working relationship with the media. *The Brunswickan* and CHSR-FM are run by students and it is very important that there be a good working relationship with the Student Union.

How do you intend to prevent an "Ivory Tower" situation developing between Council and the student body? SU councilors should work hard to get the point of view of students in their faculty, not just express their own point of view. They should regularly chat with other students and express points of view accordingly at Council. Councilors certainly need to talk to students about what the SU is doing, even if it is only about one or two things a week.

What is your reaction to the credit card situation, given your position on Council? It should be resolved right now, in fact, it should have been resolved months ago. If I get elected as President, it will be resolved within the first few weeks that I am in office. I don't know if it is my place to comment on the problem between the Foundation and the current SU President Kelly Lamrock. The Foundation has requested that he get this all cleaned up. I think the Foundation members are not doing their job if it isn't getting done. They have control of Lamrock's pay check. It's their responsibility. But if I'm elected President, this problem will be fixed, I can tell you that. There will be no repeat of SU credit cards during my term of office if I'm elected. They weren't used right.

What are your feelings about the Fulton situation, given your position on Council? I've requested his presence in the office, even though I don't have the direct authority. When I am President, there will be set office hours and they will be followed, or no one will be getting their pay cheques. If they have a good excuse and miss a day that's understandable, but when students come in the office looking for that one person who can help them out, the office staff should be able to point to an executive member's time table and say when they will be here. The paid office staff should not have to worry about whether executive members are going to be there or not, nor should students seeking help. Fulton is doing a good job with the budget, but he has not been around the office. I've told him many times to come in everyday for at least a few hours, which is not an unreasonable amount of time. I've mentioned this at several SU Executive meetings. We all have on the Executive this year.

Some have considered open government a problem, how do you feel? There have been problems with the availability of SU Executives and the lack of timeliness involved in seeing the SU's financial records. I won't comment on the Cellar's closed book policy. We are a student-run organization and have a policy that within three days a request students can see our financial records. Students should get what they ask for. It hasn't happened this year and that will change. If elected, I'll be paid by students. If you want students to believe in you, you have got to believe in them and show them what they want.

If you were the SU President this year, how would you have dealt with the number of appointed positions on the Executive? Being one of the appointed executives, I think the Student Union totally went about it the right way. Under the circumstances to run any by-election for one position (VP External), it's a lot of money. It was a Council decision and nominations were called for. There were two people interested in the position when I was appointed. If the SU VP resignation had taken place in the summer or early in September, then sure, a fall by-election would be needed.

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