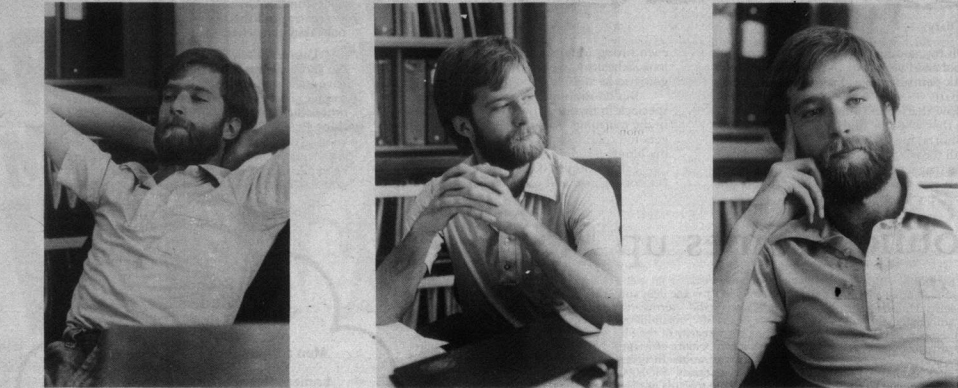


# SU President Speaks Out



What?

Me?

Worry?

*Student's Union President Robert Greenhill has been in office four months now. Jens Anderson interviewed him in his palatial office overlooking the scenic SUB parkade.*

This year again the Student's Union's prime concern will be the massive deficit and austerity measures to deal with it. How do you follow your financial situation, and how often do you get information on what is happening?

Almost daily. We have twice-weekly executive committee meetings at which our financial situation is assessed. All major financial decisions were made by executive...well, some went to (Student's) Council, but all hirings and firings, especially firings, redundancies and changes in structure — a great deal of change in structure took place this summer — all those went through executive committee.

We now get monthly variance reports from Ryan (Beebe), our Finance Manager; which means that we get a breakdown, by each area, as to how they've done this year to date, how they've done this month, and how this compares with budgeted predictions.

Myself, Roger Merkosky (VP Finance and Administration) and Ray Conway (VP Internal) also have at least once weekly a meeting along with the Business Manager (Tom Wright), and the Finance Manager (of something called "the finance committee" which we set up this summer in order to monitor our finances. It doesn't have any constitutional existence, and therefore it doesn't have any ability to make decisions itself, so all decisions it makes have to be ratified through executive committee. It is responsible for monitoring our financial recovery.

**The fee raise referendum: "We are not trying to get students to pay for the past mistakes of the Students' Union."**

You are going to be trying to raise Student's Union fees in a referendum. I don't remember the date...

We haven't set a date for the referendum.

How are you going to campaign for the increase?

What we are going to show is that we've become more responsible financially, that we are not trying to get students to pay through the referendum for all the mistakes of the Student's Union over the past few years. We need to raise \$1.2-1.5 million over the next two-and-a-half years to pay off our deficit, and to make necessary repairs and renovations. Of that, only \$200,000 to \$250,000 will come through increased fee revenues. The other four-

fifths will be provided through tighter financial controls and more efficient businesses.

You'll have to soft-sell the fact that students will be getting less for more....

They won't be getting much less. The only service that has been cut is the Art Gallery, and that, I think, is rather unfortunate.

Will clubs be getting more or less this year?

They are getting at least as much as last year.

We are right now negotiating with the bookstore to have them do the renovations in the basement (of SUB) when they expand. Negotiations are (still) ongoing, but the idea is that the bookstore expands into the present games area and pays for the games area to be moved into part of the curling rink. What we are hoping to negotiate is that in exchange for a lease the bookstore also renovate the rest of our curling rink, and a large portion of that be made into club space.

**"With a thousand more students on campus this year, we are going to have a lot of very over-used facilities here, and a lot of things are just going to fall apart."**

You campaigned on many small issues like parking and scrip. What is happening in these areas?

Just before I came here I was talking to (university) v.p. Phillips about parking. Parking is going to be really, really bad this year. The university has cut about 200 car spaces. With the extra 600-1,000 students on campus this year we are going to have really serious troubles with parking.

So we are doing three things now: one, we are going to see if we can start using residential areas if necessary, during the day, which would be a stop-gap measure, because that will cause as many problems as it solves.

Second, to see if we can find relatively unused parking lots in shopping malls or in other areas of the city with good bus connections to the university, and negotiate with the mall managers or other people for the use of them. Essentially, organize a park-and-ride system.

The third option, which we are doing, is lobbying to make sure that the LRT system *does* come underground through campus, and that it continues south to some area such as the university farm, where you could set up a park-and-ride system, by paving over part of the university farm; or some area further south.

In the short term we are working with Parking Services now to review the criteria whereby students are allowed to use parking here, to make sure that the most

needy students get it this year.

There will be a few turned down?

We might not even be able to meet the needs of out-of-town students and students with special needs this year. It is looking very bad. We are on top of it but there is only so much you can do in the short term.

How about scrip?

Terri (Teresa Gonzalez, v.p. External) is more involved in that than I am now. I think we are going to be making a submission to...the GFC Food Committee...but we are involved in making a submission fairly soon, I believe. And the Board of Governors is also examining scrip, so we should be able to get quite a bit of input there.

A lot of things like scrip are difficult to deal with until you have students back on campus, so you can ask them specifically what they like to see changed. While most people don't like scrip, a lot of people think alternatives like meal tickets are just as bad.

Isn't the main thing non-refundability...?

Yes, and also the fact that you have to buy a minimum amount. Things like that we are trying to get changed right now.

Does it look like it will go through?

It's hard to say. There has been a report, going before our next executive meeting, that tries to do with getting input into the Housing and Food Services subcommittee (of GFC) and this is more a structural thing; it doesn't address the issue of scrip directly, what it addresses is the manner whereby we get input into decision-making at the university level.

The one question of scrip we are dealing with in specific terms but we are also dealing with the larger issue of how we get input into what goes on on campus.

Can you see yourself marching in the streets if you don't get any results through regular channels?

Hmm...sure, it's possible. But if we march in the streets I hope we march in the streets with the support of the Chamber of Commerce.

You think you can get them on your side?

Well, it's a situation where there are a lot of legitimate concerns, and this year in particular they are really going to come to the forefront with a provincial election coming up. With a thousand more students on campus this year, we are going to have a lot of very over-used facilities here, and a lot of things are just going to fall right apart, and the business community doesn't like that any more than we do. They don't like low-quality graduates.

Last year we did a march on the legislature and we got in return a \$5 million shortfall in government funding, in the budget that came down a month later, which resulted in a 20 percent tuition increase, loss of faculty positions, and a large university operating deficit. A little while later people from the oil patch

announced they were going to march on the legislature, and that was cancelled because the government announced that they were going to give \$4 billion to the oil industry over the next few years.

Obviously the business community had more of an impact than we did. What we have to do is make sure that we don't sell ourselves to the business community, or to any other pressure group, whether it be organized labor or organized business; but what we should do is see where our concerns are the same, and lobby in such a manner that when we do march, and we do make a high-profile effort to inform the public, that we do have the public support of some of these organizations.

**"If we march in the streets I hope we march with the support of the Chamber of Commerce."**

Have you had any meetings yet with Horsman?

We've met with Horsman a couple of times. We met with him right when we got into office to just talk about general problems we were having. He was responsible in part for the re-negotiation of our mortgage payment.

We've also made submissions to the University Affairs Advisory Committee, which is an advisory committee of Horsman's, particularly about the participation study, so that issue has been addressed, through that committee, and also to Horsman whom I've had various conversations with.

Anything about cutbacks?

Quite a bit about cutbacks...

Did you get any commitments out of them?

Not particularly. Over the summer our main emphasis was to pressure the government not to restrict the amount of monies made available by the Student Finance Board. And I think that has been successful, because the SFB had thousands more applications than it did last year and so it exceeded its budget very rapidly, and I think due to our lobbying Horsman didn't restrict them to their budget.

As to cutbacks, we will be continuing with the Anti-cutbacks Team, and with generally informing the public, students and government.

What we will be trying to do this year is identify particularly crucial concerns such as the computing facilities on campus, and try to obtain Orders in Council to deal with those specific issues almost immediately, because there are certain problems which are going to become almost disasters this year due to the large number of students.