

The Bruns Responds

DEAN THOMPSON !!
DR. DOWNEY ON LINE
ONE, KEVIN RATCLIFF
ON LINE TWO.....



Every three years or so the University of New Brunswick seeks the services of a Dean of Students. The incumbent Dean, Prof. Barry Thompson has held the position for nearly six years and his term expires next June 30th. Last November a search committee was formed and charged with the responsibility of finding a new Dean of Students. Last week the Brunswickan printed a request from this search committee inviting students to respond and express their views on Dean Thompson's performance and more specifically on the matter of his possible reappointment.

The staff of the Brunswickan decided this week that they would respond to the search committee's request. Not all of us have been around UNB for that many years and it is rather difficult for each of us to assess Dean Thompson's personal performance. However, what we have decided to do is to respond to the search committee on what our staff feels should be the role of the Dean of Students.

The Dean is charged with the responsibility according to the job description of acting as liaison between students, faculty and the administration and to act as a STUDENT OMBUDSMAN. In addition, the dean must act as an executive officer of the university charged with the responsibility of handling long

range and day to day administrative matters involving student services. Herein, in the opinion of our staff lies the conflict. It is difficult for us to understand how one individual, i.e. the Dean can act as an Ombudsman for students and be a university executive and administrator too. A good case in point we believe was the Kevin Ratcliff affair. How can the Dean of Students adequately represent a student and be also put in the position of possibly backing the Dean of Men who is administratively responsible to the Dean of Students?

We believe the problem has been outlined. Now to the possible solution. Perhaps the search committee needs to adequately assess the situation and separate the two positions. Perhaps the university should create two positions - one administrative position and one student ombudsman position. The search committee has empowered Prof. Harold Sharp, a member of the search committee to review this situation and recommend a course of action. Those more knowledgeable than ourselves have told us that the search committee that reviewed the position of Dean of Students three years ago recommended such a course of action. However university officials finally decided otherwise. Our staff find it curious that the minutes and reports of the previous search

committee's have not been made available to the present search committee. Perhaps information came to light on this matter. This matter is important and in our view needs to be aired.

Several other points were raised at our staff meeting and we feel it sufficiently important to pass these remarks on to the present search committee.

A suggestion that the search committee publish a survey on the role of the Dean of Students and the performance of the incumbent dean has apparently been squashed. The Brunswickan

would have been happy to print the survey and serve as a place where the survey could have been collected. Instead the committee has opted for the

discreet method of having individuals send their comments directly to a member of the committee. While we do not question the need for input we believe more

responses would be received by the survey method. It will be interesting to hear how many individuals actually forward their opinions privately to the search committee.

Several members of our staff wondered why the committee has not already opted for a full search to fill the position. It might be interesting to see who else

may be interested in the job of dean of students. We are not saying that the present incumbent has done a bad job, but

maybe after six years or so it might be interesting if the committee looked around a little.

The world of university politics is a sometimes fascinating experience. Sometimes who is appointed to a search committee may be

more important than the actual issues that the committee will eventually have to deal with. We wonder why two deans have

been appointed to the search committee. We are not saying they are not qualified but one dean reports directly to the dean of students. In fact, Prof. Thompson is the boss of one particular dean. We also find it curious why two former deans have not been appointed to the search committee, one a former dean of men and one a former dean of students. Surely they would be just as qualified to assess the position of dean of students...oh well.

Our staff have raised these issues so that the search committee will take a hard look at the position. The Dean of Students is potentially the most important administrative position for most of us at UNB. We will be watching the results of the committee's work with interest.