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Referendum to be called

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Editor

On March 26, a referendum will be held for the students of the University of New Brunswick.

Presented as a "package deal" with the upcoming elections, the students for the first time since 1983 will have a voice in the student government's policy-making in areas such as divestment, student fees, recreational events, and the state of the Student Union Building.

The proposed referendum issues were put forward during the March 3rd SRC meeting and are as follows:

That the Student Union denounce the South African apartheid system and call upon the University to follow the students' lead in divesting from companies investing in South Africa.

That control over the management of the Student Union Building (SUB) be turned over to the Student Unions.

That the regular annual Student Union fee be increased to fifty dollars to improve student employment and other programs of the Student Union.

That full Student Union membership be made mandatory for all part-time and summer students, and that an annual part-time Student Union fee of ten dollars be established.

That the fiscal and electoral years of the Student Union be standardized and fixed as June 1st to May 31st, and that all Student Union terms of office affected by this change terminate on May 31st of the upcoming academic year, and that the next executive be elected in March 1987, and take office on June 1, 1987.

That the Student Union grant autonomy to the Graduate Students Association (GSA) with the condition that all graduate students shall continue to be full members of the UNB Student Union and shall pay an annual UNB Student

Union fee of ten dollars per capita.

That the UNB Student Union join the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and that each student pay an annual four dollar CFS membership fee in addition to the regular Student Union fee.

That the Student Union collect a special annual ten dollar football fee in addition to the regular Student Union fee, to be used in support of the reestablishment of a football programme.

During the January 27 SRC meeting the Student Union endorsed the decision of the Executive Council to sever financial ties to the Bank of Montreal because of that bank's ties to South African investment.

It then moved to divest itself of all holdings in South Africa and establish a policy against future investments and called for the University to do the same.

University President James Downey has voiced charges that the SU does not represent the interests of the students at UNB. The results of the referendum will either confirm Downey's convictions or allow the SU to move forward in their efforts to oppose the South African regime.

The issue of the management of the Student Union Building faces the same obstacles as the aforementioned issue — the question of accurate student representation in the eyes of the administration.

The third issue, the increase in student fees, may be one of the more disturbing to the students. A twenty-dollar hike from thirty to fifty dollars still leaves the Student Union competitive with other student governments across the country — Dalhousie exacts \$99 from every student; Acadia, \$100; Concordia, \$59.40; and St. Mary's, \$56.

Furthermore, SU President John Bosnitch says that services on campus will receive the biggest boost from the increase in capital. Improvements include:

the year-round coordina-

tion and advance planning of entertainment events, expanded photocopying services,

student tutors and counseling,

a system for typing and processing of assignments and essays,

a student-owned and operated bookstore,

expansion of the guest speaker series,

the institution of a weekly bargain film series,

student housing services involving placements for students and coordinating efforts to invest into housing,

and endeavouring to reopen the student-run convenience store.

In addition, club and society budgets will be reviewed for possible expanded financing.

However, there is the fear that if the fee hike is rammed through the SU Council without the support of a referendum vote, the administration would refuse to collect the SU fees for the coming year and thus initiate the collapse of the SU Council.

The fourth issue calls for mandatory Student Union membership for all part time and summer students, as opposed to the present optional one. This would ensure that every student has a student card and thus the right to vote in general elections and referendums.

The fifth issue involves the altering of the fiscal and electoral years of the Student Union to run from June 1st to May 31st. Bosnitch explained that there has been "considerable difficulty in maintaining control over financial affairs. Our [present] fiscal year runs from September 1st to August 31st, while our electoral year runs from January 1st to January of next year. The result of this is the SU is constantly changing signing officers and policies in the middle of the financially audited year." Bosnitch went on to say that "this causes the following problems: the outgoing executive is not presently held

responsible for their financial operations for the last six months of the year, while the incoming executive has little knowledge of what was spent during the first half of the year and therefore is being held responsible for spending which it had no control over. The timing of the present years leaves the unacceptable situation where clubs and societies do not find out



what their budget is until half the year is over."

The seventh issue concerns the Student Union's proposed membership in the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) and the four-dollar additional fee which it would require. The services of the CFS include a StudentSaver card for members. Several thousand businesses across Canada offer discounts to cardholders.

Also provided is an International Student Identity Card which normally would cost seven dollars. This card is recognized around the world and gives the holder access to International Discount and Travel Programs.

The CFS has its own travel company, Travel Cuts, which specializes in student travel.

The CFS can also assist in placing members in jobs in countries such as Britain and New Zealand.

Finally, the CFS owns the only speakers' bureau in Canada, providing speakers to university campuses.

The last issue deals with the resurrection of the now-defunct football program. This program was terminated in 1980 (see page 19 for details on this proposal).

By definition, a referendum is "a submission of an issue of public importance to the direct vote of the electorate" (*Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, 1981). This referendum may assist in keeping a higher level of student awareness, and also in maintaining a functional student government.

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