

MUGWUMP

Budget blues

by Allan Carter

The Student Union just delivered their first reading of next term's budget the other evening and it has raised quite a stink (see story on page one). One particular disturbing revelation is the cuts to CHSR-FM, the campus radio station. It appears the Student Union has proved that they can be just as stupid as the STU Student Union who just recently voted on holding a referendum to cut their funding from the station. Last year, CHSR-FM received \$76,000 from the Student Union and the Student Union is projecting that next term the station will only receive \$52,000. The reason for the cut is that the Student Union finance committee did not feel that the students should have to pay for both paid positions at the station: station manager and program manager. Therefore, they have cut funding for the program manager's position.

To replace the position they have added a new post in the honoraria schedule for a volunteer at the station: Students Program coordinator. There seems to be to me a suggestion that the UNB Student Union feels the same way that the STU Student Union does about the station's mandate. Everyone is yelling that CHSR has not fulfilled the needs of the students. So STU is trying to cut all their funding, \$8,500, and the UNB Student Union has taken it upon themselves to create a new position for the station in order to ensure that the students' needs are met. UNB's actions seem kind of premature since the survey which both CHSR and the Student Union have created, to try to assess whether or not students listen to the station, has not even been released. James van Raalte, VP Finance recently stated that as a board member he will help the station to try to find funding to maintain the present program manager's position. This is a nice gesture, but it doesn't help the station a whole lot since their new budget will go in effect in a few months time.

The argument, of course, is that why should the Student Union fund paid positions which are not usually held by students? It's a stupid argument. After all, the Student Union pays for a full time position at the Paper Post and three other positions at the Student Union offices, all of which are not held by students. The manner in which the Student Union has dealt with this whole situation is inconsiderate to the members of the station and the student at UNB. By taking such an immediate stand and cutting funding to the station, the message is loud and clear even if it is not openly expressed: We will do what we want when we want and we don't give two hoots if it is detrimental to the station. If the Student Union wants to cut funding to the second paid position at the station they may have that right, however, I think they should clearly state why they hold this position and they should also tell both the station and the students at UNB why they did not inform the station of their intentions and make an attempt to help the station find alternative funding routes for the paid position. But in just removing the position from their budget the Student Union has left CHSR in a bad position. The Student Union must make it clear why they have decided to cut this position from the budget and they must justify their reasons.

By stating they don't want to fund the position because they already fund one non-student position and funding the other one should not be their responsibility just does not cut it. If that non-student position is necessary for the operations of the station and if, ultimately, the program director position benefits the listeners of CHSR, the UNB Student Union had better find another reason for cutting the position from the budget.

To add insult to injury, one glance at next term's budget is an indication that while the Student Union has decided to cut funding from CHSR they also have decided to give themselves more money. This year's winter carnival budget was \$2,400 and next term's is forecasted to be \$4,000. Now, while the winter carnival has come a long way in the last few years, I question whether the carnival is deserving of any extra funding at this time. It appears also that the Student Union enjoys going on as many conferences as possible. This year's budget for conferences was \$9,463, next term's is projected to be \$14,199. The list of increases for general operating costs at the Student Union continues and there are very few decreases. In total, the operating budget for the Student Union for this year was \$182,268. Next term's will be \$220,728. A substantial increase, indeed. Perhaps the Student Union needs a budget advisor to help them cut costs. Maybe for a small fee CHSR could help them.

OPINION

The opinions found in Opinion are not necessarily the views of The Brunswickan

Is the Student Union attempting another Social Club-style takeover?

by Dave Keighley

Those of you who were around last year well remember the scene. An independently incorporated student body with a large student membership suddenly finds itself the subject of Student Union attention. The Student Union, a politically motivated body, claims that it is acting in the interests of the students it represents, and would like to see a more accountable student representation on the Board of Directors of this student organization.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it. But this is not 1990-91 and the failed UNB Student Union "takeover" attempt on the College Hill Social Club - it is 1991-92, and the Student Unions are back again, only this time the initials of their prey has changed. Instead of CHSE, read CHSR.

There are differences between the two situations, of course. This time the "takeover" is a coordinated attempt by the UNBSU and the GSA, not just UNBSU alone. A meeting was held between various senior Student Union members to formulate strategy, back in early February. Typically for the way the SUs seem to operate, no-one from CHSR was invited to the meeting, nor were they even aware of the meeting, despite the fact that the outcome could have profound consequences to the continued functioning of their organization.

All UNB and STU students pay student fees to their SU, from which a percentage goes to fund the radio station. Now, as this funding provides the majority of CHSR's operating budget, the SUs believe that the students should have more representatives on the Board Of Directors. Currently, the SU groups each have at least one seat on the Board and their solution to the representation problem is to put more members of the various SU councils and executive committees onto the Board (just as they would have liked to have done with the Social Club's Board). After all, their reasoning goes, the students pay the fees which go to pay for the station, the Union is the elected body of these students, and therefore more members of the Union should sit on the CHSR board.

The other difference with the Social Club affair is that the students involved in CHSR agree that its Board Of Directors needs changing, and urgently. The executive committee of CHSR, primarily students who also happen to pay their fees, agree that students who fund the station should have a greater say on the Board Of Directors (students currently occupy six of the eleven seats). However, where CHSR members disagree with the SUs is that we believe that the student representatives should not, at the same time, be members of a politically motivated body such as a Student Union. This would constitute a conflict of interest - political interference in the Media: "Say things nice about us or we will cut your funding," or "We are going to be intransigent Directors, so that you will get bad press when things go wrong. That then gives ourselves on the SU an excuse to cut your funding, which also happens to make the SU look good because that means student fees can be cut."

Call us paranoid if you wish, but look at the latter situation. Jeff London, acting President of STU-SU, is also chair of the CHSR Board Of Directors. During the last year there has been need of urgent action from the Board to instigate a new search committee to find a new Station Manager, and also a sexual harassment complaint which the Board has had to deal with. Mr. London has been integral to the functioning of each, and both these matters have been dragging on for months. Eventually bad reports appear in *The Brunswickan* and *The Aquinian* which give the impression that the station is poorly run and a waste of money. The next we know, the same Mr. London has a referendum planned for St. Thomas questioning their continued financial support of CHSR.

Further illustrating Mr. London's lack of consideration to his fellow Board members, one of the questions of the STU referendum states "Be it resolved that the SU will not forward any funding to CHSR until the Board Of Directors of the station is controlled by elected members of the the student bodies on these campuses." As I have stated, a majority of the Board already is elected by students - it has to be by law. What they seem to object to is that two members of the Board are elected by the student body of CHSR. Why shouldn't a percentage of the Board be students representing the same organization which the Board directs? Forward thinking industrial companies have workers representatives on their Boards.

Mr. London is also a newscaster at the station, and now claims (unless he was misquoted) that he has been "terminated," because the CHSR executive committee requested that he take a leave of absence from reading the news at the station until such time that he is no longer President of the STU-SU. Would any viewer think it unbiased if Mulroney was a newscaster reading a report on the economy on "The National"? Would anyone think it was unbiased if James Van Raalte wrote a news report in the *Brunswickan* about the affairs of the UNB-SU finance committee? So what listener would think it was unbiased if they heard Mr. London reading newscasts regarding STU-SU affairs on CHSR? It is an obvious conflict of interest.

I do not wish to single out Mr. London as the only Board member from the SUs to be working against the interests of the station. There is also the case of the January meetings of the UNB-SU Media Services Review Committee, in which seats were given to the *Brunswickan* and CHSR representatives. The committee, chaired by Mr. Van Raalte (also a SU member on the CHSR Board), thoroughly discussed the situation at CHSR and came up with some constructive proposals to further develop the station.

How sincere the UNB-SU was about these meetings, or the relevance of its recommendations, now seems doubtful, given the secretive February meetings of the Student Unions, and particularly the subsequent modifications made to the CHSR 92-93 budget proposals, but the UNB-SU this week. For instance, the necessity of a second paid staff person at the station was discussed in detail by the Media Review Committee and it was decided that "Paid staff act as resources; continuity" and "keep the station running" (quoted from Van Raalte's minutes of the Media Review Committee). At the UNB-SU meeting this week, the same Mr. Van Raalte decided the the second paid staff person should be cut. (And remember, the same budget proposals were passed by the CHSR Board of Directors, on which sits Mr. Van Raalte, a couple of weeks earlier).

CHSR welcomes moves by all the student bodies to reorganize its Board Of Directors. However, this re-organisation must not be used as an excuse to put more SU members on its Board, or to cut funding if they do not. CHSR would like to see student on the Board who are not holding positions on Student councils or committees - students elected at the same time as the Student Councils, and who, like the student council, will represent the interests of the fee paying student body. Currently, Student Union representatives, with their hidden agendas, are not acting in the best interests of the station. Their actions are a counterpoint to the hard work of the student volunteers and staff who want to run a radio station, not play petty politics. The result is poorer performance by the station, which means that we provide a lesser value for the students who pay their fees.