



Freedom of press battle heats up in Fredericton

by Rick Janson
for Canadian University Press
FREDERICTON—Ex-*Aquinian* editor Peter Boisseau cuts up an old pair of black corduroy jeans to provide another arm band for a waiting supporter. He makes a joke about how the *Acquinian* office has been turned into "Hollywood" that day as camera crews from the television networks arrived to chronicle the struggle of the St. Thomas University student newspaper to stay alive.

The Student union has made repeated attempts to stop the paper from publishing. They ordered it to cease publishing March 6. They fired the editorial board March 13. March 14 they opened nominations for students to apply for positions on a new council appointed *Aquinian*. March 15 they sent a request to the director of the student union building to change the locks on the paper's office door. They even called the *Aquinian* printer to try and halt publication.

But despite their best efforts the *Aquinian* continues to publish independently and on schedule.

The *Aquinian's* phone rings continuously. Support for the paper comes in from not only students on campus but from organizations throughout the Atlantic provinces. This small Fredericton student newspaper has become the focal point in a major battle over the freedom of the press on campus.

Both moral and financial support has started pouring in. It comes from other student councils, from student newspapers, from the local student radio station, from professors and from students themselves.

The paper has also received a surge in student participation as the *Aquinian's* membership grows under siege.

But despite the outpouring of support the council remains entrenched in their position.

March 20 supporters of the paper showed up at a council meeting hoping to make their case. So far the council has denied the paper the opportunity to defend itself at their meetings.

The previous week the paper had officially given notice that it wanted to be placed on that evening's council agenda. The council ruled them out of order every time they attempted to bring up the matter. The meeting became unruly as the supporters bombed the council with endless questions pertinent to the agenda to obstruct the course of the meeting. After two hours the assembly broke-up with the council's agenda incomplete.

"We're no further along with the council than we were two weeks ago," said *Aquinian* news editor Lois Corbett.

Although council has yet to name a new editorial board for the paper, the possibility of a council newspaper looks less and less likely amid local opposition.

The *Brunswickan*, the University of New Brunswick student newspaper that provides the production facilities to the *Aquinian*, refuses to let a council-run newspaper use those facilities. The *Aquinian's* printer has also stated that it does not have the press time to run-off a council newspaper.

The student union building's board of directors has not only refused to put new locks on the newspaper's door, but has affirmed the present paper's right to occupy those offices.

Council claims the paper was shut down because it was \$1800 in debt and was editorially dishonest with the students. They refuse to elaborate on those charges to the press.

The *Aquinian* claims it is in fact in the black with over \$3000 in out-standing revenues yet to come in. The paper is also heavily booked with advertising for the next two editions.