

Students' Council votes against optional SU fees

by Ken Lenz

Students' Union President Robert Greenhill announced at Tuesday's Student Council meeting that he will not be taking the retroactive increase in Executive salary wages.

In the past couple of weeks there has been much controversy about the Students' Council decision of January 24 to give each Executive Member of the SU a \$1050 bonus; a retroactive salary increase of 16.5 per cent to July 1983.

Though incoming SU President Floyd Hodgins has indicated he will maintain the salaries of the Executive at the old level of \$900 per month none of this year's executive, with the exception of Greenhill, are going to decline the retroactive bonus at this point.

Other issues discussed at the meeting included the concept of making SU fees optional, the idea of establishing representative democracy on Students' Council, and a proposal to elect the Gateway editor through a general election rather than an internal Gateway staff election.

"I am being forced to join an association in order to attend a public institution," said Law representative John Pfreim, speaking on behalf of his motion to make SU fees optional.

Pfreim stated that in the Canadian Constitution, one of the fundamental freedoms is freedom of association, and making SU fees mandatory infringes on that freedom; the same way as arbitrary arrest infringes on the freedom of an individual. "Optional fee payment would force the SU to sell itself. Right now the SU really doesn't have to do any more than any government bureaucracy," he said.

All but three councillors were horrified at the idea that they may have to let students decide whether to pay funds to the SU.

Said Education rep Rainer Huebl, "you do have a choice to join the SU; you don't have to come here (the U of A)."

SU VP Internal Peter Block said "you would be destroying the revenue sources for a lot of clubs," and that the fundamental freedom argument isn't valid.

"Part of the democratic system is that everyone pays funds and you have an elected body to control the allocation of those funds. If you don't like what the government is doing then you can run for election and change the policies," said Block, likening the SU fee collection system to that of the Federal Income Tax system.

John Pfreim pointed out to Block, "this isn't a tax argument, the SU is an association, not a government."

He continued, "only 15 per cent of the students even vote, and that just isn't enough."

SU President Elect Floyd Hodgins said although he is not in favour of making the fees optional he thinks the question should be put on the upcoming VP External referendum ballot so students can decide for themselves.

Arts rep Tony Brouwer presented a motion to give equal representation to those students in large faculties as those in smaller ones.

At present, one councillor per faculty is allowed with an additional member for each faculty which has 1000 members and another additional member for every 500 students above the initial 1000, up to a maximum of 5 representatives per faculty.

"I can't see any reason why students in some faculties can't get equal representation for their money," said Brouwer. He added, "if half the university population is from the faculties of Arts and Sciences, why shouldn't they have half the representation."

The motion passed first reading which means it will be

referred to one of the SU's numerous committees. The motion will probably be changed at the Board level before it returns to council for second and third readings.

The final controversial motion concerned the changing of the method of selecting the Gateway editor in chief. Presently, a committee to review the applicants is composed of the present Gateway editor, five Gateway staff members, and three members of the Students' Council.

The staff of the Gateway wanted to change the structure of the committee so only staff members choose the editor.

SU VP Internal Peter Block brought the motion to council, then declined to support it when he found he can't present a motion and refuse to support it at the same time.

This is because of a regulation designed to prevent councillors from wasting Council's time.

However, the motion was supported by Clubs Commissioner Caroline Nevin and VP External Andrew Watts.

Block said he objected to the proposal because he feels the Gateway would not be accountable to anyone if the motion were to pass. "Some kind of publishing

board should be established," he said.

The meeting then began to degenerate as VP Academic Barb Donaldson suggested the Gateway editor in chief be elected in an SU General Election.

Gateway editor Brent Jang referred to this proposal as "pretty ridiculous" and former Gateway editor Andrew Watts agreed, saying, "If you're going to elect a person for this position then you might as well go ahead and call a general election for the Directors of Student Help, Student Orientation Services, the Exam Registry, etc."

SU President Robert Greenhill interjected, claiming that "the Gateway hasn't shown any responsibility this year. They produce the newspaper number one, they criticize the SU number two, and they look at their own structure number three."

Arts proxy Don Millar returned the debate to the original question, saying "I think the current system of the selection of an Editor is reprehensible but I don't think we should start moving halfway towards perhaps a worse situation."

The motion was finally tabled.

Councillors gave \$12,658.50 to various clubs and associations during the meeting including \$1412 to the financially strapped Arts Students' Association.

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CFS members grow

Charlottetown (CUP) - Another campus has joined Canada's national student organization.

Students at the University of Prince Edward Island voted 58 per cent to join the Canadian Federation of Students in a February 8 membership referendum. CFS chair Graham Dowdell said 322 of the institution's 1700 students cast ballots.

The two-year old federation has now won four out of four referenda this year. University of

Alberta students voted to join in November, while students at the University of Regina and Laurentian University in Ontario voted to join in January.

Lakehead University in Thunder Bay will be the next institution to stage a membership referendum February 28. At least seven other institutions will hold referenda in March.

The federation now has 28 full members.

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