

his pitch.

I've got an offer. We'll form a national student magazine. One which would work with student groups and campus papers and be used to initiate discussion on student issues, offer ideas and information on careers and work, and promote a sense of campus spirit and involvement. It will be distributed to campuses across Canada. The magazine would be funded by a group of companies new to the market, who would offer their advertising support. A section of the magazine would showcase student journalism by reprinting the best articles from campus papers across the country. Both writers and newspapers would receive a cheque for \$50 for each reprint. You can write whatever you like. It will be good for both of us. Any questions?

Would you let us print anything? Yes, anything. Even the word fuck? Even that.

Then the big question: Last year, many of us ran an article that got some papers into trouble with campus authorities. One paper even got investigated by the RCMP for it. It was entitled "A gay man's guide to erotic safe sex." It was intended to make safe sex more appealing to gays, some of whom consider condoms clumsy and un-erotic. It contained vivid descriptions of anal sex and other acts. Would we be able to print that?

Well... Well, I'd have to draw the line somewhere.

It is as if Perlman is an illusionist making his assistant float in the air, and some audience member has pointed out the strings. His performance loses its bite after that answer.

That meeting was the turning point in relations between the student press and *Looking Up*. Afterwards, things got nasty.

Perlman says he got positive responses from none of Canada's student papers (though he notes that he attracted some individual writers with his \$50 offer).

"I think I had big plans," he said in a recent interview from his Montreal office. "But it would have required cooperation across the country. They pretty much rejected it. They simply said it had too commercial a slant."

"I thought [Perlman] was pretty desperate," says Katie Swoger, now editor of the Carleton University *Charlatan*. "I don't think he really understood how student papers work or how the Canadian university press works at all."

Around this time, many newspapers began to fear *Looking Up* as a threat to their advertising and editorial independence. In retaliation they used one of the few tools they possessed as students: their control over the use of campus space. On many campuses, student governments are able to control who can pile free publications on campus.

A flood of papers asked student governments and university administrations to stop granting *Looking Up* and *Campus Canada* distribution rights. They were successful on at least nine campuses.

They also convinced the Canadian Federation of Students, a national student government organization, to stop distributing *Looking Up* in the offices of CFS-owned travel agency Travel Cuts.

And they publicized the dispute by running regular news stories about it on their wire service.

Perlman fought back. *Looking Up's* cover banner, which originally read "Canada's Campus Voice," suddenly changed to an ironically threatening "Threat-free Journalism." Perlman wrote a bitter editorial accusing the student press of "censorship" that "parallels book-burning." And he wrote letters to editors and student government officials accusing Canadian University Press, a student-run national wire service and newspaper support organization, of "launch[ing] a massive smear campaign" which is "reminiscent of McCarthyism in the '50s."

Finally, *Looking Up's* lawyers sent a letter to CUP's Ottawa offices demanding \$650,000 in damages and immediate apologies to be printed in all 51 member papers. According to CUP officials, the lawyers haven't followed through on the demands.

Meanwhile, the publishers of *Campus Canada* kept a low profile.

"We've stayed right out of it," says Locke. "*Looking Up* and the student unions got into some really heated battles [but] our statement was, look, let this thing blow over, we've been around a long time, we're not kids, we understand that verbal arguments are never going to win anything, let's just let everybody calm down."

"Then," Locke continues, "let's spend the summertime talking to as many people as we can and making sure that everyone understands that we're not the big bad bears that we've been perceived as." The strategy was



partially successful: Locke claims that now only two campuses, York and Carleton, refuse to grant him distribution rights.

In his nine years publishing *Campus Canada*, Locke appears to have learned the fundamental lesson of exploiting students: if they fight back, just lie low until they graduate. Then you'll be back in business.

For some student press veterans, the whole story evokes a sense of *déjà vu*.

John Parsons, who was president of CUP in 1980-81, recalls the first time glossy 'student' magazines appeared on campus.

"It was around 1974 when a magazine called *Like It Is* started appearing," Parsons remembers. "It was started by two or three entrepreneurs from Toronto who tried to have it dumped on campuses."

"It was basically totally blunted, soft, wishy-washy journalism by any standard."

"The newspapers, finding this thing showing up on their campus, put two and two together and started to oppose it from about 1978 to 1979. It was a total replay of what's been happening over the last little while."

"The people who put that magazine out went on the warpath, saying that the student press was fighting free speech. The whole bit. But basically it was just for

commercial reasons."

Once again, Parsons says, the publishers had no idea that students would actually value serious journalism.

"What these people hadn't counted on is that if they just popped up on a campus and started dumping copies around, or tried to get some kind of connection to have copies dumped — it was news to them that someone would object, someone who had a very direct interest in the student community. And that was what really blew them away."

And they were blown away. By 1979, *Like It Is* had shut down and its publishers moved to safer markets.

Parsons adds that he isn't opposed to the idea of a national campus magazine.

"If a magazine was launched that was aimed at Canadian students and people wanted to sell paid subscriptions to it, or sell it on a campus newsstand, I think there should be no problem with that."

But he says student newspapers should have the right to protect their existence by prohibiting magazines from dumping thousands of free copies on campus. According to Parsons, students are often falsely accused of censorship for doing this.

"People are confusing issues of censorship basically with commercial exploitation," he says. "There's a material value in having access to students and that is something that should belong to student-owned media."

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