

Sound Off



Mugwump
Journal
By TOM BENJAMIN

MacLean explains council change

Dear Editor:

There has been in the past several weeks a growing concern about the Student Representative Council of UNB. It is felt that the body and its members are for some undiscernable reason becoming ineffective, redundant, unrepresentative and in reality a travesty. As one individual who believes all these observations are true I feel it is imperative that both the students and the SRC face this reality.

Recognition that a problem exists is the first step in the solution of that problem.

A body that substantially votes to request its president's resignation one day, then three days later unanimously withdraws that motion; an organization that instructs its financial wing not to finance parties then distinguishes that instruction out of existence with exceptions; a council that debates for literally hours whether or not to overturn a decision of the students; a body that can argue for 30 minutes about the simple procedure of tabling a motion arising from the minutes; a group that for the most part, decides issues not on their merits but upon the criteria of who supports or opposes them, has indeed a problem.

What then is the basis of this problem. I can offer but one opinion. An opinion that is certainly not all encompassing, but that does evolve from a limited experience in students' governments and organizations.

Some individuals believe that the problem stems from personality clashes between individuals. While this may be true in isolated occasions I feel that in general this is a superficial analysis that does not constitute the real problem. Others believe that the problem rests with a lack of response to the wishes of ones constituents, that is that the individual members and the SRC as a unit do not represent the desires of the student body. This observation does have its merits and in some respects does involve a portion of the problem. Still others believe that the SRC is an elitist body of half-wits, ranting along on some ill-plotted ego trip destined for personal benefits and self-gratification. One hundred dollars a year and all the pain and suffering one can cram into four hours every Monday night is a far cry from my definition of personal benefit and self gratification. However the concept that the body is elitist deserves some recognition. Where then does the problem lie?

The essence of the problem I feel stems from a blatant but often unrecognized shift in the nature of student governments across this nation, over the past ten to fifteen years. To better understand this shift one must realize that in the 1950's and early 1960's (at least in this region) student government confined their activities to matters that were wholly within their control. That is to say they were purely "governmental" in nature. During this so called "governmental" period student councils became for obvious reasons elitist. I say obvious because as long as councils operated within a sphere over which they had complete control student support for their policies and actions was unnecessary. All in reality that was required from the student body was non-opposition. The UNB - SRC like its sister organizations throughout the country is founded upon an "elitist" heritage.

Along came the mid sixties, Daniel Conlandit, the SDS, Abbe Hoffman, student awareness and a fundamental shift in the role of student government assumed a new function - that of the "pressure group". Most significant about this shift was the fact that student government left its sphere of sole control and worked itself into spheres over which they had no (or at least very little) control. Since this shift it has become readily apparent that an essential element in "pressure group" politics is mass support.

This development has created at UNB a very difficult, if not impossible problem. We have a council, that remains essentially elitist, attempting to perform a "pressure group" function. If this were not enough of a difficulty some of those more "aware" members of council attempt to invoke or at least pay lip service to the "mass support" concept when solving problems that arise within the "governmental" function of the SRC. The obvious result is that the SRC performs neither of its functions - "governmental" or "pressure groups" - properly. Before I continue some clarification of my preceding remarks is necessary. My statements about mass student involvement at the "Governmental" level of the SRC's role should not be interpreted as personal support for exclusion of students opinion or involvement at that level. These remarks are merely a recognition that so long as the "governmental" aspect of student problems are handled by a body (the SRC) then the decisions of that body must be elitist in

nature, and must exclude mass student involvement by definition. It is unnecessary to embark upon a lengthy debate involving the classical argument concerning representative democracy to justify this statement. It is, given sufficient thought, an obvious reality that every student opinion on this campus cannot be included in decisions about the day to day operation of the union. The unfortunate reality of this situation is reflected by Jacques Fawel's words.

"France contains two fundamental temperments - that of the left and that of the right; three principle tendencies if one adds the centre; six spiritual families; ten parties, large or small, traversed by multiple currents, fourteen parliamentary groups without much discipline; and forty million opinions".

The respective numbers may change but UNB student government is in the same position in the final analysis.

Having faced this fact with respect to its "governmental" function the SRC must choose between two alternatives if the problem is to be rectified. Both alternatives require a radical change in the SRC. If students, as a mass, are to be included in the decision making process of the daily running of the union then the SRC must be scrapped and replaced by the forum, the general meeting-in short direct democracy. I certainly do not recommend this solution. First because the problems of quorums, small minorities and the general lack of continuous flow of information make it untenable. Second because I firmly believe the average student on this campus does not give a dam whether or not club x gets y dollars to attend a conference in city z.

The second alternative and one which I favour does not involve a radical restructuring of the SRC but on the other hand a radical rethinking of the body's role with respect to its "governmental" function. The "governmental" function should for all intents and purposes be removed from the council. The SRC should establish for the lack of a better word a civil service. Decisions about which club gets what amount of money, questions about entertainment and speakers, problems about who gets appointment to what position should not reach the SRC. Instead the only (not to derogate it for it is important) function for the SRC

(Continued on page 9)

Female jug band takes issue

Dear Editor:

We are writing in reference to your comment in the Mugwump Journal concerning the Jug Band.

May we enlighten you on a few points, sir, regarding this issue.

1) We auditioned for the part in Red 'n Black as everyone else in the cast did, unfortunately those who choose to criticize us did not even make the effort to try out.

2) The act, sir, does not have to be all female or all male. The Jug Band merely consists of a group of people who are keen on performing in Red 'n Black. Sexism is not an

issue and it is only being made an issue by those who felt it was beneath them to audition.

3) As for an old tradition being changed, this phenomena is common to Red 'n Black and only enhances the variety the show offers each year. Might we also remind you that in 1951 a tradition was started when the male kickline was introduced. This did not cause half the furor that the female jugband has in 1975.

Your comments, Mr. Editor, were highly uncalled for. Might we suggest you see the show first before you make such outrageous

statements.

Yours truly,

The 1975 Jug Band

- Kathleen M. Ramsay
- Patricia H. Lingley
- Martha D. Stuart
- Eileen St. Martin
- D. Robyn Scott
- Martha M. Shepherd
- Carbara E. Pritchard
- Mary S. Stewart
- Susan L. Hillcoat
- Ann B. MacMillan

The controversy over whether or not to hold pubs with alcohol at McConnell Hall has still not been resolved - much to the detriment of the quality of entertainment for the general student body.

The council entertainment officer has already had to cancel some high quality acts simply because no other building on campus is suitable to hold a pub with quality entertainment and still make money.

The real reason for banning pubs in the hall has become more and more unclear as the issue develops. The original reasons were that residence students complained about the noise, damage and other hardships they experienced when pubs were held in the dining hall.

I have received no indications from residence students that those arguments represent a consensus of opinion. Pubs are still continuing in most residence basements, but apparently those do not bother the students who live there.

Those who are in favor of banning the pubs are forgetting one important segment of the university population - the thousands of students who live off campus.

The board of governors of this university has recommended that the residence system be operated on a break-even basis. Things haven't exactly worked that way. From the 1967-68 academic year up to and including 1974-75 the residence system has operated at a deficit which totals \$1,626,008. Last year's estimated deficit was \$375,000.

The money necessary to subsidize the residence system comes from the university's general operating budget. Normally the budget is used in ways meant to benefit all members of the university community, not just the minority of students who live in residence.

Since the residence system must be subsidized to such a degree from the general budget residence students are given an unfair priority in funding.

The problem at present appears, essentially, to be a difference of opinion between students. Residence students have some legitimate complaints about the running of pubs in the dining hall, but it must be remembered that non-residence students have some rights to the facilities also. The matter should be settled through discussions between concerned student groups to ensure all students are treated fairly.

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With the provincial legislature opening for a session Nov. 18 at least one act will be considered which could benefit off-campus students a great deal.

The proposed Residential Tenancies Act will clarify the relationship between landlords and tenants, and will establish rentalmen to handle problems between the two groups.

The act isn't as far-reaching as one would like, but it certainly is a step in the right direction.

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Writers of a letter to the editor in this issue are very critical of comments made in this column last week about the jug band at Red 'n Black. It is obvious the writers either did not read or understand the comments.

I have a feeling the letter was composed, at least mentally, before the column was read. I always appreciate feedback, but would prefer writers to at least read something before assuming it is critical.

I personally thought the jug band this year was the best act since the one immediately preceding it.

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As usual Red 'n Black provided excellent entertainment for the students and members of the community.

The entire cast deserves a vote of thanks from the whole student body for their efforts.

The show is one of the few events on campus which appeared to have sufficient backing and workers this year. Maybe Rod Doherty can share his secrets of attracting staff with other campus organizations.

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At just a few minutes before press time staff members here learned of a new concept under consideration to eliminate the problem of where to hold pubs.

The suggestion is that a large concrete building be constructed solely for housing pubs. The building, as envisaged, would have no windows, cast iron furniture and metal tankards.

The floor would slope to a large drain in the centre of the floor, and the walls would have fire hose fixtures.

When the pub is over the lights come on, and so do the hoses.

ER 14, 1975

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