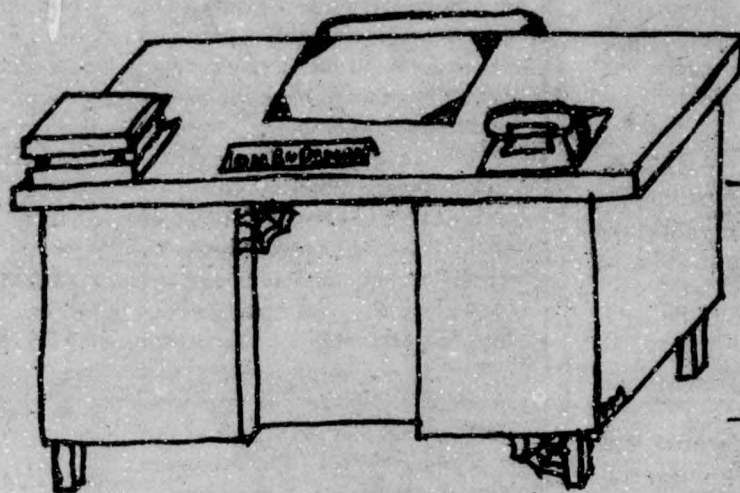


ABOUT YOUR
RAISE.....



I WANT TO
COMPLAIN ABOUT
SEXUAL HARASSMENT



Election time at UNB has come and gone. During the course of the campaigning, several candidates, including some of the elected ones, talked about establishing a separate ombudsman's office at UNB. I can't argue about that idea. I hope this position is created, and the sooner, the better.

The role of ombudsman was established in Sweden in 1809. With the huge growth of government bureaucracies, support of this institution spread to many democratic countries. There are now ombudsmen in all levels of government, in some large industries - and on university campuses.

During the 1960's there were periods of conflict between students and administration on American campuses. In an attempt to improve the relations between the two, some universities established an ombudsman's office. The University ombudsmen were favourably received, and are growing in numbers, though not at a very quick pace in Canada. Still it is conceivable that in the near future they will be a permanent and undeniable part of the university community.

At UNB we actually do have an ombudsman, in the Dean of Students, who performs that function along with several others. But we do not have an ombudsman in the true sense of the word.

Perhaps at this point you are wondering what an ombudsman really is. Well, an ombudsman is supposed to be a remedy for the excess and incompetencies of bureaucracies. An ombudsman is meant to listen to complaints, offer advice, and explain rules and policies. His chief duties are to resolve problems between citizens or, in this case, students and administra-

tion, and to try to get legitimate grievances corrected. The ombudsman should be able to investigate issues without conferring with administration officials, and he should have access to all files. If it is necessary the ombudsman should criticize, recommend and publicize injustices.

However, the Ombudsman has NO Judicial Power - he cannot make or reverse decisions. His power lies in persuasion, and if he is a competent and credible individual the university would find it difficult to refuse his advice. On the other hand; if he is not taken seriously the whole office becomes a sham.

Above all the ombudsman must be neutral and impartial and it is absolutely essential that the job is independent of the university.

As it is now, UNB's ombudsman (or Dean of Students) is a member of the administration. The ombudsman is structured in such a way that the Dean must look out for the interests of the students and the faculty/administration simultaneously.

When problems arise between students and administration, the current ombudsman has a conflict of interests. In recent times there have been several incidents, such as the foreign students' issue, or the sexual harassment problem, which have fallen into this category.

On top of this, the student population has been growing at UNB; for example, there has been an increase of 700 students since 1974. The number of complaints, questions, and problems put to the Dean of Students has grown even more substantially. There were about 800 made last year.

Who can deny, that to deal with student

problems as effectively as possible, the ombudsman's and Dean of Students' roles must be divorced.

If this occurs the new ombudsman should not be appointed by the President of the University, nor should his salary be paid entirely by the administration. It would be next to useless to have a "voice for the students" who might be overly influenced by administration.

I don't think that a student dominated ombudsman is the answer either. If he had little choice but to argue for the students in all cases, whether they be right or wrong, then justice would not be served. And I imagine, a student advocate would create a bit of friction between the two parties. If the student advocate was a student himself, how much time could he spend at the job, and how much clout would he carry with the administration?

Students and administration/faculty ought to jointly select and financially support an ombudsman. Possibly, a faculty member, who was supported by both students and administration, and whom the students could be sure would be neutral could take on the position of ombudsman on a part-time capacity. The other alternative would be to bring in an outsider who would have a full-time job; this would be a more expensive proposal but a probably more effective one also.

It looks like we eventually will get a separate ombudsman's office created at UNB. It is too bad we couldn't have had one earlier, as we certainly could have used one in the past. Anyway, I hope that the student council and administration can come together on this issue, and make a wise decision.