

Staff's choice for editor overruled

MONTREAL (CUP) Students at McGill University are organizing to oppose student council's decision to reject the unanimous choice of this year's McGill Daily staff as editor of next year's paper.

In a five-hour marathon session Wednesday night (March 15), council elected law student Timothy Denton over the Daily's choice Nesar Ahmad, by a one-vote margin in the second of two secret ballots. Earlier, the council had passed

a 14-point "contract" laying down rules by which next year's Daily editor must abide. Student Society president, Gabor Zinner, who had drafted the document, defended it to the meeting.

Claiming that his remarks were not meant to prejudice the council against the Daily's choice for editor, Zinner launched into a detailed criticism of this year's Daily, saying that it had neglected the coverage of campus events and

had promoted a "monolithic" political position.

Nesar Ahmad voiced concern that "certain ethics in journalism are involved here, such as the right of any newspaper to autonomy."

However, Denton — who has no newspaper experience — came out strongly in favor of the contract.

After four hours of heated debate, including an unsuccessful attempt to reject both candidates and re-open applications for the editorship, a motion asking for the ratification of Ahmad was proposed. A motion to vote by secret ballot was passed.

The first ballot ended in a tie, the second gave Denton an eight to seven plurality.

The students in the audience then shouted for an open vote but were ignored by council. The meeting was hastily adjourned after a call came from the audience to convene a meeting of those wishing a "free and open Daily". About 125 people gathered in an adjoining room and began planning resistance to the council decision.

At this meeting, Ahmad called for all students to mobilize support for a free and open Daily and charged that the council meeting was characterized by "red-baiting".

Sociology professor, Marlene Dixon, who supported Ahmad's candidacy, described a meeting that she and other faculty had and earlier with President Zinner, "at which he made it clear that he supported Denton and wanted the Daily to, as he put it, 'help him fulfill his mission of keeping the Students' Society from falling apart'".

Earlier Denton had told council that, "The process of dissolution of the McGill community is being perpetuated by people with an interest in destroying this community. The role of the Daily editor next year will be to restore some kind of belonging to the place."

A student at the organizational meeting stated, "We played by their rules and we lost. It's been useful because now we know the enemy."

Many students came to the Daily office after the meeting ended and declared their determination to campaign against council. A petition supporting the Daily staff gained 500 signatures in four hours. The council decision is being appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Students' Society on the grounds that parliamentary procedure requires appointees to receive a clear majority of the votes cast. Denton received only a plurality.

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