

EDITORIAL

Guaranteed Representation

by Lynne Wanyeki

Earlier this week, I had a rather interesting discussion with a member of CHSR-FM. We were talking about the effect that changing CHSR's license would have on the station's "minority" music and spoken word programming (if indeed, a change in CHSR's license would allow the station to exist at all). Such programming includes shows done in French, Spanish, Mandarin, as well as the various cultural shows, and "special interest" shows such as the feminist and lesbian/gay shows. This kind of programming takes up only a portion of CHSR's broadcasting hours, and leaves plenty of time for regular music shows and news broadcasts. Right now, then, CHSR serves as a venue and a means of communication which is simply not available on commercial stations. The person to whom I was talking felt that what this raised was the issue of accurate representation by persons belonging to the groups that such shows targeted.

This brought us to the question of whether or not such representation should be guaranteed on the Student Union Council. For example, a guaranteed seat on Council for a representative of the international students present here at UNB, as is done at other universities.

Obviously, this raises some interesting questions, the first being, why would such guaranteed representation be necessary? In assuming that it is, we are positing a certain cohesiveness among the international students that may or may not actually exist. We are, in effect, positing commonalities of both experience and social needs among the nationally and culturally diverse international student body that go beyond the scope of the various faculty-based Council representatives. For, as was pointed out during the conversation, all international students are free to run for Council, which theoretically should make guaranteed representation unnecessary. In the four years I have been here, though, I have not seen one international student run in the student elections. This makes me stop and think. Why is this the case?

Last weekend, during a meeting with the sub-committee on Media and Student Publications, some questions were raised concerning the actual content of the Brunswickan. Because content falls solely under the mandate of the Brunswickan's Editorial Board and staff members, I felt at the time that the questions asked were not particularly relevant to the proceedings of the sub-committee, whose mandate it is to come up with a long-term plan concerning services funded by the Student Union. But, I answered them nonetheless, with the hopes of clarifying the Brunswickan's position to the Student Union. Upon reflection, however, I came to the conclusion that it might be worthwhile to raise those questions here.

The content referred to was that found in the Spectrum section of the Brunswickan. I personally do not believe that the existence of this section needs to be justified in any way - although, in a sense, this is exactly what I am about to do. Spectrum columnists are not drawn from the Brunswickan's regular staff. They are members of the university community, either students or faculty, who have volunteered, on their own initiative, to write weekly submissions around a theme which they feel is important, and which we feel will be both relevant and of interest to the readership. Spectrum is a section in which I personally take great pride, for it reflects the diverse make-up of this society at large, let alone that within the boundaries of this university. It is a fallacy to assume that the Brunswickan does not reflect the opinions of the student body simply because it allows for the reflection of facets of the student body that perhaps not everyone wants to read about, know about, or even acknowledge.

The whole argument becomes rather tedious, for it is an argument that I have seen take place in each of the three years I have worked for the paper. If it is a question of perception, which I believe it to be, there are some who will be convinced of our argument, and others who will not. Some will continue to believe that the Brunswickan ought to reflect only those views held jointly by the majority of the students, to reflect only the things on which we all agree, to reflect, in effect, a deadly and boring conformity of thought. To such people, I can only offer the following consolation: you spend, at most, ten cents of your student fees on each week's issue of the Brunswickan. Therefore, even if you only flick through it to read the comics and the personals, you will receive your money's worth in full. I'd say that's a good deal, especially since you can then, as was once suggested in Mugwump, proceed to line your litterboxes for free.

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