

Sound Off



Mugwump

TOM
BENJAMIN

Journal

The honoraria structure of this university has become so important to many members of our student government that it has completely taken precedence over all major student issues.

Housing shortages, student aid problems and university budget limits have been forced into second place by an issue I can only describe as insignificant to the general student body.

And the issue of honoraria has become so completely distorted that it is causing major conflicts between many campus organizations.

To give some history of the debate:

Just before leaving office, ex-comptroller Wes Batanyita prepared an honoraria proposal which made substantial changes only to the position of comptroller. Requests for changes in other areas of the honoraria structure were ignored. The report was taken to council and defeated after a lengthy debate.

Council then passed a motion calling for the establishment of a committee to prepare another honoraria schedule, although the time restraints made it difficult for such a committee to be established since no members were appointed at the meeting.

During the March break a discussion of the defunct honoraria schedule evolved between J. David Miller, vice president Gordon Kennedy and myself. The result of the discussion was the drafting of another honoraria structure.

The report was taken to council's next meeting, where it was passed after considerable debate and some minor changes.

Then, at the last council meeting — surprise, surprise — council decided they did not approve of the report, and began a lengthy debate on its merits and demerits.

And it is the debate that ensued which gives so much insight into the problems inherent in our existing student council.

Major changes proposed in the report included massive increases for both the comptroller and CHSR director, both of whom took a lively (but inane) part in the debate.

Ex-station director Chris Pratt, who had seconded the motion which instituted the second report, said his actions at that time were irresponsible. Well there's nothing unusual about that. Many of his actions this year were irresponsible, including the submission of a "bare bones" budget for the station in the fall — a budget which did not allow enough money for the station to carry on normal operations. The budget, which made no allowances for the station to go off campus as planned, was refused by the council executive. The station has still now implemented off-campus broadcasting, although Pratt is not advocating an increase in the honoraria for station director just in case the station does manage to go off campus.

It is normal procedure to raise honoraria after the individual's work load has increased, not before.

It is also normal procedure for councillors to refrain from voting in issues where they as individuals will be directly affected. This procedure was not followed by present station director Alan Patrick, who voted in favour of a motion which would substantially increase the honoraria for his duties next year.

It appears that Pratt, who has lost more elections than most people care to remember, feels he has finally achieved a position of power on council since many of the present councillors also hold positions at CHSR.

By this stage of the meeting it became apparent that the honoraria controversy was only a symptom of deeper problems in council.

Pratt attempted to prevent students from entering the debate about honoraria, incorrectly thinking that only council members have the privilege to speak at the meetings. He has attended enough meetings to know the actual situation.

Council also listened to a submission from Yearbook editor, Diane Phillips, who said all honoraria for that organization should be increased since she felt the job entailed the same amount of work as editing a newspaper and so on. When asked if she had not agreed with the amount allotted to the yearbook in the second report, Phillips said she had, but had decided to request more money after noticing that several other positions had increased awards.

Council also entertained a motion which would, if passed, have granted and disbursed the yearbook honoraria, despite the fact that honoraria, have never been awarded before the book actually appears.

The actions taken by council Monday night could not possibly have been more damaging to the student government of this university. The major substance of the meeting was a debate concerning how much some of the council members would be paid next year. Council has lost all contact with the electorate, and many councillors have exhibited a complete lack of concern for the needs of students — students who are faced with more important issues than the allocation of honoraria.

Who is J. David Miller and why is he saying those awful things about everybody?

One reads in the newspapers and perhaps hears on the radio of corruption in the government and of misuse of public funds, but it is very difficult to condemn the government because the proof is always buried in a haze of politics. As Bruce Cockburn puts it "They're either lying or they've been misled."

Well friends, "we got trouble, right here in River City". To those of you who thought the SRC was too dim and ineffectual to do anything, I will assure you that they are indeed doing something — spending money like it was water, and trying to vote themselves salary or honoraria increases totally out of line with reality.

As will be reported elsewhere in this paper, Monday's council meeting was full of surprises.

Fact - Decisions are being made and action taken by a part of the executive committee, usually the president and the comptroller, without proper reference to the rest of the executive or to the SRC's full-time administrator whom we pay to advise on

procedure and precedent. Fact - The comptroller, after a set of honoraria guidelines were adopted by council, felt that he is worth more than the editor of The Brunswickan and should, therefore receive more money. There should be a hierarchy of salaries he states regardless of workload.

Fact - Honoraria for CHSR was discussed and Alan Patrick, director of CHSR and a rep at large voted to increase HIS OWN honoraria from \$500 to \$1,000. Mike Bleakney, CHSR program director and engineering rep and at least 8 other councillors who are also members of CHSR influenced this vote.

Fact - A motion which was dropped (fortunately) was made to pay the yearbook staff what they asked for, without any investigation IMMEDIATELY. Usually we wait until after the yearbook is completed.

Fact - Council spent over \$5,000 on Monday last. Most of it without reference to the AB (the finance committee) and no one determined whether or not we can afford this

expense, i.e. by the asking for the production of a current financial statement.

Fact - In addition to the conflict of interest there is the problem of multiple honoraria. At present Alan Patrick, Mike Bleakney, and Damian Bone from CHSR not only can vote on their own honoraria but will receive at least two honoraria from SRC funds. This also applies to Steve Patriquen from the Bruns and one or two others. The past master of this is of course Chris Pratt who, after voting on his own second half honoraria, managed to collect \$500 for CHSR, \$100 from the SUB Board and another possible \$100 for being a councillor. All this and 1/2 tuition from the University for being director of CHSR. Clearly this kind of excess has got to be stopped. The reader may well ask can a person do a good job for all of these parties who in good faith grant honoraria. My opinion is that it is impossible.

There is of course more, but in summary the ideas I am attempting to convey are as follows:

Firstly - The executive of the SRC are not doing the job. The constitution which they are obliged to protect is being violated and misused to the extent that decisions are being made in total ignorance of properly constituted mechanisms.

Second - The practice of allowing executive members of the largest organizations on council has got to stop, both to eliminate the severest form of conflict of interest and the paying of the same person to collect titles.

Third - The AB must be strengthened with some experienced people and used as the constitution provides, no more and no less.

Fourth - Council has got it in its collective head that it can do anything. This is nonsense, but when you suddenly have the power to grant yourselves money and privilege, divine right naturally follows.

I certainly expect The Brunswickan to keep the students informed on these issues, and if someone asks you to sign a petition asking for more responsibility, or perhaps asking for all benefits to be ratified by referendum in the Fall election, or even asking for an impeachment, please listen carefully.

I hope and pray that the executive of the SRC gets it together and that people on council have the honour and decency to disqualify themselves in the event of a possible conflict of interest. I further hope that no one will find it necessary to publicly question through the use of a petition of 1,200 signatures a situation of misuse of public - read student - read your - funds.

Mike Bleakney, engineering rep made the statement in council that Dr. Anderson and the administration were in some way responsible for increasing rates. The inference was of course that it is a slack operation. Needless to say, the allegation stinks, but if it were even slightly true, it would definitely be a case of decrying the sins of others to save you from your own.

J. David Miller

Don't fence me in

Dear Editor:

After going to the movie "Bug", three of my friends and I, proceeded to go to CHSR to talk with a friend of ours.

We were about to depart at 11:30 p.m., but much to our dismay, we found that we were locked in.

All exits were locked, except the front door, but we couldn't get there. So after sweet words and pleas for a key from the cleaning staff and the jocks in CHSR, we were nowhere.

One of my friends has claustrophobia, and she was climbing the walls. The others were severely pissed-off.

Seeing a chance of escape at one of the second story windows, we immediately removed ourselves from the building.

The snow piled next to the door was dammed icy. However we didn't have any casualties. Why in hell's name doesn't the building close at the appointed hours and not before.

What if there was a fire, and no unlocked window?

I am sincere, time schedules must be kept. We pay our 45 dollars plus, at the first of the year. So why do we have to put up with such nonsense and stupid frustrations.

Surely if Mr. Goldberg cannot keep a staff on duty at these hours, then he should request additional funding from the SRC to pay for such.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Lawrence

Labour not at fault

Dear Editor:

It has become evident that the escalating costs of the Point Lepreau Nuclear Power Station (now at least \$2 billion including interest on loans), have made it all but certain its shutdown in the near future. In anticipation of the announcement by the government of New Brunswick, The Maritime Energy Coalition issues the following statement.

First, we urge the Government of N.B. not to delay the cancellation as every day adds to the unnecessary costs.

At the same time, we recognize that the work that has already been undertaken need not be wasted, as the site is well suited for alternate energy production, especially wind generation.

We are concerned that when the shutdown is announced, the working force at Point Lepreau may once again be used by N.B. Power as a scapegoat for Lepreau's economic and technological setbacks.

We deplore putting the blame on labour, when the real reason for Lepreau's imminent failure is the trend toward decreasing electrical demands and increasing costs.

It is well established that many more jobs will be created by the development of renewable energy sources and conservation practices than by nuclear power plants; therefore we urge Maritime governments to initiate such job creating energy developments.

In this respect, we commend the initiatives taken by Premiers Campbell and Regan in the exploration of these alternatives for their provinces.

Finally, we wish to offer our full support and expertise to the energy planners of the Maritimes in the development of rational power alternatives.

Sincerely,

Brian Harvey
(for The Maritime Energy Coalition)