Who Will Use the AUC (and Who i

By J. DAVID MILLER

The questions most people ask about the AUC are 1) how much did it cost and 2) why was it built? The answer to the first question, since the building is there and consequently someone has to pay for it, is not only irrelavent but also completely shrouded in mystery. Suffice to say it was not an inexpensive addition to the assets of UNB.

The answers to the second question is far more pertai 'nt, and yet does it not seem a rather propos.erous question to ask? On the surface of it, yes. Why the Aitken Centre was built, well, to play hockey games in; "Yes, that's right," to play basketball and tennis on the rink-tex, maybe even some skating for the students. "You got it." That certainly was the dream — the ideal. Perhaps there should be a few concerts to make students happy (for those that will never skate on its ice surface) of course never when the ice is in (Sept. - May).

To answer more rationally the question of what the Aitken Centre is, an analysis of the real versus the non-real case is required.

THE NON-REAL CASE

The first case to consider is the non-real. Unfortunately this is the case that was presented to Senate and the Board of Governors. A university requires a rink-like area for many reasons, athletics being first and foremost. Secondly it needs a large area for registration and ceremonial occasions. Perhaps thirdly it needs a large hall for social and musical events for students, the University community, and the community at-large. It has been unequivocally established that the Aitken Centre can be all these things, so clearly the problem is not in the physical plant.

The problem of course lies in, you guessed it, the root of all evil, money. The concept of AUC was presented to the Board of Governors and Senate in the light that no money whatsoever would come out of operating funds to pay for its operation. Further, every department would have to budget for the use of the AUC. This means that if the Phys Ed department wishes to have a class in AUC or the registrars office wants to schedule an exam in there, then a budget must be created and transferred to the AUC account. This means that the AUC operates as virtually a private business on campus. This concept is feasable except for two things.

THE REAL CASE

Firstly, the nature of the University community is such that after being spoiled rotten with money for many years, everyone thinks that the barrel of money is infinite. The Government and the average tax payer knows different. But that would not stop various groups on campus to think

that they should get the AUC when they want for little if anything. Of course the Phys Ed dept wants first priority for games and teaching at the exclusion of other types of events except at off times. The Alumni have asked to have their events in there for free at Encenea. The Art Centre has even pulled strings high enough up to use the AUC as an alternate rain-date pushing out a commercial ($) booking. It is to be noted that none of these requests are in themselves entirely unreasonable but for the second problem.

Problem number two is quite simply the fact that given a piece of paper and pencil it is possible to calculate that in excess of $175,000 will be required to run AUC for a year. This figure is about 10 - 20 percent in excess of projected costs, and as it stands now there will be a substantial deficit at the end of the year on AUC operating costs.

SOME SOLUTIONS

There are two ways around this dilema. The first, and less desireable is for the Board of Governors to face up to reality and agree to support the AUC so that it can be used as the University community wishes. The second again involves people fusing reality and actively promoting that building as a site of concerts, banquets and conventions. It is not unreasonable to suggest that nearly $100,000 must come from these sources which at $1,000 - $1,500 per night means the building will be tied up for 30 - 40 percent of the time. This, to say the least is quite annoying, but represents reality. A fact the university community, in total, must face.

The action, therefore, that must be taken involves setting up a clear system of priorities governing the use of the building,

and sticking to it. It also involves working towards the *minimum* number of bookings generating a *maximum* amount of money to the University and the AUC.

It seems clear that the first priority must be that ice events such as varsity and intramural hockey get, during the season, first priority. This is a luxury, but a desirable one. A second priority, but one not too far down the scale, is the availability of ice time for free skating during the evening hours (and not in the middle of the night). A third priority should be that top quality entertainment be made available for students, the University community, and the area community. Academic and ceremonial occasions should fit in somewhere below these.

The comparable rink/arena in New Brunswick, the Moncton Collesium, costs some $300,000 per year to operate. It has

taken it some *four years* to achieve a break-even budget. It can be said quite plainly that this was achieved only through vigorous promotion and high operating efficiency. Substantially, most of the money to make up that $300,000 figure comes from the concerts put on in the arena throughout the year.

In the first three years then, money was lost developing a system, a market, and contacts to enable the arena to survive on the long term. To achieve the goal of returning the maximum amount of money to the AUC, any promotion should be done by the University community.

These are perhaps three ways to do this.

The University could promote concerts of various kinds by itself. There is a definite problem with this. It costs a lot of money to promote a concert, and the government takes a dim view of a funded organisation risking tax money. The second group could