

CRO resigns after election fine overturned

by Joe FitzPatrick
Co-News Editor

Chief Returning Officer Troy Woodside submitted his resignation to VP (University Affairs) Chantale Walker. His resignation came just after a ruling of the Constitution Committee which overturned a \$37.50 fine imposed by Woodside on Fauna Woolnough for violating the "media blackout" before the election during which all campaign material must be taken down.

The Committee, chaired by Walker, found that Woolnough had "made reasonable effort" to comply with the blackout. Woodside was livid following the ruling. "I followed the Bylaws and the Student Union wasn't there to back me up." In his opinion, the Committee was telling him "[he] was a liar." Woodside feels this will

show students that "there is no control over elections."

Woodside criticized the evidence offered by the plaintiff, "she [Woolnough] had no proof. She had a letter from a friend who helped her take posters down. But I had them in my hand."

His resignation, Woodside said, is an attempt to convey his frustration over the elections process. The Union should "back up its employees or change the Constitution" he stated.

In his letter of resignation to Council, Woodside referred to the appeals process as "a joke." In an interview, Woodside characterized the election process as "foolish." Woodside sees this incident as a symptom of the overall problem the Student Union has with elections. "There is nobody to go to," says Woodside. During many elections, as

in this one, the burden fell on whomever was the best versed in the Bylaws.

The Constitution and Policy Committee is composed of Chris Rogers, Sean Burnett, Jayne Brennan, Blair Larson, and Melanie Quigg. Larson, who abstained from the vote, served as Deputy Returning Officer. Burnett, Brennan, Larson, Quigg are members of Orientation 1996 Executive, of which Woodside is also a member. In an interview, Walker, who chaired the committee, agreed that four members of the committee had a direct relationship with the CRO, but that only Larson had abstained. But that "they were the only ones who applied for the Committee."

Walker took the news in stride and defended the decision of the Committee. "There were two posters

in a non-visible place."

Woodside was recently complimented by several members of the Executive for his conduct during the election. Two-time VP (University Affairs) Pat FitzPatrick who told Council on October 10, "I have hired and fired 4 CROs, and I've never had one better." FitzPatrick further characterized the election as "the best in a long time."

President Kelly Lamrock was surprised by the announcement. At Council, Lamrock questioned the action. "Election appeals get overturned all the time, do you think this step was needed?" he asked. Woodside, who was present, offered no comment.

Woodside has indicated he is considering running for Council in the coming year.

Commentary: Slim victory for the No side

by Brian Scott
for The Brunswickan

On Monday night, Canada was on the edge of its seat watching the Quebec referendum updates as if it were the ninth inning of the seventh and deciding game of the World Series with two out and the bases loaded.

And like the Blue Jays' Joe Carter in 1993, the No side pulled it off in the end.

From the time the polls closed to when the votes of almost 2/3 the regions were counted the Yes side held the lead - barely. The biggest margin between the two sides was no more than two percent.

But the momentum soon changed.

When 64.7% of the votes were counted, the race was tied. Both sides were at 50%. Soon after, the No side took the lead and never looked back.

But it won't be long until they will be looking over their shoulders. A No side win by a percentage point does not mean that the debate is over.

Quebec Deputy Premier Bernard Landry said that they will continue the fight regardless of the loss.

"If we lose, we start over again the next morning."

He said they must continue the fight because of the large number of Quebecers who voted for sovereignty.

About 60% of francophone Quebec voted for separation despite the loss.

Likewise, in his speech to the singing and cheering Yes crowd, Jacques Parizeau claimed the fight was not over yet.

"You roll up your sleeves and you begin all over again."

Parizeau went on to say that not all hope was lost. "We fought a good battle and we did manage to clearly show what we wanted and we only failed by a tiny margin."

Later, Parizeau caused a big stir in the rest of Quebec claiming that the vote was lost due to "money and the ethnic vote." The next day, Parizeau resigned as Quebec Premier.

Both sides have a right to be happy with the result. The No side won, but the Yes side made it too close for the federalists' comfort. The Yes side has reason to be happy because they gained support as compared to the last referendum in May of 1980 when they lost with only 40% of the vote.

But the result on Monday is not being viewed as a win for the Yes supporters or even a win for the No supporters. Many view the result as a win for all of Quebec for it places a tremendous amount of pressure for change on Prime Minister Chretien.

For the past year and a half Chretien

assured Canadians that there was no need to worry. He assured Canadians that the people of Quebec would not vote for sovereignty.

"We've got it handled," Chretien said. If he did, indeed, have it handled, then he held it with butter fingers and almost dropped it in the end. He will not only feel the pressure for constitutional change but for lack of support as well. A win by a narrow margin as this may lead some Chretien followers to think twice.

Others disagree and say that Canadians will back Chretien in the now inevitable constitutional negotiations again. They felt he is the only one who can make a deal with the province.

Maybe he can sell it to Canada, but can he sell it to Quebec?

This is a source of pressure as well. Chretien's failure to work out a

constitutional deal with Quebec may very well lead to his downfall.

This is only one uncertainty of the future.

Can Chretien strike a deal with Quebec? If he fails to do so, how will this affect the next time Quebec holds a referendum? How will Monday's close vote affect the next referendum?

It will be a while before Canada finds the answers to these and other questions.

One thing is for certain, though. It is not time for any of us, anglophone or francophone, Quebecois or Canadian outside of Quebec, to rest. Quebec's place in Canada in the coming months (and even years) will continue to be as hot a topic as it already has been.

Canadians have a lot to look forward to. The remaining few years of the 1990's will undoubtedly be remembered as a time of make or break within Canada.



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This Issue Dedicated to:

Jacques Parizeau, the ex-Premier of Quebec

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