

NEWS

Emergency loan program questioned

by James Rowan

As the money crunch hits all of us on campus, the message to UNB Students needing emergency loans given at last week's UNB Student Union meeting was a combination of "Don't call us, we'll call you" and "We'll get back to you."

At the meeting, a motion was made by VP-Finance and Administration James VanRaalte to advance a certain sum to an unnamed student to allow them to register. Said VanRaalte "The only reason we're bringing this to you is that we don't have any structure to deal with this—this is an ad hoc solution." As the student was to receive an honoraria, the honoraria was to be used as collateral to insure repayment of the advance.

The motion resulted in heated debate, and the tension in the room during the debate over the motion was palpable. Several councillors later said that they had never felt so much like resigning from council in their lives.

The debate centered over the propriety of the UNB SU setting a precedent of making personal loans, to which the councillors supporting the motion replied that precedent is not binding on the Council, and that it was not a personal loan as the money was to be given out later this year in honoraria in any case.

President Burchill, while not asking Council to take everything that the executive says at face value, asked the Council to have faith in the Executive Committee, which had already given approval in principle to the loan. This faith was not forth-

coming. VanRaalte's plea that "To turn this loan down is to turn this student away from post-secondary education," seemed to have little impact as negative sentiment towards the loan continued.

The main problem was the near impossibility of protecting the privacy of the person and the confidential nature of the financial status of the student, while still enabling intelligent debate. This led to certain members of Council making accusatory remarks regarding blame and questioning the need of the student which could not be answered by the executive without destroying any semblance of confidentiality. Members of Council have since made it known that they feel that the matter should have been dealt with in closed session, and that the handling of the entire matter was poor—too much questionable information was given out, which led to confusion.

VanRaalte admits that as a result of the information given, the Council was "partly justified" in questioning the loan, admitting that the executive was asking Council to make a "leap of faith". Nevertheless, he characterizes the incident as being a frustrating one, saying that "There was no trust there.", that as President Burchill had said, all they were asking was that the Council trust them.

It seemed that it was only a very vocal minority that was questioning the loan, or that the matter was simply one of misunderstandings, for Council eventually approved the loan, with only one vote against. The story doesn't end there, for the questions raised by the entire ugly spectacle persist: namely, why doesn't the UNB

Student Union have a formal mechanism for assisting its students with temporary emergency financial assistance? In theory, the Student Union is there to "provide for the material...needs of the members" (UNBSU Act of Incorporation), but unlike STU, a university a fraction of its size, it has no way to help those who most need it.

The University's Emergency Loan policy was inadequate in this case, as you must first register here before becoming eligible, and that was the entire problem: the student was unable to complete registration due to a lack of funds. In essence, if the student were eligible for university assistance, they wouldn't have needed the loan. The student then turned to the people who were supposed to represent the student's interests, and had their character attacked in open session.

The VP-Finance and Administration, VanRaalte, is in charge of attempts to implement an Emergency Loan Program at the UNB Student Union. Efforts have not yet begun, and the only work done to date has been the collection of information from STU, but work will continue. In Council last week, he said: "If the

STU program for Emergency Loans works—and it worked well last year, they helped over 30 students—I don't see why this campus can't do the same thing." Also of note is that STU, having only about 1700 students assisted 30 students, or 1.7% of their student body. At UNB this same percentage would represent nearly 120 students.

In the STU Student Union Loan Program, the program was given \$5000 with which to make the loans, but by imposing a two month limit on the loans, they were able to obtain a high enough turnaround to make a large number of loans, said STU Student Union VP-Finance Colleen Moore. In the STU program, only the three members of the committee responsible for the loans know the name and the details regarding the loan. The loan committee makes their determination and the VP-Finance acts as a final check. Council does not examine the loans individually, and is not aware of the identities of those requesting assistance, as a key tenet of the program is confidentiality.

To make this arrangement work, the Student Union Council has to accept not having a final say over

which specific students receive loans. "Council invested their trust in us to make the right decisions," said Moore (once again, this shows how trust by Council has become a key point with both programs—STU has given it, UNB has not).

Loan defaults are reduced by having those receiving the loans sign a contract, and by an agreement with the STU Business Office in which the money may be subtracted from Bursaries. Loans given out in the second term, are more difficult to collect, but the STU Student Union (and the UNB Student Union, apparently) seems willing to take a small loss if it is in the interests of helping their students.

VanRaalte says that the risk involved in such loans is small, but it is necessary. "If a student's house burns down and they lose everything what do you do?" While not all emergency loans are as great an emergency as that hypothetical case, it is an unfortunate reality that accidents happen: student loans are late, houses burn down, medical emergencies happen. If the program being examined now is implemented, students will have somewhere to turn when things go wrong.

UNB appealing Burnley ruling

by Jonathan Stone

A UNB assistant-comptroller remains terminated from his position despite the ruling of a Court of Queen's Bench Judge allowing him to return.

After the July 8 decision entitling him to do so, Donald Burnley returned to work to find he had been replaced and was sent home while the university appeals the judgment. That hearing is set for October 15.

The comptroller, James O'Brien, argued that the initial ruling was handed down by a single judge while the appeal will be decided by three judges. He added that the university filed the appeal immediately after the ruling in favor of Burnley, and sending him home for the duration of the appeal was considered in both parties' best interests by their respective legal representatives.

Prior to Burnley's dismissal, O'Brien said that the accounting firm of Deloitte and Touche reviewed the university's accounting systems in 1990 and recommended changes. According to Burnley, this included switching to more

modern computer systems, which in his view, was not done in accord with Deloitte and Touche's and his own suggestions. This was reflected in a series of disputes and memos between Burnley and computing services.

On November 20, 1991, Burnley discovered that all of his 15 professional staff and many of his responsibilities had been reassigned to someone else. He filed a grievance on December 12 and was suspended by the comptroller on December 16. After an informal hearing held by the Vice-President (Finance), Burnley was notified he no longer held a position at UNB.

He then took the university to court, and won his case on a technicality. In the July 8 decision, Mr. Justice Hugh McLellan stated that 1983 act by which Burnley was fired was inconsistent with the newer 1984 University of New Brunswick Act.

Under that Act, Burnley is still being paid his \$64 198 salary for a period of up to 12 months.



Shown are the organizers of this year's "Twelve Hours" Back (l-r) Heather Brown, Danny Copp and Steve LaRoche. Seated (l-r) Marcelle Woods, Judy Loukes and Leo Connell. Kevin G. Porter photo.

"Twelve Homeless Hours"

by Jeff Czopor

Homelessness hardly appears to be an issue a town like Fredericton would be confronting.

However, the Youth in Transition organization estimates that there are over 200 homeless youth in Fredericton. Presently, they are looking to establish a group home to take in some of these kids and provide them with individualized services based on their needs.

"These young people really have nowhere to go and do not have the financial resources to meet the cost of renting. Most come from difficult family situations where they have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse. We want to

provide them with a safe roof over their heads so they can finish their education or find employment and not fall between the cracks", said Joan Teed, Youth in Transition's president.

Last year, was a successful year for this charitable organization which raised well over \$25,000 by hosting 12 Homeless Hours, an event to raise money awareness about what it is like to be homeless.

The night was drizzly and unseasonably cold and the participants, who camped in the side field of Fredericton High School, truly experienced the unfavorable conditions homeless people must endure.

People had to crowd into tents

and create shelters out of what they could gather up. Indeed, this is an effective manner to understand the frustration of not having a roof overhead.

This year's goal is to raise the remainder of the money necessary to complete the home. The organizing committee is confident that this will happen and that the group home will be in place before another year passes.

Fredericton residents can expect to see students and adults canvassing for pledges between now and October 17th, 1992. Groups or individuals interested in forming teams to participate in the event are invited to contact Judy Loukes at 452-8175 for more information.