Think before you vote on October 21, 1981

Editor's Note: the viewpoint expressed in this article does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Brunswickan, its editorial board, publisher or staff.

This article was submitted by John Bosnitch, Chairman of the "CAUSE" committee - all facts and figures are taken directly from the "SUB RENOVATION PROPOSAL".

On October 21st the students of UNB will be asked to support the following statement in the form of a referendum: "I agree to the continuation of the present annual $15 Student Union Building allocation of my student fees to be used for the presently proposed alternations and renovations to the SUB."

To better understand why we ask that you vote NO on this issue, the "Committee Against Unnecessary Student Expenditures" -CAUSE - has prepared the following presentation on the proposed renovations, student needs, reasons for opposition, and most importantly, logical alternatives to the planned changes.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUB

The Student Union Building is owned entirely by the University of New Brunswick. Every year, UNB itself, puts approximately $300,000-$500,000 towards the upkeep of the SUB. These payments cover not only maintenance, but also utilities, operating costs, and upkeep of the external structure. This building is "cared for" regardless of student contributions and is not in "danger of falling down", now or ever. The initial cost of $2 million for constructing the SUB was shared between STU, UNB and Teachers College students, and a matching contribution of one half the cost was paid by the University of New Brunswick. After more than ten years, the student's half of the construction cost will be paid off. To pay off these costs, each year all the students of UNB and STU have been obliged to pay a $15 surcharge towards the SUB mortgage, on top of their $30 regular student fees. Only next year will this surcharge finally be removed. In suggesting the proposed renovations, the SUB board (the body which manages the SUB on our behalf) is attempting to implement a new $15 extra payment on top of the basic $30 fee to continue for about ten more years. The "Committee Against Unnecessary Student Expenditures" -CAUSE - feels that this extra charge to students is both unnecessary and unfair.

THE RENOVATION PROPOSAL

The SUB board (which is not an elected body) plans to carry out renovations along a general program suggested by a consulting company named "Basic Design Association". This firm examined what was called a "deteriorating decor, unsatisfactory layout and spatial organization and some security problems." To resolve these difficulties they called for a general reorganization and renovation within the existing building. The catch is that the anticipated MINIMUM cost of their changes is $806,820 (calculated in 1982 dollars - the earliest possible construction date - using existing inflation level of 13% obtained from SRC Administrator D. Campbell).

Furthermore, by projecting the dollar value of the renovations ten years into the future to the anticipated date of repayment of 1992, we find the price to be a staggering $2.7 million! To finance the work, Cindy Stacey of the SUB board proposed taking out a loan which, at today's market rates which will further inflate the price of renovations.

The actual changes noted in the "SUB Renovation Proposal" are as follows:

1. relocating student administration offices to the middle level of the main SUB section, decreasing the size of the Blue Lounge by 70% or more.
2. The Brunswickan and other print media will move up one floor to the "old" SRC offices - no change in function or facilities will result, and absolutely no space increase is projected.
3. Space for public lounges is to be GREATLY reduced, and be replaced by meeting and seminar rooms. (Why we should prefer to give seminars than to sit down and relax in the SUB is a question the report doesn't answer).
4. Walls are to be removed and rebuilt to allow for a "shopping village" in which we will have the exact same stores as we have now, with no increase in net retail area.
5. The capacity of the Social Club will be doubled by expansion to another level (taking the space vacated by the media).
6. The stage in the Ballroom is to be removed and rear wall to be demolished making room for a reception area. The size of the Ballroom itself is to be reduced (page 21 of the report - contrary to the assertion by SUB board that it will be increased). Absolutely no acoustic or major structural designs are planned for the Ballroom.

Additional general proposals include more washrooms, no change in, maintenance facilities, no change in air conditioning, no change in electrical facilities.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

If the above mentioned changes seem to be the best possible alternative, and are worth at least $806,820 of your money" CAUSE" urges you to vote yes on the referendum. However, before you do so, listen to what the representatives of the groups occupying space in the SUB have to say about the renovations:

Kevin Ratcliff (UNB SRC President) about SRC move - "It would never be one of my priorities, we don't need more room or another location - it doesn't really affect us."

Harry G. Forestell (Aquinian)
"They don't help us at all - they don't solve the problem at hand, which is a lack of space -we're not getting what we need."

Paul Buckley (Acting Director CHSR) - "It doesn't make any difference one way of another to the operation of the Station."

It goes without saying that there is staunch opposition to the renovations by the people who use the Blue Lounge (especially at noon hour when it is packed) and by those who go to coffee houses in the Woodshed (which is to move to the ground floor next to the new Social Club).

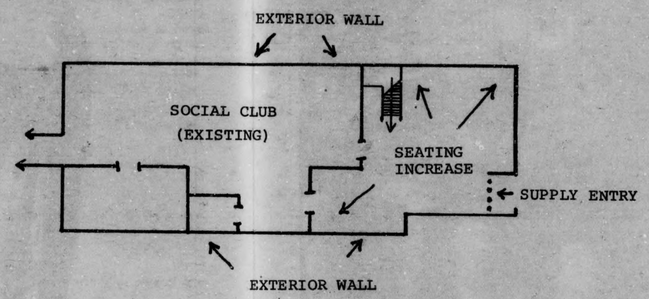
The important question to ask is, if most students oppose the renovations, who is it that is supporting them?

WHAT IS THE SUB BOARD DOING?

Regardless of the above opinions, the board has continued to spend money and time promoting its renovation program. Since the first proposals for renovation, they have spent $30,000 on a major consultant's report which subsequently "got lost in the shuffle" of changing administrations. Furthermore, just this year alone, $1,000 has been spent mailing postcards to all the students, and another $6,000 has been spent to cover the costs of preparing the general plan of the renovations. At a time when the SRC predicts an $11,000 deficit, this use of funds is ridiculous to say the least.

INTERESTING DETAILS

Lounge areas - to be reduced from 4,000 sq. ft. to 1,000 sq. ft.
Ballroom - will decrease in size from 4,900 sq. ft. to 4,000 sq. ft.
Meeting rooms - 2,550 sq. ft. of new meeting and seminar rooms will be built.
SRC Administrator's Office -doubles in size.



New CHSC plan

REASONS FOR A "NO" VOTE

1. The proposed renovations do not answer the needs of the students and in fact will serve to make the situation worse both in terms of use and function of existing space.
2. The cost of the renovations is so high that the proposed $15 fee surcharge (over the basic $30) will not even begin to cover the interest charges on the necessary loan! (See chart) In fact, every year, we will be sinking deeper and deeper into debt, and repayment will become almost impossible.
3. The Social Club which is in need of of expansion could be immediately increased in size by implementing a variation of its own expansion proposal. This would mean that none of the other "moving" costs would be incurred because the club could expand on the same level without having to move up one more floor.
4. The upkeep and refurbishing of the SUB is already paid for by the University and is not included in the $15 fee for renovations.
5. Affected groups directly disagree with the findings of the SUB board report (See statements above) Students seem to be the last priority of the changes.

Cost Chart

Note: This chart shows that at current interest rates and at the proposed rate of repayment, the total owing will, in fact, increase over the years.

YEAR	OUTSTANDING DEBT + 20% INTEREST	REVENUE	REMAINDER UNPAID
1982	$806,820	$90,000	$716,820
1983	860,184	90,000	770,184
1984	924,221	90,000	834,221
1985	1,001,065	90,000	911,065
1986	1,093,278	90,000	1,003,278
1987	1,203,934	90,000	1,113,934

Revenues are calculated as $15 per student for a total of $15 x 6000= $90000.

ALTERNATIVES

No one denies that change is needed, but a more rational approach in terms of spending and design is needed. The vacant top floor of the SUB should be usable during the day by providing reasons for students to go there. A television could be put in the empty meeting room, and portable electronic games, ping-pong tables or billiard tables could be set up in the Ballroom and Foyer areas. Acoustic improvements are also needed for the Ballroom.

Immediate expansion of the Social Club should be undertaken with a 50% increase in size this year (see diagram) and further growth next year.

The Blue Lounge must be preserved and improved at a minimal cost for maximum use. Signs could be put up to direct students to service locations such as the Radio Station, SRC, and print media.

CONCLUSIONS

The need for renovations definitely exists, but the proposals put forward by the SUB board are too expensive and don't solve the existing problems. Furthermore the imposition of a new $15 surcharge on our fees is not needed to accomplish the Alternative proposals suggestd by "CAUSE". If the present available money shown in the SUB board budget was spent on actual renovations instead of on postcards, chances are that students wouldn't have to pay more for a better, more usable Student Union Building.

Therefore "CAUSE" appeals to all students to use their votes wisely in the upcoming referendum and election. The money to be used belongs to all of the students -Please don't let it go to waste on a plan that is not in the students' best interests.