

EDITORIAL

The Student Union Review Committee

by Lynne Wanyeki

On Wednesday night, the Student Union Council passed a motion concerning the formation of a Programs and Services Review Committee. The objectives of the Committee were listed as follows:

- (i) to analyze the current programs and services offered by the Student Union; their effectiveness and benefit to the members of the Union;
- (ii) to recommend continuation, reduction or expansion of the current programs and services offered by the Student Union;
- (iii) to recommend new programs and services which will help the Union better meet the needs of its members.

Greg Lutes, President of the Union put it more bluntly in a brief conversation with me. Stating "why do we do things other than the fact that we always have", he seemed to feel the purpose of the Committee was to take an "inventory" of all the programs and services offered by and funded by the Union to determine whether or not they were, both in principle and in fact, what the Union should be supporting.

Given the transient nature of the university student community, there is a great tendency among the leadership of various student organizations to assume a solely managerial role, rather than an innovative and forward-looking role. This gets rather stale after a while, for the best that good managers may aspire to is the perfection the products already offered by the organization rather than new and exciting products - even though these products may be rough in form.

One person I know has suggested that after the paasing of the (in)famous Bosnitch era, this campus has suffered the absolute dearth of innovative leadership in the Union - with the exception of Carson's leadership two years ago. While I would hesitate in completely agreeing, I have to admit that Carson, at the very least, was forward-looking. This being the case, then perhaps the time is ripe for the Student Union to take stock of itself. In doing so, the Programs and Services Review Committee is an admirable venture.

I have some concern, however, about whether or not the Committee will, in actual fact, be able to really assess and formulate long-term plans for the Student Union. For the Committee is to be divided into four sub-committees, which are to review: the media and student publications; Union administration; Union activities and promotions; and the Paper Post. This means that the Committee is structured in a way which allows it solely to deal with specific areas of present Student Union operation. Thus, under the present structure, I believe the Committee will be capable of achieving its first two objectives, but I am at a loss when it comes to understanding how the Student Union Council expects the Committee to be able to achieve the third objective.

Naturally, I am also somewhat concerned about the sub-committee which is to deal with the media and student publications. The Brunswickan and CHSR obviously fall under this sub-committee. Both the Brunswickan and CHSR are incorporated bodies, which removes us somewhat from the status enjoyed by other clubs and societies on campus. For incorporation allows for the growth towards financial and therefore administrative autonomy from the Student Union. It is likely that the sub-committee will address the question of autonomy during the review hearings, and raise the media fee proposal once again.

About two years ago, a proposal was put forth concerning the development of a media fee. By this plan, students would pay directly into a fund for the operations of the Brunswickan and CHSR, rather than paying indirectly for our operations through student fees. The plan was heartily endorsed by both the Student Union and CHSR - although for obviously different reasons. The Brunswickan was less excited by the idea - a fact which is curious in itself. For autonomy has become the buzzword of student newspapers across Canada, many of which have become fed-up with Student Union intervention in the form of editorial control, budget-cuts, lock-outs, etc. However, the media fee proposal did not fall through because of these differences in opinion. It fell through because the university administration was not interested in collecting student fees as well as media fees.

If the media fee proposal is to be revived, the question of collection is once again relevant. And perhaps more importantly, how willing will students be to pay directly for the support of the Brunswickan and CHSR?

The Brunswickan

Canada's oldest official student publication
The University of New Brunswick

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The Brunswickan, in its 126th year of publication, is Canada's oldest official student publication. The Brunswickan's offices are located in Rm 35 of the University of New Brunswick's Student Union Building, P.O. Box 4400, College Hill, Fredericton N.B., E3B 5A3. Tel: 453-4983.

The Brunswickan is published by Brunswickan Publishing Inc. and printed with flair by Global Printing & Binding Inc., Fredericton, N.B.

Subscription is \$25 per year. Second class mail is in effect - #8120.

Local Advertising rates are available from The Brunswickan, (506) 453-4983. National advertising rates are available from Youthstream Canada Ltd., 1541 Avenue Road, Suite 203, Toronto, Ont. M5M 3X4, Tel: (416) 787-4911.

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