

EDITORIAL

SUB Expansion: Pick Up the Ball and Run

by Lynne Wanyeki

On each of the rare occasions that I come onto campus through the entrance on Windsor St., I find my eyes drawn to the new gates, purchased for the university by last year's graduating class. Although they are vaguely pleasing to the eye, I cannot help but wonder whether they are in any way what could be termed a "white elephant" ie. an object which is in no way objectionable, can even serve some purpose once it has been purchased, but is really, when one thinks about it, simply not necessary. Undisputedly, the gift of the gates was a positively lovely gesture, but there are simply more pressing needs at this university.

What this raises is the question of long-term planning. I am given to understand that our President, Dr. Robin Armstrong, is in the process of putting together a Presidential Planning Committee whose mandate it will be to draw up a 5-year plan for the future of this university. President Armstrong has been in office for a year, and has presumably learnt something about the ways in which this university works and formed some opinion as to where priorities should lie with regards to UNB's future. So, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the Planning Committee was formed to give some direction and legitimacy to the policies he would like to see implemented during his term in office. On the other hand, it is just as reasonable to assume that the initiative to form this Planning Committee came from the Maritime Provinces' Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) whose purpose it is to allocate federal-provincial transfer funds intended for education. But wherever the initiative came from, it is clear that the time is ripe for us as students to make known the concerns that we have regarding the future expansion of this university.

Two years ago, the past President, Dr. James Downey, stated that priority should be given to the expansion of two facilities: the Lady Beaverbrook Gymnasium; and the Student Union Building. With regards to the first, I understand that plans are underway to look into the building of a new Field House for the Physical Education Department. With regards to the second, not much has happened at all. Why is this?

Two years ago again, outgoing Student Union President, Wayne Carson, left funds to the amount of \$20,000 which were to go towards the establishment of an account for SUB expansion. Kevin Bourque, who replaced Carson, did nothing towards either maintaining that account or continuing to pressure the administration to support the idea. Greg Lutes, the present Student Union President, seems to be examining the idea of SUB expansion yet again. He informs me that the University of Windsor, Ontario - a university similar in size to our own, although one which has higher financial resources at its disposal - has recently embarked on a SUB expansion plan to which has been allocated \$14 million. That is, without question, a huge amount of money.

But think of the potential ... a SUB which included (and thus made more accessible) the Dean of Student's Offices, Food and Housing Services, Health Services and Counselling Services. A SUB which offered offices for all Clubs and Societies, except, perhaps, for those that already have department lounges. A SUB which claimed a Women's Resource Centre, a Native Student's Centre (if STU were to be drawn into the plans), as well as a Graduate Student's Centre ... Idle dreaming? No, I don't think so. That is exactly the sort of project which I would be willing to put my meagre Student Union dues towards, just to see its realization ten years down the road. That is exactly the sort of project I think the Student Union should put its efforts into - establishing a long-term account under the auspices of a committee which allows for the transient nature of a student population for the purpose of achieving a continuous growth towards just such a building.

I believe that if an effort was made by the Student Union towards the establishment of such a committee (which would prove such plans to be both concerted and consistent) the administration would certainly see it fit to propose a yearly allocation of funds from the MPHEC towards the project. A case in point: the administration recently applied to and received approval from the MPHEC for the allocation of \$250,000 of its budget in the area of capital funding to go either towards the renovation of the Day Care Centre in Marshall D'Avery or towards the building of a new Day Care on campus. However, the administration is not interested in running the new Day Care Centre, and thus workable plans towards this end are to be proposed by the newly-established Day Care Action Committee, headed by Jamie Van Raalte, SU Vice-President for Finance and Administration. This could be taken to indicate that the administration is willing and able to attempt to satisfy certain student concerns - provided that some initiative and responsibility is taken on by the students as well.

Last year, in an interview with the *Brunswickan*, Dr. Armstrong stated: "Until students consistently identify SUB expansion as their top priority, it's hard to think of it as being close to happening". In view of the recent formation of the Presidential Planning Committee, I would say that the ball regarding any plans for SUB expansion now rests squarely in the Student Union's court. Pick it up and run.

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