

EDITORIAL

by Allan Carter

Most of the university community probably is now aware that the Paper Post closed last week. Many people may also have been surprised by the closure since it came quickly and swiftly. As a Student Union funded and operated business, The Paper Post strived to type papers, essays and other documents at reasonable prices. In addition, it also provided graphic art design for posters and brochures. Of course, rumor has been circulating for at least two years that the Student Union would close the Paper Post. This year, unfortunately, for the staff at the Paper Post and all the students who felt it was a worthwhile service, that rumor became truth.

From the beginning in February of 1990, many questioned the establishment of such a business asking whether or not the Student Union should be competing with other businesses which already provide such services. Furthermore, many were doubtful about whether or not the Paper Post would ever show a profit given the cost of running such a business. It would appear the latter concern motivated this year's Student Union to decide to finally close shop. The Paper Post proved not to be a profit making business. The Paper Post did not provide a service to the students which they could not find elsewhere, nor was it making money for the Student Union. Instead, the Paper Post needed substantial subsidization from the Student Union (almost \$26,000 was allocated for this year), money which initially came from the students. Ironically, while students were paying for the Paper Post through their student fees, they also were billed whenever they wished to use this student service. The rates charged were, arguably, reasonable, but it still was costly for a student to get an assignment typed or have posters created.

The Student Union supports many organizations through the student fee. However, for the most part, these organizations offer the students a service for such a fee (and usually there is little, if any, extra charge for the service provided). For example, *The Brunswickan* offers a free classified service to all students (as long as name and student number is provided). In addition, there is no charge to pick up a copy of the newspaper and browse through it.

Of course, there may be a few organizations on campus where the Student Union contribution could be questioned. For instance, many argue that if a organization does not provide a service to the whole undergraduate student com-

munity then the Student Union should not support it. This argument is absurd and completely unrealistic when one considers the numerous clubs and organizations on campus which provide students with many different outings and activities. Most of these organizations are funded by the Student Union and they should be. Through the Student Union contribution, these organizations are able to maintain an acceptable, low membership fee and provide varied opportunities to the students.

Thus, given the nature of student fees and services, the closure of the Paper Post was inevitable. Unfortunately, many students were depending on the Paper Post this term and the Student Union's abrupt decision to close the business immediately was insensitive to both these students and the Paper Post employees. Closure, however, appeared to be the only solution and it had to become effective immediately in order for there to be enough money remaining in the budget for employee compensation and unpaid bills. While it would appear that much consideration had gone into the move to actually close the business, little thought went into planning how to do so appropriately. Many factors were forgotten in this closure. Jamie van Raalte announced at a club and society meeting on Monday night that some of the equipment from the Paper Post will be set up soon so clubs and organizations can get posters done and students can get assignments typed. However, with more planning such a transition could have ran more smoothly without so much confusion. Moreover, *the Brunswickan* has always provided the same services as the Paper Post. Of course, *the Brunswickan's* service is on a much smaller scale, since our major priority is the newspaper. Upon agreement, the Paper Post used *the Brunswickan* equipment whenever their own equipment was completely tied up. Additionally, on many occasions, *the Brunswickan* received the Paper Post's overflow. The Student Union certainly could have informed *the Brunswickan* that the Paper Post was closing so more preparation could have been made for those students and clubs who were looking for such a service. Of course, such an announcement by the Student Union would have been risky, since *the Brunswickan* would have undoubtedly published the Student Union's intentions. Perhaps they wished to avoid that, or can one conclude that the Student Union's failure to tell their intentions to the other similar funded student service was just

an irresponsible oversight?

The sad fact about this closure and the one which questions the whole validity of Student Union projects is the fact that something which took a year to create by one Student Union took a few months to destroy by another. Student Union executives and councils change from year to year and with those changes new mandates and desires come and go. If one Student Union spends half of their energy dismantling something another Student Union has created, what chances are there for long-term initiatives, like SUB expansion, to survive? Is the purpose and mandate of the Student Union only to distribute money to various student organizations? One would certainly hope not. Indeed, many times in the past, the Student Union has lobbied and taken action on many issues. But most of these projects have been short-lived (i.e.: protest to tuition hikes and inadequate loan programs) and very few projects span over a number of years. Furthermore, there are very few guarantees that any such long term projects will continue each year (aside from the goodwill of that year's particular council). Is the Student Union's structure inherently flawed? Is it possible for an active Student Union councilor or executive member to be assured that the initiative he/she begins and works hard at all year will also be a concern to next year's council?

Yes. For starters, the Student Union must start striving to pass on their mandates from year to year. Certainly, the daily running of the Union and the distribution of funds have been admirably consistent since the Bosnitch Era. However, long term planning on many issues has been poor. Passing on mandates from one council member to another is part of leadership and representatives of various faculties and members of the executive all have a responsibility to ensure that new councilors are aware of the outgoing council's initiatives. Of course, some past executives and councils have worked on projects which many felt were a waste of time to begin with. One such project was the attempt to merge with and/or take over the College Hill Social Club. Many students were quite relieved when the issue finally died and was not resurrected by the incoming council. Nevertheless, for the most part, councilors usually begin projects which greatly benefit the student population. The sad part is that once these councilors are finished so are the projects.



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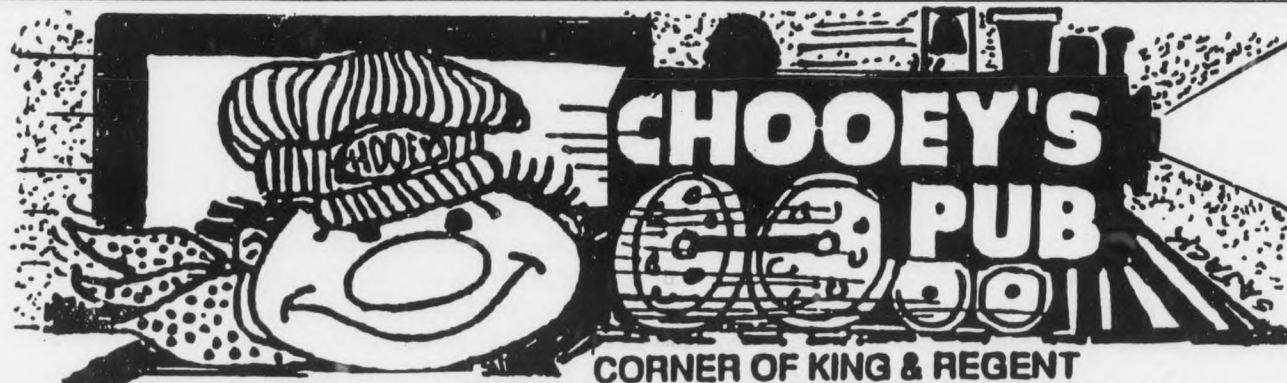
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The Brunswickan
Student Union Building
University of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 4400
E3B 5A3
Phone: (506) 453-4983
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