EDITORIAL

Spending the dough frivolously

by Allan Carter

Sometimes one has to question the motives of the university. Just recently, members of UNB's Board of Governors received letters from the university secretary asking each member if they, and a friend, would be interested in tickets for the showing of the *Phantom of the Opera*. The BOG's next meeting coincides with the show which is to be held on March 25. The BOG consists of 45 members and tickets are valued at $32.50 each.

In a news article this week (see page three), University secretary Stephen Strople explains that if demand for the tickets exceeds those provided as complementary, then money will have to be found elsewhere to purchase the other tickets. However, what still remains unclear is how many tickets the university received as complementary and where the money for the other tickets will come from.

Indeed, about $3000.00 for tickets in order to "thank" volunteer BOG members for attending six meetings per year may seem to be a very acceptable initiative. Strople argues that he feels the complementary tickets are simply a way the University can compensate its BOG members who volunteer their time to sit on the Board.

But Student Union VP External and BOG member Tammy Yates does not share Strople's sentiments. She argues that the BOG decides on the amount of student tuition every year and now the "university intends to buy theater tickets with that money". Furthermore, Yates is also not impressed with the university spending money on alcoholic beverages for BOG meetings.

On principle, Yates makes a very good point. Tuition fees increase every year and this year the university is striving to cut cost anyway it can. Practically every department and faculty at UNB have been asked to cut back their budgets. Further, services which the university provide that greatly benefit students are being operated on shoe string budgets, such as counselling service, the International Student Advisory's office and the UNB teaching center. The economic outlook for post secondary education is bleak given the weak financial commitments from both the provincial and federal governments.

The university is sending a contradictory message to its staff members and the students. On the one hand, the university is informing the community that economic times are tough and tough measures have to be taken. Yet, apparently a substantial amount of money can be found to "thank" BOG members who meet a modest six times a year to really only rubberstamp decisions already made. I'm sure Counselling Services or the UNB Teaching Center would enthusiastically welcome the money which the university has spent on tickets for the *Phantom of the Opera*.

However, all is not lost. As a BOG member, Yates has decided to request tickets for the show so that the Student Union can raffle them off with the proceeds going to a bursary fund for needy students. The other BOG members who have also requested tickets should do the same.

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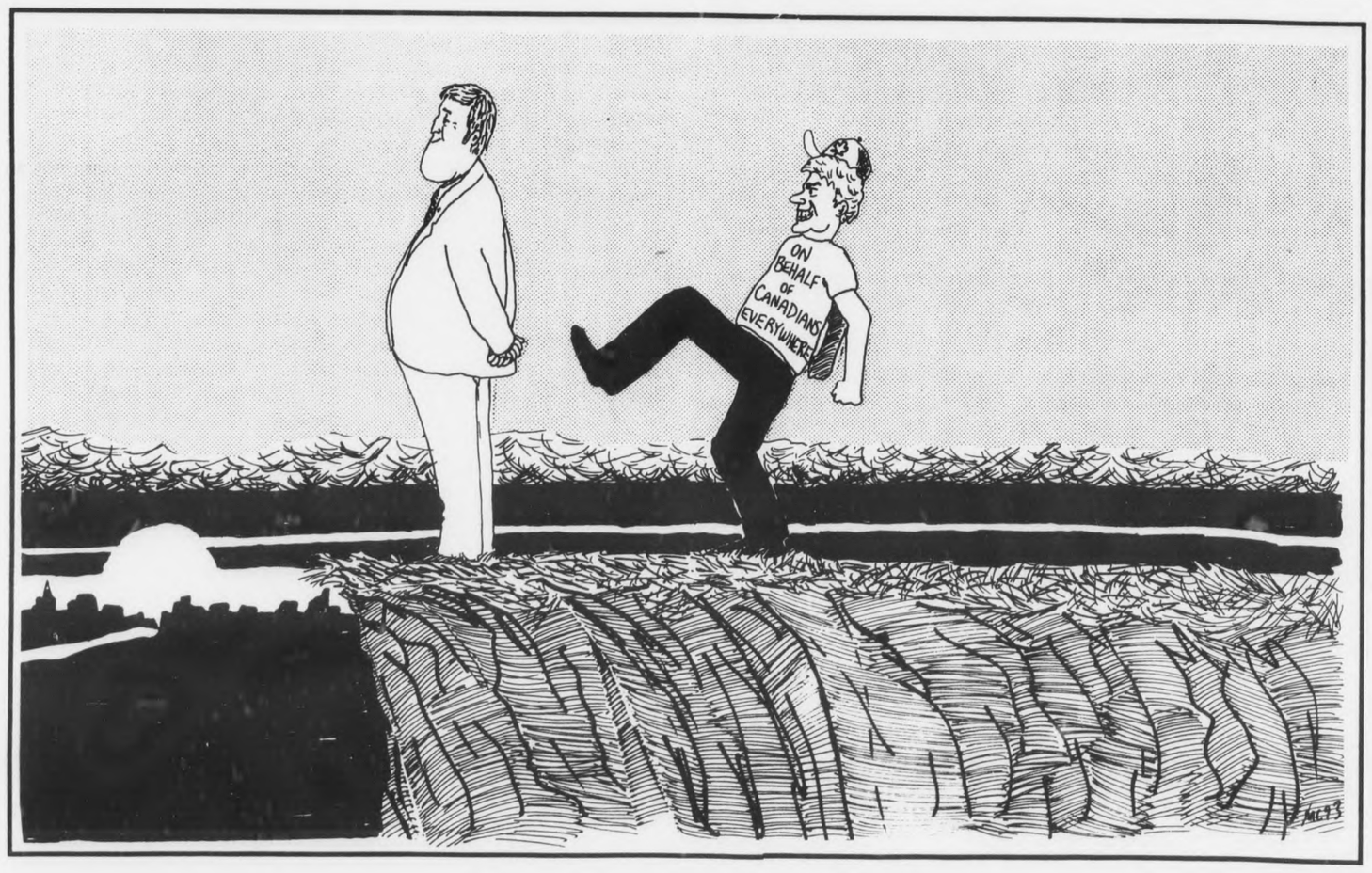
In fact, the BOG should take a good look at the money which is being frivolously spent to accommodate them with alcoholic beverages during long-day meetings. In most governments and some business corporations such expenditures are not allowed. Why should the university be allowing it? Certainly providing lunch for the members is reasonable since they meet all day, but providing alcoholic beverages is totally unacceptable.

Perhaps the amount of money being spent for tickets and alcoholic beverages for BOG members is minimal, but budget cuts and tuition hikes affect every UNB community member. They should also affect BOG members as well. In this week's issue another news article deals with the unfortunate story of a married student couple who had the heat in their home disconnected. The couple were waiting for a loan so they could pay their overdue heating bill. One of the students involved remarked that "there's not much money going around". This is a statement that the university and the BOG should keep in mind the next time they decide to frivolously spend student money.



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