

brunswickan opinion

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STU SU's internal flaws hurting students

EDITORIAL

Internal policy flaws and potential misuse of power and judgment have landed the Aquinian, the official student newspaper of St. Thomas University and a sister publication of the Brunswickan, in a tough financial position.

Debate raged on for nearly three hours last Thursday night at STU's student council meeting, although there were very few questions raised about the real issue at hand – whether or not the SU would go through with a promise made in writing by its own president.

Instead of debating the actual motion to honour the agreement, and if not, why the agreement should not be honoured – councillors and executive members rambled on proposing alternatives and loopholes to avoid spending the money that was promised.

The problem is that these junior politicians were so blinded by looking for these alternatives and loopholes that they neglected to recognize their own folly – their elected president had already promised the money to the Aquinian.

However, policy restrictions reportedly force the STU SU to take issues such as this to a two-thirds majority vote.

The issue that should have been debated then was whether or not STU SU President Duncan Gallant had the authority to guarantee the funding. Is this SRC policy retroactive? Or was it in effect when the decision was made in the first place? In either case, should Gallant be chastised for abusing his power? The STU SU constitution does note that the executive body (which Gallant said was in consensus about the funding, provided the Aquinian achieved certain objectives) has the



Kyle Albright / Special to The Brunswickan

The STU SU voted 9-3 last Thursday against honouring a verbal and written agreement their president had already made with the Aquinian promising funding to refurbish their newsroom. The Aquinian spent out of their own small surplus to do so, only to find they would not be reimbursed.

authority in the summer months to make governing decisions for the SU because the representative council is not in session.

Gallant stated at council that there was consensus among the executive at the April 25 meeting – and yet at least two VP's, Mark Henick and Corben McLean, both vehemently tried to escape honouring the agreement last week. What happened here?

This in turn brings up the issue that no official minutes were taken at the executive meeting on April 25, where the funding was supposedly granted to the Aquinian. It was stated at council that it is not policy to take minutes at executive meetings.

The real debate at council should have been over how accountable the STU SU executive is.

STU's student representative

council debated for nearly three hours over how they could avoid giving money to another student group, when it was already guaranteed to the group. Or was it guaranteed? If or if not, how effective is the group's own internal policy?

The Brunswickan editorial board does not support the actions of the STU SU. Ineffective measures of accountability and faulty internal policy have compromised the financial situation of another student group. Therefore we remind students – whether they go to UNB or STU – that it is fundamentally important to challenge the decisions made by your elected governing bodies.

While we are not STU students, this issue has severely affected the financial well-being of another member of the press.

Compromising this well-being could very well also compromise the freedom of publication of the Aquinian, as well as the opportunities available to their student writers and editors.

The funding the Aquinian requested was to refurbish their newsroom. We at the Brunswickan know the importance of an effective newsroom, and how crucial it is to maintain an effective space for a newspaper production schedule while having a space for students to drop by and voice their concerns. To say that the newsroom that this year's Aquinian editorial board inherited was in rough shape would be an understatement – and we therefore throw our support behind making their newsroom more accessible.

Whether or not this issue opens up again, the STU SU made a poor

decision, reneging on a previous guarantee that could have strong consequences, legal or otherwise. While this is a STU issue on the small scale, it's an issue that is important on a broader scale. If it can happen to this group of students at STU, who's to say that it won't happen to another group at STU, or at another university?

It should greatly concern students at any institution that an elected body can apparently decide to reverse a prior decision and effectively compromise a fellow student organization due to their own internal policy issues. This decision harms the Aquinian, their student voice, which in turn harms the students they serve. The Brunswickan is fairly certain that harming student constituents is against the STU SU's mandate.

-The Brunswickan editorial board

the brunswickan

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We are an autonomous student newspaper owned and operated by Brunswickan Publishing Inc., a non-profit, independent body.

We are a founding member of the Canadian University Press, and love it so. We are also members of U-Wire, a media exchange of university media throughout North America. We publish weekly during the academic year with a circulation of 10,000.

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letters to the editor.

Dear editor,

Last week's article by Sarah Ratchford entitled "Inquiry launched" contained a number of factual errors and unqualified information. Although I appreciate the Brunswickan's efforts to raise awareness within the student body about hate-motivated activity on campus, I believe that it is important to correct three important points that were misrepresented in the

article.

First, the article did not qualify the context of the postings made by the accused student on the prank.org website. Despite the innocuous sounding name of the website, much of the content contained within it is virulently racist, sexist, and homophobic.

The offensive content posted by the accused student had nothing to do with pranks or jokes (and even if it had, such things do not excuse the promotion of hatred

and genocide). Instead, the student's postings were elaborate pseudo-scientific arguments in favour of a dangerously fascistic white supremacist worldview.

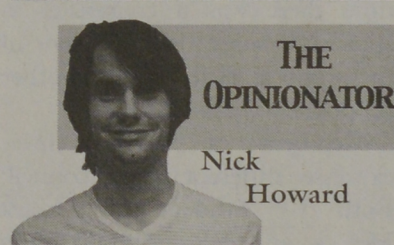
Second, the article incorrectly stated that the firearms which the accused student posted photos of were "air rifles". There were no photos of "air rifles" posted. The accused student posted photos of handguns and semi-automatic military-style rifles which they allegedly own. These are all deadly weapons that are classified as restricted firearms in Canada. The accused student also posted a description of how they effectively conceal a handgun in their jacket, and directed others on how to do the same.

Third, it was mistakenly reported in the article that I am "concerned mainly with pictures of guns posted by the student." This is not the case. I had stated

that I believed the main concern of UNB's administration to be the pictures of the guns posted by the accused student. My main concern is with the hate-motivated material that was posted on the website. I have stated this consistently since I first brought the issue to the attention of the Dean of Law. There is little or nothing that I can do about firearms owned by an alleged bigot. However, there is much that we as students united together can do about hate activity within our campus community. The racist, sexist, homophobic, religiously intolerant, and genocidal material posted by the accused student is my main concern, and it is what I believe that we as students must actively expose, oppose, and confront whenever it appears at UNB or elsewhere.

Shane Martinez
LLB Candidate (2010)

The fine art of bovine defecate



THE
OPINIONATOR
Nick
Howard

I have been accused of bullshitting. This seems to be an inherently negative term, but I think that assumption requires some examination. So what is bullshit?

Harry Frankfurt, professor emeritus of philosophy at Princeton University, wrote a book simply titled *On Bullshit*. In it he makes a distinction between lying and bullshit. Where the liar is concerned with avoiding the truth, the bullshitter is lacking any concern whatsoever toward the truth.

Frankfurt offers this insight into bullshit: "bullshit is often used to make the audience believe that one knows far more about the topic by feigning total certainty or making probable predictions." In other words, bullshit is the skill of appearing knowledgeable about topics with which one has only a cursory familiarity. Then, why the negativity? Bullshit certainly sounds like a useful skill.

Before I go much further I would like to blame science, a stance which is only too rarely taken. We constantly hear how universally awful religion is, so now it's science's turn. Science has ruined the art of bovine defecate. This most exalted of arts has been denigrated by the scientific obsession with empirical truth. Where, may I ask, is the beauty and adventure in a world lacking in bullshit?

In fact, I will go so far as to say that bullshit is safe. It may be a negative term, but it is not going anywhere. I

know this because I go to university. I go to classes without reading the text and speak intelligently about the content. I write papers having flipped Superman-style through the book under examination. But it's ok! I refuse to feel guilty anymore. Instead I will celebrate this wonderful ability that is bullshit. And finally we bullshitters have a spokesperson.

Pierre Bayard in his new ironic book, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read* puts to ease the bullshitter's mind:

"...it is sometimes easier to do justice to a book if you haven't read it in its entirety – or even opened it. Throughout this book I will insist on the risks of reading – so frequently underestimated – for anyone who intends to talk about books..."

This should be required reading (or at least skimming) for all University students. Bullshit is as necessary on a University campus as breathing. And Mr. Bayard would know, he is a professor of French Literature at the University of Paris. Finally, someone to whom we can rally – Bullshitters Unite! It mustn't be a closeted term anymore; it belongs out in the open, to be appreciated. I know you use it, and I know you love it.

What would life be without the joys of bovine defecate? Dull, monotonous and frighteningly Brave New World-esque (yes I've actually read that one). So relax, don't worry about the truth, and just let something interesting come to you.

The Opinionator is a weekly opinion column by UNB student Nick Howard, presenting a no-holds-barred approach to current events or anything that smacks of unquestioned perspective. He can be reached at nphoward@gmail.com.

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