The Brunswickan

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The Brunswickan, in its 141st year of publication, is Canada's Oldest Official Student Publication.
We are an autonomous student newspaper owned and operated by Brunswickan Publishing Inc., a non-profit, independant 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.

Letters
Must be submitted by e-mail including your name, letters with pseudonymns will not be printed. Letters must be 600 words maximum. Deadline for letters is Friday at noon.

Editorial Policy
While we endeavour to provide an open forum for a variety of viewpoints and ideas, we may refuse any submission considered by the editorial board to be racist, sexist, libellous, or in any way discriminatory.
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CFS needs to let student groups go

by The Charlatan editorial staff,
the Charlatan
(Carleton University)

OTTAWA (CUP) -- They say if you care about something, let it go. But when three universities in British Columbia started holding referendums to pull out of the Canadian Federation of Students, the lobby group decided to play for keeps.

The first two university student groups voted strongly in favour of leaving, but the third group, representing students at Kwantlen College, had its referendum delayed when the CFS dragged it to the B.C. Supreme Court to get it pushed back to September. The judge dismissed them and said the referendum should go ahead in April.

If a student group wants to leave the CFS it has to get a petition signed by 10 per cent of the group's population. At Carleton that's 2,000 signatures. The petition also has to be sent to the CFS executive six months before the vote noting its exact times.

If you want to include such a referendum question with the Carleton University Students Association ballot in February, the petition needs to be signed and delivered before August, ahead of the student union's referendum deadline of January.

There's also red tape surrounding policies on campaign periods, who is allowed to campaign, and control over the wording of the referendum question.

But if a group does jump through all these hoops and escapes with a majority that wants to de-federate, is that it?

Not quite.

The national executive has to look over the results to determine if they are "in order" and then makes a recommendation on whether to accept de-federation.

If the CFS really cares about students and isn't just after numbers and monetary support, it should make the process to leave easier and more transparent.

Exchange programs create stilted view of academics

by The Charlatan editorial staff,
the Charlatan
(Carleton University)

OTTAWA (CUP) -- While exchange programs can offer students an opportunity of a lifetime, they lack a certain degree of merit.

When students go on exchange, their semester or year turns into a time of fun, relaxation, and partying.

That's not to say having a good time is a bad thing, but the focus of an exchange should be on both the cultural and academic aspects, with a greater emphasis on the latter.

Usually when students take courses at another university, a 'pass or fail' grade system is used. Since letter grades don't appear on a student's transcript, this can lead to a lack of motivation on the student's part because the system gives them an easy way out.

Most universities claim that it's hard to convert grades between institutions because the marking systems and course guidelines differ. But a solution — perhaps using percentages to calculate grades — is needed.

Some exchange students take harder courses to prevent their overall averages from being affected. This is unfair to students who forgo 'pass or fail' courses at other universities or who are unable to do so.

This weakens the credibility of a student's degree because they can avoid having certain course marks factored into their grade point averages.

Universities, including Carleton, should re-evaluate the way it evaluates exchange students.

Student loan facts from the trenches

Dear Editor,
Here are some facts about the cost of post secondary education from someone who has attended university from 2000 to 2006. After completing an undergraduate degree at St.Thomas University and a Bachelor's Degree at UNB (two year program), I am now left with an outstanding balance of $60,694.86 on my student loan debt.

The established repayment that has been assigned for my loan is $777.45 a month for 10 years. The interest rate currently stands at 7.75% on this outstanding balance. Now, if I take advantage of the repayment flexibility that is currently offered, I can extend my loan to 15 years. By doing such, the repayment calculator indicates that the total amount payable is $136,436.37, which means that the total interest payable is $75,741.51.

I am grateful that I am able to be on interest relief due to a currently low salary. During interest relief status, the Government will pay $4,640.04 a year on my behalf for up to 5 years. Regardless, the total interest payable of $75,741.51 over the course of 15 years is obscene. Yes, the interest can be claimed on my income tax, but that amount is more than the original cost of attending university and is money that could be better spent either by investing it or saving for retirement, which would grow a greater return for my future either way.

As a student loan carrier from the trenches, I believe it's time the Provincial Government considers eliminating the interest charged on student loans altogether. This would enable student loan carriers to not have to repay more than it costs us to attend university, would provide greater flexibility to manage our hard earned dollars, and would provide immediate and long term relief. In other words, the revenue that is generated from the interest collected on our student loans is not something that keeps the provincial budgets balanced but could and should be, considered a great investment.

Mark Barbour
Fredericton, NB

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SU should reject incoming VP External

Dear Editor,
I believe I need to bring light to the current situation regarding Mr. Timothy Ross. Mr. Ross was elected VP External for the academic year 2008/2009. I will not be able to support his ratification as Mr. Ross will not be able to complete his duties as VP External. He will be leaving the country between the dates of May 1st and July 6th, 2008. While Mr. Ross did explain his situation to the current Chief Returning Officer, he did not fully disclose to the Council in general. The CRO, as I understand it, would not have the bases for understanding, why Mr. Ross's internship would affect his ability to perform his duties as VP External.

Mr. Ross's actions were, in my opinion as a Member of this Union, unprofessional and without the best interests of the student body as a whole. In a professional setting you simply do not allow yourself to be 'hired' for a position when you know you have prior commitments, without at least being transparent about your situation.

Mr. Ross will not be in the country during an important summer for student representation. The Report on Post Secondary Education will be released in the last week of April, and it needs the attention of a fully engaged and present VP External. This is of importance to every student in this university and across the country. Absenteeism does not present a united front to Politicians and media makers. Mr. Ross did not consult the current VP External for professional advice regarding the feasibility of working for a Corporation, such as the Student Union, and also completing an internship.

The student body is in an uncomfortable situation, as there is only one week to solve this issue. If Mr. Ross had approached Your Council earlier regarding his inability to perform his duties; I would feel more favourable towards his situation. Something might have been arranged earlier to solve this issue. I feel his move to wait until he was elected to inform Council was deceitful.

Although I understand Mr. Ross has vital academic commitments to complete this summer, all students must deal with these issues. I do not believe he should be given special treatment, because of his requirement to go overseas. I justify this by saying that most executive members are set back a year in their studies by their positions. This is not a unique issue.

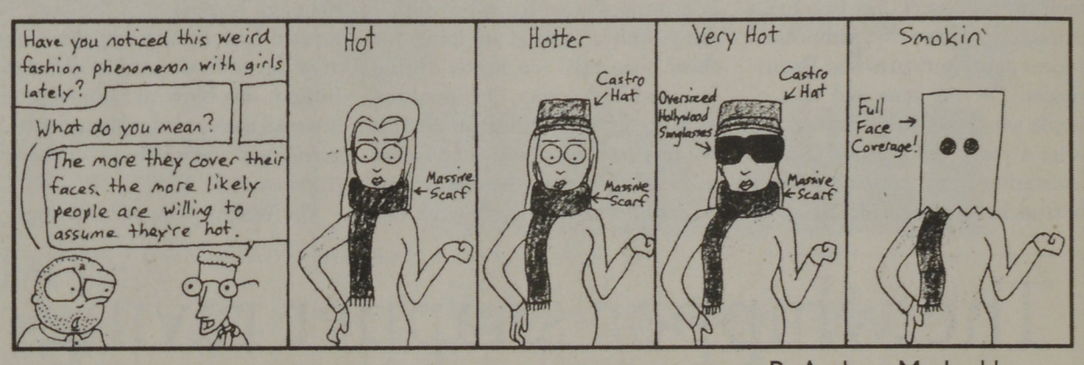
I also call on the current President Bradley Mullins to explain why he did not contact neither the council, nor the CRO regarding Mr. Ross's situation. Regardless of who or what is at fault for the current situation, I believe Mr. Ross will not be able to fulfill his duties and that he has misled this entire student body. I request, as a student who pays union fees, and wants to be fully represented by my VP External, that Mr. Ross step down and allow another individual the opportunity. An individual who can spend his/her time in Fredericton, in New Brunswick, in MY country to represent ME on issues that are important MYSELF and ALL students of the University of New Brunswick. I had no idea that Mr. Ross was leaving the country. I cannot support an individual in this position of importance, who does not have the integrity, dignity and foresight to fully disclose his position to Council and the Student Body.

If anyone has any questions or comments regarding my position on the matter, please feel free to contact me at: CMRuelland@gmail.com.

Thank you,
Courtney Ruelland

Comic and Sudoku

VICTORIA (CUP) -- Youtopia comic.



By Andrew MacLachlan
Nexus (Camosun College)

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