

# THE GEM

"jewel of the isle"



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## Praise and criticism at General Meeting

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S.U. President, Gordon Cobb, described the new Constitution as "smaller", and "more streamlined", than its previous form. This opinion was expressed at the General Meeting of Student Union members, on Monday, regarding this week's referendum on the amended Constitution.

Although the University has approximately 1800 full-time students, and Cobb managed to get classes cancelled during the time of the meeting, only about 140 students were in attendance. As a result of this poor showing, a quorum (about 180 students was not realized.

After the approval on the order of agenda, Cobb read a quick description of the amendments. With each description he gave a brief explanation of how these changes would benefit the student body.

During the discussion period which followed, concerns about the amended Constitution were voiced by some students.

Arts student, Bob Hanf, was concerned that students didn't have enough say in regards to SU fee increases. Hanf wanted to see the question of whether or not to raise the fees go before the students, who would then express their support or disapproval through a referendum vote. Recently, Council passed a motion to raise student fees \$5 in the 1986/87 academic year.

Hanf suggested that a motion should be moved to change Article VII(A)-1 to allow for full student participation in the fee-setting process. This Article states: "The Student Union fees for Active Members shall be determined and set by the UPEISU Council."

This suggestion, could not be carried out, however, because there was not a quorum present to vote on a motion.

Cobb assured the audience that, "Council will take his (Hanf's) ideas into mind and correct them (the problems)." Cobb added that

perhaps they (the Council) could make Hanf's suggestion into a by-law. At this juncture, another student pointed out that bylaws can be "overruled by the Constitution." Article IX(C) states: "By-laws may expand on, but not contradict or supersede the UPEISU Constitution."

The debate on this topic closed with Cobb promising that Council will look into the matter at a later

date; adding that if changes were made by Council, it should be "assumed" that they were made in the best interests of the student body.

At the January Student Council meeting on the SU fee increases, a number of Councilors expressed their concerns on the subject. They felt that they should have time in which to gather opinions, and inform their constituents about the raise. When the motion

was brought forward, however, it passed.

Another concern was brought out during the course of the General Meeting about advertising of the amendments. Bill MacMillan felt that the changes should be advertised through means such as the newspaper. He feared that the changes to the Constitution would be accepted without many students fully understanding them. SU Speaker,

Nils Connor, then pointed out that the Ombudsman was available for students with concerns of this type. MacMillan stated that if students weren't aware of the changes they wouldn't go to the Ombudsman. Cobb informed MacMillan that these materials will be on reserve in the Library for interested students.

Connor stated that the Ombudsman was always present on Council to "safeguard" students' concerns. "Things are very safe, really," he added.

The Ombudsman was not present at the General Meeting.

After a general discussion on the Constitution the meeting ended. Students filed out of the lounge, leaving behind dozens of information packages concerning the amendments strewn about.

One student felt that lack of a quorum was "disgusting", considering every opportunity was made for students to attend.

However, this was not the only meeting which has had attendance problems. During the past few Council meetings, including the special meeting on the ratification of the amendments, there have been difficulties with some Councilors arriving late, or leaving early. As a result, Council has had "close calls" in meeting its own quorum requirements.

This problem has been primarily attributed to the gap left by 3 vacant Council positions: Two have been filled recently, and the person to fill the Arts Representative position will be voted on at the same time as the referendum. Newspaper representatives at recent Council meetings have reported that attendance was so sparse at times that when a Council member left to use the wash-room, discussion had to be stopped until he/she returned thus restoring a quorum.

Considering the turnout for the General Meeting, one has to wonder if many students are aware what they will be saying "yes" or "no" to in this week's referendum.

