

Right Here and Now

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Rob Walker

Editor in Chief

Two weeks ago, a student union councilor named Faiz Ahmed brought us a copy of the student union working budget. He had been attempting to have the budget publicized since last year, and council had again stalled any attempts to have it made public. Since I was around last year when they first refused to even show it to a student, only to pretty much be forced to do so, I felt this was a worthwhile story.

The fact that I, myself, was forced to sit down next to the VP of finance to look over my own staff budget while I worked on a business plan for next year just shows how ridiculous this policy is. I'm an employee of the student union and manager of a working newsroom, but I'm not allowed a copy of my own budget?

I've seen some of the criticism leveled at Mr. Ahmed and I want to set the record straight on a couple of things: While he did bring us a copy of the budget, it was our decision (mine and Mel Bernard, managing editor, specifically) to print the entire budget without any alterations or commentary, not his. That he should be blamed for printing the budget is absurd, the only thing he's "guilty" of is leaking us a copy, a copy which we all felt should be made public in the first place.

The student union is a not-for-profit, private organization designed to represent students attending a public post-secondary institution. The money we shell out every year (and there's a lot of it) pays all the SU's salaries (including mine). How can this information not be made public?

If anything, we should commend Mr. Ahmed's courage in coming forward with this information for students. He certainly didn't do it for prestige or to further any sort of political career, but rather out of genuine concern that students weren't getting all the info they deserved, or were being forced to jump through hoops to get it. Yes, he 'broke protocol', but our society is built on the blood and sweat of people brave enough to stand up and do the right thing, even though it's "against the rules". People seem to forget that just because it's a rule, or even a law, doesn't make it right. Slavery, anyone?

A week after we printed the budget and only four days after the attempted takeover of the Cadre was shot down, Ryan Gallant sat with Shawn Younis on the hiring board for the Editor in Chief position. I had made my objections known to the student union ombudsman that I felt Gallant, after having tried to have the Cadre taken over

by another group behind our backs, was biased and should not be on the hiring board. When I walked into the interview, Younis and Heather Love (a non-voting member) shook hands with me, but Gallant stayed seated at the end of the table.

The interview went normally, but on Sunday afternoon, during the last student council meeting of the year, Gallant told council during a closed session that I should not be rehired.

Note here that I've never had so much as a written warning in my two years here, and that I never had an opportunity to respond to any of the allegations made against me, nor did I even know what they are.

A few hours after the council meeting, at the student union banquet, Gallant praised all the groups and associations belonging to the student union, but when he got to the Cadre, he said only that we 'were a pain in his ass'.

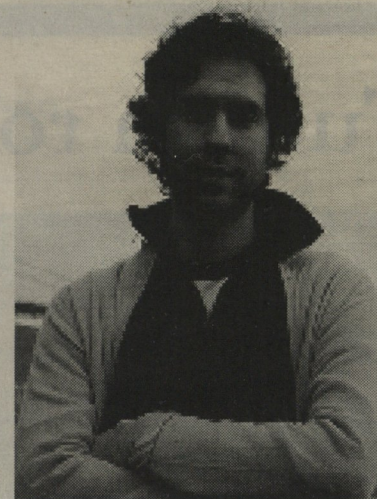
Hours after that, at the wave after-party for the banquet, Gallant decided to dedicate the song 'Asshole' by Dennis Leary to me. The video is on youtube if you don't believe me.

Now, let's be clear here: I have a good sense of humour. Under normal circumstances I would have thought it was kind of funny, laughed and raised a beer to him. However, here was our student union president, less than 10 hours after telling a group of people I should under no circumstances be rehired, dedicating the song 'asshole' to me. In this case, context is everything and I couldn't think of a more perfect example of his personal dislike for me.

Keep in mind that the week before, student council voted to take all of my recommendations regarding how the committee looking into autonomy should be formed. In the same breath that they voted not to rehire me, they hired every single recommendation I made for next year's staff.

It is unfortunate that I have to end my time here under such circumstances. I was hoping to stay on next year to help guide the Cadre through autonomy and set it up for years to come.

Instead, student council seems content to leave the two major leadership roles unfilled, as of this writing, both Editor in Chief and Managing editor



positions are empty. When I asked Shawn Younis, Ryan Gallant and Willy Gauthier, what would happen in August if no one applied for them, they said they'd deal with it when the time came. They also suggested people from Holland College might apply.

The problem with that is, people from Holland College did apply, after they were approached by me, and they were hired based on my recommendations. Stacey Murray, who has done an incredible job here for the last two years and was the only applicant for Managing Editor, wasn't rehired on the technicality that she was at Holland college...despite the fact that student council has known since the start of last year that she would be doing the split program between UPEI and Holland College.

I find it very interesting that the two people who have caused the most "trouble" for the student union over the last two years are the two people who were not hired on for next year.

All in all, I will always remember my time here, the friends I've made and the lessons I've learned. That a small group of dedicated, hard-working individuals (a cadre, if you will) can make a real difference has never been so evident. I want to thank all of the people who stood by us, and especially with the staff who stuck with us. The quality of your work, your integrity and most of all, your dedication to telling the truth has been inspiring.

"Journalism is a gun. Aim it right and you can blow off the kneecap of the world." – Warren Ellis

Rob Walker
Editor in Chief (Outgoing)