



...SACRED COWS

By PETER GILLIS

I know many of you blinked and missed the SU information session held in the pit last Wednesday concerning a \$9 raise in our student fees. The meeting was the latest in the SU's "consult-then-ignore" approach to government that seems to be working incredibly well. I do wish they would add just a little more 'info' into the 'information,' though.

To start with, the session was -- and I timed this -- 45 seconds long. Forty-five seconds!! The presentation consisted of the VP Finance standing up and telling everyone that, since tuition has gone up a lot over the last few years and student fees haven't, it's okay to raise our fees. There was even a nice chart comparing the two costs.

Could someone please tell me what relevance the cost of tuition has to our SU fees? The only thing that matters in the issue of raising fees is whether or not the SU is spending more money than it is making. This was mentioned briefly before the presentation ended and it was time for questions. What could we ask after a 45 second speech? "You say it's okay to raise student fees. Can I have your phone number?"

Next, another SU member jumped up and repeated the request. After receiving no questions yet again, she said, and I quote: "If there aren't any questions, we'll assume it's okay and raise your tuition!" For the sake of argument, let's assume that the 75 caffeine junkies in the Pit were a decent representation of the ENTIRE student body. Since when does boredom imply consent? By raising our fees by \$9, the SU must need about \$25,000 more annually. If it does, why? Is it due to rising

costs, or mis-management? The only way to find this out was to look at the books.

I asked to see the budget for 1998; but I was told it wasn't finished yet. It seems strange to me that they're so certain of needing extra money when they haven't finished figuring out what they're doing. The following are a few curiosities I dug up while comparing the '97 budget to the '96 and '95 financial statements. Forgive my little nit-picking.

It seems El Presidente makes \$413/month to be, well, President, while the Vice-Messiahs each make \$358/month. (I guess it pays not to take a stand.) Has anyone ever seen a job description for these positions? Also included under SU Executive expenses is \$1,500 for the "Honoraria's" salary, whoever the hell he or she may be. Courses for the executive run to \$1,775; but we are never told what courses we students are paying for. ('How to Wok with tofu and rice?') Other small council expenditures include sweatshirts for \$600, leadership courses for \$500, and a group photo for \$150. Have we found our \$25,000 yet?

Then there's the financing for CIMN, averaging \$12,000 the last two years, due to be eliminated April 30th. I wonder where this money is going. This newspaper is budgeted for a \$19,000 loss, which is up \$4,000 from 1996. This includes an extra \$3000 set aside for salaries. You mean we get paid?

If cutting \$25,000 in expenses isn't enough, then we have to somehow find the same amount in revenue. Besides our fees, the greatest source of revenue for the SU is the Barn. Sales for 1997 are budg-

eted for \$100,000, and incredible \$35,000 less than last year's and \$12,000 less than '95's. Based on past performance, this is a budgeted decrease of 25%. The net profit for the Barn is estimated at \$7,450, which is \$19,000 less than '96 and \$2,000 less than '95. More, they've estimated cost-of-sales to be 50%, which is up 5% from their average. With revenue of at least \$100,000, this amounts to a loss of \$5,000. As a person who has spent the better part of his working years in bars, including the management level -- believe me, no one budgets for a loss in revenue and expects to survive. No one. Furthermore, salaries sit at 36% of revenue. That's \$36,000!! Does it cost that much to have a few bartenders sit around and play cards?

Finally there is the overall performance of the SU itself. They've estimated a \$12,000 profit for '97; but they could always screw that up, right? Even if they did, they have an operating surplus of \$35,500 stretched out in the last several years. Quite an accomplishment for a NON-PROFIT organization. (I wonder what's become of that money.)

The Student Union in no way needs to raise fees for next year. All they've done is blow a little political smoke in our faces, counting on our own apathy to do the rest. The saddest thing is -- it's going to work. Even knowing the truth, UPEI students won't do a thing about it. The SU will merely wait a few weeks until the next scandal distracts our attention, then quietly raise our fees anyway. We'll never make a sound.

Welcome to your life. Have a nice day.

This Week
At The
Panther
Lounge

Wednesday
Trivia

Friday
Senior Class Pub
\$3.00

Saturday
April 15th
Year End Pub
with Uisce
Beatha
\$5.00 Wet