

Plans not to collect student fees

By Peter Kuitenbrouwer
of Canadian University Press
FREDERICTON (CUP) — The president of the University of New Brunswick says his administration may refuse to collect student fees next fall as a means of destroying a student council if things have gone too far.

Without fees, the council would have no operating budget.

In retaliation, the council is planning to go to the New Brunswick legislature next month with proposed amendments to the UNB Act, which governs the province's largest educational institution. The students want the 10 board of governors members currently appointed by the provincial legislature to be elected directly by New Brunswick voters.

The controversy pits UNB president James Downey, the suave, soft-spoken public relation man's dream, against John Bosnitch — abrasive, unremitting, and intensely political.

Downey was recently re-appointed to a second five-year term, and in November Bosnitch swept into a third term as student council president while winning two thirds of

the student vote. The final battle this spring between the two men could have far-reaching implications for student power across Canada.

"If you could sum up a phrase for the struggle at UNB for two and a half years," Bosnitch said recently, "that's it — the struggle for power."

During the summer of 1984 in Bosnitch's second term as president, the student union building board, which he then chaired, called for open tenders on all the stores in the building, and accepted bids from students to take over the businesses.

The council also set up a convenience store to compete with the privately run store.

In a series of swift moves 18 months ago, the UNB administration seized control of the building, closed down the store, abolished the SUB board, and took over control of her services. Shortly after that, Bosnitch was trounced in council elections.

The UNB administration restructured the SUB board, taking away its decision-making power. Now the board simply advises the

UNB board of governors, which has the final say.

Bosnitch wants control of the building back, and argues that as student money was used to build the SUB, subject to an oral agreement, students could run it.

Downey disagrees. "The SUB is owned by the Board of Governors," he said. "Mr. Bosnitch creates fiction."

Downey agrees students should have some say in running the building. But "there are also the interests and wishes of a number of alumni — particularly those who live in Fredericton," he said. Downey listed faculty and support staff as other "interest groups" that have to be consulted for board of governor decisions.

Bosnitch says downtown business give donations to UNB every year, but are more than reimbursed from the large profits their stores earn on campus.

Downey said he refuses to give control of the building to Bosnitch and those around him because they have proved themselves incompetent.

"Our concern is what's in the best interests of the students,"

Downey said. "Our primary concern is not to provide a few students from the council with a laboratory for experimenting with a business venture."

Although the university has collected student fees since 1939, the council has no legal guarantee this will continue. Bosnitch has a three-step plan for survival: sign a contract with the administration for fee collection, strike a campus buildings committee of students to take back control of the space, and gain student support through a massive school-wide public relations campaign.

At the last meeting, the council agreed that every councillor must wear a gold pin with their name and position. Photos of the councillors with home phone numbers will be posed all over the university. The council will hold an open forum for all students once a month.

The council also bought four new photocopiers for students, which offer the best quality copies on campus at the cheapest price — five cents each.

Also to rally students, the council has pulled it money, up to

\$310,000 out of the Bank of Montreal because of that bank's heavy investments in South Africa, and has ordered all campus clubs to do the same.

Downey claims Bosnitch has lost support of the community and of students. But Tony English the council vice-president academic, who ran for election independent of Bosnitch, said he and many others have come to see that they have to stick together for student rights.

Two long-time faculty members who have been involved in the council-administration disputes say they side with the students although they oppose Bosnitch's confrontational methods.

"If students want to take control of their own affairs, that seems reasonable providing they take the financial and administrative accountability that goes with it," said Alan Sharp, a physics professor and the head of the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers.

But, Sharp said, "the basic question of who represents the students would be a great deal clearer if there was a higher turn-

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