

Student Union Unhappy with Bar Food Provider

By Julie VEINOT

The UPEI Student Union wants better service from the company contracted to provide food for its bar.

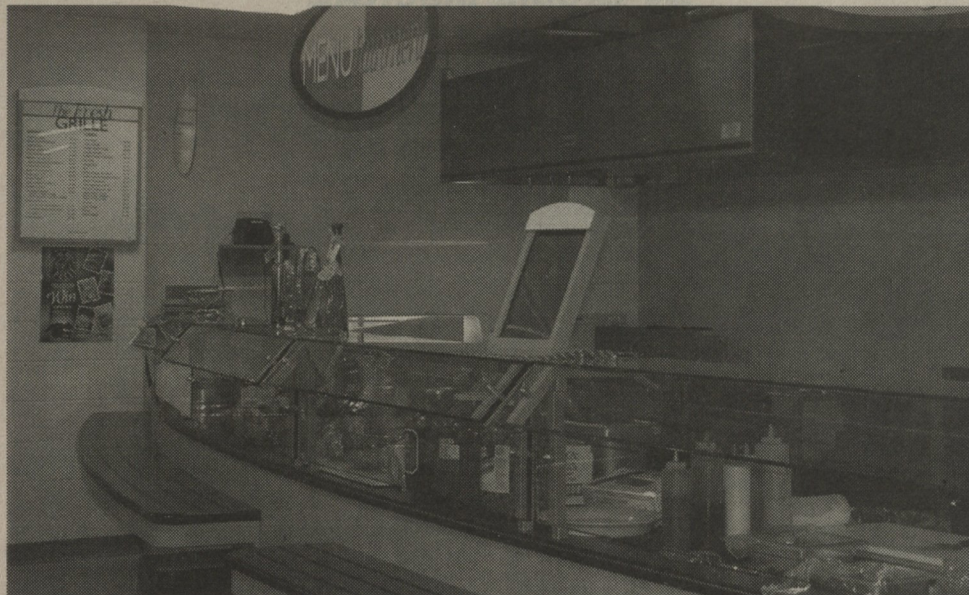
When the Murphy Student Centre was built, the University decided to contract out the food for the Wave instead of building another kitchen and making the food themselves. Chartwells, the company already providing food on campus, began making food for the student bar, along with the café.

Student Union president Chris Power says council is unhappy with the service. In the summer, council and the company talked over what hours the company was to provide food, but in the fall, the company stopped cooking at 7:30 in the evenings. They also didn't cook on Saturdays, which had been part of the deal in the summer, he says.

"For the first few Saturdays, the cook just didn't show up."

In mid-October, though, they began cooking for Saturdays, but it was too late for Power and the other students, because no one was showing up looking for food anymore.

"The damage had been done."



Place many students wanted to see during exams

Power also says the quality of the food has been changing. One week he ordered garlic fingers and received actual garlic fingers, similar to those sold in restaurants. The next week, he ordered the same thing, but received what he calls garlic breadsticks.

"It was a completely different product," he says.

Along with that, the combination plates - which include wings and other fingerfoods - typically have

something substituted because the kitchen runs out of a certain food. There have even been a few nights we've they've ran out of wings completely.

Though most of the problems have been around the bar, Power is also disappointed there was no to little food provided during exam time. The café in the student centre closed at 2 p.m. for the first week of exams, but in the second week, they simply didn't open.

"Someone who is contracted to provide a service to a university should be willing to provide it at slow times," Power says.

He understands they would not want to keep the café staffed during slow times, but this is the first time the company has operated the café in the Student Centre. He says they should've given it a try before closing completely.

Todd MacIntyre, food service director for Chartwells, says they cannot open when they don't make enough revenue to cover their operating costs.

"You're not going to be in business for long," he says.

He says he sat down with the University last summer to look at what hours they should be open and they agreed Saturdays they wouldn't be open. They tried it for three Saturdays, discovering their costs outweighed the money they made from the food.

They used numbers to predict what business would be like during the fall exams, so ended up not opening the second week of exams because they did not expect enough business to justify their "labour-intensive" operation at the café.

"We didn't feel we were going to get our revenues," he says.

As far as food quality at the bar goes, he has not heard anything negative, adding, "I can't fix it if I don't know about it."

Running out of food like wings on busy nights is something that happens with every restaurant, he says, especially when this is the first year of operation at the Student Centre. One week they may buy 10 cases of wings and sell 10, while another week, they will buy 12 cases and only sell two.

He says they will be revisiting the idea of opening more hours if business is brisk enough.

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