

Letters to the Editor

New Cadre Found to Be Biased

I am writing about the offensive and controversial article that appeared in a recent issue of The Cadre. I found this so-called news story extremely troubling and disturbing. In the article "SU President Fears Students may be Punished in Faculty Deal" by Nicholas Stewart, The Cadre's News Editor attempts to pass off the completely one-sided and biased opinion of Student Union President Brandon MacKenzie as if it was a legitimate news story. I'd like to point out that when writing an actual news story, reporters are required to get quotes from four sources. In this same issue of The Cadre, there was a story picked up from the Canadian University Press Wire ("McGill Student Battles University's Anti-Plagiarism Policy") that beautifully illustrates the proper methods a reporter must follow in order to avoid bias. Without other perspectives to give readers more information, Nicholas Stewart is simply allowing the SU President to manipulate The Cadre into being a propaganda machine to put forward his own agenda, and distorting the paper's role as a voice for the students, NOT a student union newsletter.

But perhaps that is all The Cadre has become. Why else would the Chair-of-

Council get a half-page article devoted to how the student union took over the paper and how great it's going to be? Finally I got to see a pull quote in The Cadre that says "Don't walk by a Cadre without making sure you've read it from cover to cover." Thank you Clare Henderson for making the February 4 issue of The Cadre the most self-referential issue of the paper since the time we dedicated an entire issue to how we won trivia at Myron's.

STEPHAN MACLEOD

Sex-pert.

PS: In the February 4 Editorial, Sean Brady says "...as part of our retooling around here....we've decided to hold a contest to rename the paper. Happy with The Cadre? OR would you like to see The Faction make a return as our namesake?"

You can't change the name of the newspaper without having a referendum and getting 50 percent of the ENTIRE campus (not just 50 percent of the vote) to agree on a name change. You have former Cadre Editor, and the current editor of Grain Magazine, Kent Bruyneel to thank for passing this resolution through student council, in order to avoid ignorant editors without a sense of history from changing the paper's namesake. Nobody wants it to

be called The Panther Prints or The Gem ever again.

Also, The Faction was a 4-page humour pullout that appeared in The Cadre once a year, and it consisted mostly of fake articles satirizing student union politicians. If you want to return to the paper's tradition of critical thought and spirit of independence, then for the love of God stop publishing biased articles written by student politicians and start writing and thinking critically.

Editor's Response:

Dear Reader:

Had the article by Nick Stewart which was referred to in your letter been about the contract negotiations as a whole, I would agree that the story was one-sided and biased; however, the story was simply a report of how Brandon MacKenzie (a representative elected by the student body specifically to look out for us when dealing with such troubling matters as a potential faculty strike) felt about the whole ordeal. Even so, I fail to see how the article could in any way have been reasonably construed as "offensive".

The Cadre is not a Student Union newsletter, but is instead here to inform

students about any pertinent issue -- and how an article detailing the Student Union President's fears on behalf of students (and their pocketbooks) fails to meet said criteria, I cannot fathom.

Regarding the name change, I thank you for bringing that bit of news to our attention. Because of the "spring" break we have not been able to dig into the minutes deep enough to find that resolution, but we are looking into it. The motivation for the name change was brought on by staff listening to urges from friends and associates to make a change. Opinions were split, some believing that "The Cadre" was a ridiculous name in the first place (many don't even know what it means), and others believing that given the ups and downs the paper has experienced over its recent history, even though they had liked the name, that it had been soiled to the point that a change was necessary. We will continue to explore this issue further. In the time being, make suggestions (namethatpaper@hotmail.com), and if you wish, suggest that "The Cadre" remains. If the name can be changed, maybe it will be. If it can't, we can at least have some fun considering the possibility.

To the Editor:

A decision by a student union to take a direct role in the management and creative process of a student newspaper is never something to be taken lightly. After careful consideration of the circumstances surrounding the UPEI Student Union's decision to intervene in The Cadre, I would like to say that I support the actions taken. The incidents which prompted the student union's action are examples of extremely poor editorial judgment. The editorial cartoon that was published was offensive for many reasons, not the least of which is the perpetuation of negative stereotypes surrounding the LBGTQ community. It is a perfect example of how the ends do not justify the means. Although I can totally empathize with the frustration felt by some students on your campus; I feel that their frustration could have been communicated far more effectively and without causing undo harm and distress to members of your university community.

Regarding the article that was published in The Cadre, I must first state my total and absolute shock at its content and nature. That such an article would be given any expo-

sure in any publication is profoundly disturbing. That article was particularly offensive to members of the Christian faith tradition, to those who have suffered losses because of suicide and mental illness, and to the entire community at large. There have always been reasonable limitations on free speech. Hate speech, and speech which is known or reasonably ought to have been known to cause offense, is never justified by the defense "it was free speech". Few communities in Canada, if any, would support the publication of that article. It was an offensive and anger filled piece of trash that was more suitable for the recycling bin than the pages of The Cadre.

Student newspapers do not have any special protection or status when it comes to facing the consequences of poor editorial decisions. Although they are a learning environment for young journalists, student newspapers must at all times strive to ensure that they are not discriminating against members of their community. When student newspapers fail to do this it is the responsibility of those ultimately responsible for the newspaper to take action.

In the end the publication of these

offensive pieces and the subsequent actions taken by the student union are symptoms of a bigger problem. It has been my experience as a student newspaper editor that the creation of a newspaper editorial board, or of a board of directors, has a direct and positive influence on the operation of the newspaper. A Board of Directors aids young newspaper editors by acting as a place to go for advice, and as the final authority for the newspaper. Such a Board, created with a balance between the various stakeholders in the university community (newspaper staff, students, faculty, administration, and the student union) can help to ensure the editorial independence of the newspaper from any single group. A student newspaper board of directors acts as a pro-active leadership. It also helps maintain experience and knowledge gained from past mistakes. Ultimately a Board of Directors helps to ensure that a student newspaper maintains not only their independence, but also their sense of responsibility to the communities they serve.

I feel confident in these assertions because my newspaper, The Baron, went through a similar situation as The Cadre, in

2002. During our incident an article was published that was highly offensive to women. The student union here took action and immediately restructured the newspaper. I was hired to rebuild The Baron and I along with a team of dedicated students have helped create a new, healthy, and stable newspaper that accurately reflects the many viewpoints on our campus while at the same time always striving to maintain the highest editorial standards. I can see no reason why The Cadre can't achieve the same success. However, in order to achieve this The Cadre will need the support of the entire UPEI university community. I would encourage members of your university, from students to members of the faculty and staff, to help ensure that The Cadre's transition is positive and beneficial for your community.

Sincerely,

David Shipley

Editor-in-Chief, The Baron

Chair, Canadian University Press B.O.D.

Atlantic Rep, Canadian University Press