

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

This letter is in reply to a letter to the editor written by Zain Esseghaier and published on October 24<sup>th</sup>, and which concerns the Student Union's refusal to allow him to obtain a copy of the UPEISU budget for this year. Instead, VP Finance, Dennis Cahill, suggested that he come in and they discuss it together, and that he then leave without a copy of his own. Esseghaier explains that two reasons have been given for this refusal, which we will first go through, before moving onto the larger issue of our inability as students to become critically involved in issues pertaining directly to us. This is also a point that Esseghaier brings up and with which I fully agree. Let us then begin:

The first reason given for not allowing Esseghaier, as well as any other student, to obtain a copy of the budget, is that students do not have the necessary background information in order to understand it, and are thus improper candidates for a critical analysis of the text. The simple solution then, would be to include this background information with the actual budget. This would allow students the capacity for an informed and critical analysis of the budget, as well as for further inquiry into any aspects which might, up to that point, remain unclear. This then, would seem to solve the problem.

However, a more fundamental problem will still exist in the viewpoint of the Student Union in its relation to the student body. The stance taken by the SU is based on the presumption that students lack even the critical skills to understand that having the background information is also important in understanding a budget. As a result, the SU is replacing the proper intelligence of the students with incompetent reasoning, in which case all drawn conclusions would inevitably be false (for more see Marx's 'False

Consciousness'). In this respect, the SU councilors see their obvious relationship to the students as analogous to that of parent and child.

The second reason given for not allowing students a copy of the budget suggests that students do not actually need this option, and as such it can be withheld\*. This is on the basis that since the budget is ratified by the SU, and the SU is itself elected by the student body, the student body has already approved of the budget. The logical conclusions of this argument, however, suggest that no actions could possibly be taken by the SU which have not been approved by the student body, simply by virtue of having been taken by the SU. This runs into the problem of circular logic, in which students approve of decisions made by SU councilors because they are made by SU councilors.

There is, however, an even more absurd suggestion we can infer from the position taken up by the SU - that this year's SU budget had been approved by the student body even *before* it had ever been created. This is because this year's council members were elected at the end of the last school year, prior to the creation of this year's budget. In this case, any budget which might possibly ever exist would be approved of by the students before this actual existence, regardless of its possible contents and before the SU itself has any idea of what this may be. This second argument only works to strengthen the parent/child analogy made obvious in their first.

We have now looked at the problems existing with the reasons given Esseghaier by the SU for not allowing students to obtain a copy of the SU budget, and why they remain inadequate as reasonable and logical explanations. This also comes at a time when SU fees have risen significantly since previous years, which is directly

funded by the student body, and without either prior notification or explanation concerning this significant rise to this same student body. More to the point, we can also see that from the reasons given by the SU not to allow Esseghaier to obtain a copy of this budget, that actually seeking input from the students themselves, is by no means necessary, or for that matter, helpful at all.

In concluding then, I would like to ask: What kind of possibility does this allow for us, the student body, to become critically involved with issues pertaining directly to us as students, and whose actions affect us? The relationship between the Student Union and the Student Body, as perceived by the SU itself, is one in which the SU remains the more knowledgeable authority to a body of naive students who unsure of how to interpret information for themselves. With such an outlook, the SU will never treat the students with equal respect, nor fulfill their duty to represent the needs of these students. This representation, and these needs as such, are flatly being denied.

\* Two weeks ago at Hunter's Alehouse I witnessed an intoxicated old man attack a drummer on the grounds that he was wearing a backpack while playing. He continued to wrestle at the musician, exclaiming to him that he "don't need it!" It was sad, but also slightly comical at the same time - he had begun a highly unnecessary conflict over something quite absurd.

Thank you,

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Dear Editor,  
I would like to follow up on the editorial I posted in last week's edition of the Cadre about the status of the Student Union budget. In my letter I explained

how I attempted to obtain a copy of this year's Student Union budget from the SU and the reasons that were given to me by the VP of Finance and General Manager for not turning it over.

I've received a lot of positive feedback concerning this particular issue. I've been in contact with several Arts Representatives about this and they have been extremely helpful to me which I greatly appreciate. However some questions still remain, which I will try to address here. A couple questions I've been asked is what is my reason for wanting a copy of the budget and what problem do I have with this year's budget.

With respect to the second question, I don't necessarily have a problem with the budget, to be honest, aside from some of the obvious expenses and incomes, I really don't know its contents, or how much money goes where. That being said my reason for wanting a copy of the budget is clear, to find out exactly what makes up the SU budget, something which all students have every right to do.

Now it must be noted that the SU will allow students to see the budget, line by line, but are prevented from having a copy their own and must view it with a member of the executive, probably the VP of Finance. This is where the problem lies. The SU executive, with the General Manager, base their reason for not releasing the budget on the grounds that the information required for a proper understanding of the document would not be available. So if a student is interested in knowing the contents of the budget, or has a question about it, they need only contact the VP of Finance, who will then show it to them and provide for them the "right" information required for a proper understanding.

This leads to a monopoly on information, and as they say, information is power. If the SU Executive are in possession of this information and background knowledge why can't they make it

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