

Editor's Note: The Picaro is a biweekly publication, but we feel this is an important issue and wish to inform students. That's why we've created this Picaro extra. If you have any questions or comments, we welcome your feedback.

Student Union Looks Into Elections Process

by Andrea Bannister & Robin Boudreau

Problems that arose from the recent general elections took precedence at the Student Union meeting last week.

After the two-day long meeting, members of Council could only agree on two motions: "the democratic process has been successful" and to pass the problems over to a Committee to review.

Questions about the elections process have been circulating since the disqualification of Andrew Clattenburg, a presidential candidate, an hour after the polls closed. The winner of the race, Sheri Moore, received 170 votes, just one ballot more than candidate Alanna Mason. The 113 votes for Clattenburg were announced as "spoiled" by Chief Returning Officer, Marina Harris.

Student Council has received approximately 50 written letters of complaint from students who are angry at the recent elections process.

Rules in the Student Union constitution were broken more than once, said Gin Hing Yee, the SU Omsbudperson. For example, election dates were not approved by Council according to regulations (Section 3.36).

"The dates for the elections must be ratified by January 31," Yee said. "I can't find in the Council minutes, any formal motion setting the election dates."

Karen MacGillivray, External VP and James Tilley, Science Representative are concerned with elections process and the outcome of the Council meeting.

They too, said that the constitution has been breached. MacGillivray noted that the Elections Committee extended the campaigning dates that were set by Student Union policy. However, this was never approved by Council. This means all candidates were campaigning past the allowed date and should have been disqualified.

"I was saying to Council 'This is a clear breach of our constitution!' But they wanted to let it lie. Can we not take responsibility for our actions?" MacGillivray said.

Tilley said, "Despite the fact that the Student Council meetings were roughly six hours in total, I believe that all the motions

were not fully or equally discussed."

MacGillivray also questions the election procedures themselves. Harris, the CRO and the head of the elections, left the voting list in her Council mailbox after the polls closed. Anyone could have entered the office and tampered with the list, thereby making a recount, if necessary, problematic.

Yee and his committee reviewing the elections, will take all these issues into consideration. He anticipates the report will be completed by the end of April.

Law & Order - MSVU Style

According to the Chief Returning Officer, Marina Harris, at the Student Council meeting on Friday, March 15, 1996, presidential candidate, Andrew Clattenburg, was disqualified on this basis:

- An anonymous student registered a complaint with Student Union, claiming she overheard Clattenburg actively campaigning to students in a hallway on Wednesday, March 13, the last day of voting
- An emergency Election Committee meeting was arranged for Wednesday night, after the polls were closed and before ballots were counted
- Although Harris made allusions to other students making complaints, these students did not appear in front of the Elections Committee or submit a written complaint
- As of Friday March 15, there was not one written complaint submitted to Student Union concerning Clattenburg
- At the emergency meeting, one student testified that she overheard Clattenburg use the words "vote" and "leader" and saw him shaking hands on Wednesday, March 13. The student's name has not been released, even to Clattenburg.
- One councillor at the Student Union meeting asked if the conversation, since it was only briefly overheard, could have been taken out of context. He suggested that Clattenburg could have been thanking people who had come up to him. Harris said even if that was the case, Clattenburg should not have been using those words in a public place.
- Harris admitted that she made no attempt to find the students Clattenburg was allegedly campaigning to.
- Harris did not inform Clattenburg of the time the incident allegedly took place. She said that they knew it had to have happened between ten and eleven in the morning because that was the only time he didn't have class.
- After the meeting with the anonymous student, the Elections Committee interviewed Clattenburg. He did not get a chance to produce witnesses and was not told the identity of the person who made the complaint or of the exact time and location.
- On the basis of this evidence, the Elections Committee unanimously decided to disqualify Clattenburg

Who is Really Listening?

by James Tilley

I am the current Science Representative on Student Council and the Graphics Editor on the Picaro staff. Some may see this as a conflict of interest, but I have tried to stay as neutral, as possible, in any dispute or conflict that has occurred. Until now ...

March was election month as some may have realized (which in itself seems to be a miracle.) Many problems occurred during those few weeks. The question I have is, *What have you heard?* There were many questions that came up during and following the election process. My problem is that some questions were not addressed fully. None were made public despite the protest of several councillors. So the rumour mills continued to provide the students with possibly false information. News writers for the Picaro sent to cover the story got nothing but a rushed "No comment" from members of Student Union who should have had the answers. Until now ...

When the rumours begin to spread the democratic process begins to break down and chaos follows. People may protest due to false information and they can't make informed opinions because they have not received the facts. So the student body has begun to ask questions. There are general questions about campaigning, changed rules and regulations. The following are some of

the questions that I have been hearing. There are questions about the disqualification of Andrew Clattenburg, questions about the very close totals of Sheri Moore and Alanna Mason. Some people have questioned the ability of the elections committee, some have even questioned the ability of the CRO (chief returning officer.)

The suggestions I have heard are just as diverse as the questions. The only difference is the severity of the solutions. Some say that we should leave it be and get on with our lives. Some say that we should make Andrew's votes count (the fact that he lost is beside the point.) Some say the presidents should rerun. Some say that entire election should be considered null and void. Student Union took most of these options under consideration. And Council with a majority vote has declared that they would sit on the fence.

What does this mean? They admit there were some problems. Yet they also declare that the election followed the democratic process. Student Council has decided to form a committee to look into the problems and prevent any future mishaps. But what about the academic year of 1996-97? What if the committee discovers that there was enough problems in the election process to declare the

election invalid? Nothing productive could happen, for as it stands now the committee won't be able to have anything reported to the council until during the summer sessions.

Now I am not saying there is anything even wrong with the election process for this spring's general elections. In fact there is a good chance that there isn't. All I am saying is that student government has not provided the students with any concrete information on the election for either side.

The Ombudsperson, has received almost fifty complaints about Andrew Clattenburg's disqualification. This has been presented to council and then passed off to another committee. Passing the problem to others will not solve them.

In short, the elections process was problematic not because of any possible mistakes made by candidates, the election committee members or the chief returning officer. The problems were caused because the issues aren't out there for people to make decisions. I'm a member of the Student Council and the student press and I have only heard rumors about the election and its problems. I can't even imagine how you are feeling. How can you make any personal decisions without the facts. and even then **Who is Really Listening?**

Student Union Hopes to Soon be Accountable

by Robin Boudreau & Andrea Bannister

According to the Student Union constitution, any person registered in one course at Mount Saint Vincent University is a member of Student Union.

The Union presently does not have an appeal process, whereby a higher level is available for students to go to with complaints. Basically, Student Council governs themselves.

Student Union President Joe Stolz said his council is in the process of creating a Judicial Board. Students who find no satisfaction from the Student Union, will then be able to appeal to the Board.

Current circumstances reveal that this Judicial Board is needed. Gin Hing Yee, the Ombudsperson for SU, has received 48 letters from students, condemning the recent elections and calling for a review into the disqualification of presidential candidate, Andrew Clattenburg. Although the letters will not be addressed by the Council, he said they will be taken into account by the Committee which is being set up to review the past elections.

"Students felt their votes did not count," Yee said. Votes for Clattenburg were labelled "spoiled" after he was disqualified.

The Committee reviewing the elections, headed by Yee, will draw up a list of recommendations and present them to Student Council. He admits that Student Union does not have to implement any

of the recommendations.

Even members of Student Council are questioning their own current process.

External Vice President Karen MacGillivray said that the Council has recently breached its own Constitution. She was "incredulous" when other Council members quashed motions to look into election matters.

"My personal take from the way that the motions were withdrawn and passed, indicated that we don't have to follow our own rules," MacGillivray said.

Stolz too, said that "there is an accountability problem."

He said Student Council is looking to form a Judicial Board which would be based loosely on Dalhousie's. Their Board has the power to over rule decisions made by their Student Union.

The Mount's Student Council is working out the details to bring this kind of Board into effect.

Stolz hopes the nature of the Judicial Board will be defined soon.

"I don't feel there is a problem with this Council, but we want to protect students from future Councils that may not be of the same calibre or have the high level of integrity that we have right now," said Stolz.