

For Information

S.97-54

As amended
See editorial
amendments in
mins of Jul 7/97



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Memorandum

To: Senate

From: Ron Heath

Dean of Student Services & Registrar

Subject: Electoral Standing Committee

Date: May 22, 1997

Report from the Electoral Standing Committee

The Electoral Standing Committee has met once during the past year at which time it considered an appeal from a candidate resulting from the recent student elections to the Board of Governors.

The first part of the request focused on the fact that there was only one polling station for the election on the Burnaby campus and that, since it was located in the south-east corner of the Academic Quadrangle, student participation was affected. The Committee acknowledged that the location used was not the most central. It was noted that additional polling stations would involve extra costs associated with staffing and that stations that changed location from one day to the next would lead to confusion. The Committee did not support the appeal but requested that the Registrar consider alternative locations that might be more central for the whole Burnaby campus community.

The second part of the request dealt with issues relating to press coverage, some of which were identified as misrepresentation of both the views and the candidate. After some consideration, the Committee determined that it was not possible to assess whether or not the press coverage in question had direct influence on the final results. It was noted that the appeal was not submitted upon discovery of the alleged offence but rather, was submitted after the results of the election were known. In addition, the request was submitted considerably beyond the 96 hour limit after the closing of polls as specified in the election rules. The Committee asked that the Registrar submit a report to *The Peak* as a means of communicating its concern to the community at this kind of campaign activity and to amend the information provided to candidates to ensure that it was well understood that this activity would not be tolerated.

Notice to *The Peak*

During the recent campaign for the election of students to the Senate and the Board of Governors, individuals unknown were responsible for willful misrepresentation of the views and positions of at least one of the candidates. The situation was exacerbated since the press coverage extended into the public media. Subsequently, copies of those articles

started to appear on the campus, again posted by individuals unknown. The newspaper subsequently printed a retraction, confirming that they had been misled but headlines being as they are, the retractions did not command the attention of the original items.

In any campaign, it is appropriate that an individual should be held accountable for his or her stated views, opinions and stands on issues but at the same time, it is highly inappropriate for an individual or individuals to falsely attribute views, opinions and stands on issues to a candidate, and especially when the individual or individuals misrepresent themselves as the candidate through telephone interview, press release or other means. It is not sufficient to claim that the newspaper publishing the material should check the reliability of its sources.

The Electoral Standing Committee wishes to make very clear the position that this kind of election/campaign tactic will not be tolerated. Any such instances reported during the conduct of an election will be investigated and should the individuals involved be identified, they will be dealt with to the fullest possible extent.