

'I WANNA BE A DOG'

BY SHARON MCIVER



Less than one week out from the UCSA elections, I thought I'd take the opportunity to acquaint myself with the current exec by reading through the minutes for the year, and rating them with regards to sustainability. The fact that the exec have a Sustainability and Special Projects portfolio (that is currently held by Gower Buchanan) is excellent and indicates that the UCSA are committed to improving in this area. Well done!

On the 25 May, it is noted in the minutes that "CANTA is the watchdog to hold the exec and association to account while it is also a voice for students". I will therefore assume that the lovely exec is itching for me to hold them to account. If I had a tail, it would be wagging.

So here's a brief rundown of the matters that struck me as being sustainability related. I'll work backwards from the last meeting where minutes have been made available:

13 July:

👍 "The Sustainability Policy was "approved and adopted" with a unanimous vote. Very well done indeed, although in the discussion the main point made was that "partnership extends through our suppliers to enforce them to package products in certain ways that are environmentally friendly." Hopefully, this means more than just enforcement of recyclable, but still just single-use packaging, and that the UCSA will encourage businesses to use reusable packaging and offer discounts if students bring their own containers.

👍 The implementation of \$2 meals in the 'Heat and Eat' section of the Student Union building, to help cash strapped students. Excellent!

8 June:

👍 "Coke has supplied 600 cans of "Relentless" to the UCSA to supply students in the afternoon sometime." Cans are recyclable - good.

👎 Contents of can.

👎 The high levels of 'CocaCola-nisation' on campus (why the 360 café is red and white).

👎 The exec deciding to hand the "Relentless" out at exam time, so that students can spend the first hour hyped and unable to think clearly, before crashing from sugar and caffeine overload. Brilliant!

25 May:

👍 "CANTA is a watchdog." Woof. Woof.

11 May:

👍 "The exec would like to run a hardship grant for students for out of the blue expenses (dentist, optometrist)." Ka pai.



"Foodbank policy was examined by the exec and it was moved that the exec endorse and approve the foodbank policy as it stands". Passed unanimously - I guess this means no dentist grants.



"Club Grant Applications" The following clubs had their grants accepted: "Sci-Fi Society \$900, UCNavs \$500, U-Can Dance \$1000, UC Hockey \$1000, ENSOC \$1000, LAWSOC \$2500, ENSOC \$2500." Awesome - although it does seem a bit 'classist'.



"Poverty and Fair Trade \$176". Definitely classist then - but I will assume that being modest people, this club may have only asked for a low amount. But where are the other clubs? Are they missing because they never applied, or perhaps they didn't know such grants are available?

27 April:



"Food bank is stocked and ready to go." This is a fantastic service where students in extreme financial difficulty can get \$20 food parcels (that's reduced cost rates) that will see them right for a few days. Nice work!

23 March:



\$20 food parcels "will not be pre-made so that students can decide what suits their tastes." A really good decision that takes into account the various food requirements of students who are vegan, dairy-free, gluten-free, pescatarian, vegetarian, rawatarian, or whatever.



The exec discuss the possibility of encouraging students to attend the AGM with "free sausages." What about non-meat options to encourage vegetarian students to attend? Could the UCSA offer food that does not support the highly unsustainable meat industry? Will the sausages have pork in them, thereby offending Muslim students and maintaining dodgy-as pig farming? These are the questions I'd like to see answered at an AGM. Pity the smell would put me off. [In a later meeting it was decided to offer discounted food and drinks, so I'm assuming the sizzler idea didn't happen. Still - best to discourage future sausage use.]

10 March:



Students want cheap food, so the exec discuss the possibilities of "the implementation of Subway". Since when has Subway been cheap? And if you let one of the multi-nationals in, you'll have the rest buzzing like blowflies, and before you know it you'll be breaking all the new rules in your Sustainability Policy and the Uni will be ankle deep in trash. The 2009 exec will be known as the "ones who completely sold out".



Fortunately, the Subway idea was buried and on July 13 the exec came up with a better idea - the \$2 meals. Whew!

24 February:



"UC 0 Week Bags contain few things (Razor, Pens and Vouchers) compared to other Uni's 0 Week Bags. . . . Too many fliers, not enough products." I couldn't agree more - but I would suggest that you have a think about what products you include, and how they're packaged. Wouldn't it be awesome if the UCSA came up with an 'eco' 0 Week bag, filled with useful stuff with the least waste? They might even get on Campbell Live for having the most marvelous 0 Week bag ever.



So although environmental concerns have not been heavy on the agenda, the 09 exec seem to be making more good decisions than bad, and according to their Sustainability Policy it will get even better. Have a read of it yourself: www.ucsa.org.nz/fileadmin/downloads/sustainabilitypolicy.pdf, but some of the highlights are the supply of Fair Trade Products in all the UCSA cafes, the reduction of waste, and the support of Sustainability Education.



Best of all, it says "The UCSA will aim to operate in a way that . . . reduces its use of toxic and non-biodegradable substances." Does this mean there'll be no more "Relentless" giveaways on campus?



So, well done to the current team, and with the Sustainability Policy in place, like Snoopy, I can retire to the top of my kennel, and take a 'zzzzzz' until the next exec is elected and in place.