

Letter to the editor . . .

# Token student opinion used in IM decision

To the Editor:

It is a monstrous irony that two student groups, the Young Democrats and Student Senate, are now blaming each other for the fact that student opinion was not "consulted" regarding the proposed intramural building. This failure is not the fault of either group, but instead should be blamed on the system by which decisions are reached and buildings are authorized at the University.

Because I feel deeply about this matter, and because I have been opposed to the intramural building for more than two years, I feel it is my duty to make available to the student body my knowledge on this subject. During a period of one year, when I was editor of The Daily Illini, I was in a sense the "representative" of the student body in part of this matter. Now I want to make an accounting.

I was first told about plans for an intramural building on this campus more than two years ago, when a "feasibility study" and other preliminary work was already under way on such a building. At the time it was mentioned to me, by the chairman of a faculty Senate committee concerned with it, I expressed strong doubts that such a building was needed. My objections centered on two areas:

First, it seemed to me that the intramural program at Illinois no longer had physical exercise and athletic achievement as its primary purpose, but that instead it had been made into a means by which fraternities and other organized houses glorified themselves, won trophies, and publicized their names.

### IM Program Overemphasized

Secondly, it seemed to me that other areas of student endeavor on the campus were painfully underdeveloped. I protested the lack of proper support for student activities which would develop an intellectual, artistic or cultural awareness in their members, and I insisted that in terms of money

the IM program was grotesquely overemphasized.

In this light, the use of a great amount of money for such a purpose seemed unwise to me, even though students would be given a voice in the eventual administration of the building. The chairman of the committee listened to me with sympathy; our conversation had been informal, and I was thankful for his interest.

The next contact I had with the proposed building, aside from rumors I heard, occurred during the last school year, when I was telephoned by David Matthews, the director of the IM program, and asked to come to his office one afternoon.

### Student Leaders Called In

Before I went to see Matthews, I received a call from John Gwinn, a good friend of mine who is a former president of the University YMCA. John told me that several "student leaders" were being called in by Mr. Matthews for a "presentation" of the IM building proposal. John told me that the "presentation" consisted of elaborate photos and descriptions of IM buildings on other campuses, an argument that our IM program needed such facilities and a request for an opinion.

According to John, since the "presentation" was so elaborate, and students were called in separately without being told the nature of the meeting, a factual opinion from the "leaders" might not be obtained.

I went to see Mr. Matthews, was given a very smooth job of salesmanship, and then expressed my objections to the entire scheme.

I later talked to John again, and with some of the other students who had been called in, we compared notes. It developed that strong opposition to the proposed building had been voiced by leaders in Student Senate, The Daily Illini, the housing groups, Interfraternity Council and several other representative activities.

Of course, we had no way of knowing what percentage of the students interviewed didn't like

the idea, because we did not know how many students Mr. Matthews had called in. But it seemed to us that a good sampling of "student leaders" representing a good portion of the student body had expressed serious reservations about the project.

Shortly afterwards, I was in a discussion with George Bargh, who is the administrative assistant to President Henry. Many students do not know Mr. Bargh's name, but it is my observation that he was one of the most sincere, honest and sympathetic officials I dealt with in the administration while I was editor of The Daily Illini.

My impression is that his job is often to act as a diplomat and trouble-shooter when something goes wrong with the established way of doing things here. In that task he has done an excellent job, and all by myself he is one reason that the System here is not the utterly hopeless bureaucracy it could be.

### Expressed Strong Reservations

When I told Mr. Bargh, almost in passing, that several other "student leaders" and myself had expressed strong reservations about the IM proposal, he was surprised. I got a definite impression that Mr. Matthews, in reporting the results of his interviews, had painted a very favorable picture and played down any opposition to the building. In a personal investigation after my meeting with Mr. Bargh, I satisfied myself that more than half of the students interviewed by Mr. Matthews had not been in favor of the building.

This autumn, a group of student leaders — new leaders, of course, because my class had graduated — were taken on a tour of Big Ten campuses to inspect other IM buildings. They were then asked for their suggestions. It is significant that they were not asked whether the building should be built, or whether they thought the money could be used for a better purpose, but instead how they thought the building (represented to them as an accomplished fact) should be administered.

### Report Calls for Student Control

Their report calls for a large amount of student control over the building, which by itself, of course, is good if it survives.

In any event, the building by this autumn was accepted as a probable fact, the students gave their blessings to it after what must have been a pleasant trip to all those campuses, and nobody asked if the first group of "student leaders" had been accurately reported or if the second group had been prevented from really considering whether the building should be built.

During all of this time, of course, the campus as a whole had no knowledge of the proposed building. The plan was common enough knowledge among the student insiders in the IM program, but they were part of the family and could be trusted. Student Senate had no mandate to officially consider the building, nor did any other group.

### Newspaper Cooperation Requested

In this connection, certain facts about publicity on the building should be made public. The Daily Illini carried a few mentions of such a building last spring, and as a result the University's department of public information called a meeting of all local news media. At this meeting, the newsmen were asked to "cooperate" in "holding" news on the IM building and two other projects until the University's "official announcement."

Well, when the staff of The Daily Illini changed last May and new editors took the place of old ones, this "cooperation" was lost in the shuffle, as was perhaps inevitable. But The Daily Illini printed nothing about the building until after the student inspection trip, which Sports Editor Larry Beaupre participated in. Beaupre wrote a front-page story when he returned, telling of plans for the building. He was not, of course, aware that the public announcement had not been officially made.

University officials were angry at Beaupre and The Daily Illini for jumping the gun on the story, but they still delayed their official announcement until some weeks later.

### Official Announcement Delayed

Let's consider some of the implications in the facts recorded so far. The University delayed official announcement of the building until a point had been reached at which it was almost impossible to consider whether it should be built. Too much money had already been spent on preliminary plans which would be wasted if the building were canceled.

Often, in such cases, the University argues that premature announcement of the plans would make purchase of the necessary real estate difficult. But in this case the IM building will be put on land which the University already owns, and so the delayed announcement was a convenience more than a necessity.

During the planning stages of the building, it was felt necessary to go through the motions of "consulting" student opinion. So students were brought in one by one and interviewed by the single person most interested in seeing the building approved.

Then, later, students were taken on a trip and then asked to sanction the building by suggesting how it should be operated. At no time were the students as a group asked to talk over the wisdom of such an elaborate building. It seems that student opinion was not wanted so much as student token approval.

### Token Students

This leads me to my final point. All of the "student leaders" manipulated in this sequence of events were used as Token Students. The student body as a whole was never consulted, though its money will finance the scheme, and indeed repeated efforts were made to keep the student body ignorant of the project. The students who

were taken into confidence were not encouraged to give their own thoughtful advice on the project, nor was their advice heeded. Their only purpose was to gloss over an official decision, give it the appearance of a joint effort of students and the University, and quiet later arguments about the building (which, it is obvious, are many).

Now we see Student Senate and the Young Democrats blaming each other for this failure of the community of scholars. Neither is to blame. The entire operation was geared to bring the building safely past possible criticism and get it built despite student opinion, or, rather, in indifference to it.

### Suggest Postponement

I have two suggestions. 1. The Board of Trustees should postpone a decision on this building for one month. (In doing so, it would assert its right to make the final decision, rather than have the decision made by an irreversible chain of preliminary plans.)

2. An all-campus referendum should be held to measure student opinion on the building.

The time has come for students to either insist on an honest role in decision-making here, or to refuse to allow themselves to be used to add respectability to a decision someone else has really made. It is better for students to have no voice in this University than for them to be manipulated as Token Student Leaders to quiet their fellows.

Roger Ebert

## Help!

The Daily Illini has many openings on its editorial, business and photography staffs.

No previous experience is necessary, but interest and a desire to work and learn are musts.

For further information, visit our offices in the basement of Illini Hall from 3-5 p.m.

## Letters to the Editor

### IUSA replies

To the Editor:

The purpose of IUSA is to provide for the educational, cultural, recreational, and social needs of the students and faculty, and to develop leadership among the people working in IUSA.

We are proud of the fact that our programs are self-supporting. Contrary to popular opinion, IUSA receives no student fees. Some programs are profit and some are deficit and we must make them balance. We try to do this without lowering the quality of programs or stifling individual creativity.

It is a salient tenet of any theory of leadership development that an indispensable factor is allowing people to make their own decisions and carry them out. Most of the ideas for changing programs come from the chairman and major chairman level because they are the people closest to the programs and can best see possibilities for improvement.

We want new ideas to come from every member of IUSA and we want to try every idea that might improve a program. Sometimes these ideas do not work, but the people involved still learn much from the experience of working with a program and with the people involved in the program.

The "machine" you discussed is not as well-oiled as outworn appearances seem to indicate. Parts and functions are constantly being changed. A few examples of new innovations within the past year are: Current Speakers program, Dad's Day Casino, Speaker Program, Game Nights, big name entertainment at Homecoming, expansion of the dance program.

All of our programs have significant purpose, such as Mom's Day and Dad's Day. Specifically in the areas of education and culture, in addition to the three speaker pro-

grams, we sponsor Model U. N., International Fair, Forums of Thought, and International Brother-Sister. These programs are valuable to a wide variety of students and faculty.

Yes, IUSA is a bureaucracy, but all large organizations are. The bureaucratic system is ingrained in the American way of life and there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it as long as everyone can have the opportunity to express his ideas.

We try to establish this free climate. The people who are not afraid to express their opinions and to try their ideas are the ones who get ahead. Many times, slowing down the machine is the best thing that could happen because it provides a chance to look at it and see if it is doing the job that it should do, both in terms of the product it turns out and in terms of whether or not the parts are being worn down to the expense of the product produced.

But students are the components of this machine — students who gain experience from taking an idea and shaping it into a reality, who have a sense of accomplishment when they look at a job well done, who value the friendships that they have made in IUSA, and who feel that this activity experience will help them in later life.

We like new ideas. We want to provide all we can that the campus wants. We enjoy helping people to realize their capabilities and make full use of their intellects, as well as develop their personalities. Won't you come up and see us?

The IUSA Directors  
Tom Good  
Nancy Hamm  
Carol Geppinger  
Al Bock  
Fran Voris  
Carol Bokorney  
Jerry Wagner

## Daily Crossword Puzzle

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|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>                              | 43 One of the Dulleses.   | 10 Henri Beyle's pseudonym.    |
| 1 Georgia city.                            | 45 Totem pole.            | 11 Sun: Prefix.                |
| 6 Title meaning father.                    | 46 Staleness.             | 12 Inter ____                  |
| 10 Rough fabric.                           | 48 Air.                   | 13 Valley.                     |
| 14 Type of brick.                          | 50 Egyptian god.          | 19 Empty spaces.               |
| 15 Statue by Phidias.                      | 51 Fry.                   | 21 Children's poet.            |
| 16 Enumerate.                              | 52 Constellation.         | 24 Rockefeller Plaza building. |
| 17 English tar.                            | 55 ____ Jose.             | 25 Otis.                       |
| 18 Former U.N. Secretary General: 2 words. | 56 Zola heroine.          | 26 Chatter.                    |
| 20 Higher: Ger.                            | 59 People of Pine Bluff.  | 27 Agrarian.                   |
| 21 Moor.                                   | 61 Famous Swede.          | 28 La ____ France.             |
| 22 Of the Muses.                           | 62 Keep in check.         | 29 Unrelenting.                |
| 23 Architectural style.                    | 63 Yale men.              | 30 Lieu.                       |
| 25 Tejuene.                                | 64 Ship's deck.           | 31 Sapid.                      |
| 26 Charming, for one.                      | 65 English county.        | 34 Discipline.                 |
| 28 Follower of a certain religion.         | 66 I direct: Lat.         | 37 Vegetable.                  |
| 32 Herb.                                   | 67 Seven long years.      | 39 Red Sea land.               |
| 33 Vary.                                   | <b>DOWN</b>               | 42 Avenaceous.                 |
| 35 Man of distinction, for December.       | 1 Saint ____ France.      | 44 Nevada: Abbr.               |
| 36 "Rule Britannia" composer.              | 2 Star in Draco.          | 47 Egyptian leader.            |
| 38 Postponement.                           | 3 Funny girl.             | 49 Poe poem.                   |
| 40 Sediment.                               | 4 Von Weber opera.        | 51 Rope.                       |
| 41 Dance for two.                          | 5 Marshal at Waterloo.    | 52 Channel island.             |
|  | 6 Mexican aborigine.      | 53 Algonquin.                  |
|  | 7 Swiss canton.           | 54 Similar.                    |
|  | 8 Bargain: Colloq.        | 55 Eel: Dial.                  |
|  | 9 Norse home of the gods. | 57 Useful gas.                 |
|  |                           | 58 Site of 7 Dows.             |
|  |                           | 60 Porter's relative           |
|  |                           | 61 Like as ____                |

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