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Students cull Trustee opinion Trustees consider SASG compromise, new chairman

by Mike Alexander

"The Trustees." Oh, how often we've heard that label this semester. To many students they represent Power, Money and Power. When the administration isn't a convenient scapegoat to blame for something "wrong" around here, one can always pass the buck to the trustees. Or at least that seems to be a common feeling on campus. Last weekend, however, students could go beyond the myth to the reality.

At 1:30 p.m. Friday, there came the trustees' open forum in South Lounge. Twelve trustees were there, including Chairman Fritz Maytag.

Dave Cooke, off-campus SGA president, started things off by reading the trustees the letter that SGA had approved, calling for Dean Frazer to resign one of her positions, either as administrator or instructor of philosophy. Cooke claimed that Frazer had "fused the two roles" and pointed at the Magurshak tenure decision as evidence of Frazer's conflict of interest in action. When a question arose as to whether the letter actually represented a campus-consensus decision, Cooke and Jim Rabchuk presented the administrative authoritarianism petition as evidence of campus support, despite the fact that the petition had been introduced over two weeks before the Frazer letter had been presented to the campus and SGA took no measures to illicit campus opinion since then.

The SGA letter led the discussion into a regurgitation of the Magurshak decision and the tenure process in general. Maytag responded by saying, "It is extremely unfortunate, but in the next three years, one-fifth of the faculty (23 members) will come up for tenure. A lot of people are going to be turned down."

Regarding the Magurshak case specifically, Maytag cryptically said, "I probably know less about it than I should know and I probably know more about it than I should too." Yet, when Lance Isen responded, "I am horrified that you support something that you know very little about," Maytag appeared to contradict himself by saying, "I know quite a bit about the situation." He added, "President Drake was correct. He's doing a fantastic job and has the right interests at heart."

Finally, an hour into the forum, the discussion moved on to something other than tenure and Magurshak. Student Brian Gratch asked the trustees whether there were plans for a construction of a fine arts facility "for displaying all of the rotting artwork being stored down in Fine Arts' basement." Trustee Jim Lowry jokingly commented, "Oh, it's not rotting, it's just sort of fading away." No one laughed and Emily Earhart, student-director of the Negative Space Gallery, emotionally informed the trustees of the hundreds of works "just being left down there in a basement that's been declared a fire hazard." The trustees took the comment seriously and listed some of the college's priorities. Mention was made of the library, Mears and other projects, such as the completion of the dorm renovations, the building of a new psychology department facility and the renovation of Grinnell House.

Finally, the forum discussion turned to the inevitable topic of what to do about Grinnell's investments in corporations operating in South Africa. Maytag flatly stated, "We're not going to divest. The situation is detestable, we know, but it's not the situation, it's what we can do about



The South African Support Group demonstration last Friday culminated in a sit-in during a trustee meeting in Windsor House. Approximately 100 students crowded into the house to hear members of SASG discuss divestment with the Board of Trustees. Photo by Barry Jarrett.

it." Lowry, who has been in South Africa, said, "Every college in the country can divest every penny it has invested in South Africa, and it won't make a damn bit of difference. The change is power — we have to get the people in power to relinquish it." Chris Lehmann, SASG member, exclaimed, "By being involved in South Africa, Grinnell is taking a moral position now. They are still reaping the benefits of an apartheid."

During their later meetings, the trustees approved tenure for Professors Peter Druian (psychology), Andrew Hsieh (history) and Robert McKibbin (art). They also discussed Grinnell's tenure process in general. New officers were elected: Robert Burnett is the new chairman of the board, with John Chrystal and Patty Floyd taking on the positions of vice-chairpersons.

However, the big issue for the trustees, again, was divestment, which took up about 50 percent of discussion time.

At 4:30 p.m., students, faculty members and administrators gathered across the street from Windsor House, where the trustees were meeting. Between alternating periods of rain and sun, the crowd sang, chanted, ate and waited. Professors Gurira, Magurshak and Wall gave pro-divestment speeches, which successfully added to the rather angry enthusiasm which pervaded the atmosphere and feelings of those assembled. At approximately 4:50 p.m., SASG representatives Joel Robbins, Larry Hecimovich, Laura Heller, Jim Hunter and Robert Schwartz went in to meet with the trustees and deliberate the issue.

An hour and a half later, Robbins emerged from the house. "I'm very upset," he stammered. Suddenly, students were crying, "Let's go in," and people started pouring into the house and into the meeting room, while various SASG members handed out fliers titled "Instructions for Civil Disobedience."

The trustees didn't seem greatly affected by the commotion, and the deliberation continued between the board and the SASG members. Maytag was saying, "We are very impressed with you Grinnell students, your sincerity, your energy, your thoughtfulness —," when Heller interrupted: "More talk — nothing but talk — that is what we're angry about. We don't

get any coherent response, all we do is chat. We feel you think you're doing nothing wrong."

Waldo Walker, executive vice-president of the college, interjected, "The board has been impressed. The impression has been good. But you can't just sit down and expect them to give you an answer." Lowry echoed Walker's comments: "You did good work. You want us to take action, but it will not be taken today."

Robbins said, "We can't keep doing this and you keep saying no. Of course we're emotional; we've been doing this for two years and you still won't give us an answer. It's your turn to find some justification. Let's have a least some concrete statement — people have no feeling for your empty gestures." He continued, "When you're in power, you don't have to work too hard to back up a decision — you can just say no. Our problem is, should we keep working, or should we just go home?"

At this time, Hunter proposed a compromise:

- 1) The board initiate stockholder resolutions in those corporations which Grinnell College owns stock and which operate in South Africa, calling for: a) the corporations to sign the Sullivan code; b) the corporations to comply with the Sullivan code; c) the corporations to cease any activities which contribute to upholding apartheid.

- 2) The board include a student as a voting member of the trustees' investment responsibility committee.

Maytag responded by saying, "The board will discuss this at their meeting in the fall, although it's not likely that it will pass." Trustee Gardiner Dutton then interrupted Maytag and exclaimed, "Now, Fritz, we ought to take this seriously. It's worthy of discussion." The group was then instructed to type up a copy of the compromise proposal and deliver copies of it to the trustees on Saturday morning. This ended the meeting, at approximately 7:20 p.m.

On Saturday, the trustees briefly discussed the proposal and stated that they were "in general agreement" with it. A committee of the board will work over the summer to put into specifics a resolution and the board will take action on it at their fall meeting scheduled for Nov. 5 and 6.

SPLAG champions liberal arts

by Anne Bordonaro

Yet another acronym has been added to the campus lingo: SPLAG. If you haven't heard yet, these initials stand for the name of a new student group, "Students for the Preservation of Liberal Arts at Grinnell." "The group intends to be a watchdog on current campus issues and a source of information," according to SPLAG member Adam Burck.

SPLAG co-founder Jeff Hersh explained that the idea of the group began before break when he and two fellow hall presidents, Tony Kulick and Mark Bradshaw, were upset about many campus issues including the denial of tenure to Assistant Professor of Philosophy Dan Magurshak, the decision to have no buffer days for the next five semesters and the possibility of the installation of a core curriculum. Hersh, Kulick and Bradshaw were hoping to organize student action through the SGA Joint Board but the board was hesitant.

Hersh explained, "We want to get on it right away. We wanted to get the non-activist student body aware of what was happening and establish some lines of communication with the faculty and administration. We couldn't do it through SGA so we decided to go outside SGA."

The first SPLAG meeting was held on April 22. Approximately 25 students attended the first meeting and 35 attended the second. Hersh said, "The group took off with a life of its own after the first meeting." SPLAG members John Voltz and Joel Robbins organized the administrative forum. According to Hersh, the goals of the group are to keep students aware of what is happening as it happens and not after a decision has been made. SPLAG committees are now working on setting up a policy concerning computer privacy and a job description which includes a description of tenure policy.

Another SPLAG committee is working with the faculty to arrange faculty-student coffeehouses in order to keep informal communications open. Hersh said that certain faculty members have hinted that students ought to stop complaining about decisions that have already been made and work to see that these things don't reoccur. In addition, Hersh cited that, "In the past, students have not discussed campus or national issues much with the faculty."

SPLAG members said they will continue to hold forums next year when necessary as well as to keep watch on the administration through the various administrative committees. They intend to keep students aware through S&B editorials and perhaps even a newsletter.

Hersh noted, "We can't change the decisions that have been made. We have to concentrate on the future. You must be emotional to get people aware and involved and now we can be rational once people are aware. As Magurshak said, 'You have to know what you want.' It's time to tone down the tension and figure out what we want."