

New student group working to appeal CRO ruling

Students argue they never declared themselves the organizers of the No side and that the the penalty is unwarranted. However, the CRO's written ruling stated that Steph Shantz, a member of the SAKCoke group, had declared her intent to run the No campaign

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In her ruling, Woynorowski found that the materials, which comprised of posters suggesting that the Coca-Cola Company violated the human rights of workers in Colombia and was complicit in the murder of several union workers in the area, constituted pre-campaigning in violation of SU bylaws. The posters also included links to websites run by both local and international anti-Coke groups.

According to the written ruling, Woynorowski contacted SAKCoke on several occasions and asked them to take down the materials, but the organization refused to do so.

Election regulations prohibit individuals in support of either side of a question from putting up materials to sway voters before the official campaign period begins. Woynorowski fined the No campaign \$900, which comes out to 90 per cent of their entire election budget, and prohibited the No side from posting any materials on campus in support of their campaign. Also noted in the original complaint was that a member of SAKCoke was handing unsolicited

material to students on campus, an allegation that Woynorowski could not find evidence for and therefore didn't include in the ruling.

But while the verdict levied a heavy fine against the campaign, Woynorowski said that it was in line with decisions with previous years.

"We're arguing that this isn't pre-campaign material; it doesn't have any connection to the campaign whatsoever."

**COSANNA PRESTON,
ANTI-COKE COALITION MEMBER**

"The point of the [ruling] is to match the advantage with that the campaign has received by pre-campaigning. We've had this happen in the past, like last year when the [Physical Education Complex campaign] were fined for what someone posted on WebCT.

The message only reached six people, but they were fined \$200," she said, pointing out that it's likely many more students had seen the anti-Coca-Cola materials.

However, Alejandro Pachon, a member of La Chiva, a group on campus that tries to raise awareness for Colombian social issues and works closely with SAKCoke, argued that the situations weren't the same.

"[The CRO] says that there is a precedent ... directly related with the PAC plebiscite. But, different from the PAC group, we have never asked for a plebiscite," he said.

Unlike the PAC plebiscite, the SU drafted and approved the wording the Coke plebiscite question.

Furthermore, Pachon argued that SAKCoke's materials weren't part of a No campaign, but was simply continuing the efforts to raise awareness of their cause as they had been before plebiscite question was finalized—and attempting to influence voters.

But the CRO's ruling also stated that Steph Shantz of SAKCoke showed an intention to run the No campaign after the plebiscite question was finalized.

However, Angelica Quejada, another member of La Chiva, pointed out that no one had registered to head the official campaign to oppose the plebiscite.

"We're not related to the campaign at all. Our objective is to make people aware of problems in Colombia. We cannot just stop talking about Colombian issues because there is a [campaign]. It's kind of strange, as there really is no 'No side,'" Quejada said.

That, however, might change. After meeting Monday evening, a group of student activists have decided to appeal the decision made by Woynorowski and take it the SU's Discipline, Interpretation and Enforcement (DIE) Board for a final decision on the matter. Cosanna Preston, one of the members of the anti-Coke coalition (and, in the interest of full disclosure, a former Gateway news editor) said that they disagreed with a few of the points in the CRO's ruling.

"We're arguing that this isn't pre-campaign material; it doesn't have any connection to the campaign whatsoever," Preston said. "It was to do with an event that happened in the end of January beginning of

February, which was decided to go ahead with before the plebiscite was ever agreed on."

She also echoed Quejada's comments that the No campaign didn't exist, and therefore shouldn't be possible to fine. As well, she raised concern that the restrictions around pre-campaigning might stifle protest about issues unrelated to the plebiscite question.

She argued that the Yes side of the campaign was guilty of pre-campaigning as well, with the number of signs and vending machines Coca-Cola has around campus. Penalizing just the No side, according to Preston, is not fair.

While they haven't decided on whether the group will take the reins of the No campaign, Preston did say that it was a possibility.

"I want to stress that we aren't the No campaign right now, it is just a consideration. We'll get the [DIE Board] decision on Wednesday evening, which would still give us time to register if we wish," she said.

The Gateway will be posting information on the results of the DIE board meeting as soon as it becomes available at: www.gateway.ualberta.ca

FACT:

Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Rastafarianism and Seventh-Day Adventist are among the world's religions that prohibit, restrict or discourage the eating of shellfish in their holy texts and teachings.

FACT:

We at Gateway news don't know why treacherous crustaceans are feared the world over, but we aren't taking any chances. Lobster, mollusks and yes, even crawdads, are not welcome in news meetings, held on 3pm on Fridays in 3-04 SUB, and will be thrown out on sight.

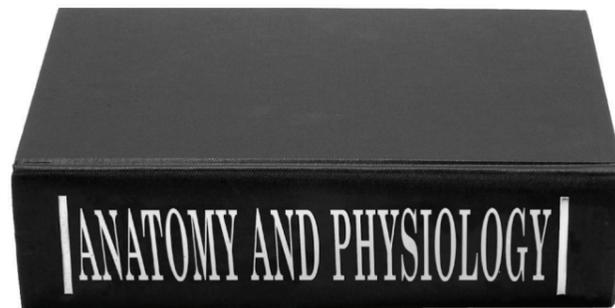


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