



KRISTINA SULATYCKI

SHAKING IT UP Richardson urges students to vote Yes, but Ogonoski and No side volunteer Angelica Quejada say “nay.”

Two sides square off over Coke

SCOTT LILWALL
Deputy News Editor

Along with the executive positions, students will be voting on a plebiscite concerning the future of the University and Students' Union's exclusivity contract with Coca-Cola. Brock Richardson, a fourth-year political science student, is the campaign manager for the Yes side, while fifth-year political science major, Denise Ogonoski, heads up the No campaign.

1 What benefit would the student body see by voting for your side?

Brock Richardson: If we say Yes to this, first off, we eliminate a two-year period [under the current contract] where we get nothing and we guarantee that until 2015 students will be getting an average of \$524 000 a year directly into scholarships and bursaries and student services. So I think the benefit is very clear. Especially when affordability of education is such an issue.

Denise Ogonoski: First of all, you get choice at the University. The Yes side says that you can go to Mac's and buy your own drink or go to a water fountain, but really, I don't know if that's good enough. We're not saying “ban Coke,” but we're saying provide choice to people. Coke's still going to be on campus, obviously. But we think there are better alternatives, and we think there are a lot of intelligent people on campus who can think of a better way provide this choice to people on campus. Decision-making is something that's not really being given to students right now, with Coke having the monopoly. Coke's doing it for us, and we just need to take that back. And I think that is a really big benefit to students.

The ethical purchasing policy that the Students' Union has is something that benefits everybody and they're obviously not following it. So they're not following it and they're also obligated to stop the contract with a company like Coke, because it doesn't meet even the lowest ethical standards.

2 Given the campus response to the Coke debate, it seems to be a contentious issue among students. Why do you think there are such strong feelings on both sides of the Coca-Cola issue?

Richardson: I think that the thing that causes the problem on both sides is that there are a lot of myths about the deal, and that people are basically boiling it down to money versus ethics. It's not money versus ethics,

because even if Coca-Cola does have questionable ethics—and I think that is the strongest that the No side has been able to put out there, that they are questionable—the option of getting Coke off campus, the option of absolving us of any moral guilt, which is what some people want to feel, isn't there. Because we can't get Coke off campus. We're only the [Students' Union], the University is still going to sign a deal. And even if the SU wanted to get them out of [the Students' Union Building], we couldn't for two years anyway. So getting rid of Coke isn't an option here.

Ogonoski: Because there was such a huge movement trying to raise awareness against what Coke is doing and its effects on our campus and our students this whole year. It's been going on since September. When this plebiscite came up, it was already an emotional issue. So the fact that there's a plebiscite on it just condensed it. When you have a movement of any sort, there is always going to be a reaction to that movement. We have a strong movement going regarding raising awareness about Coke, and that's why there's an equally strong reaction against that, because you're going to get a strong reaction to a strong movement.

3 Given the fines that have been levied the No side (amounting to \$900), some have expressed concerns that it may have affected the validity of this vote. What is your response to that?

Richardson: I don't think that that's going to affect the validity of the vote. When it comes down to it, there are so many different ways of getting the message out there, of informing students of what's going on. I don't think that [the No side] having a very substantially diminished campaign budget is really going to affect their ability to get their message out there if they chose to really push it. It's good that we have two sides in this referendum. I mean, if you look at the U-Pass, there's only one side there. I think that that's a problem when these things occur, because you don't have anyone running for office, you just have people picking a side. Money is only one of the issues, because that [can] only produce campaign materials, but there are so many other things that people are doing: classroom speaking, talking to kids one-on-one, producing very cheap materials, which are easily done by anyone.

Ogonoski: We've had to become a lot more creative, like word of mouth especially, so we have been doing a lot of campaigning in different ways. We

don't have fancy posters up all over the place, obviously. But we've been doing a lot of classroom speaking and tableing. We have handbills that don't cost a lot of money that are very much person-to-person campaigning. It's highly effective for us, because it gives us a chance to explain the issues fully to people. I think it's still a valid question to pose, even with the fine, personally.

4 What do you think is the future of exclusivity agreements on Canadian campuses?

Richardson: First of all, who do you want to be business partners with, and that's probably what's on the mind of a lot of universities and colleges across the country. If this was a decision on if we were choosing whether we want Coke on campus or not, I think that this whole plebiscite would be playing out very differently, because I think that is a different issue entirely. That's not the choice here. I think the other choice that has to be made here by college and university is that, because government funding seems to be going down and down every year, there is the need to explore alternative funding methods and alternative ways of actually getting results for students. Because, I think it's okay to bark up the same tree for years, but if you're not accomplish anything for students, that's a problem.

Ogonoski: I can't predict the future, but I think that people are smart. People in universities are smart. They're going to realize that this isn't a good idea. I don't know what they're going to choose as an alternative, but I think that they are going to realize that these exclusivity contracts aren't right, and they are going to find their own alternatives by finding out what they need, what works best for them. Not what works best for a large company like Coke, that violates human rights and environmental standards. So, I think there is going to be a reaction to these, because it's already started; it's happened in the [United States] already, so I think Canadian campuses are going to follow suit.

5 You have five minutes to write a haiku explaining why students should vote for your side.

Richardson:
Do the pragmatic
Thing scholarships bursaries
Half of a million

Ogonoski:
Stick to the issue?
What of ethics, choice, power
Coke's hardly worth it



Fact: Automatonophobia is the irrational fear of statues, mannequins, dummies, or any other intimate object that represents a sentient being.

Fact: Gateway News meetings, held on Fridays at 3pm in 3-04 SUB, is an automatonophobic-friendly environment. We have a strict “burn all ventriloquist dummy” policy. They might not all be evil, but we don't like taking chances.

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GATEWAY NEWS

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THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS ARE AVAILABLE:

Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics
2 SU Seats
2 GFC Seats

Arts
8 SU Seats
8 GFC Seats

Business
3 SU Seats
3 GFC Seats

Education
4 SU Seats
4 GFC Seats

Engineering
5 SU Seats
4 GFC Seats

Law
1 SU Seat
1 GFC Seat

Medicine and Dentistry
1 SU Seat
2 GFC Seats

Native Studies
1 SU Seat
1 GFC Seat

Nursing
2 SU Seats
2 GFC Seats

Open Studies
2 SU Seat

Physical Education and Recreation
1 SU Seat
1 GFC Seat

Pharmacy
1 SU Seat
1 GFC Seat

Faculte St. Jean
1 SU Seat
1 GFC Seat

Science
9 SU Seats
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THE NOMINATION DEADLINE IS TUESDAY, MARCH 13 @ 17:00

