Common sense choices

The Maine Campus
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The Maine Gay Symposium has passed without incident, but the University of Maine Board of Trustees is not out of the frying pan yet. The Trustees have tempted the flames of public opinion by standing up for rights of free speech and assembly, but indications are they may jump into the fire of indignant student wrath by tampering with our rights of representation in two crucial decisions.

Both issues concern money. One, here on the home front, involves an attempt to take UMO income from a proposed tuition hike and make it available to other Super-U campuses to subsidize programs that will not benefit us. The other issue turns the tables on the students at the other campuses — their presidents want the power to approve and veto expenditures of student activity fee monies by the local student governments.

At the top level, the trustees will be asked by Chancellor Donald McNeil and a 6-1 majority of the Administrative Council to deny President Neville the right to channel some $600,000 that our tuition hike will generate next year back into programs that we have steadily clamored for over the years. Neville is engaged in a momentous struggle against a dictatorial chancellor whose singular mind right now seems to be pointing to the enrichment of the hick hallowed halls at our fringe institutions at the expense of UMO students. The odds are against us, so the real fight may just begin tomorrow.

The council has also used such disjointed logic to recommend student governments be denied the right to decide for themselves where money that students have entrusted to their elected leaders will go. Doesn’t that remind you of a little fight about “Taxation Without Representation” a couple centuries ago?

The Super-U Organization of Student Governments has lobbied vigorously for financial autonomy for all seven student governments, and rightly so. We are all able to balance a checkbook, and there is no common sense available to explain why expenditures of student activity fees should be placed under the scrutiny of a step-by-step approval by university administrators. UMO, fortunately, does not suffer under such unethical standards — and Neville has assured Ms. Bailey that status quo is the rule here — but checks on some campuses must run a gauntlet of beady eyes too plentiful to count on one hand.

These situations must be remedied. The Trustees, who have been poorly advised by their underlings, hopefully will take a long, hard, look at the facts surrounding the issues so as to cut through the musty politics.

One wonders if the chancellor and a few of those presidents aren’t in need of a serious, mind-searching spring cleaning effort. Certainly some attics need to be aired out. Hopefully, the Trustees will choose to steer clear of these cobwebbed collegians and vote common sense.