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SRIC to Pressure Exxon Mobil on Fake Climate Science

WINSTON CHENEY

Have you heard of the Socially Responsible Investment Committee (SRIC)? Yeah, I hadn't either. But after hearing that SRIC invests in corporations with the goal of changing some of their evil corporate ways, I was interested. I spoke with the Committee's chair, Sophie Logan '19, to figure out what their goals are and what they're doing this semester.

Each year, SRIC chooses a corporation to invest in. Every Bard student has the opportunity to vote, this year through an unassuming email sent out a few months ago entitled "Socially Responsible Investment Committee." Forty-one students responded to the Google Docs vote, meaning

that forty-one students represented the entire student body. Bard students' apathy is an easy explanation for this, but perhaps that's not the whole story, because the email SRIC sent looked more like an informational pamphlet, not a voting ballot.

This year, SRIC will invest in Exxon Mobil to try to eradicate their publication of fake climate science. Exxon has a long history of hiring scientists to disseminate fake science dispelling climate change. The fuel giant is so powerful that they have markedly swayed public opinion away from a more accurate understanding of climate change over the past forty years.

Sophie Logan, a current junior and the chair of SRIC for the past two years, explained specifically how SRIC plans to make a change in the formidable Exxon. First, SRIC has to

invest at least \$2,000 and hold that share for a year. After a year, SRIC is able to submit a shareholder's resolution. Then, as shareholders, they can



explain what they think would make the company better. In this case, SRIC is seeking to bring up the dangers of a powerful corporation spreading misinformation about climate change.

Surprisingly, shareholder's resolutions are actually most effective when the company "throws them out." To jettison a shareholder's resolution, instead of bringing it up at the public shareholders meeting, the company must make a legally binding agreement to the terms of the shareholder who submitted the resolution. Thus to avoid the resolution. Thus to avoid the publicity that would come

with announcing SRIC's resolution at a shareholders' meeting, Exxon would have to agree to SRIC's terms. Every year, Exxon's shareholders' meetings are widely publicized, so bringing up SRIC's resolution would publicize and perhaps legitimize the fact that Exxon has been publishing fake climate science for the past forty years.

Sophie Logan and SRIC has proven that shareholders' resolutions are an astonishingly effective way of changing large corporations for the better. "This is unbelievable leverage that people have for moral issues."

Bard College FREE PRESS



FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2018
Annandale-On-Hudson, NY

Steve Pinchback: B&G Union Chair

BROWNYN SIMMONS



Steve Pinchbeck sits behind a desk in the Campus Center at a Student Labor Dialogue meeting, his heavy-duty boots resting firmly on the floor. SLD is a club that works to foster healthy relationships between students and workers at Bard, and Steve attends every meeting. Next to Steve sits his fellow Bard worker, Ed from CCS, with whom he shares a sense of camaraderie and a mutual 'seen-it-all' understanding.

When Steve speaks, which he does with calm, gentle urgency, the students in Student Labor Dialogue listen intently, excited to learn from his labor union wisdom. When Ed adds something to the conversation—usually beginning with "Back in my day..."—Steve grins and chuckles, his creased and

dimpled smile quick to appear.

Steve defers to students for decision-making, although we, as students, know far less than he does about workers' rights and unionization. His humility, gracefulness, and quiet intelligence make him highly admired by all members of SLD.

Steve works for Buildings and Grounds at Bard. He is part of the Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning department (HVAC), in which there are only four

workers total. But he is the only person who conducts preventative maintenance on heating and cooling on campus.

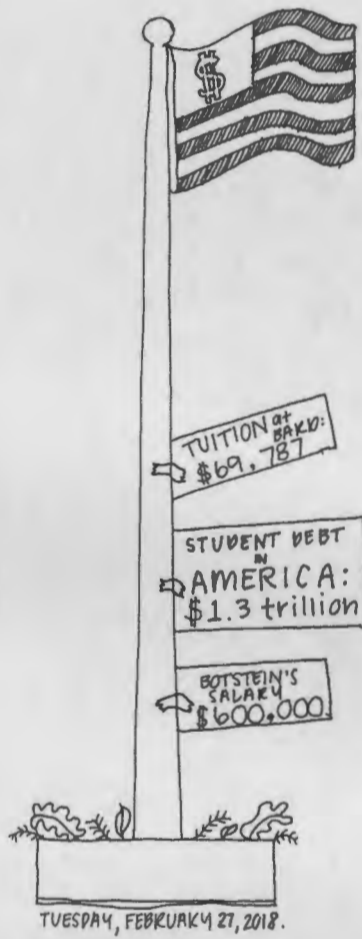
He is currently serving his second term as union chair at B&G. His duties as chair are to "manage the business of his bargaining unit and be the interface between his fellow workers and the Bard administration and community," he tells me, rubbing his lined forehead.

Since becoming a member of the Bard community 16 years ago, Steve has been a union officer for the past 14 of them. He started out as a shop steward, moved up to vice chair, and then was elected to his current position. Steve is also an executive board member for his union local, SEIU 200 United (a local branch of a national trade union, which in this case encompasses upstate New York and Vermont), and he is proud of Bard B&G's reputation with the local as one of the most organized shops.

On a typical day, Steve meets with his co-workers in HVAC, and they check building management software to see if Bard's systems are running properly. "We triage the biggest problems," Steve says, "and then we go out to do specific problem diagnosis." Once the team develops a plan to address the crises of the day, of which there are many, Steve moves on to maintenance work all over the campus, from the Fisher Center to Montgomery Place.

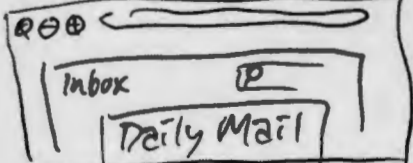

Every winter and summer, he is in charge of changing hundreds of air filters in the dorms. "Before there was Citizen Science, I had a month to do it," Steve sighs. "Now I only have eight working days, which leaves little time for actual maintenance." He says he'll get it done one way or another, likely working overtime on the weekends to finish a project.

B&G is understaffed, and its overburdened workers need to attend to high-priority problems, like when "a



WikiHow Browse categories

How To Succeed at Bard

1. Always read the Daily Mail.
 
2. Become friends with a dean.
 
3. Be nice to Downz.

whole building is down," before they can respond to individual maintenance requests. This puts a lot of pressure on the workers, not only in HVAC but throughout B&G. Since there are so few of them to go around, they must cover a big stretch of territory, and many Bard buildings are old and in need of repair.

Steve worries that Bard students think B&G doesn't address their dorm room concerns in a timely fashion, and he fears that their reputation among students has suffered accordingly. But more importantly, he wishes he could give students what they need. This is a difficult position for Steve, as he doesn't have a say in Bard's hiring decisions, but he still needs to do his job without adequate staffing.

But working at Bard isn't always stressful for Steve. His favorite thing about the college is its arts community. "I love being surrounded by the arts...I really like Bard students. You guys en-

ergize me," he smiles. "When I'm feeling cynical, it's good to have youthful optimism to remind me..."

If there's one thing that Steve would like to see on campus, it's better communication between workers and students. "Sometimes I feel like Bard students don't understand that we're all working people just trying to get by. We're seen for our work and not for the people that we are." That's why Steve loves SLD. "It breaks down these divisions because we're all sitting down together as people."

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Bard Required to Participate in Environmental Survey

LIAM MAYO

On February 26, the Red Hook Town Planning Board met to decide whether Bard would need to complete an Environmental Impact Statement for campus expansion plans. An EIS is a process including studies of environmental impacts, consideration of possible mitigating elements, and community involvement.

After preliminary statements from Bard representatives, the Board heard from Tivoli Mayor Joel Griffith. He urged the board to require an environmental survey, citing the EIS process as a chance to improve "tension, frayed relations, and imbalance of justice" between Bard and the surrounding communities.

The board went on to review various areas in which Bard's campus expansion

plans may affect the local ecological environment and community. Bard representatives—Vice President Jim Brudvig, consultant Peter Setaro, project manager Chuck Simmons, and Manager of Transportation Services Jeffery Smith—argued that the potential impacts were minor, and the study would be more effective further along in the planning process. They also claimed that the cost of the process (around \$50,000) was a major factor in their reluctance to complete an EIS.

The Planning Board opposed Bard representatives on several key issues: enrollment projections and whether to include Stevenson Gymnasium expansion plans into consideration. The Board ultimately decid-

ed to issue a positive declaration of environmental significance, requiring Bard to complete an Environmental Impact Statement.

The Free Press will be covering this story as it develops.

was a trans person organizing this," they said. While Zacharias doesn't think it was intentional, they don't believe that's a valid excuse: "If you're new to these terms, and worried about terminology: practice. No one's going to fault you for trying to learn."

When asked if Berkowitz apologized for the slip-up, Zacharias said no. "I was embarrassed for Chelsea," they said. "If you're inviting someone because you think they have a perspective that's worth offering, you should also make an effort to respect their identity, and by misgendering another trans person who organized the event, and by messing up the acronym [of LGBTQ], no matter how innocent those slips are, that reflects poorly on the school."

Berkowitz declined to comment when approached by the Free Press for a statement about his mistake.

The tension between the student organizers concerning their opinions of Chelsea Manning was highlighted in the contrast be-

tween their two statements. During their opening remarks, Zacharias stated, "As a member of the trans community, I cannot overstate how much it means to Bard's queer and trans community to have Chelsea here."

Williams Jr. followed by warning the audience, "This event is not a legitimization, nor an endorsement; we are here tonight to think critically and carefully about acts which some would call courageous and which others would call cowardly," to which Zacharias rolled their eyes.

Loud and long-lasting applause met Manning when she walked onstage with Dean Thomas and Professor Duong. "Sometimes you have to replace those [failing] institutions," she said in her introductory remarks, "and sometimes you have to combat those institutions. That's been an ongoing experience in my life, whether that's been in school or in the military or in prison or even today."

Midway through the energetic debate, Professor

like, and what it feels like...And that's a threshold that once crossed, I could never go back from."

After the event, Zacharias told the Free Press, "I've only heard positive feedback from students, and there was a profound sense that it was important for her to be here." They noted that legally, "she's not allowed to talk about the documents that were leaked, including the collateral murder video. And then for the Senate race, there's a law in New York State about giving candidates equal time to speak...and we're a non-profit institution so we can't legally endorse anyone." Zacharias continued, speculating "Chelsea just got out of prison...And now she's a celebrity, and the impression I got was that she wasn't very comfortable being put in a position as an authority figure, being asked what is the solution to x, y, and z."

"I was mostly happy with the event," Professor Duong told the Free Press. "I wish certain questions didn't receive evasive an-

swers, but that's inevitable, I think." He added that he admires Manning's "commitment to revealing how nobody ought to owe any loyalty to the American state. We may be stuck working with it, but it is morally bankrupt and deserves none of our allegiance."

Dean Thomas stated that the "wide-ranging nature of the discussion—everything from trans activism and its relationship to mainstream liberal/progressive politics, to the ethics of whistleblowing, to the role of technology in society and the associated opportunities and dangers—meant, I hope, that everyone found something thought-provoking in the evening."

When asked of his opinion on Manning, Williams Jr. told the Free Press, "I'm of the belief that anyone who commits treason is supposed to be in jail. But it is a courageous thing to undergo transition in prison." But, he added, merely being "trans doesn't make you an activist." He continued,

claiming "There's a racial line along this too. She is a white woman, and if you ask black activist students if they think Chelsea Manning's an activist for prison abolition, that conversation will probably be a bit of a joke. You've been in prison, but what are the steps you've taken to abolish the

prison?" Williams Jr. laughed and said Zacharias might disagree with him there, "which is the point of the Tough Talk lecture series—to have honest, civilized discourse about things that are not so easily known and thought about."

TOUGH TALKS

Chelsea Manning Speaks at Bard

BROWNYN SIMMONS

Sosnoff Theater, Bard College—February 21, 2018, U.S. Army whistleblower Chelsea Manning spoke at an event hosted by the Hannah Arendt Center's "Tough Talk" series and Queer Student Organization, moderated by Professor Kevin Duong and Dean Rebecca Thomas. The event, and the organizational efforts leading up to it, underscored the tension between her status as a trans icon and a political actor—both in the mass media and for members of the Bard community.

In 2010, then-Bradley Manning leaked over 750,000 diplomatic documents to WikiLeaks (including the "Collateral Murder" video, which depicted the indiscriminate killing of Iraqi civilians and two Reuters journalists by an American gunship), which resulted in an unprecedented sentencing of thirty-five years in prison. The day after her sentencing in 2013, she came out as a trans woman and argued for her right to receive hormone treatment. In a shocking reversal by an administration that aggressively pursued whistleblowers under the 1917 Espionage



HOROSCOPES



Pisces:
Untimely death.



Aries:
Untimely life.



Taurus:
Oof.



Gemini:
You forgot something.



Cancer:
A piano will fall on your head and your teeth will be replaced with black and white keys.



Leo:
You'll get a great deal on the Austin Powers boxset on VHS



Virgo:
You'll drive into a wall with the road and surrounding scenery painted on it.



Libra:
Avoid anvils like your life depends on it.



Scorpio:
Nothing is coming up Milhouse.



Sagittarius:
It was laced, dude



Capricorn:
She thinks you're clingy



Aquarius:
Sleep in a race car bed for faster language acquisition

Act, President Barack Obama commuted Manning's sentence in 2017, and she was released on May 17.

Chelsea Manning is a champion of so many causes—government surveillance and transparency, prison reform, stopping the military industrial complex, and transgender rights—that it is easy for her to be heralded as a hero by some while being deemed a traitor by others. This contention was played out by student event organizers Mark Williams Jr. and Harper Zacharias, who each had their own reasons for inviting Manning to Bard.

Williams Jr., founder and chair of the "Tough Talk" Series, and Zacharias, head of the QSA, each contacted Manning's agent independently to invite her to campus. Initially, when Williams Jr. approached Zacharias about inviting Manning, they did not divulge that the QSA had already invited her themselves. "That was really weird," Williams Jr. reflected.

Zacharias said that they kept quiet strategically. "I wanted to see how much control [Williams Jr.] was looking to have over the event, because I wasn't interested in just throwing money at something." They also have a tumultuous past with the Hannah Arendt Center—and with Professor Berkowitz specifically. "I was skeptical of whether the Arendt Center would let me be very involved because of my history with them, but it became clear that, funding wise, it wouldn't be possible without either of us," said Zacharias.

Professor Berkowitz, Academic Director of the Arendt Center, opened the event with a brief introduction. When reading off a piece of paper to introduce Zacharias, Berkowitz mis-spoke, using "she" before quickly correcting himself, and he proceeded to blunder through the "LGBTQ" acronym. Zacharias uses "they/them" pronouns, and "had specifically typed out [their] bio with they/them pronouns to ensure no one would overlook that this

Duong questioned whether or not Manning's leak of government cables had had an appreciable effect. This contradicted claims made by the (admittedly controversial) founder of WikiLeaks Julian Assange, as well as other more reputable sources like Amnesty International, that Manning's enormous release of diplomatic cables to WikiLeaks was a catalyst for the 2010 Tunisian Revolution and the Arab Spring. In response to Duong, Manning claimed that it was important to start the conversations to get to the root cause of the problem of U.S. militarism.

Pressing her, Dean Thomas questioned why her release of 750,000 documents wasn't "targeted."

"It was targeted. That was the target. I mean, that is the number," Manning responded incredulously.

"I honestly don't know what your main—what was the thing you really wanted to be public?" the dean asked.

"The whole thing," Manning said decidedly.

"Ok, but there were a lot of things. There were 250,000 diplomatic cables I think?"

"Yep."

"On a variety of topics, about a variety of things."

"Yep."

The audience laughed. "There you go," Manning said.

The dean seemed confused and said, "I guess I'm not quite convinced that the ethics of what you did outweighs your responsibility to maintain secrets."

Without ever directly responding to the question of why she released the documents, Manning argued that the United States is a "whirling death machine," and said it should be exposed as such.

When Professor Duong challenged her again on the outcome of her actions, Manning's voice rose and quivered emotionally. "There was this moment when I'm there, and it's just like, these are people...And I realized that this is not a data set, this is reality. This is humanity. This is what war is, and what it looks