

SPECIAL

ELECTION

EDITION

THE

BRUNSWICKAN

New Brunswick's largest weekly newspaper

VOL. 106 ISSUE 19

4 PAGES

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1972

FREE

Four better or four worse

By DON ALLEN

The central concern of this article is the caliber of the various candidates for the office of SRC President. However, mechanical ineptitude on my part with respect to the operation of cassette tape recorders has occasioned a restructuring of the entire article. As originally conceived it was to be composed of four commentaries, one for each candidate. Each commentary was to consist of three sections: initially, a brief outline of the credentials of a candidate; secondly, the results of a typed interview in which each candidate was asked a series of questions on what are generally considered to be important issues to students and a final section containing my comments on the candidates based on their answers to the aforementioned questions. However, when I began to edit the interviews I discovered, much to my chagrin, that two of them were missing. This development, as I earlier mentioned, was the logical consequence of my mechanical ineptitude. (Twice I forgot to push the little red "record" button.)

For a number of technical reasons relating to publication of the Brunswickan retaping the interviews would not have solved the problem. For these reasons I therefore decided to alter the original design of the article and merely present my impression of each candidate based principally on the interview and generally revolving about their position on the main issues discussed.

Each of the candidates displayed a bizarre and often frightening combination of originality and sincerity, inconsistency and ignorance, balls and bullshit. An incisive comment on one issue was usually overshadowed by incredible ignorance in another area.

To avoid any misunderstanding of my position with respect to the various presidential candidates I should state at the outset of this article that I do not believe

any of the individuals offering for the office of SRC president are qualified to effectively or even adequately carry out the duties and responsibilities that are attached to this office. However, no doubt whoever is elected will by some weird combination of circumstances manage to muddle and bungle his way through until approximately this time next spring when in all unfortunate probability a similar farce will be held to relieve the incompetent of his duties and the newest version of the annual student albatross will make its appearance.

The initial candidate it was my misfortune to interview was David Kelsey. Dave is a second year Arts student whose chief claim to fame on the campus was his position as past president of the UNB Student Liberals. In addition he has served as a member of the Consultative Council of the Liberal Party of Canada and was a founder of the Students Council Lower Canada College in Montreal, for what that's worth.

Dave wants to be president because he thinks it is time students had a leader "who will take a definite stand on important issues". He feels his past organizational involvements and political "connections" best equip him for the office of president. By his own admission, Dave "has been dealing with politicians for a number of years" and that, in my opinion, is one of his main problems. His continual reference for "the need to be realistic about problems" has the familiar ring of other platitudinous pronouncements by wishy-washy liberals and petty politicians. For all his talk about taking a stand on important issues Dave really didn't have a hell of a lot to say.

The presently rumored increase in student fees is of primary interest to Dave. In his estimation the problem stems from increased costs in the residence system. To offset these cost increases Dave proposes elimination of the position of proctors within the residence system along with a reduction in the resources available to the various house dons so that they would receive

only free rooms and board. Queried as to what he would do if no concrete action was taken by the administration on his proposal, Dave replied that he would "resort to the media and really blow it up". No doubt his contention that the media has never been effectively employed by the student body of this campus is justified. However, whether one could fairly affix the entire fault of this failing to past student leaders is dubious when one considers the shoddy state of the provincial media. However that is a minor point. More important was his admission that he felt there would be few, if any, realistic courses of action left open to him as SRC President if the administration chose to ignore his publicity campaign - and that in my opinion is precisely what the administration would do. In all probability the administration would announce it had taken the idea under consideration and in the interim student fees would be increased.

On the issue of student housing Dave felt that the main problem was a lack of adequate facilities particularly those insuring privacy for individuals. Dave followed this dazzling display of his talent for in-depth analysis of problems with a pronouncement that he "really didn't get off on the Co-op" which he later likened to taking a firm stand on controversial issues. While rejecting the co-op and present residence systems as effective forms of housing his only alternative was a rather vague reference to the idea of trailer courts. As his proposal to create a committee on housing reveals, he obviously realizes that there are certain problems in this area but he has not presented any constructive or positive alternatives to the present system.

On the issue of student loans while he was not satisfied with the present plan (who is?) he felt that there was little he could do as president to directly produce structural changes in the present system. However, he felt his "political connections" with the government would enable him to aid those students who could successfully demonstrate to him that they had indeed been done an injustice. It is precisely this type of cloak and dagger back-

room politics that should be avoided.

With respect to the extent of student participation in the actual decision making apparatus of this university Dave sees student participation to be essentially advisory in nature with the SRC president serving as a liaison officer between students and administration.

While he felt, for example, some system of course evaluation should be established he did not think that students should enjoy parity with faculty on the issue of hiring and firing professors. Similarly, he suggests that while the student position on any issue should be forcibly represented to the administration, the student should not

of certain so called "progressives" which suggest "certainly eighteen year olds should be allowed to drink but you'll still have to leave the important decisions affecting your lives to older and more mature individuals".

Dave seems to accept this attitude wholeheartedly. He, like all of the other candidates does not feel that students possess the responsibility, maturity, expertise or experience that are normally required to make important decisions. Naturally students, in a large measure, do not possess this degree of responsibility or maturity and it is mainly because they have never been given a chance to do so. How can you



DAVE KELSEY

exercise any voting privileges on the Board of Governors.

Lowering of the age of majority was of vital concern for Dave but only for those actions directly affecting the individual. He did not, for example, think eighteen year olds should be allowed to sit on a jury. Twenty-one was still the proper age for that type of activity. The fact that Dave was more concerned over obtaining the right to drink for eighteen year olds than he was over obtaining the right for these same eighteen year olds to exercise a direct and meaningful control over their lives as students no doubt is an accurate reflection of his value system.

Obviously eighteen year olds should legally enjoy the right to drink but for me this is only a minor example of the traditional attitudes taken toward "Youth". This discrimination on the basis of age is manifest not just in legislation but in the paternalistic attitudes

expect people to develop these qualities when they are never exposed to the conditions which are most conducive to the creation of these qualities?

In my opinion, while Dave may be aware of the existence of certain problems he has not subjected them to any extensive scrutiny. I have attempted to illustrate that a similar assessment of any solutions he has offered to the problems is equally justified. While he at times appears to be sincere he obviously doesn't realize the extensive responsibilities and implications of this position. He conceives of his duties and actions in terms of a wheeling-dealing politician and unfortunately that has been one of the main problems with the SRC. The traditional attitude of the SRC toward student problems has been characterized by this petty politicking and not by sincere and dedicated attempts to effect significant solutions to these problems.

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