

MUGWUMP

by Lynne Wanyeki

It's the last issue of the Brunswickan. . . Thank God!!! I can't help but breath a big sigh of relief - I feel my blood pressure going down already. . .

Anyway, to review the term. Nationally, the brutal (but expected) death of Meech Lake during the summer was ignored (or as least allowed a quiet burial) as the crisis at Oka came to a head. We came back to school when the stand-off was at its most tense point. Formerly latent racism revealed itself in full fine colour, blowing away Canada's reputation worldwide. The SQ was replaced by the army - both became scapegoats for government policies towards Native Americans. The events and ramifications of Oka faded into obscurity as Brian, obviously distraught at the death of his baby Meech, started serious work on the GST. He floods the Senate, shows that he is fading fast politically (told you he was distraught). The Senate is reduced to bedlam - Canadian politics, for once, is amusing to follow. New commissions, panels, etc. etc. to discuss "national unity" are formed. Quebec seems determined to go for sovereignty. Please don't - I don't want to live in the Kingdom of Irving. . . During all the internal furor, Bush decides its time to go to war in the Gulf. Canada makes the statement that it is prepared to use force against Saddam Hussein with/without the mandate of a UN Resolution. Yeah, why don't we just leap in feet first without looking? The very presence of all the men, women, artillery etc. creates its own reality. There is going to be a war. Merry Christmas.

Meanwhile, back on the farm. . . The Student Union tries, in quick succession: a takeover; then to acquire a controlling interest; and when that fails, to restructure the Board of Directors of the Social Club. The Social Club screams "Independence! Independence!" and mobilizes the support of the students. Both sides mount expensive propaganda campaigns to prove their point - finally the furor dies down. Does it really matter?!!

Yes, it is now officially a rule which the administration, using Kim Norris intends to enforce - those violating the "no smoking" rules will be punished with fines of up to a maximum of 6% tuition. I am assured these rules will be rigidly enforced. So what?!? Until I'm provided with a pleasant, well ventilated room in which to smoke (no, C217 does not fit the requirements) I think I'm going to find it exceedingly difficult to comply.

Last year, at this time, 14 women were killed in Montreal. The killer, himself a victim of abuse and violence, targets his aggression on women. Was his choice of target a reflection on society's perception of the role of women and feminists? Abuse generates abuse - women and children bear the brunt. There is a lesson to be learned here.

Taxi fares have gone way up. The number of classes attended per week per student have gone progressively down. Snow's on the ground. Ethiopia and Sudan are on the verge of famine again. Christmas decorations are up all over town. We're in a recession. The mines up north are still on strike.

In a world this full of cheer, I hesitate in wishing you all a Merry Christmas. . .

See you next term.

OPINION

The opinions found in Opinion are not necessarily the views of The Brunswickan.

Pro-gun lobby triumphs

It is particularly ironic that on the eve of the tragedy at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, where 14 women were killed with a powerful semi-automatic rifle, that the government is proposing to delay or even abandon its new gun control legislation under pressure from the pro-gun lobby. The students who collected over a half a million signatures, the parents of the victims and the numerous individuals and groups who have lobbied for tougher laws are reeling in disbelief.

There are, no doubt, many factors contributing to violence in our society and to the Montreal tragedy. Gun control is not a panacea for what ails our society. However, there is also no doubt that without a powerful semi-automatic weapon, the toll in Montreal would not have been so high.

The proposed legislation was clearly a compromise. It provided some additional controls on the process for obtaining guns and some changes to the type of weapons and ammunition which could be used. It was regarded as a step in the right direction but did not, for example, restrict access to weapons by people convicted of violent crimes such as common assault. It did not restrict access to guns by 16 year olds. It did not provide for controls over safe storage, nor did it do anything to remove the AK-47s, Rutgers or other paramilitary weapons currently in circulation. It retained the current approach to Firearms Acquisitions Certificates (FAC) where one FAC entitles the bearer to as many guns as they want.

And yet, despite the fact that the improvement in controls were by all accounts, small and incremental, and the fact that both the liberals and NDP expressed cautious support for the bill, a small, vocal minority of gun owners crying for "individuals liberties" has managed to convince members of the Tory caucus that the bill should not survive.

New York City has become a war zone, complete with back to school bullet-proof vests. There is not need to talk about the prevalence of guns and their effects south of the border. It is time to take a hard look at what kind of place we want our cities, and our country to be.

Canadians for Gun Control.

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