

Editorial

EDITORIAL BY KAREN BURGESS

Welcome to the rumor mill... would you like a cocktail?

Life's little ironies never cease to amaze.

This university, as most will know, recently announced the retirement of its most infamous assistant professor. As has been the university's habit in this, and other matters, the Public Relations and Information department prepares a specific statement, putting everything in black and white, ensuring that there can be no confusion about the issue.

The statement released about Assistant Professor Martin Yaqzan's retirement gave the relevant dates and stipulations of confidentiality as had been agreed to by the parties involved.

What was a little different about this announcement was the fact that there were two slightly different versions. The one which was received at the Brunswickan offices consisted of a few terse paragraphs under an equally to the point headline. This, one can assume, was circulated to all the usual recipients of mail from UNB's communications fax tree.

The notice was also distributed to the different departments on the campus, bearing an "urgent" designation and a note to departmental secretaries instructing them to photocopy the notice and make sure every faculty member received one. Perhaps this is often the practice, or perhaps the university felt that making sure enough well-chosen information was given to everyone would cut down on the numerous queries and rumors that such an announcement would be sure to spark. Whatever the administration's intentions, they had already been made

redundant.

In what has to be the most amusing twist in the whole affair, the news of Yaqzan's retirement was leaked to the press before the official announcement was made, being reported in mid-December by a Saint John based daily.

The story claims that the wife of some unnamed high-ranking university official had leaked the information. At a cocktail party.

Yaqzan said things the university's administration didn't feel were correct and it suspended him, instigated a review into 27 years of his professional past and subsequently, reached an expedient retirement agreement with him. The public blabbermouth over drinks, however, did little to inspire reaction on campus, even though the material leaked was supposed to be confidential.

There was not even one little press release assuring the interested community that an investigation into the identity of the official and spouse in question would be forthcoming. An infraction such as this should at least, by the calculations attributed to the administration by some quarters, be worth at least a six-month paid leave.

Rumors published in two New Brunswick dailies suggest that the university will be paying Yaqzan his full salary for up to three years, plus a reduced rate after that. Estimates of Yaqzan's settlement endowments have crept upward to \$60,000 a year, but the university, holding to its policy of confidentiality with regard to retirement settlements, can neither confirm nor deny the reports. Perhaps they

should have some sort of party. Major information leaks being left to full-fledged cocktail parties, one should be able to squeeze a meager leaked confirmation or denial out of a casual soiree, or, say, a wine and cheese.

If the University is paying Yaqzan a full salary for three years running plus a little extra after that, then the settlement is tantamount to a \$200,000 public relations gesture. The university, tottering on the brink of a multi-million dollar fundraising campaign, apparently believes the retirement will clear the University's name and make the concept of giving money to the institution a little more palatable to potential patrons. It makes for an interesting, though strange, interpretation on the adage that one has to spend money to earn money.

One has to wonder to what degree the administration's actions were motivated by this kind of outside pressure, though it is far more amusing to speculate about the conflicting messages from different sources the university must have received. Suspend him. Re-instate him. Retire him.

Torn between the romantic notions of academic freedom, and the harsh economic reality that there are some people out there who would refuse to attend or let their children attend this university because it employed Professor Yaqzan, the institution chose the noblest available option—waffling. Faced with the realization that they could not do nothing, they did everything.

The affair has, however, set a number of dangerous precedents. Staff

and faculty have effectively been told not to speak out, not to express ideas that could be perceived as ugly or uncomfortable. The reactions of the university's administrators and Student Union say this loud and clear.

Being willing, if indeed they are, to pay off inconvenient employees, the administration has conceivably also set itself up like a country which is known for negotiating with kidnappers. Pay one ransom and it's likely you'll be targeted to hostage-takings in the future. Perhaps a particularly outrageous article could procure a cushy settlements for professors five or even six years away from their retirements.

If the settlement rumors are true, then perhaps the question of where the \$25 per student health plan fee will go can be answered. For those of you not familiar with the situation, the Student Union, after passing a referendum amongst students, has gotten approval to have a CFS health plan implemented here at UNB. Instead of paying the \$25 fee which has in the past been included in tuition payments, students will pay money to the Student Union for their health plan.

The university will not be reducing tuition by \$25 next year despite the fact that they will no longer be administering a health plan to students. This should net the university somewhere in the range of \$250,000—probably enough to pay the reported settlement amount until just about the turn of the century.

Here's that delightful irony again. They'd be exchanging lots of medical care for one big Band-aid.

MUGWUMP BY AL S. TARE

We know how to fly (most of the time).

MY TURN. If you have ever been snowed in at an airport you will know what frustration is. I learned all about the fine points of frustration on my trip back from the Christmas break.

January 7, 1994. 8:00 a.m. - I leave San Francisco aboard a Northwest airlines flight with connections in Minneapolis and Boston bound for Fredericton.

1:30 p.m. - Take off delayed in Minneapolis due to weather in Boston. We eventually take off twenty minutes late. Circle Boston for an additional twenty minutes before landing.

7:45 p.m. - We arrived twenty minutes ago and are informed that our flight to Fredericton has been canceled. I am told that the airline is not responsible for the weather. However if I go down by the Information booth there is a company which will get me a reduced rate on a hotel room.

9:00 p.m. - I have picked up my checked luggage (as there is no storage at the airport except lockers which were full hours before I arrived) I have met two other gentlemen to share a taxi with, to the Howard Johnson's Park Plaza.

9:15 p.m. - I receive my distressed rate from Howard Johnson's only \$85.00 U.S. (which includes the \$10 deposit on telephone calls). I meet some other people who came off the same flight and are supposed to get on connectors to Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John who got their

hotel paid for as well as receiving taxi and food vouchers.

Curtis, (one of my taxi Compadres) who attends the University of Maine, is informed that they will not accept a personal cheque from Maine, nor will they allow his father to put a room on his credit card over the phone and Curtis informs them that he only has ten dollars cash (Not enough for the taxi back to the airport). The hotel requires a faxed copy of his father's card. Curtis seems agitated and explains that his family lives in a small midwestern town and it is unlikely that he will be able to find a fax machine which he could use at that time of night. He calls his parents and I go drop off my luggage in my room. As there are two beds in my exquisitely decorated room (including the cigarette burns in the carpet and bed spread) I head back to the lobby and covertly (lest the hotel try to squeeze more blood from my dwindling supply of stones) offer the extra space to an obviously distraught Curtis who is frantically explaining over the phone about his dilemma to his parents. After we returned to the room I received a nice thank you call from Curtis's parents (also listening to their disgust that it took a foreigner to help their son in his own country).

11:00 p.m. - After returning from seeking out a pack of cigarettes at a local convenience store which had everything including a prostitute in shiny gold shorts and

boots huddled in the corner for warmth in this weather the two hundred or so dollar warmth business was slow - we retire for the evening, smoking four or five of the cigarettes to calm our frazzled nerves before we fall asleep.

January 8, 1994 7:40 a.m. - We arise and Marty (our third taxi Compadre) says we should rent a car and drive to Bangor; maybe I can arrange to have someone come from Fredericton and pick me up there. I decide to see if the airport will open for my 9:40 a.m. flight and head for the airport.

8:30 a.m. I arrive at the airport to discover that although the visibility is improving they haven't begun to plow the runways. I ask why some people got everything paid for while others received nothing. I am informed that no one should have gotten anything paid for, and those that did lucked out.

10:00 a.m. Flight canceled. I re-book on another flight. Again someone puts forth the suggestion of Bangor by rental car.

12:30 p.m. - After more attempts at re booking we are informed that all flights to Canada are canceled. I call a friend and ask if he can borrow a four wheel drive and pick me up in Bangor.

2:30 p.m. - Informed that there is almost no chance of a flight to Bangor. Call to confirm a ride to pick me up. Together

with three others who are going to Bangor I get in a rental car and head for Bangor International Airport (where I arranged to be met).

6:30 p.m. - Arrive in Bangor and call to make sure that my ride is on its way, only to find that the storm is full force in Fredericton and cannot make it until the next day. Perhaps he should have looked outside before telling me he'd come and get me.

7:30 p.m. - With \$40.00 in my pocket I shell out a reasonable \$30.00 for a room at the Super Eight Motel in Bangor (not only was it reasonably priced but nicer than that Howard Johnson's in downtown Boston). I search my luggage for change, order a pizza and pay \$5.70 in dimes, nickles and quarters.

11:00 a.m. - I awake after an exhausted sleep to the maid knocking on the door. I dress and head for the airport.

2:00 p.m. My roommate Jennifer arrives at the airport to pick me up and save me from any further ordeal.

6:00 p.m. Stop in Houlton for something to eat at Pizza Hut. Great food and a fantastic waitress.

8:30 p.m. - I arrive at Home Sweet Sweet Sweet HOME.

The Moral of the story: While their motto is "We know how to fly" they mean in good weather. In bad weather they know how to abandon you to fend for yourself.



The
Brunswickan

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