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Controversy on Campus

The media descend on UNB in the wake of last week's Opinion piece in the Brunswickan, while the university and the students contemplate action. For more details, see the News section; for response, see the Editorial and Blood & Thunder section.

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BrunsBits

Things are getting out of hand when you've heard from:

CBC News for New Brunswick	Women's Health Bureau
CBC Information Morning	The Brock Press - Brock U.
CBC Newsworld	CIAD - Montreal
The National (CBC)	St. FX Student Union
Prime Time News (CBC)	The Xavarian - St. FX
CBC Radio (Toronto)	CKLW - Windsor
CBC TV - again	London Free Press
This Hour has 22 Minutes	The Variety - U of T
MTV	Dalhousie Student Union
ATV	Saint Mary's Student Union
CITY	Canadian Federation of Students
ASN	CPS-Ontario
Canadian Press	CNN
Halifax Chronicle Herald	Canadian University Press
The Link - BCIT	CHOM
Globe & Mail	BC Report
Southern News Service	Kingston University Radio
St. Cross Courier	The Gazette - LWO
CNN - Montreal	The Impulse - Waterloo
CHQC - Montreal	Queen's Student TV
The Lane (U. of Windsor)	The Guardian - Charlottetown
The Argus (Mt. A)	The Mirror - UNB
NBC - Moncton	CBC Midday
The Sun (Halifax)	Toronto Sun
The Sun (Halifax)	Toronto Star
CFRB - Toronto	

Yaqzan responds:

UNB in uproar over prof's Opinion

by Karen Burgess
and Jonathan Stone

While UNB administrators await word from their legal counsel regarding an Opinion column written by Assistant Professor Matin Yaqzan, the author of the piece calls the resulting media frenzy a "tempest in a teapot."

"There seems to be a general lack of critical reading or thinking," wrote Yaqzan in response to questions submitted to him by the Brunswickan this week. "My comments are being either misunderstood or purposely misquoted."

Yaqzan's Opinion column on date rape has angered many students and has been receiving attention from local, provincial and national media since its publication last Friday.

UNB's Vice President Academic Tom Traves says the university is looking into the possibility of reprimanding Yaqzan for writing the column.

It's a touchy issue because it brings two of the university's fundamental values into direct conflict, he explained. It all comes down to the value of freedom of speech and of free thought versus stepping on the lines of the university's sexual harassment policy.

The UNB Policy and Procedure on Sexual Harassment, which applies to all faculty, staff and students, states: "The university is committed to creating and maintaining an environment for all students and employees that is free of objectionable and disrespectful conduct. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated by the University of New Brunswick." The administration feels Yaqzan's comments may fall under a clause condemning conduct that "creates and intimidating, hostile or offensive working or academic environment."

Traves said that UNB "probably encourages more free speech than most universities," but that this opinion may have crossed the line. "We do recognize that there are always some constraints on free speech, more specifically, when it comes to an issue of sexual harassment," he said. "Under some circumstances, free speech has a limitation, whether this is that circumstance remains to be seen."

The vice president was also concerned that Yaqzan had signed the column, stating his affiliation with the university. When a professor comes forward as a faculty member they are representing the university, he commented.

Traves said that no students enrolled in Yaqzan's courses have come to him so far to complain, but

Late Breaking Story

University Suspends Mathematics Professor

Effective today (Friday), assistant professor of mathematics and statistics Matin Yaqzan has been suspended by the University.

The Brunswickan learned late yesterday afternoon that the university has suspended the professor, author of a controversial Opinion article pending an investigation by university officials.

"Tom Traves Vice president (academic), has initiated a full review of Professor Yaqzan's performance of his professional responsibilities. Although precipitated by the Nov. 5 newspaper article, this review will encompass Prof. Yaqzan's total employment record."

Prof. Yaqzan has been instructed to stay away from the university campus during the suspension. Another instructor will be assigned to his courses until the matter is resolved," explains a university press release. In an interview Thursday evening, UNB President Robin Armstrong said he was not prepared to comment on whether there were other incidents in Yaqzan's teaching career which would prompt such a review. When asked if the review was expedited by the national media attention the professor's opinions have attracted, Armstrong said, "If The Brunswickan hadn't have published the article last week I doubt if you would have gotten the fax you got this afternoon, this afternoon."

"The attention that the University has obtained was clearly not desired by the university," he commented. He warned against assuming that the suspension indicated that the university's lawyer found some evidence that Yaqzan's Opinion violated the university's sexual harassment policy.

"It (the review) will look into his professional responsibilities, which is a broader statement," he explained.

Professor Yaqzan confirmed that he was notified about the suspension, but was unprepared to comment about what he will do about the situation.

"We don't even have a car to transfer things, I mean, it's inhuman, that's all I can say at the moment. You might as well be thrown out of your house," he said.

the Student Union is circulating a petition demanding the administration to appoint an alternate instructor for all of his courses.

In his comments to The Brunswickan, Yaqzan said that none of his students has discussed the article with him, and commented that he had not been contacted by any member of the university's administration.

"As to your question whether I have been contacted by a member of the administration, the answer is no, as of the time of writing this on November 11, 1993, 10:45 A.M., the day before your publication. Also, not a single student in my classes has brought up the subject of my Opinion column, and they have all been well-behaved. Some of them might now be persuaded or manipulated by the zealots of some misconceived and misguided women's organizations," he wrote.

He feels that his opinion has been misunderstood, particularly the comment that a "promiscuous girl" who has been raped should demand monetary compensation from her attacker.

The comment, he says, "was only about 'promiscuous' girls. A girl is promiscuous if she sleeps around with boys—many boys."

"It should be obvious that a girl or a woman who is willing to engage in a sexual act with many, is not really against that act per se, as would be a girl with a conviction that was wrong to do so," he writes.



Professor Matin Yaqzan's Opinion has gained him international media attention
Photo by Kevin G. Porter

Yaqzan feels that Traves has been putting words in his mouth by saying "He essentially claims that all men are potential rapists," and says "I challenge him, or anyone else for that matter, to cite a single statement that can be considered irresponsible. If he cannot, Then he is morally obligated to make a public apology and the media have an obligation to give it the same kind of publicity that they have given to false statements about me."

He justifies his demand for monetary compensation from the media saying "The reason was that the only way to counter any misuse of the immense power of the media in our society, is through the court sys-

tem, which is entirely based on money."

Yaqzan also asked that The Brunswickan note that he made a public announcement in 1982 about his lack of association with any organized religion. Some media reports have said that he was believed to be a practicing Muslim.

Yaqzan did not answer all the questions posed to him by The Brunswickan, saying, "I must confine myself at present to only some of them, until I have seen The Brunswickan of November 12."

Yaqzan has been an assistant professor of Mathematics and Statistics at UNB since 1967.