

New minister, old problems

As many of you are aware, there was a provincial cabinet shuffle on October 9, 2001 – exactly one month ago today. During which, Dennis Furlong was appointed the new Minister of Education & Minister responsible for the Culture and Sport Secretariat. That being the case, it would seem to be an appropriate time to issue a Ministerial progress report, if you will.

To begin, according to October press releases, Mr. Furlong "intends to place a greater emphasis on wellness in all its forms – psychological, social and physical." Further, the new minister states that he "believes in the need for a well-rounded education, with students instructed in music, arts and physical education as well as academic subjects."

Personally, I would like to commend the minister's 'progressive' stance. This approach could be said to be especially important considering the correlation between class /financial status on the one hand, and poor health, wellness and access to the arts on the other. It is often argued, for instance, that public commitments to such goals are one factor or tool in the struggle to elevate health and social inequalities between the economic poles of society.

Although in and of itself the Ministers line of reasoning is positive, there are certain issues that need to be brought to attention concerning its application. First, there has been a long public school tradition of promoting wellness and health in a way that caters to the interests and experiences of white males. There is, for example, a very relevant tradition that sees contemporary team sports, with their focus on competition and hierarchies of subordination and 'leadership', as the perfect tool to direct thinking and reinforce the patriarchal capitalist ethos.

Now, while I would be prepared to argue this point, for the purpose of this essay, we can, at the very least, say that the Western presentation of sports, health and wellness do not appeal to large numbers of our students. Many remain inactive because schools insist on offering the traditional and limited range of 'popular sports'. Further, such a Western presentation ignores the fact that, even the understanding of wellness and health is not static across cultural

boarders – it does not mean the same thing to be 'well' all over the world.

My second concern, which I have touched on, is a general apprehension of utopian type policy statements that do not specifically mention issues of class, gender and race as inseparable components of policy related dialogue. As an example, these three 'categories' (race, gender and class) are consistently found to be necessary variables with regards to health and wellness 'quality'. While public resources can be used to reduce this inequality, a 'plan' or vision

As well, such 'generalized' policy statements raise concerns about the sincerity of the message. Utopian political rhetoric, in my experience, seems to be the first indication, not of a bad plan, but no plan at all. I think there is reason to believe, therefore, and to no ones surprise, that there is not exactly sweeping changes coming down the pipe.

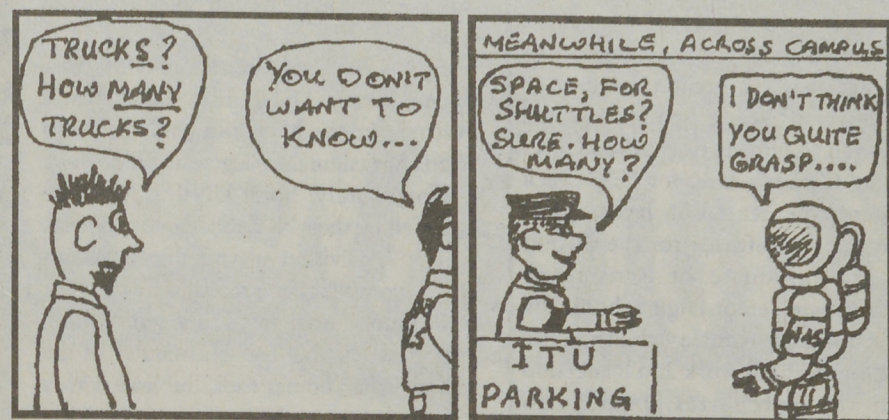
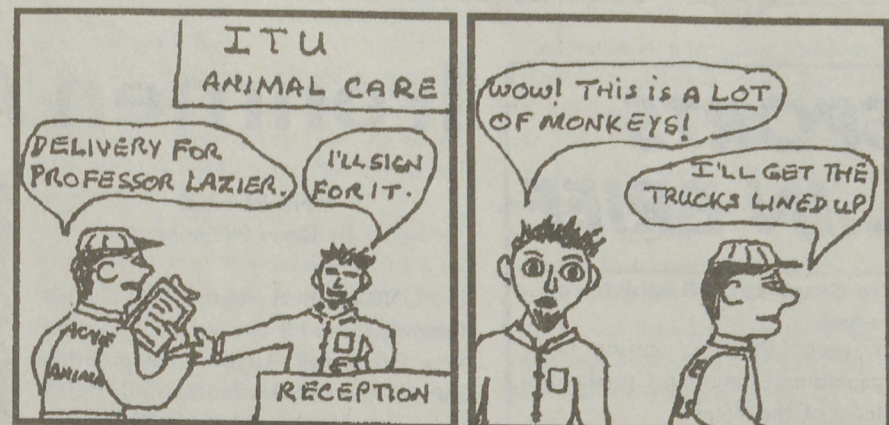
Far too often we have seen politicians do a great deal of talking, but with minimal action. Further, I'm quit sure that most would agree this inconsistency is more the norm than the rule in our political arrangement. For this reason, I think we are justified in demanding a little action to go along with these statements.

Keep in mind, that this is not meant to chastise Mr. Furlong. Rather, I am bringing to light the very skeptical, and justified, nature with which students view ministerial political rhetoric. On behalf of the UNB education students who share similar concerns, therefore, I would like to welcome the new Education Minister. However, I would like to let him know that talk has tended to be a bit cheap for past ministers. For this reason, if this was a real progress report, I think I would have to check the box that read 'disappointed.'

Paideia: Analyzing The Inconsistencies In The Theory & Practice Of Education
by Shea Tompkins

that ignores systemic social concerns seems doomed to repeat the same mistakes. Either to be a superficial and ineffective solution, or, one that benefits the population in a disproportionate manner – catering to the experiences and needs of children with parents in a position to effect policy and its application, which is not an equitable representation of social experiences.

What raises this suspicion further, are certain statements made by the minister concerning the schools role in student wellness. Furlong states that, "physical activity is not relegated just to the school hours...our entire population, as a whole, is not fit enough." I would warn the minister that this is a line of reasoning that often leads to an emphasis on the individual as 'the problem', ignoring socio-economic variables. An individuals financial situation has a huge effect on their ability to have access to quality food, medicine, and leisure time just to name a few. This does not even touch on the correlation between poor working conditions, such as low safety and sanitation standards and high stress levels with low appreciation and satisfaction, and low salary employment – all of which, have a tremendous impact on wellness issues. We can not expect that these concerns, therefore, will disappear by simply doing 'more'. Of course, I am not claiming the minister feels this way. Rather, I am warning that his is a line of reasoning that often culminates in 'poor bashing' and 'victim blaming'. At best, it ignores fundamental and systemic concerns and variables.



DOC

Examining the value of life

Continued from Page 6

Abolish the stigma of pregnancies out of wedlock

Women who face the risk of being disowned by their families are in desperate situations. This translates into dangerous situations. If a woman lacks both a support network and safe, accessible abortions, she will be pushed to take drastic measures. This can lead to suicide and (possibly) fatal, self-inflicted abortion. Two horrors directly opposed to life.

Additionally, in some workplaces, women still lose their jobs due to pregnancy. A reality that their partner in conception does not have to face.

The emphasis here is on context, context, context. Would it not be more effective and less traumatizing to women to provide safe, accessible abortion as an option while addressing these very real issues which lead to

very real oppression? Abortion is not going to disappear until open sex education and 100 percent effective birth control is provided for all. Abortion is not going to disappear until poverty, rape and stigmatization are made to disappear. Is this not where we should be focusing our time, energy and money? What is a more effective and compassionate approach to reducing suffering? Traumatizing women who are already in stressful situations with harassing signs and gruesome pictures? Taking away safe choices? When we talk about the value of life, whose lives do we mean? Why would the potential life of a fetus have a greater value than the lives of women around us?

This is a very complex issue and the five points previously outlined are only some of the reasons why abortion is needed. There are multitudes of reasons why women choose to have an abortion

which have not been discussed here. I do not know what my reaction – my choice – would be if I were faced with an unwanted pregnancy. However, considering that every woman's situation and context is different, I would never impose my decision on anyone else. No woman should be forced to carry out a pregnancy she feels she should not go through with, whatever her reasons.

And of course, let's not be ahistorical. The control over women's sexuality and reproduction has always been used as a mechanism for social control. It has been an effective weapon in maintaining power over the lives of both women and their children (Anne Bishop has written a very comprehensive book studying the interconnectedness of oppression, lineage and how the anti-choice movement has played a role. The book is called *Becoming an Ally*.)

We have a lot of work to do.

THE CELLAR
EST. 1994

Pub & Grill

COMING SOON

Mon Nov 12

Painting Daisies

(Back by popular demand)

Wed Nov 14

Funky Underpants & friends
(Weekly)

Fri Nov 16

The Flying Boat

Sat Nov 17

Orjazzm

Rheostatics \$10

CALENDAR of events

Monday Nights @8:00pm

Foosball Tournament

\$5.00 Entry

Winner Takes All

*Random Prize giveaway

Tuesday Night @8.00pm

Pool Tournament

\$5.00 Entry

Winner Takes All

For those of you that have been waiting to join the Coolest club in town

"Cellar Dweller club kits On Sale Now"

Where else but the Cellar

Ask staff for details

Watch for your food specials Monday - Tuesday - Wednesday Night

Friday Nov 23

The Rheostatics with Kevin Hearn

(From *Barenaked Ladies*) & *Grand Theft Bus*

Tickets on Sale Now At The Cellar \$10.00

Thursday Nov 29

Fred Eaglesmith & The Flying Squirrels

Tickets on Sale Now At The Cellar \$10.00