

# OPINION & EDITORIAL

## Editorial

### Life: so wonderful, so tragic

by Cindy Brown  
Editor-in-Chief

Every now and then I feel a little insignificant. What does my life mean? Why am I here - for what purpose? Yes, deep thinking with Cindy.

Thinking about such things can give one a large headache, even after a few minutes. How are we, as insignificant little people, supposed to be able to figure out what our lives mean? I don't think I ever could.

However, I love life - even though I cannot find meaning. But, maybe that is the meaning - life is pretty fun. Life is rarely ever boring. Think it's boring? Try watching CNN for an afternoon. Heck, try watching the weather network - it works for me. Why do I care what the weather is like in other parts of the world? I don't know, but I know I've watched the weather network for hours at a time in the past.

However, life for many others is really much more difficult, even here in Fredericton. Don't believe me? Watch the news, watch CNN - you will see scores of people who are hungry, homeless, in the midst of war, alone, suffering - the list goes on. Life, so good for some, so bad for others.

It makes me feel guilty. It makes me feel guilty that I am sitting here typing for a newspaper (a damn good

newspaper) and learning all of the time. It makes me feel guilty that tomorrow morning, no matter how tired I am after staying up until all hours of the night, I will get up and go to class (at 9:30 am). That is a privilege.

Yes, going to school is a privilege we pay highly for. Tuition is high, we all have to work, and often graduate with huge student loans. It's all worth it.

There are others who will never go to school, either because they have no access to post-secondary education (sometimes no access to education at all), or perhaps because the money just isn't there.

Life is really depressing and difficult. But it doesn't have to be. Those of you who read to this point and even some of you who don't - you are the future and you have the power to change things.

Change. Not too easy to do. Traditions are hard to break. If things are working now, why change them? Because things could work better differently, if an effort was made. However, the opposite could also be true.

Not a whole lot of effort is needed to change things. Say hello to the person in your class who is always alone; donate food or time to a food bank; buy a homeless man or woman lunch; become a politician and keep your promises. We, as the leaders of tomorrow, have the power to change things - if we just work at it.

## Editorial decision concerning Lepine

*Brunswickan staff  
makes poor decision  
about suicide note?*

by Lisa Nussey

On December 6<sup>th</sup> 1989, Marc Lepine shot and killed 14 women. The editorial staff of *The Brunswickan* chose to commemorate the tragic event, 12 years later, by printing his suicide note. This perhaps was a questionable decision in light of widespread acknowledgement that December 6<sup>th</sup> should be not about Lepine but about recognizing the scope of violence against women in general.

More importantly, however, is the context in which his letter was printed. By headlining the suicide note "Letter from a madman," the editors of the campus paper in one fell swoop, both absolved Lepine of any responsibility for his actions and depoliticized the 1989 massacre. Big claims to make about four small words, I know. Please allow me to explain.

First. We do not hold accountable for their actions those who are mad. This truth is evidenced in what we have come to know in the courtroom as the insanity defense, whereby the accused and presumed guilty is absolved of responsibility for his or her actions based

on the assumption they were not aware of the implications of those actions. Had Lepine not shot himself and instead walked out of the University of Montreal, and shortly thereafter into a courtroom, could we not imagine his lawyer using an insanity defense? Could we also not imagine, and hope for, the ensuing public outcry at the possibility that this man not be held responsible for what he did?

Is it possible Lepine was mad? Yes. Has it been demonstrated that he was mad? No. And the burden of proof lies with those who wish to make that claim. Certainly from his suicide note one does not get the impression this is a madman rambling with neither rhyme nor reason. In fact his complaints are largely in keeping with the type of misogyny that permeates women's everyday lives and is not a far cry from some academically enshrined opinions of the "fairer sex."

What is it then that makes him a madman? That he killed 14 women because, and only because, they were women? The federal government admits that, in this country, well over five times that number of women are killed every year by their partner or spouse. Are all those men crazy? "Ah, yes," someone might say, "but each of those men killed only one woman, not 14 all at once." So it is not the crime, but its magnitude

that is unintelligible to us? That should be instructive. The goal here is not to rank these atrocities but to connect them; an endeavour that is startlingly lacking in the discussion surrounding the Montreal Massacre.

This brings me to my second point: labeling Lepine as mad depoliticizes the horrific event. That is, in doing so, the picture is painted as one that is entirely out of synch with the rest of our lives; an isolated incident, an incomprehensible aberration that has no bearing on how we proceed in this world. We are made to believe this type of violence against women is not something to be taken seriously; it is a unique event perpetrated by a madman and no further discussion is required. While there is a decided uniqueness to the events of December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1989, there is also a consistency with reality that, far too often, goes unmentioned.

Shooting 14 women for no other reason than that they are women is an action consistent with the workings of a society that benefits from the continued devaluation and impoverishment of women. Shooting 14 women for no other reason than that they are women is a political act. It needs to be treated and reacted to as such.

The editorial staff at *The Brunswickan*, with a rhetorical slight of hand, has done its part to ensure this never happens.

## UNB professor stresses harms of tobacco smoke

*Professor Wiesner dies  
before his results can  
be published*

by Fred Klidas

As soon as the good news was received in the UNB, Fredericton campus, Chemistry Department, Organic Section, that Professor Weisner had been nominated for the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, I visited him to express my congratulations. After talking about his nomination, I noticed, on his desk, a copy of a spectrum with peaks of different heights. I then asked him what this spectrum was about and he answered, as follows: "I have just finished analyzing tobacco smoke and each peak in the spectrum indicates a certain chemical present."

He explained to me the main peaks which indicate the following chemicals present in the tobacco smoke.

- Carbon monoxide
- Nitric acid
- Ammonia
- Benzene
- Hydrazine
- Various aldehydes
- Hydrogen cyanide
- Nitrosamines
- Benzopyrene

- Methylpyrene
- Flouranthenes

In additions to these chemicals, the spectrum indicated the smoker is exposed to more than 4,000 other chemicals in smaller amounts.

Professor Weisner made clear to me what the analysis shows, but was not willing, as an organic chemist, to comment on the health risks of each chemical. He said, "A school of medicine would be more knowledgeable on this matter."

Unfortunately, a few weeks later, Professor Weisner died and did not publish his results in a scientific journal in a better form than the above information he gave to me. However, I feel by reporting what he said to me concerning the composition of tobacco smoke will be of use to those dealing with cigarettes.

If Professor Weisner had been with us a few more weeks, he had a good chance to receive the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, and UNB's reputation would have been enhanced by his award.

*Mr. Klidas is a Former Chemical Analyst and Instructor in the Geology Department, UNB, as well as senior member of the Chemical Institute of Canada, honorary member of the President's Associates at UNB, and a member of the Chancellor's Club.*

## Dear Lord: help us all

Dear Lord:

Please forgive the Liberals for they know not what they do. They lead us into poverty while indulging themselves at our expense. They tax us for programs to which we are not privy, then pat themselves on the back for accomplishing this.

Oh Lord, they have all the statistical information to make intelligent decisions yet they squander it for the purpose of popularity and self interest. Please help me understand their true intent and their apparent dismissal of important issues. Lord, most importantly, please help me not hurl every time I see them on TV for my stomach cannot bear them anymore and my brain has been drained empty on their unfulfilled promises.

Lord, please help all those ex students who will spend the next 20 or 30 years paying off their student loans, re-building their credit ratings and the retailers in Canada who will inevitably be affected by this (not to mention the students' dependents), for these students are burdened by high interest rates and harassed by collection agencies with the blessing of our leaders.

Lord, if you can hear me, please help me explain to our leaders that that which they ignore now may in fact hinder their lucrative pension

plans in the future. Perhaps, Lord, they should start pouring more money into the Health and Social Services for the future drain that will most certainly happen because we will not be able to put money aside for our own pensions until we are well into our 50s.

Lord, what happened to common human decency? Lord, please keep the remaining Canadian ex students from fleeing this country in order to survive. I truly believe that with your help, a caring government which manages money well, this country can overcome the "Slings and Arrows" of poverty. Just one more thing, Lord: Please explain to me again the major causes of *brain drain*!

P.S. Lord, if you feel so obliged, could you please forward me some information on: budgeting normal living expenses, Federal student loans, Provincial student loans, and bank student loans all on minimum wage jobs. I am most certain that even our own talented Mr. Martin would find this an impossible task. It is said Lord that you turned one bottle of wine and one basket of fish into a feast for thousands. Perhaps you can turn our Canadian dollar into an American one - that would be nice!

Your Servant,  
Karen

## Editorial Policy - Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be dropped off to the offices of *The Brunswickan*, SUB, room 35, no later than 5:00 p.m. Tuesday to be published in that Friday's issue. Letters on disk would be appreciated, but they must be typed. Letters can also be e-mailed to the Editor-in-Chief c/o bruns@unb.ca.

The Brunswickan reserves the right to edit any letters for clarity and will not publish any letters deemed to be racist, sexist, libelous, or hateful in nature.

Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words in length and will be edited down if longer. Your name, student number and phone number must be included with your submission but may be withheld if he/she so wishes.

Interested in writing a column? Students who wish to write a regular column for *The Brunswickan* must provide a sample to the editor for consideration. Columns can be no longer than 750 words and will be edited for length and clarity.

Have a talent for drawing? Can you see the humor in politics? (If there is any). Send us your editorial cartoons - you may just become famous.

Check out our new, improved website at [www.unb.ca/bruns](http://www.unb.ca/bruns).

## Exchange Abroad Information Session

An information session on exchange abroad will be held on Thursday, January 17th, 2002 at 12:00 noon - 1:00 P.M. in the Alumni Memorial Building Lounge.

Exchanges are open to University of New Brunswick students in their 2nd or 3rd year of study. Students pay their tuition at UNB and attend the exchange university abroad.

*Application deadline: Friday, February 8th, 2002*

- 1: Sweden, Umea University
- 2: Swansea, Wales: University College of Swansea

*Further information is available in the International Student Advisor's Office  
Room 18, Alumni Memorial Building  
Telephone: 453-4860*

## Regaining the power to change and the power to rule ourselves

*Students should learn  
to administrate  
university*

Anonymous

The student body of our fair university has forgotten its power. Each year thousands of creative and intelligent men and women pay thousands of dollars to attend an institution built for them, leaving it to an impersonal and non-representative administration to decide how their money is spent.

This oligarchy signs monopolistic contracts with major corporations, increases our tuition each and every year (another 10% next year!) and not once asks us, the students, what we think about their actions, even though we are the only reason they have the power they do.

I propose we realize and regain our true power, that we become a democracy, that we administrate our own university.

This year a mere 10% of the students of UNB voted for our student union representatives - people who represent us and give

us a voice. Some didn't even know about the elections (which should change), however, I believe most of those who didn't vote decided that if they did voice their opinion, it wouldn't change anything (which *must* change).

Access to information is the most important aspect of any democracy. If students do not know what the administration is doing, we have no way of changing it. First and foremost, students must be fully and objectively informed about all aspects of how this university is run; only then are we able to know where to start change. Based upon this knowledge of where and how our money is spent, we will be able to collectively decide which programs warrant support and which do not. We can decide to initiate recycling and composting programs, to shed corporate influence through promoting free choice, to buy supplies from local and environmentally friendly companies, and the list goes on.

A voting section of the UNB web page (already in progress) will be able to give all students equal access, equal opportunity

and equal say in any aspect of the administration. An objective and cooperative body of student representatives will present the student body with important decisions to make, which will affect *all* of us. This representative body has *only* the power to inform the students, who, in turn, *decide for themselves*. They will inform us through e-mail, newspapers, and pamphlets handed out in classes, giving every student equal access to all of the information. *If* we, as the students - the power of this university - find a representative is being biased or corrupt, then we may force them out and allow a more wise and objective executive to take their place - *this is the power we have*.

We must regain this power which lies in each of us, the power to change, the power to think as a community instead of as individuals, the power to rule ourselves. The only thing stopping us is our willingness to sit back and let it slip away; let's make sure it doesn't.

My name is irrelevant, I speak for the people.  
Pass it on.