

Just a thought ...

Joanne Barr
Campus Minister

I come from a family of cottagers who have relished the joys of cottage life. We have toasted marshmallows over the open campfire, canoed in the early morning mist, gazed at the starlight sky - all at Grand Lake. In our family we call this body of water, "The Grand Lake" because we think there is nothing quite like it, although there is another lake with the same name in Ontario.

Over the years, we have entertained numerous visitors, including deer and raccoons, bears and loons.

I went to the lake recently. It was a gorgeous day. Even though fall had arrived, the temperature was very warm and there was a gentle breeze blowing. It was somewhat disconcerting, for the colours were the spectacular colours of the season, yet the air felt like the air of summer. The waters sparkled in the sunlight.

There, in the middle of the cove,

rested a loon. By this time of the year, most birds would have headed away, but not this one. I imagined that he felt as I did, reluctant to have fall come to an end. He appeared defiant, swimming alone, out there in the middle of the cove. I, too, wanted to hold on to the warmth of that sunny day and the brightness of that blue sky and I knew, at that moment, that we were kindred spirits.

Many of the leaves had fallen from the trees. The ground was already covered with a blanket of gold and red and orange. I shuffled through the colours on my way to the rocky beach.

Even the dog, splashing along the water's edge, didn't seem to upset the bird. Geese flew overhead and shouted out their calls of farewell. But the loon stayed put.

I was the guest at the lake that day. The loon was the gracious host. I hated to leave. I think that my feathered friend felt the same way.

Monarchy continued from page 5

Minister. Finally, any replacement for the monarchy would bring about a few expenses of its own: most of the existing expenses, plus all of those associated with presidential elections, as a start. The cost of re-writing every piece of federal and provincial legislation (including the Constitution Act itself) to reflect the new constitutional reality also comes to mind.

Further, it is unfortunate that the writer equates ceremony with uselessness. I can't wait to see what his wedding will look like if it is to be devoid of ceremony. Also, I presume he won't bother attending his Convocation (but I suspect he will have had a change of heart on the value of ceremony by then).

The third point is that Canadian children cannot aspire to be the King or Queen. The fact of the matter is that the chances of being elected president in a republic are so small as to be nearly negligible (never mind that most children probably don't want to be the president anyway.) Let us take the population of Canada at a constant 30 million, and let us say that the president must be at least 18 years

old. There are perhaps 23 million Canadians between 18 and 80 years of age, giving our hopeful candidate about a one-in-23-million chance of being the president, which isn't much different from a zero-percent chance. As to the equality issue, what more equal way could there be of deciding who will wear the Crown than the simple accident of birth? We are all born, after all!

Finally, the writer tries to suggest that tradition should not play a part in how we choose to govern ourselves. On this I will only say that its longevity has given the Crown a level of stability that no other institution can come close to claiming for itself. It has served us very well for two centuries, and it is clearly a case of something which is not broken, and therefore does not need to be fixed.

I have only dealt with the claims made by "A Son of Freedom." There are a great many arguments in favour of the monarchy which he has not sought to dispute. Anyone wishing to inform themselves on the benefits and drawbacks (few as they are) of our constitutional monarchy will find a wealth of information on the Web.

which is affecting the way in which we live and also requires the destruction of natural resources which are needed for us to "survive." These destructive measures are never mentioned in the advertisements for these communication systems. We are sold a future and way of life which, if we are to believe the ads, is blissfully optimistic, as long as we are "hooked-up."

Major global corporations, which share in the financial benefits of our so-called dependence upon our communication systems, also have a vested interest in Global Trade meetings and conferences like those held in Quebec and Italy this past summer. If I hold stock in any of these global corporations, I also have a vested interest in supporting the sale of more and more of these arbitrary communication devices. Now, it becomes easier and easier to tout the advantages of global communication (to save lives, for instance, or to have the ability to get everyone working toward the "common good"). If you believe that corporations have an agenda other than increasing capital gains and diversifying to give the impression of being more local and community-oriented, then you can

no anxiety is felt at all, and so, no responsibility is required to keep up your end of the conversation: they can simply log-off and an attitude of 'entertain me or else' begins to develop.

These arbitrary devices also deter us from communicating with those within our own (physical) context. If, for instance, Woman has a relative/friend who lives miles away but can be counted on to support all of Woman's ideas/beliefs, then less emphasis is placed upon the need to communicate with those who are actually within her (physical) context. Perhaps if we started to communicate with those within our local communities instead of trying to hook up with someone half-way around the world, we might be better off in the long run. At the very least, I think we should reconsider defending the use of these arbitrary forms of communication as being necessary for communication and a measure of a person's ability to love or care for another.

This is to say nothing of the vast amount of energy our current communication system is itself dependent upon - i.e. infrastructures of cable, electricity, capital, and time -

does not mean we don't love or care for each other; it simply means we are living with the consequences of mediation and distance and that neither one of us is interested in using arbitrary mediating devices in order for us to maintain contact with each other.

On the contrary, I believe that these arbitrary devices may actually limit "meaningful" communication, as is evident in the way we communicate when we are face to face with another person. For instance, the telephone has made us super-conscious of dead silences (we try to avoid them at all costs and end up filling in the blanks with all-but-useless information). This avoidance also disrupts our concentration and as a result, our attention span becomes shorter and we become unable to follow a train of thought for more than a millisecond. This is quite evident in children now who have been trained (by us) to become dependent upon the Internet for communicating. These kids have just about lost the ability to communicate "meaningfully." Ironically, the absence of such things as dead silences on the screen actually has a negative effect on these children's ability to relate to one another because

Communication continued from page 4

could rethink the ways in which we communicate, we may come to realize the only "meaningful" communication we participate in is that which is, for lack of a better word, existential. *Why?* Because *everything* "meaningful" is existential. It is during the immeasurable instant between perception and reflection that meaning (shapeless and fluid) occurs. As perception gives way to reflection, meaning takes the shape of the images which *allow* reflection. Thus, meaning ceases to be meaning and becomes a collection of *images* of meaning. In other words, the more mediated meaning is, the less meaningful it is: *conscious thought* mediates meaning, and *all extensions* of conscious thought (language and the media through which it is expressed) *mediate* conscious thought. Granted, ironic or *self-conscious* meaning disrupts its own mediation by *drawing attention* to its own "mediatedness," but such a disruption ultimately serves to illustrate that mediation renders meaning less *meaningful*.

So, since my brother and I live several hundred kilometres apart and since communication between us would, therefore, be mediated at the outset, we don't talk anymore. This

SU ROUNDUP

Kate Whitfield
VP Executive,
UNB Student Union

As we watch the percentage of the student contribution to the total cost of education rise, from 14% in 1980 to more than 30% today, we need to ban together and take a step back — step back to gain a perspective of where the university sector is heading.

In the October 5th issue of the Brunswickan, our President, Elizabeth Parr-Johnston, was quoted as stating that one of the justifications for raising tuition was that UNB is below the Maritime average and that it was reasonable to move our fees towards the average for our region. This is a daunting statement, as Mount Allison students pay up around 40% of their general operating budget.

I also think of my friends that study at Acadia University. They are told that their school is working towards becoming the "Princeton of the North." They pay high tuition for this type of learning environment, not to mention the personal laptop that each student receives. I don't know how we can compare the two. It also takes us back to the question of where the university sector heading.

Is our education a commodity? Is the university selling a service? I am not disregarding the efforts I have seen made to make this a student-centred institution, however, with a rumor in the midst of a 9.5% increase next year I can't help feeling worried.

We need to get all of the players in this game together around one table, not to ask for more money or to complain, but to look for some answers. Currently, any discussion with the federal government about post-secondary education (PSE) never fails to include the point that the province is responsible for PSE. When talking with the province, a finger is pointed at the federal government saying that not enough money is given. Then when reading the Brunswickan, UNB administration points to the province and the need for an increase of its grant by 5-6% for the tuition to remain at the 2000/01 levels.

I am not pretending that I have all the solutions; however, a forum on tuition and the rising cost of education is a first step. Allowing students, a major stakeholder, to participate and take some ownership for the current situation. As said earlier, if students bear the burden of paying for the increased cost of fuel to heat our buildings, then they should be able to talk about it. Dialogue between the university administration, the provincial government and the students could create some much-needed direction for UNB and the current financial situation.

As you read this, I am actually in Ottawa for a general meeting with CASA, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. The annual lobby conference was cancelled partly due to the current situation in the United States; however, the members are all still meeting to discuss other issues including the future of the organization. This is an interesting question for me, because the role of CASA, a federal post-secondary education lobby organization, on our campus is always a contentious one. However, in Ottawa I will be meeting the Finance Minister Paul Martin, so expect an article on that discussion in the near future. For more information on CASA, visit the new and improved website.

probably find work in any number of call centres which seem to be springing up everywhere.

Other global organizations - the World Trade Organization (WTO), The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Multinational Agreement on Investment (MAI), the World Bank, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and the Organization for Economic Co-

operation and Development (OECD), to name a few - all seem to be supporting the same global economic view which would require us to support global corporations by being "hooked-up" in order to participate and share in the financial benefits.

Does this mean these corporate organizations actually love us and care about our future well being? You decide!

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