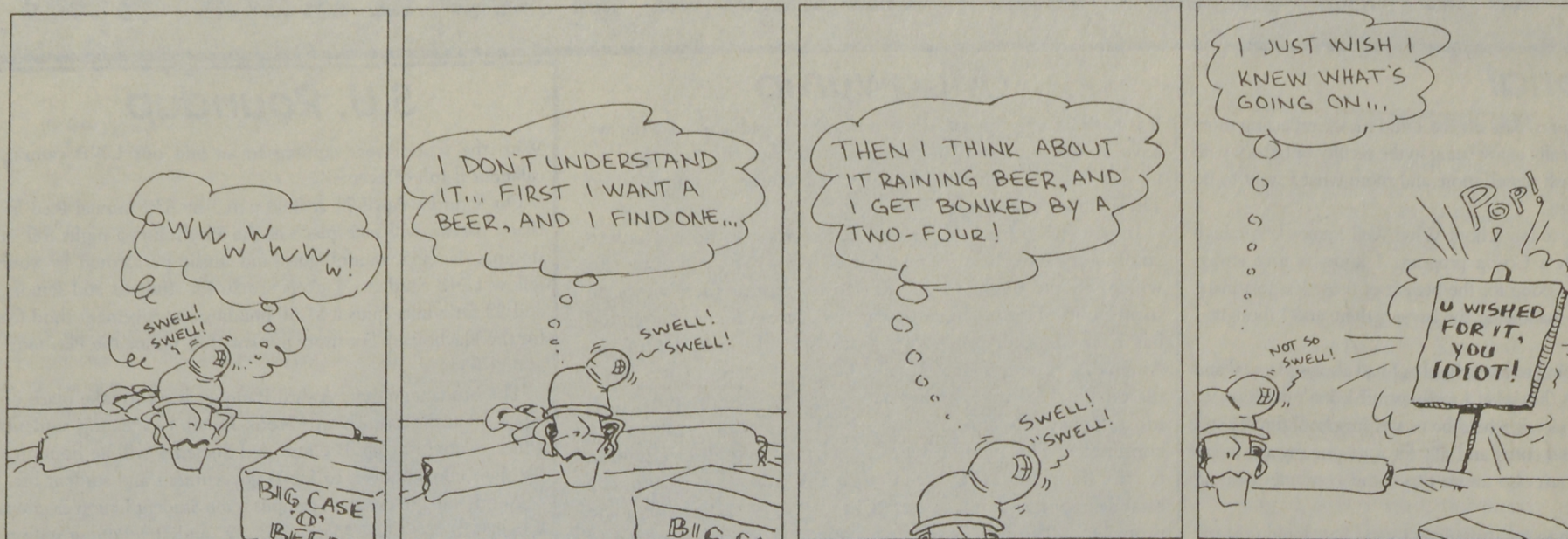


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Essay: Reasons for going to Summit in Quebec City

The University of New Brunswick has already allowed exam deferrals on the 20-22 of April 2001 for students who wish to attend public protests for the upcoming Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. The issue in this paper is whether or not I ought to be accommodated by my professor in receiving a deferral outside the scheduled exemption dates.

I will argue that I ought to be accommodated in this instance for reasons of practicality, educational, personal, and intellectual developmental value. I hold that these reasons outweigh the objections to the claim that I ought to be accommodated outside the exam deferral dates.

There are reasons of practicality as to why it is not desirable for me to write my exam on the scheduled date. The date on which I am requesting a deferral is the April 24th which is two days after the allowed deferral period. In my case, it is not clear that I am able to organize immediate transportation back to Fredericton from Quebec City after the 'protests' to write an exam the next day. I would not be able to dedicate even adequate time during the 'protest weekend' to studying for a final exam on the 24th. Furthermore, there are public activities, such as the peoples summit, which are taking place before and after the protest dates which conflict with the exam time and I would like to attend these activities as well. These are some problems which would need to be dealt with if my exam were not deferred. I am suggesting that it would be better for me to write the exam before the protest period.

The first objection is that to accommodate a deferral outside the scheduled dates would be unfair to the overburdened professor by providing extra work for them. I hold that there is much educational value in attending the protests, and that this reason, together with the impracticality of travel arrangements, outweighs the first objection. Attending the protests is a practical form of education which can not be taught or learned inside the classroom. One actually experiences and observes the 'real life' topics which are taught, but can only be discussed, in the classroom. One is able to interact and converse with groups and people that represent differing ends

of the political and social spectrum. One can observe how the differing groups exercise various rights and freedoms in expressing their opinions. During such an event, one can not ignore or detached themselves from the issues which are confronted in the classroom, as one is actually experiencing them first hand. By attending the protests, one is encouraged to develop a political and public consciousness outside the walls of the university. The development of such an education is truly important and can be realized by observing the protests. Such educational and personal development does not necessarily require one to actively partake in 'direct action strategies' or 'civil disobedience' activities. The university itself upholds, and is promoting, the development of such an education by allowing students to attend the demonstrations. I hold that the encouragement of such an education outweighs the concerns presented in the first objection, and thus ought to be endorsed. The reasons why final exams were deferred by the University are also applicable in this case as well. Principles that the University of New Brunswick upholds, and relied upon to defer exams, such as: "...the promotion of educational environments conducive to the development of the entire person...", and the fact that this involves "...students developing a public conscience and actively engaging the democratic process...", directly reinforce the argument that I ought to be accommodated in re-scheduling my exam on April 24th. I believe that the professor would be "promoting educational environments" and further encouraging "students to develop a public conscience" outside the classroom by allowing the deferral on the requested date.

I agree with the second objection that one's commitments are important and ought to be respected; to break a final exam commitment would be to downplay the importance of such commitments. This is precisely why I am attempting to reschedule my final exam, with the permission of the professor, to a more convenient time. My intention is not to dishonor my commitments, but to make them more reasonable. I also hold that because of the educational value in attending the protests, one's exam commitments ought to be

accommodating. Thus, the second objection is eclipsed by the value of such an educational experience.

The third objection is that the anti-globalization movement is anti-educational and anti-philosophical in its tactics. The objection further states that such tactics and participation in the movement ought not to be encouraged by the university. One can attend the protests as an individual. One need not endorse, or associate with, various factions which are anti-philosophical and anti-educational. I think that one can take part in the protests and at the same time be philosophical and rational. There is a great diversity of groups which are attending the protests such as Christian groups, Labor and Worker's Unions, Humanitarian Rights groups, political activists, and other student groups. Most of the groups are not anti-philosophical or anti-educational. Globalization is one of the main focal points of the protests, but it is not the only one. Each group may have differing reasons for attending, but many agree that exploitation and human suffering is undesirable. Human suffering and exploitation are some of the more important issues being protested at the demonstrations. The university has also refrained from taking a position on whether or not the protests are 'right' or 'wrong'. The university neither advocates nor denounces the protests, and thus is not supporting any political or philosophical position other than the fact that students ought to have the opportunity to attend and express their beliefs.

'Diversity of tactics' is a concept which has been accepted by many different activist groups attending the protests. This concept emphasizes the fact that different groups have different strategies for protesting; this fact ought to be accepted within reason. For example, some protesters may decide that 'direct action' is not a strategy that they wish to personally partake in, while others may wish to actively partake in such strategies. All of the groups advocate a non-violent form of public protest.

I have personal reasons for attending the Peoples Summit and the protests in Quebec City. The Peoples Summit aims to promote public awareness and educate people as to the issue (both positive and negative) that accompany the Free Trade Area of the Americas

(FTAA) agreement. Some issues that will be examined during the Peoples Summit are the potentially negative economic, political and social effects of the FTAA agreement on many areas of the Third World. There is a concern that the FTAA agreement shall facilitate the exploitation of workers in Latin America, support governments which oppress their citizenry (eg. Colombia), and continue to implement economic policies which benefit the upper-class elites while causing much human suffering among the lower-classes in the regions. I would like to partake in promoting such awareness and receiving such an education. I oppose the FTAA because the policies that this trade agreement advocates are highly exploitative of many people in the world and thus are highly immoral. This is why I am choosing to partake in anti-FTAA protests. By taking part in the FTAA agreement, Canada will be supporting various Latin American countries which have atrocious human rights records. Canada will be economically and politically aiding repressive regimes and governments which inflict much harm on their citizens. I do not think that this can be justified by any means.

I accept the possibility that my views may change and or be influenced by my experiences during the protests for better or worse. I think that people ought to have the opportunity, and be encouraged, to attend the protests. I advocate peaceful tactics with reasonable limits on 'direct action strategies'. Unlike some self-righteous people who might attend the protests, I am open to criticisms of my views and I do seriously consider arguments that oppose my views, as I have responded (I believe sufficiently) to the three objections.

I hold that the educational value in attending the protests outweighs the stated objections. I believe that because of this high educational and personal developmental value, I ought to be accommodated in rescheduling my final exam for Phil. 3106. I believe that I will gain much education from my experiences in Quebec City this April. I have a very strong political consciousness and I think that I ought to be encouraged in my pursuit to expand it.

• Alex Bailey



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