

THE BRUNSWICKAN OPINION & EDITORIAL

Editorial

Bowling for answers

by Sean Patrick Sullivan
Editor-in-Chief

In 2001, the United States had 11 227 gun deaths. Canada, on the other hand, had 165.

Before seeing *Bowling for Columbine*, Michael Moore's hilarious and heartbreaking documentary on America's love for the gun, I didn't have an answer why. American television news is full of violence, and CNN loves its war coverage. I guess that because we hear so much about it, by now Canadians just expect more violence out of their southern neighbours. We don't really question why.

Bowling for Columbine, however, tells us.

It's all about fear.

That's right - more than anything else, Americans are afraid.

See, Moore explains that Americans have been conditioned to live in fear. Through flashes of video clips, we see reports of killer bees (that never did infest the country), sharks (that never did infest the oceans), and razor-bladed-filled Halloween candy (which never happened either). Oh - and a clip from a report about "deadly" escalators mangling riders, all accompanied by dark, haunting music.

What do we have to fear in Canada, you ask? On Monday the breaking news

story on ATV was of a diseased oyster population off the coast of Nova Scotia. Ooh - scary.

US media are at fault for following the "if it bleeds, it leads" philosophy of news reporting. As Moore cites in the film, in the same period that the rate of murders in the US decreased by 20%, coverage of killings rose by 600%. That's an incredible number, and accounts for why almost every ABC or FOX news flash is about a "brutal murder" or "gang violence." Even though less violence is happening, increased reporting leads the public to believe there's more. Much more, in fact, to the point that people are worried about their well-being 24-7.

Which is where Moore fits guns into the whole deal. A lot of Americans are scared of each other, so they want guns to protect themselves (not realizing that the more guns they have, the more everyone else does too).

Moore doesn't offer any solutions, but rather connects a massive amount of information.

This mass of information is why this is an editorial rather than an entertainment piece - because you have to see this movie. Realizing the motivation behind American violence and linking its history to the present time is essential to understanding exactly what is wrong with that country (and maybe the world) today.

Mugwump

Ya can't buy me love

by Ben Conoley
Managing Editor

Buy Nothing Day. Sounds easy doesn't it? After all, I live off about a nickel a day, and that's before groceries.

On November 29, people all over the world will celebrate the busiest day of the (American) shopping year, by buying nothing. Heavily endorsed by *Adbusters* in North America, Buy Nothing Day is annually gaining more and more notice.

But for the average student like me, or anyone else with a bank account balance reading more like a UNICEF box after all the loonies were taken out, the year is full of Buy Nothing Days, so what's the point? Some would say nothing, some would say the day is harmful to the economy, an argument used more frequently post September 11th. But Buy Nothing Day isn't about killing the economy, jobs, or small business. It's about awareness.

We spend too much.

It's important, especially in North America, to bring attention to our never satisfied bellies of consumerism. We should be protesting ourselves on Nov 29 more than Nike, Gap, or American Eagle. I remember this summer, when I was pissed off that I hated my job, I decided to go buy a skateboard movie to make me feel better. Why? There's people around us, real people to talk

with, walk with, share with - and they're free, for the most part.

It's impossible to deny both our societal and personal lust for goods, and not-so-goods.

But why do we behave this way? Is it because in an age of electronic, impersonal communication, we don't get the human attention we need? Is it because of our total disenchantment with the mindnumbingly repetitious work most of us are sucked into? Whatever it is, maybe we shouldn't blame the 'system,' not this time.

Quick, pull your eyes away from this paper, there's probably people around you. Get up. No, keep walking past Harvey's, you don't need super-sized fries. See that other person, the one you know from English 1000, go talk, chat, heat up your lunch. It's easy, in theory. Talking with people can be hard, reading the Sears Wishbook is easy. It's so much easier to ignore someone when they sit down next to you than it is to try and get to know them. We need to be able to reach out for comfort in other ways. It's not that we're behaving badly when we comfort shop, but it's not a healthy choice.

So go ahead and buy nothing next Friday. Challenge yourself, even though it means not going to the bar, or the movies, or ordering pizza. Call on a friend, talk, people like that. Get to know someone instead of something.

Reports from the centre of the universe

Sincerely, sleepless in Toronto

by Chris Wilson-Smith, Esq.

When I went to UNB, I had only two things on my mind: getting the heck out of UNB, and a sharp-looking baseball cap.

Presently, I am attending York University in Toronto - a collection of half-buildings which could easily be mistaken for an odd mixture of Alcatraz and Electric Circus.

Reluctantly, I miss UNB.

Take a look around yourself. I'll bet you can count at least five hippies within a 20-foot perimeter. As I look around myself, I see only one person who even remotely resembles a hippie, and that's because I'm staring at a life-size cut-out of me. Hey - I've gotta spend my money somehow.

Nope, no hippies here. Not even jocks. Or geeks. Or nerds. Or freaks. Just people - students - who look like they are headed for a night at the clubs, rather than towards their 9:30 am class.

The girls wear stilettos and the guys wear sunglasses at night, and I'm the only one who wears snow pants. And nobody listens to Corey Hart. Rather, hip-hop reigns supreme - and not only in discmans, but in the hallways at school. Just ten minutes ago, I walked out of class, turned the corner, passed the DJ booth, and lined up for some coffee. Then I... wait a second: the DJ

booth?

I thought I was ready for the big-city life. After all, I thought, Toronto can't be that different than Fredericton. I'm used to being around cell phones.

But in Toronto it isn't just cell phones - it's laptops, palm pilots, pagers, messaging systems, head-sets, hand-sets, fax machines and the internet - and all made to fit snugly around the waist. If I were visiting Toronto for the first time, I would assume the Batman utility-belt look was in.

Classes are regularly interrupted by beeping, or an electronic song, or an annoying vibration noise coming from someone's gooochie handbag.

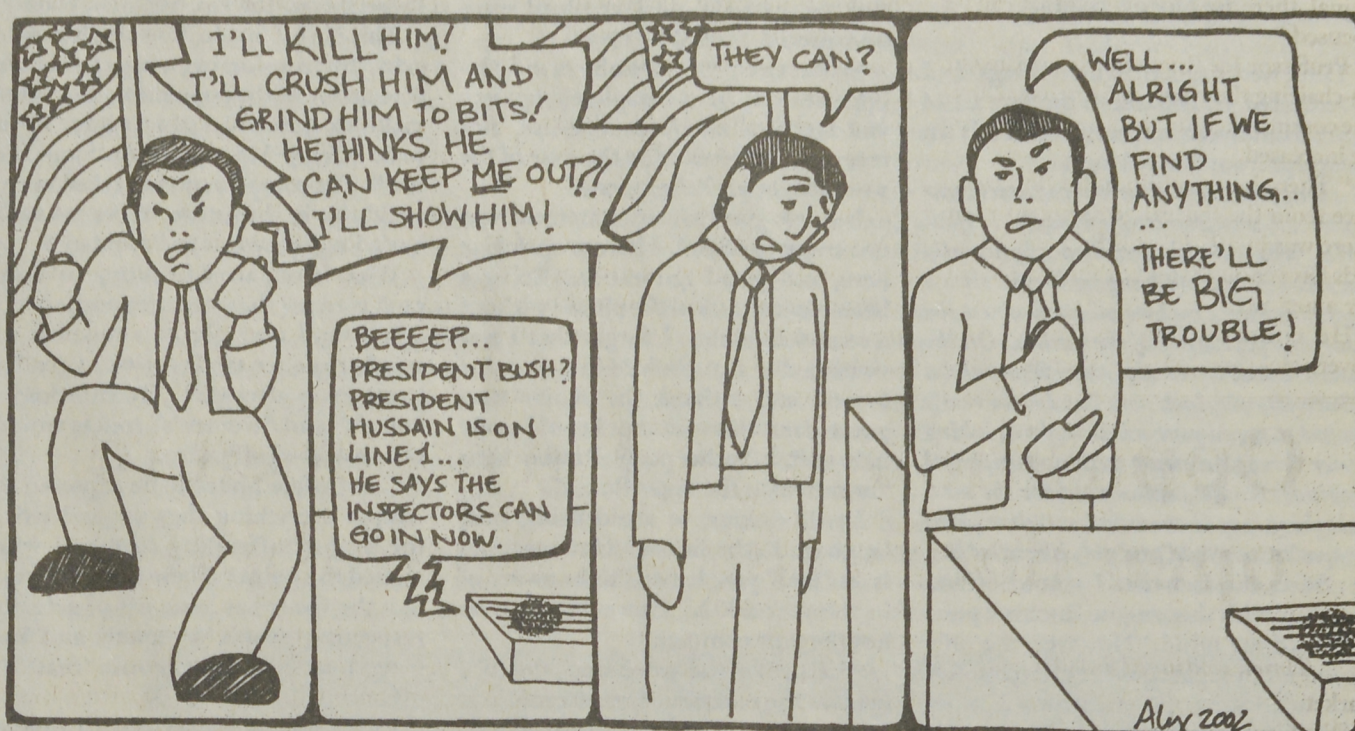
My tutorials consist of short snippets of dialogue supplanted over long periods of nothingness - sometimes even my TA is too caught up in her hair to think of anything to say.

The girl who sits beside me in one of my poli sci classes thinks that Plato is like, um, sooo cool, and the chap on my other side isn't voting Liberal in the next election. Nosiree - he's voting for the democrats, dig?

Good luck, dude.

Then again, I've only been here a couple of months. Maybe I should buy a Palm Pilot and wear fancy pants. Maybe I just need to give York U culture a second chance.

Maybe it's too early for me to be sitting in this bar.



Alex White/The Brunswickan

Because everything is political

Out of sight, out of mind

by Tan-Nee Ng

One of my friends had the unpleasant experience of working in a landfill last summer. As an environmentalist, he couldn't really justify working there for any reason other than the money.

One day, while we were en route to Fredericton, we passed his place of employment and I couldn't help thinking that landfills are absurd! They reminded me of when I was a child, and my dad made me clean my room. Of course I'd pick up some dirty clothes from off the floor, and then shove the rest of my stuff under the bed (including food). And sure, it worked for a while...until my room began either a.) reeking of mold or b.) my dad looked under the bed an hour later to find that my clean-up job was really just a sham.

Now, if you think about it, landfills work on the same principle. We basically

put a bunch of garbage into a big ol' hole in the ground. Wow, what a great idea! Garbage gone, problem solved; nobody will ever know it's there! (Even when that familiar moldy smell starts spreading!) Man, that's just about as smart as dumping our toxic wastes by the ton into the ocean! When are people going to wake up and smell the coffee (or in this case, the rotting coffee grounds)? But you know what the bottom line is? If we didn't consume so much, we wouldn't waste so much either! It makes perfect sense. Think about it!

Ok, let's go...

Say we go to McGreedy's for lunch, and we order a combo #5, which constitutes our juicy cow on a bun, drink, and french fries. Mmmm...dead cow.... Anyway, the dead cow on a bun comes in a cardboard container (or wrapper); the drink, in a cup with a plastic lid and straw; and the fries, in a

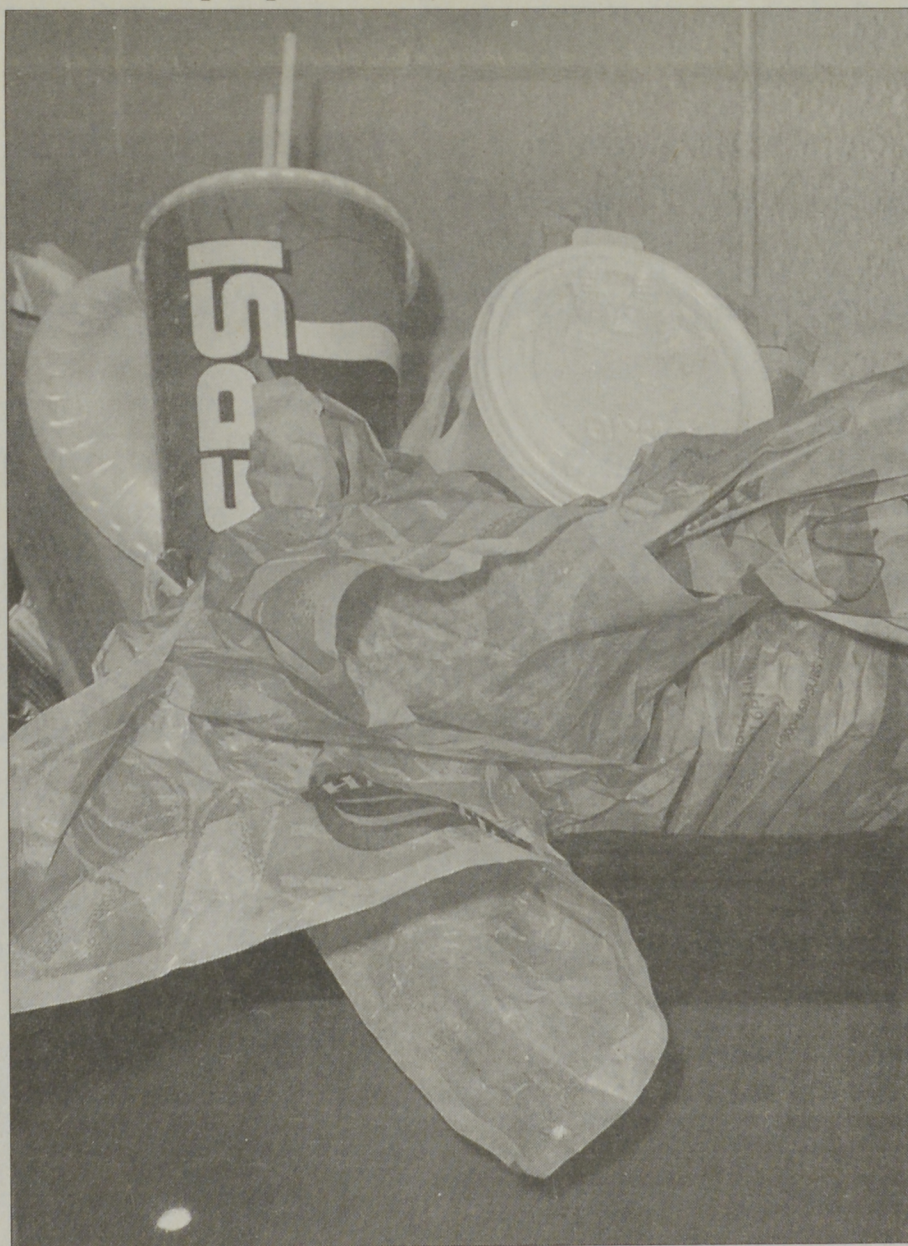
carton. Then we have the napkins, the cup holder (if you're going through drive-through), the sweet & sour sauce, ketchup, mustard, vinegar, and finally, last but not least, the salt and pepper condiments (which each come in their own separate package). Geez...what a waste, 15 minutes later you end up with a load of cholesterol that you'll either: a.) Have to exercise two or more hours to get rid of or b.) Pack on the pounds. Oh wait, I totally forgot something else you're left with...the garbage! A whole whack of garbage that you end up throwing away. This is the same garbage that ends up buried under 6 feet of soil in a landfill, surprised?

Now you might think that a ketchup wrapper or two's not much garbage, but think of it this way: if I gave you a nickel for your birthday, you'd probably think I was a cheap-ass bastard and I doubt you'd think it was a lot of money. But if over half the population of the US gave you a nickel for your birthday, then I'm willing to bet you'd be pretty damn happy. I mean, hey... that's a lot of nickels and who's to say they aren't American nickels, eh?

Anyway, the point is that there are about 270 million people in the US that eat out everyday. Now out of these 270 million people, some of them will eat out more than once a day, which makes the amount of waste psychotic! But that's just in one day, now multiply 270 million people who eat out more than once a day by 365 days a year, for x number of years to come. What an astronomical figure! (And we're not even including how much waste McDollar's makes on their own, or how much waste you make as a person in an average day...)

A lot of people think that if we had more laws and better recycling, all our problems would be solved. Well, you know what? We do have recycling facilities, but how many people take advantage of them? Isn't it just easier to toss something in the garbage then having to wash, rinse, and recycle it? And even if it's biodegradable, isn't that just an excuse to pawn our waste to the future generations of this planet? We end up with a bunch of garbage that we bury. Out of sight, out of mind. And then we say our natural resources are almost gone.

But how do we fix all of this? Is there a solution? Making packaging biodegradable is great, but what we really have to look at is to stop wasting so much. If you don't need it, don't get it just because it's free. Recycle when you can. Every bit helps. Sure, it will take time, but if everyone starts, eventually we might be able to save this sorry excuse of a planet we call home!



Brendan Doyle / The Brunswickan

Useless packaging like this is filling up the world's landfills.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A letter in response to 'A letter to the United States'

Dear Ms. Peters:

I am a citizen of the United States who proudly calls Canada home and will graduate from one of the finest faculties of law in your great nation: the University of New Brunswick.

I hope that you are not an English or Journalism major because your use of satire was unfortunately overshadowed by an envy-filled rant. That is a shame because I was looking forward to reading a critical discourse.

First, as for being stupid and ignorant, I must confess that most Americans do not appreciate such a trivial exercise as being able to name the great provinces and territories of Canada. Instead, we know more about our history than any other nation. I find it ironic that for such a horrible country, American History appears on every university curriculum in the world.

I challenge you to learn more about the great history of Canada instead of complaining about why America sucks. In recent surveys by Ipsos-Reid, Canadians were far less knowledgeable about Canadian history than American history. Louis Riel would be turning in his grave if he learned this statistic.

Our ignorance and stupidity is also apparent when you consider our innovations in science and technology. How many Canadians have been on the moon? Although, I must admit the space-arm and Marc Garneau were nice gifts to the American space program.

Your envy continues to shine when you talk about the great Canadian war machine that defeated the hated Americans in 1812. This commentary was quite enjoyable. As an American, I will concede defeat - you won.

The men who shed their blood at Ypres and Dieppe would not be proud of your comment that Canadians are "dragged into wars" by the United States. Some of the greatest victories in

the two World Wars were fought by brave Canadian men who fought for the freedom you enjoy.

Please do not visit the United States, watch our programming and pump your hard-earned "loonies" and "toonies" into our war mongering machine. Your purchases on eBay will be missed! It is funny that you will complain about how rotten we are, yet you will still watch our shows, listen to our music and buy our products. (As for Canadian television, I much rather watch old reruns of the Beachcombers and the French entertainment show "La Fureur." I can do without the American shows.)

Please learn more about your great nation and worry less about ours. Spend your Canadian dollars to support Canadian businesses. Fund a military to keep Canada as the top peacekeeping nation in the world. Spread the word to all Canadians and even enlighten some Americans with how great Canada is. Otherwise you appear to be an uneducated grouch who distains a nation because of your envy.

Jason Stephen French