

THE BRUNSWICKAN OPINION & EDITORIAL

Editorial:

Our generation: apathetic?

by Cindy Brown
Editor-in-Chief

One of my professors said that my generation - and yours - is an apathetic one. Well, not in those exact words.

After reading an article for the class, and after discussing it, the professor asked the class to evaluate the thesis and to determine whether we accepted it.

No one really said a whole lot. So, after a relatively short period of silence, I spoke. I said, in words quite similar to this, "I don't accept this theory entirely. Although I agree with some points, there are others which I don't. So, no, I do not accept this theory in its entirety."

Well, my professor (whom I do respect and look up to) replied (I am paraphrasing), "That is why you edit the *Brunswicks*, your views reflect the views of the majority of the students at UNB." He clarified himself by saying that not a lot of students latch onto anything in particular. The meaning of his message to me - our generation is an apathetic one, in which many people do not feel very strongly about...well, anything.

I can see his point. Our generation, as a majority, has never wholeheartedly protested anything. There have not been

feminist protests, or huge protests about the government, or about what the university is doing - especially not on the scale of what happened in the 60s.

My professor went even further. He said that he wished people would latch on to *something*. Why? Because we, as university students are the leaders of tomorrow and there are very few people who care enough to feel passionate about something.

I can see why he worries. It is hard enough to get people into the *Brunswicks* to write for us. (But I won't make this a pitch for volunteers).

However, I must point out that there is still a staff which runs the *Brunswicks* - and we are all passionate about what we do. I know of many people who asked for deferrals on their exams last year so they could go protest in Washington. Just look at all of the posters the UNBSRI puts up, all of the meetings they have had with UNB administration, and all of the demands they have made. These are all passionate people who care about what they are doing.

Okay, so back to this theory we were discussing in class. The exact theory does not matter, but I will use Socialism as an example. Socialism, true Socialism, in theory looks pretty good. But, in

practice it does not work out so well. Look at Communist Russia - it was repressive, harsh and overthrown after about 60 years of power. On paper, the theory looks good, but once you put it into practice, it is not so.

I also told my professor that another reason why I did not accept the theory we were discussing was because it was so easy to poke holes into it - as we had done in class. Why should I accept a theory which is fallible? I prefer, instead, to consider many ideas or theories and to keep an open mind.

That's why Communist Russia was so repressive - because an open mind can be a dangerous thing. An open mind would see the holes in the government's policies and illegitimize the regime. Not so good for the government.

My professor then went on to stress that the reason why he was so worried was that when we were policy makers, how could we make the right decisions, when we were such an indecisive generation - indecisive in the sense that we did not latch on to any one idea.

Well, when those decisions fall on my table in the future, I would hope that I keep an open mind and consider all the possible solutions before I make a final decision.

Mugwump:

Where were we Wednesday?

by Patryk Reid
Managing Editor

A whole lot of people on campus have been trying to figure out why the UNBSU didn't play a role in organizing Wednesday's national Day of Action which saw students from universities across the country call for a freeze on tuition fees. The answer is simple: the event was organized by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), of which the UNBSU is not a member. But it does lead one to ask why the national lobby group UNB undergrads are represented by, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), does not have a similar policy. And whether or not the reason is a good one.

The Day of Action was coordinated by the CFS as a protest of what the majority of its members consider to be ridiculously high tuition fees at universities across the country. It cites an increase in the cost of attending university of about 126% in the past decade, and the associated tripling of graduate debt loads to approximately \$25,000 per average student. Indeed, it is interesting to note Finance Canada statistics which show that the average price of an arts education in New Brunswick rose 85.4% between 1990/01 and 2000/01 - from \$1,898 to \$3,519. CFS, which represents student associations and unions in 60 of Canada's universities, also sought to draw attention to the wide disparities in the tuition fees of different provinces. For example, the *Globe and Mail* states that while the average

cost of an arts education in Ontario costs \$4,062, that in neighbouring Quebec is \$1,912 for natives of the province.

Yet while CFS has a solid position on what is among the most vital and contentious issues affecting students, CASA has no stance on the matter. The 23 member student organizations of this lobby group have agreed that because they all have different ideas on how they would like to see tuitions handled, CASA will not lobby for tuition-related changes. Asked what she thought of the Day of Action, Kate Whitfield, UNBSU VP Executive, and representative in CASA, said "we're not for or against it. It's just not our event."

But should it be? Tuition went up 8.2 percent at UNB this year, and is likely to go even higher next year. Whitfield also mentioned that there had been significant number of calls to the SU office on Wednesday from people interested in participating in the protest. It is reasonable to say that despite an unfortunate level of student apathy at UNB, maintaining low tuition fees are pretty high on the list of concerns we have.

And isn't that the whole point of having lobby groups such as CASA: to represent the interests of a vast group to better the possibility that their common concerns be taken seriously by the various establishments which serve them? Perhaps the members of CASA could find some common ground to improve the chance that the students they represent get a bit of a break on the education they're buying. I'm assuming they can all agree that tuition is high enough as it is.

Who's misinformed?

Speaking for the plants

by Andrew Daley

In response to "A response to the misinformed" by Kathryn Asher in the February 1, 2002 edition of the *Brunswickan*. Well Ms. Asher let's begin with my awful speciest views shall we? Sure by the strictest definition of the word you can call me a speciest. I don't consider it insulting because in my view there are worse things to be. To name just a few: racist, sexist, and, particularly apt in this case, elitist. I consider it somewhat of a paradox that you spew labels on me for being a meat eater and yet you consider yourself my moral superior. Instead of joining the morally elite in your crusade against meat eating wouldn't it first be beneficial to solve the problems of human society? Racism and sexism in particular are still serious social problems.

You say, Ms. Asher, that you "find it hugely insensitive to non-human animals to compare their suffering to that of wheat". I find that massively hypocritical since in your article you bring up putting mentally handicapped children in cages! I don't know why you pull that out of your hat but how insensitive is that for the

mentally handicapped? I'm sure they enjoy being reduced to the status of "just like an animal"! Further insensitivity is the continuing connection between killing cows and the Holocaust. I would imagine that a great many, I know one for sure, Holocaust survivors would be outraged by the continuing comparison.

Ms. Asher how petty of you to question my educational background! And how amusing that you consider a course in high school the be all and end all of biology knowledge! However, since you brought the subject up, it seems plainly apparent that high school is as far as your study of ecology has advanced. Your thoughts on re-entering cows into the wild are puzzling. "Basic ecology"? I didn't realize that ecology could ever be described as basic. From past experience alone it seems clear that the way ecosystems react to new stimuli is not basic, but one of nature's most complex processes. Countless cases of a new plant or animal introduced into ecosystem and reeking havoc have occurred. The basic ecology in these cases failed because while the new plant or animal served the purpose for which they were introduced, the unforeseen consequences were devastating. Driving local wildlife or plants to the brink of extinction is not what I'd call basic. It doesn't seem likely that re-introducing the cow into nature could drive something to extinction but in the infinitely complex

interactions of nature it is a distinct possibility.

Ms. Asher, since you took high school biology I assume you are familiar with scientific reasoning. My main point being that no matter how crazy a theory is, unless there is definitive proof against it, it is possible. I invite you to join me on a little thought experiment and, consider the possibility of the following. You were correct in assuming my comments about the feelings of wheat were made in jest, but they were also carefully chosen. I exaggerated slightly by inviting one to ask the wheat their feelings, but is the concept of wheat, or plants in general, feeling really so far out there?

You dismiss plants from ever belonging to the world of consciousness and pain simply because they lack a brain and central nervous system. To continue your argument through, plants also lack a set of lungs and cannot breathe. Does this mean they are not alive? Certainly not! Plants are quite clearly alive, they grow, they evolve, and they multiply. Plants don't have lungs like animals, but they live. Plants don't reproduce like animals (sperm and ovum) but they do reproduce. Continuing this argument leads us to an interesting point; just because plants don't have a brain like an animal and don't have a central nervous system like an animal can we really make the assumption that they absolutely, positively do not have either consciousness or the sensation of pain? The answer is no we can't. Conversely, just because animals have the same type of brain and central nervous system as humans doesn't necessarily imply that they work the same way (with regard to "consciousness"). Right now, of course, there is no evidence. I can hear you telling me this and saying I am being totally unreasonable. Perhaps, but there have been other unreasonable people in the past. What's that Copernicus? The Earth revolves around the Sun! Nonsense! Or, hey, Wright brothers, you'll never be able to produce a heavier than air flying machine, that's impossible!

The point being that one-day in the future we may discover an alternative form of consciousness or pain that applies to plants. What will you do if that should happen? Stop eating animals and plants? If that were the case I'd start investing in some Intravenous Solution companies real soon! The other alternative, is of course to say screw the plants, they don't have the same kind of pain we have so it's ok to kill them. But you can't do that because then you'd be reduced to my level. I'm a speciest now but alternative number two would make you an "animalist".

You have to draw the line somewhere. I choose to draw it at cows, pigs, and chickens. You choose to draw it at plants. I accept your choice, why can't you accept mine? I am a moral person. I am not racist, sexist, elitist or any number of other negative -ists. Yet you claim that I am morally unconscious because I believe human dignity should be bestowed on humans before animals? With all the problems facing the human race I find that a shocking misplacement of priority.

Connecting for life

February is suicide prevention month

Suicide - most people think it's a private issue, but it's not. It's a community problem, and it needs a community solution. With a provincial suicide rate that consistently outpaces the national average and that has almost doubled since 1975, it's time we started talking about it. As a community, we are all responsible for each other. We need to educate ourselves about suicide, its warning signs, and reach out to those in need. Last year, 113 members of our New Brunswick community committed suicide. With 100 attempts for every death, last year 1300 people around us were in so much pain they could figure no way out except to end their lives. For them, their friends and loved ones, suicide is no longer something that "happens to other people". If you care about someone who is hurting and finding it hard to cope with their life,

wouldn't you want someone to reach out to them? If that someone can be you, would you know where to turn?

Our community has resources that may help. The Fredericton Suicide Prevention Committee is doing its part in helping people become aware of suicide, its warning signs, and where to turn. Every year, in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, its members conduct suicide awareness presentations to over 3000 students in local high school classes. Prior to graduation, every teenager should know about this issue. In February 2000, the "Helping Tree" program was launched. This flow-chart of community helping resources has been distributed to over 10 000 students at local universities, colleges and business schools. This February—National Suicide Awareness Month—will see it distributed to local Employee Assistance Programs. The Committee is helping the Canadian Association of Suicide Prevention (CASP) host its national conference here in Fredericton, October 21-23rd.

Just a thought...

by Joanne Barr

A few weeks ago, I decided I would drive to Moncton for the day. I was up and on the road at an early hour. The air was crisp and clean and there had been a snowfall the night before - the fields and woods were covered with a clean blanket of powder. The sun's rays sparkled on the snow-laden grounds. The tree branches were layered with mounds of snow and the picture reminded me of a Hallmark card. The day was glorious. The weather definitely had an impact on how I was feeling and I felt great.

Last night I was driving home. It was after 5:00 p.m. and I noticed how "light" it was. I knew the days were starting to get longer and Spring wouldn't be too long arriving in this part of the country. It was a thought which energized me immediately.

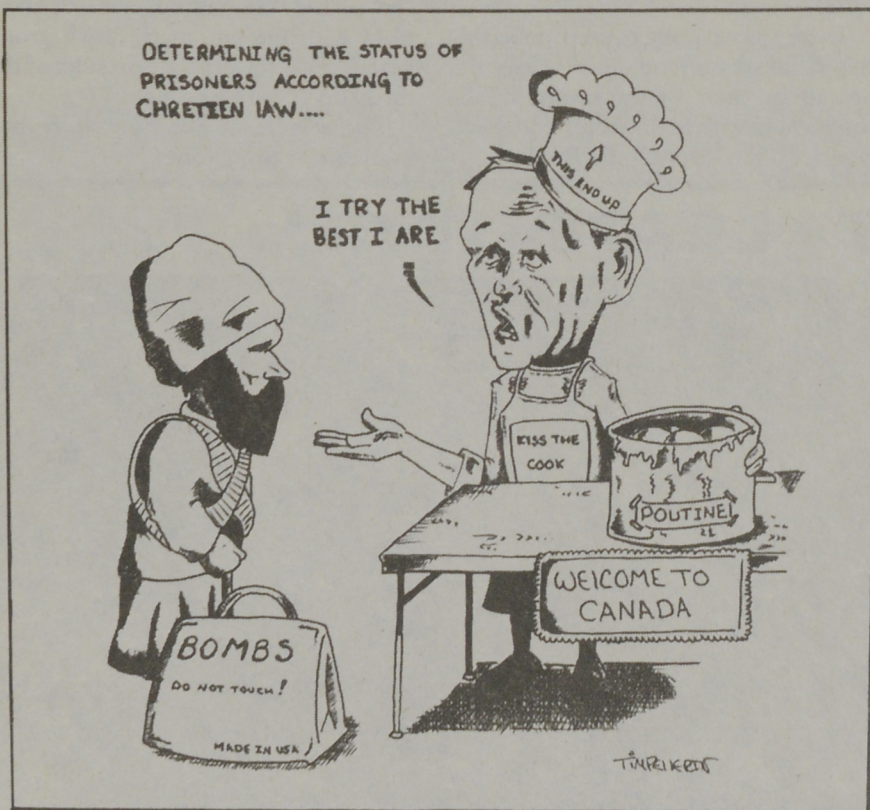
"Light" plays such an important role in how we feel and cope with everyday living. I think most of us feel better when the sun is shining and the sky is blue. Our cares and concerns may not completely vanish at times like these, but they don't seem as foreboding as they do on the days when the sky is overcast with rain-filled or snow-filled clouds hovering overhead.

Throughout the centuries, poets have written about a sense of sadness, loss, and lethargy, which can accompany the shortening days of Fall and Winter. There are cultures and a number of religions which have Winter festivals which are associated with "light," candles or fire. For many people, this time of year can be especially debilitating. They suffer from SAD, or Seasonal Affective Disorder, which is more severe than the "Winter Blues."

The typical symptoms of SAD include depression, lack of energy, increased need for sleep, a craving for sweets, and weight gain. Symptoms begin in the Fall, peak in the Winter and are usually resolved in the Spring. Susceptible individuals who work in buildings without windows may experience SAD-type symptoms at any time of the year. A number of treatments recommended to help those who suffer from SAD include: light therapy (being exposed to a light box), spending an hour a day outside, medication, psychotherapy, and daily exercise.

Perhaps those of us who do not suffer from SAD might be mindful of those who do and try to be more considerate of them when the dark days of winter are upon us.

It's just a thought...



What is education worth to you?

by Greg LeBlanc

Education is the most important institution of any free, democratic society. Without it we could not read or write, build a home, start a fire or even contemplate equality, justice and freedom. Education allows us to peer into our past, appreciate our present and plan for our future. To be miseducated, however, is worse than having none at all. It indoctrinates us

with fear instead of curiosity, greed instead of passion, and ignorance instead of wisdom.

Post-secondary education has become necessary to get a "good" job in today's world, and as a result it has become expensive, crowded, biased and corrupt. Everyone deserves an equal opportunity to learn at these institutions, but, because of the increasing expense, they are becoming

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