

THE BRUNSWICKAN OPINION & EDITORIAL

Mugwump

Sorry to spoil the mood

by Ben Conoley
Managing Editor

I like to think of myself as a concerned citizen of Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, and the world. Unfortunately, as of late, it's been getting harder and harder to focus my energy and thoughts into something that feels constructive, besides of course, this newspaper.

Leaving high school in 1999, I thought myself to be a pretty politically-driven individual. I guess to some extent I still am, but there seems to be so much more to be concerned with today, especially when involved in the independent media where we're constantly bombarded with the awful truth of the world we live in.

I don't think I'm the only one who feels this way. Mind you, there is a great number of people, not only in Fredericton, but all over, who devote a great deal of time and energy attempting to create change. I applaud them for their efforts and successes. However, judging by the low numbers in attendance during the forum with UNB President John McLaughlin (one undergrad, one grad student) I'm not the only one who feels overwhelmed. At least I hope it's overwhelming, because there's a lot to be worried about out there.

Looks like we're probably going to be heading out to war. I don't know what, if anything, is going to stop Bush Co. from loading into their tanks, planes and ships to "fight the good fight" in Iraq. Tuesday's assassination of a United States citizen in Kuwait surely isn't going to help. I guess I'd be pretty pissed off if my father had almost been killed by Saddam, but this seems to be taking it a bit too far. The funny thing is, Tony Blair has admitted that while they can't prove Iraq has weapons of mass destruction, they have to go in anyway, just to make sure they don't have any. Apply that to any local law-enforcement effort and see how far it gets you in a court of law, Mr. Blair.

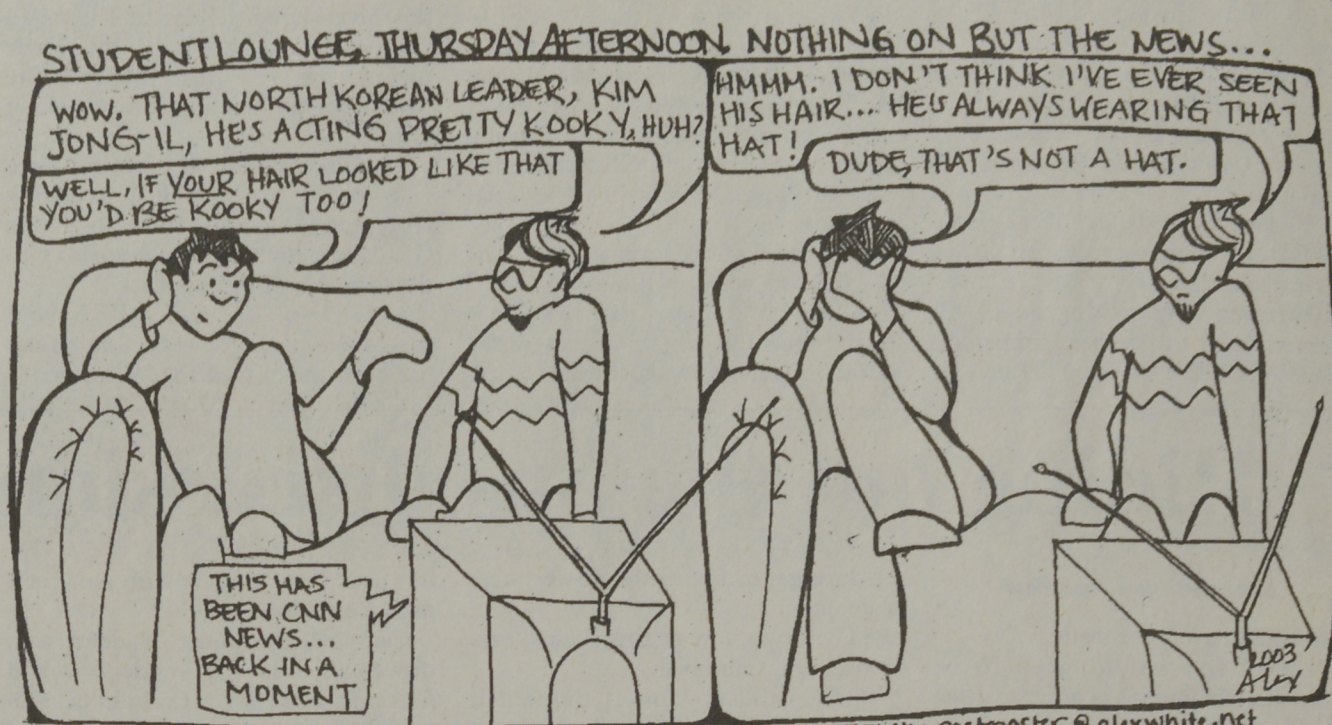
Where's Osama? Oh, jeez, I don't know, we better give the military a couple more billion dollars to find one man, even if it means killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people. It's not like there's a couple dozen other men ready and willing to take his place.

So we might very well see decriminalized marijuana in the near future. Ontario courts have been having a great time throwing out all kinds of small-time possession charges. Now, I support these decisions, but quite truthfully, I'm afraid to argue the subject without coming off like a complete burnout. But hey, I've been to Amsterdam, it's a beautiful city, and their largest crime problem is bicycle theft. The constant bombardment of cocaine dealers trying to sell me Drano laced with bleach is a hassle, but all-in-all, things haven't seemed to change much for the worse since they introduced decriminalization. Oh, and yeah, it's good source of paper.

There's a few other things too: Animal rights, SUVs, sexual assault, homophobia, racism, sexism, every other "ism," the fast food industry, Israelis killing Palestinians, Palestinians killing Israelis, WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, Microsoft, parents who just don't understand, tuition, next years tuition, paying back student loans, finding a job, eating, eating well, people on the street freezing and/or hungry, crack, child pornography, child labor, child abuse, spousal abuse, alcoholism, family dying, friends dying, AIDS, other STDs, cancer, nuclear war, having a shitty job, poverty, third world debt, abortion doctors being killed, ozone depletion, carbon dioxide increasing in the atmosphere, soil erosion, water pollution, noise pollution, light pollution, GMOs, pesticide use, religious prejudice, terrorism, police brutality, rape, endangered species, capitalism, Nelly.....

It's a big world, and it's got a lot of big problems. But where am I supposed to start? Coming to university I was confident I could tackle it all, and single-handedly save the universe. But I soon found out I couldn't. What are we supposed to do when as a whole we're faced with such a barrage of problems, while at the same time trying to individually keep it together? I'm not trying to sound philosophical, and I'm pretty sure I don't, but I think I need a break. Maybe this newspaper thing will have to do for now.

By the way, it was Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Monday, big ups to him for not being afraid, and unfortunately having to die to prove so.



Anti-American? Of course!

by Michael Belyea

Two letters in the January 17 issue of *The Brunswickan* attempt to entirely discredit any important and worthwhile criticism of the United States. Both letters are little more than reactionary diatribes.

Yes, there is a sort of Canadian smugness about our southern neighbours, who in every sense are normal, decent people. If Mr. Demmons and Mr. Steeves had left it at this, I would have applauded. Yet the wild fancies in which both authors indulge, as well as some outright distortions of political reality, suggest that their complaints have nothing whatever to do with bigotry towards the American people. The real point is that we are to properly admire brute power and moral hypocrisy.

You can't help but to be left with the impression that the "socialist" nation of Canada (an idea which is pure invention) is actually inferior to the great benevolent power whose overriding ideology, we are informed, and one that rules US foreign and domestic policy, is "personal responsibility"—another fiction.

Just to clear things up: countries are not moral agents, in which good old ethical values form the basis for actions abroad. I believe that you simply cannot understand international politics unless

you are aware of this basic truth.

Mr. Demmons's admiration for the "success" of Americans does not, as he believes, have much to do with ordinary Americans at all, but rather its owners, who are precisely the people who have concocted the very ideas with which he now dutifully admonishes us. He believes we are "envious" because he cannot imagine otherwise; that someone could criticize the United States is evidently too much for him, who unlike the rest of us has seen the true error of his ways and now perceives clearly the shining example of the most violently aggressive nation on Earth. Since America is by its nature good and true, all criticism is therefore suspect. Further, it is based solely on the personal inadequacy of those northern communists—Canadians—who are so oppressed by health care.

The rhetorical acrobatics are impressive, but have no real meaning beyond trickery, which is true of propaganda generally.

Mr. Demmings informs us that "we're doing nothing in the war on terror."

Well, this rather ignores the fact that there is no "war on terror." The US and its allies remain fully committed to and involved in terrorist programs throughout the world, so the point is irrelevant. By "terrorism" he actually means "Islamist terrorism"—a tiny fraction of total terror activity, much of which is carried out by the great

democracies, as well as by their often undemocratic allies. To deny this is simply to presume the "right" of the powerful, as inherent.

Mr. Steeves implies that the US must either go to war with Iraq or "die." This is a totally false dichotomy, one which even President Bush (momentarily) hesitated to say. It's based not only on the idea that Saddam Hussein is a threat to the United States (an idea that those traitorous commies called the CIA scoff at) but also on the wild assumption that America is not the aggressor in this case, and that Iraq is. To believe this requires a faith that I would call fundamentalist in nature, in which reason and evidence are not only unnecessary, but not wanted.

As for defending Saddam, this is absurd. The only people in this debate who have defended Saddam are many of the same folks who now want to go to war; in the 1980's, critics of Saddam's murderous policies were labelled naive, as critics of Western policy usually are.

One last point: Canada, more often than not, is wholeheartedly involved in America's brutal and often illegal military adventures; I suppose Canada's complicity in acts of criminal aggression should make Mr. Demmons and Mr. Steeves sleep more peacefully, as we can claim "personal responsibility" for a few hundred thousand more dead women and children.

Student Union Roundup Telling it like it is

by John Campbell
SU VP Executive

First of all, let me say thank you to everyone who participated in our Student Survey back in December. This survey, which touched on a variety of topics, focused mainly on the financial situation of students at UNB. With the hundreds of responses that we received, we've been able to get a wide perspective on what it means to be a student here at our school.

So, the responses have been collected, the numbers crunched, and the results analyzed. So, what's next? Well, with the help of some great people (thank you Jennie and David!) we've been working the last few weeks on putting together a report that shows the financial situation of students at UNB. As you read this, the report is being printed, bound and distributed to numerous people and organizations around the province. These reports are going to be landing on the desks of Premier Lord, President McLaughlin, CBC News and *The Brunswickan*, with the hope that we can do away with some old misconceptions and educate the public about students' lives at UNB.

For some students, living this life isn't all that bad. Some get ample help from their parents. Some have money saved up from working. Others have a good paying part time job to help with the costs. It's good to hear that for some students, the system works. However, that's not the case for everyone.

The numbers really tell it all. Students are working more hours a week in order to afford to live and go to school. Of the people that responded, 28% of students are working over 16 hours a week, even though the university only recommends a maximum of 10 hours. People may argue that these students are just working more because they just want extra spending money. However, 72.5% of everyone that works does so just to

be self-supportive.

The fact that students are working more while going to school in its self isn't really all that bad, but this extra work seems to be effecting the quality of their education. Although 74.57% of students responded that studying time takes priority, an easy majority of people said that their work schedule jeopardizes their study time, and that they were more likely to change their studying schedule than their work schedule.

These are just the start of some of the data that has been uncovered by this survey. For most of us, this isn't really surprising. We live this life and know what it's like. Why spend your money on a survey that tells us things we already knew? The answer is simple. Now we can prove it, and use the survey to offer solutions. Rather than just complain about it, or shrug it off and live with it, we're trying to do something about it.

So do you want to get involved? Do you want to show the provincial and federal governments what a student's life is really like? Then I have an opportunity for you. CASA, our federal lobby group, is putting together a campaign called "Generation Debt," and UNB has been chosen to be the first school used!

We're profiling individual students from across the country to use in our ad campaign as examples of what students go through. So, do you have a big private debt? Maxed out your student loans? Couldn't get student loans? Parents not contributed to your student loans like they should? Want to stand up and say that there are problems in the system that need to be fixed? Then contact me at unbsu@unb.ca for your chance to make a difference.

Also, a limited number of copies of the report I've been talking about will be available at the Student Union office. So, if you want to look it over in depth, drop by room 126 of the SUB.

by Jason Stephen French

I had never voted Republican in my life. My great-grandparents were of Russian and Czechoslovakian descent; whereas, my grandfather was an Irish-American. As a family, we remained faithful to the Democrats for the reason that Democrats concerned themselves with immigrants and the working poor. My mother's family was poor Irish-Slovak immigrants who were among the working poor in Cleveland, Ohio. John F. Kennedy was their version of the Almighty.

I vividly recall entering the United Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, during the 2000 Presidential Election. Although, I was a registered Democrat, I was also business-economics graduate who believed in tight fisted fiscal policy and embraced many conservative ideologies. I may be naïve, but I firmly believed that "compassionate conservative" was not an oxymoron. Bill Clinton (whom I twice voted for) had an environmental, big-business and anti-welfare agenda that was reminiscent of Republican politics which traditionally omitted the working poor from the rest of America. I decided the right thing to do was to vote for the lesser of two evils: George W. Bush. I will never vote Republican again.

Ironically, the impending war with Iraq is not the reason I am ashamed of my vote. The Bush Administration has done a horrible public relations job with this one. Oil aside, anyone who honestly believes that there is no weapons of mass destruction being built in Iraq can contact me immediately because I would love to sell you some ocean front property in Arizona. Hell, the funding and technology for all of these weapons came from the United States in the 1980's when we supported Iraq to fend off the "hated" Iranians.

What I did not see or hear at the anti-war protests on Saturday were protesters blasting the human rights record of the Iraqi government. Why not protest in favor of a peaceful and friendly Iraq? Amnesty International reports that the government of Iraq have committed "gross human rights violations on a

massive scale." The peaceful and innocent Iraqi's have arbitrarily detained and arrested tens of thousands of government opponents, tortured opponents and family of those without reason and conduct mass executions daily. Furthermore, the International Olympic Committee is investigating charges that the son of Saddam Hussein, Uday, tortured athletes for merely losing games. This behaviour is akin to Nazi Germany and merits an ass-beating by the US on its own.

Nevertheless, the reason I am ashamed of my vote is because of the treatment of the affirmative action issue by the Bush Administration. The president promised he would strive for a diversified America. Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell were strong black leaders whom I assumed would keep Bush and the old white men "in check." Instead they are ignored.

Bush has publicly denounced the University of Michigan's Law school's pro-affirmative action admissions policy despite pleas by Colin Powell to the contrary. As a white male from lower-middle class background, affirmative action was the very criteria that kept me from being accepted to U of M's law school, notwithstanding my poor LSAT score and modest GPA.

I had the pleasure of living next to one of the worst inner-cities in the United States: The Over-the-Rhine district. I was able to witness poor black children having to share one book per five classmates, seeing high school seniors graduate with a 5th grade reading

capability and rampant drug sales visible on the street (see the movie *Traffic* in which scenes were filmed in Over-the-Rhine). Economically, the 80% black community has a median income of \$19,000 dollars U.S. whereas the Greater Cincinnati median income is \$67,000. Most residents are single mothers with two to three kids.

Faced with these economic and social disparities, not only do I believe that kids from these neighborhoods should receive "Diversity" points while assessing their law school applications, but they should receive a medal and scholarship just for being able to complete college in itself. As someone who has had the luxury of attending a great academic high school and graduating college with honors, I must concede that in my opinion those qualities are by no means as impressive as an inner-city child graduating college and scoring average on the LSAT.

It would be irresponsible to assume that most black-Americans live in the inner-city. Nevertheless, in regards to educated and wealthy black Americans, there was until 1965 an affirmative action plan in the U.S.: WHITES ONLY. It is unbelievable to fathom that until the mid 1970's, black Americans were treated as second class citizens. That is only 30 years ago!

For my president to lash out against a plan that promotes educational diversity and the opportunity to study with individuals of all races and walks of life is not only irresponsible, but is outright ignorant. For that I am truly embarrassed.

Remember

Letters to the Editor

Deadline

Tuesday

Noon

Name, student number, and valid phone number required.

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The Brunswickan's Editorial will return next week.