

THE BRUNSWICKAN OPINION & EDITORIAL

Editorial

Terrorism at the pumps

by Sean Patrick Sullivan
Editor-in-Chief

The commercial starts out simply, with a baffled man standing at a gas pump.

A child's voice cuts in, and the images on the screen change accordingly: "This is George. This is the gas that George bought for his SUV. This is the oil company executive that sold the gas that George bought for his SUV." Panning over a map of the Middle East, the voice continues: "These are the countries where the executive bought the oil, that made the gas that George bought for his SUV. And these are the terrorists who get money from those countries every time George fills up his SUV."

"Oil money supports some terrible things," it says. "What kind of mileage does your SUV get?"

This is one of two new ads The Detroit Project (thedetroitproject.com), an organization founded by Americans for Fuel Efficient Cars, has been pushing to get aired on US television networks.

Designed to parody the recent anti-drug ads developed by the Bush Administration (ads which are complete lies and do nothing to educate kids about the risks of drug abuse, but rather try to scare children by linking pot smoking to terrorism), these ads relay a truth. SUV's use much more gas than other vehicles (12 miles per gallon is average), and such excesses increase our reliance on overseas oil.

And, since Iraq has the second-largest oil reserves in the Middle East, and Americans (and the rest of the West)

desperately need that oil, well... you know what's going to happen (take a look at Tan-Nee Ng's column on the right).

The ads are the brainchild of Los Angeles columnist Arianna Huffington, and have caused quite a stir with the networks. As can be expected, the car companies are freaking out, claiming the ads are "outrageous." SUV's they say, are safer in collisions and better for families. Oh, and you can go off-roading as needed.

Never mind the fact that they tend to roll over, pollute more, use more gas, and smash the hell out of other cars in collisions. To be more fuel-efficient, automakers claim, they would need to develop smaller, lighter cars that would be no where near as safe as an SUV.

Cars like the Daimler Chrysler Smart Car? Sure, it's kind of flimsy, but it can get up to an amazing 65 mpg (see www.smartcarofamerica.com).

Notably, the Bush administration is the first in over 20 years to not require automakers to develop more fuel-efficient cars. In fact, in March the Senate voted to put off legislation that would force automakers to improve fuel efficiency standards by 50% over the next 13 years.

These commercials are trying to teach the public the dangers of over consumption of gas by showing the real link between the pumps and terrorism. For years advertising has tried to tell consumers that owning a big, hulking behemoth of a vehicle will make your life better. Congrats to The Detroit Project for showing otherwise.

Mugwump

What an idiot

by Ben Conoley
Managing Editor

On a trip to visit family in Quebec a few years ago, my father took us to the town in which he grew up. During the stop we went into the graveyard and he pointed out the graves of some of his friends who had died because of drunk driving.

Gordon Campbell should resign from office.

While vacationing in Hawaii last week, the BC premier was driving home from a dinner party, which involved a few drinks. After being pulled over for driving erratically, Campbell proceeded to score 200% on the blood-alcohol test.

Returning home shortly after, with the papers running his smiling mug-shot on the front page, Campbell was quick to host a press conference denouncing his actions, and saying he made a "horrible mistake." However, despite a recent polls which say 50% of those asked want Campbell to resign, he plans to stay put and finish his job, something that isn't too common in the British Columbia Premier's office.

Campbell claims that since he was on his own personal vacation, his actions shouldn't affect his job. I'm not too sure how that argument holds up. Should he have been caught smoking weed, or even worse, had he hit someone with his car that night he'd surely be ousted from office.

Student Union Roundup

One in 6500

by Kate Whitfield
SU President

I have always believed that the solution to student apathy on campus does not lie in forcing student participation but in ensuring that the options are available. I always thought as a Student Union our job was to ensure that all students felt that the information was available to them. They don't have to use it, but it has to be accessible.

I still believe this, but today I need some help. On Monday, the Student Union hosted a question and answer period with the president of the university, Dr. John McLaughlin. This was organized by the SU at the request of some students during the first term. One particular issue that students wanted answers to was the university's rational for the huge increase to the international student differential tuition. The forum was scheduled over lunchtime, before class workloads overwhelmed everyone and advertised in every form possible besides personal invitations to each and every student.

Besides the few in the room associated

with the UNBSU council, one undergraduate student and one graduate student showed up for the forum. I still believe that every student doesn't have to participate, they just have to know how, but when one of over 6500 undergraduate students on the Fredericton campus show up there must be something wrong.

I often hear that no one has time because they are too stressed with course workloads, volunteer jobs and part-time jobs to participate. Is the situation at universities getting too stressful that hardly anyone has the time to work to fix the situation and make it better? Or do people choose not to participate because they believe that there isn't a solution?

As the SU President, I am also willing to take some responsibility. Maybe the SU thinks that we are doing what students want when really we are not. When we debated in council last term about whether or not to participate in a tuition freeze campaign with the Université de Moncton maybe we should have said yes. Not necessarily because we believed that it was the best thing for UNB but because it is something

Because everything is political

Iraq: why get involved?

by Tan-Nee Ng

People have been organizing everywhere against the situation taking place in Iraq by the U.S. government. I have met very few people who actually support the war and many more who have pledged to combat the Bush agenda with all their power. There are also others who simply do not like war in general, but don't know the specifics of the case. They are willing to lend a helping hand, but do not feel comfortable getting involved in something they hardly know anything about. I believe I am one of those people.

I have remained pretty silent during this escalation of forces because although I do not believe violence against innocent civilians is the answer, I don't know enough about the U.S./Iraq situation to be able to back up my anti-war position to others, especially those who think Bush has an actual right to bomb Iraq. But, let's look at some facts:

The war is broader than the attack now being planned by the Bush Administration and includes the combined impact of the 1991 Desert Storm bombing and the 12 years of sanctions and intermittent bombing since then. British and U.S. forces have bombed Iraq more than 50 times this year alone.

The number one killer of young children is dehydration from diarrhea caused by water-borne illnesses, on the rise since the US bombed the electricity grids that powered Iraq's water treatment plants. Sanctions have prevented Iraq from importing replacement parts for chemicals needed to treat water. At the present moment, 4,500 children die every month from starvation and preventable disease in Iraq and nearly 60% of the dead are

children under the age of seven. According to UNICEF and the World Health Organization, US-led sanctions have killed over one million people. Thus, sanctions and bombings are some of the biggest weapons of mass destruction.

Credible analysts such as former chief UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter maintain that the military threat from Iraq is exaggerated and that since the Gulf War, Iraq has been largely disarmed. 95% of Iraq's chemical weapons have been destroyed and any biological agents they may have had in the 80's are long expired. Moreover, Iraq lacks the delivery systems (eg: long-range missiles and rocket launchers) to be able to turn chemical or biological agents into weapons.

In October 2002, the CIA issued a report saying that the military threat from Iraq is at its lowest in a decade and even if Iraq "retains the infrastructure needed to build" a nuclear weapon (as Bush warned in his September 12 speech to the United Nations), it is not the same thing as building one, thus the most likely scenario in which Saddam Hussein would launch weapons of mass destruction is in an all-out war aimed at deposing him, which is, ironically, exactly what the U.S. plans on doing.

There is a lot of history between the U.S. and Iraq that would take too long to get into here. However, fortunately for us, the good people at CHSR are devoting six hours of programming on the background and reasons for the impending war against Iraq by the U.S. this Saturday, the International Day Against War in Iraq, so be sure to tune in. There will also be an Against War/Anti-U.S. Imperialism street party and march taking place this Saturday at 1pm in front of City Hall, so if you oppose this war in any way, be sure to show up.

Ramblings of a madman

American pilots to blame

by Nathan White

The actions of US Air Force Majors Harry Schmidt and William Umbach, the pilots involved in the death of four Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan last spring, are being investigated in a pretrial hearing this week at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana.

Surely anyone who came near a TV in the days after that fateful April night remembers the first subplot of the "War on Terror" to really hit home. Canadians weren't necessarily ecstatic to be involved with the conflict in the first place, and now some had died at the hands of the very neighbours they were meant to be helping.

The hearing, unprecedented in that it marks the first time US Air Force pilots may actually be held accountable for their actions in a friendly-fire incident, is intended to determine whether charges will be brought against the two pilots. While some say the hearing is just a misappropriation of military funds intended to placate Canadians, others point it as a way for the Air Force to absolve itself from responsibility by pointing the finger at two mere employees.

Either way, few Americans see it as a legitimate pursuit of justice, and the two men, who could face up to 64 years in jail, have received outpourings of support from their home communities, with some people even calling them heroes.

On Monday night, CBC's The National aired tapes from the incident in a segment entitled "Canada's Casualties." The pilots, who were safely 22 000 feet away from the machine gun fire of the Canadian training exercise (fire that, at most, could have ricocheted 1000 or so feet in the air) apparently felt they were under threat.

Major Schmidt then said that he could see some men firing, and that he was "going in in self-defense." I am by no means a military expert, but I would not generally consider moving myself closer to potentially deadly gunfire a form of self-defense. Schmidt did so, then dropped the bomb that killed four men,

and injured eight others, only to receive the message that there were friendly forces in the area ten fateful seconds later. His response? "I hope that was the right thing to do."

Schmidt saw some men and some flashes, and without any way of knowing if they were friend or foe, abruptly decided to bomb them, then hopes it was the right thing to do. If this "bomb 'em and hope for the best" approach doesn't show an absolute disrespect for human life, then it at least shows a complete lack of judgment by the pilot.

The piece goes on to show teary-eyed wives and mothers, asking God to open the hearts of Canadians to forgive their son/husband, as well as an eye-witness injured in the blast asking for justice to be served. While the pilots say they just want to fly again, their lawyers point fingers at the Air Force for failing to properly inform their clients of friendly forces in the area, or claim that their actions were impaired by "GO-pills" (Air Force slang for amphetamines pilots are routinely given). The only thing anyone neglects to mention is that they were in any way wrong.

With the pilots, their lawyers and families, the Canadian survivors, and the Air Force itself all screaming "I didn't do it!" in a high-profile finger-pointing session reminiscent of an elementary school playground squabble, it's hard to imagine justice will ever be served in this issue.

Should the pilots spend 64 years in jail for their mistake? No, but they should at least admit that they made a bad decision, instead of following that stubborn "I'm always right" instinct that so many Americans seem to be cursed with. Will they ever do that? Probably not, and after their lawyers are done condemning the Air Force for terrible communications, forcing the pilots to take drugs, and whatever else they can dredge up to keep their butts out of jail, Schmidt and Umbach might even be allowed the honour of flying again for that very Air Force.

The only guarantee is that four men will never take another breath due to an unfortunate accident for which Schmidt and Umbach are at least partly to blame.

everyone can participate in. One of the reasons I voted no was because UdeM wanted to organize mass protests and I pictured myself and ten others standing with our placards outside of the legislature representing the biggest university in the province. Again, maybe this is what we should be doing because ten students is better than one.

We were successful in getting the province to commit more money to post-secondary education in their last budget; however, tuition is going to go up again

this year. We do have a commitment from UNB that the increase will be less than last year. There is still work to be done for a commitment regarding the international differential fee and where additional funding will be allocated. UNB will also experience major cuts. With the university operating budget process underway for 2003-2004 now is the time to give input. If you have comments or suggestions, e-mail me at suprez@unb.ca or feel free to write a letter and start a debate in *The Bruns*.

THE BRUNSWICKAN

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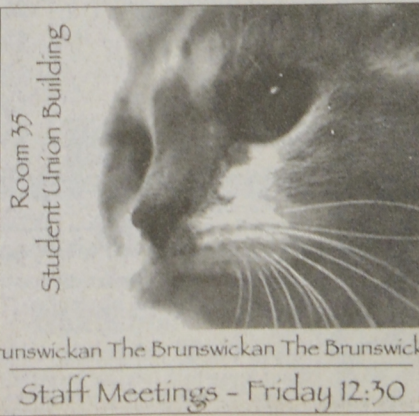
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CBC's Barb Roberts. Remember the time our
News Editor called you at 6am from a
payphone near a deserted gas station in
northern Quebec during an awful cold snap?
Good times...

<and>

Chris Wilson-Smith's uncle, uh... Tony. Keep
up the good work, see you in Montreal.

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