THE BRUNSWICKAN
canada's oldest official student publication

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While we endeavour to provide an open forum for a variety of viewpoints and ideas, we may refuse any submission considered by the editorial board to be racist, sexist, libellous, or in any way discriminatory.
Letters to the Editor should be under 300 words in length, and may be edited for clarity and brevity.
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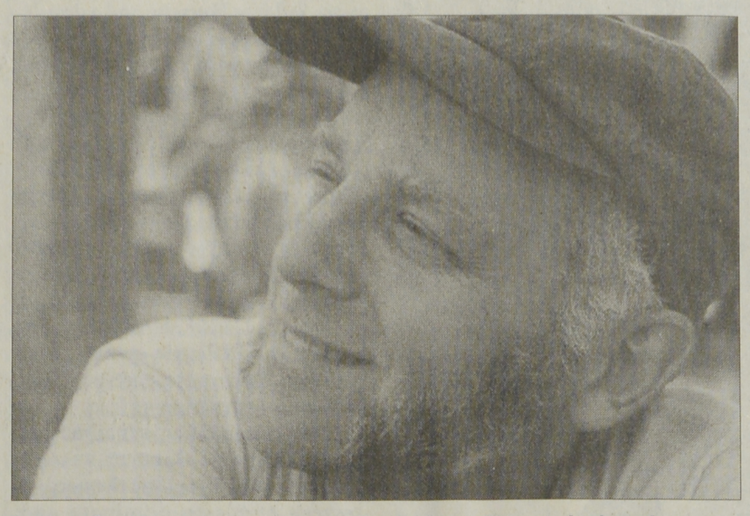
This issue is dedicated to:

The friendly folks at TravelCUTS for letting people stand on your counter.

The passing of an activist hero: inspirations and lessons



DECONSTRUCTIONS
ASAF RASHID



Tooker Gomberg was a passionate and creative protester whose energy helped inspire a generation of activists. He'll be missed.

I was hit with some surprising news while in Toronto recently. It was Friday night, March 5th. I was experiencing the final night of festivities of the 2004 Eco Art and Media Festival, an event put together by members of York University's environmental studies faculty and local artists and supporters. There were a lot of social and environmental justice activists in the room.

At one point, after some performers had just finished their act, a few people approached the stage and one of them made the announcement, "Tooker Gomberg has left us." The image I still have in my mind is of a solitary bike found on the bridge between Halifax and Dartmouth, with no rider. It was a suicide, or maybe better put that the seemingly endless energy finally ran out. I never met him, but I was hoping to meet him one day.

Tooker Gomberg was a very well-respected environmental and social justice activist in Toronto, Edmonton, Montreal, and throughout Canada and abroad through his far reaching reputation. He was residing in Halifax at the time of his death at age 48.

The results of his tireless work are numerous, including founding one of Canada's first curbside recycling programs in Montreal, serving on Edmonton city council for four years with a strong environmental agenda, and in general, being a dedicated cycling advocate everywhere he went.

Not to be forgotten are his efforts at running for mayor of Toronto in 2002 on a deep social and environmental platform, and coming in second.

Tooker gained much respect and admiration in activist communities for his passionate and creative protest. There are many examples. For one, he was known for riding his bike with a car-sized wooden frame and a "road hog" sign on it during cycling rallies.

He was also once dragged out by police from Toronto's Empire Club after shouting down Alberta Premier Ralph Klein during the premier's speech on why Alberta doesn't like the Kyoto accord. Again challenging Ralph Klein, in 2002 he locked himself in a vault in Mr. Klein's Calgary constituency office, saying the Klein government had failed to act on a decade-old report on cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

His energetic protest sent him to jail on occasion, including one instance last year. In Toronto's Peace Camp, set up at City Hall in the lead-up to the US-led invasion of Iraq, city hall security guards approached Tooker and his megaphone. One guard said, "You are prohibited from sitting at a picnic table in our public square and talking with people about peace." The other chimed in, "Stop using that megaphone. You are breaking a bylaw. If you don't stop now I will arrest you." Quite sincerely and through the megaphone, Tooker asked: "which bylaw?" He was taken away.

Tooker's life was full of energy, and it seemed almost as if it was unwavering, but is it not too much to expect anyone to remain "tireless"? It was well known to Tooker's close friends that he was suffering from depression in recent years, even though he continued to exhibit so much energy and creativity.

Many in the activist community in Toronto, upon hearing of his death, were reflecting on the amount of energy both he and so many of the rest of us put into our work. Is there an imbalance? Are we often going about things in an unhealthy way, for both us and our communities? Sometimes it seems as if each of us has to put in so much just to achieve simple things like affordable housing and the right to be free from toxic waste in our communities. It always seems like there is more to do, and some take it to an extreme. It can be depressing.

It is the life that many full-time "fighters" live. As one put it, "If it could happen to Tooker, it can happen to any of us."

I also echo the paraphrased words of my friend Jay in Toronto, another energetic contributor to social change efforts: "Real social change can't happen and isn't going to happen if only a few people out of so many more are going into burn out and not taking care of themselves..."

Reflecting on these statements: Tooker's life was vibrant and inspiring. So many lessons can be learned from it, and one powerful one might be to try and make some changes to our approaches and ways of relating. Many things have got to change in the world and in ourselves.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Another view on Haiti's troubles

I often roll my eyes when reading Tan-Nee Ng's weekly columns, but her article, "The lowdown on Haiti" [March 10] just knocked me off my feet. After reading the article that I felt had the same quality as a grocery store tabloid, I was compelled to inform *Bruns* readers of a much more realistic scenario as to what has developed in Haiti in the past weeks and discredit the idea of American imperialist motives.

Tan-Nee writes that the reason for the trouble in Haiti is due to the "2001 [elections where] seven senators in Aristide's party were chosen."

In fact, Aristide's party, Fanmi Lavalas (FL), won 26 of 27 seats! Human Rights Watch, (an independent, non-governmental organization) said the 2001 elections were 'fundamentally flawed' and directly implicate Aristide to the failure of fair elections.

She also conveniently left out numerous cases of political violence and intimidation leading up to the elections by FL supporters. The police rarely attempted to stop violence and the only arrests made were against, oddly, supporters for opposition candidates and indeed the candidates themselves. This also helps to underscore the widespread corruption stemming from the highest echelons of government.

Transparency International (another non-governmental organization), in its 2003 Corruption Index, ranked Haiti as being the third most corrupt country out of a possible 133.

So I'll go out on a limb and say that perhaps the people brought about the revolution in Haiti because they were not satisfied with illegitimate government claims to power or the corruption that plagued it. Peace is slowly coming back to the impoverished country and with the help of the international community, stability and true democracy can prosper.

According to Tan-Nee (who evidently hasn't done her homework), it would be better to prop up Aristide in Haiti under the illusion of American imperialism than to respect the wishes of the Haitian people to have him gone.

• Anthony Near

Reproductive rights should trump 'control' rights

Although I may disagree with val colden's perspective on the morality of abortion ["Abortion rights is a queer issue," March 10], she raises an excellent point by arguing that queers have a stake in abortion rights. Logically, if there were less abortions, there would be many more babies available for adoption. And that would make it much easier for queers to raise families.

Giving birth to a baby is extremely tough, both mentally and physically, and going through labour only to offer the child up for adoption is even harder.

Nevertheless, anyone who is familiar with the science behind it, however, knows that abortions are not the easy answer. They also happen to be a rather cruel slap in the face to all people who wish they could raise families of their own but can't.

• Andrew Krupowicz
Editor-in-Chief, the Mike
U of T

Bus drivers shouldn't stop for coffee

With all of the talk lately about a better bus system for us students, it leaves me to wonder if the system is fully to blame. Does anyone ever consider that the bus driver himself might be at fault when it comes to the poor service we receive?

Here is a situation that actually happened to me today while I was traveling the 11 North from Main St. to campus: the bus driver pulled over onto the shoulder of the road in front of Tim Hortons. He said he was just running in for a quick coffee and a muffin. I looked around at my bus mates to see if they were in as much shock as I was.

We couldn't believe that he had left his bus, still running even, on the side of the road with nearly 20 passengers waiting to arrive at their destination.

Thanks to "Bus Driver Bob," or whatever his name was, I was five minutes late for a meeting I would have had 10 minutes to prepare for. All I have to say is "are you serious?"

Really though, you don't see cabbies pulling over for a quick bite to eat whenever they feel the need. If I am going to pay for a service that you are providing, you're on my time and not the other way around.

• Clarissa Andersen

DAVE ALEXANDER'S TOP TEN
LIES YOU'RE TELLING THE COPS

10. They're the ones who'll be sorry when you get out of the drunk-tank.
9. The dead guy fell on those bullets while rushing over to lend you his money.
8. Something or other about your "evil twin."
7. You always keep a pound of oregano taped to the inside of your toilet tank.
6. Janet Jackson's nipple drove you to crime.
5. You were trying to push that goat out of the mud when your pants fell down.
4. In your best Obi-Wan voice: "These aren't the drugs you're looking for."
3. Your theory of "premeditated self-defense."
2. Those car stereos belong to the children.
1. "Look! Behind you! Ninjas!"

next week!

Brunswickan Elections for:
- News Editor
- Opinions Editor
- A&E Editor
- Sports Editor
- Photo Editor
- Board Rep

March 24th

All are welcome. SUB Room 35 @ 12:30pm.
Contact eic@unb.ca for more information.

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