

Dr. Kent, former dean of arts

by Chiaki Sadanaga

Dr. Peter Kent's office is located in Tilley Hall on UNB campus. Many books are arranged in huge bookshelves. Papers are piled up on the desk next to his computer. His coat is hung on the door. Kent knows that he will have to leave the comfortably arranged office next year.

Kent received honorary designation - Professor Emeritus in History and Dean Emeritus - in October 2005. The rule of the university is to award professors honorary degrees; but they don't give honorary degrees to retired faculty members. Instead, they have a separate distinction - Professor Emeritus.

Kent officially retired June 2004. At that point, he was asked by the Vice President to come back to UNB for a year as acting Dean of Arts.

"I had been Dean of Arts from 1988 to 1999, and I enjoyed that, so I was quite happy to come back and do it... I guess [in some ways] I wasn't quite ready to retire completely," Kent says.

Kent's teaching philosophy is to empower students to study and learn on their own.

"My approach to teaching is to show students what they should be thinking about... for them to do it and for them to discover from their own readings and their study," says Kent.

Kent has enjoyed what he does since his early experience at a school in Oromocto.

"I never thought about doing that job before," says Kent, "but I absolutely loved it; loved teaching Grade-nine history."

When Kent started teaching at the university level in 1965, he saw that students came to class, and only listened

to what he was talking about. Kent just gave students lectures. It wasn't quite "teaching" to him.

"For the first few years, I found teaching at university wasn't as satisfactory as teaching high school would be," says Kent, "because I wasn't doing that much 'teaching.' I wanted to do more 'interactive teaching.'"



Submitted to The Brunswickan

Drs. Peter Kent (right) and Norm Whitney were named professors emeritus at UNB's fall 2005 convocation. Dr. Kent is re-retiring this year after having been UNB's dean of arts for 13 years.

That was when Kent decided to join a tutorial program where students re-enact historical events. He also became involved in intersession trips to Rome.

"[It is important] sharing students' learning with each other and professors," Kent says.

Having more discussion-based classes and tutorial programs, Kent describes himself as "primarily a teacher."

He says teaching and interacting with students is more important than doing his own research, although he is enjoying his present research on the Vatican.

"During students' learning process, it is also so important

for me to be there and to be helping people make decisions about their lives," says Kent. "Students are the ones who are going to make those important decisions, so it's important for me to get to know who they are."

There is a bench under a tree in the yard in front of the library. The bench is dedicated to Kent. Several stone replicas of his books are also resting on the bench.

"Graduate students contributed to build that bench in my honour in 2004," said Kent. "It is very important to me."

The bench stands there not only to show Kent's significant contribution to UNB, but also to show the strong tie between his teaching experiences and his students' learning experiences with him.

Sex Party positions itself against the mainstream

by Hilary Onas
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VANCOUVER (CUP) -- Google "sex party" and among the approximately 43 million hits that come up is the official website of The Sex Party (TSP), a BC-based fringe political party that materialised earlier this year.

Sex Party leader John Ince said he understands the stigma that gets attached to sex in politics - that's part of the reason the party exists today.

Ince said his frustration with speaking to politicians at various levels of government and discovering they had no intention of getting involved in sex issues, also prompted the party's creation.

"Politicians want to avoid the subject of sex," he said.

TSP intends to develop what they term a "sex-positive culture."

"We argue that there's an overwhelming amount of evidence to suggest that as individuals, and in our institutions, there are a lot of negative attitudes to sex," Ince said.

As an example, he cited an experience TSP had with Canada Post and the BC Liquor Control and Licensing Branch earlier this year. Canada Post refused to distribute TSP election flyers fearing its sexually explicit content would offend the public.

As well, the BC Liquor Branch prohibited TSP from serving alcohol at its SexArtVoteYes! (SAVVY) fundraising event due to the nature of the event's entertainment, which included live sex acts.

TSP is pursuing legal action against both Canada Post and the BC Liquor Branch with the aid of some UBC law students.

In the future Ince and TSP would like to challenge what they deem the "sex-negative" policies governing sex work. TSP favours a total normalisation of indoor sex work.

"There is no way a sex worker can legally get a license to do sex work, in commercial premises... It's one of the things that helps keep prostitutes on the street," said Ince.

TSP's ideas on educational reform, however, have been the most controversial.

Instead of sex education being centred on harm reduction, teaching youths about sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, TSP wants to see its approach of "sexual gradualism" adopted throughout BC.

"[Sexual gradualism] would focus on giving individuals the skills to make sex emotionally and physically rewarding," said Ince.

The skills in question include sexual experimentation with the self (masturbation), the creation of a comfortable dialogue about sex, and "erotic exploration" with peers.

Ince would like to see the aforementioned reforms incorporated into the school curriculum starting in grade 10. "It would be an elective - in the same way an art class is an elective," he said.

Ince acknowledged that the chances of a Sex Party candidate being elected to public office from the "fringes" of the political system are slim.

"We envision the political as more than just getting a candidate elected," said Ince. "Part of our mandate is actually to educate mainstream politicians."

Sam Heppell, president of the University of British Columbia New Democratic Party, believes TSP is achieving this goal. "They definitely make a contribution," he said. "If they're encouraging

increased interest in the political process that's great... At the same time people do need to be smart when it comes to voting - you only get one vote."

And Heppell feels that TSP has a legitimate cause. "I think it's definitely a valid criticism that sexual issues aren't on the political agenda," he added.

In the provincial election last May, the three Sex Party candidates who ran managed 305 votes between them. BC is home to approximately 40 officially recognised political parties, by far the most of any Canadian province.

"Some provinces would have a higher tolerance for different views... some would be more aggressive about keeping a tight reign on how [official party recognition and elections] would work," said UBC political science professor Gerald Baier.

"There might be a more tolerant tradition for a variety of perspectives [in BC]," said Baier.

Baier also believes fringe parties like TSP appeal to young people who are disenchanted with mainstream parties and politicians.

"Those parties might touch on some of the lifestyle issues that students are more interested in," he said.

Ince has other ideas on why students should get involved with TSP.

"We were really conscious that when we used the name Sex Party that it was a double entendre. Party is political; party is fun," said Ince.

"If students are interested in parties that are just unlike anything they've ever seen, getting involved in our SAVVY events is amazing... So there's a whole aspect of having fun."

TSP may be expanding its particular brand of fun federally. In the future they aspire to take their message across Canada and run in the federal election.

Pssst: Here's the scoop on the new STU President:

Dr. Michael Higgins will assume the office of President and Vice Chancellor in July 2006.



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