

Institutionalizing support for war efforts: Welcome to UNB's Gregg Centre

by Asaf Rashid

Universities are places of critical thought and study, not places where there is simply complacent acceptance of ideas just because those ideas are supportive of particularly influential institutions in our society. Considering this, UNB's recently unveiled Milton Gregg Centre for the Study of War and Society is an example of what universities should shy away from. The Gregg Centre seeks to uncritically promote the Canadian Armed Forces rather than to engage in the academic exercise of critically evaluating their actions and ideas. I would argue that if UNB wants to maintain and/or develop the image of an institute of critical thought and study, the Gregg Centre should be moved off campus, with its affiliation to UNB severed. My reasoning is as follows.

For starters, in no description about the centre's recent unveiling has there been any mention of a desire to critically evaluate, for example, the motives of the Canadian Armed Forces' missions, its power structure, the nature of its associations with various military from other countries, etc. As described on the UNB website on September 9, 2006, the Gregg Centre has two roles: "The first is to focus on Canada's Army, its history, place in society, operations and ongoing transformation in today's complex international environment. The other is to foster public awareness of the unique military heritage of New Brunswick and of the province's continuing contribution to the defence of Canada." Not once do the words "critical," "question," "challenge" or any other such words that imply conflict of ideas appear in the description of the goals of the centre. This implies complacency.

Further confirming the "yes sir!" direction of the centre is the fact that it will receive \$120,000 per year in funding from the Department of National Defence. The Centre's deputy director, Dr. Lee Windsor, commented to the CBC (September 12, 2006) that the centre can do research "so that the Canadian public can understand what

their army does for them, what they get for their tax dollars spent on the army." He added that the money received from National Defence won't influence the work done by researchers. I disagree with that idea. Having been involved in graduate studies for nearly seven years now (at two different universities), I have often heard the concern over how funding sources affect the manner in which research is conducted. I have conceptualized my own funding in that way: the money source does influence the work done.

There is more evidence against the academic integrity of the Gregg Centre. The September 12 unveiling of the Gregg Centre also marks the establishment of the Gregg Centre National Council, chaired by David O'Brien, current president of Raytheon Canada. Raytheon is one of the largest arms manufacturers in the world. As of April 2004, they sat only behind Lockheed Martin and Boeing in terms of size (as reported in Canadian Dimension Magazine March/April 2004). Although I'm not entirely sure what the relationship is between the Gregg Centre and the Gregg Centre National Council, it is clear there is some link between the Gregg Centre and the arms trade, which is a conflict of interest. How can research through the Gregg Centre effectively critique military deployments when it is associated with money made through those deployments?

Additionally, the Gregg Centre opens up at a time when the Canadian Armed Forces are engaged in a major recruiting drive. On February 6, 2006, the Armed Forces announced its operation CONNECTION, with a purpose to revitalize their recruiting culture by engaging the entire chain of command in an aggressive and comprehensive recruitment strategy (information from the National Defence website). The problem I have is not so much the act of recruiting as it is the manner in which it is done. In the description of Operation CONNECTION (National Defence website), members of the Armed Forces are asked to "tell people what you do for a living, and that you enjoy it, and that it's exciting and

challenging and rewarding." People are not being asked to say what they actually think or to reflect broadly upon their experience.

This dishonest portrayal fits very well with the Harper government's efforts to market the unpopular Afghanistan mission. On September 22, Harper spoke in front of a rally to support the troops at Parliament Hill that went by the title "Wear Red Friday." According to Harper, everyone is happy with what's happening with the Afghanistan mission, including Afghanistan. He ignored going into details about concerns that have been expressed, for example, by Malalai Joya, the female member of the Afghan government. At the September 9 NDP Federal Convention, she explained (whole transcript at <http://www.ndp.ca/node/4329>):

"The U.S. government did remove the medieval-minded regime of Taliban and their Al Qaeda masters. But instead they brought back the 'Northern Alliance' to power, who are... as brutal and anti-democracy as Taliban and even worse... Afghan women and men are not 'liberated' at all... On May 7, 2006, I was physically attacked by pro-warlord and drug-lord MPs in the parliament just for speaking the truth - crimes of Northern Alliance. One of them even shouted 'prostitute, take and rape her!'"

Can the Gregg Centre - with so many barriers to critical analysis in place - expose such unpleasant details as Ms. Joya has conveyed? Will they even bring up the subject of the Trans-Afghan pipeline and the relationship between security of the pipeline and Canadian troop presence? These are two amongst many questions that can be asked. I encourage all concerned people to write to UNB's administration and the Gregg Centre administrators as well and ask tough questions about the nature of the centre. If the centre can only act as a beacon of unequivocal support for all Canadian Forces efforts - in spite of any negative repercussions to Afghans and the Canadian troops themselves - I think it's time for UNB to plan an exit strategy for the Gregg Centre.



Internet

Thank you Fredericton

by Neal Green

Fredericton can be cheap. Cheap like a prostitute you are probably better off avoiding. But I would not recommend avoiding this town. According to a reliable source, a friend who is still learning English and may have been sauced at the time, a parking pass works out to \$10 a month at UNB. Well, that is petty change. The last university I attended charged almost as much for a single day. And no, it was not in Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. Rent here also happens to be quite affordable. While my cronies back home are living in shady basement apartments with bad drug deals going down all around them, I am getting a great deal in a great place only a 10 minute walk away from campus. And I haven't heard a single gun shot yet. Upon graduation, it is feasible to buy

a house in this fantastic city. Not so virtually anywhere in B.C., Alberta, or Ontario. Unless by house, you mean trailer. And by buy, you mean steal in the middle of the night, and that's okay too.

Getting drunk can also be a bargain if you are smart. Hit any one of the very generous happy hours around town and it is possible to get lit up for next to nothing. This is strange because the liquor store prices in this province are some of the most expensive nationwide. And when the painful morning after rolls around, it is possible to get an excellent three dollar breakfast downtown, something I am not used to seeing. If one were a critical thinker, one might say that the wages are correspondingly higher in cities with higher costs of living. Well, one might be right. However, this article is only related to university students who are lucky to get a part-time job for seven dollars an hour.

University students do not generally make "mad skilla" until years after leaving this establishment of learning. Unless they choose to slang the rock or slang something equally profitable. Unfortunately, the law and my mom get angry when I choose that route. With the glaring exceptions of Nfld. and Quebec, there are no places in Canada that stand out as having significantly lower tuition than N.B. (Manitoba is cheaper, but that only counts if you would like to live there!). Quebec does not count because they won't share the wealth if you are a non-resident. Factor in overall costs of living and it is hard to say that we are getting jacked in the overall picture. It's all about looking at the bright side, my friends. Something we all need to do from time to time. Because those slackers in the Legislature are not going to listen. And if they ever do, it will only happen after we graduate.



Response to Religion: not on the science menu

by Tyler Coleman

Dear editor,

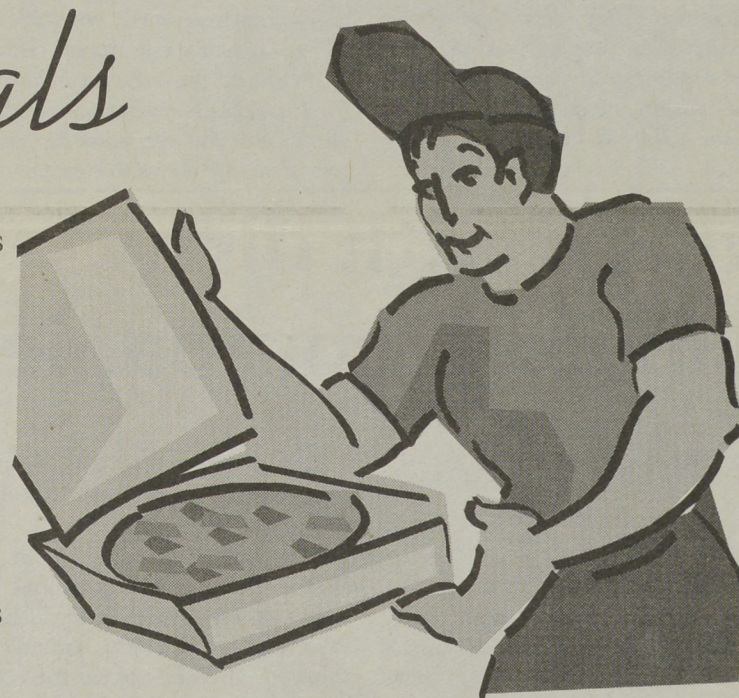
Let me first state that I am a Christian with a BA in religious studies and consider myself (though some think it impossible for a Christian to be) a rational person. My interest was peaked by a title in Wednesday's Brunswickan: "Religion: not on the science menu." In this article Nobel Laureate Sir Harold Kroto speaks of his fear of the blurring lines between church and state, and fundamentalist religious groups. Having traveled extensively over the past year through the Bible belt and watching the news channels down in the states it scares

the heck out of me too. Where I started to have problems with Kroto's arguments is when he states, "the strict enforcement of one's religious beliefs on others, he said, is why folks have so much trouble getting along." I agree with the statement but Kroto then goes on to explain how he would like to remedy this great wrong. He would cut out single religion schools so as to "enforce equality at an early age." This is a judgment that is saying that single religion schools teach elitism or some other form of inequality among peoples which may sometimes be true but not always. Kroto states that his 'religions' are humanism, atheism, amnesty-

internationalism and humourism. It seems from the article that Kroto is a bit of a fundamentalist in his own religions and that he wants to impose his views of the ideals of humanism on others, the very thing he is blaming fundamentalist Christians of doing. He cites useless killings due to Christian conflicts in the 16th century as a great injustice, which it was, but also makes reference to the weapon, the guillotine, which was used in a cause related to enlightenment fundamentalists. I agree whole heartedly with Sir Kroto that religion and state should stay separate but just because a person doesn't believe in a god doesn't mean their religion should dictate public policy.

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