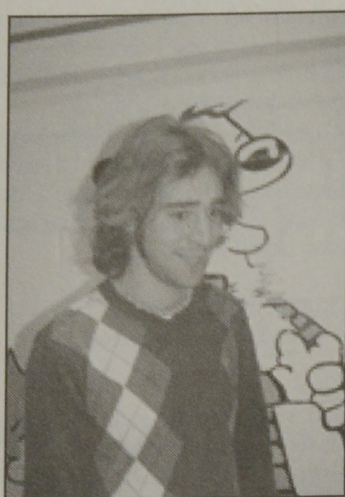
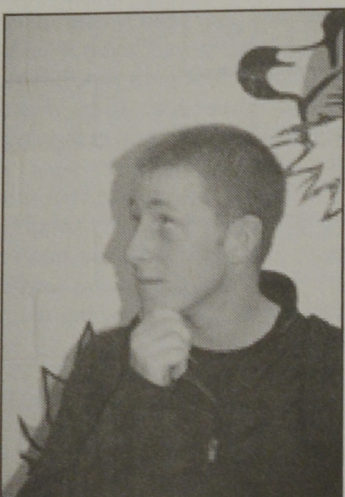
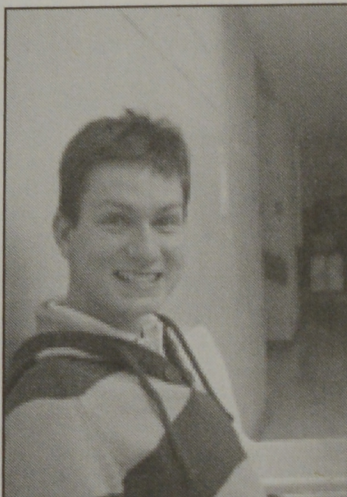


THE BRUNS **VIEWPOINT**

What's your favorite childhood toy?

My imaginary Lite Bright
Andrew LambertBarbie
Brianna LaidlawRock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots
John FitzgeraldStuffed dog
Mike McLeanMy stuffed hawk
Natasha BlackBarbies
Vanessa Morris

An open letter to Alex Stevens

Dear Editor,

After reading your article, Mr. Stevens, regarding the Weak Size Fish show, I was awed by your courageous effort to give a professional review in spite of your being too drunk to actually remember the show. I, too, was excited to see this show, as I knew I was in for a treat: this is only Weak Size Fish's third show where they had the full band.

No one better than a seasoned musician like yourself could understand how difficult it is to play for 2 full hours in a bar that is excruciatingly hot and without taking a break from singing or playing. My memory fails me though: what was the name of your band again? What instrument do you play? And when is your next gig?

Your basic questions are good ones: Can the Fish appeal to the masses? Can they fill a venue if they don't have their friends standing behind them? In their three shows in Bathurst and one show in P.E.I. this summer, they packed the houses, each of them three times the size of the Capital, and did so when no one from university was around. I am sure you were at each of these shows, doing your legwork and background so you could continue writing with the high level of professionalism you exhibited in this review. I must have missed you at those shows because you had been swallowed up in the crowd.

I couldn't agree with you more than when you said that a band should not have more than two guitarists nor more than one singer. Really good instrument

and vocal harmonies are so overrated. Bands like Pink Floyd, the Outlaws, Lynard Skynard, Fleetwood Mac, Shania Twain, and so many others would be so much better and have a much stronger and more loyal following if they would follow your sage advice.

Again, you are so right - it would make so much sense if when any band played a venue with a small stage that they just leave those members that can't fit on the stage home. Knowing it is all about what a band wears and how they look and not at all about their unique sound is such an astute observation; it's like you and Paris Hilton are of one mind - fantastic! (And I think the way you describe Nick Mazerolle's quick tongue and nimble hands, you and Paris would get into quite the cat fight over

him, yes? Me-ow!

And as a final point, you couldn't be more right about the overuse of microphones. Not only are you right when you say there were too many of them, I say take it one step further: banish their unsightliness from the stage altogether. The band could save lots of money by just using fake plastic mic's and lip-synching the words. This practice hasn't hurt Janet or Britney's street cred one bit and if it's good enough for them, it should be good enough for the Fish, too.

Bravo, Alex Stevens, bravo!

Sincerely yours,
Meaghan Dougherty

How Confident are we of the Confidence in this Minority?

ROUSING
THE RABBLES

by Nick Ouellette

The time has come for a history lesson.

Little has engrained itself in the popular culture of our nation as much as the Canadian Heritage Moments such as the one that first utters the words "responsible government" for many Canadians. Yet, other than knowing "it's a Canadian idea," the question remains whether every Canadian knows what responsible government really is.

Definitions such as dutiful and loyal are grand and full of aspiration, but they both fail to capture the true meaning of responsible. And while we might hope that our governments are reliable, conscientious, and competent, even the fickle, careless, and incompetent government can be said to be a responsible government.

A responsible government is seem-

ingly less impressive, yet ultimately far more important because it is accountable and answerable to Parliament. It holds office only while it enjoys the confidence of Members of Parliament, so that executive authority hinges on the colloquial will of the people.

Tests of confidence arise in votes on the Speech from the Throne, budgets, and anything else the government simply declares to be a matter of confidence. When such a vote fails, confidence is withheld, the government falls, and an election is normally called. And that's what brings us to today's history lesson.

Parliament reconvenes next week when the government introduces a new Speech from the Throne with a new set of legislative priorities that has already set off a new round of political gamesmanship. The pieces are already falling into place.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his minority government have declared that if the opposition parties support the Speech from the Throne, and thus the government's legislative agenda, they cannot then vote against any of the bills the Speech mentions. To ensure this is the case, the government intends to declare most if not all of these bills as matters of confidence, hoping to scare opposition parties that do not want an election into supporting Conservative

policies.

Even without seeing the Speech, the Bloc and the NDP have already made demands that the Harper government cannot support. Thus, in expectation of Harper's plethora of confidence votes, it falls to the Liberals to decide whether Harper stands in the Commons or falls to the electorate when the Speech from the Throne finally comes to a vote.

If Dion's Grits support it, they stand between a rock and a hard place where they must determine whether they also support the bills that fall out of the Speech. The alternative risks forcing an election in which they would need to make the case for supporting the government's policy agenda but not its bills.

Harper's political manoeuvre is tactically adept. Painting Speech from the Throne supporters as either wholesale supporters of the government or as eventual flip-flop junkies is a perfect way of ensuring that he can govern for a full mandate, even in a minority government situation. Dion's recent leadership weaknesses are not helping the Liberals chances.

However, the Conservatives appear to misunderstand fundamentally the function of the Speech from the Throne. Despite what the threat of numerous confidence votes might suggest, a vote in favour of the Speech does not give the government carte blanche to enact as it pleases.

If it did, there would be no need for a legislative session beyond the Speech from the Throne. The Governor General could parade into Parliament and read the Speech, some MP's would give rousing and partisan speeches, the vote would happen, and either it would pass and they could all go home or the government would fall and we'd be off to the polls.

Of course, that is not how things work, because a 30 page speech does not encompass the details hundreds of pages of legislation and estimates. If MP's approve the Speech from the Throne they do not surrender their conscience, because to do so would extinguish Parliament's inherent accountability.

Approval is indicative merely of an agreement in principle of the legislative and budgetary policies the government plans to bring forward. Once introduced, those measures are still subject to the rigorous scrutiny of Parliament. Bills must still go through committee. Budgets must be analyzed. Questions must be asked and answered.

Meanwhile, the opposition Liberals cry foul, claiming Canadians do not want an election. But, in reality, this

is the time when the opposition must unwaveringly meet its commitment to holding the government accountable.

It has been a year and a half since Harper took office. Are we satisfied with our government? Has it, and its ministers, performed well? Should it be allowed to create a gauntlet of confidence matters that stand outside the normal practice of Canada's Parliament? These are questions to bear in mind as the Governor General delivers the Speech from the Throne.

If the opposition truly supports the goals and ambitions of the government, then it must support the Speech. But, if the Speech is such a significant digression from their values, then the opposition parties cannot support the Speech. The same holds true for any legislation introduced as a matter of confidence if and when the Speech from the Throne is approved.

The time has come for the opposition to pony up. It is not enough that the Liberals might presently stand divided. Do not mention that Dion's leadership is routinely under question—the party chose a leader and it must make do with the one it selected. Liberal MP's form Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and have a duty to hold the government to account.

A vote in favour of the Speech from the Throne or any other confidence matter merely to avoid an election that might cause their party difficulties is a vote that shirks the opposition's duties under responsible government, and a vote that says to Canadians that they are not ready to govern. Our democracy insists that an ineffectual government held to account is better than a government with the greatest policy ideas that is never checked by elected representatives.

It is true that the government cannot use the Speech from the Throne to cloak itself in apparent authority to govern without opposition. But at the same time, the opposition parties cannot mask themselves behind the veil of weak leadership or lack of direction, and certainly not behind an allegation that the public does not want an election. Such a veil comes at the expense the opposition's burden under responsible government.

If the government wears its cloak or the opposition dons its mask, it will shroud Parliament in a void of accountability.

Nick Ouellette has served on the UNB Student Union Council and the UNB Board of Governors, and now serves on the UNB Fredericton Senate and as an Assistant Don in UNB's Residence Community.

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Alpine LAGER

Karaoke with Sean Burgess (in the pub)
DJ Fuji in the main bar

The Brunswickan
Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

4:30 PM

SUB Room 103

Questions? eic@unb.ca