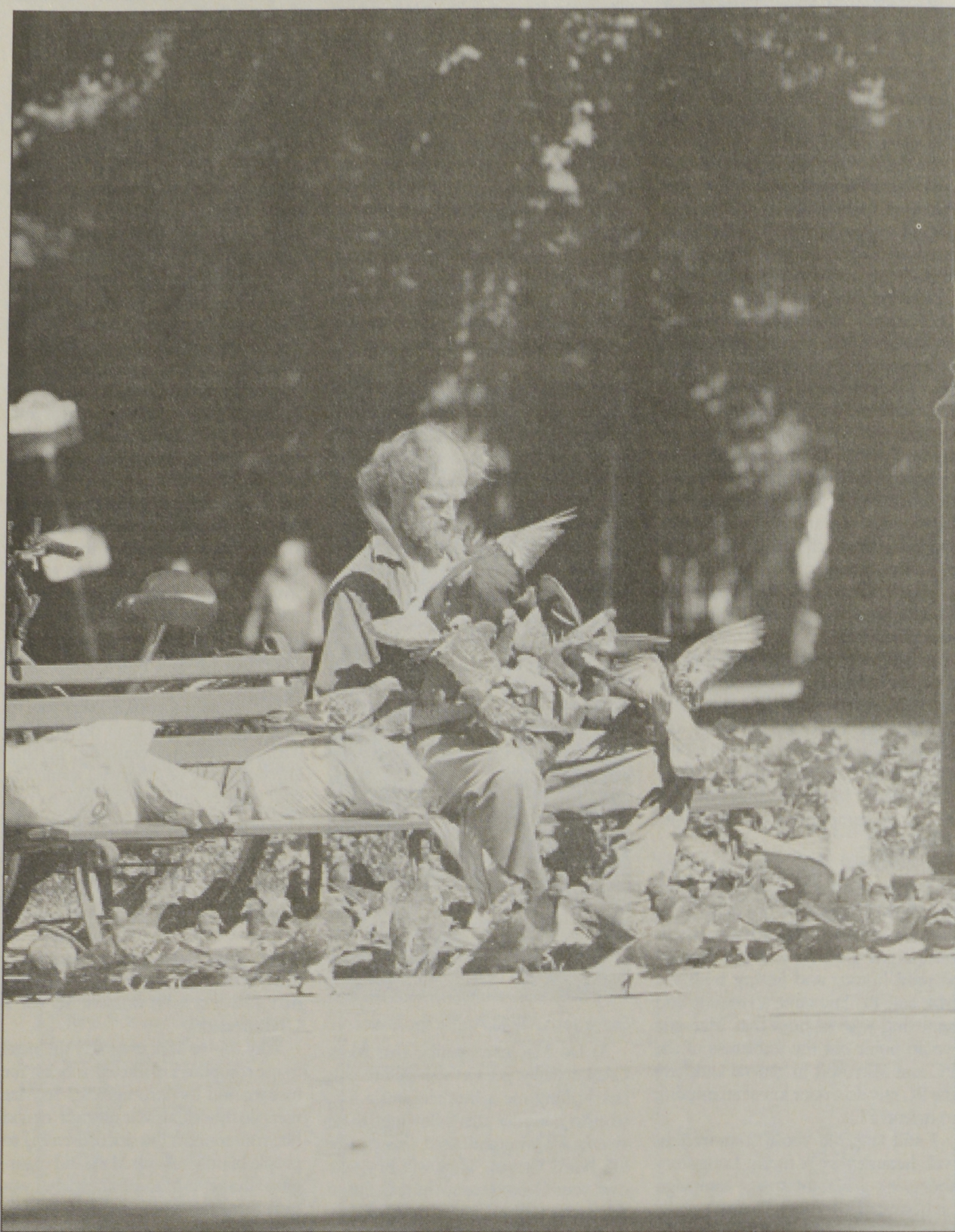


COMMENTS & LETTERS

eic@unb.ca • September 19, 2007

Photo of the Week



Jennifer McKenzie / The Brunswickan

I saw this man feeding the pigeons in Kings Square, uptown Saint John.

UNB Saint John Yay or Nay?

MUGWUMP

by Tony von Richter

"While we support some of the broad themes contained in the report, there are several recommendations with which we take exception, particularly those pertaining to our Saint John campus".

Those were the words of UNB President John McLaughlin in a statement released to UNB faculty, staff, and students this past Friday in the wake of the release of the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick report. This commission evaluated the province's higher education system.

Of course, the most talked about aspect of the report has been the recommendation that NBCC Saint John merge with UNB Saint John to become a polytechnic institute separate from either UNB or NBCC.

For the most part, reaction to this portion of the plan has been negative with everyone from the UNB administration to the students themselves protesting the proposal.

Not everyone is against the closure of UNBSJ, however, as some people believe that closing the Saint John campus will help the university in the long run.

Should UNBSJ be shut down, though? Would this proposed polytechnic institute be the best thing for the province? Just what would the polytechnic institute focus on?

According to the report, the new school would focus on health, energy, and business-related programs with a unit of the Dalhousie medical school located on the campus and a focus on the energy sector, as Saint John is an emerging player in the energy industry.

Aside from the students and administration who simply don't want their

school to close, I think that description of the new institute is why so many people are opposed to it as, aside from the medical component, what does that school sound like?

To me it sounds pretty much like a school set up to serve the needs of Irving Oil.

Now, I'm not as opposed to the existence of Irving as some people are. I don't like that they own virtually all the media in the province or that they're so big they control much of the province's employment (although they can't be blamed, for no other company is as big as they are), but I really don't like the idea of an entire school being set up to seemingly serve their hiring needs.

So while I don't think that forming a school centered entirely on the energy sector, the portion of the Commission's report about putting a medical school in Saint John should be seriously considered.

What should happen? UNBSJ should stay open, but rather than offering Arts, Business, and basic science courses, the school should be converted into a full-fledged medical school with the faculty of nursing moving to Saint John as well.

This would accomplish more than few things, including eliminating duplicate programs and concentrating the resources that were spread across multiple faculties into one blanket faculty, which could potentially improve the quality of the programs offered by the various faculties and placing a medical school in Saint John would raise the profile of the school and greatly contribute to President McLaughlin's goal of making UNB a comprehensive university. A medical school would also improve the quality and increase the options offered for post-secondary education in the province, which was the whole point of the report.

So I don't think UNBSJ should be replaced with a polytechnic institute, but it can't survive in its current incarnation either, and a UNB-branded medical school could be the best option for the province, the school, and most importantly, the students.

The Brunswickan

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Town/Gown Divide Deepening

ROUSING THE RABBLES

by Nick Oulette

The "student issue" has once again taken Fredericton by storm, but the wake left by its tempest has the potential to harm the community more than any collection of fires on Graham Avenue could. To be certain, arson of furniture and other debris is a serious concern and whoever is setting these fires must stop in order to ensure the safety of College Hill residents: students and non-students alike. However, the response by some in the community now extends beyond a public safety concern. It has evolved into a vilification of students that has created an unwelcoming environment.

The issue is not solely a student is-

its own. A week and a half ago, UNB students took to the streets and raised over \$25,000 for cystic fibrosis research in this year's Shinerama campaign. Visit the UNB residence community and you will find no fewer than a dozen residences that each mount annual charity fundraisers and campaigns for the benefit of their community—Fredericton.

Encouraging students to look at Fredericton as a life-long home rather than a four-year stepping-stone is surely the aim of programs like the Freddy Beach Party that sees Fredericton shut down Queen Street to welcome students at the beginning of each school year. But these efforts ring hollow when a city councillor who acknowledges she doesn't know "who is causing the fires" automatically sets her targets on students and accuses them of "[tearing] apart the sense of community." Comments like these illustrate an undertone that students are outsiders and are not welcome in Fredericton.

These are not the only instances that highlight the superficial value in existing

crime and other disorder, but a pressing concern was that they be installed by the fall "before students return to Fredericton." And when is the last time the city has engaged with students themselves to determine their needs as citizens in this shared community? There are increasingly more reasons for students in Fredericton to feel unwelcome and uncomfortable in a city to which they have much to offer.

The lack of a formal response by UNB to the recent arsons exasperates this dynamic. The institution has sat by idly without either challenging claims against students or making efforts on campus to educate students about their role in Fredericton.

It is time for this conversation to move from rhetoric hurled in the media into a forum where this issue can be properly addressed. Where is the city's university/community relations committee? It seems like the perfect venue where the universities, the city, and, most importantly, students can come together to discuss the place of students

Are we still bloody homophobic?

by Mireille Smith

Intercamp (Grant MacEwan College)

EDMONTON (CUP) -- Canadian Blood Services promotes the idea that if you donate 15 minutes of your time and a pint of blood, you'll save lives. You may feel a bit light-headed afterwards, but you can take pride in knowing you've done something to help others—so long as you're not gay.

If you're a gay male who's had sex in the last 30 years, your blood isn't wanted.

This suggests we'd rather die than have gay blood pumping through our veins. To make matters worse, Canadians don't have a choice in the matter. Canadian Blood Services considers gay male sex a behaviour putting people at risk for contracting HIV and AIDS.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, 1,232 cases of HIV were reported in the first six months of 2006. Among these, 47 per cent were gay males, and 33.5 per cent were of the heterosexual persuasion. The difference between these numbers is relatively small.

Canadian Blood Services should differentiate between risky behaviour in general and a person's sexual orientation. On the Record of Donation questionnaire, potential donors are asked, "In the past six months, have you had sex with someone whose sexual background you don't know?" Heterosexual indiscretions performed before this time frame aren't an issue.

Gay men, however sexually responsible, are automatically branded a threat to the blood supply. Meanwhile, Promiscuous Patty can waltz in under

the radar. If all donations are properly tested, only tainted blood should be a reason to turn gay donors away.

Apparently there is a blood shortage in Canada. The Edmonton Sun reported last week that the shortage in this city led to the cancellation of some elective surgeries. Still, healthy gay men are prevented from helping, which also does nothing to squash homophobia by continuing to view AIDS as a gay disease.

It's unfair to fault the blood donor system when it's supposed to guard our health and safety. But speaking as one of those protected Canadians, if I'm on my deathbed in line for a transfusion I don't want to die waiting for clinically approved, heterosexual blood.



Andrew Meade / The Brunswickan

sue. Fredericton police have recognized this; the main suspect in the case of two recent burnings is not even a student. Despite this, the typically student-populated College Hill is again providing a convenient lightning rod for negative attitudes toward students. What is most unfortunate is that reference to student areas as a "hole in the neighbourhood" cheapens any efforts Fredericton makes to welcome students into the community.

And it is community for students as much as it is for anybody else. Take a look beyond Graham Avenue and you will see a vibrant student population that wants to embrace Fredericton as

efforts to provide students with a sense of community. Despite actual injuries, there is still no pedway or alternative pedestrian way near route 8. In two separate years, the city has refused to engage with the UNB Student Union for a cost effective U-Pass that would allow students to take full advantage of the city's bus system and in turn allow the city to upgrade its ailing transit infrastructure. Both of these opportunities would allow students unable to afford vehicles to live somewhere other than College Hill. Yet, the city has delayed.

Two years ago the city decided to install surveillance cameras in the downtown tannery area in order to deter

in Fredericton.

If the stakeholders do nothing, or if they continue to make biting comments at each other in local papers, we all stand to lose. Those who choose to study at UNB will consider Fredericton a future home—a place to work and raise a family—only if the environment is the right one. The community should not deprive itself of the benefit students can bring to Fredericton, both now and in the future.

Nick Oulette 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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