

soundoff

Immediate problems need attention

Dear Editor:

I have just read, with increasing anger and disgust, the letter from Mr. William Sweezy, Superintendent. My first question is, what is he the Superintendent of? If it is of schools, then I suggest that the New Brunswick school system is in much worse shape than anyone thought.

Mr. Sweezy seems to have the idea that university students who are unable to pass the University English Competency test are the results of the failure of the university educational system. He protested that the public schools, while not entirely blameless, should not be receiving the brunt of the criticism. He chose instead to make a weak attempt to slough the responsibility onto the shoulders of the university.

His first point, which is that the brightest students in the school system are the ones who benefit most from the present system, is pure fallacy. Teachers are restricted to teaching the material to their students. The teacher must modify his plans to reach the median level of comprehension in the class. By definition then, the brightest student does not benefit from his educational system, but suffers.

Mr. Sweezy also brought out other points, points which I would like to counter:

1) Does the university accept students who are not suited to the academic setting? Yes, the university does commit this offence. It is not enough to just admit this though. The university admits students it shouldn't because if it didn't, then, in effect, it is saying that there are problems with the academic level of the public school system. This obviously isn't acceptable to the government which funds both the public schools and the universities, or to the parents who have the votes which put a government in power. Most parents want their children to have an advantage that they did

not have, namely a university education. By virtue of the political process then, the university is required to lower its standards, while at the same time, the public school system is making drastic changes in its educational policies. Gone are the three R's, "Readin', Ritin' and Rithmetic." Instead, the student is encouraged to express himself in his writing without worrying about the grammar. I would like to add at this point that I agree with George Orwell, poor writing leads to poor self-expression and inarticulation, both of which many students suffer from. Grammatical rules improve the quality and clarity of the written thought, which in turn improves the mental organization of thoughts and helps the student to articulate clearly, without having to wonder whether the meaning of what he has been saying has been understood. Today, because of increasing use of computers, students will be ill-equipped to learn how to use them because computers and computer languages require precise and correct grammatical usage. In this, the growing age of computers, many will be left behind because those responsible for teaching English, in all its shapes and forms have neglected their jobs.

2) Mr. Sweezy's second point would appear to show his total lack of understanding as to the responsibilities of the public school system. He asks if the university is diagnosing the needs of the freshman English student and then teaching the deficit skills. Mr. Sweezy seems to have his priorities mixed. The university is the apex of the school system. It isn't the responsibility of the university to teach the freshman student English, but to expand the student's knowledge of English. The university is then acting on the premise that the public school has fulfilled its responsibility and has taught the student the rudiments and fundamentals of the English language.

As witnessed by the University English Competency Test, these responsibilities are not being fulfilled. Further to this point, Mr. Sweezy is suggesting that it is not the responsibility of the public school to teach the Freshman student English. If, as Mr. Sweezy suggests, this is true, what then are the criteria for admitting a student to University? Certainly not on the basis of scholastic marks, as all subjects require an understanding of the English language in order for them to be effectively understood.

What Mr. Sweezy is really proposing is that the University take over the function of the high school. I'm sure this would be an agreeable after fashion with the administration of a university, provided they were receiving the funds of the high school system. By turning the universities into large high schools, however, the university doesn't do its job, which is to expand and enlarge the mind of the more capable high school student.

As it is now, some univer-

sities have required freshmen to take compulsory writing courses, just to bring their writing skills to an acceptable standard. The problem was that the universities were not receiving extra funding for this program because the education officials in the provincial government ASSUMED THAT THE HIGH SCHOOLS WERE FULFILLING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND PREPARING THEIR STUDENTS TO ENTER UNIVERSITY. As can be seen from test results from the two universities in Fredericton, this was not happening.

3) Mr. Sweezy's third point shows his inability to understand the function of the public school system. He asks whether or not the university is compatible with the public school system. His question, mystifies me. The relevant question is: Is the public school system preparing the student for the broader areas of study which will be encountered at the university level? The obvious answer is no. If the public school system was responsible, there would be no

question of compatibility. Of necessity, the university is not compatible with the public school system. The areas and subjects which a university teaches are too large for a high school to teach. Ostensibly, what the high school is supposed to be teaching, are the fundamentals for further study of broader areas.

Mr. Sweezy's other two points are general points, poor attempts to obscure the real issues of responsibility and a general decline in the quality of teaching over the past several years. I suggest that Mr. Sweezy would be better employed working on the immediate problems, rather than obfuscating already muddled issues.

One last point in reply to Mr. Sweezy. This is on a personal note. As a product of the New Brunswick school system (St. Stephen High School 1980) as well as others across the country, I do not believe that I was at all prepared for entrance to University.

Name withheld

Damages out of hand

Dear Editor:

The College Hill Social Club, which has a member of over 3,000, the majority of who are students of the UNB and STU campuses, is rapidly becoming a "victim". A victim of what? Allow me to elucidate.

Since moving upstairs and officially opening its new premises in November of 1982, the CHSC has repeatedly been the victim of thoughtless individuals who, presumably, get some form of satisfaction from destroying Club property. (What these mindless "persons" are either unaware of, or know and care less, is that the property they are destroying belongs to the members, though this is not the issue.)

Damage to Club property according to my observation has increased of late. The list I received from a member of the Club's management seems to lend credence to this observation. On Saturday, January 7th, a toilet in the men's washroom was destroyed, and on the following Saturday, January 14th the door to the same stall was kicked in and a hole punched in the wall. (See photo). The management estimates the cost to repair said damage will be approximately \$1,000.00! (See figures below). Unfortunately this was not the only damage done in the past seven days.

As a member of the Club, I wish to protest the behavior of these individuals and to inform other members as to what is

going on. The quickest and easiest method of so doing, I felt, was through our University newspaper. I hope after perusal of the damage figures, other members of CHSC will be as angry as I and support the Management, Board and Staff of the Club in ousting those individuals who cause damage, if and when they are caught.

There is no plausible reason why such damages should occur, nor should their occurrence be tolerated. The extent of the damage is immediately evident upon entering the Club. The carpeting looks a decade old, rather than only fourteen months, due to people throwing their gum and lit cigarettes on it. The ten low backed bar stools have dwindled to three that

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