

EDITORIAL

by Lynne Wanyeki

Thankfully, the rush of Orientation, Registration and those inevitable course-changes is now behind us. However, as tedious as the long line-ups were, they gave me the opportunity to reflect upon several points which I feel are pertinent in view of the upcoming provincial elections.

The first issue concerns the 3% tax that has been drawn from our Student Loans. The federal government has employed an unprecedented economic strategy - that of actually taxing a loan. Most people would agree with the idea of charging interest on loans, but taxing loans is quite another matter. It seems to me that the need to tax has become a quite uncontrollable desire at both the federal and the provincial levels. Consider the fact that there are about 8000 students on the UNB campus. NB Student Aid has granted approximately 2500 of these students the full loan amount of \$3360. The tax on the full loan amount is \$100/head. Thus the coffers of the federal government now boast \$250 000 more than before September 5th and 6th. This is not by any stretch of the imagination an overwhelming sum of money, but this also solely from undergraduate students at UNB. About 10 000 more loans were given out to New Brunswickers who attend educational institutions elsewhere - within and without the province. And then there are the students from all other provinces ... The point is that the money adds up. Where is this money going? To carry the deemed extreme financial burden of those university graduates and drop-outs who have defaulted on their loan payments? Maybe ... then again, maybe not. Who knows?

I cannot help but feel that both the federal government and the provincial government (by its allocation of transfer payments) are not fulfilling their obligations to those who wish to attend a post-secondary educational institution adequately or equitably. The cutbacks in provincial grants to the university means that the university feels it is justified in raising student fees. Post-secondary education is increasingly becoming available only to those who can afford to go independently, only to those who are subsidized in some other way. The growing financial difficulty of access to university is just one symptom of the increasing disparities in New Brunswick society as a whole. Something to think about seriously as we go to the polls ...

And, speaking of which, we can rest assured that not much money is going into the provincial electoral campaigns. I have seen only a few (as yet un-defaced) billboards which attest to the charms and sincerity of various candidates, only a couple of advertisements on television which promote the warm, down-home feel of whoever has paid to be spotlighted on each particular advertisement, and only fairly uninspiring coverage of the various campaign promises in the local press. The lack of enthusiasm for this election is downright depressing, although it is not entirely incomprehensible. This electoral calm could be due to the fact that people still haven't entirely absorbed the idea that it's really happening - afterall, the time between the election call and the actual day that voters will go to the polls is relatively short. On the other hand, it could be due to the fact that the four ostensible party choices have numbed people into a wondrous sense of limitlessness. (Really, what we have is three shades of right and a pale shade of left - it's not that difficult). But the reason for the calm is more likely that given to me by a fellow student. He likened the election to a coronation - where the outcome is a given. The Liberals are expected to slide back in for another term, to achieve an easy victory. Too bad - I grew up with electoral campaigns that were always messy, always exuberant, and always unpredictable, even though the choice was limited to members of the same political party. Not a perfect situation, to be sure, but an infinitely more exciting one.

Returning to campus ... I see changes and new happenings all over campus. The residences of Harrison and Bridges have both become co-ed. I am curious as to the reasons why this happened. Was there simply a much greater demand for rooms in co-ed residences this year? Or was the decision to change them over based on some sort of rational set of conclusions? However, whatever the reasons may be, I am of the opinion that the change is a good thing. Based on my one-and-a-half year stint in the residence system, I would say that sex-segregated residences all too often lead to the mindless and sexist behaviour evidenced by that little publication put out by Jones house towards the end of the 1990/91 academic year. Co-ed residences are much healthier (not to mention cleaner) places in which to learn to live together than single-sex residences. However, this observation is not intended to ignore or detract from the decisions made by those students and parents who feel uneasy at the thought of co-ed living - each to her/his own.

Finally, talking of letters to the editor, the *Brunswickan* urges all those students with an opinion or comment to send in letters to our Blood 'n' Thunder section. Past experience has shown that it normally takes about three weeks before something happens which is controversial enough to warrant a reasonably-sized flow of letters to us, but maybe this year will be different. Also, we are seeking writers for our Opinion column. If you are hit by the Muse while pondering the ins and outs of a particular conundrum, send your writing in. To a large extent, the *Brunswickan* is your paper. Use it.

The Brunswickan

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