

Sweeping it under the rug?



The conflict between the foreign students and UNB's administrative staff now looks, after more than three or four months of excessive caution, backtracking and general lack of help on the part of the Dean of Students, as though it may be near resolution. The foreign students have received an undeniable amount of harrassment from certain people in positions of power and influence, but, because they have refused to let themselves be pushed around and dictated to by other people, it is rumoured that the resolution will be in their favour. That is, they are being given, rightly, what they asked for, and thus, by 1st November, UNB foreign students should see a new Foreign Students Advisor.

However, this apparently satisfactory resolution does not cover up the fact that the foreign students have had to push against administrative and organizational hinderance and obstinacy in taking any steps towards rectifying what has been a pretty bad situation. Okay, foreign students are not a special case, but they do face many difficulties that home students do not, whether these difficulties be personal, social, economic or administrative. The first two problems can really only be solved by time and the student him or herself! The third, economic, will be discussed later but the fourth, administrative difficulties, are something that the foreign student, whether a foreigner coming to Canada or a Canadian going to a foreign country, should rightly not expect to encounter. If a country, or a university in that country, is so desirous to get foreign students to study there, it

is utterly and totally reprehensible that they should be subjected to the sort of gratuitous administrative unhelpfulness, even rejection, that has been perpetuated here for so long, and overlooked by those in higher positions of authority. What is worrying is that this sort of mismanagement, this unwillingness to effectively and efficiently reach a solution over such problems as have recently come up, could continue for many years to come. It takes time before each new set of students understand and appreciate (if, indeed, some of them ever do) the wasteful and negative things that are going on here.

It is felt amongst those students, foreign or not, who are more politically conscious than most, that the Dean of Students has not been fulfilling his role within the administration of the university - in short, he does not appear to have been doing his job. It took from May 28th to the end of July. At the end of July, the Dean of Students was reported to have said that he could no longer remain neutral, and that he was on their side. The foreign students, delegation asked him how he could be on their side, noting that for two months he had worked against them. At the same meeting, he contradicted himself by saying that the Foreign Students Advisor, was performing her work "above average." The foreign students could not afford to work with contradictions. At another meeting, he told the students committee that, as he was unable to deal with the case, he was going to ask the President to appoint a neutral party to deal with the foreign students grievances. He

is commended to have done so. Many foreign students experience financial difficulties whilst at university, both at undergraduate and graduate level. One of the main reasons for this is the differential fee, imposed purely on foreign students, which was introduced in the last few years.

Foreign students also have to pay up to two hundred dollars more for the privilege of insurance over here. At graduate level, the situation has now arisen whereby it is virtually impossible for foreign students to have any form of scholarship or assistanceship and live in residence. Besides the fact that the residences are often too noisy to work in, this situation can lead to severe financial difficulties, and the worries associated therewith, which is one of the last things one needs when trying to apply oneself to degree work. This can force some students to rely on parental contributions in order to get by - by this, I mean being able to buy course books, which are at unholly prices, and stationery, postage stamps, etc.

Finally, a word about the need amongst students at UNB for a greater political awareness. Political apathy is as much a person's right as the chance to exercise the franchise. However, political apathy is one of the main reasons why injustices continue to happen. Greater political awareness is necessary if these inequalities are to be removed, both at campus or student level and, perhaps more importantly, at an international level. So, in the elections, use your vote, and, ultimately, vote for what you believe in.