

Phallic Blues

by KWAME DAWES

Let's just say that it is in bad taste. But some of it is good so that it is not altogether bad. Power is what it is all about; power and the money that gives rise to power.

ENTER THE BLUE ZONE is Labatt's latest promotional gimmick and this time they have come up with a package that should be very interesting and appealing to students. The science fiction mystique of this promo is upheld by the cylinders of freebies that are being given out to students all over campus. The cylinders are navy blue (outer-space) and we all know the symbolic meaning of cylinders.

The freebies are very tastefully designed, colours nicely blending and all that. Get one of the blue cylinders and you will get a light-blue highlighter (for the industry of student-life. Labatt's knows the market); a magnetic diary which is a very clever invention; and a rather fancy pin with twilight zone images of laser darts bursting from a beer can. The coup de grace of all this is a very large calendar/poster complete (albeit in fine print) with what appears to be a fairly accurate list of the days that will happen this year.

So what is so tasteful about all of that? It is the poster; the top half of the calendar. Let me describe the design. A cityscape at night; sky-scrapers glowing phallic like because of the two giant women, scantily clad, who are kneeling over the city and giving us the typical seductive glossed-up look.

But these posters will do well because UNB has a lot of really macho men who drink more beer when they see a naked woman. These men also become full-fledged supporters of a certain brand of beer once they know that the brewer are truly macho types like

themselves. Labatt's has discovered the secret of UNB's macho image and that is an impressive thing. Still, a few people may have problems with the poster which is why I felt compelled to explain why such an advertising gimmick could be still deemed as valid and effective in today's liberated society.



"WE NEED A ROBIN HOOD"

Students speak out on income assistance issue

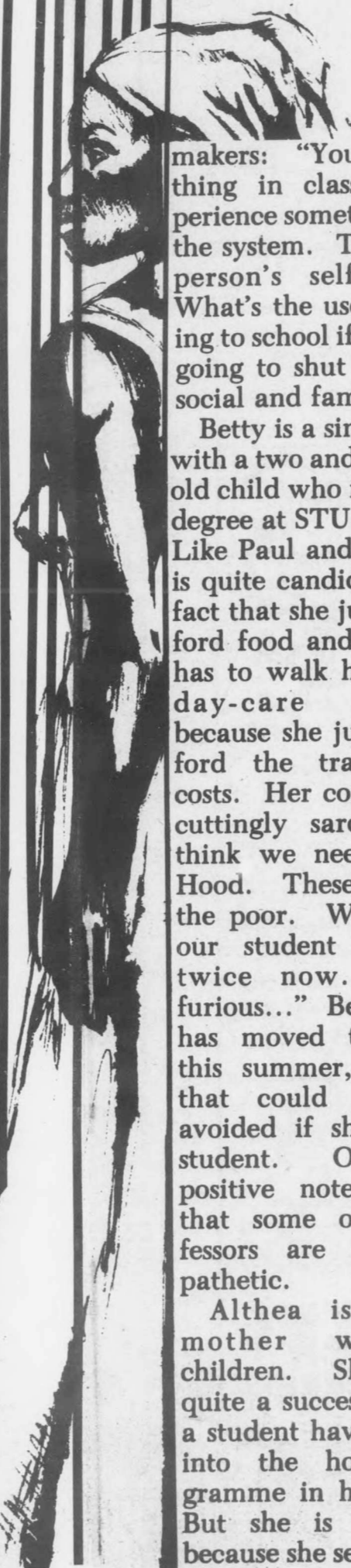
At first, to the people who are not directly affected, it all seems rather confusing, but with a little explaining this problem of income assistance and student survival at UNB becomes quite clear.

What has happened? In simple terms it would go something like this: Last year, students who received income assistance from the government did not have their student loan considered as an income resource by the people who calculate the degree of assistance each individual is given. So, in June of 1st year, returning students and people considering an education at University budgeted for a certain amount of money to see them through this year. Then, in August they discover that the provincial government has altered its policy on these things: the student loan will now be considered a source of income. Reaction? Shock, anger, a sense of betrayal and a strong sense that something has to be done.

There is more. It would seem that the vast majority of people affected by this policy are women, and especially single mothers. This seems understandable enough considering the difficulties that would exist in juggling academic work with a job while raising children and keeping a home. But there are a number of men who are affected, especially married men who are attending university with their spouses.

The reaction of many affected students has been quite consistent and there has been some action taken thus far. A group of affected students and other interested people attended a meeting at the Memorial Hall UNB on Sunday night to discuss the issue and to put into place some plans of action. It was a perfect forum for the *Brunswickan* to get some insight into the reactions of some of the people who are directly affected. Here are some of the responses to the questions posed by reporter Pam Lougheed on Sunday night. At the request of those who responded the *Brunswickan* will not use any names or disclose information that could reveal their identities. All names are fictitious.

Paul is married with two children. His wife is like him, a full-time student at STU. When asked about his living situation especially with regards finances he admitted that rent was a big problem for them while groceries and other essentials were consistently hard to come by. Living through this period was for him an exercise in survival techniques. His comment about the entire situation revealed his disillusionment with the policy



makers: "You learn one thing in class, and experience something else in the system. That hurts a person's self-esteem. What's the use in me going to school if they're just going to shut down your social and family life?"

Betty is a single mother with a two and a half year old child who is doing her degree at STU and UNB. Like Paul and family she is quite candid about the fact that she just can't afford food and rent. She has to walk her child to day-care everyday because she just can't afford the transportation costs. Her comment was cuttingly sardonic: "I think we need a Robin Hood. These steal from the poor. We're paying our student loan back twice now...I'm just furious..." Betty says she has moved three times this summer, something that could have been avoided if she wasn't a student. On a more positive note, she says that some of her professors are quite sympathetic.

Althea is a single mother with two children. She has had quite a successful year as a student having made it into the honours programme in her faculty. But she is very angry because she sees the entire

policy as highly discriminatory: "We (women) are the only sector of society that has to repay our student loan twice over. That definitely constitutes discrimination. And that's what I'm against." During exams last year, Althea had to work as a waitress to make ends meet. According to her, after paying tuition, her family is living in poverty. "It's mostly our children. If we were living on our own, we could manage."

"I question whether this is another means of reducing the funding to university institutions, and whether this is an overt way of keeping women out of the administrative levels of industry." Claudette's suggestion that there is a larger conspiracy in operation may seem paranoid to many, but it certainly forced us to honestly question whether there is still not a significant level of sexual exploitation going on in this society. Claudette is a fourth year student at STU and she is a single parent with two children. For her it is a simple issue of economics and "they" are being unfair to "us". For her it is quite simple: last year she didn't have enough money and this year they are taking away more. "Being a student is penalizing me..."

Claudette admits that other people are getting less but she finds it unreasonable to suggest that the reduction of the student's income should

be the way to create equity. According to her, the government should be upping the payments across the board. She demonstrates the problem by giving a few statistics. The poverty level of a family of three is estimated at \$18,000 while she receives about \$10,000 a year. According to her, the student loan does not give anymore towards living costs since most of it is used up for education costs. Simply put, the problem has been made even more painful for single parents, especially.

These are just a few of the many who have been affected by this new policy and it seems reasonable to suggest that the government seriously considers changing the policy. Granted that the Canadian government is committed to seeing to the welfare and health of its citizens and that it is determined to encourage economical independence in people through the progress that can be gained through education, it should not be too difficult to deduce that this new policy is essentially self-defeating. In Jamaica there is a saying: "Cut your nose off to spite your face." I suspect that there is some applicability of that proverb to this situation.

Researcher: Pam Lougheed
Writer: Kwame Dawes



Artwork by
KWAME DAWES