

BLOOD AND THUNDER

Letters to the editor reflect the views of our readers and not necessarily those of the Brunswickan. Letters may be sent to Rm. 35 in the Student Union Building. Deadline: 1 pm on Tuesday. Usual maximum length: 300 words. Please include name, student number and phone number.

Pities students if van Raalte elected

To the Editor (Attention James van Raalte)

I am writing in response to comments made by Mr. van Raalte in the March 19 issue of "The Brunswickan" during the election campaign. Comments you made were:

-Daycare is a problem for mature students...they're not my responsibility. That's for Campus and the GSA to deal with".

"Your concerns are my concerns"

-Many of us are faced with heavy course loads, part-time jobs, families and other stressful situations. I want to invest my time to help those students who don't have a lot of free time."

The first statement is directly contradicted by the last two statements. you claim to be concerned about the concerns of the student body. If 35% of the student body are mature students, I would say that they would be your responsibility if you are elected Student Union president. Supporting a daycare on the UNB campus would show that you really do feel for the people who have families and are attending school. It sure would help ease the burden on those students with heavy course loads, part-time jobs and families.

You also claim that you are "committed to serving students. Serving students involves listening to ALL of the students, not just the ones who say what you want to hear. If, by the time this letter is printed, you have already been elected, I pity the students who will have you as the SU president next year.

I'd also like to comment on the rebate plan. Two or three dollars is not going to make the difference as to whether or not I can feed my family this month. If you were truly, "doing this for all the students who need money and food," you would put the surplus in a bursary for students with financial need. (even mature ones)

I hope you will honestly listen to the opinion of:

Kerri Sorenson
Mature Student, wife and mother

We're gay, not stupid

Dear Editor,

I feel it necessary to respond publicly to the letter in last weeks *Brunswickan* titled "Homosexuals not always innocent victims".

The writer states that where there are "elements within this group of people [homosexuals] whose behavior provokes attack", referring to an incident in Zellers where someone touched his backside. While I agree wholeheartedly that the man who affronted him in this way was completely out of line and deserved some sort of apprehension, I resent the implications his letter has for the rest of the gay community.

Gays are only a 'group' based on a common sexual orientation, not common behavior. We are as diverse as any other sector of society. There are always going to be 'elements' whose behavior is irresponsible or harmful

within a large group of people, but just as all straight men should not have to fact the consequences of the actions of a few male rapists, why should the entire gay community be tainted by incidents such as that experienced by the writer of last weeks letter. Intended or unintended, the letter reinforces homophobic attitudes towards all gays and indirectly suggests that perhaps a proportion of gay bashings are justified. This insinuation is both ignorant and dangerous. The majority of gay bashings consist of excessive physical violence. Knives and clubs are commonly used and victims are frequently repeatedly kicked on the ground in the head and chest. Some die as a result. No form of non-violent approach from a gay man warrants this sort of attack. As such, while the incident in Zellers was understandably an upsetting experience and a violation of the writer's person, it does not warrant the violence of gay bashing. One wonders whether the writer would consider violently bashing a woman who did the same thing.

As for being a frequent occurrence, it is ridiculous to suggest that gay men commonly go around touching the backsides, or making other sexual advances, to men they do not know to be gay, thereby causing their own physical assaults. We're gay, not stupid!

As a final note the writer in question wonders "how many cases of sensationalised gay bashings result from reaction to 'aggressive' homosexual behavior". If he realised how prevalent gay bashing is, even here in Fredericton, without ever getting into the media, he would soon see that it is certainly not sensationalised. The local media, in fact, underplay the severity and frequency of these attacks.

Attacks against gays are common enough not to need letters like the one in last weeks's issue suggesting violence is an acceptable action under "certain circumstances", or otherwise.

James Whitehead

Not impressed with the Wimmin's Room

Dear Editor,

The Wimmin's Room column this week was unusually controversial. The opinions of Ms. Kilfoil do not offend or impress us and we are firm believers that everyone has the right to an opinion. Our problem, and we think we speak for many of our constituents, was the manner in which the arguments were advanced, complete with misquotes, misinformation and insulting language. In persuasive writing, these tactics are considered wholly ineffective.

The language was inappropriate not because we personally found it offensive, but rather because others no doubt did. More importantly, Ms. Kilfoil's unnecessary language has completely unraveled much of (sic) work of this year's student council. We are certain that by the nature of her comments, Ms. Kilfoil does not care about the council's work, however, many other do. Through the Terry Fox Run, the College Hill Neighborhood Association and the Christmas Match Fund to name a few, the student council has worked

hard to improve life for students in Fredericton by strengthening public attitudes toward students. *The Brunswickan* is not only distributed on campus, it goes to many retail outlets in the community and to the lobbies of several government offices. Ineffective and disrespectful expressions like "I don't give a shit", "I was pissed off", and "that is a load of crap" do not characterize the words of an educated university student. Ms. Kilfoil may also want to consider the fact that children, perhaps even those who would attend the daycare as "after school" participants, could have had access to her column. This is clearly not a professional way to attack a problem.

Now for the misinformation ... Anna MacDonald has worked diligently with the Daycare Committee and has served as the liaison to council. She has kept councilors up to date on the accomplishments of the committee. Some representatives from the Daycare Committee presented information to council as well. They made it clear however, that they were there to provide updated information and answer questions. They clearly were not seeking money at that time. From our perspective, all comments from councilors were positive. We cannot figure out what has infuriated Ms. Kilfoil to the point of irrationality. On her point that "the majority of student union representatives have refused to give their support either financially or morally", we have to wonder where she gets her information. Perhaps she has conducted individual opinion polls with councilors to feel qualified to make such obscure generalizations. But, we are two councilors who were not consulted.

Next, Ms. Kilfoil claims that not one person on council is a mature student. Well, according to her definition (those over 21 year of age), almost everyone on council is a mature student. Ironic, isn't it? The mature student allusion is completely reversed later when Ms. Kilfoil says she doesn't "give a shit" about Alcohol Awareness because she learned to drink responsibly years ago. Does this argument hold when we apply it to the daycare situation? If one particular student does not have children, then daycare is something they shouldn't care about? Clearly we don't agree. Do you?

We missed the "meet the candidates" battle; however, we have heard many disgruntled students criticize the way in which Jennifer Lawson, a candidate for Business Rep., was misquoted. She made an apt comment that daycare was not the only issue to be addressed by candidates. Ms. Kilfoil twisted her words to suit her already flawed argument.

Ms. Kilfoil resents comments like "there haven't been enough students coming to the student union asking for a daycare." We all realize the importance of a daycare, but Ms. Kilfoil seems unable to grasp the concept of the student union as an organization accountable to a student body. There are procedures to be followed here, this is not anarchy! The student union council does have functions and one of them is the allocation of student fees. As such, Mr. vanRaalte is not in the habit of issuing checks left and right when he intuitively feels a need somewhere. Hopefully, the daycare committee

will present council with a proposal for funding and the daycare dilemma will be resolved.

On the bright side, Ms. Kilfoil, in the Wimmin's Room, often attracts student attention to important issues. However, in the future, we hope that she will avoid inaccurate generalizations, crude language, false information, and libelous quotations.

Jennifer Campbell
Heidi Hawkins

Gay bashing

Dear Editor,

To the writer of 'Homosexuals not always innocent victims'. It is too bad that you have experienced what you say are negative homosexual experiences. You stated that people were 'wolf-whistling and crotch staring' (sic) which to me suggests that your attire must have been suggestive. You then go on to say that what was disturbing was the fact that a homosexual sexually assaulted you. If your clothing was suggestive then I suggest that this person may not have been a homosexual, but a cover up security/floor walker. The Fredericton Mall among gays is known to be "cruisy", and that in the past security have used various tactics lets say to "entrap" gays. So perhaps you were lucky you did not beat this person up.

You further state that this type of behaviour provokes gay bashing. Gay bashing is not done on a one to one basis, gay bashing is usually done by a group of 'strait' (sic) or denying gays' seeking out one person with the intent to inflict serious harm.

Signed 'poor you'

A reply to a reply

Dear Editor,

I thank A.J. Carisse for clarifying his arguments in reply to my previous letter. Normally, I would not be so petty as to write a reply to a reply. However since the issue is an important one, I would like to make another submission if *The Bruns* will humour me. If there is further discussion, I would prefer to carry on person to person (I can be reached c/o Biology Dept.).

I don't believe that I misunderstood the main thrust of his original argument, not did I deliberately attempt to create a straw man. In his first letter, he stated that (and I quote): "Reality is of course all inclusive... This principle not only applies to ontological inquiry, it extends throughout the entire spectrum of consciousness (my italics)".

In my first letter, I simply took these statements at face value and showed that the principle he describes does not apply throughout the entire spectrum of consciousness, using the examples of banking and doing science. I then went on to suggest that he was making an unjustified assumption if he asserts that the metaphysical realm is different than the rest of reality.

In his reply he concedes that his principle does not apply to the above examples, but was intended to apply only "outside the framework of empiricism". He does not provide, so far as I can see, an answer to my question

asking, why do you believe there is objective reality in the empirical world but not in the non-empirical?

The clarification of definitions does not seem to be very helpful to his argument. He says, "by all inclusive, is meant that anything is possible". I'll agree with that, but it does not follow that anything and everything is reality. Again, this would not work in the physical world so one comes back to the original problem of justifying different assumptions for the empirical and metaphysical.

Self-contained apparently refers to the perspective of the perceiver. He uses the example of a light, and says that if it is green from the perspective of the perceiver, then it is green. I would agree that in most cases this is true, but would point out that it is possible that a mistake could be made. If there were two people, one saying it was green, and the other seeing red, would they both be right? So this is weak.

Self-defined "means that reality defines itself - it is not subject to terms and conditions". This sounds reasonable to me, but seems to contradict self-contained. Is reality dependent on the perspective of the perceiver or is it not?

Carisse then suggests that when these definitions are taken together as premises, they form an argument to show that there is no objective truth. I don't see any argument here. And even if (sensually speaking) it is true that we don't know anything. Would it not be true to say that the earth is a sphere as opposed to being flat?

Although the examples I used were physical, I do not believe that the only reality is that which science can verify. I think we're in agreement on that. I said that if God exists, He exists whether or not anyone believes He exists. The reverse is also true. If God does not exist, then there is no God even if everyone in the world thinks there is. These statements do not contradict my perspective on empirical reality in any way. Indeed, they are consistent because in both cases I am operating on the belief that reality exists objectively. It is not I who is making an ontological distinction. If I had said, "God exists because I believe He exists, even if no one else believes", then I would have been contradicting myself. But I didn't.

So I think the onus remains on Carisse to show a reason for operating on the basis of objective reality in the world we can measure, but assuming that everything is subjective in the metaphysical. Saying it is self-evident will not do. Neither will an argument that the failure to prove otherwise is reason for accepting his conclusion (argumentum ad ignoratum).

Finally, I would like to suggest a non-empirical example. Do you believe in love? If someone genuinely loves another person, what does that mean? Is the love a real (though intangible) thing, that would exist whether or not the loved one acknowledged it? Or does the love exist only if and because the one loved believes he is loved? The latter sounds a bit like saying that love is just a figment of our own imagination. Some, in despair, may have come to this conclusion. But they are wrong.

Sincerely yours,
S.K. Arndt