

Editorial Mary Rogal-Black

Editorial is a regular feature of the Brunswickan. An article in this section is published as the periodical's official expression of opinion on a topic. It is not intended to be an editorial policy. It is not intended to be an editorial policy. It is not intended to be an editorial policy.

Bruns 1000: The Development of Brunswickan Thought

It's awfully easy to live in isolation. A special circle of friends, a job and some courses can keep us busy enough that we occasionally feel cut off from a larger world and powerless to affect it. The media provides an antidote to that isolation though, and *The Brunswickan* provides UNB students with an opportunity to know more about their community. Just as our courses teach us how to study and think critically, there are ways for Bruns readers to get the most out of their newspaper. Without undervaluing the other sections, I would suggest that an informed reader needs to know about the news and editorial sections — the heart of the paper.

The op/ed section of *The Brunswickan* has three basic parts: editorials, *Blood and Thunder* (Letters to the Editor), and *Spectrum*. To publish a weekly column in *Spectrum*, interested writers are asked to submit three sample columns. The Editorial Board then reads the submission and vote on whether or not to accept it as a regular column. So far this year, we have voted on seven columns and accepted four. Prior to voting on several potential columns this week, one particularly astute Board member asked what exactly we want *Spectrum* to be. *Spectrum* should represent (individually and as a whole) a significant contribution to debate about issues of interest to students. I would also like them to be well-written, present logical arguments and address topics that represent a good cross-section of student life.

Columnists represented in *The Brunswickan* volunteer their time and energy to this cause — any holes you see in the *Spectrum* section are likely there because no one has stepped forward to fill them. Since the beginning of the year, for example, I have been looking for someone to write about men's issues — not an antifeminist perspective, since a war between a men's column and *womynsay* would certainly be a waste of space and the antifeminist sentiment seems to be claiming its space in *Blood and Thunder* this year, but something that examines issues relevant to men. As well, just as Forestry students provide *Forest Breeze*, representatives from any faculty are welcome to submit a column for consideration.

Editorials are another regular element of the op/ed section. Despite the dictionary definition that states that an editorial is "the periodical's official expression of opinion on some issue," I don't consider my own or anyone else's opinion *The Brunswickan's* Official Opinion. However, readers do need to be aware that any form of media will be biased and that if one of the functions of a newspaper is to bring about social improvement, its writers and editors are necessarily in the position of judging what issues are relevant to that improvement. *Mudwump* and this weekly editorial will provide readers with some insight into the prejudices — positive or negative — of two of the individuals whose opinions shape the paper each week.

There is an important distinction between opinion columns and news stories. News reporters, as we all know, are supposed to be objective. While the columnist's goal is to persuade their audience to accept a certain point of view, it is not the intention of news staff at *The Brunswickan* to make up readers' minds for them, only to provide information relevant to the issues. Some journalists are particularly aware, in their role as critical watchdogs, of the flawed nature of individuals and organisations. As a result, many develop a valuable sense of humility. National political columnist Jeffrey Simpson (*The Globe and Mail*) writes, "Journalists are chroniclers who should never inflate their own importance beyond the events and people they cover. Nor should they assume that those on the stage of public affairs are somehow less gifted than themselves. Nothing is easier, or more fatal to sound journalism, than for a columnist to adopt the pose of moral or intellectual superiority, since among the hazards of this pose is the certainty that some readers know more about the issue at hand than the writer." But even the most humble and objective reporter is required to make judgements. The selection of stories reflects the interests of the people who work at the newspaper and there is necessarily some bias involved in choosing how to approach a story. Readers need to be aware that many factors, from legal implications to who could be reached for comment on an issue, impact on the final version of the story.

With that in mind, one of the things that has surprised me most in the past two months is the frequency with which *The Brunswickan* gets blamed for making individuals "look bad." For example, a student stopped by the office last Friday to ask why we had mentioned the name of Aitken House in a story about two men on trial in Fredericton for sexual assault. The lead of the story in question read, "Two UNB students, Tyler William McCabe, of Aitken House and Michael Robert Pinter, also formerly of that residence, faced charges of sexual assault in Provincial Court Wednesday." While Aitken House residents may cringe at the reference, the reporter in that case was simply stating the facts of the case. The article in no way suggested that other residents at the house should be held responsible for the situation; any guilt-by-association assumptions made would have to be on the part of the individual reader.

As long as we stick to reporting the facts in a fair and reasonably objective manner, *The Brunswickan* can only make people or groups "look bad" if readers chose to judge their actions in a negative light. And even if I had chosen to write an editorial examining the phenomenon of sexual assault in residences, it would have been the opinion of one person, and relevant only as such. This is where the critical eye of the reader becomes important: no matter what you read, whether it's the *National Enquirer*, *The Brunswickan* or *The Globe and Mail*, putting a thing in black and white does not make it true. Readers must learn to draw conclusions with care.

It is important — I would suggest it's an individual's civic duty — to read newspapers carefully and critically in order to determine the facts and, particularly in the case of *The Brunswickan*, to contribute to the discussion that takes place within its pages. As a volunteer organisation, no one individual, including myself, wields complete control over the contents of the paper; it is a team effort, depending very much on the interests and experience of the people who get involved, whether by taking photos, writing regular articles or submitting a letter to the Editor.

Developing a critical eye will be rewarding for both the individual reader and the community. When *The Brunswickan* lives up to its potential, it provides UNB students with a window into the larger community we live in, a place to learn how to interact with that great machine "society."

BLOOD & THUNDER

Letters to the Editor

Yes to UNB spirit — no to football

To the Editor:

Ever since school has started I have been hearing rumours about a football team at UNB. GREAT! WONDERFUL! AWESOME! BUT, where are you expecting to get the money? Oh, you're going to ask every student to pay 10 extra dollars in our tuition. Excuse me "Friends of UNB Football," I don't have the 10 extra bucks to put in my tuition. Sure, that \$10 is going to allow me to get into the games for free but I have some news for you. Last weekend I attended a Mt. A vs. St. FX football game in Sackville and the student attendance was nil. They, too, have added an extra \$10 fee to the tuition allowing students to get into the football games for free. So I guess that plan sort of backfired on them, eh? Gee, the students are losing the money by not going to the game BUT the good old football team is benefitting. Could the Friends of UNB Football be banking on something like this occurring at UNB? Mt. A won by the way.

Look at the weight room here at UNB. C'mon, we all know it sucks. How do we expect to get a strong, respected football team at UNB with such a crappy weight room. Will we have to get a new one just for "our boys"? Shall we fork out another \$15 for the 1998 tuition? Plus, I highly doubt that our new improved Bombers would want to work out with the lowly peasants just trying to stay in shape ... even though the lowly peasants own the damn gym!

I agree with V.P.-Academic Louis Visentin that it is going to cost much more than the "Friends" are predicting. I mean insurance alone for these guys is going to be incredible. Besides, isn't this

figure quoted just for the first year of the football team? What about when the money runs out, what are you going to do then? Are you going to sneak the Football Fee up another 5 bucks? You wanna know what I think of that idea? It bites.

I am the first person (and probably the only person) on campus to have spirit and pride for UNB. I am a niece of a Red Bomber. I am a daughter of UNB Alumni who went to many football games (that is, when they were still WINNING) in the 1960's. I was at the Homecoming Game. Hell, I even know "Bombers Away" and "Ricketty Racketty" in their

entirety. I love football but I'm sorry, UNB does not need a football team. You want to know what we need? We need student involvement with the present activities (Varsity Mania, Student Union, Societies, and many more) before we need to support a non-existent football team.

I have already had numerous conversations with students about this and even a very heated conversation with a Friend of UNB Football at Homecoming and my mind has yet to be changed. When the referendum approaches in February, I'm voting "NO."

Sincerely,

L. Bayler

Newfie jokes go too far

To the Editor:

I am a second-year BN student here at UNB and I must express my disgust over an incident that occurred in the SUB cafeteria at approximately 8:30 a.m. on Friday, October 25 as I was enjoying my morning coffee. I happened to sit at a table next to some professors who I recognised because they are there every morning that I am. These individuals were engaged in a rather loud conversation centered around Newfoundlanders. What I mean is that for no less than a half an hour I listened (it was hard not to) to these people totally bash just about everything about the Newfoundland culture. To sum it up: I am stupid, lazy, a drunk, and the only thing I am good for is to make jokes about. I should have defended myself or at least said

something but I was in shock. I just couldn't believe what I was hearing.

I am not asking for an apology, it's just that I am so upset that I felt it should be brought to the attention of your readers. I came to New Brunswick because I heard good things about this school and province but Newfoundland will always be my home and I would not have it any other way.

I probably shouldn't be so upset because Newfoundlanders are known for their warm, friendly and hospitable personalities and what a few UNB professors think is really not that important. I guess discrimination truly comes from ignorance — even from our highly educated authorities.

Name withheld by request.

Yaqzan offers Bruns criticism

To the Editor:

I have been reading *The Brunswickan* for the last 30 years during its 130 years of publication and have made occasional contributions to it. As a matter of fact, an opinion column by me published exactly three years ago on November 5, 1993, led to my early retirement as a member of the faculty at UNB. May I make a few comments and suggestions:

1. I find this year's large format of *The Brunswickan* inconvenient and unwieldy. Unless the vast majority of its readers prefer it, you should go back to the earlier format.
2. The print size is too small. You should adopt the same size as in *The Globe and Mail* of Toronto or *The Telegraph Journal* of Saint John.
3. There is no such word as "womyn." You should correct such errors when your contributors misspell.
4. With reference to your editorial of November 1, 1996, the use of the word "alleged" in the reporting of a crime that has not been established is perfectly reasonable. While it would not be appropriate to use the word "alleged" to report that a murder, car accident, fire or an earthquake had occurred, a reporter must use "alleged" to indicate the possible "murderer" or "driver responsible" for the car accident. In the same vein, when a person claims to have been sexually assaulted, a reporter must use the word "alleged" with the name of the accused. There is no question of "gender politics," or the bias on the part of

"male-dominated media" in such reporting, as suggested by Mr. Mark Pederson of CBC, and quoted by you in your editorial.

The last sentence in your above editorial reads as follows: "There is no substantial legal reason to 'allege' about sexual assault and, despite our reluctance to believe the horror of rape, it's past time for the media to admit that sexual assault is just as real as car theft." Whether or not there is "substantial legal reason" to use the word "alleged" it would be inaccurate for a reporter to say that a sexual assault actually took place, unless the reporter himself or herself was the guilty party.

You quote your legal advisor as saying: "The thing is to avoid the imputation of guilt. Sometimes the word 'alleged' helps to do this, sometimes it is just a thin veneer over a defamatory imputation of guilt which is nonetheless defamatory." To impute is to attribute blame, and it is not a reporter's job to blame the accused of the crime or the accuser for making a false charge. The use of the word "alleged" does imply that the reporter is simply reporting and not making a judgement about the veracity of the accuser. Otherwise, if you don't use the word "alleged," how do you avoid the "imputation of guilt?"

5. Mr. FitzPatrick, your Managing Editor, is quite correct in surmising that some students would be better off having been trained in a specific trade rather than enrolling at a university and obtaining a degree. A university education

should not depend upon a person's financial capacity, rather his or her mental capacity. I wrote about it in *The Brunswickan* sometime in the early seventies.

6. *The Brunswickan* had a tradition of an opinion column written by a student or a faculty member, besides the opinions expressed by the editor or its other regular columnists. It would be a good idea to continue that tradition, although some faculty members are liable to be reluctant to take a chance in view of what happened to me for writing an opinion column.

7. You should invite some of the international students to provide a weekly feature about their countries and customs, problems and possible solutions. Some students in the sciences, engineering and the computer science and, for that matter, nursing, can write articles that would be informative and entertaining for the students in other fields.

8. It would be helpful if your contributors indicated their field of specialization and/or the year at the university. *The Brunswickan* did exactly that in the past. It is helpful in determining whether the writer deserves credit or sympathy during a critical review or accolade for his or her ideas.

9. The commercial ads should be kept at a minimum.

Matin Yaqzan

Retired (Jan 1994) member of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, UNB.

Mudwump

Joseph W.J. FitzPatrick

I read with some amusement the response of Mr. Sean Rouse of the NBSA regarding my piece (*Mudwump*, "University population control," page 6, Issue 6).

First off, I contend that University admission is encouraged (by the student aid system among other factors) when not every student who can qualify for student assistance should be in university (but are because it is the only form of post-secondary education they can afford), and they should never have been told that they must go to university.

Through an insidious combination of marketing and peer pressure, we are bombarded with a message to go to University.

Admission standards at UNB are much lower than you may expect. A 60% average in 6 courses will get you into Arts, Engineering, Kinesiology, Forestry, Forestry Engineering, and Computer Science. A 65% average will get you into Business. And 70% will get you into Nursing.

While I was on the Academic Senate, an Associate Dean stated that 25% of the Arts students enter with an average of 60-65%.

Is it a coincidence that there are 300 in Nursing and 1300 in Arts? Mr. Rouse, and other members of the student movement, have argued that everybody "deserves" a university education. But this assumption only bears itself out if everybody is equally qualified. Why should society (and students) pay for thousands of students to be educated in

a degree which serves, largely, as a proving grounds for students without firm plans, or a stepping stone to a post-graduate degree?

How many students get their Arts degree and then choose a different field? How many students get two bachelor's degrees?


Your guidance counselor, like mine, looked at your marks and told you whether to consider going to University. If you got a 55% average, they would try to discourage you from attending university. But if you got that magical 70%, well, off you go. Thought you might want to try to work for a year — 'don't bother,' they would say, 'you've got to go to school now.' Well, maybe, just maybe, I got an 85% average in the "Science and Engineering College Preparatory Program" because it was something I felt I had to do, because I was led to believe that Arts was where the people who couldn't get into Science went, and that Community College was for high school dropouts. In addition to this, the shame that is impressed upon those who are made to feel they are "too stupid" to attend University is a pox on all of us who are here.

We make fun of the students who flunk out of first year. We, the ones who pass, are told to forget those who "don't have what it takes" to be at UNB. This elitism, I argue is more damaging and deplorable than any sort of economic elitism which may currently exist because only 2/3 of University students use student aid. People who attend Community College and Trade Schools are not "stupid" they just want to do different things. Telling somebody who wants to be a carpenter that

they shouldn't "waste their abilities" on a trade is telling them that you can't be intelligent or insightful without going to university. And what good is a BA degree to a carpenter? Not much, especially when they have to work at a fast food restaurant to pay off their student loan and get a bank loan to take their carpentry course.

The loan system also imposes a heavy burden by forcing students to make the decision after high school or not at all. It is surprising that a mature student would have to be on welfare before they could qualify for student assistance, but the current system, designed primarily to push high school students through university, discourages anybody who isn't a recent high school graduate from attending. Since we award degrees to people who may never use them and, worse, may have never needed or even wanted them, the people who get a degree for the purpose of furthering their education find their degree undervalued.

Raising requirements isn't as simple as raising the percentage for admissions. We must consider alternative means of testing whether students really want (or need) to come here. What about conducting interviews (we do for graduate schools)? What about competitive enrollment limits? What about raising the minimum acceptable grade from C to B? That would even get rid of a few of my courses. And if you need proof that we have too many degrees, I have only one question: would you like fries and a Coke with that?



**the
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*This issue is dedicated to:
Those we cannot afford to forget.*

The Brunswickan, in its 130th year of publication, is Canada's oldest official student publication. We publish weekly during the school year, with a circulation of 10,000 copies. The Bruns Online is an ongoing e-zine version of *The Brunswickan*, located on the World Wide Web at <http://www.unb.ca/web/bruns>. The opinions contained in this newspaper are those of the individual writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Brunswickan*.

All members of the university community are encouraged to contribute to *The Brunswickan*. While we endeavour to be an open forum for a variety of viewpoints and ideas, we may refuse any submission considered racist, sexist, libellous, or those containing attacks of a strictly personal nature. *The Brunswickan* reserves the right to edit for brevity. Letters generally shouldn't exceed 300 words in length and must contain your signature, student number and phone number, or they will not be printed.

All copy submitted must be double spaced, on one side of the page only and must be legible. If we can't read it, we won't print it. *The Brunswickan* accepts copy on 3.5 inch disk, either Macintosh or MS-DOS format.

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