

OPINION...

TO THE CORE OF THE DARK UNDERBELLY

By David S. Gorham

The regionally based anti-bilingual, anti-French Confederation of Regions Party has recently been attended by that amorphous beast called 'media spotlight'. The political meanderings and mean-spirited thunderings of a bigoted few? Or is it a bigoted few leading a disaffected mob of average people?

The C.O.R. members write letters to the editor filled with frightening strains of bile; inundating the two major Irving dailies with half-literate and demagogic mutterings. In fact, the mother ship of Irving dailies (Telegraph-Journal) printed a good sized notice, belatedly, declaring its intention to edit and even censor the incoming letters. In effect, it will try to ignore the phenomenon of anti-French feeling, save for a few well crafted letters, or those which shed some new light on the political drama. The official reaction in media and officialdom seems to be either a blind eye or studied indifference.

But what about the Confederation of Regions Party, which had surprising electoral success in New Brunswick? Is it simply race hatred and Anglo-Saxon thick headedness, or is there something more there? The thorough observer might wish to point out the element of popular support C.O.R. seems to receive from average people as evidence by the daily letters to the editor columns. Judging by the profuse and often frightening letters from John Q. New Brunswicker, one point out there may well be genuine disaffection with official bilingualism. Perhaps this reflects more than narrow bigotry; perhaps this is all indicative of a much larger problem.

The average New Brunswicker, it seems, is being left out of the process. Official bilingualism may be just, good and even noble, but that does not mean these people are thereby illegitimate in their anger. Simply because a government policy is at heart altruistic in intent does not mean there is no need to heed opposition to it in the general public. The devil's advocate must point out that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, with many good bricks.

In attempting to understand the normal disaffection with edicts from above lacking popular affirmation, I have explored my own experience in the New Brunswick 'systems' and with the French fact as seen in New Brunswick. At one point in my elementary school career, I felt the pressure to learn French or else face social degradation, lose social face. The teachers of the required panacea for the French fact's problematic existence were often arrogant, condescending and haughty in their pedagogic attitudes. It was as if this language's mastery were a private country club I must enter in order to obtain the key to economic and social success. It was simply the machine of the school system grinding out the trickle-down of that once highly altruistic policy. Again and again we were told in that processed monstrosity called public school, that we should learn this language or be damned and thereafter cast out from polite and successful society. The learning of this lyrically beautiful language had become a bitter taste on a disenchanted tongue.

And so went my disaffection with public school and the French fact. It became heartening for me to see the Association for English Speaking Canadians formed with a defiant Union Jack symbol on its rising head.

Grand said I! This was the time to revel in Montcalm's defeat on the Plains of Abraham at the hands of mighty Wolfe! This was the liberation of the English, come to break the chains on my mind put there by the education system! But of course, the organization was largely repugnant in its operation, with little to commend it to the liberation of minds.

One can easily see the average New Brunswicker encountering an edict from above once it had filtered through the labyrinthian guagmire of largely impersonal systems, such as the schools or government agencies down in the Glass House.

When a light is thrust in someone's face and they are then told it is for their own good, they fail to see the altruism my friends. They grow angry and grasp hold of the dark underbelly of disaffection.

This brings us to a current political firestorm occasioned by the Meech Lake Constitutional hearings (see Channel 10 for coverage), with which official bilingualism is linked. We should all urge Premier McKenna to hold a province wide referendum on Meech Lake itself. The educative impact of this would be invaluable and politically sagacious. By thrashing Meech in public debate, a Constitution which is an abstract thing can be connected to an issue of concern to many people, that is, official bilingualism.

Through such a public political catharsis those attached to the organizations of vitriol and bile may learn there is a larger picture, within which some of their concerns are legitimate. Through the medium of a public and province-wide referendum, the New Brunswick public may discover things about itself, and be able to detach its anger from the dark underbelly.



MUGWUMP JOURNAL

By Melanie R. Hawkes

Well, well, well. Another Valentine's Day has come and gone (just like every other holiday). Did you guys remember to send your sweetheart a Valentine? Did you remember it was Valentine's Day? Well, did you at least remember your sweetheart? If you did, then you played your cards right. If not, I'm telling you now, you've lost major brownie points and are probably up the creek!! Shame on you.

Here is a hint for next year's Valentine's Day. DO NOT SEND ANONYMOUS flowers, cards or other gifts. What is the point? All you've done is wasted your money because the poor girl/guy still doesn't know who on earth you are. Thanks Mr. Anon! Take a few risks in your life. The person has probably been waiting for weeks for you to come up and talk to him/her. Hmmm, I wonder who won that beaver foods Valentine's day cake?

Have you noticed when you walk into the cafeteria now, that you are actually able to see the other end - due to our new 'No Smoking' laws. Doesn't it remind you of high school? When you used to smoke in the bathroom while one kid watched for teachers. Then, when they started down the hall you'd all flush your cigs down the toilet. Well, now when you're smoking in the caf and you're not on the platform and the CP walks down towards you, suddenly you feel 13 years old again and stamp out your smoke.

Have you been skiing lately - good for you!! If you haven't, there's no excuse now. We have had plenty of snow in the last little while. And don't try using that 'midterm' excuse. Give yourself a break sometime (But do well on your test too - if it's possible.)

On the subject of midterms --- Can anyone tell me why it is that midterms always come at the same time? One can go for weeks without a single assignment and then 'plonk' you have 3 midterms and 5 papers all due within the space of 4 hours. It never fails.

Here the jungle music coming from room 26 on Wednesday? Well, it was Africa Week this week and there was a really interesting display. Music, clothes, books, carvings, pictures and all the rest. It was worth a browse. I guess it was the next best thing to a trip there. They are also having a show, dinner and dance on Saturday - tickets at the SUB.

The Bruns team were a complete success in the Big-Brother, Big-Sister 'Bowl For Millions' last weekend. Jeremy won with an awesome (?) score of 97. And our beloved 'One-Brow', Stephane, managed to score 59. I don't know if that's worth \$2, Steph?!? (What can I say, I was hung over - Ed.)

Bet you all figure you're going to win the Orientation '89 50/50 draw today. I'm sure everybody has a ticket. I bugged the living daylight out of every person I knew until they bought 3 for \$1. (Yes, you'll thank me when you win.)

I hope all you business students (and members of other faculties) are planning to attend the Business Society's 10th Grog. SUB Room 26 this afternoon, 3-6 pm It's going to be a blast - with door prizes and free popcorn even!! See ya there.

Mel

Word of the Week - "On Ya" - Australian slang meaning good for you, thanks, good luck, hows it going and all that stuff. Right One-Eye!?!?