

MUGWUMP

The rich and famous

by Allan Carter

It appears that "In The Courts" in *the Daily Gleaner* is becoming a column for naughty things that the rich and famous do. Wayne Carson, former Student Union president of UNB, entered no plea to a charge in court the other day. It seems that Carson was "operating a boat towing a ski tube in a dangerous manner." He is to reappear in court on November 4 for a plea. Because of the seriousness of this charge, I believe all students at UNB should attend this court appearance in November and rally our support for Carson. If he wants to drive his boat dangerously the city should let him. After all, he acted out the position of president dangerously for one whole year, he should at least be able to do the same with his boat!

Fun! Fun! Fun! I hope everybody had the chance to read Jon Lazar's "weekly column" on the Student Union Page in last week's Brunswickan. Jon Lazar, as a student at large, is one of your "watch dogs" of the Student Union. He takes his job quite seriously. Last week he really challenged the Student Union on many issues. One such challenging sentence was:

"This week's council meeting ran through the regular day to day goings on, including a few new upcoming events and ideas."

Wow! Thank goodness I know that! Gee, and to think the Student Union almost did that without me knowing.

Lazar expressed some concern to me when his column was moved from the News section to the Student Union Page. However, he said at least he wasn't in the Spectrum section of the paper since nobody reads it. Well, just to inform Lazar we received more letters in Blood and Thunder last week from articles which were in Spectrum than we did from any other section of the newspaper.

I think the UNB Student Union page is appropriate for Lazar. After all, his column is merely Student Union propaganda. When I first heard that Lazar wanted to write a weekly column I was hopeful that it would become a column in which he would question some of the Student Union's actions and also make suggestions (which perhaps he could gather from students) about what the Student Union should be doing. There are many issues that need to be addressed and lately some have been placed on the back burner - SUB expansion is just one of them.

Anyhow, I love the new name for his column: "Funwump." I'm not sure what it exactly is supposed to mean, but maybe Lazar will explain its significance some time when he is finished patting the Student Union's back.

There is still hope. Perhaps Samantha Ferlatte the other student at large who was just elected in the by-elections will take a different approach. Lazar has informed us that we can look forward to her debuting as a "Bruns reporter/columnist on the SU page in the near future." If she does write a column I hope it proves to be a bit more controversial and interesting.

At Wednesday's council meeting the Student Union had to discuss what appeared to be hundreds of motions put forward by the Confederation of Students. Apparently, representatives from the Student Union will be attending a conference in which all of these motions will be discussed and voted on by all the university members of CFS. Now, while I did not listen to the whole meeting and I sympathize with anyone who has to sit through such a long meeting, I was discouraged by at least one statement I heard.

Apparently, one of CFS's mandates is to abolish tuition costs at universities. This is of course an ideal situation, but considering that tuition has been steadily increasing every year it probably isn't a bad mandate. They propose that since the government whines that they have no money to put towards educational issues, they should tax large corporations in order to produce the money and lower tuition costs. One councillor felt that this idea would not work and said that CFS should not even deal with such issues. Well then what should CFS do? Perhaps they should lobby for cheaper beer prices or better milk in cafeterias across Canada. Or maybe they should create new Student Union logos. I know, how about they lobby for less classes? To me this suggestion was absurd and I'm surprised no other councillor challenged it.

Perhaps a student at large may want to tackle this issue in his/her next column. Just a suggestion.

What is it with the classroom clocks in Singer Hall? Either the time is wrong or the second hand is doing a never-ending circle dance. Whatever the problem, I hope it is corrected soon because it's quite irritating and it's keeping me awake.

Oh, by the way, for some reason it completely, I mean utterly completely, slipped my mind to inform you of my reason for spelling "here" wrong in a Mugwump. Well, I have a reason for not telling you my reason. Is that clear? Good.

Ducks' butts: Aren't they poetic?

OPINION

The opinions found in Opinion are not necessarily the views of The Brunswickan

Political Correctness and you

by Kwame Dawes

There is a new insult in circulation today. If you really want to get to some one without sticks and stones, call them "Politically Correct." It has been effectively stigmatized by those who were against the concept in the first place. Articles in *Times*, *Newsweek*, *MacLean's* and the *Globe and Mail* have sought to unearth the assumed fascist bent in such a philosophy. Two years ago it was not quite that way. Two years ago, the politically correct people were a group of individuals who were concerned with the growing right wing ideologies of the society - ideologies that seemed to exclude through language and policy those who were not regarded as belonging to the main-stream. Two years ago, the politically correct were involved in a struggle to bring a sensitivity to bear on the questions of race, gender, class, etc. in our society. The process entailed a deconstruction (or indepth unearthing) of the structures that have guided much of our thoughts and values for years and a quest to show them up for what they were.

But any struggle for change almost always will degenerate into clearly demarcated camps because the enemy is best beaten when the enemy is quite clearly identified. Such simplistic reductionism is inherent in the practice of blacks regarding all whites as enemies in the struggle for their freedom, or in women regarding all men as enemies in their struggle for equal rights. But let us understand that those who create this Manichean structure of warring camps are not always the oppressed who are seeking to change things. It is a crucial and effective strategy of the dominant group to try and establish the protesting groups as easily defined enemies, as well. In the process they establish a series of simplistic characteristics that they associate with the protesting group and try and make those traits define the group. The result is quite clear in the case of the politically correct movement.

These days, people will insult you by screaming "You politically correct little pig!" What they are saying is that you are a whinning little do-gooder whose instincts have led to an absurd philosophy that is both untenable and fascist in its attack on innocent people who are trying to live their lives. There is truth in the assertion that some exponents of the politically correct philosophy have introduced a series of expectations on society that are both complex and as discriminatory as some of the values of the dominant oppressive groups. The power of lobbying that the politically correct now possess has caused fear among some of the old vanguard because the political correctness movement (if such a movement does exist) has discovered the effectiveness of championing the cause of very specific groups. On the most part the notion of a politically correct movement is a conspiracy theory that does not truly reflect reality. The so-called movement is made up of often unrelated special interests groups who are, as it turns out, fighting the same enemy. It is therefore the enemy that is defining them as a single movement because from where s/he stands they constitute one large force. (Germany, when attacked from the east by Russia and from the west by American and Britain saw all three as enemies. The fronts differed but that was all.) These groups may seem completely unrelated, but when each begins to cry discrimination, the sound of their combined screams becomes impossible to ignore. So the beleaguered dominant class, concerned that the PC movement is effectively limiting their ability to act, feel intimidated and threatened.

Sadly, this has led to an unfortunate state of affairs. Rather than place pressure on the dominant class to change, it has granted bigots, racists and jerks a wonderful excuse to continue on as they will. Now they can scream "It's those politically correct beasts!" when they are challenged for their racist values. And who wants to be called "politically correct?" So the letter writers who support COR have decided that they can effectively dismiss the opinions of university students because they subscribe to "politically correct" notions. It is a cop-out based on cheap reductionist reasoning. Many women are reluctant to denounce sexism when they think they recognise it because they fear that the men who they care about will declare them to be "feminists" or worse, "politically correct feminists." The political correctness backlash has therefore disarmed people's sensitivity to unfair ethical practices and so has in many ways won the battle. As long as the term politically correct is deemed an insult the dominant groups have won.

I have less trouble declaring myself to support much of what it means to be politically correct, but I am constantly aware of the tyranny that political movements, even the most noble minded of them, can bring to bear on the thoughts of the individual. I therefore choose to redefine the term. I regard political correctness as the instinct to delve into the underlying meaning of the things people say and the underlying implications of the things people do. If I discover that their intent is to discriminate and oppress, I will speak out against their actions. And no one is exempt from this kind of scrutiny. I regard it as politically correct to challenge the elements of facism and intolerance apparent in some advocates of political correctness. I treat political correctness as a subjective entity that is as personal as my views on abortion, religion, masturbation and eating. Surely correctness is a concept that is rooted on subjective experience. This does not mean it is not political. Nor does it mean that I can not expect others to share my views. What it means is that I am constantly aware that what I deem to be politically correct is a product of my history, social-setting, and education. This gives me the important safety-valve of self-reflexivity, but it does not prevent me from speaking-out or challenging the values of others.

I will therefore not be insulted by those who try to silence me by declaring my views to be politically correct. Of course I think they are correct, that is why I hold to them. I suspect also that those who regard themselves as my opponents share the same dogged belief in what they speak about. My point is that all advocates of political values regard their positions as politically correct. All that has happened recently is that one group has decided to undermine the credibility of the other group by placing into question the values of the latter group. It is a clever tactic that seems to have worked well. I encourage people to forget the labels and try and establish in themselves their own concept of what is fair in the arena of values and ideas. We are all political correct - or we think we are, anyway.

Here is a small test. What would the "politically correct" folks say about the banning of *Huckleberry Finn* and *To Kill A Mocking Bird* from school reading syllabuses? Many think they would rejoice. Some do. Others don't. I certainly think it is a poor idea that has borrowed its premise from the "bury-our-heads-in-the-sand-and-it-will-go-away school of thought. That is not political correctness. That is sheer ideological ineptitude. If they would simply train teachers to identify the racism inherent in a given work and to show it for what it truly is, they would be doing the students more of a service than banning the books. I mean, are they including books by black writers as a result? Will they now include Toni Morrison's *Sula*, Richard Wright's *Native Son*, or Neil Bissonath's *A Casual Brutality* to the curriculum?