

EDITORIAL

Engineers rule the world?

Kwame Dawes

"Just when I thought I had gotten out of it, they drag me right back in!" Micheal Corleone - *The Godfather III*

The comments below must be understood as a response to an anonymous writer in the last edition ERTW, UNB's Engineering paper. I make this clarification because I do not believe that this writer spoke on behalf of all engineers at UNB. The myopia and misguided nature of her/his thoughts assure me that the ideas expressed belong entirely to him/her. Granted, the article in question appeared as a kind of editorial, but again, I reiterate that I must give the other engineers the benefit of the doubt. Thus, my references to engineers in this article are directed at all those who agree with the views expressed by the writer in the ERTW.

It is a pity that the writer construed my comments about the importance of the library system a few weeks ago as an attempt to suggest that students should stop going to classes and try to get through without the help of professors. The writer quickly concluded that my comments reflect the bias of an Arts student; the argument being that science students, especially engineers, would find it impossible to do something as radical as missing lectures and trying to study and do research without the guidance of lectures. Well, if it is of any consolation, many arts students would agree that missing classes is a bad idea. I would as well. This does not mean that it is not possible to gain a degree without the aid of formal classes. To suggest otherwise would indicate the limitations of a student's perception of their own abilities. But all of that is beside the point. My point, which was clouded by the writer's tendency to take things out of context, was that the library is an essential feature of any university and any academic discipline. One speaks of possibilities not as if they are the norm, but simply as indications of the importance of the library facilities for the intelligent and diligent student who is as interested in learning as they are in being spoon-fed.

The engineer whose comments I referred to here has the very "artsy" trait of clairvoyance, for he/she predicted accurately that the Brunswickan's response to the editorial would be an offer to grant them an opportunity to air their views and to help make the Brunswickan more relevant to the people they conceive of as being engineers. Indeed, we welcome the input in as much as we encourage the input of the nurses, the lawyers, the historians, the physical education people, the education students and so on. We do this because we are fully aware of the fact that we are a campus paper that is intended to serve the entire university community. To suggest that the Brunswickan is of no interest to an engineer is to argue that the engineer is only interested in what happens in Head Hall. It is to further suggest that the engineer does not attend concerts on campus, does not go to see films on campus and at the cinemas in town, has absolutely no interest in plays and books, does not care what the Student Union does with their money, does not care what happens in the residence houses that they live in, does not have any interest in the political developments on the their campus, in the country and in the world, does not think that other students who are not engineers have anything useful or interesting to say, does not care what their president has to say about university policy, has no interest in moral and religious issues, does not have a sense of humour, has no interest in poetry, does not think dialogue on women's issues is of interest to them, has absolutely no interest in sports at this university, does not need the free and available notice and advertising board that the Brunswickan classifieds provide, and is wholly content to remain cloistered in their engineering labs for the entire time spent at university. If this is indeed the case, then the Brunswickan is certainly not for the engineer. Fortunately the Brunswickan has had dealings with enough engineers and science students to suggest otherwise.

One appreciates the self-inflating whining among engineers and other science oriented students that they really don't have time to do anything other than their academic work, but one is not impressed by it. A year ago, one of our co-sports editors was an engineering student. Tim Lynch worked with devotion and success at the paper. At times it was a strain on him academically as it is for any student who works here, but Tim Lynch graduated with first class honours from UNB. He is now pursuing medical studies. I think Tim would be the first to state that his experience at the Brunswickan was useful and fulfilling. The Brunswickan has had and still has science students on its editorial board. To suggest otherwise would be a complete falsehood. To suggest that the burden of engineering studies is uniquely so immense as to mitigate against involvement with the paper is merely an indication of one's basic limitations. Not everybody will be able to work at the paper, but their capacity to do so or not has more to do with personal preferences than to do with the academic pressures of a given discipline.

I would enjoy seeing engineers extending themselves and writing reviews of texts that of interest to them. It would be excellent to put together a feature that examines the implications of the weight of books on the infrastructure of the Harriet Irving Library at UNB. The truth is, non-engineering students are also interested in issues that some closed-minded engineers are convinced only interest them. Leonardo da Vinci introduced us to the true renaissance person and in so doing set a standard for human behaviour when it comes to the relationship between the arts and the sciences. Engineers who write as the fellow I address in this editorial show that Leonardo da Vinci's example has been overwhelmed by a blinkered notion of the pursuit of knowledge.

At the core of the arguments of this engineer is a tragic bigotry based on the premise that engineers and other scientist are very different from students in other disciplines. It is entertaining when such bigotry is limited to the realms of humour and teasing, but when it begins to shape the policy of these people, it becomes ridiculous and misguided. The truth is that our education system has created these peculiar dichotomies between the various disciplines and placed arbitrary values on them. "Engineers will make more money than most arts students so engineering is a better vocation." The fallacy of such an assertion should be obvious to anyone who has had some background in logic. It has been extremely rewarding to work with science students who have eschewed such dogma. For them, and for myself, the world and all the knowledge that it contains are our palette. We have a right to indulge in any facet to the extent of our abilities and interests. Writers like William Stewart from the computer sciences program and Steve Griffiths in biology have demonstrated that scientists are as interested in and capable of contributing to the world of journalism as are arts oriented students. Their example should be followed by the myopic people in the engineering department.

Finally, on the issue of funding, I must make a quick point. The writer suggested that the Student Union should desist from funding the Brunswickan because it is not representative of the student body. The Student Union, fortunately, is far more responsible than this writer in engineering and is aware of the role of the paper as a forum for inter-university dialogue that does not exist in another form on this campus. It is offensive to this writer that the writer of the ERTW editorial felt that the Brunswickan is given a disproportionate amount of space to the gays when they only constitute ten percent of the population, while the engineers, who constitute a full thirty percent of the undergraduate population are granted no such space. Implicit in this argument is the homophobic misconception that there are no gay people in engineering. There are. The comparison is ludicrous. Engineers should feel free to access the paper and contribute. We have made many offers as a paper and it is the engineers who have failed to respond directly to this offer. Beyond this, there is little else that can be done. If they want a voice in the paper, they must act. To suggest that the Brunswickan should be relegated to an Arts journal like the blinkered and single-minded ERTW is to totally misunderstand what the role of a campus newspaper is. This is not a newsletter. The Brunswickan has been around for one hundred and twenty-five years and intends to continue to serve the entire university for another hundred more years. The Student Union understands this and will be hard-pressed to convince the student population that the paper fails to address issues that pertain to a wide-cross section of the student population.

Finally, I must express gratitude to the writer for at least reading both the editorial and the mugwump sections of the Brunswickan. Please encourage those who have flipped through the paper to their hearts content to ensure that it is dumped in a recyclable bin for we intend to make use of the paper again and again and again.

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by Lynne W
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