

Noam Chomsky at UNB

by Mary Rogal-Black
Brunswickan News

The auditorium in MacLaggan Hall was overflowing Monday night, with a crowd ready to pay homage to a somewhat reluctant idol.

An estimated one hundred people were turned away, and others listened to the hour-long lecture standing in the doorways, seated in the aisles, or on the stage at the feet of controversial political commentator Noam Chomsky.

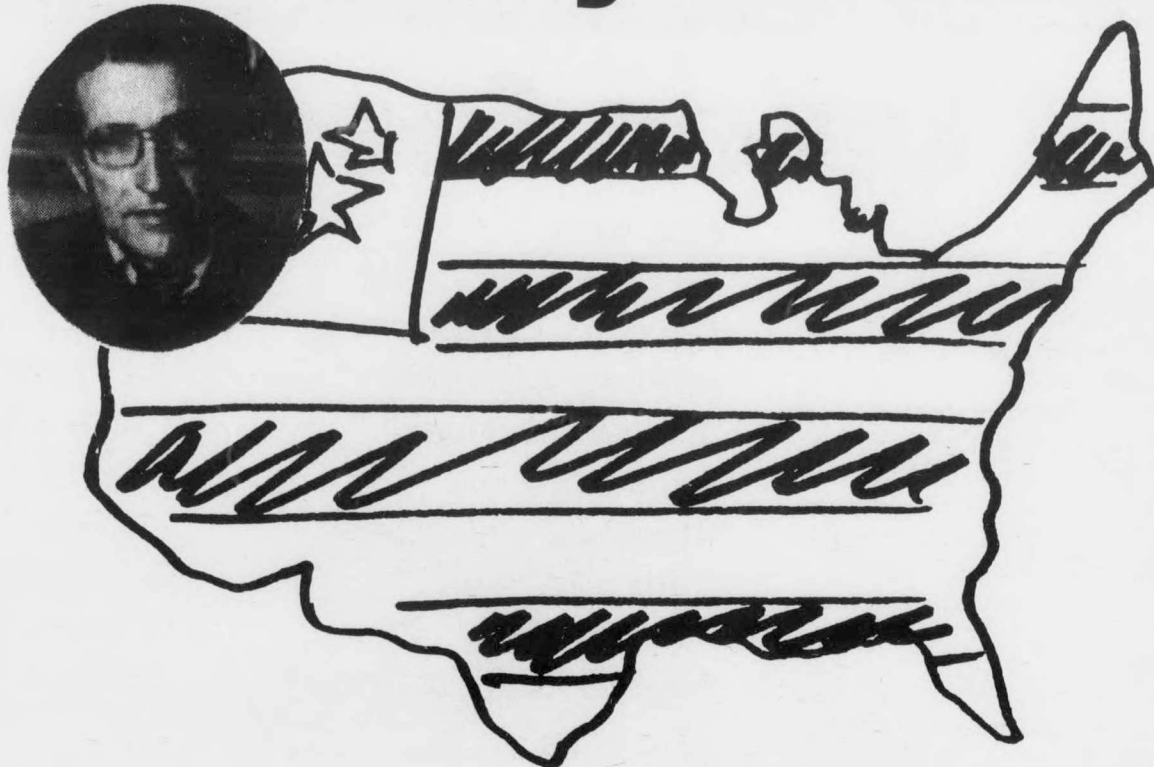
Professor Chomsky was introduced by Sidney Pobihushchy of the Political Science department, as a "leading intellectual in the world today."

"What do I say in introducing a person of Professor Chomsky's scholarly stature?" asked Pobihushchy. "Maybe I should say that he brings to his analysis a penetrating logic and a perceptivity unexcelled in scholarship today. Or maybe I should say he leaves no fact unturned in his meticulous and unyielding pursuit of the truth. I could say that his intellectual brilliance makes his humility all the more human and compelling, and that his political analysis is unsurpassed for honesty and clarity. I could say that he has been, and continues to be reviled by the brokers and magnates of power, whose corruption, shenanigans, and injustices he has so assiduously disclosed."

Chomsky's lecture, entitled "World Order and Its Rules," explored American foreign policy, particularly in its military and 'humanitarian' — a term he used with a certain amount of irony — interventions.

To provide his audience with an understanding of some of the attitudes that guide American policy, Chomsky referred to journalists, politicians, and political scientists who put forth the view that the U.S. is a wealthy country — a home whose owners must protect it at any cost.

Illustrating how the United States justifies its foreign policy, Chomsky cited a leading professor of political science at Harvard University: "The United States must maintain its international primacy in the world, and the reason is that alone among nations, its national identity is defined by a set of universal political and economic values: liberty, democracy, equality, human rights and markets."



"All of these are far more central to American policy than to the policy of any other country. And this is just a matter of definition, so the science of government teaches."

"And so it would be idle to consider any empirical evidence that might bear on it," Chomsky added sarcastically.

"One of the leading architects of the new world order that was established after world war II, George Kennen, said that the primary object of U.S. policy must be to maintain the position of disparity that separates our enormous wealth from the poverty of others."

Though one might expect the American voters to object to such policy, Chomsky suggests that these views are not generally available to the general public.

"There is no contradiction at all between adopting one posture when addressing the public, and advocating and implementing a radically different position when addressing the people who count internally," he said.

Chomsky reminded the audience that there are few eras and of course, few countries exempt from the charge of atrocities against humankind, even though many leaders have claimed that their states have achieved an unsurpassed level of civilization.

Chomsky places the actions of the United States government in the context

of history, and contrasts American policies with those of other countries.

Emphasising the particularly dubious nature of history as gleaned from, for example, the Encyclopedia Britannica, Chomsky traced accounts of Belgium's King Leopold, which became progressively less harsh as each new edition of the encyclopedia was released.

"The United States has an unusual military doctrine, perhaps unique — I don't know any other country that has it. It's roots go far back, as far back as the war to keep the Indians quiet," Chomsky said. "The doctrine is that U.S. forces are not permitted to be placed under any threat, and they are under orders to use massive force if they sense any threat."

"The U.S. troops entered Bosnia under exactly these 'robust rules of engagement.' The White House announced that, stating that there would be no more limits on force, unlike the wishy-washy Europeans."

Contrasting U.S. policy with that of other countries, Chomsky said, "at the same time that U.S. forces landed under these robust rules of engagement in Bosnia, Norwegian peacekeeping forces in South Lebanon came under fire from the Israeli tanks, and a number were wounded. But of course, Norway is not the United States, so they didn't respond with deadly force, and couldn't

have if they'd wanted to, and the United States takes it for granted: 'that's another country, not us. Our job is to keep Indian countries quiet, and we do it the way it oughta be done, like real tough guys.'"

"Sure, very tough," Chomsky quipped, "as long as you make sure your enemy is defenseless."

With a matter-of-fact and unassuming presentation style, Chomsky presents his ideas as common-sense truisms, despite the fact that they tend to challenge the way we understand the daily news, and even the way we read our history textbooks.

Chomsky recalled a time in the seventies when he tried to raise awareness of the political situation in East Timor, and could only collect together a few people in a living room. Though one might suggest that times have changed now that crowds flock to hear Chomsky speak, he resists the role of messiah of the truth.

"The reason I mentioned the question of optimism is basically to point out that it's irrelevant," said Chomsky when questioned by an audience member about his hope for the future. "It does not make any sense to be either optimistic or pessimistic. The only thing that makes any sense is for everyone to get involved in trying to do something."

The Cellar Revenue Breakdown - March 1996

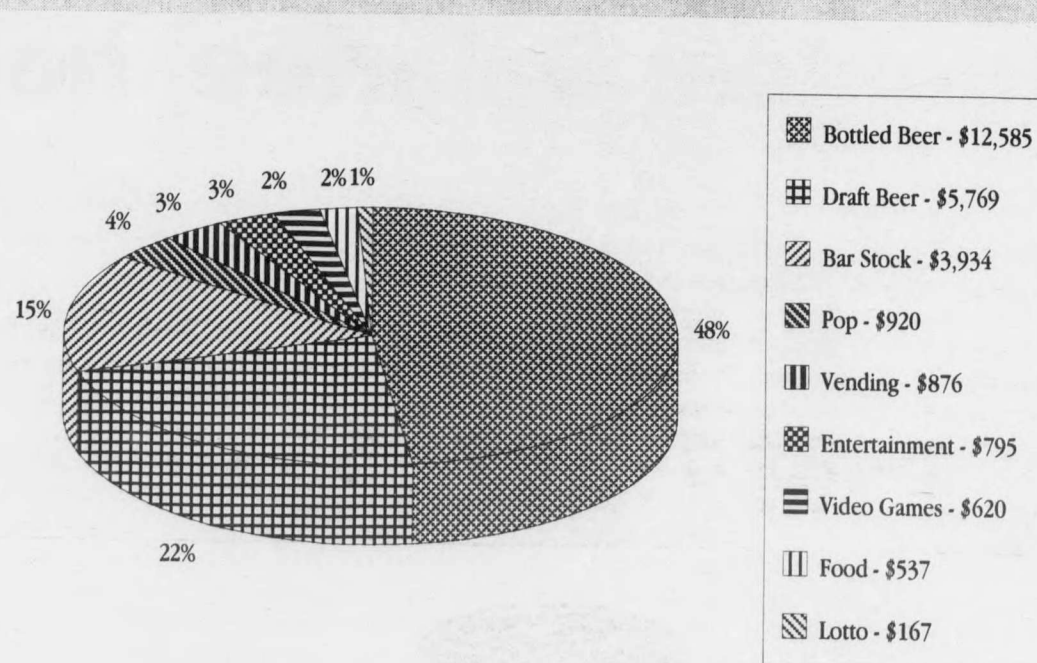
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Numbers obtained by *The Brunswickan* indicate that The Cellar, located in the basement of the SUB, made 70% of its approximately \$23,500 in revenue from beer sales during the month of March.

Expenses over the same period are unclear, although *The Brunswickan* has learned that \$3,000 is budgeted each month in fixed costs (rental of space and lease on equipment). In addition, wages of \$5.50 for bar staff and \$8.00 for door staff have been reported.

The Board of Directors of Student Union Beverage Services Incorporated (SUBS Inc.), the body which oversees the operations of The Cellar, will not confirm wages or salaries.

The Brunswickan has also learned that interim Bar Manager Darryl Kent will be offered a full-time contract in the not too distant future. Until such time as there is a contract, Kent will continue to be paid an hourly wage of an undisclosed amount.



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