

Why do I deserve to live?

SACKVILLE, NB (CUP) — A homeless man begged me for spare change and I got nervous. He was not much older than me, but he was down on his luck and his begging made me feel vulnerable.

If I had taken the time to put myself in his worn shoes for one moment I would have realized it is not me who is threatened at all. Winter was coming, the elements would become much harsher to deal with and I know I have a warm house to go home to.

In late November I went to New York City for a rugby tournament and I got a taste of reality. The experience allowed me to contextualize myself in my commu-

nity and really understand how lucky I am.

There were transvestite prostitutes walking across the street being laughed at because of their attire. There were old men and young men sleeping in the subway stations who looked more like scenery than actual people. There was a pregnant woman who asked a friend of mine to let her give him oral sex for money to support her baby.

There was a young man, probably my age, walking through the subway cars asking for money. He gave us a spiel about why he was down on his luck and that it wasn't our fault, but it wasn't his fault either. When he got to the end of our car and no one had given him any-

thing he promised us that the next time he saw us he would kill us. "I promise you that," he said.

I never really thought too much about all these things until I headed home. The thing that gets me is how they ended up on the streets and I'm here. What made me so deserving of a great education and all this opportunity and makes some other women beg to make money by giving oral sex? I could just as easily be there but for some reason, whether I deserve it or not, I got lucky.

Is it choices? Did I get out of the path of destruction at the right time, or am I still headed that way? I can't wrap my head around this idea of homelessness.

I can't understand why we have men and women who live in dumpsters who prostitute themselves, who have to give up the idea of "body as temple," and subject themselves to degradation on a daily basis. I know there are people who believe that it is someone's fault that they are on the streets, but I don't buy it.

Maybe this is all about consumption. Sometime, long ago, we all just wanted our fair share of the pie. Once upon a time, one acquired all one needed to survive and surrendered the surplus to be equally distributed among the less fortunate.

And then we started wearing suits and wanting more stuff. Other people got less stuff. And now some

people get no stuff. They sell their bodies, the only thing they do possess, to try and get a little bit of their due share.

Yeah, maybe it is about consumption. The consumption of goods, the consumption of bodies, the consumption of other people's ability to have a shot at making it in the world.

Give a little bit. Try not to live so excessively. Don't ignore what you see around you - people being disadvantaged by no fault of their own, and being ridiculed and criticised because they have been given less opportunity than you have.

Tara Mills

The book of egos

Put down your posters and placards. Scrape off your bumperstickers. Pack away your can of police-strength pepper spray. There will be no strike today.

Next week, supposedly students across the country will put down their pencils and pocket-protectors and protest something. But who will actually show up? If I cared less, and heard there was an opportunity to skip class, I would probably sleep. I would not trek around in the slush yelling reworded slogans from the 60's — "hey hey, ho ho, student debt has got to go..."

Only 25 percent of King's — the most outwardly socially active group of Upper Canadians on the planet — actually voted in favour of a strike. Dal, according to a one-sided *Gazette* article, supports this effort. Ok. Half the schools in the country belong to the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) while the rest have created the fringe Canadian Association of Student Associations (or something like that). They all agree on the problem, but they lack coordination. Why?

It's something about student loans — no two people have the same amount. We all have different needs, different resources, etc. We all complain, from our own perspectives. If a friend has less loan, you sneer at their rich Gap education. If a friend has more debt, you slink away in shame for complaining that you have it so bad. Most of the most active people will be able to get jobs as professional activists and come from backgrounds of luxury. So who asked them to skip class for me.

The problem isn't just the strikers, it's who's meant to listen.

Tristan Stewart-Robertson

When Ford strikes, people listen. When students strike, people laugh. I've seen them laugh. Sure parents are concerned for their children as they watch their future fill up with debt. But public primary and secondary education in this country is in far worse shape and it is still far more important. As is health care. And many other issues. We don't have to go to university. We could go to a college, get a good job future, have little debt. It's all rosy on the other side...maybe.

I'll be going to class and I know many who will scream at me that I don't care. Bulllocks. Of course I care. But I can't make the government care about an issue which should not be of primary importance when the country is as screwed up as it is now. My interests, and I believe the interests of future students are best served by attending classes, learning as much as we can, finishing our education and then taking over.

Yes, I'm calling for a coup again. This time, when we get out into the "real" world of the Liberal Canadian Century, we will remember our perspectives and we will change the country, fix the problems and make education work. What do we know now? Not much. We need to learn more. We need to grow up. Strikes (on any level) don't prove maturity.

So I, like many others, will be sitting in class whenever the others decided to walk out. And someday, when we are all sitting in government solving problems with realistic solutions, maybe we'll hand out some jobs to ex-activists.

Strike This!

GMOs are getting a bad rap

EDMONTON (CUP) — The media is increasingly portraying genetically modified organisms (GMOs) as a bogeyman to frighten consumers. The drawback of the recent outcry is that those who fear GMOs the most are the people who understand them the least.

A little research shows that there have been virtually no health problems associated with consumption of GMOs, despite the fact that every person in Canada has consumed them.

Many seemingly innocuous foods are "afflicted," including wheat, canola, soybeans and countless fruits and vegetables. I am not implying that genetic modification cannot have ramifications on the health of individuals and the environment. All I'm saying is that fear mongers are loudly extolling the virtues of their own ignorance and hence blatantly misinforming the public.

Many people assume all natural products are edible and appropriate, while man's "tampering" necessarily corrupts the natural bounty. However, indiscriminate consumption of the fruits of nature may lead to entirely natural strychnine or cyanide poisoning.

Moreover, the food industry and its government watchdogs hold synthetic products to a higher standard than natural foods. This means that one is more likely to die of lead poisoning from the ground water of an organic farm than by eating colouring agents added to a Popsicle.

Some would argue that man should cease all agricultural "interference." They forget that agriculture itself, the institution without which modern society would never have arisen, is the process of selective development of plants.

Selective breeding has been used for thousands of years to optimize strains of grain. This process occurs naturally, but mankind's acumen has allowed an acceleration of evolution so that the needs of the hungry can be better met.

Complete abandonment of contemporary agricultural practices would result in famine heretofore untold. But cultivation of novel agricultural methods, including genetic modification, could yield a promising future.

Much of the burgeoning population of the world remains hungry. Habitat destruction threatens plant and animal species worldwide, as humans daily require more arable land. By improving the productivity and efficiency of our means of production we bring about vast opportunity for the voiceless majority that suffers under the dictum of hunger. Thus GMOs may help to eliminate human hunger, but may also leave more rainforest unmolested.

Genetic modification is a technique that technology has made available. The process is very similar to selective breeding, which involves a very real, largely unregulated exchange and manipulation of genetic material.

The improvement is that scientists can determine exactly what the product of their efforts is, through identification of the protein(s) encoded by the inserted gene. Instead of random intermingling of the genes of various plants, the gene that confers the desired property can be focally administered.

Simply put, genetic modification is merely a more sophisticated method of enhancing the food supply, increasing quality and yield as we reap the fruits of our labour.

We must keep in mind that there are dangers inherent in the development of any technology. The procedures used and the resultant products ought to be thoroughly tested if we are to trust what we eat.

Regulating bodies must set and enforce adequate standards if the consumer is to feel safe. It must be kept in mind that modifications to enhance immunity to pests should not come at the expense of more serious side effects.

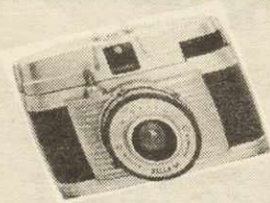
The problem is that there is little empirical evidence for the apocalypse that some claim GMOs are bringing about. The individual consumer would do better to avoid cola and potato chips than these "artificial" foods.

The educated consumer should keep in mind that the ruckus caused by the "back-to-nature-lobby," and even this little diatribe of mine, should be taken with a grain of salt.

Bryan Norrie

Submit your

Photo of the Week



Snap happy!

Drop off
photographs
to room

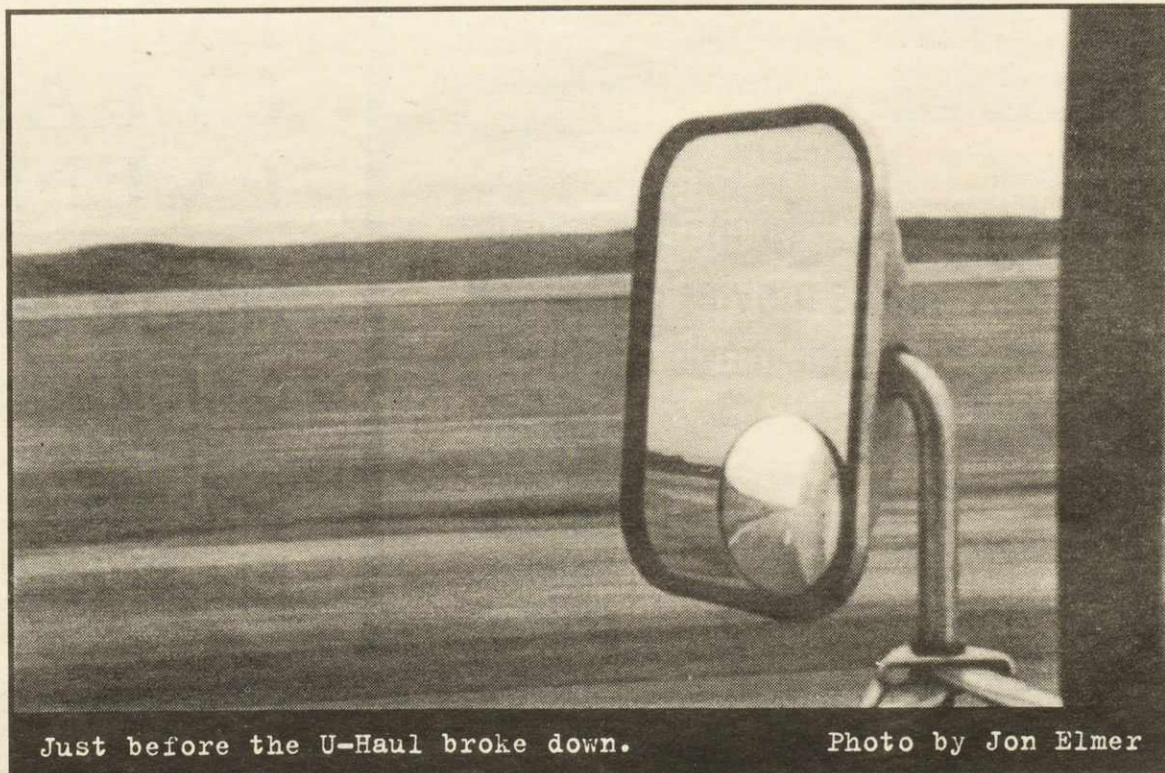
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THE GAZETTE



Just before the U-Haul broke down.

Photo by Jon Elmer