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The New Boat People

Now, Now, Kiddies

The Edmonton Fire Department responded to an alarm in HUB Mall early on the morning of February 27. Luckily the alarm proved false.

Ray Richards, the campus fire protection officer, stated that someone had triggered one of the pull alarms. "We treat every alarm like a real fire," he said. A representative of Housing & Food Services downplayed the incident. "Kids will be kids," she said.

Students in the mall at the time commented that there was a very strong smell of smoke. "What's with the fire trucks?" asked one, "have they found a fire?"

The alarm could not be shut off initially and resisted attempts to reset it. Finally, with the aid of an electrician, the alarm system was reset at 4:15 a.m. "It was never anything serious," noted Housing and Food Services.

In itself, this is a harmless tale. But the "kids will be kids" comment and the administration's view of the entire incident being a mere prank is potentially lethal.

Are HUB Mall residents or users kids? No. The vast majority of them are university students. Does the administration (or at least Food and Housing) see students as kids? Considering the degree of maturity and motivation that is required from university students, the reference to students as kids is damn condescending at best. At worst...?

And in the light of several students commenting that they smelled smoke, why was the alarm dismissed as a prank? Couldn't a HUB resident have become worried by the smell of smoke and pulled the alarm? I can't see why not.

When such alarms are laughed off, the point that a student may have been legitimately worried is overlooked. False alarms and pranks are not synonymous.

The apparent attitude of some administrative sectors that students are mere babes is distressing. Will the administration sit idly by thinking that students are crying wolf in the event of a genuine emergency? "It was never anything serious" may be the ironic forerunner of the administrative excuse "We didn't think it was anything serious."

Shaun Cody











Tuesday, March 4, 1986