

Blood and Thunder

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Rm. 35, Student Union Building
DEADLINE: 5 PM, Tuesday
MAXIMUM WORDS: 300

Absolute Truth

To James Gill

I would like to respond to a statement that you made to the effect that both you and Keener MacHiner can be right while holding opposing viewpoints. To begin with, I would like to consider some various concepts of truth. The first concept is that of absolute truth. This view of truth maintains that some things can be considered wholly right, while other things can be considered wholly wrong, without disallowing the possibility of grey areas in some matters. I would place the Bible in this category. The second concept is that truth is relative. Hegel's idea that you could have one set of ideas, called a thesis, and another, opposing set of ideas, called an antithesis, combining together to form a new set of ideas, called a synthesis, would fit into this category. Another expression of relative truth would be: "What is right for you may be right for you, but it may not necessarily be right for me, and vice versa." This would deal with those matters considered wholly right or wrong with regard to absolute truth. The third concept is that truth does not exist, which is the concept that totally opposite viewpoints can both be true. Stated in terms of mathematical logic, absolute truth would say A is equal to A, and A is not equal to non-A. The view that truth does not exist would say that A is equal to A, and A is also equal to non-A.

You say that that is not what I said; I was only speaking of moral issues which affect only myself. Is truth a subjective matter in some areas and objective in others? If there is a distinction between subjective truth and objective truth, then where is the dividing line between the two, and how is it to be arrived at? Will it be reached objectively, subjectively, arbitrarily, or by the opinion of the majority? Why would the majority be right, and can it be wrong?

You say we have laws which must be followed. Where did those laws come from? If Allan Legere and Charles Manson believe they have done no wrong, on what basis do we draw the dividing line to say that this is a different issue? You say this is different, but you do not explain how it is different. Is this your opinion, or some feeling that you have, or did your conscience tell you this? What shall we say then about the views of those holding opposite opinions about abortion? If the pro-choice group is right, then the foetus is not human, and abortion is not morally wrong. If the pro-life group is right, then abortion is murder and must be stopped. Can both of these viewpoints be true? If so, then how do we save the life of the foetus and abort it at the same time? Why should we write exams? If my ideas are just as true as those of my professor, why should he mark any of my answers wrong or give me a failing grade?

To disband the concept of absolute truth is to pass from reason into non-reason. If everybody held the position

that you hold, James, and practised it consistently in all areas of their lives, what would be the consequences for us all?

Sincerely
Gary Craigs

Eclectic Schedule

To the editor

The conversation that one encounters when CHSR-FM is the topic usually tends towards the negative. At least, this has been my experience since I have been listening to the Station (grade 8, Sunday Night Jazz with Mark Bartlett). As I see it, there are two problems that should be cleared up in the latest round of concerns that are being raised by the Student Union.

First, that students do not listen to the station should reflect on the students and their attitudes, rather than the stations programming. Granted, the promotion of the station is not very good (and it is good if the Student Union will help and encourage it in this process), but that does not mean the programming is bad. Unlike commercial radio, CHSR is not meant to be a background noise for insecure people, but on alternative entertainment and information centre. That means that specialization is the fare of the day.

If a student (or anyone else) listens to CHSR, does it not reveal that they are interested in learning more about the arts (shows on music, events in the city, or drama for example) or ideas (special news program, or broadcasts both local and imported from other provinces

and the world!) which are not available on any other radio station in Fredericton (except, possibly, the CBC in certain cases). Only those students that are interested in pursuing and learning more about the world we live in will be tuning in. If students aren't listening they are not concerned with finding out, what the station has to offer them. That is their fault, and an inevitable loss to their lives.

Secondly, the success of CHSR should not be rated by how many people listen every day. Because of the specialized programming I wouldn't think that anyone does this but the program director of CHSR-FM. It is meant to address the areas that commercial radio is afraid of (for political or economical reasons usually) which means bringing a very eclectic schedule. I don't listen all the time. I'm going to listen to reggae and folk, or maybe from a Different Perspective. I'm not going to listen to heavy metal or experimental. Nevertheless, am a regular listener. I even support the latter shows being aired!

Statistics mean a lot more than principle to politicians. However the Student Union is in the academic community. So come on Wayne, and all students on campus, instead of pulling out funds increase them. If that handful of listeners are positively affected by CHSR it is worth it.

A university which neglects campus/community radio is an embarrassment in our society where we brag of being advanced. This is just one person's opinion.
Sincerely,
Scott A. Durham (BA IV)

Only for the fair

Purvi Rajani's statement "feminists do not speak for me or for many other women" went right to the heart of the problem the feminist movement in Canada. The feminism practised at the University of New Brunswick is an exclusive club where white women make decisions that enhance their group. When women of colour are included or when white women work with women of colour it is a classic case of the oppressed oppressing the most oppressed.

If the movement was or is inclusive, recognition of the fact that minority women are excluded from most decisions that are made to help women would be known at present; and appropriate actions taken.

I was made aware recently that a woman reports to the President on the status of women. Not one of the women of colour I know was consulted. I called one of the leaders in the women's movement who is a woman of colour; and who works at the university to inquire if she was ever consulted. She said she was not and was unaware that one of her sisters reports to the President on women's issues.

The recent affirmative action policy of the Law school did not even mention women of colour. Sisters I ask where is your equality and fairness?

Is it only for the fair?

An excluded woman of colour.
PS. I am anxiously waiting to see who will be excluded in the International Women's Day celebration.

Perspectives Democracy

by Wm. Mott Stewart

The Democracy which shall make government the organ of public reason...is yet in the womb of the future. Goldwin Smith-1887

The Democratic ideal can be succinctly stated: one person, one vote. Canada's system of government cannot be said to be truly Democratic, for it violates the spirit of this ideal in two fundamental ways: (1) it lacks proportional representation, and (2) it is privately financed.

1. Proportional Representation
Almost every democratic country in the world has created its own implementation of the democratic ideal; we have a hand-down system inherited from the British. It is time we considered some alterations.

The well-known and glaring flaw in the British Parliamentary System is its nonproportional character. In the most extreme example, party A could win 51% of the seats with 51% of the vote, while party B received all the other votes. Party A would then form the government with 25% of the popular vote,

while part B would be relegated to the opposition with 75% of the popular vote!

A proportional representation system is the essence of the democratic ideal. We should settle for nothing less.

A proportional representation system must (a) ensure that all candidates which actually win their riding are seated, and (b) match the political complexion of Parliament to the popular vote.

I suggest the following simple mechanism. First, all candidates which actually win their ridings are seated. No further candidates from the most over-represented party are seated. Then, second-place candidates from the under-represented parties are seated, starting with the most closely contested ridings, until the political complexion of Parliament matches the popular vote.

This mechanism would often result in two (and sometimes three) candidates being seated from closely contested ridings. This is appropriate. The voters will assess each representative's

performance, and render their judgement in the following election.

A proportional representation system may result in more minority governments - a beneficial development and reflective of the will of the people.

A proportional representation system would also provide the populace with a strong incentive to vote, even for candidates they consider likely to lose, in order to support the part of their choice as a whole.

2. Party Financing
The financing of political parties by private interests is an egregious distortion of the Democratic process, and should not be tolerated.

Modern elections are strongly influenced by polling, advertising, and direct mailing, which all cost money. The present Canada Elections Act allows private organizations, such as corporations and wealthy individuals, to finance these activities through financial contributions to registered political parties.

The electoral playing field is

therefore not level: wealthier interests have more influence, and less wealthy interests have less influence. This makes a mockery of the central tenet of democracy - that every citizen should have an equal vote.

Business is the primary player. The next largest player is the Canadian Labour Congress, from which the New Democratic Party receives much of its financing.

The primary fault of a privately financed democracy, as we all know, is the consequent indebtedness of the political parties to their financial backers. This system is absolutely incompatible with the spirit of democracy. No country can call itself truly democratic that does not publicly finance its political parties.

As always, the appropriate mechanism is all important. I suggest the following. Amend the Canada Elections Act to make private funding of political parties illegal. Then levy a Democracy financing tax of one cent per day per person - a trifling sum for the support of

our most important institution. This tax will raise about 95 million dollars per year.

Distribute ninety percent of this total annually to registered political parties proportional to their popular vote in the previous election. This is the fairest method of distribution, because it is decided by the people.

Distribute the remaining ten percent of the total at the time of the next election to independent candidates proportional to the number of supporting signatures they can obtain.

After four years, this mechanism will provide a party with one third of the popular vote with about 113 million dollars, or 400 thousand dollars per riding. At this level, the party could direct mail their election platform to every household in the country about eleven times over.

This mechanism would level the playing field, and eliminate political indebtedness. Like the mechanism for proportional representation, public financing of political parties would provide the populace with a strong incentive to vote, even for candidates they consider likely to lose, in order to support the party of their choice as a whole.