

The Brunswickan

Canada's oldest official student publication
The University of New Brunswick

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The Brunswickan, in its 126th year of publication, is Canada's oldest official student publication. The Brunswickan's offices are located in Rm 35 of the University of New Brunswick's Student Union Building, P.O. Box 4400, College Hill, Fredericton N.B., E3B 5A3. Tel. 453-4983. Fax. 453-4958.

The Brunswickan is published by Brunswickan Publishing Inc. and printed with flair by Global Printing & Binding Inc., Fredericton, N.B.

Subscription is \$25 per year. Second class mail is in effect - #8120.

Local Advertising rates are available from The Brunswickan, (506) 453-4983. National advertising rates are available from Youthstream Canada Ltd., 1541 Avenue Road, Suite 203, Toronto, Ont. M5M 3X4, Tel: (416) 787-4911.

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MUGWUMP

d for democracy

"The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment."
 (Robert Maynard Hutchins, 1899-1977)

You probably don't know me. My name is James Rowan and I'm Offset Editor (*Chief Dot-maker*) here at this wonderful newspaper we call the **Brun**s. I have been desperately trying to get a chance to have some real *content* in this paper for a year and a half now. This is my first foray into the field of Mugwump Writing, and after our elections Tuesday, likely my last. To tell the truth, this is only the third time this year that they have let me out of the darkroom long enough to write anything. But no, I'm not bitter. Well, not all *that* bitter...

The idea for this column struck me last Friday. I was sitting in the Brunswickan office, when suddenly I was struck with the thought "Hey, why not go up to the 'Meet the Candidates Pub'". For those of you who missed it (*and approximately 99.93% of the student body did*), it was a little get-together where you were supposed to ask questions of your favourite Student Union election candidate and they were supposed to squirm as they tried to avoid the issue.

The largest group present seemed to be those attempting to collect sufficient signatures to enter the election race before the deadline, which was by then only half an hour away. It is precisely this kind of planning, foresight and organization that the Student Union needs. Best of luck, folks. With a beginning like that, I can guarantee that you'll go far in the Student Union.

In other news, Arthur Dull, sorry, I mean Doyle, is still trying to win some kind of elected position before he graduates- any election, any position, I don't think he cares anymore which one. Apparently, whoever maliciously defaced Arthur's campaign posters last year either graduated or was too busy this year. Too bad - I thought the Hitler mustache looked good on him.

Basically, though, the Pub consisted of a lot of Student Union-types (*you know who you are*) listening to CHSR's resident spin doctor try to convert them to the religion of campus college radio, CHSR being the one true church and Steve Staples (*whose job was just slashed out from underneath him in this year's budget, courtesy the UNB SU*) being the high priest. This struck me as being the most obvious example of the blind leading the deaf (*and dumb*) that I have ever had the misfortune to witness. However, we all ought to thank Roy Nicholl, CHSR-FM Public Relations Officer. He at least knows what the words 'election issues' mean. Most of the people running this year, with a few exceptions, would suffer physical pain if forced to confront an issue or deal with a matter of any substance. This isn't a good sign.

This election was bizarre and hard to predict. It would have been even harder to predict if more people had bothered to vote. One of the underlying causes of this strangeness was the lack of older, more experienced candidates. Yes, that's right, the 'old guard' has finally scraped together enough credits to graduate. Not to cast aspersions on your academic prowess, but good lord, some of you folks were up there a long time. You'll be missed. Writing Mugwump won't be the same without you.

Even worse than the departure of the old guard is the lack of initiative demonstrated by those who are still here. Both the VP University Affairs and the VP Finance and Administration got off with yes/no votes, rather than real opposition. No one bothered to run against them. Either there is a massive mutual admiration society that can't imagine a better pair of candidates than Anna MacDonald (*VP University Affairs*) and Jamie Van Raalte (*VP Money*), and that's not bloody likely, or else no one cared enough to run against them. This student apathy is amazing. Look at what you've done! These people should not be running unopposed. Jamie Van Raalte, Mr. Hack'em-Slash'em!! *The horror, the horror!!!* Don't you people care? Anna MacDonald! *Someone stop the madness!* I mean, it's the Dot-Matrix woman (*see the Bruns, September 27 for more info... oops, sorry Steverino, I guess there wasn't a real Bruns that week!*)! Now don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that these people aren't good at their jobs, no, perish the thought. Rather, I'm saying that it is appalling that none of you lazy slobs out there on campus cared enough to give these people some real opposition, in the form of an opponent for the position.

At any rate, back to the Pub. As I was there, the thought that this looked more like some sort of bizarre stage production than a real world event struck me. So, I took the Student Union Presidential Candidates and wrote them a song (with my most sincere apologies to the Gilbert & Sullivan society):

Song - The Student Union President

*Kevin, Darren and Eric: We are the very models of a Student Union President,
 We have kissed butt with every student, professor and resident,
 We'll keep up this charade until it starts to get ridiculous,
 And when we have been seated there's no way you can get rid of us,
 If ever you heard what we were doing you'd surely raise a fuss,
 Ramming through thirty motions with the magic of the omnibus,
 To say that we are total nincompoops is hardly front page news,
 It doesn't matter who you voted for, you'll be the ones who lose!*

(Hey, light opera isn't my strong point, okay?)

I would like to be writing about the UNB Student Union election results, but they aren't in yet. So, swallowing my pride, I'll take a few shots at STU. Well, the students up there have spoken, and they have said "We don't know. Nope, no ideas at all. Just totally idealess." Yes folks, five of their positions were decided by less than ten votes, causing automatic recounts. The complicating factor here is that there are fourteen ballots out there that don't have names on the voting list to accompany them. And yes, this discrepancy is *greater than the margin of victory in at least five contests*. Not only that, it took longer for STU to count the few hundred ballots they got than for South Africa to count up the results of a 2 million person nation-wide referendum.

Why was it so difficult to choose? Well, for president they had three choices: Pat McDermott, who never sent us a single press release as VP External; Brian Pierson, who looks like a Bart Simpson doll who was stretched on the rack and then force-fed bad acid; and finally, Jeff McGovern, who was doing fine until he was fired from STU Orientation for financial mismanagement.

This is so pathetic it makes our presidential candidates look positively ... naaah, nevermind.

In all seriousness, these elections are no laughing matter. They will determine where your money is going to be spent, and by whom. They will determine how other universities are likely to perceive us. The democratic system can't work if you don't vote. Neither will it work if you aren't informed. Read the Bruns, listen to CHSR. If you see your faculty rep in the hallways (assuming you're one of the small minority who actually knows the name of your representative on council), ask them some tough questions. If they can't or don't answer, you have the power to get rid of them. Use it.