

EDITORIAL

Student Power with a New Face

There is a plan afoot, spearheaded by the St. Thomas Student Union, to encourage a yellow ribbon project for the Canadian troops in the Gulf. The project is not intended to be political, instead, it is an attempt to express concern and support for the women and men who are stuck out there in the desert. No one should have any objections to this initiative. The fact is that these people are in the Gulf largely because of their loyalty to Canada as a country. Their training has ensured that they regard prompt and obedient response to orders as an elemental part of the carrying out of their duties as defenders of the interest of the nation. When they do return from the Gulf, whether in victory or in defeat, the fact still remains that they went to do their duty; a duty that they would have performed with equal loyalty if it entailed a direct defence of the Canadian border.

These people should not be blamed for the war. To vent anger at them would be unfortunate and totally misdirected. They are doing their duty. If there is any anger to be vented, here is an instance in which it would be only correct to point it at the politicians who make up international policy. Those who oppose the war have to learn from the mistakes of the Vietnam War. The soldiers then, were subject to a painful series of attacks which made them scapegoats for the decisions of their superiors. If this war turns out well, there will be little danger of the politicians losing accolades (politician are skilled in ensuring that they get all the praise they deserve), and the soldiers will be commended on their heroism. If it turns out badly, while the politicians may dance away from the rebuke, the soldiers will have to contend with the resentments of their relatives, friends and neighbours. God forbid that this happens. We must remember the things of the past and apply the lessons learnt to our present circumstances.

Closer to the home front, I am fascinated at the way in which life has really changed for the university student in the past thirty years. I have been watching with great interest, the PBS programme on the student revolutions of the sixties. Amazing stuff. Students came to the awareness that they were adults and that they had a voice that could cause change not only in their universities, but in their nations and in the world. The power was rooted in intellectual daring and the exuberance of youthful enthusiasm. They carried the day by way of their numbers. Since then many have lamented the loss of that kind of drive among students but this voice of sorrow is overstating the case. The changes of the sixties are still extant. Admittedly the emergence of independent student Governments may have now simply added to the power structure that once existed, but there is little question in my mind that students have more power now than did their counterparts in the fifties and early sixties. What has changed are the political inclinations of these student, and that is the nature of societal change.

Here on campus, we have a perfect demonstration of student power that has assumed a radically different ideological tone. The people who encouraged and supported the removal of the Iraqi flag at McConnell Hall may not be aware of the tremendous scoop that their victory has been. The fact is, they took on the administration and beat them thoroughly. According to Dr. Garland, Vice-President Academic, the flag will not be put back up because doing so will cause more harm than good. I suspect that the University administration is afraid that someone else might rip it down again and this time do so with greater drama and ceremony. To their credit, those who removed the flag did so without damaging it. One is not certain that this would be the case a second time around. I suspect also, that the Administration has chosen to let things ride because they fear what will happen if students decided to rise up in public protest about the reinstating of the Iraqi flag. (The initial incident won the attention of CBC radio, CHSR, Canadian Press, and the Daily Gleaner.) The rumoured one thousand names on the petition that was sent to the administration would seem to have effectively forced the administration to try and avoid confrontation. The students have won.

Many would argue that this is not a victory to be proud of. You will no doubt encounter many opinions of this nature in this issue of *The Brunswickan* so I will make no effort to make a case either way. What I will say is that here, we have an example of the actions taken by students that have a remarkable breadth of support from fellow students. Whatever we conclude about the removal of the Iraqi flag from this Hall of Residence at UNB, and whatever we may assume about the motives of those who carried out the act, we can't deny the fact that it speaks volumes about university students at UNB today. One also suspects that the seemingly passive response of the administration says something about its own attitude to the issue at hand. Significantly, UNB's Student Union Vice-President External, Mark Lockwood, has made it clear that he thinks that the flag should be put back up. Will the Student Union take an official position on the issue? This yet to be seen. What is certain is that "this ain't no case of student apathy, that's for sure!"

CHSR is celebrating 30 years of Broadcasting on this campus this week. The Brunsw would like to congratulate our fellow media outlet on this campus. We also hope that during these celebrations students will get a chance to see what the station can do for them and will thus be convinced that the vision that got the whole thing started in the first place was a very positive one. I understand that there will be an Open House upstairs on Saturday. The Awards Ceremony on Saturday night is to be a grand event, also.

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