

How many different things are there to think about when you are in university? There are tuition, grades, study time, classes and social events. But you should also be aware that we are the future leaders of this country and we should be starting to take an active role in our society and the concerns of the people involved.

The UNB STUDENT UNION does take an active role by way of the SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE. This committee was struck to address the concerns of an ever changing society. As the Social Issues Commissioners for the UNB Student Union, Doug Saunders and Tricia Davidson are responsible this year to make students aware of these issues and to help inform them of the consequences of their actions. In order to do this, they will be running a numbers of campaigns over the year to make students aware of these concerns. As you can see from the list below, the issues that will be addressed are ones that concern all members of our society.

October 3-9	AIDS EDUCATION WEEK
October 31-November 4	PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY WEEK
October 17-21	HARASSMENT CAMPAIGN
November 14-18	"NO MEANS NO"
December 6	MEMORIAL FOR THE MONTREAL MASSACRE
January 9-13	CAMPUS SAFETY
January 16-21	ANTI-RACISM
February 6-10	SAFER SEX CAMPAIGN

As the Commissioners for this year, Mr. Saunders and Ms. Davidson are also responsible for representing various interest groups within the Student Union Council. All students are represented by their duly elected faculty representatives, but these people do not really represent issues for students. For example, who will represent the concerns of the student who may be confined to a wheelchair and may require assistance in fighting for better accessibility in the buildings around campus? What about the person who may be gay and afraid to approach anyone about a concern in university life or needs someone to talk to about where to find help in dealing with their sexuality? The Social Issues Commissioners are there to represent and assist these students with these concerns and any others that apply to their portfolio. Both of the Social Issues Commissioners would like to stress that if there are any issues that you would like to be addressed by the UNB Student Union or if you would like more information about any of the issues listed above, please feel free to contact them at the UNB STUDENT OFFICE at 453-4955.

HOMOPHOBIA

This is an issue that not only effects people who are gay or lesbian, which are the people at which the homophobic attitudes and comments are directed towards, but the people who are homophobic. There is nothing wrong with being gay or bisexual. Some people tend to think that we are these horrible people who are going to be the end of society. There is no reason to hate someone just because they are more happy being in a relationship with someone of the same sex.

There is a group on campus known as the GAY AND LESBIAN ALLIANCE or GALA. The goals of this organization is to promote a healthy gay lifestyle on campus and to show that gay and lesbian people are no different than anyone else. The Social Issues Committee felt it was appropriate to ask GALA to submit an article in this issue

as it is one that effects them directly. The following was submitted by Darren Elliot, who was recently elected as one of the Co-Presidents for GALA.

Homophobia is an irrational fear of homosexuals. As any phobia, it is most often based on insubstantial ideologies, hence the irrationality. People are often afraid and defensive towards that which they cannot understand. Since each person views the world through their own mental screen, a filter so to speak, it is difficult for some to understand that others are different than they.

Homophobia is not always based on mere lack of understanding. Sometimes it stems from an inner fear that one might be homosexual/bisexual him/herself. Lets make it clear that homosexuality is not a contagious dis-

ease, if you aren't gay now then you will not become gay. However, it is often possible for one to suppress their true sexual orientation in light of societal pressures, religious beliefs, et cetera. Facing the issues of homosexuality can feel threatening to them, causing them confusion and turmoil. If they do not recognize where these unpleasant feelings are rooted, it is probable that they will attribute these feelings as being their gut reaction to homosexuality and they will base their opinions accordingly.

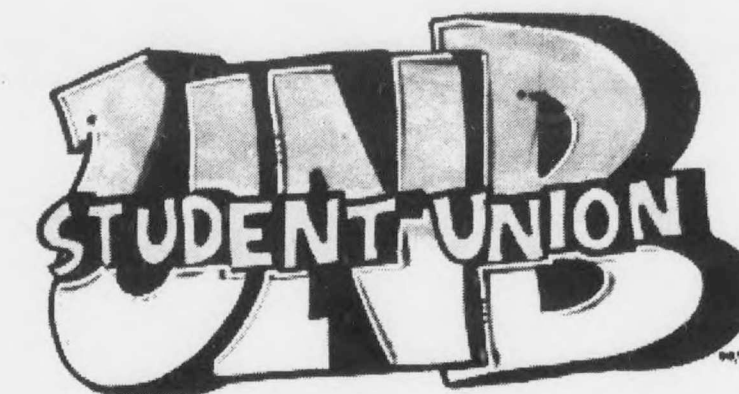
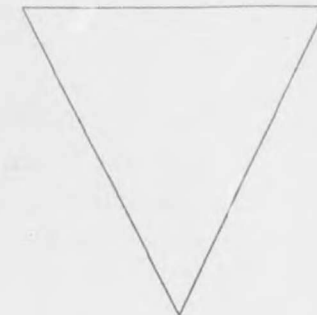
Another common cause of homophobia is a person's environment. Discrimination is a taught behavior; small children do not judge others based on race, color, religion etc until they are taught to do so. We have grown up with many negative connotations being attached to homosexuality through the media,

churches, family, and friends. Prejudices are often passed down from parents who think gay persons are vile, loathsome, and a threat to their society as we know it. Children learn most of their ideologies from their parents, and can be very impressionable. If your parents are Jehovah Witnesses, you probably were too when you were growing up, and probably still are. Same goes for any religion, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, you name it. A person first learns to discern the world through the eyes of his/her parents/guardian; they trust their reasoning to be based on fact rather than opinion.

The last factor I will highlight that may cause a person to feel homophobic, is the AIDS epidemic. Despite all the education and media attention given to this illness, there are still misin-

formed people who think that AIDS is a gay disease. AIDS IS NOT A GAY DISEASE; IT IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ILLNESS that can infect anyone regardless of their race, color, sexual orientation, economic background, whatever. AIDS is caused by sharing blood needles and sexual contact-be that straight or gay sex. AIDS is not a punishment from GOD for gay people, anyone can catch it. It is most often spread through unsafe sex practices (ie. multiple partners, lack of precaution, etc.) but anyone can fall victim to the disease. Even someone who is cautious and non-promiscuous can catch the disease. If you have slept only with one person, you could still be at risk; if the other person has AIDS and you have unprotected sex, it may only have taken once. Using condoms are not

100% foolproof either. The fact is that the more partners you have, the higher the chances are that someone that you've slept with is carrying the AIDS virus, but it is even possible that the one person you've been with could have been a carrier. The only way to be completely not at risk is to never have sex and to never share drug needles. Make sure that you and your friends are educated so you know how to best protect yourselves. No, AIDS is not a gay disease. AIDS does not discriminate. AIDS is not a game.



SEXUAL ASSAULT

For those of us who have never been sexually assaulted, we can only imagine the pain of what those people who have been go through. This is, by far, one of the worst things that can happen to a person. To have your body and dignity violated like that can be nothing short of devastating.

The following letter was submitted to the Social Issues Committee to be included in this article. It shows very clearly the kind of thoughts and feelings that a person experiences when they have been violated by someone that they knew.

"Imagine being constantly reminded of the worst event in your life. Posters, pamphlets, and T shirts seemingly everywhere, serving as constant reminders of something you would rather forget. This is reality for survivors of rape.

Almost a year has passed since the night someone I knew and had no reason not to trust took a part of me away without my consent. He took a piece of my soul and no matter how hard I try I will never get it back. Men who rape are not monsters, they are your friends, brothers and neighbors. This was perhaps the hardest thing for me to understand. I had the same attitude as most, believing that it couldn't happen to me. It happened to me and it can, and in most cases IS someone you know.

I was raped. For the longest time I couldn't even say that, which means that day by day I'm getting stronger again. I denied it for so long but ultimately you must be honest with yourself or you can never begin the

healing process. I could be any of the women you see on TV or in Frosh Week movies, my story is disturbingly similar. It was a night that I will never forget. Almost a year later my nightmares will not let me sleep. Bruises and broken bones heal, a wounded soul does not.

I am one of the lucky ones, although some days I don't feel as though I am. I'm alive, thousands of women each year are victims of violence that has taken more than a piece of their souls, it has taken their lives. It took a great deal of time for me to talk about it, it's still not easy, but friends are a big help. My rape has not only affected me but has had a profound impact on the people I love.

Rape is not sex, rape is violence. What a man did to me was not in any way my fault although for a very long time I questioned this, just as thousands of other women question it. Life does go on, although recovery is not an overnight process. The scars I have may never heal, but with each day it becomes less difficult to see those posters and T-shirts and a little easier to talk about. And as the healing process occurs, I become less a victim and more of a survivor.

To join in the fight against violence against women, contact your Student Union. Someone you know will be thankful you did." ANONYMOUS 1994



UNB STUDENT UNION SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE STUDENTS FACING THE ISSUES OF TODAY.... AND TOMORROW

AIDS EDUCATION

AIDS is said to be the one of the most devastating diseases of our time. And this is probably an accurate statement; not only for the people who have contracted the HIV virus, but for the families and friends of these people. There are a great deal of prejudices regarding AIDS and perhaps one of the most ignorant is that AIDS is a "gay disease". AIDS is a disease that can affect anyone and it does not make any discrimination based on gender, age, social status or sexual orientation.

This week is AIDS AWARENESS WEEK in Canada. The only way that this disease will be defeated is if we make people aware of it and educate them that AIDS can have an impact on your life. The focus for this campaign is YOUTH AND SEXUALITY and it is focusing on young people, their attitudes, sex and sexuality. Young people will play a very important role in the fight against this disease in the future and they must be informed of the issues regarding this disease. The actual theme for AIDS Awareness week was "Ask Questions, Break the Silence". The only way that people can get informed about this devastating disease is if we ask questions. We must be able to talk to our young people and make them informed about sex and sexual issues. If they are not informed, how are they supposed to make informed choices in regards to their sexual activities?

All across the nation this past week, events and information programs were organized in an effort to help people learn and understand more about this terrible disease. For many people, the symbol of AIDS Awareness is the RED RIBBON. This ribbon is used to show one's support of the fight against AIDS.

As well, on the Sunday just past Oct. 2, 1994, towns and cities across the country organized an event that as become known as THE WALK. This is a walk-a-thon to raise money for Canadian AIDS Research. Thousands of people across Canada walked in the event this past week in an effort to raise money but more importantly to show that there are many people who are effected by AIDS and how the fight will continue against this disease until a cure is found.

By being informed about the issues regarding this disease, we will be able to find a cure. People have to realize that this is a disease that will affect everyone in the course of your lifetime. According to recent surveys, the amount of people being infected with the HIV virus is on the rise, in particular among our young people. Only by continuing to "Break the Silence" will we be able to defeat this disease.

AIDS can affect anyone. It can sneak up on you out of the blue and have a very profound change on your life. The following article was written by a UNB student who had his life affected by AIDS:

May 6, 1994. This is the day that my life changed forever. It was the day that I found out I was HIV Positive. When I look back at that day, I can feel the emotions that anyone would sense when they receive that kind of news. Angry, sorrow and fear. I was worried about what kind of life I would be able to lead and how my friends would be affected. What about telling my parents? Oh My God!!!! I can't let them know that I am going to die. What about

being involved with someone on an intimate level? Will there be someone out there who will love me despite this thing inside my body? What will it be like to die?

Then I realized that these kinds of questions are really not that important. What matters the most is that I live my life to the fullest and get everything that I want out of my life. I want to finish my degree and find a career that I am happy to work in. I want to be happy and spend time with someone that I love, growing old with that person.

When you look at me, I'm not really different from anyone else. You would never know from looking at me that I have something that will be a direct link to my death in a few years. I have lost weight, but I can always rack that up to eating healthy and exercise. I do tend to get tired very easy, especially late in the day. But besides these things you would never know that I am HIV+. But still the questions remain. Should I tell a person that I want to have a relationship with that I am HIV+ before we start dating or should I wait until well into the relationship? Will that person leave me if they find out? Will they be scared?

I tend to see the whole world in a different light now. I kind of find things rather funny now. I look at people and things, thinking to myself, "My God, did I really act like that?". I find that things that I never really cared about before are some of the most important aspects in my life now. I actually take the time now to stop and look at the world around me: the trees, the sky and the people in the world. I know that this may sound crazy, but it is the truth.

When one is faced with the prospect of one's own death, one tends to appreciate life all that more.

The most comforting thing about this is that my friends are sticking by me when I need them. It always feels great when you receive a greeting from someone, but my friends tend to give me a hug when they see me. I wish hugs could cure the world because hugs are the greatest gift that you can give someone when they need a friend.

There is one person in particular that is my dearest friend in the whole world. He is always there when I need him, even when I have nothing to say. He never gets angry with me when I act like a total asshole. Just the thought of seeing you makes every day worth getting up for. You know who you are so I won't mention your name; I just want you to know that I love you and I will miss you when I am gone.

Get informed. Protect yourself. Don't let this happen to you.

Anonymous (1994)

