

EDITORIAL

Student Press: The need for fairness

by Allan Carter

The problem with any volunteer student organization is attempting to maintain what can be termed as a moderate level of professionalism. This is never an easy task. At *the Brunswickan* a genuine effort is being made to keep the public, particularly the students, informed about what is happening on campus and the community. Additionally, *the Brunswickan* also attempts to be a forum for public debate. Undoubtedly, we have many critics. Some argue that we are not forceful enough. They believe that as a student newspaper, our techniques are not radical or alternative. In other words, we follow the mainstream media line too closely. Others argue that our methods are too bull-headed. They believe that we investigate issues too quickly and tend to forget about the repercussions which some of these issues we deal with may have on the people involved.

These two contrasting observations suggest to me that the *Brunswickan* has a diverse readership. However, what many do not realize is that we also have a diverse staff. There is rarely total agreement on any issue which comes up at the *Brunswickan*. Instead, people argue and bicker over their differences of opinion and usually the office can be an insightful (or boring) place to be during such discussions.

One issue which always crops up is the notion of objectivity. True, it is probably appropriate for a news reporter to have absolutely no bias on the story which he/she is investigating. However, in reality, that is never that case. Any newspaper which proclaims that they are totally objective on any issue is either misleading the public or just ignorantly mistaken. Pure objectivity does not exist. What does exist is the need and concern for fairness. Any responsible reporter strives to get all the sides to a story, and there are usually more than two. By obtaining responses and reactions from all sides of a story, the reporter is progressively avoiding showing bias in a story. Of course, the questions asked, the manner in which an interview is done and what a reporter selects to write, all are considerations which illustrate that while one strives for objectivity, it can never

be reached. Everyone is biased and only on a few occasions have I not felt strongly about something which I have been reporting on. In such circumstances, the reporter has two options: he/she can either refuse doing the story because of their bias, or they can attempt to be as fair as possible. It is in such situations that the competence of an editor is truly tested because he/she, on occasion, must decide whether or not the reporter is a suitable candidate for the story.

Of course, if a newspaper aims at only reporting on events, ceremonies, and rewrite press releases, the responses which they will receive from their readership will no doubt be stagnant. However, if a newspaper strives to report on issues to make people aware of what is occurring, the letter to the editor section and the opinion pieces may prove to be a bit more stimulating and interesting. Such discussion, one would presume, is healthful, particularly in a university community.

The Brunswickan has come under fire in the past couple of years for a few of the articles which it investigated. Usually such response comes from people who were involved in the story, so such reaction is to be expected and in some circumstances respected. On some occasions, however, individuals have been upset because they did not want what they said printed or they just simply had no comment. Discretion from the people being interviewed is as necessary as discretion from the person who is doing the interview. In such cases, the incidents are usually unfortunate ones. Nevertheless, if the reporter deems that what was said was important or feels it necessary to point out that the individual asked to respond to an issue had no comment, that is his/her prerogative. It is a difficult responsibility and one which usually involves making heart-rending decisions.

The work at a newspaper is always exciting, but at the same time it is extremely challenging. Sometimes it is tempting not to meet the challenges. Many question why newspapers are sued or why so many people complain about a newspaper's content. I have found that in cases where the newspaper is acting responsibly, lawsuits are

usually a direct reflection of the newspaper's attempt to meet the challenges it faces. It would be easy for us, for example, to avoid controversial issues and completely sensationalize various topics. Some argue that it is sensationalism which causes lawsuits. I tend to disagree. Certainly, the tabloid newspapers are sued over such techniques, but in most cases university newspapers are sued because in trying to make an attempt to deal with a controversial issue, they make irreversible mistakes. In most incidents, the mistakes are noted and not made in the future. Sometimes, however, a newspaper is aware of the risks in running an article on an issue which is already a heated topic, but instead of denying its responsibility, it takes those risks and tries to keep the public informed as best as possible.

Shrinking the responsibilities which you are challenged to do in any job is inexcusable. If a person takes such an attitude in a job, the employer becomes concerned. If a newspaper fails to take full responsibility for their actions, the readership becomes concerned. Each week, *the Brunswickan* is subject to criticism, praise and concern from its readership. Through letters to the editor, news articles and opinion pieces, individuals are able to express their feelings on a broad range of issues. This process also helps the newspaper to maintain a focus as it takes into consideration what is important to the community. For many who have graduated from UNB and are now living outside the university, the newspaper is one of their few sources to what is happening on campus and around Fredericton. Noting the limitations, the newspaper is also a venue for those with legitimate concerns, either about the newspaper itself or issues which are happening on and around campus.

At any rate, *the Brunswickan* is striving to meet the challenges faced by a student newspaper. Some people do not feel that our techniques are suitable, while others feel they are. Such diversity and discussion illustrates that, to some degree, the newspaper has been successful in meeting the challenges.



the
brunswickan

Canada's Oldest Official Student
Publication
Established 1867

Editor-in-Chief
Allan Carter

Managing Editor
Aime Phillips

News Editor
Karen Burgess

Entertainment Editor
Alastair Johnstone

Sports Editors
Frank Denis
Bruce Denis

Offset Editor
Mimi Cornier

Photo Editor
Kevin G. Porter

Distractions Editor
Jeff Czopar

Features Editors
Chris Lohr
Petula Jurasek
Dave Burt

Technical Co-ordinator
Eric Drummie

Business Manager
Jayde Mockler

Advertising Manager
Tara Froning

Advertising Design
Bill Traer

Typesetters
Rose Knox,
Kathy Makela, Lisa LeBlanc
Janet Glendennin

Proofreader
Veda Bowlin

Staff This Issue

Mark Minor, James Rowan, Bill Traer,
George Ato Eguakum, Sherry Morin,
Patti Post-Smith, John Valk, Adrian
Park, Jodi Gay, Jetholo Cabilette, Nick
Oliver, Jonathan Stone, Murray Carew,
Jessica Pierson, David Price, Len
Madsen, Gordon Thompson, Kayleigh
Freeman, Kouroush Mohseni Needa
Seymour, Chris Hunt, Marc Landry, Terri
Ann Kennedy, Shelley Tozer, Heather
Lebreque-Havens, Luke Peterson, Gordon
Loane and Martin Yaqzan.

The *Brunswickan*, in its 126th year of publication, is Canada's oldest official student publication. The *Brunswickan* is generally published every Friday during the school year by Brunswickan Publishing Inc with a circulation of 10,000. Membership is open to all University of New Brunswick Fredericton students, but all members of the university community are encouraged to contribute.

The opinions contained in this newspaper are those of the individual writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Brunswickan*.

The *Brunswickan*, while being an open forum for the viewpoints and opinions of all UNB students, may refuse any submission that is judged to be racist, sexist, libellous, or containing attacks of a strictly personal nature. The *Brunswickan* reserves the right to edit for brevity. Letters generally shouldn't exceed 300 words in length and must contain your signature, student number and phone number, or it will not be printed.

All copy submitted must be double spaced, on ONE side of the page only and must be legible. If we can't read it, we won't print it. The *Brunswickan* now accepts copy on 3 1/2 inch disk, either Macintosh or MS-Dos format.

Articles printed in The *Brunswickan* may be freely reprinted provided proper credit is given.

The *Brunswickan* is printed with flair by Maritime Web in Moncton, and impeccably delivered by Tiny.

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

National advertising rates are available from Campus Plus at (416) 362-6468.

The *Brunswickan*
Student Union Building
University of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 4400
E3B 5A3
Phone: (506) 453-4983
Fax: (506) 453-4958

Pizza Delight

DOUBLE DELIGHT DEAL

10% Discount with student I.D. on regular priced food items

it's some GOOD!

\$10.99 plus taxes

2 9" Pizzas (3 toppings) + 1 McCain Delite Chocolate Cake

PICKUP A LITRE ONLY 99¢ plus taxes

Two Locations to serve you:
15 Prospect St. 453-1400 & 169 Main St. 459-1707

Double Delight Deal ends Nov. 8th