

# EDITORIAL

By Karen Burgess

Oh, "hypocrisy." Excuse me, I thought you said "autonomy"... The Board of Governors of this university has just declared the student body intellectually unfit. According to the Board, students are incapable of judging the consequences of our own actions. In a court of law, this prognosis would get you off of murder one charges—here, well, you can't even get diagnosed because you aren't seen as fit enough to choose a health care system.

If you were possessing of an intact mental capacity, you would probably remember that during the Fall, the S.U. held a by-election to fill a few empty positions and to get the mandate of the students to implement a new health plan. A record 20% of students showed up to vote (usually a by-election only draws 8-10% turnout) and passed the referendum by a conclusive 3-1 margin.

The Board has to vote on the proposal because the university would be responsible for collecting the health plan fees. A few members, however, did not feel that the DEMOCRATIC process followed by the S.U. was good enough. They felt perhaps students weren't totally grasping just how much the plan would cost, that we, collectively, had voted to approve a program of which we were at least partially ignorant. As a result, the Board voted (although there were still holdouts) to ask the Student Union Council to hold a vote reaffirming support for the plan.

This raises three interesting questions:

a) What did they expect the Student Council to say? A referendum is binding within the S.U. constitution. After being given the mandate of their constituents, they cannot in good faith vote against their wishes. One wonders why the opinion of 30 students should be presumed to be more important than that of the 1400 who previously voted.

b) What kind of education are they selling us anyway? We're paying thousands of dollars a year to receive an education in which even the governing body of the administering institution has so little confidence they won't trust us with a simple decision about health care. Try going out to find a job with that diploma now, guys. "Well, your own administrators don't think you're capable of making decisions, but I'd like to put you in charge of the entire West Coast operation. Congratulations!" Yeah. Right.

c) Why the hell did we vote on the SUB expansion referendum yesterday? Or perhaps we are at least 1/4 competent. We can't approve a \$100 a year cost which might pay for a portion of our medicine, therapy and birth control but we can sure approve a \$25 expenditure which goes toward a SUB expansion—an initiative which is part of the university's cherished Venture Campaign for fundraising. When the university's fund-raisers continue their search for a nationally-recognized campaign spokesperson so they can (finally) get this fund-drive off the ground they will certainly have to couch their requests very carefully:

Dear Sir/Madam,

We hope that you can see the obvious support this project has received from all quarters of the university community.

We let the little boys and girls who come here have a pretend referendum and, although we know that they aren't completely cognizant of how much money \$25 actually is, they approved the donation so they could build themselves a bigger playpen.

This is not the first time a referendum on the health-plan has been poo-pooed. Three years ago the S.U. held a referendum asking that oral contra-

ceptives be included in the University's health plan. Obviously, it was not, which is likely a good reason the new plan passed.

The Board's request for council's reaffirmation should not have reached a vote; however, the other options proposed at the meeting seemed even more ludicrous. It was requested that the students be further educated, that an intensive advertising campaign be launched. Why? so we can hold another referendum so that it can again be dismissed? Silly students, here you thought we were undergoing budget restraints. See? This just proves our capacity for misunderstanding. We can afford to run each referendum twice, no problem.

Perhaps we should send ballots to each student's home so their legal guardian can make the decision for them:

Dear UNB administrators,

We would like Johnny to vote yes on the health plan referendum. Please keep him after school to explain to him how to use the new health plan card, we'll make sure he carries it on a shoelace around his neck (like his house-key) so he won't lose it.

Extreme scenario, perhaps, but the attitude is there.

Is it just the age of the constituents which makes their vote insubstantial? By that reckoning, every municipal, provincial, and federal election held in this country for decades should be declared invalid. Mere neophytes, those who at 18 are legally eligible to vote should be disqualified. It would be difficult to determine where pupa becomes enlightened political cog, however, seeing as the students who vote in Student Union election can range in ages from late adolescence to... what? You name it—older than some of the members of the board I bet.

Or perhaps it is merely these people's enrollment at UNB which incapacitates them. Perhaps the air quality, the water supply, or the radiation from the every-third-light which they keep on which turns our brains to drooling blobs of infantile mush. Nope, can't be it. The Old Arts Building would have that too and you can bet the Board wouldn't pat VP Traves on the head and tell him to go back outside to play as they effectively did to students.

It must be, then, the education with which they are providing us. Our \$2,470/year entitles us to 126+ credit hours of debilitating un-knowledge. Otherwise, at least Poli-Sci students would be considered enlightened enough to participate in the democratic process. Or perhaps

Economics students who fully understand the value of cash, could be allowed to vote on money matters. Our nursing students, then, would surely be able to give enlightened opinions on health care.

I certainly hope the Board recognizes the implications of their actions. By this reasoning, all of their own decisions are unsound. There are, after all, student representatives on the Board elected by their equally vacuous constituents. The whole decision-making process has thus been made on an obviously faulty foundation.

The muck gets deeper still, as it is conceivable that there are governors who have at least one degree granted by this university. After all, if we are determined to have lost our faculties by virtue of our enrollment in one, then what does that say for those who have completed their "education" at UNB? Certainly, degree conference must demonstrate that they have ultimately completed the program in which we are being educated. They are UNB grads, a proud few who can never be divested of their heritage—they can prove it, they have the diploma. They are, some might say, *absolutely certifiable*.

## MUGWUMP

BY JAMES ROWAN

Election Time. Every political writer's favorite time of year. Preliminary predictions had voter turnout perhaps as high as 30%, a good 25-50% higher than normal. Maybe this time the Board of Governors won't invalidate the results—but then, they want the SUB Expansion vote to go through, don't they? After all, if we won't pay \$25 for a major improvement to student life, then their own fundraising campaign probably isn't going to have many takers, is it? Well, maybe they'll levy the fee regardless of the referendum results. After all, they do have that power—and an apparent willingness to use it.

If the BoG ignores the results of the SUB referendum, they are sending the message that we are incapable of administering our own affairs, and I suggest that we should agree and refuse to allow the University to take any more money from children—by dropping out. If they accept the referendum results, then we are witnessing pure hypocrisy. I wonder if the inclusion of oral contraceptives on the plan may have had something to do with the vote of the BoG, or if they feel we just aren't capable of doing anything without the firm guiding hand of the university—reaching into our wallets.

The stunning hypocrisy of a Board of Governors that conducts all of its meetings *in camera*, routinely ignores or patronizes its student members and has never, ever, consulted the students or cared about their objections in the face of skyrocketing tuition fees and the probable introduc-

The B.O.G. apparently didn't feel the democratic process followed by the S.U. was good enough

## Are we cattle? No. So why is UNB milking us?

tion of ancillary fees (not to mention a likely massive boost to parking fees) and then questions a referendum on fees makes me wonder what right they think they have, what gives them the audacity, no, the absolute arrogance, to patronizingly assume that we didn't know what we voted on?

This attitude permeates the power structure, even the UNB Act. Student Senators are not allowed to vote on academic appeals, despite sitting on the Student Standings and Promotions Cmte. of the Senate. If they knew the student in question, fine, but students are in no circumstances allowed to vote on student appeals. There is no more of a conflict of interest in students voting on appeals than there is in professors voting on appeals. But we aren't considered responsible enough to deal with that tricky balance, and the profs are.

Enrolment at this university is declining. Elsewhere in the region, it is increasing. Why? UNB treats its charges like cattle: ignore them most of the time, milk them for a few years and then get rid of them. I, for one, am tired of being a cash cow.

Ah well, perhaps some day I will be wise enough to fathom such complexities. Thankfully the BoG will think for me until then.

Congratulations to the winners of the Student Union elections—if there were any. Everyone I talked to voted no to all but one candidate...



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