

# OPINION...

## THE STATE OF THE UNION

By LUIS CARDOSO

As I watched a report Monday night on CBC television's The Journal concerning the role of university students in the recent uprising in Czechoslovakia, I was compelled to reflect upon the apparent differences in the attitudes of their counterparts in Canadian universities, more specifically, the student body at UNB. The students in Prague played a significant role in achieving drastic changes in their country's political system. They put their own futures on the line and developed a well executed strategy of approaching Czechoslovakia's labour force to organize massive walkouts.

Granted, Canadians are not undergoing the type of dramatic, high-profile political unrest and change that is affecting East bloc countries. This is not to say, however, that issues which should be important to students, issues also to students could make significant contributions, do not exist. The environment, the recent abortion legislation (which would rob women of freedom of choice), the renewed antagonism between the Acadian and English communities of New Brunswick (witness the rise of C.O.R.), anti-Jewish sentiment as expressed in the writings of Malcolm Ross and his supporters (views of which students should be aware as a result of recent letters and opinions published in The Brunswickan), and disturbing sexist and homophobic sentiment also evident throughout the pages of this publication, are only a few such issues.

How, then, does one go about gauging the attitudes of the student population on these and other matters? The student media is a fairly good indication of what students are thinking. The Brunswickan, by virtue of its articles -- written for the most part by students -- and perhaps even more so through the letters printed in the "Blood and Thunder" section, can serve as an accurate reflection of the attitudes of students at UNB. If sexist, racist, or homophobic articles and opinions appear on the pages of the student publication, and students do not rally to protest in the form of written replies, one can only surmise either that they do not care or they are in agreement. Both conclusions are disturbing. (It is interesting to note that the only replies to th paranoid anti-Semitic views of Prof. Matin Yaqzan were written by a professor: not one student wrote to register his or her disgust at the views expressed.)

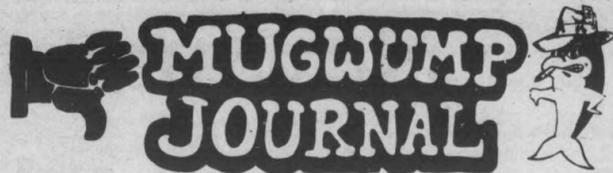
The Student Union, the representative council of the university's student body, can also be a good reflection of opinion. The Student Union can organize action on important issues (such as those listed above) concerning students and the community they are a part of. Recent UNB history, however, was witness to distressing student apathy in the face of events surrounding the brazen removal from power of a properly elected student union by the university's administration, which consequently replaced it with a hand-picked successor guaranteed not to stir up trouble. Students merely watched while the power their student government had worked militantly to achieve was snatched away from them. Since that time the Student Union has become bogged down in the wranglings of operating itself. Trivial financial matters seem to be primary on its agenda.

While there are students who are concerned with and active in social, political, and environmental issues, they often have to join organizations outside of the university community. The Student Union should play a more significant role in rallying students to worthy causes; it can make students aware that they are a political forces that cannot be ignored.

As a reflection of the attitudes of students, however, neither the student media nor the student union at UNB present a pleasant image.

As a relevant aside, a close friend in the media brought to my attention a recent phone-in program on CBC radio, the topic of which was whether or not the sex of the candidates in an election would determine how one would vote. This seems a silly question to be asking, she pointed out, as it could serve as a forum for those who would jam the airways with their sexist bent; it is a topic that by its very existence as a question on a regional radio program somehow lends legitimacy to the opinion that women cannot hold political office.

Happily, the callers to the program, both directly and through their responses, took the program to task for asking a question that served only to make an issue out of a non-issue.



By Trevor Corey

I guess all you people in UNB land will get a "geeks" perspective on Mugwump this week. Your beloved Mugwumper this week (as you may have guessed) is a Computer Science "geek", so to speak.

To start off, the biggest news in "our" neck of the woods is CS is going to be an official faculty. For us that's great. We are no longer a subset of the Engineering faculty and no longer a subclass of nerds; we are full fledged geeks. Too bad I won't be here to see any of the benefits as I graduate in May. Oh well. . . For all those who opposed faculty status for CS. . . phhhh . . . on you.

How about the Devils. They are hot. I expect to see them rank nationally soon. For those of you who haven't seen any games this year. It's good entertainment for nothin'. Excitement at its best.

Lets go skiing. . . I've been waiting months for the snow to arrive (ever since summer ended). Now the snow is here, but we still can't go skiing yet. AARRRGH! (Hurry up Dec. 9)!

Now that midterms are over, I know everyone is already studying for Xmas exams. I'm not sure if advance studying even exists anymore. I think cramming has become a way of life for university students. Maybe that's what's wrong with us these days. We never actually learn it, we just cram it in so we can regurgitate it, then we do a brain dump and forget about it.

'Tis the season for Christmas parties! Every group at university is having its party now before exams start. I only have 3 to choose from this weekend.

Have you ever noted that Christmas music starts playing in stores the first week of November. Christmas is overplayed. . . 2 months of Christmas music. . . gimme a break!! Just a gimmick to make you spend your money for another month.

Hurray. . . 7 months and one million dollars later someone is back behind bars. I won't comment any further to avoid far reaching repercussions.

Snow crazy what it does to some people when they get in a car. They go absolutely crackers. Snow isn't that tough to drive in it's just a matter of being careful not nuts. Give some people 4 wheels and some snow and its really scary.

Oh well I guess that's all I have to say for this week. I probably won't get a chance to say this next week so good luck on exams and have a merry Christmas.