

The Lombardy Poplars

The University of New Brunswick, noted for its beautiful green campus, is losing its Lombardy Poplars. The slender trees in a graceful line behind the gymnasium were ordered cut down by the Fredericton City Council and they will be replaced by an asphalt strip for diverting trucks from the centre of town.

This is a noble idea, and the City should be commended for its interest in the affairs of state, but it is apparent that a mistake has been made. The error is not only in the decision to destroy eighteen lovely poplars — trees which have stood by the road that has been the entrance to the University for 180 years. The City has decided to build a road which will be obsolete before it is finished. And it will cost more than a more desirable alternate.

Trucks will be diverted across the foot of the University to Beaverbrook Street, and past Regent to the other end of town. But the cost will be phenomenal. The City should have made a short road from the Trans-Canada Highway to Montgomery Street, a much shorter length of pavement, and yet still no more of an inconvenience to trucks or other vehicles desiring a shorter route through the city.

There would have been a much smaller loss of developed property, like the Lombardy Poplars, and the travelling time would be reduced from about five minutes to three minutes.

If the route through town is built, eventually the traffic load will be as great as the busy downtown streets are now. Presumably this will be the case in ten years, at the present growth rate. So the new 'truck route' will be useless, and trucks will have to use the Trans-Canada route anyway.

Not much foresight there, if you ask us.

But it is important to consider the principles behind the problem of destruction of property such as the Lombardy Poplars. It is 'progress' to build roads, to help speed the wheels of industry. It is 'progress' to rush trucks through the town instead of crowding them through downtown traffic. But it is ignorant to ruin the products of nature when there is no reason to do so.

So much has been spent on a useless road.

And so much has been spent by our University in developing our grounds. Most of that money has gone into Fredericton's economy.

So much money has been spent by students in local apartments, on food, movies, taxis, clothing, beverages, on gas and cosmetics, toiletries, jewelry, magazines and records, to mention a few things which combine to make UNB one of Fredericton's largest industries.

Unfortunately it would be difficult for UNB to leave Fredericton. But it would be much more pleasant if Fredericton would make a small concession to the University as an expression of good faith.

Let's hope we can always come to UNB to sit in the shade of the Lombardy Poplars.

This is important, too

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Brunswickan

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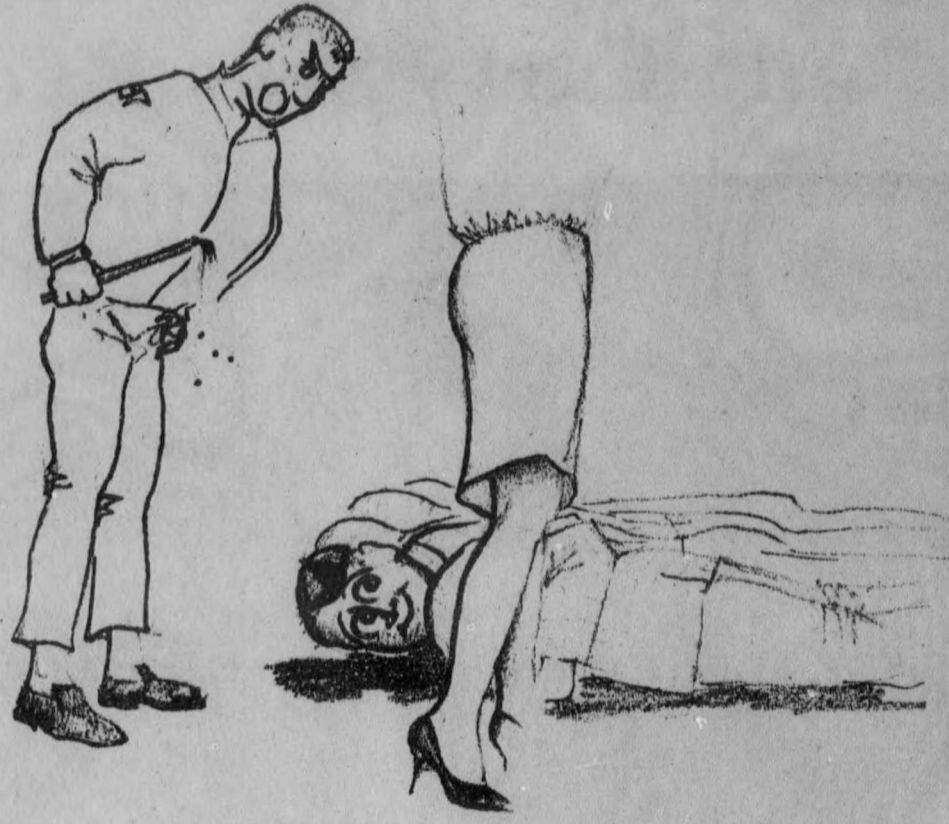
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"head down, freshman; — air raid!"

Aristocracy in the University Community

by R. B. Harley

The greatest threats to the Canadian academic community do not lie in challenges to its academic freedom. They spring rather, from the democratic



egalitarian philosophy that has swept through even the academic community itself. This philosophy has gained the acceptance, passive or active, of the majority of Canadians and it was only to be expected that it would find champions among the academics. What is deplorable is that far too few people are willing to point out its dangers for the universities, because to do so makes one appear unkind.

Democratic and egalitarian principles have encouraged, and even prompted legislation for, mass entrance into our universities. They have seduced us into believing that equal opportunity in education means, in fact, indulging in a riot of charity for incompetents. Capable students are swamped by the mediocrity of the majority, excellent professors are confronted by daily amphitheatres of sleeping minds which will not be aroused, and administrators are given the impossible task of financing spiralling costs with far from matching funds.

To believe that the recognition of the "problem" by business and government, and a resultant injection of vast amounts of social capital, will solve the "problem" is to evade its very point. Such would be a logical result of liberal-democratic thinking, agreed, but it will not solve the "problem." For the issue revolves on the question of excellence, and excellence is a concept alien to liberal-democratic thought.

Excellence suggests that some will be better rewarded than others, that some are not merely better "trained" but are more entitled to direct our affairs than others. The idea of "excellence is derived from aristocratic

traditions and is consequently an aim inimicable to the egalitarians, educators among them. The aristocratic tradition in learning is thinking, articulate expression, and commitment to do well. A man who has demonstrated his ability in these spheres is entitled to lead. Ordered thinking and articulate expression are major goals of a university education; liberal-democratic beliefs defeat them.

The defeat is the result of two main forces. The first of these is the number of students at our universities. The classes must be large; this precludes the dialogue which would encourage articulate expression and limits the instructor's opportunities to test the order of his students' thinking. The second force is that of charity. Were this extended only to entrance, one might not be so worried. But it is blatantly stretched throughout the entire university career. A private chat with the professor can frequently smooth over a significant omission on a test or in attendance, lateness in completing assignments or even failure to do them, and practically every conceivable default.

The core of the chat is not the student really did have a valid excuse, but that the professor ought to "give him a chance." By doing so, the professor becomes a "good guy" and an academic fraud. And the same principle often governs graduate school admissions, subsidy allocations, and, later, the hiring of staff. This workshop of generosity refuses to record excellence the stature it should enjoy.

Charity and the pressure of numbers threaten our universities' search for excellence. They meet their challenge we ought now to re-examine the virtue of discipline and the value of aristocratic tradition. "Freedom" and "democracy" have done much to liberate our social patterns from archaic restrictions. But in education they have muddled our thought and obscured our goals. To restore proper balance we must demand of our administrators, faculty, and students more respect for the excellence which they are supposedly attempting to attain. And that excellence is not to be found through study of "Democracy in the University Community."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In past years the Brunswickan has suffered from a plight that attacks many campus newspapers, that is, lack of response from the student. This can be the result of two forces, one, that the newspaper isn't doing anything, which in itself is sufficient reason for the student body to act, and two, the student body does not care how its affairs are being handled. A student publication can never fulfil its duties if it doesn't have the support of the campus or if it has no inkling of what the students are thinking, or what

they want. It is for these reasons that the "Letters to the editor" column plays an important part in the make-up of the Brunswickan. By providing a forum for discussion, the Brunswickan, by way of this column, is carrying out one of the prime reasons for its existence.

We, of the newspaper staff wish to encourage you, the Freshman Class, to write and freely express your opinions on the happenings on Campus, and your feelings about this newspaper or any other organization

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