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Brunsbites

Things Overheard During the CFS Student Strike Day:

-Will penicillin cure CFS?

-Spread out. You're making us look thin.

-Boy, that guy is the spitting image of Lenin.

-Strike? I thought this was the smokers corner.

-Now let me get this right. I'm boycotting class so I can go to class???

-Alright. Who forgot the placards? Skippy?!

UNB strike turnout low



A small group of students gathered outside the SUB to protest social policy reforms.

Photo by Mark Landry

By Mary Rogal-Black
Brunswickan News

National student strike day, intended to demonstrate student solidarity to the Liberal government, was marked by contention between student groups at UNB.

The debate on Wednesday between students was to strike or not to strike.

Some students said on Wednesday morning that they did not plan on boycotting classes. Nicole Fleck, an Education student, said that she thought the strike was self-defeating.

"It's defeating the purpose to not go to class when we're fighting for the right to go to university," said Fleck.

Fellow Education student Clark Graves agreed with Fleck, saying that the strike was an ineffective method of protesting the proposed cuts.

"You want to go to class, so you're not going to go to class," said Clarke.

Paul Estabrooks, president of the Student Union, agreed with these students, saying that while the SU is as opposed to the changes as anyone, they do not support the methods of protest.

"It makes no sense for students to walk out on an education they have already paid for," said Estabrooks.

"We feel that there are far more productive ways for students to be involved in the process and work for reform than skipping lectures and throwing Kraft dinner at politicians," said Estabrooks.

Some students, however, felt that the strike sent an important message to government.

Paul D'Aubin was part of a group of independent students organising the local protest.

"It's a day for students across Canada to stand up for a right," said D'Aubin.

D'Aubin was frustrated that the UNB Student Union did not support the efforts of the striking students.

"I don't understand why the Student Union doesn't support its students at all. They're trying to shove back the ideas of a big group of students," said D'Aubin.

Nadia Stevens is a BA student. She at-

tended the rally on Wednesday and questioned why more students weren't getting involved in the protest.

"Everyone's going to be in the same boat when tuition goes up," said Stevens.

The SU has circulated pamphlets and press releases to tell students about their objections to the strike.

Pat FitzPatrick, VP Internal, said that the SU came out strongly against the strike because it objected to some of the tactics being used by the CFS. FitzPatrick refers to reports that Lloyd Axworthy's children have been targeted and harassed by angry students.

"We wanted to disassociate ourselves from what was likely to happen in Ottawa today," said FitzPatrick.

Rodney Mowatt is a mature student completing his psychology degree at UNB this year.

Mowatt said he was concerned that by opposing the strike, the SU was setting up an Us/Them situation which could damage the impact of the message students were trying to send.

Mowatt was also concerned that the

student union is pursuing a political agenda in objecting to the CFS-organised strike.

"The way I understand it is that the SU is trying to separate from the CFS," said Mowatt, referring to recent conflicts between the UNB SU and CFS.

"I think that maybe they should suspend their agenda to separate and be more concerned about what is going to happen to students," suggested Mowatt.

Mowatt said he joined the student strike for the sake of his daughter, who is now in grade ten at FHS.

"She'll be hitting university just when these rises in tuition are going to hit," said Mowatt. "I'm concerned about her well-being in university."

The strike was organised on a national level by the Canadian Federation of Students, and various groups in Fredericton helped to organise the local effort.

About thirty protesters staged a rally outside the SUB around noon, where Strike Action Committee organizer Shawn Corey encouraged people to join the march.

Several representatives from unions,

including one person from CUPE in Saint John attended the rally, according to Corey.

Strikers carried placards with messages like, "Education is a Right," and "Liberals only kicking the poor man and woman when down".

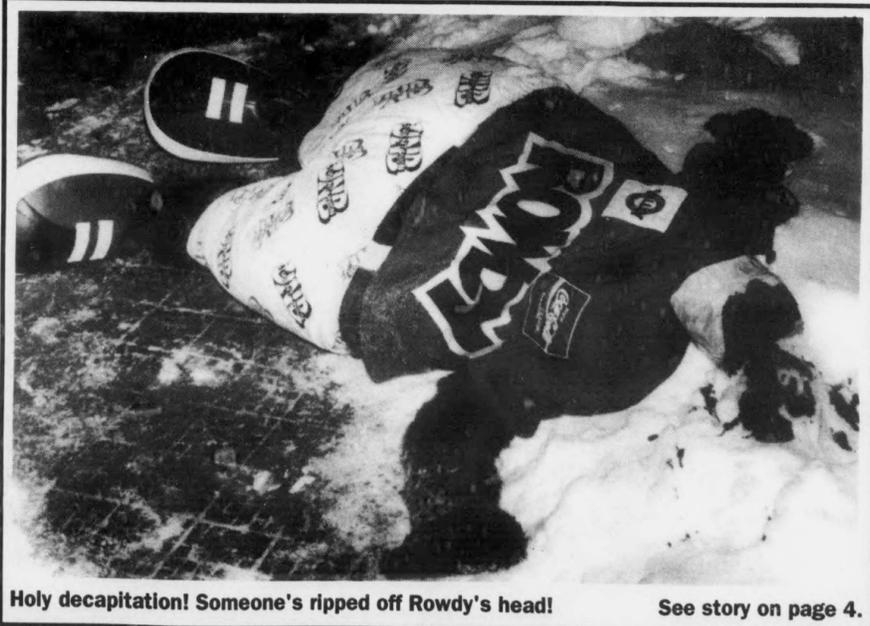
From the campus, protestors proceeded to Fredericton-South MP Andy Scott's constituency office. Scott was in Ottawa at the time of the protest, and a prepared statement was read to the striking students.

The statement did not refer to the national strike.

According to Corey, the number of strikers increased to eighty by the time they arrived at Scott's office. Protestors attached personal notes to the window of Scott's office. They called it "sending out an SOS".

"The size of the rally was a little small, but under the circumstances that was understandable," said Corey, referring to the opposition strikers had encountered with the UNB SU.

"Our rally was part of a much bigger thing and the fact that our rally was smaller was OK," Corey commented.



Holy decapitation! Someone's ripped off Rowdy's head!

See story on page 4.