

We're paying too much and getting too little

Throughout the year - and even more so just after Christmas - students at the University of New Brunswick and other like institutions drop out. They leave university, sometimes for a year or two, but all too frequently they decide they will never return.

Those of us who are left behind - the great majority of us anyway - often stay because we're simply too scared or unsure of ourselves to do anything else. If you've got the time and the money, university these days is a pretty good place to spend a few years of your life.

University is safe.

We're safe from the outside world and its pressures, and we substitute new and artificial pressures in their stead. We become isolated and lose confidence in ourselves. Education, we are told, gives us the benefit of getting a degree. Employers more often than not employ degrees, not people. We are production units coming off the production line, ready and waiting to be channelled into the mainstream of our self-perpetuating society.

If it were possible, if we could muster the courage, many of us would leave this place for good.

The provincial government, and this university in particular, should not feel that they are immune to consequences of this artificial world that they have created. Indeed, they have told us that enrolment is down, costs are up and we'd better be in for a rough time. And don't get caught with your pants down, believing that fees are likely to stay where they are. Odds are very good that a fee increase - or at least a proposal for one - is on its way.

But that is not the solution. It can't be.

Because it's a stop-gap measure, which will do little to encourage students to stay in university. We wouldn't be at all surprised if more and more students dropped out, or didn't bother to come here in the first place.

Finances, then, must not become more of a problem than they already are. It is up to the university, the Higher Education Commission, the Department of Education and the Department of Youth to make sure that this problem doesn't get any worse.

We're already paying too much for too little.

All of which brings us to this:

Just exactly what are we getting?

We get diet-fed degrees, given to us anywhere from 18 to 30 or more hours a week. Sure, we get to think about how we'll approach a problem or an essay. But very little time in many faculties is devoted to actually thinking about ourselves and what we've come here for.

We come and we get options. We choose what we will 'think' about for the next four years. In many faculties we're given too much work - in others not enough. Yet work alone is not a measure of a degree's worth. To be worth something, the student has to learn, not just to be able to spout back statistics or quotations from the instructor in class.

Some faculties allow student interest to develop and affect course changes, and others do not. Even some of those that supposedly 'listen to the students' don't bother.

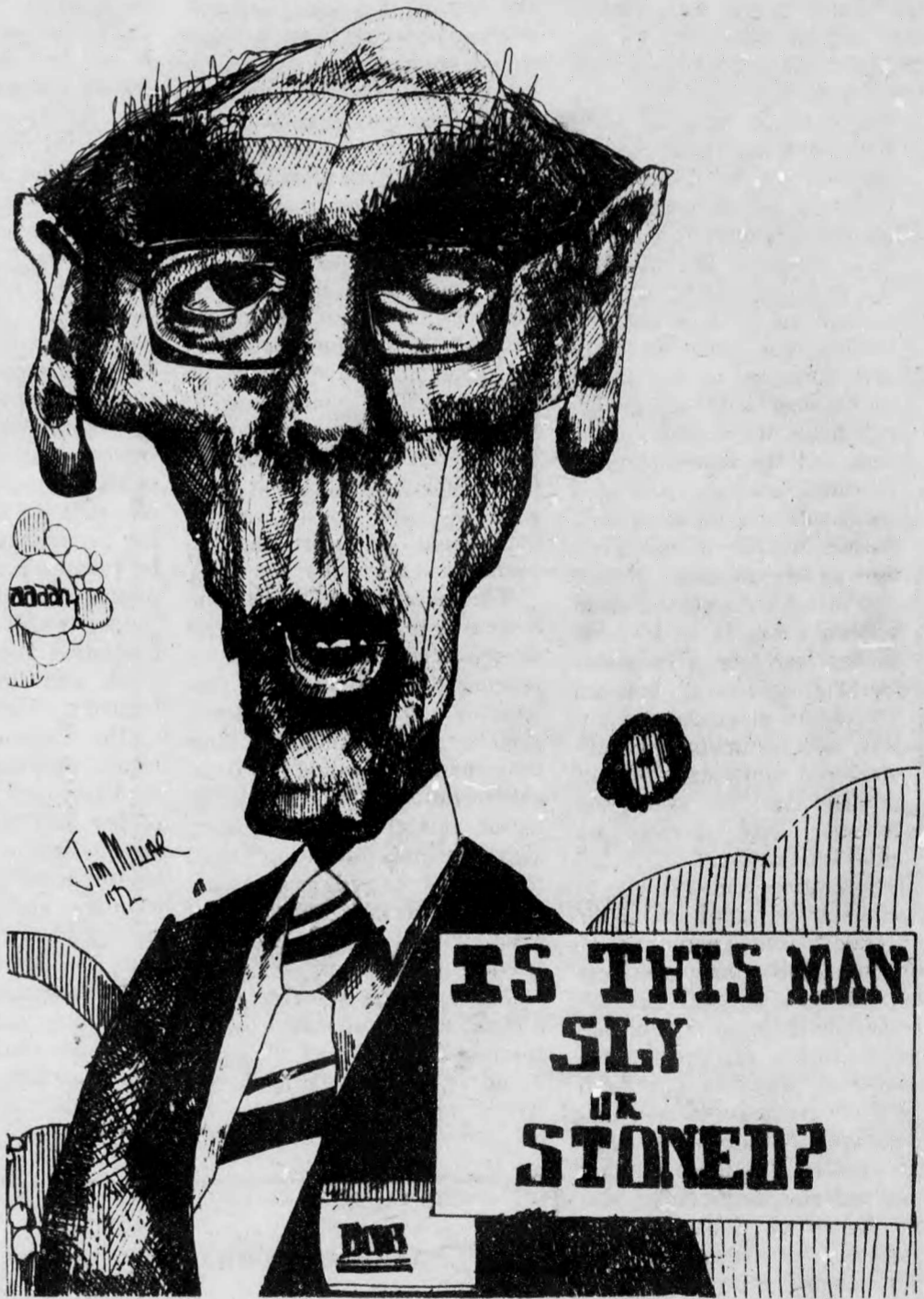
The university is for the people - the students. It can be no other way.

The initiative in this matter lies with the students and its various

representatives. We cannot allow our fees to go up and we must take on new responsibilities in shaping this university into what it should be. We must impress upon the government and various departments that new and excit-

ing change is needed if our universities are not to become meaningless.

For all this to happen we must express opinions. We will agree and disagree, but in the final analysis the product must be ours.



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One hundred and seventh year of publication. Canada's Oldest Official Student Publication. A member of Canadian University Press. The Brunswickan, "New Brunswick's largest weekly newspaper", is published weekly at the Fredericton campus of the University of New Brunswick. Opinions expressed in this newspaper are not necessarily those of the Student Representative Council or the Administration of the University. The Brunswickan office is located in the Student Union Building, College Hill, Fredericton, N. B. Printed at L'imprimerie Acadienne Ltée., Moncton, N. B. Subscriptions, \$3 per year. Postage paid in cash at the Third Class Rate, Permit No. 7. National advertising rates available through Youthstream, 307 Davenport Road, Toronto. Local ad rates available at 475-5191.

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