

# EDITORIAL

## ... AND ON TO THE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Kwame Dawes

In this week's editorial, I will comment briefly on a number of the controversial issues that have been given voice in our paper. It is encouraging to see that students especially are concerned enough about an issue to write a letter into the paper. Admittedly, some of the letters have bordered on sheer offensiveness, and for many, the opinions of some of our letter-writers are very difficult to cope with. Despite this, I think the Brunswickan is doing the right thing by providing a forum that allows students to express their opinions. Certainly, this facility has allowed us to have some insight into the way people are thinking. The opening lines of Karen Jean Braun's letter to the editor on January 26, 1990 should be the theme song of all UNB students: "Lest silence be mistaken for acceptance..." Contemplating the writing of a letter and then concluding that it is a futile exercise amounts to inertia and in many instances, sheer irresponsibility.

While Braun's initial remark was commendable and while her comments about the dilemma of advocacy and gender in the politics of male/female co-existence in our society, her comment suggesting that being raped is a more bearable experience than reading the *Brunswickan* was unfortunate in its insensitivity to the trauma of rape. But it was a good "hook" and maybe that is all that it was. Sadly, when attention grabbers contradict the very theme of an article, it actually ends up backfiring. Loaded weapons are very delicate things, and when the muzzle of a rifle is filthy, the weapon becomes lethal to its bearer. For the record, the *Brunswickan* does not advocate sexual assault through writing. The paper does not perceive itself as an exclusive male newspaper. The Editorial Board encourages articles that concern themselves with women's issues and this will continue to be a policy of the paper.

The professor Davies affair has sparked off much discussion in and around the University about faculty and the carrying out of their tasks. Unfortunately, there are many students and past students, who relish this "scandal" for the sheer pleasure of seeing a professor being implicated for actions that professors have consistently penalized students for. This is understandable considering the dynamics of human nature, but as has been stated and restated in letters to the editor, this incident is not to be seen to represent the entire faculty of the University. Surely, this kind of scrutiny on professors is not discouraged by the administration, however, there is the danger that attitudes of self-righteousness and insensitivity could now have crawled into this affair. Ultimately, this incident has shown students that a genuine complaint, supported by a willingness to come forward despite the risks involved, is worth the effort.

The new Law Faculty proposal to hire exclusively female faculty until 40% of the staff is female has brought on the expected groans of disapproval from several quarters. No doubt, the first and most commonly voiced concern is that staff will not be hired on the basis of their academic qualifications, but firstly on the basis of their gender. The fear is that the quality of scholarship will suffer. Implicit in this perception are some corollary issues. One is related to the reason for this new policy. If it is a corrective measure seeking to address some serious problems with hiring in the faculty, must one then conclude that the Law Faculty has consistently and perhaps intentionally applied a sexist principle in its appointment process? Perhaps, it would be better to look at this issue from the perspective that within any academic discipline there is the potential for a full and challenging course of study that would focus exclusively on women's issues. In this light, the increase in female faculty will guarantee that these areas are not ignored. The Law School must be commended for taking such a brave step. It is possible that objections to such a policy will halt its progress, but the increase in female faculty is inevitable in light of the increase in the ratio of female to male graduates at universities in Canada.

This week's issue contains a plethora of responses to the now infamous Chase and Cormier letter of last week about the unacceptability of homosexuals as teachers and hence as role models for the youth. Some have asked whether letters of that nature (not the first to make it into the paper this year) should be published by the *Brunswickan*. There is of course the easy answer which declares that we don't censor material coming into the paper, but that would be a lie. A more involved and accurate answer is that we thought the letter was important because it claimed to be written on behalf of a large percentage of students in one of the more important faculties of this university. It seems crucial that we get some idea as to what the sentiments (albeit misguided or offensive) of students at the university are. At the same time it must be appreciated that in the dynamics of dialogue on this issue, the opinions of Chase and Cormier have to be aired and addressed.

Finally, Varsity Sports have much to be proud of over the past two weeks. The victory of the women's basketball team over PEI's team was particularly exciting. I listened to the ball-by-ball on CHSR and the commentary managed to capture the energy and drive of our players. Victories in swimming, both men's and women's, men's basketball, an exciting victory in hockey against STU, along with several AUAA athletes of the week awards, combined to make UNB quite a successful sporting venue.

# The Brunswickan

Canada's oldest official student publication

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