

Brunswickan — 1939

Fascism, Football, and Federal Censors

by Steve MacFarlane
brunswickan staff

The Brunswickan has been for many people the most gratifying experience UNB has to offer. To a student journalist, his campus newspaper may have all the sense of drama a great daily newspaper has to the social historian. In an attempt to bring to you some of that sense of drama, as well as some of the social history of UNB itself, the Brunswickan begins this week a series of features devoted to some of the Brunswickan years of the past generation.

We begin this week with the editorship of William Y. Smith, New Brunswick's best-known economist and former head of UNB's department of Economics and Political Science. The year was 1939, the first year of the Second World War.

-Ed.



Page one of the Brunswickan of November 4, 1938, carried the story of the appointment of William Y. Smith, then News Editor for Editor Lester Hoar, as next year's Editor-In-Chief after only a few months on the staff.

His Business Manager was to be George A. McAllister, now his neighbour, colleague, and the author of the present University of New Brunswick Act. His News Editor was Colin B. MacKay, to succeed him as Editor-In-Chief and later to become President of the University. He was to publish eight pages a week, with an SRC grant smaller than the present cost of one Brunswickan.

Canada's entry into the Second World War coincided with the beginning of the new academic year 1939. The development of pro-British Canadian nationalism and the opening of hostilities against Germany determined that war would be the dominant theme of political discussion at UNB. Freedom to criticize, naturally, was proscribed that year and the following six

more rigidly than any time since.

FEDERAL CENSORSHIP

Under the heading *Brunswickan Sure Of One Reader At Least*, early that year, students were informed that the government Censor Co-ordination Committee would closely scrutinize the Bruns.

"Campus radicals and crackpots are therefore warned that anything, true or otherwise, likely to cause disaffection to his Majesty or to interfere with the operation of his majesty's troops will be considered a criminal act and would be punished as such."

The censors needn't have worried about UNB. The SRC that year passed a resolution requesting that the University give credits for the Canadian Officer Training Plan.

In one of Smith's editorials, he said, "we have no sympathy with radicals who seek notoriety by coming forward with statements of disloyalty to the British crown which would tend to convey abroad

the impression that Canada is wavering in her allegiance to the Crown."

America's decision to remain out of the war in 1939 brought this comment in the editorial column: "the present attitude of many responsible Americans must smack almost of cowardice to the Britisher who is paying so dearly with his blood and his money that 'government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth.'"

Loyalty was more than a matter of resolutions and editorials. Under the head *Drama Society Chooses Plays* was the note: "it was suggested that an appropriate satire on Hitlerism be substituted for one of the selected plays. After careful consideration of this suggestion it was voted out on grounds that such a play might cause a misunderstanding in the audience."

CUMBERSOME SRC

The SRC, under President Lester Hoar (succeeded next year by the present Dean of Law William F. Ryan) was a six-year old structure with a cumbersome system of constituencies determined by year (rather than faculty), which survived, amazingly enough, for nearly three more decades. Its tiny budget, set up each term rather than yearly, was required to support sports events as well as most of its present responsibilities.

It had succeeded a non-structured participatory democracy, where all students were councillors. In 1939, according to one editorial, "UNB is the only university in Canada where payment of student levies is not compulsory." The comment came in an appeal by SRC president Hoar that the financially beleaguered council had exhausted its credit at the bank and needed the outstanding levies. Council's treasurer that year was Colin B. MacKay.

The SRC entered the year associated with two national student organizations, the service-oriented NFCUS, later

abbreviated to CUS (Canadian Union of Students) and the more politically oriented Canadian Students Alliance. During the year, UNB left and denounced the CSA, apparently in reaction to its unfortunate policy of criticising conscription and for being "anti-British and anti-war."

The Brunswickan concluded its editorial that week of January 26, 1940, with: "To put our attitude in very blunt terms, WHY DOESN'T THE CSA MIND ITS OWN BUSINESS?"

Last year, 1969, UNB left CUS. In 1940 UNB was reaffirming its solidarity with the NFCUS during a membership crisis when Laval University of Montreal broke with the union. The editorial on February 9, criticising Laval for its action, prophesied: "If the whole controversy ends in disuniting Canadian students it will be well to remember just who drove the first wedge into the breach."

THE MOUNT A GAME

In sports that year, the big issue, as always, was the October UNB-Mount Allison football game. After years of defeat, the October 27 Bruns was headed, "UNB TRIMS MOUNT ALLISON 42-0". Students were ecstatic, and they showed their triumphal joy as they paraded through Fredericton in a Victory March.

Sports Editor Dave Dickson (now provincial Supreme Court Justice) turned out the purplest prose of the year describing the jubilant students as they approached the old Queen Hotel. Cheering them from a third-floor window was New Brunswick Premier Allison Dysart, who "could not

contain the outbreak of college spirit, so long latent within him, so he stood up and lustily cheered with the rest."

Lord Beaverbrook that year donated \$150,000 for the construction of a gymnasium. Hockey, meantime, was played on a hickory-walled outdoor rink, managed for the princely sum of \$3 a week by "Jim" Dineen, now President of UNB.

Women's Liberation meant only the nineteenth-century feminist movement then. The Brunswickan was produced by an almost entirely male staff, except for an issue of the Ides of March, 1940, printed on pink paper and called the "Co-ed Brunswickan". Special Editor Mary Neville explained: "as the everyday editor, Big Bill himself says, 'the Brunswickan is blushing because it has fallen into female hands'."

She went on, "we are ready to take over the controls any time the boys want a rest, a holiday, or some efficient help." Among the efficient help that paper provided was News Editor Becky Watson, now manager of the campus bank and Canada's first woman bank manager.

Answering the Call to Arms, the editor left the Brunswickan in February of his second year, 1940, to become Second Lieutenant, Light Infantry, William Y. Smith, York-Carleton Regiment. As he finished his training at Camp Aldershot the new editor, George A. Cody, was writing, "we must exercise every faculty, we must strain every nerve and fibre in suppressing the drive of the Hun, and we must make assurance doubly sure that the flag of the clustered crosses will continue to reign over all the vast regions encompassed by our great empire."

