

'Midnight Alley' Bone of Contention

Executives State Their Reasons

February 9, 1961

Sir:

We, Walter Learning, President; Rolf Moller, First Vice-President; Raymond Steeves, Second Vice-President, and Wendy Tidmarsh, Secretary; the Executive of the University of New Brunswick Drama Society, formally announce our joint resignation. We realize the result of this action may be that UNB may not be represented in the New Brunswick Regional Drama Festival.

We, the past executive, realize that this move will cause much inconvenience, to the students, the Festival Committee, and to our Season ticket subscribers. However, we feel that the action of the University Administration, which forced the cancellation of *Midnight Alley*, makes our resignation imperative.

This play had been in rehearsal since the first week of December. It was the choice of the Society at the beginning of the autumn term, signifying that the Society felt the play was worthy of production. This play was accepted by the Dominion Drama Festival for competition on a Regional and National level. Having already conformed to the high standards of the Dominion Drama Festival, we do not feel that our production should be submitted to further censorship by the Administration, unless we have contradicted some definite University policy or principle. No such statement, regarding a breach of policy or principle has been forthcoming from the Administration.

We wish to make it clear that our resignation is a matter of principle, the principle of true, fair, and public discussion, which one expects to find in any university.

Walter Learning, Pres.
Rolf Moller, Vice-Pres.
Ray Steeves, Vice-Pres.
Wendy Tidmarsh, Sec'y

★ ★ ★ Good Theatre?

The two recent editions of the *Brunswickan* which report and discuss the decision of the administration to withdraw the production of *Midnight Alley* leaves me puzzled. From the report I can find no reasons for this decision, there is of course a suggestion to the effect that "it is not a good piece of theatre and it may be a bit too strong for Fredericton audiences". But what I should like to know is, how can the administration determine this matter? Do they write plays? Do they write novels? Are they literary critics? Or do they just decide arbitrarily what is "good theatre"? And how is this expression "good theatre" being used anyway? Is the expression based on a linguistic confusion, or a moral muddle which makes it difficult to disentangle morals from art? Or is it just an emotive sound expressing uneducated prejudice? It is suggested that the play might be a bit strong for Fredericton audiences and certainly one would not challenge the opinion that as far as the arts are concerned, Fredericton is virgin country. But some of us (at least 950 petitioners to be exact) would have liked to have seen this play or at least have given Fredericton the opportunity of seeing this play. But this opportunity has been revoked. Why? And here do I trace an implied contradiction in the editorial of the *Brunswickan* of February 7th. "Do the reasons behind the cancellation justify its negative effects? What are the reasons behind the cancellation . . ."

For like the editorial writer, I can find no reasons which the administration offers to justify its decision. And because of this, it does seem odd that the writer should talk about the reasons which lie behind the cancellation; unless, of course, he knows of some reasons which he has not made public to his readers. But I suspect none were given. Now, we don't have to give reasons for liking jazz or gum, but we do need to give reasons for our conduct, especially when our conduct affects other people, as this action of the administration does. And if the administration of a distinguished university does not support its actions with reasons, can we call it "distinguished" — let alone a "university"? S.D.

A CHALLENGE!

Sir James Mountford, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liverpool, gives, in the current issue of *Viewpoint*, a very good statement of the broad object of a British University. UNB could do well to take it as its own.

"Factual information has, of course, to be assimilated; but the primary aim is to stimulate in the student the ability to think for himself, to be tolerant of divergent opinions, to assess evidence and draw rational conclusions from it. The whole purpose is not to pump facts into the student's head but to challenge him to formulate his thoughts and defend them against informed criticism. He is treated as a mature person and the responsibility for his progress is placed squarely on his own shoulders".

Student life is however more than a matter of classrooms, labs, lectures and tutorials. Residences, Student Centres, SRC's, religious, political, debating, and dramatic societies (to say nothing of the activities of the playnig field), all have an important part to play in the education of the student. In these informal situations the student rubs shoulders with others of different backgrounds, and so with an exchange of opinions can clear their minds about everything from the Winter Carnival to the fundamental issues of life. And this in the long run can be more significant than a brilliant academic career. The DITHERING sessions in rooms until the wee hours of the morning sharpens the wits and widens horizons in a way which formal lectures never could. This is one reason why forward looking universities stress the building of more residences. It is a pity that all this wonderful idealism which students get out of university will be swallowed and destroyed by the very society in which we live. However, we can always hope that the universities will produce individuals who will fight for their ideals.

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