

# FREE SCHOOL, POLITICS, AND COLIN B.

It simply isn't relevant to use Berkley radical language in N.B.



Featured in a Brunswickian interview this week is David Hallam. David is a twenty-two year old student in fourth year honours philosophy. As befitting the involved person, he has held various positions on the campus, arts representative for two years, a member of English curricular committee for two years, and a member of a liaison committee between the students and the administration formed to deal with last year's library incident.

More important however is Dave's experience as manager of the Rochdale Governing council and his activities with various minority groups in New Brunswick, Ontario and the U.S. Dave is intelligent, well informed, and willing to air his observations with clarity and insight.

The Brunswickian publishes this interview in an effort to bring Dave's observations on Co-operatives and radicals to light. UNB requires, now particularly, reasoned criticism on both.

BRUNS: Dave Lambert, general manager of the New Brunswick Residence Co-operative, told the Brunswickian that he hoped that the Co-op would develop into a Rochdale type of free school. Would you care to comment on this statement?

HALLAM: Mr. Lambert is under a misconception which led to the failure of Rochdale College as a free school. Within the financial framework of the Co-op it is not possible to have anything which resembles a free school as that term is usually understood.

BRUNS: Would you elaborate?

HALLAM: The financial arrangements for the Co-op makes rent relatively high for the kinds of people that would

usually be at a free school, i.e., artists and artisans. They don't have what we as students consider a modest rent.

At Rochdale this was one of the first problems encountered. The financial structure of Rochdale demanded that rent be paid, as a result the artists and artisans had to leave the main building and find housing elsewhere. The sort of people who moved in after the "good people" left earned their rent by dealing dope. The rest were the sort found in any typical university residence.

BRUNS: Could you suggest what the concept of free school implies?

HALLAM: The free school concept is experimental and a co-op used as a residence is nowhere near experimental. There is no way that the co-op can coalesce with the idea of free school within the framework of a university. The main objective of the university student is to get a degree, whereas the main objective of a free school is to liberate, personally liberate consciousness and direction. This is not possible within the context of the university because of contradictions.

BRUNS: Are there any free schools which fit your criteria?

HALLAM: The Free University of New York was a grass roots movement amongst the street people in the east village and the university area. It developed in a haphazard fashion, with courses coming and going, their success depending on their popularity. Classes were held everywhere from street corners to garret apartments. There was a fair amount of street theatre, but the main interests became political. This led to a high degree of involvement in anti war demonstrations and as a result the failure of the free school.

Columbia Free School developed the other way, from the top down. It was an effort to pacify the students at Columbia after the "nigger" unrest. It was essentially a college for students and not for the artists and "bohemian" types. Fortunately this was recognized by all, and few problems resulted.

BRUNS: In short, you feel that Mr. Lambert is a bit naive?

HALLAM: No one at the Co-op knows what they are asking for if they wish to emulate Rochdale. They should look at Rochdale carefully if they plan to continue as they have.

BRUNS: If we may change tack for a moment, and move into the realm of radical politics; is there actually a radical movement on the UNB campus?

HALLAM: There are a number of well meaning people whose analysis is lacking but whose spirit for action is great.

BRUNS: What do you mean when you say "whose analysis is lacking"?

HALLAM: So far, analysis of the university structure hasn't shown sufficient intellectual rigour, there has been no critique of the university as a whole.

There has never been a consistent Marxist analysis of the community in relation to the larger New Brunswick society, nor has there been a Social Democratic analysis given.

BRUNS: What then, has been the purpose of radical arguments here?

HALLAM: Most of the argument is a valid response to the incredible lack of candid or honest answers to questions students have been asking.

BRUNS: What do you mean by candid answers?

HALLAM: As an indication of how I would interpret the meaning of candid answers I shall refer to an incident with former president Mackay. During an SRC meeting he was asked what profits the bookstore showed for the year. He referred the question to his financial advisor who replied by giving a breakdown of expenditures and receipts which the students could not be reasonably expected to comprehend. He presumed that the students had a working knowledge of the university financial structure.

A candid answer would simply be that the bookstore made a profit of forty six thousand dollars. This, of course, does go to defray other university expenses, but if this sort of information was directly available to the student he would have the candid answer to his question.

BRUNS: What would be the result of these candid answers?

HALLAM: If this sort of information were available to the students, if they received a direct answer, when they asked, they would ask more questions. If this type of answer was given time and time again many other facts would come to light. This would disturb the students and eventually might lead to a voluble and active student voice.

BRUNS: Do you see any other problems with the radical movement here?

HALLAM: Unfortunately they have taken their models for action from somewhere else and by appearance and language are alien to the citizens of New Brunswick. This presents a contradiction when the claim the radicals are making is that they work in the interest of the average citizen.

BRUNS: Where have the models come from?

HALLAM: This summer the SDS activities downtown were sheer emulation. There was a people's park rebellion at Berkley and a couple of weeks later a "mini" park rebellion in Fredericton. The texture of the approach the SDS used was definitely American, the vocabulary was American and the techniques American.

BRUNS: Why are these models really not useful?

HALLAM: It simply isn't relevant to use Berkley radical language in New Brunswick, because we are dealing with a social structure straight out of the nineteen thirties. We have our own robber baron and it is irrelevant to talk of the technological revolution because technology hasn't ever reached here. It is irrelevant to talk of the distance between students and professors because professors here are readily available to students. It is irrelevant to talk of ghettos because there are no ghettos. There is grinding poverty but very different from the urban poverty in the United States. The outside frames of reference just don't apply.

BRUNS: What is the alternative?

HALLAM: If there is to be a radical movement at this university or in New Brunswick, it must come from a felt response to conditions as they exist in New Brunswick not as in the U.S.

Rather than have a great number of people from Montreal and Ontario trying to tell New Brunswick students what they feel to be their particular problems as residents of New Brunswick, the students must speak for themselves and rationally. There has been too much of an evangelical tone to all of the proceedings so far. If there is an analysis it must come from the people. "Che" said that.



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