

# SPECTRUM

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*D for democracy*

## A look at democracy from the inside

**ELECTIONS/** *Running for office isn't a mammoth undertaking or a herculean task.*

by James Rowan

We are, as I write this, embroiled in the furor preceding a national referendum. The entire future of our country will be determined on October 26 (depending on who you believe, at least), which is not all that far from now. This should be a time when, more than at any other moment in our history, we feel ourselves an integral part of the political process. Quite frankly, I have been quite impressed with the activism seen on the campus of this university in connection with the referendum. The PC Youth and Reform youth organization have, despite regularly being obliterated (and perhaps rightly so) by some of the student press, established some level of credibility with the students. That students on this campus care enough to be involved with a political organization and a campaign amazes me. I confess to being shocked that for once students seem to care—but then again, the stakes are very high, if we may believe what we are told. The only truth that we can know in this case is that the answer will appear so very clear to our children and their children in hindsight... assuming that this constitutional package rates their attention.

At any rate, let me return to my central point. While we are all familiar with the political process as members of the electorate, a group that is on the receiving end of all the political advertising, posturing, demagoguery, and earnest campaigning done in seeking election, very few of us see the campaigns from the inside. Earlier this month, I entered the race for the vacant Arts Representative seat on the Student Union.

I ran for political office. Except that it is difficult to think of it in that way. Indeed, many people have asked me why, considering some of my views on life/the universe and everything, I would ever run for Council? Well, there were a few reasons. For starters, I thought I could do the best job. Arrogant? Perhaps, but if you do not fervently believe that you are the best candidate, in your own ability to lead, to follow, and to accomplish your established goals, should you really be running? Secondly, I wished to advance some causes that I thought were falling through the cracks in the system. Due to yearly turnover, every Council was reinventing the wheel. I thought (and still believe) that someone had to get all the goals of the Union (in the broadest collective sense) accomplished as soon as possible. Also, I had long ago been labelled a complainer by the Council, and rightly so. I also believe that there comes a time when you have to show that yes, you are will-

ing to put effort into proving yourself right, that you must put up or shut up. So, I embarked on an election campaign.

Day 1. The Odyssey of the nomination forms. 8:30 AM. No forms. 9:30 AM. No forms. 10 AM. No forms. 10:15 No forms. At this point I informed the poor beleaguered staffers that I will be back every half-hour to complain until a nomination package is placed in my hands. 10:45 AM. Nomination form in hand, I go off in search of popular support. As I had already surmised, the nomination process involves the tracking down of all friends, acquaintances, classmates, roommates, relatives, co-workers, every single person you recognize from high school, and if necessary, but only if absolutely desperate, total strangers. Please remember this formula, for it will recur when discussing "voting". Once the supporter is in place, they sign on the dotted line. After ten of these fellow Union members have signed, the document is submitted to the Chief Returning Officer... who is in Sussex. Ah. It seems that, in extreme desperation, having found not one UNB student who would take on the task, the Student Union was forced to turn to someone who actually cares about student politics. Ironically, the only one who cared enough about UNB students and the Union (and the politics of the students and the Union) wasn't actually a UNB student. UNB, Mount A, close enough, and Tony Norrad becomes CRO for the Union.

The remainder of the week was spent waiting for the @#!\*? nomination period to close so that the campaigning could get underway.

Finally, nominations close. The next day, the poster campaign begins. One of the things that most annoys me is that for the most part, the war for the hearts and minds of the students is waged by poster. Without exception (and I follow the convention, though I don't like it), the posters include as their primary element the name of the candidate and the position sought. Good ad design, yes. A useful forum for promulgating understanding and knowledge of the candidate's platform, no. I try to include some text on my positions, but I realize that it is something of a lost cause. The Bruns election write ups come out. I am appalled to realize that I have written more or less the same thing as my opponent, except for the tone and the style. I realize that getting a message to the students and differentiating myself is going to be more difficult than I first thought.

On the following Monday, the Candidates Forum is held in the S.U.B. Cafeteria. Eric Burchill, SU Pres,

steps up to the mike. Asking for the students' attention, he gets it. He holds it for about 30 seconds, until he utters the words "elections". After that, we all watch the eyes of the audiences. We notice that there seems to be about a twenty second attention span in effect. As a result, the speeches get very short and to the point. Andrew Fuller, running unopposed, uses his time to advertise coming Campus Entertainment events. One candidate repeats his name a few times, mentions that his opponent isn't there, utters the word dedication, repeats his name a few more times, the position sought, and sits down. It is the best received speech, and comes in under the all important twenty seconds time limit. It is probably the most effective bit of political oratory to be given in the campaign.

That evening, those of us who actually bothered showing up trudged off to the residences, to meet with the Houses, and their students who bother to show up to greet us. In the course of five hours, we see eight Houses and meet 167 students. The high points are Harrison, Aitken and Jones House. At Harrison, we encounter upwards of sixty people; in Aitken we are asked questions, and in Jones we encounter someone (finally!) who really seems to have hard questions for us. Immediately, the Student Union Execs move in and ask him if he would like to work with them, moving quickly because they are interrupt-

ing Monday Night Football. Basically, that one moment made the entire evening a success, no matter the outcome of the speeches, or of the election, in my book.

As well, I saw the Union doing what it has to do: being responsible to its members. The policies, plans and goals of the Union leadership were outlined, and the methods to the ends were advertised at each stop on the campaign trail. I was encouraged firstly that this was being done, secondly that students seemed to care. Well, 167 of them did, anyway.

Election day, take one. Nothing much happens. The campaign is over, and all that remains is to wait for the outcome.

Election day, take two. The counting is about to begin at 8 PM... except for a minor computer breakdown. The counting is about to begin at 9:15 PM... but the keys to the ballot boxes are locked in the safe. One of the DROs mutters something about impending doom, 15 minutes, and a bolt cutter. Within the half hour, the counting begins. The results come in, and I lose by 11 votes.

The loss is disappointing, because I wanted to actually get something done, and now I won't have the chance. Hopefully, my victorious opponent will succeed in completing everything that she wished to

complete, and along the way succeed in fulfilling all of my goals as well. We'll find out. All I can hope for is that my candidacy in some way helped make the truth heard, and assisted in bringing the students back into student politics.

From a purely personal perspective, I've paid my dues, taken a good hard run at Council, and basically, have earned the right to criticize them if they screw up. This isn't a bad second prize. In the process of running, I've learned something about the nature of politics, and I've made some discoveries about student apathy at UNB. All in all, I would recommend that every student take a good hard look at examining democracy from the inside. Running for office isn't a mammoth undertaking or a herculean task for the rich and powerful, it is within the reach of every single student on campus (except for the physically disabled, who wouldn't be able to access the CRO's offices or likely most of the sites of the debates... which is perhaps the most grievous inequity in our university). Most of you have the makings of a councillor or committee member, some of you have the makings of a really good councillor or executive, and a few have the makings of great councillors and true student leaders. Most importantly, all of you have the characteristics of a great voter. Exercise the most important right you have at every opportunity.

### *The Black Triangle*

## Red bricks and red necks: "Basic Instinct" at UNB

**OPINION/** *There were many warning signs about the movie, so why did the Student Union choose to show it?*

by Tristis Bhaird

I actually started another column under this title last week, but due to some amazing technical errors it became lost in the vacuous void of digital dumping grounds in other words "Sorry Mister Editor, but my computer ate my homework."

It's rather fortunate that things worked out this way, since at the time of last writing I had not seen Basic Instinct and could barely stand the comparison to the religious censors who condemned "The Last Temptation of Christ" without seeing it, that kept tumbling through my mind.

I feel much better now.

I can thumb my nose at that silly, juvenile male, rape celebrating, pornographic piece of violent trash with the self-satisfaction of having sat through both brutal, boring hours of it.

It really was a stupid movie. In a world full of formula plots and

poor characterization I'm not surprised by that. It isn't the first movie that uses sex to hold an audience's interest (though barely) in the absence of substance. It isn't even the first time that the fem-rambo-fatale has been used as antagonist. Finally, believe it or not, the idea of the lesbian as sexual deviant who is won over by the handsome hero and faces the wrath of other unrescueable lezzies, has been used before, too. This one had Michael I'm too sexy for my part Douglas in it, though. That guy can ruin any movie.

What angers me about this movie is not it, in itself, but that it was chosen to be shown on campus by the Student Union. The magazine articles about the violent anti-lesbian plot, the reviews that stated over and over that the storyline was stupid, and could have been done without the gay-thing, the protests, the news coverage, all these should have been warning flags to the coun-

cillors who imported the film. It should not have been part of the regular lineup without some kind of forum set up to talk about the issues it raises, and the reality of lesbians lives vs. the myths it perpetuates.

Universities exist for the pursuit of knowledge. There should be a sharing of information, and an acceptance of new ideas, or thoughtful discussion of complex issues. This mindless tripe is full of hate! It should never have been presented as student entertainment as if it were harmless.

The incredible popularity of it (It sold out & many of us were turned away. I eventually rented it—meaning I didn't get to listen in on other people's reactions, but I did get to yell "Put your shirt on Mike!" without getting someone's popcorn in my lap.) is not a defence of its presentation. Advertise any porn

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