

# Editorial & Mugwump

## EDITORIAL

KAREN BURGESS

### Why do we vote?

Theoretically, we vote to uphold the tenets of democracy, to voice our approval of one party's political stance, and to endorse a candidate we feel can lead us into a prosperous future.

At UNB, however, we seem to vote for entirely different reasons. It is true that choosing a political leader could conceivably be seen as self serving on all levels. We want people with views and standards similar to our own to run the country/ province/ association so we can live happily ever after. We hope that the elected party will build a stable foundation for its constituency's future, so that later generations will prosper from our wise decisions.

But even this mild self concern seems not to be the motivator at UNB. In the 1988 federal election, 60% of the voters registered here on campus voted at UNB's four polling stations.

This year, Student Union officials have mounted a residence challenge to force resident voters out of their near-catatonic apathy and to inspire them to vote. They are aiming for 75% of registered voters. This, in itself, is a good thing. Residences have been developing a sense of house spirit, and actually attending candidates forums and watching debates. But wait, why are they doing all these progressive things?

An informal exit poll conducted after students watched Monday's televised candidate's debate in the pub indicates that the most important federal election issue (in the opinion of 45% of respondents) is education. Very noble. It almost appears that the altruistic vision of the greater good applies; after all, reforms won't be implemented until after most current students complete their tenure here at UNB. Lest this tendency inspire us into an orgy of back-patting, we should qualify the results with a little contextual information. Much of the literature and promotional material on the residence challenge displays very prominently the slogan "Make your mark, vote education."

Obviously, this could influence voters who have little other exposure to campaign issues to identify education as the top

priority. Pro-student attitudes on the part of a candidate are admirable, but one also has to worry about other issues; for instance, if one gets a larger student loan because a certain party wins, how do they pay that loan off if the powers that be make no provisions for job creation, or if new taxes created to pay off a staggering deficit eat up more disposable income than a recent graduate can afford.

Then, there's another contributing factor to consider: each residence gets points for having its members show up for these events.

Ultimate goal: informed vote for the best leader, or an IBM PC and printer to the winning house?

Ditto the Student Union by-election. The voter turnout is estimated to be at a whopping 20 per cent as opposed to, say, 13-15 per cent in the spring election.

Is it because we have well matched candidates staging an issues-based campaign to improve the quality of life on campus for all students? NO, it's because we have a referendum that would

Isaac Asimov wrote a short story set in a futuristic country which did away with voting as we know it. The election of the federal government was decided by the vote of one citizen, selected at random by a computer. Even after this voter was selected, he or she never actually cast a ballot, or stated an opinion on who should govern. The individual was interviewed extensively, and the vote was decided by a computer which analyzed the voter's responses. This, they argued, was the only way to ensure that the elections were not decided solely on the basis of personal material gain.

Extreme, I admit, but it does make one think. The student unions of UNB and STU are shelling out over \$14,000 do get you out to vote, and individual parties are shelling out countless millions more to get you out to vote for them.

You'll be bombarded with numerous opinions and encouraging slogans in the next little while, which will carry essentially identical messages: VOTE!

It's hard to vote with only altruistic considerations in mind, but if you're going to vote solely for the sake of showing up and flaunting your house colors, at least find out what the politician you're voting for believes in—don't just ask how many megs of ram are on the computer you might win.

## MUGWUMP

JAMES ROWAN

Well, the election results are in. Yee-ha. The electorate has gone to the polls and have cast their ballots and now the results are clear for all to see. It is a little strange to see people that I met through the student press now working the other side of the street, student politics, but I'll have to manage.

Pat Fitzpatrick, VP-University Affairs-Elect, had the honour of the ritual forcible removal from the Brun offices. You see, as we are responsible journalists, with a reputation for integrity and honesty, we must be ever vigilant and guard against any possible influence or censorship by the Student Union. As a result, we periodically chuck any Student Union people found in our office environment out into the hallway. Pat completed the ritual first toss with skill and aplomb. Jamie van Raalte was about, but we didn't throw him out because he's willing to be a gofer.

It was especially strange throwing Pat out of the office, as he used to be a Brunnie. In fact, back when he was known as TDF, Pat won the prestigious honour Brun "Keener of the Year." It remains to be seen if Pat will be able to garner similar accolades at the Student Union.

The other VP-elect, Paul Estabrooks, showed off his managerial, financial and administrative acumen from the moment of his victory, by not calling for the financially suicidal beginning of a bookstore and/or daycare. If he keeps on like that, he should be fine. I look forward to the headaches I'll be giving him in my official capacity as

If you were expecting impartiality,  
look for the News section.

financial officer for the Brunswickan.

The other really important vote was the Referendum question on the adoption of the CFS Health Plan. Despite an anxious two days at SU Referendum Central, the Referendum passed by a vast margin. Initial fears of a crushing defeat were proved wrong; cynically, almost everyone had assumed that high voter turnout corresponded to massive disgust with one of the candidates—and the only thing that came to mind was the referendum. It seems, however, that the people were voting because they liked the idea of a health plan. This is a good idea, because the current health plan was underutilized and poorly understood—because the administration had no incentive to advertise it when it would just cost them money.

The main arguments against the plan were that it was too inclusive (i.e. oral contraceptives were going to be included) and that it was too expensive.

The plan itself answers both questions: if students don't want something covered, they have the power to drop it. If the rates are too high, they can drop some coverage. Neither is an option under the university health plan.

Finally, the results of the vote for Arts Rep will not be known until the next meeting of Council, as the two candidates tied. Good luck to both candidates when it comes time to toss that coin. Toss that coin...that is just sooo democratic. There's got to be a better way.



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NB. Sorry to the folks who print out  
paper, Prestige Web in Moncton,  
over the name change last week. The  
name of the firm is indeed Prestige  
Web.

Words of Wisdom: Democracy is the  
belief that the people know what  
they want and deserve to get it, good  
and hard.  
- H.L. Mencken

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