

The Brunswickan

Canada's oldest official student publication

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EDITORIAL

THE FUTURE IS NOT THAT BAD

When I look at photographs of my three nephews, I am struck by the frightening fact of family inheritance. They look like I did when I was their age, and, more disturbingly, they look like my father did when he was their age. While this is normally regarded by many as the stuff to make us marvel at the beautiful order of nature; I am instead daunted by the inexorable march of time and the weight of history that these three boys now bear. The more I note the threads that link these three generations together; it is the more I see the differences in the worlds that each of us belong to. It is hard to be optimistic about the future of my nephews with all the horrors of AIDS, pollution, the threat of nuclear war, and the increase in drug abuse, among young people. Naturally, I wonder if my father did not have the same concerns about me. But I am convinced that in 1962 he had more to look forward to in the future of a young West Indian growing up in a developing that was beaming with the possibilities of independence and nationhood. His generation was a struggling one, seeking to cope with the pressures of existing in a world that regarded Apartheid as acceptable. Much of the hope and thrill of that period has worn itself out. Society is now ruled by a pragmatism of economics that is given greater weight than the basics of human kindness; community and sharing. With the shrinking of the world through media and communication these statements can no longer be easily dismissed as unfounded generalizations. The spreading of a universal world view is becoming more and more possible today what with the combined forces of television and print media and the weight of international trade. The future is therefore, a daunting one to consider decisions of previous generations.

But hopelessness and inertia are not acceptable ways to approach the future. Surely, there is much to be said for technological advances and their positive potential in the development of human society. The increasing amount of historical, political and scientific knowledge available to us today at least indicates that the material is there to encourage progressive lifestyles in the future. Fewer people should be as easily deceived by diabolic political leaders or intruding nations as long as societies make use of the knowledge available to them about the artificiality of political rhetoric. In larger cosmopolitan societies like Canada, the USA and France, the "mosaic" of cultures that exists should be granting greater appreciation of other peoples to those living in such areas. The international implications of these examples of multi-cultural societies cannot be underestimated. The cliché of the exotic, and the fear brought on by ignorance will be eroded by this development. No longer are these Chinese, African and Indian people just students who will leave eventually; they now live permanently in these communities in larger and larger numbers - the mystique is going; and along with it, all the pre-conceived ideas and prejudices that have held for years.

The environment may be pretty messed up, but we are aware of it; and people now have something to collectively work towards. Children rally to causes like that as well. In New Jersey a young teenager managed to lead a movement towards legislative changes concerning the use of recyclable plates and cups in fast food stores! There is something remarkably promising about a generation that can produce children of that calibre. But more can be done by this present generation that is producing these children and guiding their development. Now, more than ever, the need for positive role models is crucial. By projecting the problems that we regard as fairly minor or manageable into the future and by multiplying their occurrence a hundred fold; we will begin to see the extent to which actions we take today can affect the world of today's children. If we could allow the dread of children born and forced to grow up with serious ailments brought on by AIDS, alcohol and drug-related misdeeds to bother us for a while we may be challenged to curb our behaviour. However, there is always the tragic and selfish position that the enjoyment of one's existence is more important than concerns about future generations. Unfortunately, there are many who still hold this view and to a large extent they happen to be people without children or people who haven't realized that they will grow older and will have more difficulty coping with a problem-racked world than they are having now.

I am excited about my nephews and I am not entirely pessimistic about their future. Riding through New Brunswick's Eastern end on Wednesday evening, I was struck by the sheer beauty of the dazzling sunset fading from a self-congratulatory yellow into a mellow and round orange flood of light. The skeletal tree branches played light games with the sunlight throwing shifting shadows on the serene barns and farm houses along the trans-Canada. Autumn in New Brunswick. Beautiful. Matchless. I leaned my head on the cool glass and enjoyed that uncanny sense of well-being and safety on the ride into Fredericton. I would love to preserve moments like these and in some way make sure that they are available to my nephews.

My fortnightly trips to Dorchester have made me appreciate more the curious contradictions of New Brunswick rural life. The peaceful country friendly atmosphere offset by the bizarre potential for youth delinquency and violence. The values of family and community contrasting with the high incidents of alcoholism and familial abuse contribute to this conundrum of a unique community. Perhaps, this is why the strange and terrifying events in Newcastle have caused such an air of mystery in the region. I am not sure if this mystique is lost on New Brunswickers; but Newcastle is making it in international news (eg. *The London Times*) because of the way in which the events constitute a type of "Paradise Lost" paradigm. Alan Carter's article on the people of Newcastle bears this out well. He talks to people he is acquainted with and he discovers things about their experiences that capture the fear and anxiety brought on by the murders. Some weeks ago, I praised New Brunswickers for their inquisitiveness and their old-fashioned (but positive) manner of getting involved in correcting things they feel to be going against the community's interest. Was I wrong? Is it possible that there are people who know more about the killings than they let on? If so we can only pray that they will have the strength to stand up and speak out.

Kwame Dawes
 Editor in Chief