

# The Brunswickan

Canada's oldest official student publication

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The Brunswickan, in its 124th year of publication, is Canada's oldest official student publication. The Brunswickan's offices are located in Rm 35 of the University of New Brunswick's Student Union Building, P.O. Box 4400, College Hill, Fredericton N.B., E3B 5A3. Tel. 453-4983.

The Brunswickan is published by Brunswickan Publishing Inc. and printed with flair by Global Printing & Binding Inc., Fredericton, N.B.

Subscription is \$25 per year. Second class mail in effect.

Local Advertising rates are available from The Brunswickan, (506) 453-4983. National advertising rates are available from Youthstream Canada Ltd., 1541 Avenue Road, Suite 203, Toronto, Ont., M5M 3X4, Tel: (416) 787-4911.

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# EDITORIAL

The producer of the programme sits at his/her desk and frowns while reading the scarred script of an enthusiastic, but nervous story writer. "What is the angle? The angle."

"The angle." The writer shifts his/her weight.

"The angle, you know? Why should I give a damn about this?" The producer leans forward and stares at the reporter. His/her glasses are slowly removed.

"Well, it is a human interest thing, people..."

"No, no... I mean the usual Joe Blow, Mary Jane, the everyday man in the street; my grandmother, man; my old maid aunt who watches soaps day in day out...that's who I mean, you follow? Why, should they give a damn about the Brazilian farmers dying of pesticide poisoning in some backwater, unheard of town in East Brazil? Hell, it isn't even a bloody tourist resort; you know? Got to have an angle. RELEVANCE! RELEVANCE."

So the writer quietly leans. News relies on its shock and entertainment value these days. The element has all to do with the ability of the victim to identify with and internalize the object of the shock. Having explained this to the reporter, the producer proceeds to identify for the apprentice the perfect angle: the poor farmers are cultivating cocoa and the bulk of the cocoa produced is sent to North America and made into chocolate. Apparently, the pesticide that is killing all those Brazilians has a strong residual quality and traces of it can be found in the chocolate that is produced and consumed in North America. Thus the North American consumer is in danger of contamination. Viola! A story! It doesn't matter that the local impact may only entail some stomach ailments as compared to the death that is reeked on the Brazilian farmers. It is also never discussed why these farmers are forced to use a banned pesticide and to risk serious illness because of the need to get the pittance that they are paid for their labour. It is not discussed, either, that large economical dynamics involving multinational cooperations have actually led to the kind of labour force that is so exploited. Those things tend not to pass as lively and relevant news stories; they belong, apparently, the speeches of raving and ungrateful Third World headers at United Nations gatherings.

It just seems a pity that the North American psyche finds it difficult to break away from this "the world revolves around us" syndrome. There must be a place for news stories that accept the notion that the nature of our world today makes all international events somehow relevant to our existence. Such stories would appreciate the common factor of human experience while keeping close sanctions on the underlying political and economic factors that link different nations together. It just seems horrendous to think that the tragedy of the Brazilian farmer was made news worthy essentially because the selfish instincts of the populace were effectively catered to.

On a related note there has been much hype about the return of the native Germans to West Germany from East Germany in the media lately. It has been for many, a very touching demonstration of human fortitude and faith and for others it represents the very essence of what freedom and democracy are all about. We have caught ourselves smiling indulgently at the elation felt by these refugees entering a new and free land. But something smells odd. This is not your typical refugee scenario. One rarely sees government minister waiting on the border to let in refugees from Third World Countries, nor are we used to seeing people who are escaping from repression and death threats in Asian countries welcomed by business people with job offers and contracts to be signed. A friend of mine reminded me of the many refugees in West Germany who are still waiting for some response for refugee claims put in years ago. One wonders how they feel watching all this hoopla about the East Germans. It cannot be ignored that the bulk of these onlookers are non-European or at least non-Germanic people. There is a message there somewhere and it should get some attention by the media. Not many media agencies seem to have discovered that "angle" as yet.

Finally, I encourage all to support the annual Terry Fox Run being organized by the Student Union. There is no doubt the cause is a noble one and one worthy of the courage and determination of the late Terry Fox.