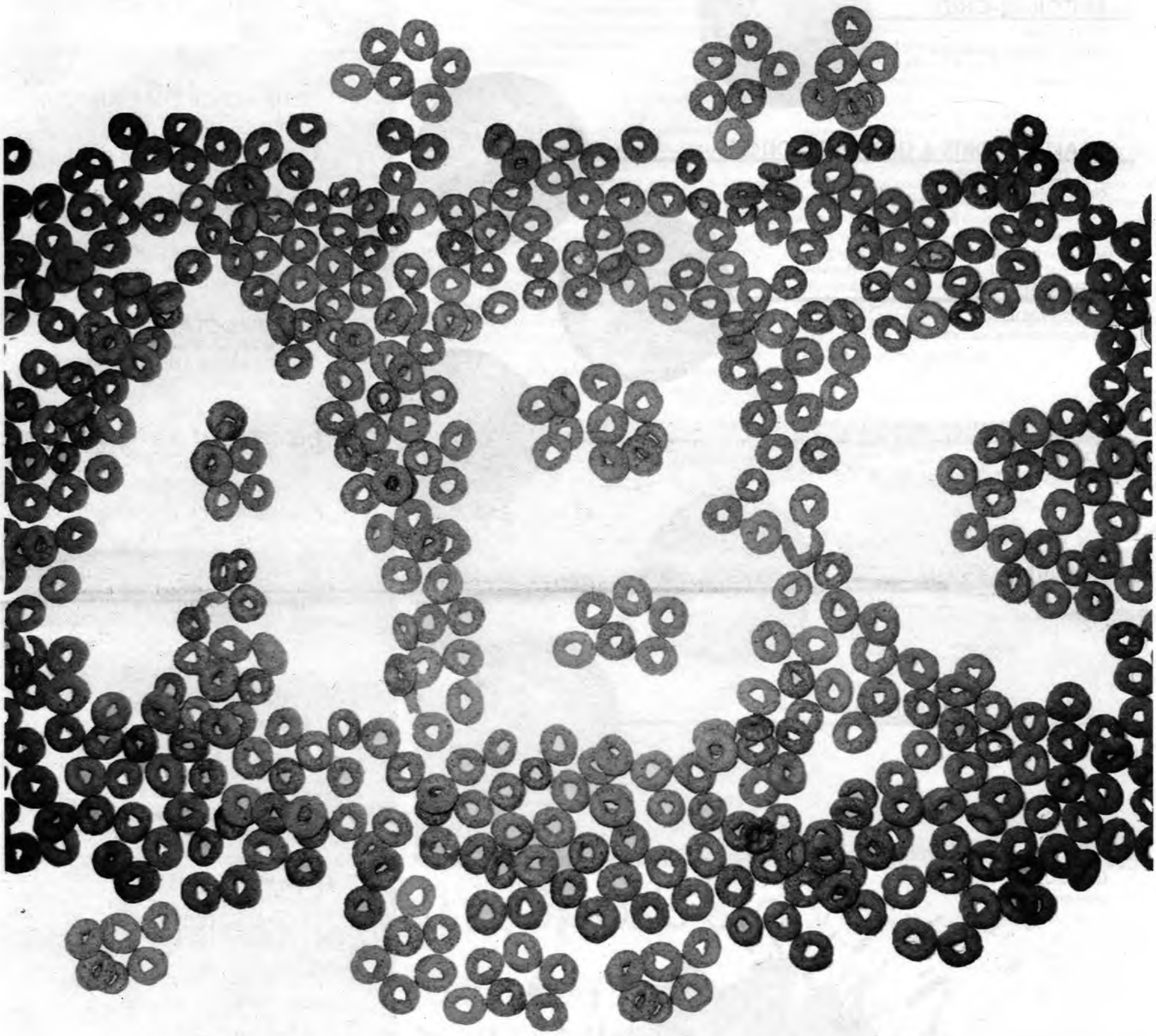
Red River College

projector



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Red River College
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Red River College
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TAKING ON THE SPP: Protesters gather to speak out against the Security & Prosperity Partnership, an agreement between governments and corporations in Canada, the United States and Mexico meant to catalyze free-trade deals and make the transfer of temporary migrant workers from Mexico to Canada smoother.. Protesters say the agreement is more about big business than free trade, and would have a negative effect on economies in all three countries.

Tackling the Security & Prosperity Partnership

Chris Webb
News Editor

By the time you read this, it will already be too late.

Too late to stop an agreement that supporters argue will benefit an entire continent through increased free-trade deals and critics decry as an anti-democratic deal shrouded in secrecy and profiteering by big business. It's called the Security and Prosperity Partnership, but people are asking: Security and prosperity for who?

Council of Canadians chairperson, Maude Barlow, one of the chief organizers of protest action around the summit that happened last week in Montebello, Quebec, where Stephen Harper met with the US and Mexican Presidents, said people shouldn't be fooled about who really sets the agenda at these summits -- the 30 business leaders who sit on the North American Competitiveness Council.

The council comprises leaders from ten companies in each country and includes corporations like Wal-Mart, General Electric and weapons-maker Lockheed Martin. They advise the three national governments on facilitating trade.

Thomas D'Aquino, president of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, chairs a group which advises Canadian members of the North American Competitiveness Council, a group of 30 corporate executives supporting the SPP. D'Aquino called the protests "undemocratic" and claimed business was not controlling the summit.

"These people don't care about you, and they don't care about your quality of life, and they don't care about food safety, and they don't care about true security," Barlow told a crowd on Parliament Hill."They only care about making money."

This sentiment was echoed by the Canadian Labour Congress who demanded the Harper government end participation in the SPP and make the summit an open and democratic process involving the Canadian people. At the same rally on parliament hill, executive vice-president of the Congress, Barbara Byers, said,"if this is really about improving NAFTA for all of us, we would all be included in the process. Instead, everything is being done in secret, behind closed doors."

Of the many concerns raised by the summit, lack of transparency and the anti-democratic face of the event was key, another was the role of protesters and the right of legitimate dissent.

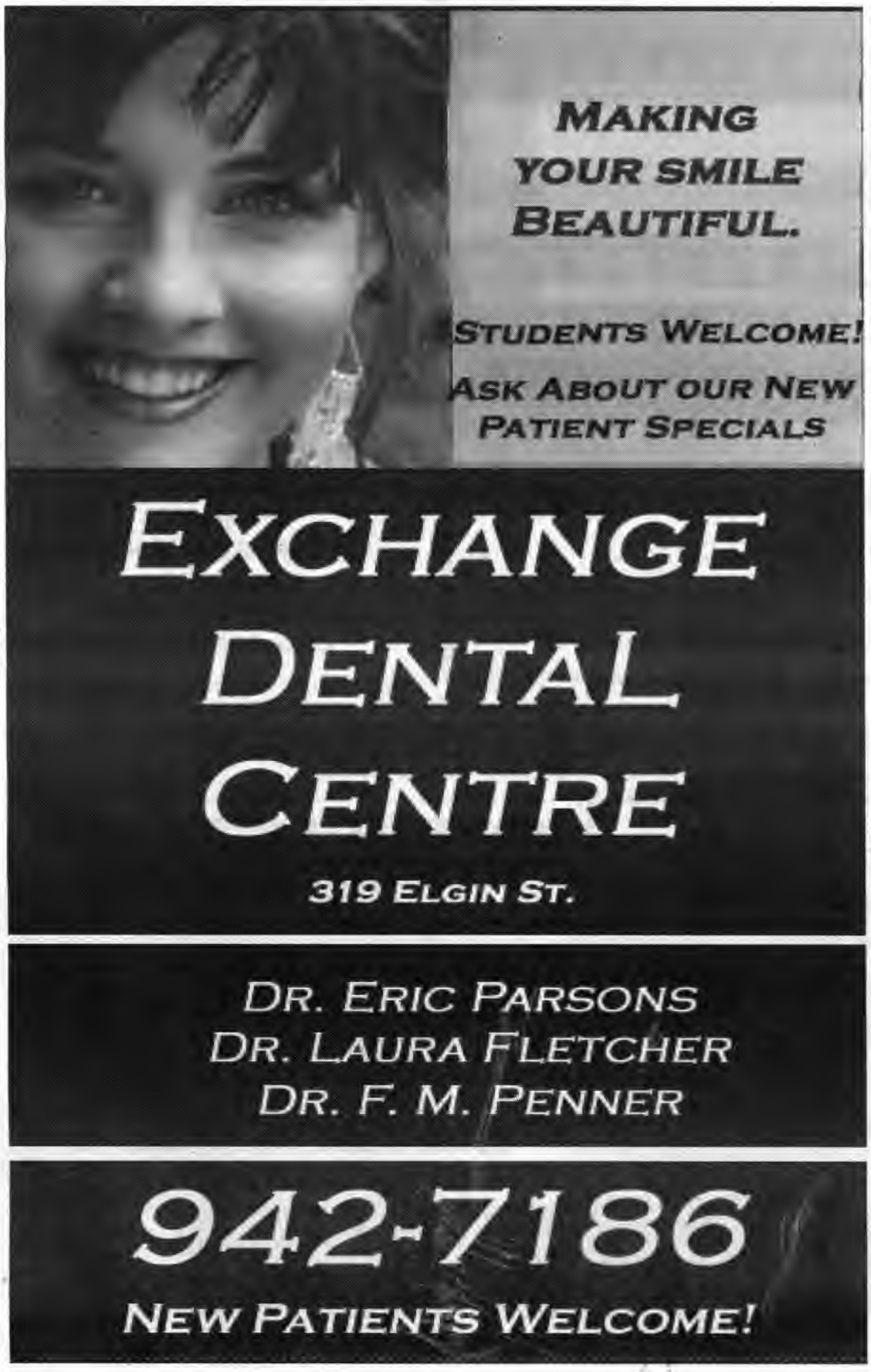
While the many groups opposing the SPP certainly had good reasons for doing so, there was a large gap in their analysis of the deal and its effect on immigrants, minority communities, aboriginal people and those disenfranchised and driven into poverty by previous NAFTA agreements.

The SPP was referred to as a lethal combination of NAFTA and homeland security. This statement quite accurately describes the SPP, although only some marginal voices from the protest movement described the horrendous effect the agreement would have on communities other than working class Canadians. One of the SPP's agreements was the integration of a continental security apparatus, the increased militarization of borders and sharing information such as the no-fly-list. Efforts which will undoubtedly lead to increased deportations of immigrants and refugees and further attacks on civil liberties.

In addition, increased rates of poverty and displacement result from free trade agreements like NAFTA and the SPP as they take steps to further privatization and corporate tax breaks while at the same time cutting back or eliminating environmental regulations, labour standards, health and safety regulations and public services. Job security is also a casualty of free trade, as more and more jobs become de-unionized, and part-time and informal jobs replace secure full-time ones.

One of the summit's aims was to make the transfer of temporary migrant workers from Mexico to Canada easier. The Canadian Labour Congress reports: "Instead of improving working conditions in response to the demands for work-life balance made by workers in places like Manitoba, trucking employers are electing to transfer work-life imbalances...to migrant workers."

Like the NAFTA and FTAA debates of years past, the question raised is prosperity for who? NAFTA devastated Mexico, with the minimum wage falling 40 per cent since 1994, and 62 per cent of the working population now living below the poverty line. Efforts in Mexico to fight against the neo-liberal agenda have been met with state violence and repression. Now that there's a continental deal in place protecting the interests of capital over the rights of these people, there is no doubt we'll see more violence and poverty.



Red River College
STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Make it yours!

Feel Free to contact us at:

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VP Support Services
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Vice President Princess Street
(204)949-8466

Up Coming Events

Aug. 28 — Aug. 31

Meet the Exec Day's (Free Coffee & Donuts :D)

August 28 - Library Hallway
August 29 - A-B Hallway
August 30 - Princess Street
August 31 - Buffalo Hallway

KICK OFF WEEK WEEK 2007

September 4-7

Check out the half page ad inside this edition of the Projector for more info!

Join the SA Events Email List.

CHECK OUT THE SA WEBSITE @ WWW.RRCSA.COM

Message from the Executive

Hello fellow students, and welcome to Red River College! We are the executive officers of your Students' Association (SA) and we're looking forward to working hard this year to make your experience at RRC a positive one.

The SA is here for the students, to protect their needs and interests, and to represent the student body to the College and the public at large. We provide a variety of services in different forms. Some of these services include:

- Retail Stores – The Ox and the Mercantile
- Student Lounges
- Food Bank
- Health & Dental Plan

The SA also offers various employment and volunteer opportunities for students, such as working at the social events, being a Class Rep or being a member of our Student Advisory Board.

Or even if you just want a place to meet some friendly people and learn more about what goes on at the SA, please come visit our offices in CM20 at the Notre Dame Campus and P110 at Princess Street Campus. We'd love to meet you!!!

Angie Hererra, President
Dean Mary, VP Academic
Lovell Li, VP Support Services
Dale Gledhill, VP Princess St. Campus

Low on Cash?
Want to earn some extra money while in school?

Check out the bulletin boards for jobs offered by your Students' Association
Come by the offices for more info....

STUDENT HEALTH PLAN OPT-OUT DEADLINE
30 Days from Start Date of Program
OPT IN -RETURNING STUDENTS:
30 Days from Start Date of Program

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Join the Student Advisory Board (SAB)
Become a Class Rep
Visit our offices for Information

WATCH FOR A LIST OF CLUBS IN THE OCTOBER EDITION!

YOU MIGHT FIND ONE YOU LIKE OR GET AN IDEA TO START YOUR OWN!

COME TALK TO LOVELL LI

Notre Dame Campus
CM20 - 2055 Notre Dame Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Princess Street Campus
P110-160 Princess Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Satan rides Rhinoceros Party back into politics

> ***"The wily old rhino, going crazy from the summer heat, believes he has outdone himself in putting together his platform. There will be laughter aplenty between now and polling day."***
>
> - Brian "Godzilla" Salmi
> from the Rhinocerous Party website

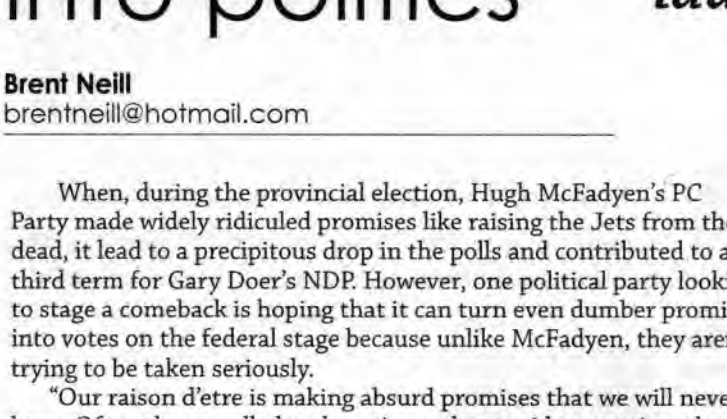
Brent Neill
brentneill@hotmail.com

When, during the provincial election, Hugh McFadyen's PC Party made widely ridiculed promises like raising the Jets from the dead, it lead to a precipitous drop in the polls and contributed to a third term for Gary Doer's NDP. However, one political party looking to stage a comeback is hoping that it can turn even dumber promises into votes on the federal stage because unlike McFadyen, they aren't trying to be taken seriously.

"Our raison d'etre is making absurd promises that we will never keep. Often the so-called real parties make stupider promises than we can ever dream up, but that's just luck. We work hard to come up with our stupid promises, they don't," said Brian "Godzilla" Salmi, the president of the Rhinoceros Party of the Canada, the recently resurrected version of the party that ran candidates across Canada from the 1960s through to 1993.

Salmi, who has legally changed his name to Satan, launched his campaign for the September 17 federal by-election in the tiny Montreal suburb of Outremont by promising to change the name of Canada to Nantucket. Past Rhino promises include repealing the law of gravity, legalizing pots and pans and other kitchen utensils, and providing better higher education by building taller schools. Key to the philosophy of the Rhinoceroses Party is a promise to never keep any of their promises and in the case of ever winning an election, promising to disband and force another vote.

The party used to receive tens of thousands of votes across Canada but was killed off at the beginning of the 1990's by a change in Canadian electoral law that required all registered parties to run minimum of 50 candidates and make a deposit of $1000 per candidate. The 50 minimum requirement was dropped in 2004, but the



deposit is still needed for all candidates and Sami intends to contest this rule as a violation of the Charter and a deterrent to low-income Canadians that wish to participate in the electoral process. He filed a lawsuit at the beginning of August in Federal Court, and Satan versus Her Majesty the Queen will be heard at a later date in the year.

In the meantime, Salmi will focus on bringing some levity to a tightly fought by-election that along with a pair of others in Quebec on the same date may dictate how long the Conservative minority government lasts into the year.

Outremont is the most intriguing race of all because of the presence of Thomas Mulcair, a former provincial Liberal environment minister, who is running for the NDP, trying to give the party its first seat in Quebec in over 25 years. The seat has been a Liberal stronghold, but the parties weak poll results in Montreal are giving both the NDP and Tories hope that they can add an MP to their total.

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RED RIVER COLLEGE
of Applied Arts, Science and Technology
WELCOME BACK!
Stop by for lunch, fun and prizes and help us kick off the 2007–2008 academic year.
Meet new friends, catch up with old friends and meet staff members of the Aboriginal Student Support Centre and School of Indigenous Education Division.
WIN PRIZES!
Please join us on
Wednesday, September 5, 2007
Princess Street Campus
11:00—12:00
Room P107
Multi-purpose room.
Or
Thursday, September 6, 2007
Norte Dame Campus
11:30 – 1:30
The Aboriginal Student Support Centre
Room F209
Brought to you by the Aboriginal Student Support Centre & Community Relations

Your Voice on Campus

WHAT'S ON THE TABLE FOR THIS YEAR'S STUDENT'S ASSOCIATION?

Chris Webb
News Editor

Students should be an effective and prominent voice in college affairs says Red River College Students' Association President, Angie Herrera.

Herrera's argument for representation is based on a strategic plan implemented by the previous students' association which aims at encouraging students to contribute and participate in the workings of the college, while support and services enable students to continue their studies and play an active role in campus life.

"I'm really excited about this year," said Herrera.

"We [the students' association] work really well as a team and with that good work environment everyone's really connected. I'm pretty confident everyone will do a really great job."

Herrera and her team have been busy over the summer with a number of projects that she hopes will help students at Red River College and across the province.

"One of the main things we've been working on are the renovations to the Cave at the Notre Dame campus," Herrera said. "The whole area is being gutted and we're putting brand new furniture in. I hope we can use it as a space to hold more events like bands and keggers."

On a larger scale, the student association is working closely with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) and their members on renewing the Canadian Millenium Scholarship Foundation. "I really believe that this scholarship has helped students across the country and reduced some of the debt that so many students deal with," Herrera said.

In 2006, the foundation got a boost when CASA used its first meeting with Prime Minister Stephen Harper to renew the foundation when its $2.5-billion endowment is exhausted in 2009. When the foundation was launched in 1998, then-Finance Minister Paul Martin, announced to the House of Commons that the foundation's grants would cut student debt in half. However, Canadian Federation of Students President, Amanda Aziz, says student debt has skyrocketed in the last fifteen years and compound interest is making matters worse for tens of thousands of graduates struggling to make loan payments.

Herrera maintains that the students' association's effectiveness in providing an array of services and support to students is thanks to a healthy and productive relationship with the college administration. "Jeff [Zabudsy] is a pleasure to work with. It was a little intimidating at first dealing with everyone on the board [of governors], but everyone has been really welcoming and helpful. I hope we continue that relationship and keep encouraging student's to be an active voice on campus," she said.

WHO REPRESENTS YOU?

Ah, the sweet aroma of new binders, the crisp spine of a new textbook, the stale cups of coffee and the frozen tears shed as you run after that last bus...

As your day-planner slowly fills with assignments and your life descends into that ever-familiar state of disarray, remember that someone cares. Someone even represents you.

THIS IS HOW IT WORKS:

The Red River College Students' Association (SA) is you, me and your smelly locker buddy. At the beginning of this year you will be asked to elect class representatives. You will elect one or two class reps who are your voice in the student government. Class reps direct queries and concerns about your program to the Student Advisory Board (SAB). They also promote SA events on campus.

The SAB is the executive board of the Student Association. SA President Angie Herrera, said the "advisory board is really the student governing body of the students' association." The SAB is comprised of 20 students and 5 alternates from a diverse range of college programs. They meet once a month to discuss the larger issues that the SA deals with—all students are welcome to attend meetings and application forms for the SAB can be picked up at the SA office.

The SA is democratically elected by the student body and serves the interests of students by providing programs, services and events that meet student needs. The SA also represents students provincially and federally as a member of the Canadian Alliance of Students Associations. CASA, formed in 1995, is an alliance of student associations from across Canada. CASA now has 18 members and represents almost 250,000 students nationwide. Some of CASA's policies include: Canada Study Grant, Millennium Scholarship Foundation, Debt Reduction in Repayment, Interest Relief, public vs. private institutions and the Pan-Canadian Accord. Online: rrcsa.com, casa.ca

News Briefs

Compiled by Chris Webb, News Editor

BIOFUEL SEEN AS A BOOST FOR POOR FARMERS

Environmental and food experts say the world's rural poor could benefit from a boom in fuel made from crops, despite worries that an accompanying surge in food prices could result in more hunger. Many agricultural commodities have been in a virtual price freefall since the 1970s, with devastating consequences for entire economies. But key prices have bounced back in recent years, in large measure due to the biofuel industry. "Decades of declining agricultural prices have been reversed thanks to the growing use of biofuels," said Christopher Flavin, president of the Worldwatch Institute. "Farmers in some of the poorest nations have been decimated by U.S. and European subsidies to crops such as corn, cotton, and sugar. Today's higher prices may allow them to sell their crops at a decent price." Biofuel production doubled between 2000 and 2005, according to the International Energy Agency. Biofuel powers roughly one percent of global road transport. The IEA expects this share to quadruple by 2030.

WORSENING WATER CRISIS IN BAGHDAD

The Baghdad Water Authority has reported it is now unable to provide drinking water to most of the city's residents because of the collapse of Iraq's infrastructure. Much of the country is suffering severe lack of water, and the small quantities supplied are not good for human use. Iraqi hospitals are full of people with illnesses due to the unsafe water. Doctors at several hospitals confirmed to IPS that water is one of the worst causes of diseases, especially among children, and that some of children had died of water-borne diseases compounded by a severe lack of medicines. U.S. ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker acknowledged to reporters on Jul. 19 that Baghdad residents were receiving on average only one hour of electricity a day. Before the U.S.-led invasion, Baghdad residents received 16-24 hours of electricity daily. Without electricity, water cannot be pumped to homes.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN PEACE KEEPING FORCE

Southern African leaders launched a peacekeeping brigade on August 17 as part of a planned African standby force to be deployed on peace missions and to tackle disarmament and humanitarian crises on the continent. The peacekeeping brigade, part of an Africa-wide effort to form an operational standby force by 2010, is expected to rapidly deploy in areas for a "limited duration", with a mandate from the United Nations, African Union or SADC.

WIKIPEDIA 'SHOWS CIA PAGE EDITS'

An online tool that claims to reveal the identity of organizations that edit Wikipedia pages has revealed that the CIA was involved in editing entries. Wikipedia Scanner allegedly shows that workers on the agency's computers made edits to the page of Iran's president. The tool, developed by US researchers, trawls a list of 5.3m edits and matches them to the net address of the editor. It also purportedly shows that the Vatican has edited entries about Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and a computer belonging to the American Democratic Party edited entries on right wing radio host Rush Limbaugh, calling him "idiotic, racist, and a bigot".

[Sources: Inter-Press Service News, Dahr Jamail, Mail and Guardian, BBC]

RED RIVER COLLEGE
STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Campus Jobs

OPERATIONS COORDINATOR
Casual

The SA needs an energetic student to take care of our three new common areas (Lockers, The Workshop, & The Cave). Work on your own time—making sure these spaces are setup and operating properly—on a weekly basis.

$225/month **Apply by Sept. 7, 2007**

MEDIA COORDINATOR
Casual

The SA needs an energetic student to deliver the Projector (our student newspaper) at the Notre Dame campus on a bi-weekly basis and to manage our bulletin boards (weekly).

$150/month **Apply by Sept. 7, 2007**

SAFE WALK PATROL OFFICERS
Part-time/Casual *Sept. /07 - May /08*

The SA and Red River College require Safe Walk Patrol officers for the Princess Street campus, to escort staff and students to and from various locations in and around the college. Offering 6 – 12 hours per week.

$8.00/hr **Apply by Sept. 4, 2007**

EVENTS COORDINATOR
Princess Street Campus - *Part-time/Casual*

Get paid to bring fun events & entertainment to RRC Princess Street Campus. Help plan, promote, implement and evaluate social, cultural and educational programs

Wage: $ 9.00 /hr **Apply by Sept. 14, 2007**

FOOD BANK CO-ORDINATOR
Part-time *Sept. /07 – May /08*

The SA Food Bank needs an effective manager to administer and promote this bi-weekly service. The co-ordinator will need to work with Winnipeg Harvest to ensure sufficient stocks are maintained.

$200/mth **Apply by Sept. 7, 2007**

EVENT STAFF
Servers/Security/Cashiers - *Part-time/Casual*

Bartenders, cashiers and security personnel are needed for our various social events throughout the year. Experience in customers service is an asset. Training to be provided.

Wage: $ 8.50 /hr **Apply by Sept. 7, 2007**

ASSISTANT COORDINATOR
Part Time/Casual 10-15 hrs/week

The Student Benefits Plan Office requires responsible students to assist in the office. Experience in customer service required, must be available Fridays 12-4. Please drop in at Room FM 66 (Notre Dame campus) to apply.

$8.00/hr **Apply by Sept 7, 2007**

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!
Casual

Volunteers at many social events on and around campus including socials, concerts, keggers, nooners, movies and more. Meet new people and help in making events fun.

Free Stuff **Apply today!**

To apply for any of the above positions please submit a resume with an application form indicating the position desired, to the RRC Students' Association in room P110. Detailed job descriptions available upon request.

RRC Students only, please. We are an Employment Equity Employer

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A Toban In a Foreign Land

Doug McArthur
Arts & Entertainment Contributor

Sometimes, I am afraid to admit it. It's become somewhat of a "hide your shame" situation, but, alas, it is true – I am, in this town, what is affectionately known as a Toban.

I've been coming to the Kenora area for the past 13 years and even then, my exposure to Kenora was nothing more than a quick trip into town to buy groceries, pick up chips at the Chip Truck, or on occasion, see whatever movie was on at the cinema. I haven't "lived" in Kenora, until this summer.

My existence as a transplanted Toban started very innocently – I'd go to meet city officials, members of clubs, and other established Kenoraites and we'd have that cursory chat after some more serious questions about where I'm from and how I ended up in Kenora. I'd say, 'I'm from Winnipeg, but I have a cottage here that I've been coming to for over ten years,' in a vain attempt to qualify my status as a foreigner. But the second half of that sentence didn't seem to have any weight or meaning, as I'd be met with a unilateral reply of "Oh, you're one of those Tobans."

Typically, the comment would be delivered with a laugh - masked in jest, with just a hint of sincerity. I knew the people of Kenora were kind and generous folk - especially when you consider they share their town with an almost equal population of tourists each summer. I kept that thought in mind, but I couldn't help but notice a slight undercurrent of bitterness, like biting into a raw piece of rhubarb. The natural sugar is there, but the aftertaste leaves a hint of sourness in your mouth.

I was determined to remain optimistic as I went along my merry way, meeting the dynamic and talented folk that pepper this cozy little patch of the Canadian Shield tucked into the northwest corner of Lake of the Woods. How could anyone in this bustling little burg transmit negative vibes upon their neighbours just 200 kilometres west? We bring you our tourist dollars and our cheerful spirits each summer, and the city really comes alive when all the tourists come to town. That's a good thing, I'm sure.

But one day, while surfing the grand expanses of the World Wide Web, I came across two similar pages with some very different views. Both were groups created on the popular social networking site Facebook – one was called Kenora Transplants, a group created for people who come to live in Kenora from other parts of the country and the world, who are looking to share their stories or just meet some experienced locals to show them the ropes. A very nice sentiment I thought – out-of-towners banding together to help each other out in a new city.

The other group was called, 'Hello, I'm from the Greater Kenora Area,' and included a very interesting and revealing post on its discussion board.

The topic was "What do you really think of us 'Tobans?" It was a humble cottager asking year-round residents to tell her the no-holds-barred truth about what Sunset Country's born and raised feel about their seasonal visitors.

Bingo. Now, I will get the real answer to my inquiry, from real Kenora people. What I found inside, though, was scattershot.

The replies ranged from angry requests to "learn how to drive", "learn some manners", and to understand the function of a blinking green light, to gentler socioeconomic commentary - "you drive up the prices at Safeway." It then progressed in a downward spiral of profanity and hatred, on mainly the same topics as the previous posts.

My initial thought was mainly to defend the honour of my home province. I admit I'm annoyed by some people's poor driving skills when I'm in Winnipeg. But no more than I am annoyed by people's poor driving skills anywhere else in the country, and I don't think I've found poor drivers in Winnipeg to be any worse than poor drivers in Kenora. It's a generalization that really doesn't fly when you think of it on a person-to-person basis. Also, consider that driving conditions, traffic, and street layout are significantly different in Kenora compared to Winnipeg, making traversing Kenora a challenge for novice visitors.

After a summer in Kenora, conversing with Kenoraites on a daily basis and (I hope) integrating myself into life here, I can say I am deeply, truly and in furious disbelief of the comments I read.

People in Kenora are just like Canadians living in any other small town in Canada, in that they're gentle, kind people who, as previously mentioned, are very generous to share their beautiful city with visitors in the summertime.

The topic of being a Toban in a world of Kenoraites has come up many times in conversation, and I've found that people understand and appreciate the fact that tourism is becoming Kenora's number one commodity, and don't mind inviting in guests from the west. Or any part of the world, for that matter.

Kenora, this is my love letter to you – and my promise to spread word to all my Toban brethren that your beauty, grace and tranquility are not to be taken for granted. I'll see you again next summer.

I Write What I Like

This column is dedicated to the memory of Steve Biko: anti-apartheid activist, student leader and the father of the black consciousness movement, killed by the Apartheid state in 1977.

Biko said "the most dangerous thing in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." Words which certainly held true during the racist apartheid regime, but words which, nonetheless, hold continued relevance for us today---especially those of us in schools, universities and colleges across the country and around the world.

Education, in Biko's opinion, was an essential element in fostering critical thinking and questioning the hegemony of the ruling classes. By no coincidence this is my belief too, and while not in the sites of racist oligarchs, I am still deeply concerned about the increasingly submissive role academia plays in questioning authority.

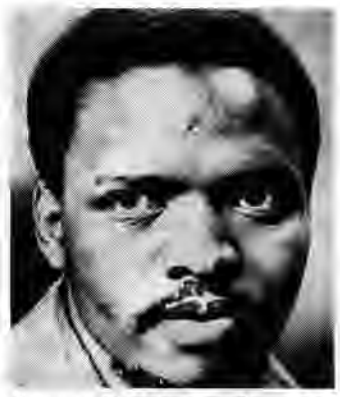
Cracking down on intellectual dissent brings images of the Kent State massacre and the student riots of 1968 to mind. However, a less dramatic, but just as insidious form of "academic cleansing" is taking place on campuses in the United States right now.

On July 24, 2007, the Board of Regents of the University of Colorado (CU) voted 8-to-1 to fire Ward Churchill, a tenured professor of American Indian Studies and former Chair of the Ethnic Studies Department. Not only is the firing of a tenured professor rare, but the incidents surrounding his dismissal speak volumes on the state of dissent in academia today.

CU claims Churchill was fired because some of his work was plagiarized and falsified. An inquiry was launched which did not recommend Churchill's dismissal, and he was subsequently supported by hundreds of academics across the country who pointed out that CU's "investigation" had been a pretext, catering to the political and financial interests which dictate policy at CU. CU even ignored evidence from a group of scholars who found the investigative committee itself guilty of research misconduct.

To this day, no complaint about Churchill's scholarship has come from the broader academic community. The "free speech witch-hunt," as Churchill calls it, came from within University President Hank Brown's administration.

Hank Brown is a former Republican Senator who voted yes to prohibit same-sex marriage, yes on rejecting racial statistics in death-penalty appeals and yes on banning affirmative action. As disturbing as his credentials may be, the "investigative" report he ordered is even more appalling and reveals how Indigenous perspectives on traditional Eurocentric history are not only ignored, they are attacked.



STEVE BIKO, 1946-1977

Forty-four pages of the report are devoted to disproving Churchill's research on small-pox infected blankets being handed out to First Nations between 1837 and 1840. While this research constitutes exactly three paragraphs of Churchill's 12 books, and less than one percent of the genocide inflicted on Indigenous peoples, the CU administration refused to listen to support from other native scholars.

As Gary Witherspoon, a professor of Native Studies at the University of Washington, rightly points out, "scholars have taught and written for several centuries that Columbus discovered America. That is a more easily provable case of research misconduct than anything of which Churchill has been accused...Those who deny genocide and perpetuate Eurocentric biases disguised as fact are not being investigated."

Thankfully, this event happened south of the border. Thankfully we're protected by our charter, right?

On July 30, 2007, Tom Juravich, a visiting professor at Carleton University was denied entrance to Canada because he was arrested 26 years ago during a protest on a union picket line. Juravich has visited Canada 50 times in the past two years. "I think this is going to have a chilling impact on the kind of legitimate dissent that we consider as a part and parcel of the democratic process," he said.

THE RADISH

Area Man's Personalized Licence Plate Falsely Proclaims Coolness

Residents of the quiet town of Yathon, Manitoba are in a tizzy after 52-year-old insurance agent Thomas Guerin openly flaunted his new personalized license plate, which falsely proclaims a level of cool not even closely representative of Guerin's profoundly uncool ways.

The license plate, which reads WAYCOOL, adorns the front and back bumpers of Guerin's restored 1950 Plymouth Special Deluxe, which he has been working on in his garage for several years. The desperately single Guerin took up restoring cars when he completed his last project - creating a shrine for his Buffy the Vampire Slayer collectibles, complete with a full wig of Sarah Michelle Gellar's hair, which he collected over many years of following Gellar around at conventions and other events.

Guerin got the idea to restore a classic car not from friends, but from one of his idols – Tim Taylor of the show Tool Time, which Guerin believes to be a real show.

"We just don't get it here, because it's Michigan public access," said Guerin. "I guess it's just good enough that they made a really long documentary series on it. Even the guy's wife and kids are in it, it's really cool."

When he's not sitting on his plastic-covered couch in his floral print shirt eating Cheetos and watching bad sitcom reruns, the scrawny, pot-bellied and balding Guerin enjoys taking drives around town in his classic car, with no particular destination.

"He obviously doesn't have any friends. The only time I see him go out is when he's taking his stupid car to the car wash, or to drive it around the park really slow and play 8-tracks of Dan Fogelberg at maximum volume," said Susan Park, a nosy bitch who lives up the street. "Maybe he just needs to get laid."

The license plate in question.

Guerin paid an extra $50 for the personalized plate when he registered the Plymouth Special Deluxe, money well spent in his books.

"I wanted to find a way to let everyone around me know that this is a cool guy's car. IMCOOL was already taken, and so was COOLGUY. It took me a while, but I came up with WAYCOOL and I'm happy with my choice," said Guerin.

"Now, when big brutes kick sand in my face at the beach while girls stand by and laugh at me, I can be confident their attempts to convince me I'm a worthless piece of shit are in vain."

But Guerin's tormentors aren't quite convinced.

"What an idiot," said local beach bully and Charles Atlas fan club president, Skip Martin.

"The next time I see him, that pipsqueak is getting an extra dose of sand in the face, courtesy of yours truly. Oh yeah! He's going down," proclaimed Martin.

But Guerin remains oblivious to the irony of his personalized plates' message of coolness.

"It's like, totally pathetic," said Vicki Patterson, a snotty high school senior who works at the A&W Guerin frequents. "He comes in here, and like, acts all cool and stuff, giving random people the thumbs-up and trying to get high-fives. And then you look at him, and he's like, totally crusty ... and he smells."

Patterson recalled one incident in which Guerin, who smells "like a bag of dirty diapers dipped in curry", ordered two full Teen Burger meals for himself, and proceeded to sit and eat them while fervently picking "nasty things" out of his ears and nose.

Guerin said he plans on keeping his car in pristine shape, so he can pass it on to his son one day. But experts say Guerin's chances of actually having a child are slim.

"He suffers from a rare condition, called loserdomytosis, in which the subject lacks the part of the brain that connects coolness to reality," said psychologist Dr. Heather Treleaven.

"It effectively cuts his likelihood of reproducing to around a 1 in 500,000 chance in his lifetime. And that doesn't account for the probability of finding a life mate. Those are just the chances that, say, he could possibly knock up some one-toothed slut in the bathroom behind the Loaf N' Jug."

You Don't Know Me

If Anne Frank wasn't such an incessant whiner, throwing so much negativity around her attic hideaway about her situation, her family, those soldiers out in the streets and jotting all her tiresome complaints down in that diary, then things would have turned out a lot better for her.

Offensive to say? Yes. Ignoring the facts of history? Of Course. Downright ignorant? Without a doubt.

But a look at the summer reading of dozens of Manitobans at Grand Beach on an August weekend, the top of the Amazon best sellers list for almost a year, or on the TV show and web site of über pimp Oprah, shows that the idea that Anne Frank was a victim of her own negative energy is a resoundingly popular one with the pitiful and feebleminded millions that have shelled out to buy snake-oil salesperson, Rhonda Byrne's, best selling book and infomercial DVD The Secret.

The Secret isn't really much of a secret at all. It's a combination of some of the worst clichés of the self-help and motivational industry, mixed with some new-age pseudo-science and some top flight marketing.

Byrne was inspired to bring the secret to the world after reading a copy of the 1910 book The Science of Getting Rich, which outlined that the key to having a successful life was understanding the all powerful, yet only known to an obscure 19th century charlatan, Law of Attraction.

The Law of Attraction asserts that what you think creates what you feel and these feelings flow out of your body as magnetic energy waves over vast distances, which will cause the universe around you to vibrate at the same energy level as your feelings. If your feelings are negative, negative experiences will inevitably flow right back, and positive feelings will equal positive experiences.

The shelves in the motivational section of bookstores are filled with inspiring tales of the magic of positive thinking. But what takes The Secret beyond the banal sap of Mitch Albom and into a more dangerous and outright stupid category, is its religious like insistence that through your thoughts you can manipulate objective physical reality. The book states many times that, "when you think of the things you want, and you focus on them with all of your intention, then the law of attraction will give you exactly what you want, every time!"

Every time! Wow! The book tells stories of people who thought of money and became rich, tells dieters that they can eat what they want and will lose weight by thinking of skinny people and not looking at the negative energy of fat people. On Oprah, Byrne brought in a guest that used the Law of Attraction to cure herself of cancer without any medical intervention by thinking healthy thoughts and watching happy movies. The mantra of The Secret is "Ask, Believe and Receive."

It's bad enough that millions of people are buying the book and thinking that a new car is going to appear in their driveway through their own thoughts, (which actually happens on the DVD!), but our consumerist culture can easily absorb a couple million more people going through life in a haze about their dreamy, soon to appear Lexus.

What takes The Secret to a truly offensive level is the author and its proponents insistence that the law also brings bad things to people who think bad thoughts. In a time that Africa is reaching the breaking point of a horrific AIDS crises, Oprah states that, "You cannot 'catch' anything unless you think you can, and thinking you can is inviting it to you with your thought."

If only all those negative folks filling up mass graves over in Africa were positive people like Oprah, we wouldn't have to buy those ugly "Red" shirts from the Gap. We could also end that whole poverty thing if we got that billion or so people living on less than a dollar day to think about money because The Secret says, "The only reason any person does not have enough money is because they are blocking money from coming to them with their thoughts."

That's easier than listening to Jeffery Sachs talk about global financial reform.

Maybe when the Museum of Human Rights opens up in Winnipeg, Byrne or Oprah or any body else that bought The Secret and became a believer, can lobby for an exhibit where they can explain that the millions of victims of genocide over the past 100 years were, through their negative feeling-states that they projected into the universe, in effect asking for it.

Because after all, as Byrne writes "What you think and what you feel and what actually manifests is always a match — no exception."

No exception, indeed.

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CASA sues two former members

Jamie Harkins
the Charlatan (Carleton University)

OTTAWA (CUP) -- The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) has launched lawsuits against two former members, demanding compensation for allegedly unpaid membership fees.

Separate suits have named the University of Manitoba Students Union (UMSU) and the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU).

"It's currently in the hands of the lawyers. Our hope is that we can settle our dispute before it ever goes to court," said CASA national director Zach Churchill.

Max Silverman, vice-president (external) of the SSMU, said that their group is being sued for $28,000 plus three per cent interest for unpaid membership fees for the 2005-2006 academic year.

He said SSMU voted to leave CASA in October 2005 and paid the alliance fees for the academic year up to that point.

CASA's constitution states that: "A withdrawing Member shall not be entitled to a refund of its Membership Fees for the then-current Fiscal Year and shall be responsible for Membership Fees for the ensuing Fiscal Year if the notice of withdrawal is given on or after the first of March."

In total, Silverman said SSMU has paid CASA $12,000 out of the $40,000 usually charged for a full year's membership.

Garry Sran, president of the UMSU, said that the UMSU left the association in February 2005 and is being sued for $20,800.

"It is unfortunate that the members of CASA are suing the students at the University of Manitoba," Sran said.

He said that he could not comment on the specifics of the union's defence.

Silverman, however, feels that the issue has already been addressed.

"When we left, and about three times since then, we've offered CASA — I don't want to say a settlement because I don't think they have a case — but we've offered CASA to pay them what we're calling an act of good faith on our side," Silverman said.

"So we don't think that we owe them any money, but we think it's really dumb for student associations to be tied up in court with one another, especially this year in Quebec [when] we're fighting the defreeze of tuition," he continued.

"Them saying they want to settle with us out of court is totally disingenuous," said Silverman.

Churchill said that the SSMU and UMSU are trying to "take advantage of" CASA by not fulfilling their contractual obligations, adding that they have put a strain on CASA's finances, which is unfair to the alliance's other members.

"It's important to realize that CASA is a very small NGO with a very small operating budget, and so when past members or members choose to default on their loans and choose not to pay the funds that that organization is owed and that other members are owed it's problematic for us," Churchill said.

"It's very important for us to recoup those funds in order for us to operate and in order for us to provide our services to our members."

Victim of Circumstance

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Much like peeing your pants while on a rollercoaster, the first days of school can be both exhilarating and dreadful. There is every opportunity for things to go right and oh so wrong. As I enter my, hopefully, last year of school, I look back at what I have learned in all of my first days of school.

The new school year calls for new clothes, which was great because my mom used to always buy them for me. These days money is tight, but she is still there to get me new underwear, well at least new to me, even though I'm not really her size.

It can also be exciting to meet up with your schoolmates that you may have lost contact with over the summer. Oh sure, you've probably got a doll collection that you played with everyday and you gave the dolls the names of your classmates and you acted out little plays and sang songs with them. Or maybe that's just me. But it's still exciting to see your friends again, and catch up, and see if they had a worse summer than you.

Buying school supplies can also be fun as you check out the latest in pencil case fashions and the new iStapler from Apple. But, if you wait until the last minute, you might find yourself in the middle of a demented version of Lord of the Rings, where everyone acts like Gollum, drooling and crawling over each other for a shot at the only three-Ring-ed binder remaining. Better get to the store earlier next year, Frodo "Shoppin'" Baggins.

The one thing I definitely do not look forward to is the annual "Bully-Walk," where you pass through a gauntlet of school bullies and they choose which nerds to terrorize for the upcoming school year. You would think that a girl bully would not be as strong as a boy bully, but trust me, it's a bad thing that they've got no idea what it's like to be kicked in the groin.

There are a lot of scary and exciting things that can happen surrounding you on your first day of school, but even if something bad happens remember this: your first day of school will only happen once this year. And oh yeah, bring a change of pants. Just in case.

Students take on Canada Student Loans

Shara Lee
The Peak (Simon Fraser University)

VANCOUVER – (CUP) Two students at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia have launched a campaign to change Canada's student loan systems. But while the feds say they're listening, no actual changes seem to be on the horizon.

Julian Benedict graduated from SFU in 2006 and he was shocked to discover just how much he was faced with paying back.

"I had huge student loans to deal with. I started to make payments and I couldn't believe all the problems I was having with lost documentation, misinformation, and generally things that were wrong with the system," said Benedict.

Rather than complaining about his problem, Benedict and his friend Mark O'Meara started the Coalition for Student Loan Fairness to address the needs and concerns of other student loan borrowers.

The organization has already started collecting names in an online petition seeking support for eight points that the CSLF wants to present in Ottawa. The eight-point plan is a list of major issues that the CSLF has compiled and includes the creation of a student loan ombudsperson, a reduction of interest rates on loans, and a demand for online up-to-date statements to allow students to stay informed about their loan status.

They have also started working on an education campaign to make people more aware of their campaign.

"Federally, there are over 990,000 student loan borrowers," said Benedict, "Considering that the average debt according to the Canadian Federation of Students is about $27,000, Canadian students owe the government a lot of money."

"We're paying among the highest interest rates in the G8 for student loans at a time when governments across the developed world are saying that they want to make it easier and more accessible for students to get into education systems," he added.

The CSLF believes that there are two fundamental stages of a student's financial life.

"The first one is when you're in school and dealing with issues like tuition fees. The second stage is in repayment, when you're paying back your student loans," said Benedict.

The CSLF's membership is composed of both students and graduates but is also getting some external support.

"[By] form[ing] alliances with other groups like credit counseling societies and other groups who would not necessarily be aligned with students, our organization is open to any reasonable means to get the voices of student loan borrowers heard," said Benedict.

Benedict is looking at paying back about $40,000, but his case is far from the worst.

Peter Watt, another former student, said that his debt amounts to approximately $110,000.

"I've gone bankrupt twice to try putting it off. That didn't work, obviously, because you can't do that — all it really does is put it off. The creditors are sill bugging me, but that's calming down now," said Watt.

The government collection agencies "are pretty relentless if you can't pay and the interest is higher than on other loans so it's kind of frightening, actually. Other than a potential settlement, I really have no hope of paying it back," he added.

Officials with Canada Student Loans know of problems like Watt's, and acknowledge that something needs to be done to help them.

Leesha Lin, acting director of operational policy and research for the Canada Student Loans Program, stated in a recent article to Maclean's.ca that although a review of the student loan program has been launched, it still hasn't happened, and neither is there a timeline for any recommendations and action plans.

As for people like Watt, they are exactly the kind of people that the CSLF hopes to help.

"I'm really encouraging everyone to come to our website and find out the facts about the student loan system and help us make it better," said Benedict. The CSLF believes that with enough support, their eight-point plan and petition can make a difference in the way that Canada's student loan borrowing system operates.

Some of these people are wetting themselves. And some of them are enjoying it.

Warped Tour 2007 was worth the trip

Brett Hopper
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You may have noticed a severe lack of summer music festivals in this city. It doesn't make sense because of Winnipeg's many different music scenes, but every summer it's the same story; want to see some great bands? Well, you have to go somewhere else.

To be fair, Countryfest is a good time, and Folkfest is always a sure thing, but that's about it for this town.

I suggest making the most of it, and finding a music festival that will take you more than three hours to get to. For me this summer, the place was the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome parking lot in Minneapolis, and the festival was the Warped Tour.

It's been 13 years since Vans, a clothing company, first introduced us to the Warped Tour, a traveling punk-rock festival. The tour draws diverse crowds, young and old, from all over as it treks its way towards seemingly every city in North America, every city except Winnipeg that is.

The weather in Minneapolis was hot and sunny. It was about the same as a summer day in Winnipeg except for one noticeable difference, no humidity. Except for the few cases of sunstroke, no major accidents or incidents occurred.

It was a great day for a concert. The energy of the crowd was upbeat and friendly, and performers interacted with their fans in groups both large and small in the same way. Rest assured the atmosphere at the Warped Tour was safe and inviting.

The 2007 edition of the tour saw legendary punk acts such as Bad Religion, Alkaline Trio and MxPx showing relatively new post-punk-whatever groups like Circa Survive, Underoath and Poison The Well, why the Warped Tour has been around for so long. It's the never-ending enthusiasm of the Warped Tour faithfuls who don't seem to quit chanting well into the 10-hour-long showcase.

One of the many new additions to this year's tour was a stage dedicated entirely to hip-hop sets with P.O.S. and K-Os acting as headliners. You might think this wouldn't work well with the predominantly punk atmosphere, but the energy and intensity was equally as positive as any other stage. Hometown heroes P.O.S. and Rhymesayers Entertainment might have had something to do with that though.

The Warped Tour is also known for acting as an avenue to promote certain causes like PETA. Even the latest social networking phenomenons, Myspace and Facebook, both had their respective tents set up at the show, although interestingly enough at opposite ends of the parking lot.

Warped Tour 2007 featured a new stage dedicated to hip-hop, in addition to the regular punk and rock acts.

After experiencing a concert festival outside Manitoba, I find it easy to say it's one of the best times I've ever had. To the organizers of the Warped tour I say this: See you next year in Chicago.

Letters Make Words

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An office is a strange place to work. I would liken it to a hive or a colony, but an office is the furthest thing from nature I can imagine. I don't remember seeing grey walls and fluorescent lighting last time I went to the lake.

Never have I ever worked in a place where people have cubicle, or cube, envy. Being the summer student, it seemed the long time employees would like to have seen me relegated to the depths of whatever lies beneath "lower main." Not the basement. HR says calling something the basement takes away morale, and lower main dwellers need their morale.

"You're cube is HUGE!"

"Oh, really. That's good I guess."

"My cube is tiny; I can't even fit all my stuff in it."

"That's too bad. What stuff can't you fit in it?"

"...you know, work stuff."

"Oh, work stuff. Yeah, that must suck."

A friend told me about a guy at his office who would only use yellow hi-liters because he thought they looked more professional. The natural result of this was that he hoarded them, because that's what you do when you work in an office. Yellow hi-liters are at a premium, so you must gather them all and store them in your desk that is made out of particleboard and covered in some laminate that matches your grey walls.

Then there are shirts or vests, and they are always embroidered with the company logo. For the men there is a selection of golf shirts, and for the women it seems they get the vests. My mother has a particularly becoming Government of Manitoba fleece vest that is about five sizes too big. A must have for fall. I see groups on men going for coffee in their cotton-poly blend golf shirt with the logo embroidered on the right breast. Very becoming, and if anything should ever happen to them, they will always know where they work. Someone could find them and return them to the office where they would walk in, confused, and be pleasantly and cheerfully greeted by Brenda the receptionist.

Fall new release blitz promises good listens

Taylor Burgess
ultratails@gmail.com

Every year, the end of the summer promises a handful of great albums. Promotional mp3's begin to circulate on the internet in early to mid-summer, so around the time that we all head back to school, there are a handful of hyped-up records, like M.I.A.'s "Kala," Liars' "Liars", Kanye West's "Graduation," Animal Collective's "Strawberry Jam," Caribou's "Andorra," or Kevin Drew's "Spirit If."

Here are a couple albums that might've slipped under your radar:

BLACK LIPS
Good Bad Not Evil

CURRENT RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 11, 2007

WHAT IT IS:

This will be the fourth full-length album from self-proclaimed "flower punks." It's the follow-up to their live record "Los Valientes del Mundo Nuevo," which was supposedly recorded in Tijuana. I even hear that Black Lips had hired a mariachi band as an opening act.

HOW MUCH I'VE HEARD:

Two videos, "Katrina" and "Cold Hands." "Katrina" is a ridiculously energetic and catchy song about a mean girl that was last seen on a highway in New Orleans.

WHY I'M EXCITED:

Mostly because of the aforementioned energetic live album that was released earlier this year. Absolutely none of the songs from "Los Valientes del Mundo Nuevo" are on the upcoming "Good Bad Not Evil," and the two songs that have been released so far are extremely promising. "Katrina" is easily one of my favorite songs of the year so far.

WHY YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED:

If you have ever listened to Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and been bored, Black Lips are probably for you. The terms "blues-rock" and "punk" do get thrown around a lot, but Black Lips' energy is indispensable. Also, the band has recently signed to Vice Records; a label has been gaining notoriety for recently releasing albums by Bloc Party, Justice, and Chromeo.

SUNSET RUBDOWN
Random Spirit Lover

CURRENT RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 9, 2007

WHAT IT IS:

This will be the third full-length from Sunset Rubdown, the project of Spencer Krug, who has been in the notorious band Wolf Parade. Camilla Wynn Ingr of Pony Up, Jordan Robson-Cramer of XY Lover and Magic Weapon, and Michael Doerksen create the backing band to Krug's ridiculous triumphant melodies and sweeping ballads.

HOW MUCH I'VE HEARD:

This album leaked in the middle of the summer, so nearly all of the tracks are all over the blogosphere. However, "Up on Your Leopard, Upon the End of Your Feral Days" is the only official mp3 release so far. On it, the full band stomps and thinks of itself as a sailor's song accompanied by a xylophone.

WHY I'M EXCITED:

Nearly a year ago, I listened to Sunset Rubdown's previous album, "Shut Up I Am Dreaming," and then saw the band perform live at the Collective two days later. I was blown away on all accounts. Previously, Spencer Krug made a habit of rewriting and rerecording his old songs to improve upon them, which would explain titles like "Stadiums and Shrines II" and "Snake's Got a Leg III". However, on "Random Spirit Lover," all of the songs are brand new material. I'm also extremely excited to see the band play in Winnipeg on Halloween.

WHY YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED:

If you've listened to any alternative radio station since November 2005, you've undoubtedly heard of the band Wolf Parade. Although Dante DeCaro has proven himself a good musician in Hot Hot Heat, as Dan Boeckner is proving himself in Handsome Furs, Spencer Krug has always contributed largely to Wolf Parade. While Sunset Rubdown may not be as anthemic or accessible as Wolf Parade, they are definitely no less effective.

KICKOFF WEEK

START THE SCHOOL YEAR RIGHT...

event lineup

tuesday, september 4

BIG SKY DANCE performance in the Princess Street Campus Cafeteria 12:00PM

VIVA CAPOEIRA performance in the Notre Dame Campus Courtyard 12:00PM

wednesday, september 5

Comedian, **FRASER YOUNG** will be doing standup in the Black Lecture Theatre (Notre Dame Campus) 12:00PM

Kickoff Week Kegger in the Courtyard (Notre Dame Campus). Featuring live music by **SONS OF YORK** (3-6PM)

thursday, september 6

Comedian, **FRASER YOUNG** will be doing standup in the Multipurpose Room (Princess Street Campus) 12:00PM

Kickoff Week Kegger in the Princess Street Campus Cafeteria. **DJ D-LO** will be spinning! (3-6PM)

friday, september 7

Red River College Students' Association & Molson present
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Turning Japanese One Film at a Time

If you've taken any history of film classes, you're probably well aware of the impact of director/writer Akira Kurosawa had in modern film over his near 50 years of filmmaking. His film classics inspired the likes of George Lucas' Star Wars and John Sturges' The Magnificent Seven. But beyond Kurosawa is a new wave of Japanese filmmakers, equally as inspirational in their methods.

First off, nowhere in North American film will you ever find such unique violence as in director/writer Sion Sono's Suicide Club. From a woman slicing off her own fingers and baking her head in an oven, Sono poetically tackles the issue of high suicide rates in present-day Japan.

Not only did Sono's film get the country talking, but also contributed to the revival of the horror-slasher genre. From the likes of Saw and Hostel, Sono's 2002 ruthless and extreme violent film stands as a gross, yet artistic achievement in modern horror.

In Marebito, director Takashi Shimizu, famous for his 2006 film The Grudge, dives into Tokyo's dark underbelly of society, literally.

In this 2004 horror film, Shimizu explores Tokyo's mythical underground labyrinthine of passageways and hidden cities. Chained to the wall of one city is a naked woman who feeds on human blood, whom the protagonist adopts as a pet.

And while this film is never overly violent, Shimizu instead relies on the classic horror technique of using the protagonist's mental state as voyage throughout the film. Instead of beheadings and iron maidens, Shimizu relies on paranoia and obsession.

So, if Sono helps to provide the visual blood and guts, and Shimizu helps with the exploration of the human psyche, then director/writer Kazuaki Kiriya helps to provide the visual.

Based on a 1973 anime, Kiriya's 2004 film Casshern was entirely filmed in green screen, a technique used a few years later in Frank Miller's 300.

Casshern brings to life the visual style you would only expect in an animated film, but instead using human actors. From giant robots, to Matrix-stylized fighting and destruction, to waves of explosions and blood, Casshern is a live-action anime. And while this film might be dialogue challenged, Kiriya's film was a stepping-stone to the realization for 300.

So if you're like me and tired of the Hollywood film scene, these three films are just a small example of a huge collection of Japanese films that might be filmed in another language, but are universal in appeal.

Superficial Rantings of a Celebrity Gossip Junkie

healthprojector@gmail.com

Okay, for the sake of journalistic integrity, I'll admit it.

Ready now?

I'm a celeb-aholic. I go through celebrity gossip magazines like Paris goes through boyfriends. My nightly news consists of Access Hollywood and Entertainment Tonight. (Okay, so I watch the "real" news too – and I'm not just saying that to ward off the wrath of my journalism instructor.)

It's sad, really. The amount of time and money I waste on celebrities is disgusting. And yet, I enjoy every single minute of it, eagerly anticipating the next celebrity faux-pas. I mean, who didn't follow the coke-induced downfall of Lindsay/Britney/Paris/insert female "celebrity" here?

Those who know me can vouch that I spend an inordinate amount of time surfing Perez Hilton (for those of you still living in caves, Perez is only the hottest celebrity gossip website out there) and reading Us Weekly (I can almost see my instructors flinch again).

But I'll get to the point.

The Projector is an amazing newspaper (plug, plug), but it was lacking. It needed something a little lighter. That's why I'm here – for the next eight months, I will be your go-to girl for all things celebrity (with a little bit of pop culture thrown in for good mix). Love it or hate it, you know you'll read it, because really, who can actually say that they've never snuck a peek at the supermarket newsstand journalism?

Oh, and for the record, I had enough of the media circus that was Paris Hilton this summer, so you won't find any mention of her "traumatic" 23-day jail experience. Ditto for a certain Ms. Spears's parenting skills (or lack thereof).

Celebrity Gossip Challenge

IN HONOUR of the first installment of my column, I've decided to do something a little special and recap the top celebrity newsmakers of the summer. The first person to correctly identify them and send the list to me at healthprojector@gmail.com will win a prize. Good luck!

1. This ex-reality star won't be living the simple life now that she's preggers with her rock star boyfriend's baby.

2. This starlet chased down her ex-assistant's mother in what only could only be a cry for help, leading some to believe that this mean girl's party days are finally over.

3. This international power couple recently made the move to L.A., sparking a media frenzy rivaled only by the news of one half of the duo's pop group reunion.

What the heck is she nattering on about now?

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Episode one: Geez is it that time already?

Summer passes. Dill in my garden gets weeded out and garlic has been harvested. Cooler nights . . . which means sooner or later, I need to come to terms with the upcoming SCHOOL YEAR.

I haven't managed to hang, fold or put away clean laundry since February. Clean clothing lies scattered in piles, dirty underwear in one corner. My desk is buried in paper – half finished taxes, schoolwork from last term. "Fuck," I think, "I need to get my shit together."

I'm not ready. It's been a good summer, working the festival circuit, discovering a passion for drumming, drinking, smoking a little pot now and then. I grit my teeth: time to return to this esteemed educational institute and its lack of a decent cup of coffee . . . and has anyone else wondered at the lack of exterior doors on all the bathrooms?

Mainly I need to steel myself to not take it too seriously – my "education," I mean.

"RRC enables skilled, experienced and motivated graduates to succeed and achieve their dream," boasts the College website, and I'm not about to contradict that. But, 'success' often gets confused with 'employment,' or 'career.' From where I'm sitting (closer to 40 than to 25) that's a pretty piss poor definition. Limited.

Sure, for many the grades, scholarships, job experiences, whatever, will be the focus of the upcoming academic year. Yet, for some of us, the true education will be in learning the valuable lessons that are ancillaries to the post-secondary experience. Maybe the big epiphany will be "no one should ever drink THAT MUCH tequila in one sitting" or "my, it certainly is easier than I thought to lose my panties," or whatever.

When I received my first "F" on my university transcript after a lifetime of overachievingly good grades, it came as a blessed relief. The lessons of so-called "failure" were more pertinent than showing up to my 17th Century English Literature class. Not that I'm advocating being a total slacker, but don't overlook the value of "slack" or any other experience in the long run.

For all you fuck-ups and stoners, underachievers and people whose lives might happen to fall apart in the months to come, good luck. If you're one of those students who can navigate the work and deadlines with a modicum of competency, "good on ya."

Whatever happens, embrace the experience as valuable, if not necessary.

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The Biblio File
"The Demise of the Book Column?"

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"In the twenty-first century we may well become an endangered species - a few of us kept alive in captivity to serve as quote whores, but otherwise extinct in our native habitat of books." – Alex Good, "A Defence of Reviewing."

In his "A Defence of Reviewing," Alex Good is speaking of people like me. We need books. We need to have bookshelves full of them, dog-eared and beloved, or pristine and treasured. We need to always be in the middle of one so that we may read it on buses, in waiting rooms and on rainy days. We need to read them, think about them, talk about them and write about them.

Bookworms, book lovers, bibliophiles: call us what you will, books are both our escape and our reality. But now, must we face a reality of book reviews and book columns going extinct?

Like the Walkman, will their obsolescence have no impact on today's society? In a world where people want their information fast and they want it now, I would argue that book reviewers will, in fact, play an essential role. Who else has the patience to read a 400-page tome, linger over each phrase and metaphor, savouring the diction, analyze its themes and motifs – and then rid it of every nuance and subtlety by converting it into a rudimentary chapter-by-chapter outline to be posted on Spark Notes?

However, this limited role may reduce book reviewers to nothing but "quote whores" who reserve their most effusive hortatory and two-thumbs-up-isms for those especially well-connected authors, and what kind of existence is that?

The Biblio File is my attempt to combat this avoidable fate. Through a combination of book reviews and book news that is relevant to Red River College students, I will keep alive the book column for one more year.

This year in The Biblio File, expect discussions of controversial books (The DaVinci Code), profiles of local writers (including some of Red River's own), a look at the Oprah book club phenomenon, and some book reviews.

If there's a book you'd like to share, we'd love to read your review of it! Just contact myself or Sara Atnikov, the Arts & Culture Editor. Let's make sure the demise of the book column is postponed just a little bit longer.

The Garifuna

Jamil Mahmood
Arts & Culture Contributor

Some friends and I left Winnipeg in May and headed down to Central America and El Salvador. In our travels we stayed in Livingston, where I met a Garifuna man.

The Garifuna are the indigenous people of Belize who are losing their culture faster than the Mayans. Their culture places a great importance on music, dancing and storytelling, and their religion is a combination of Catholicism, African and Indian beliefs.

One day we were sitting up on our balcony at the Garifuna hotel when a guy walking down the street waved to us, so we waved back. He then asked if we had books, to which we said yes, so he came up to our hotel room.

His name was Phillip, and looking at him you wouldn't think much. He looked like he might be homeless or down on his luck. He looked to be about 20 year old, but was in fact 52 and very well educated. He has his masters from the University of Chicago. He came up and talked with us and we realized he wanted to take our books to read and pass along to others, but we were not done reading them so we had to say no.

He ended up hanging out with us for a couple hours teaching us about the Garifuna people and the problems of Livingston. He was so eloquent and wise we were all left speechless.

He talked about the Garifuna and how their goals are making it big in the states, but when they come back, they bring things like swimming pools when they have a whole ocean to swim in. Through his stories it became pretty obvious how our Western culture and our drive for material things are tearing apart the traditions of the Garifuna. They leave Livingston wanting to make it big and to get a lot of money, and they come back totally changed, no longer interested in their traditional culture.

After talking to him for a while he offered to take us to a traditional Garifuna community the next day. The morning of we got up and went for breakfast where we ran into Phillip. He sat with us and told us about how Livingston is 83 per cent Garifuna, yet none of the shops are owned by Garifuna. They are all owned by companies or non-indigenous people.

We walked into the community and he showed us where a group of women were just finishing their ninth day of mourning for someone who had passed away.

Phillip then took us up to his grandfather's house, who was 94 and the last traditional drum maker of the Garifuna. As we walked in, he was making a wooden sling shot for some of his grandchildren, and had just finished two traditional drums – an amazing site to see.

After showing us the village, we went into the jungle and Phillip showed us his house. He had avocado and coconut trees, coffee and plantains. He cut us each down a coconut, chopped it open and let us drink the juice. It was so good.

We continued on and took a canoe up the river and then hiked through the jungle. The whole time he was telling us stories from his childhood, or talking about the Garifuna and the struggle to keep their culture alive.

We got to the beach and he talked about the loss of language. He took a stick and wrote out the words Aba, Biama, Uruwa, Garduru, and Sendu, which are one, two, three, four, and five in the Garifuna language. He then said that most of the people living in Livingston don't even know what each of the words mean, and even some of the elders are loosing the traditional language.

After our day with him, Phillip took us to a small restaurant so we could eat traditional home cooked Garifuna food. It was pretty amazing.

Phillip taught us so much and really gave us a perspective on the negatives of our culture. It left me feeling weird. While I know traveling is a huge learning experience and is an amazing thing to do, I can also see the ills of the tourist industry on the local peoples. We go down there and expect to learn about and take from their culture not thinking about how the Western society that is ingrained in us affects them.

We don't think about giving back while we are there.

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Numerous food recalls a growing concern

Andrea Danelak
Health, Sports & Life Editor

First, it was spinach – then chocolate. This past month, toothpaste, tires and toys – but that's an entirely different story altogether.

Product safety has always been an issue for everyone, but in the past few years, the amount of food recalls (both voluntary and involuntary) has risen dramatically, leaving some wondering if the food they eat is safe from dangerous bacteria such as E. coli, salmonella and botulism.

With recalls like the infamous spinach incident in September, in which many companies' bagged spinach was tainted with E. coli, sickening hundreds of people across the United States, and with trusted companies like Hershey's and Dole pulling millions of items off of grocery store shelves, it's no wonder that many consumers are more than a little apprehensive when it comes to buying food.

"It's scary," says Lisa Widmer, 21, a flight attendant who buys as many organic products as she can because she "trusts them a lot more."

"The recalls shouldn't happen because once they do, and once people get sick, the companies can't take that back," she said.

According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)'s website, when it becomes aware of a potential food hazard, either through consumer complaint, routine inspection activities or information from the food industry, an investigation is launched. That investigation often leads to a recall.

The CFIA inspectors then gather information about the product and its distribution and work with the food company involved to make sure that all of the hazardous products have been removed from stores.

In cases where the product poses a serious health risk, like the spinach incident, the CFIA issues a public warning that advises consumers through the media. Widmer says she heard about the spinach recall on television and the radio, but thinks that stores should make more of an effort to qualm consumers' fears.

"I don't remember going to stores and seeing signs about the recall; the spinach was just taken away," she said. "The stores know that people make a big deal out of recalls, and they probably just wanted to pull the products so they wouldn't lose business."

To keep informed of all public warnings and recalls, visit the Food Recalls/Allergy Alerts section of the CFIA's website at www.inspection.gc.ca. You can even sign up for the CFIA's free e-mail subscription service to receive all of the latest food advisories.

Connecting on Campus – The First Date

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Rhiannon Maskiw-Connelly is an attached 21-year-old student, who is more experienced in the world of dating than most people her age. She has done a lot of casual dating, had one very serious relationship, and has been in love once. She has broken hearts and had her heart broken, and is here to share her ideas, thoughts, and insights in the world of love and dating.

We see it all the time in the movies: candlelit dinner, romantic evening stroll, and a soft kiss in the moonlight.

But does it ever work that way in real life?

I went on more "perfect" dates than I can count. And not a single one was anywhere near perfect. Meaningless conversation ruined the romantic mood at the restaurants. The evening walks were more of evening stumbles, as I had no choice but to drink half a litre of red wine over dinner to drown out the endless barrage of corny pick up lines that were being thrown at me from across the table. And soon, I had given up on the idea.

And then, when I least expected it, it happened. There was no romantic dinner, no handheld walk, and it was pouring rain outside.

Here's how it happened:

I met him at work. (I work in a bar; not a good start.) He had asked for my number numerous times, and after a while, I caved in. I agreed to go out with him; he planned for us to play pool.

I brought my own car, as I didn't plan to stay for long, and I showed up late.

We grabbed a drink and a pool table and started up a game in the oh-so-mood-setting atmosphere, which included several drunken eighteen-year olds and Ace of Base playing over a cheap speaker system.

I was expecting the usual lame attempts to grope me: hands on my hips and body pressed up against mine as he "helps" me with my pool shot (sorry guys, we weren't born yesterday.) And I was pleasantly surprised when none of this occurred. Instead, he stood on the other end of the table and used his cue to help me line up my shots.

From then on things only got better. We laughed, we talked, and time flew by. We ended up playing pool for four hours (before this I had only played a grand total of four hours of pool in the entire 21 years of my existence) and left only because the place was closing down for the night. Then he walked me to my car and kissed me goodnight in the rain.

So what I've learned about the perfect first date is that there is no such thing as a perfect restaurant, a perfect conversation, or a perfect kiss.

The only perfect date I've ever had was a date I was anything but eager to go on -- a date at a pool hall; with fluorescent lighting, loud teenagers, and cheesy 90's music. You'd never find it in a Meg Ryan movie.

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The Other Side - The First Date

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Zach Regiec is a single, 32-year-old student, who has run the gamut of dating and relationships. He has been the dumper, the dumpee, broken hearts and had his heart crushed. He has been rejected, done the rejecting, and he is here to share his stories, thoughts and ideas about the dating scene in Winnipeg.

The ideal first date or IFD takes on many forms; but the first date is a great opportunity to start a real connection, see if he or she is worth it, and it sets the tone for future dating.

Plan the IFD from front to back. Decide what event the two of you are going to attend first, and then plan dinner or drinks before that event. If you can theme them – great. (If you chose a Japanese art show then go for sushi before the art exhibit.)

What to do? Where to go? Try to find out as much about the other person as possible. Ask some of your mutual friends, read their Facebook or Lavalife profiles, or gather the information you learned from previous conversations.

Are they sporty? Take them to a Goldeyes, Wesmen, Bison, or Bomber game. Are they into the arts? Then the art gallery, the museum, the Leo Mol sculpture garden, or a local art exhibit is a great start. The idea is you want both people to feel comfortable, but more importantly you want yourself to look good.

So, if they are arty and want to go to the Leo Mol garden, be proactive and go on-line and find out some stuff about Leo Mol. Drop the line "did you know that Leo Mol was born in the Ukraine?" Or even admit you read "Leo Mol decorated churches to make ends-meet while he was a struggling artist." Show them that you are bright and that you put some effort into stuff beside yourself.

What if I don't really know a lot about them? The Assiniboine Park Zoo, Assiniboia Downs, and gelati on Corydon are usually great spots for first dates. They are all reasonably priced and produce tons a stuff to talk about. If you are stuck for conversation, talk about the surroundings, the polar bears, the flavour of the gelati, or ask what their favorite junk food is. Be mildly inquisitive – people like that. Try to talk half as much as you listen. Find out more about them than the superficial stuff. Ask them where they grew up or with which siblings they get along better?

If you ask them on the date, be prepared to pay for everything. Yes, it can be a lot of money; however, if you ask them out for dinner or drinks before the event - you have to pay. Maybe do it now while you have a lot of that student loan left.

The best way to start a date is by going for drinks or dinner first. Some reasonably priced spots are East India Company, Confusion Corner Bar & Grill, Inferno's Bistro, Fude, Bombolini's, Earls, Joeys, Noir, and Civita.

Remember what type of person they are – do they seem adventurous? Try one of the ethnic spots. Did they grow up in a small town, or in Southdale? Then you may want to go to Joeys or Confusion Corner Bar & Grill.

If you have lots of bread to spend, Tre Visi, Amici's or Wasabi on Broadway always make stellar impressions.

Location and travel time are crucial, so try to pick a restaurant that is close to the venue that you are attending for the second part of the date.

So basically, the IFD consists of two parts - a nice dinner, and an event that you and the other person would find interesting. Pretty simple huh?

Believe me, it has taken me some time to figure this out. At times, I have tried to tinker with the formula and it all goes awry.

The best IFD is actually three parts, the third being going back to one of your places for some fooling around. Never follow any stupid rules like "I don't kiss on the first date," or "I NEVER sleep with someone on the first date." Rules and guidelines are meant to be pushed, if it feels natural to go home with the person - do it. If they are dirty and you don't feel comfortable yet, then avoid it.

Also, try to avoid the cliché dinner and a movie because you can't chat during the movie - unless you have a social disorder and don't enjoy talking. Dinner and a concert are tough because it's hard to chat during the concert. However, if you get him or her tickets to a huge concert that is in town, that may be a great start.

FIVE THINGS YOU WANT TO HEAR ON THE FIRST DATE:

1. Wow, I'm pretty drunk.
2. What are we doing after this?
3. I had a great time, or this was cool.
4. Do you have to be up early for anything?
5. Lots of LAUGHING!

FIVE THINGS YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR ON THE FIRST DATE

1. My ex took me here for our anniversary.
2. I'm pretty tired - I think I might bail early.
3. Is your friend Chris Webb single?
4. My last partner cheated on me.
5. Them talking or texting on their cell while they are with you.

Fashion Icon

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Katharine Hepburn, Jackie Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, Liz Claiborne – some of the greatest fashion icons of all time.

Is this "fashion icon" something one wishes to be called, one aspires to be named, or is it really a compliment, at best, laden with a huge responsibility: one who inspires the masses with their style and flair, must always, without fail, be what they want you to be.

You're joining the ranks of some of the most influential trendsetters in the fashion world, what a title to behold. What a burden to carry.

This thought came to me while I was perusing an issue of "US Weekly", what I call my dirty magazine, when I started to analyze Victoria Beckham -- "fashion icon".

Her wardrobe, consisting primarily of really short skirts, really high heels and really revealing tops, doesn't really ooze fashion icon to me, but somewhere, at some point, this title was given and Mrs. Beckham took it and ran with it.

There was a collage of "a day in the life of Victoria Beckham", which showed her doing what she does. I say it this way only because I'm not exactly sure what she actually does, but regardless, it showed her doing "her thing."

It seems that this title has completely taken over this poor woman's life. She struggles through the soccer field with her three young sons, in her 4 inch heels, tight skinny jeans and a sexy off the shoulder T-shirt pouting in such a way that is so obviously, uncomfortably unnatural and just screams: "I have too much mirror time!"

She never smiles; she prides herself so much on looking the part that no one really knows if she's even real, if she can feel her children's touch, is the price of fashion stardom really worth the complete domination of one's life?

I know there is something sexy about looking half put together and effortlessly beautiful. Doesn't a husband love to see his wife with messy hair, in an oversized T-shirt totally natural with their children? Does it ever get to a point where enough is enough? Where perfect isn't really perfect? Where beauty isn't in the way you dress?

All valid questions, unless of course, you have been branded as the all knowing, always perfect: fashion icon.

For everyone who wishes that they could be the next fashion icon, think again. It's only going to give you a world full of burden. With everything good comes something bad, so I strongly suggest- look good when you need to, and enjoy the freedom of being able to be a mess when you want. Find other ways to inspire.

Send your body to basic training

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Shannah-Lee Vidal

A lack of motivation can leave some of us stalled on the fitness highway. With an assortment of obligations on our plates, it can be difficult to make room for a jaunt to the gym. Many Winnipeggers are enlisting in fitness boot camps in the hopes that some rigorous basic training will whip them into shape.

Boot camp is a regiment of circuit training that leads recruits through an intense series of exercises, designed to keep the heart rate pumping. Candy Carriere, an employee at Pan Am Pool, believes the workout to be an effective tool for slimming down.

"Circuit training is a combination of cardio and resistance. So not only are you getting your muscle toning and strengthening done, but you are getting your metabolism up and burning the fat and calories," she said.

Participants can sign up for weekly evening boot camp classes in the current Leisure Guide. A 10-week session will cost around $55. For those feeling more adventurous, there are a few private boot camp operations in the city, such as Adventure Boot Camp. Expect to get up at the crack of dawn, as classes start as early as 5:45 a.m. For three days a week of training, the price tag is $180, while signing up for the full weekday schedule will set you back $299. However, if you're a man, you will have to look a little harder, because many of the classes available around the city are for women only.

Brides-to-be have found boot camp a trendy way to lose those few extra pounds before the big day. In fact, there are some classes specifically marketing themselves as a nuptial preparation. While the workout is the key draw, Carriere also sees it as an opportunity to develop bonds.

"The whole idea of the class is to bring the bridal party together so they can socialize and get into shape for the wedding," she said. "A lot of times the bridal party doesn't know each other very well, so this gives them a chance to spend time together."

Carriere realizes that boot camp may be more strenuous than what some people are normally accustomed to. There is a questionnaire posted on the walls of many of the public exercise facilities run by the city. If participants answer yes to any of the questions, then it is recommended that they discuss the exercise program with their doctor beforehand, although the choice is ultimately in the hands of the individual.

"Because we're the City of Winnipeg, we can't turn people away," said Carriere.

However, Carriere insists the instructors are ready and able to handle any issues.

"Our instructors are trained to recognize safety is number one," she said. "Plus, we make sure that all of our instructors are fully certified before they teach any classes."

Handle food safely before the season's last barbeque

Doug McArthur
Arts & Entertainment Contributor

Eating outdoors is one of the joys of summer across our great nation, and although the warm weather is winding down, there's still time for a few more barbeques before covering the grill up for the winter.

A meal with friends under the great canopy of the September skies can be one of the most enjoyable experiences of the season; however, you need to take special precautions to ensure that you are eating and storing food safely and protecting yourself and your family and friends from foodborne illness when cooking outdoors.

If you're wondering what constitutes a foodborne illness, it's any illness caused by the consumption of food. Foodborne illnesses are caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites most commonly present due to the improper handling, storage or preparation of food. The Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education's website has an extensive set of reading materials on foodborne illnesses and what can be done to prevent their spread. The site notes the different types of bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses, and some other conditions to be aware of:

"Many bacteria, including Salmonella species, Campylobacter species and Yersinia enterocolitica, can reside in healthy food animals, without them showing any signs of illness. These animals can then spread the bacteria to other healthy animals at the farm level."

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency publishes a guide to food safety that will help you prevent foodborne illnesses. Here's a quick breakdown of the important steps to take to make sure you barbeque safely:

1. Sanitize your hands by washing them for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before handling food. Also, make sure your utensils (like tongs, flippers and knives), countertops and cooking surfaces are sanitized – it can reduce bacteria, which will in turn help prevent foodborne illnesses.

2. Keep food cold – the guide recommends you keep food at or below four degrees Celsius. Bacteria can grow on food if it is left out and is at a temperature anywhere between four and 60 C for more than two hours – and that can decrease to an hour or less on a hot day. If you're keeping food in a cooler, make sure you pack it with lots of ice to keep the temperature below four degrees Celsius.

3. Cook to the right temperature. A digital thermometer is a cheap and easy way to ensure your food is cooked to the proper temperature, which the guide says is 60 C or higher. For example, a properly-cooked medium-rare steak should be 71 C.

4. Always make sure your raw and cooked food stays separate from each other. Don't use the same plate you brought your raw steaks out on to place cooked ones. That will cross-contaminate the food and could lead to foodborne illnesses.

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'Roid use in sports enrages one writer

Trevor Suffield
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It seems that through some artificial enhancement in the media, steroids have received a lot of attention lately. For the uninitiated, anabolic steroids are man-made substances that help with muscle building, and androgenic steroids are for an increase in male traits and characteristics.

The drugs, usually banned in sports, are prevalent in athletes, horses and mimes. An easy way to remember: Ben Johnson took anabolic, and Ben Affleck needs to take androgenic. But lately, steroids have been in the news because of two people: Barry Bonds and Chris Benoit.

Barry Bonds recently broke the all-time homerun record in Major League Baseball. What makes Bonds' achievement so incredible is that he all of a sudden started to hit homeruns in 2001. Sure, he was hitting some homeruns before then, but not at the torrid pace he has been hitting them in the last six years. Up until 2001, he looked more like a skinny, underfed bat-boy instead of a hulking Batman. Garsh, do you think he took something to bulk himself up? I can guarantee that he wasn't stuffing his uniform with socks, which, incidentally, was how they did steroids in the 1800s (they weren't too bright back then).

For many, the homerun record is now tainted because of the steroid allegations. Bonds refuses to say anything on the matter, but really, he doesn't need to say a thing.

I have two things that prove he has taken steroids: my eyes.

Bonds wasn't the first athlete to take steroids, and he definitely won't be the last. As long as there are methods to gain an advantage over an opponent, or methods to gain more money than an opponent, steroids will be around.

A quick way to tell if you're on steroids: can you lift a car that you couldn't yesterday? And did that last question make you really, really angry? That brings up the topic of "roid-rage" and our next subject, Chris Benoit.

Benoit was a professional wrestler, but more recently, he was a murderer. It has been alleged that Benoit was filled with "roid-rage" when he took the lives of his family and then himself. While it hasn't been proven that steroids caused his behavior, it can't be discounted either. Maybe someone else was going to murder his family and he just needed that certain "edge" to do it first.

And listen, I see no problem with wrestlers taking steroids; in fact, I encourage it. Granted, what they are doing is basically performing a soap opera/ballet in spandex, so there is no professional gain to them by doing drugs. The outcomes are all predetermined, so they don't actually need them in order to "win." They need it for their genitals. See, steroids make your testicles smaller, so when your opponent misses and actually hits you there, you won't feel much of anything (and neither will he).

Lately, I have even thought of taking steroids, because I feel it would help enhance my physique (or actually give shape to my pudding-type body), and I thought it would help me focus and make me a stronger writer. Then I re-read that last paragraph about the testicles. I think I'm going to stay clean.

I'll still have the same fake personality, but not a fake body.

Bibles and Broomsticks

Shannah-Lee Vidal
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"It all goes to the same place!" That was what a friend's Scottish grandfather once told her as he was enjoying his usual hearty breakfast. But what weirded her out was how he would cut up his toast and eggs and mash them into a bowl of thick oatmeal.

I often think back to that story. A lot of preparation went into that meal – just like we put a lot of preparation into ourselves, making choices, defining the differences between each other.

But in the end, it all has the same purpose.

This is especially true in our spiritual lives. Each religion, or path, has a set of doctrines and actions that shape those who follow. There are different terms for the worshiped. But really, it's all the same thing. We have names and stories for our deities. All of this belief is based on energy. The only difference are the terms each branch of humanity has chosen to use in defining and establishing their belief systems.

I was never officially baptized into any formal religion, much to my Catholic mother's chagrin. My father said he wanted me to pick my own religion when I reached an appropriate age. There had been many times during my teenage years when my father and I would sit at the kitchen table, attempting to interpret and decode the bible, analyzing our findings and observations.

A few years ago, I began my official foray into spiritual practices of the pagan variety. Although I suspect I had been heading that way for a long time prior. In university, I had been invited to my first solstice ritual. Soon I came to realize there was nothing wrong or strange, about exploring what seems natural and what seems fascinating.

There's no reason why each separate spiritual path cannot be appreciated. I don't think it matters what religious beliefs you subscribe to. At the heart, they all are meant to possess the same basic fundamentals of faith, love, and positive thought. As well, they create a sense of community for us; offer us a sense of belonging with the universe and each other.

In recent years, I have come to realize I am not giving up my own beliefs by accompanying my mother to church on the occasional holiday. In fact, I smile at how similar the service is to the many pagan rituals I have taken part in.

Maybe the world really is one giant bowl of oatmeal.

Just some food for thought.

The Sports Story

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In 2005, the world of fantasy football changed forever.

No, that wasn't the year that picking Michael Vick became popular. Thankfully, that fad never caught on.

2005 was the year ESPN the Magazine released their first ever fantasy football magazine.

A bible for football junkies, this 160-page special edition magazine featured everything from player rankings and team previews, to mock drafts, stats and cheat sheets. The 2006 and 2007 editions were equally helpful, and they were the only thing I relied on come draft day, but they just weren't the same. There was truly something special about that first issue that I really took for granted. It contained 25 tips to help you win your fantasy league.

Normally fantasy magazines all repeat the same nonsense about not drafting this type of player or that type of player, but these tips were different. With the start of the 2007 National Football League season right around the corner, (kick-off is Thursday, September 6), I've decided to share a few of these tips with you.

In the spirit of love for fantasy football everywhere, here are five of ESPN's top tips to help you win your fantasy league, remixed by yours truly of course.

5 – Forget about personal hygiene: It was never good being the smelly kid in school, trust me, but being a stinker at the draft could distract your opponents enough to throw them off their game. Eau du toilet? No thanks!

4 – Try to win an Academy Award: Regardless of your football knowledge, if you are in a draft, you have to act the part. Bring a stack of football magazines to the draft, along with 400 pages of printed stats. Even try to borrow a buddy's jersey to really sell the part.

3 – Head games are key: Do not agree with anything anyone says about anyone or anything. Toying with your opposition right before the draft could send them to the showers early.

2 – Use peer pressure early and often: It worked in high school, and it will work here as well. When someone is struggling to make a pick, jump all over him or her like a loose trampoline. My personal favourites include: "Can we hurry this up, I have to work next week," and "I think the player you are about to pick just retired."

1 – Do not praise others: I cannot reiterate this enough, DO NOT PRAISE OTHERS. You have worked hard up until this point wearing down others and boosting yourself up, why waste it by complimenting your enemy's team? Instead, go out with a bang and guarantee you are going to win the championship, even if your team sucks. And just remember: if you end up winning your league, and there is a cash reward involved, I get half.

With the money you save you can buy tons of extra books. Right?

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