

OPINION

TELEGRAPH JOURNAL

NEW BRUNSWICK'S NEWSPAPER, FOUNDED IN 1862

JOHN WISHART, BNI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DAVID STONEHOUSE, MANAGING EDITOR
MARK IYPE, SENIOR EDITOR
DAVID SPRAGG, EDITOR, ADMINISTRATION
ERIC MARKS, EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

JANE NORTHRUP, REGIONAL ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

NO FUTURE'S BUILT ON ENTITLEMENT

The First Nation of Elisipogtog has been criticized because 85 per cent of its residents draw welfare, while the community opposes seismic exploration that could lead to a domestic shale gas industry and job creation. We're not suggesting the debate is actually that simple, but the contrast seems emblematic of a larger phenomenon in New Brunswick – one with national repercussions.

A significant number of New Brunswickers – native and non-native, English-speaking and French-speaking, rural and urban – are fighting reforms and economic development initiatives, demanding that governments preserve a status quo that doesn't work. It doesn't work because government cheques, backed by costly government debt, have replaced income from economic activity.

Whether the issue is unsustainable public-sector pensions, federal Employment Insurance, or provincial social assistance rates, New Brunswickers have taken to the streets and community halls to say they are opposed to change and entitled to their entitlements.

The shale gas protests are not even the most startling example: that distinction goes to protesters who oppose reforms to Employment Insurance in areas where a significant number of jobs are going unfilled, due to a lack of skilled or willing workers.

Such protests are fanning a backlash in Alberta and Ontario. These provinces' taxpayers are the main contributors to Employment Insurance, the federal equalization program, and the federal cash transfers that fund 40 per cent of New Brunswick's social programs. The more that backlash grows, the likelier it is that the flow of funding to New Brunswick will be reduced as the federal power of these populous provinces increases.

It has grown easy for pundits in other parts of Canada to write off the policy debates taking place in New Brunswick by insinuating that New Brunswickers are not interested in working. New Brunswickers who want a more prosperous future need to be more vocal in their aspirations and start proving the pundits wrong.

We believe shale gas extraction should be expanded if – and only if – it can be demonstrated the gas sector can be developed as safely as other industries have been. To evaluate the potential of this economic opportunity and others, though, New Brunswick legislators must determine the facts, then assess whether the potential benefits outweigh potential costs.

Government cannot do so if the roads are paralyzed by protests or exploration is halted by a moratorium.

The days when federal subsidies could sustain this province are drawing to a close. New Brunswickers need to engage in constructive debate on how to build a more prosperous future, acknowledging that the way forward will not be found by clinging to the past.



Expand Saint John's business culture

UNB Saint John's business programs are rated among the best in Canada. It's an accomplishment that the new Dean of Business, Fazley Siddiq, intends to build upon.

He wants to expand business undergraduate education by partnering with community colleges; expand the recruitment of international students, such as American college graduates; and increase the importance of the campus to the community by acting as an incubator of business culture and a sounding board for small-business start-ups.

This is a positive, promising vision – and in our opinion, just what this city needs in its quest to create a culture of entrepreneurialism and achievement.

The business community played a key role in lobbying for the creation of a satellite university campus here, knowing that access to post-secondary education would shape the city's growth. Today, with all communities in the region having committed to a common growth strategy and local boards of trade considering merging into a single chamber of commerce, development of the campus' business department is critically important.

Enterprise Saint John, the Board of Trade and other local business associations should be asking what they can do to facilitate growth in business education, and what spin-offs expanded university programs could generate.

There is a world of commercial opportunity out there, and it will be open to our graduates, if we equip them with the right skills and experience.



Rights are not being trampled

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Recently, during the RCMP action against the protesters in Rexton, a radio sound bite had a protester screaming "What about my freedom of speech!?" Well, madam, your freedom of speech is enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, just like every other of 31 million Canadian citizens. All of us would fight with you in protecting that freedom, just like the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who died to ensure this right.

However, as many protesters before you (unions, etc.) have learned to their dismay, said right of freedom of speech does not extend to blocking a provincial highway for 15 days after a court injunction is served and you are asked to leave by the rightful authorities. You, madam, have then escalated your status to "criminal." I'm pretty sure that right is not enshrined in the Charter.

Next, we have the "warriors," masked thugs who are bringing bayonets and pipe bombs to a protest. Well, madam, we have just ratcheted your group's status from "criminal" to "terrorist." I can guarantee you that that particular right is not in the Charter.

Why don't we tell the other side of the story for once? That would be refreshing.

If you want to be treated like Canadians with rights, then act like Canadians, not seditious criminals and terrorists.

PAUL J. SHONAMAN
Saint John

Don't condone thuggery

I find it unbelievable that many readers of this paper and many other citizens of this province, native or otherwise, can in any way justify the blatant disrespect for the law by some members of the native community last week. Whether you personally agree with the RCMP enforcing the law of the land is of no matter; it is the law!

Treaties were signed hundreds of years ago by my ancestors and the native people. As I watch natives and ancestors of natives hunting and fishing year round, and paying no taxes as my tax dollars support native communities, it appears we non-natives are holding up our end; however, I am sure in those treaties the natives agreed not to bear arms against us.

I can only assume you don't take a gun, bear spray or explo-

sives to a peaceful protest. If native leaders in any way condoned the actions of these thugs, as they were prepared to battle the police, then the Department of Indian Affairs should deduct all damages done to government property from their next tribal check.

It's time native leaders became leaders in the 21st century. It appears what happened in Rexton was just an old-time circling and burning of the wagons - in this case, police cars. That's not the way to get any support from me.

PETER MABEY
Wilson's Beach

Protest supporters aren't fools

Once again, Stuart Mills has missed the point ("Law-breaking is law-breaking," Oct. 19). In every dispute there is more than one side; otherwise it would be just insanity.

Mr. Mills has put his blinders on and can't see past his own opinions. For him to accuse me of condoning violence and destruction couldn't be further from the truth. But, he is entitled to his opinion just like everyone else.

If these demonstrators, be they First Nation, French, English or Chinese are such monsters, then why are they getting so much support around the world? We are not all morons, as portrayed by Mr. Mills.

These demonstrations are not just about fracking. There are issues that started long before fracking was even thought about and were never resolved.

What we need to do is press the reset button and start over. When it is done right, then everyone will gain by it.

The natural gas found in New Brunswick belongs to us. We can't just give it away.

TONY MANUEL
Quispamsis

What will fund public services?

I have been listening to and watching the protests for three years now; meanwhile, the fiscal position of the province continues to deteriorate.

If no new sources of revenue and economic activity are found soon in New Brunswick, the only option may be for New Brunswick to default on its debt, cutting hospitals, schools and other public services in the province.

If not from gas and other natural resources, what will be the source of revenue to keep our public services afloat?

Economic reality is not a pretty picture right now.

KEN MCGEORGE
Fredericton

Should we all blockade roads?

I am so upset with the mess at Kane's Corner in Saint John, now under construction. Every day a water truck sprays the road and my car ends up being a mess of splashed mud spots. I am not sure what is in the water, but I am willing to do something about it.

While everyone is sleeping, I am going to go to King Square and cut down six trees. Then, I will proceed to haul them to the causeway and build a blockade, complete with burning tires. No one will recognize me because I will be in disguise.

If it gets below freezing I can set fire to a couple of police cars. After all, other people have done this and they got away with it.

If I was a bona fide Aboriginal Person I think I could get away with anything, but alas, I'm just a Catholic senior with ancestors from Ireland.

Now what do you suppose is in that water they are spraying?

TERRY PARKER
Saint John

Breast cancer: get screened

Last month the province issued its first report on breast screening data. It's great news, but we still need more women to be screened regularly.

We work on behalf of the women (and men) who are at risk of, or who have survived, breast cancer. In eight years, we've done a lot to improve breast screening.

We've contributed \$1.1 million towards the purchase of 11 full-field digital mammography machines – the gold standard in breast screening. Between 2009 and 2010 we drove our big pink bus to meet thousands of New Brunswickers in person and talk about getting a mammogram. We recently supported the New Brunswick Breast and Women's Cancer Partnership in hiring a coordinator, who is helping us to reach underserved populations. We've also introduced free breast health sessions to groups and businesses.

As the screening program evolves we see the tangible results: more machines dispersed through the province; shorter wait times; and earlier diagnoses,

which allows for improved outcomes. But we're still not reaching the national target of a 70 per cent screening rate; we're at 52.9 per cent. We've got a good thing going – our screening numbers have been climbing over time – but we can't let up.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. There's no better time than right now to find out if you're eligible to be screened and book your appointment. Then talk to the women in your life and make sure they do. We're working to create a future without breast cancer.

JANE PARSONS, CEO
Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation – Atlantic Region

Friendliness is city's heritage

In reference to recent glowing comments by cruise ship passengers about the friendly welcome they have received in our port city, I think that our alleged renown as "the friendliest city in Canada" probably began many years ago.

In a memoir by The Reverend Angus James MacQueen, who served at Centenary Queen Square United Church during the Second World War, he wrote: "We have never lived in a friendlier city than Saint John, nor one where the members of the congregation were more loyal and supportive."

Rev. MacQueen later moved to Edmonton, which he described as "hardly a city, more like a prairie town, but where the future was knocking on the door."

How true. I hope that the church that he served there is still open for worship.

MARIAN PERKINS
Saint John

Advice on masks

If one of your children insists on wearing the scariest mask ever conceived in Canada, you have a parental responsibility to explain the consequences.

Your child has the right to know that the majority of Canadians will slam their doors if they see a likeness of Stephen Harper standing on their stoop.

If your son is the outgoing adventurous type, who enjoys being embraced by passionate liberal women of all ages, then a Justin Trudeau mask is your best buy. Just keep it away from your husband.

LLOYD ATKINS
Vernon, B.C.