

In praise of every woman

March 8 was International Women's Day. You probably noticed something different going on in the SUB lobby last Tuesday and if you stopped to look, you would have found out what it was. I stopped to look. I also stopped to listen to the comments, many by people who already knew what was up, and then the inevitable, "Why do women need a special day? You're just making yourselves seem different and more open to criticism." The woman who answered him hit the problem right on the mark. "Because men already have the other 364 days," she said.

International Women's Day is the Gazette's excuse for this women's supplement. We regret we have been so negligent on the issue up until now, but we have the usual excuses - not enough writers to cover all the issues, too much school work, etc. Let us atone for our sins.

This 'special' supplement is not intended to male-bash; we hope the articles included here will bring women's issues to your attention, because they are important. For the most part, men and women, are unaware of the frequency of wife beating (which is not just an infrequent slap in the face), they may know about the type of sexism women students face in school, but they don't understand how much it hurts us, not only the woman being degraded but woman as a whole, as a human being, and they don't see the harm pornography does to women and men and society as a unit.

All of us are, at one time or another, guilty of sexism, of treating humans - women more often than men - as less than equal, either consciously or subconsciously. Pornography is the worst manifestation of this. It pervades society like a dirty joke passed on from one mouth to another. It is socially acceptable and only recently has it been questioned as being harmful. Pornography (not to be confused with erotica) is bred in young minds and becomes a way of looking at women (more commonly called 'girls') which says women aren't people so it's okay to treat them as less. Erotica, on the other hand, does not need to degrade one gender for the pleasure of the other. It upholds the beauty of a mutually sharing sexual relationship. It is love, while pornography is hate.

We hope our women's supplement will cause you to take another look at your values and, if need be, to restructure them into a more positive outlook on women - our need to be treated equally and our hurt when we find people who can't, or don't want to, understand this.

We're not asking you to bow and open doors for us, we're just asking you not to close them.

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Dal's days of Women (without wine or song)

by Bob Morrison

To celebrate International Women's Day last Tuesday, the Dalhousie Women's Committee arranged for a series of speeches, presentations and displays dealing with women's issues, which were presented in the SUB.

Caroline Zayid, a member of the Committee, was generally pleased with how all the activities went. "People made good use of all the material and information provided", she said.

The activities actually began Monday night with Dr. Merchant discussing the medical aspects of rape and concluded Wednesday night with Mary Clancy's discussion on the legal aspects of rape.

On Wednesday presentations began at noon in the Green Room. Pamela Colby

spoke on self defence for women, demonstrating some tactics. Colby explained the 12 hour course she had taken is available in Halifax. It takes place over a six week period for total cost of only 20 dollars. She said persons interested in the course should contact A Woman's Place.

Following this another presentation was given with the visual aid of a slide show dealing with women in trades.

Throughout the lobby various displays were set up. Red Herring Books exhibited books dealing with women's issues. Paintings and pottery by local female artists were shown.

Displays also dealt with A Woman's Place, women in trades and self education for women.

Mount rally raises spirits

by Samantha Brennan

Hundreds of enthusiastic women gathered at the Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) Seton Academic Centre to celebrate March 83 International Woman's Day.

The rally, entitled "Women Rise to the Challenge" featured Francene Cosman, President of the Nova Scotia Commission on the Status of Women, Leader of the New Democratic Party Alexa McDonough and Archbishop James M. Hayes. Folk singer Rita McNeil inspired the audience with touching songs about women in her life.

The audience was a broad cross section of women from the Halifax area. Women from all walks of life, different races, very young and very old, sat side by side and listened as the speakers discussed issues affecting women today.

Women at the rally expressed solidarity on a number of important issues of global concern:

- To have the right of further information, physical protection and reinforcement of appropriate penalties for common assault committed by husbands against their wives.
- To support the Cruise Missile Conversion Project and urge government to prevent testing of cruise missiles in Canada.
- To endorse efforts of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and Native Women's Committee.
- To condemn broadcasting pornography and to recommend the CRTC prohibit such programming.
- To demand all Nova Scotian political parties commit themselves to promoting equality of women in political life
- To oppose proposed changes in Family Benefits announced recently by Minister of Social Services Edmund Morris which would cut benefits paid to unwed Nova Scotia teenage mothers.

A common theme expressed by speakers was a need for women to take action against the spread of pornography in society.

Cosman encouraged women to learn more about the issues to prepare for the fight. "We must not be lulled into complacency," she said. Pornography, said Cosman, is a five billion dollar industry, the fastest growing segment of which is child pornography.

Voting power is woman's greatest strength in the battle, said Cosman, citing women comprise fifty-two percent of the voting population. "We must actively pursue the goal of women being equal members in the fabric of Canadian society," said Cosman.

Archbishop Hayes urged women to stand up against broadcasting pornography. "It is a sad commentary on our society that women are taught very early in life pornography is not their concern," said Hayes. He spoke of the harm pornography does to the men in our society. "It gives them very limited and leering view of women," he said.

Pornography contributes to violence because of the underlying message "the victim isn't a person; simply an object to be used," said Hayes.

Alexa McDonough asked men to listen to demands made at the rally. "They must realize the demands we make for equality . . . are really the measure of a civilized society," she said. Other speakers included MSVU President Dr. Margaret Fulton, who summed up many of the rally's concerns when she said "Women need jobs and women want peace."

Echoing the rally's theme, MSVU student Vice-President (external) Leslie McDonald urged young women to be ready "to rise to the challenge and be ready to pick up the sword when it's our time to lead."