

Alternative for gays and lesbians

by Dan

The alternative press has always been an important source of information in society, since it reflects the concerns and needs of specific groups of people usually neglected in the mainstream press. The bisexual, lesbian and gay community is one which certainly relies on the alternative press for its sources of information, news and entertainment.

Xtra Magazine, a Toronto-based lesbian and gay weekly tabloid, presently has a circulation of over 22,000 reaching a large number of outlets in Metropolitan Toronto as well as far away places such as Thunder Bay, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Halifax.

Getting a paper to this stage was certainly no small task. Colin Brownlee, Associate Publisher of *Xtra*, admits they have had problems in the past caused by a lack of tolerance from establishments in providing magazines like these on their premises.

Many of these problems have been overcome through public input and pressure insuring that *Xtra* is made available to the public. One example has been the recent permission by public libraries in the city of Toronto to have *Xtra* available to their users. This was all accomplished through public pressure on the various library boards.

Xtra provides a wealth of information for the bisexual, lesbian and gay communities in Metro Toronto. Its "Out in the city" section chronicles what is happening in and around Toronto in art, photography, dance, film, health, literature, stage, radio, religious service and political issues.

In addition, *Xtra* provides special supplements in its XS section which tackle topics pertinent to the community. In the past such topics have included outing (exposing lesbians and gays to mainstream society), same-sex spousal benefits and gay bashing (beating the pulp out of someone just because they "look" or "act" gay).

Overall, it is magazines like *Xtra* which keep our community aware of what's happening, when and where, which is certainly very useful for groups like lesbians, gays and bisexuals who are marginalized and often ignored.



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Xtra!
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Papers like *Xtra* are not what I would label "alternative press" since this implies they are an alternative to some sort of other form of press. Rather, for many homosexuals this is the only press available to them which actually includes them.

Xtra and other magazines and publications for bisexuals, lesbians and gays are available on campus at the *Bisexual, Lesbian and Gay Alliance at York*, 447 Student Centre or downtown at the 519 Church Street Community Centre (located east of Yonge Street, near Church and Wellesley).

Serious issue skewed by coverage

by Ira Nayman

The only conclusion a reasonable person can come to is that *The Globe and Mail*, Canada's National Newspaper, is trivializing the issue of sexual harassment.

Saturday's newspaper contained a massive feature by Oakland Ross about inter-office relationships. Ross graciously allowed that when a male boss tells a female worker to sleep with him or lose her job, sexual harassment has occurred.

Ross' thesis was that everything short of this is "murky" and cannot be taken seriously. The boss who has his hands all over an unwilling underling? A potential misunderstanding — no more. The superior who makes remarks about his female employees' bodies or sexist jokes within their hearing? Apparently, it's all innocent fun.

The bulk of Ross' article details a fictional romance in the workplace, bolstered by facts about inter-office romance. Ross' facts are correct as far as they go: offices are an important meeting place for people and

Analysis

The *Globe and Mail's* coverage of sexual harassment inexplicably trivializes an important workplace issue.

many romances start in them.

However, his entire story is irrelevant to the issue at hand. Ross describes consensual relationships between men and women; harassment, by definition, is unwanted sexual attention from a boss.

Unfortunately, along the way, Ross makes a number of unfounded and ignorant statements. He creates a scenario where a woman in a failed relationship claims sexual harassment out of spite, despite the fact that the vast majority of known cases of harassment are legitimate. Incredibly, he suggests discussion of sexual harassment is keeping men and women from engaging in office romance; thus, women are hurt by exposing social problems which hurt women!

The Globe's coverage of the issue in the wake of Clarence Thomas' US Supreme Court confirmation hearings has been frighteningly out of touch. Earlier in the week, a story was writ-

ten about a talk given by Dr. Fred Mathews, a psychiatrist, who claimed that women harassed and abused boys, turning them into rapists and sex offenders as men.

The facts simply do not support these assertions. The vast majority of people who are abused are women. At least twice as many boys are abused by men than by women; far more rapists are abused by their fathers than their mothers. Ultimately, this is another way of blaming women for their own victimization at the hands of men.

The Globe, by giving stories about factually inaccurate, essentially crackpot theories equal prominence to stories that credibly explore the issue of sexual harassment, promotes a form of equivalence between the two. The newspaper suggests that there are two equally valid ways of looking at the issue, when, in fact, the documented and anecdotal evidence suggests there is only one.

Ending the week's coverage with Ross' piece was reprehensible. Of the 90 column inches, including a sidebar, devoted to the story, only one dealt with the not unreasonable feminist view that men take advantage of their power in senior positions in the workplace; and even that was immediately followed by a sarcastic retort ("Phew!"). With the last word an overwhelming endorsement of intra-office "romance," *The Globe* is telling its readers that sexual harassment is not a serious issue.

This is, of course, a case of telling your readers what they want to hear. *The Globe* sees its readership as the (predominantly) male corporate elite, the men with power, the men who are most likely to be sexual harassers. Consciously or not, *The Globe* has used its vast resources to assure its readers that if they engage in such behaviour, they are beyond reproach.

The Globe is just serving its readership. Unfortunately, it isn't serving the truth.

"Incredibly, he suggests discussion of sexual harassment is keeping men and women from engaging in office romance"

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