

Lest we ignore

I find it tough to get worked up about the subjects which seem to inspire about every second columnist on Remembrance Day. Maybe I'm jaded and spoiled for being two generations removed from the last 'real' war that affected large numbers of Canadians, but poppies and cemeteries have never stirred my blood.

I reflect personally (and not just one day a year) on my family members who fought and suffered — yes. But when the popular media get hold of the subject of the 'great' wars of this century, a saddening exercise in oversimplifying history gets played out. The basic message of Remembrance Day has always seemed to be, "Gee, aren't we lucky we had (and have) an army." A warm, fuzzy aura comes to surround acts of brutal violence, and unanswerable moral questions are too often reduced to black and white, demonstrating once again that we really don't understand (and do a lame job of attempting to comprehend) violence in our society at all.

As if we needed another illustration of this fact, we have the case of Mr. Matin Yaqzan, an Assistant Professor of Math and Stats at the University of New Brunswick who has become instantly notorious for his particular perception of one variety of violence — date rape. In case you haven't heard the uproar, Yaqzan wrote an opinion piece for the UNB student newspaper, *The Brunswickan*, suggesting that date rape is all fine and natural, that men can't help it and that women shouldn't complain about it because it's simply a fact of life in these days of promiscuous women. The (soon-to-be-ex?) prof was responding to an article in a Canadian Federation of Students circular entitled "Recognizing date rape when it happens", written by a Dalhousie student.

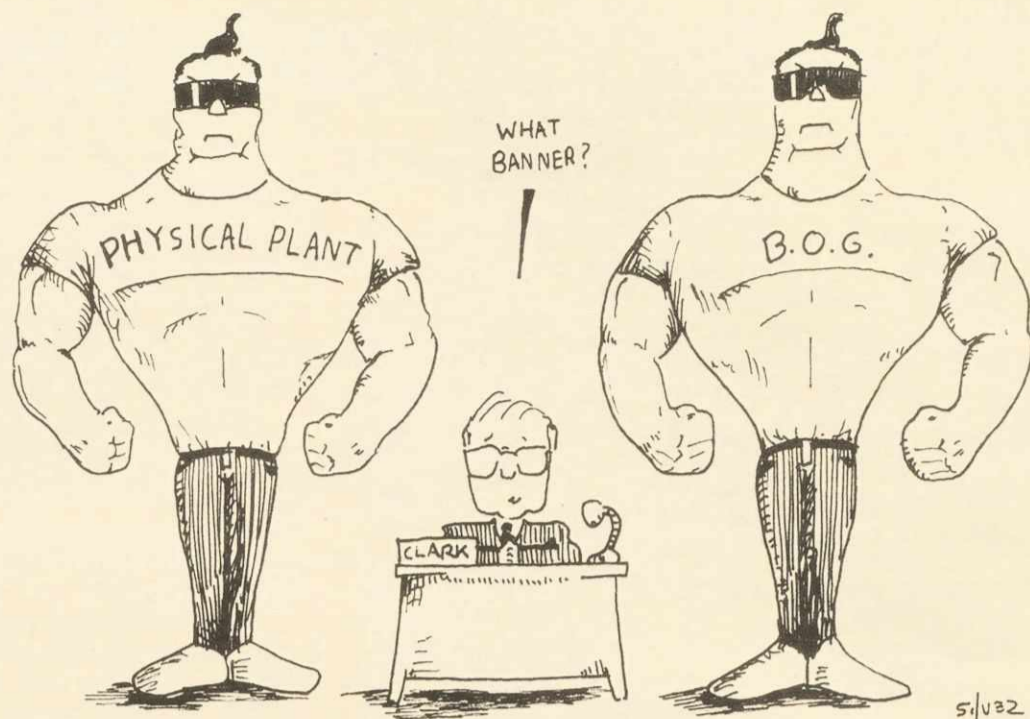
As medieval as his viewpoint is, it is probably worthwhile in the long run that Yaqzan was 'outed' in the way that he was. The university's policies regarding a comfortable, harassment-free learning environment may see him ousted. If the man behaves in any manner comparable to the way in which he says it is 'natural' for young men to behave (and we can presume he has not kept his opinions bottled up before this), he has already poisoned the atmosphere. If he is disciplined or removed, it was probably long overdue.

That's where discussion of Mr. Yaqzan and his backward worldview should end. It is difficult to miss the irony in the way that the media has given a man centre stage in the suddenly-topical debate on date rape, an issue which in its very essence is about women being overpowered and silenced.

There may be no problem more important to be addressed on campuses than that of women being forced to have sex against their will. It is an outrage that is endemic, but not for the reasons of "nature" that the UNB prof suggests. Women's groups have fought an uphill battle to even get it recognized and acknowledged, and it deserves to be at the top of a university's, and society's, agenda.

And that means at the top of the individual's agenda, too. Let's take responsibility for our own violence instead of perpetuating myths about it

Ryan Stanley



LETTERS

The Dalhousie *Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on MacIntosh or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Designer genes

To the editor:

I'm writing in response to an article by Steve Miller in last week's issue (November 4). His article was about whether scientists should or should not be allowed to clone human embryos. There are a few things I've noticed.

In his article he doesn't directly state whether he is in favour of cloning or against it. It seems to me that he is in favour of letting scientists do as they please in the name of a 'breakthrough'.

To 'clone', according to the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is "to make a copy," or "one that appears to be a copy of an original form." So I wonder why in his opening paragraph he says that McDonald's hamburgers can never be great because they are all the same. Wouldn't that argument apply to people that are all made from the same mould. It seems as if he is contradicting himself.

His article says, "For every major breakthrough... there has been a group which savagely opposes the new truth." I'd like to point out what 'savage' means, according to the Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. "Not under human control... lacking restraints normal to civilized human beings... a person belonging to primitive society... boorish... rude... uncivilized... uncultivated..."

I do not understand why he chose such an offensive word to describe a group whose opinion differs from his own. Those boorish, rude, uncivilized people are concerned about the future and would like to discuss the consequences of such 'breakthroughs'.

If human embryos were cloned, would the people they produce be real people? Would human rights belong to them? Would they be kept in a laboratory? Would they be used as experiments? As pets? As slaves? (Oh no, now we have computer technology for that!) What are the benefits of cloning? So that scientists can say, "I told you we could!"??

He says that scientists know they have the capability, so isn't that good enough. Now we'll know who to call if we ever need a copy of someone.

How would one know that the people against cloning are the 'minority'? The

society about which he is speaking is not based on the rule of majority. I doubt very much if there would be a 'referendum' saying, "Do you think cloning should be allowed?" The people who decide if these kinds of things pass are the people who have the money to fund.

I would also like to point out that he referred to beneficial scientific work as "mankind's wisdom" and to quote many of those rude, boorish, uncivilized minorities I'd like to say, "it's HUMAN-KIND!"

Name withheld by request

Savage cuts

To the editor:

I heard yesterday that the Savage government has cut back on funding of Juniper House, a transition house for battered women in Yarmouth that serves three counties, to the point that they have been forced to announce their closure at the end of this week.

Furthermore, the Minister of Community Services had the audacity to offer Juniper House a 'loan' to keep them going to the end of the year. How they expect to be paid back by a non-profit organization with no funds is beyond me.

That these announcements had to be made on the day following the national television premiere of *Life With Billy* is ironic. What is even more ironic is that Savage's government should allow this to happen when John Savage himself stated at the Atlantic premiere of *Life With Billy* that zero tolerance for spousal abuse should be top priority in a Liberal government.

Carolyn Smith

Oil Outrage

To the editor:

Now I consider myself as big an environmentalist as the next guy, but today I think I've discovered the limits of my acceptance of environmental changes by companies.

I was in Canadian Tire picking up a

litre of motor oil (the recycled brand I might add). I picked up my purchase, got it rung in by the clerk who bagged it in one of Canadian Tire's new smaller, recycled bags meant for smaller items. "Hey!" I thought "Good idea, smaller and recycled, can't beat that!" As I walked out, not two feet through the door, my bag broke. My oil fell from the bag, cracking the cap and since the recycled oil company doesn't over-package by putting in a second paper seal, I spilled perhaps a quarter of my oil (but hey, don't worry, most of it went right down a drain).

Grumbling, but still firmly in favour of the new bags (one bag in a million breaks, I thought) I picked up my sticky mess and headed for the car. While under the hood 'installing' the remains of my purchase, I glanced over toward the store. Out comes a man who'd just bought some tools and being a small item, they naturally put it in a new recycled bag. Not four feet from the door his bag split open and his items fell out! Now I should give the bag a little more credit. He probably would have made it eight feet had he not slipped a bit in my spilled oil.

Recycled products are a great idea. I support them fully, but I hope nobody loses sight of the fact that even if a product is 100 per cent recycled material, if it doesn't serve its intended purpose then it's just 100 per cent waste.

Garth Sweet

U. of Antarctica

To the editor:

Dr. Clark has proposed cutting all the departments at Dalhousie University that deal with culture — music, theatre, library studies, etc. He said he wishes to do this to ensure that Dalhousie maintains its place as a 'national university'.

What nation did you have in mind, Mr. Clark? I do not believe you will find a university in the middle of the Sahara. Certainly Antarctica does not have one. Nor does Rockall. And I can't imagine there is a 'national university' in the Simcon Islands.

Alan Ruffman

President

Geomarine Associates Ltd.

the Gazette

Vol 126 No 10

November 11, 1993

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Founded in 1869 at Dalhousie College, *the Gazette* is Canada's oldest student newspaper. With a circulation of 10,000, *the Gazette* is published weekly through the Dalhousie Student Union by the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, of which all Dalhousie University students are members. • *The Gazette* exercises full editorial autonomy and reserves the right to refuse or edit any material submitted. Editorial decisions are made by staff collectively. Individuals who contribute to three issues consecutively become voting staff members. • Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and announcements is 4:00 pm on Monday before publication (Thursday of each week). Commentary should not exceed 800 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be requested upon request. Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o *the Gazette*. • Advertising copy deadline is noon on Monday before publication. • *The Gazette* offices are located on the third floor of the SUB, Room 312. • The views expressed in *the Gazette* are not necessarily those of the Dalhousie Student Union, the editors or the collective staff.