

COLUMN

The dissent of (wo)man

by Sue Pennypacker

As university students and future members of the workforce, the day-to-day conditions which people face in their professions are of great importance to us all. While I'm sure that we don't expect full-time employment to be an easy ride, we certainly don't believe that our prospective occupations will take place in hostile environments.

The liberal work ethic, "work hard and you will be rewarded," is a principle on which the majority of us have been raised. Unfortunately, it's not that simple. This perspective fails to recognize the systemic discrimination against minorities.

Last fall, a Kingston woman was awarded \$48,000 in a sexual harassment case. This woman suffered from the mental and physical stress of this harassment for 14 years before she quit her job. The man who was accused of sexual harass-

ment seems to have been upset at the fact that he was making less money than a woman. He constantly made comments about her appearance and the quality of her work. She complained to the owner of the company, but he simply brushed her complaints aside.

Although the harassment in this case was not of a sexual nature, it was clear that the victim was being harassed due to her gender. Because she did not fit the traditional feminine role (sweet, little housewife, no brains, certainly not fit to work in a job superior to that of a man), she was ridiculed and made to feel worthless.

This feeling was probably reinforced by the inaction of the company owner—he obviously thought that the matter was unimportant and unworthy of his attention. She worked hard, but was not rewarded by a friendly office atmosphere.

So great... Now we have this wonderful precedent, and all women (and other minorities) will cease to

suffer harassment in the workplace.

Wrong! While some companies may undoubtedly act more promptly in cases such as this, the action will probably be due to the monetary, rather than the moral penalty. Harassment in the workplace will not be discontinued because the attitudes will be change.

In other words, the symptoms will be alleviated, but the cause of the trouble will remain untouched. We will still face hostile situations in the workplace due to human characteristics that have nothing to do with our ability to perform our jobs properly (ie. gender, race, age, class).

Let's be realistic, and get rid of the liberal work ethic. It assumes that all workers are white males with equivalent opportunities and that they who work the hardest shall prosper the most. In a pluralistic society, this assumption of uniformity rings false.

In order to live in a society free of discrimination, we must challenge the status quo and confront shortcomings.

LETTERS

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supply. Thankfully, all the blood they receive is tested for HIV.

Furthermore, their policy not to accept blood from gay men regardless of their sexual history is discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. They are allowed to get away with this injustice because they are a non-profit, volunteer-based organization.

I believe that York University should not allow the Red Cross the privilege of soliciting blood on this campus until it ends its discrimination against gay men. I for one am incensed that there were here earlier this week, and I will not venture to donate blood until this insult is rectified.

Sincerely,
Steve Cooney

Excal needs a good kick

To the editor

What's happened to your newspaper? A year ago I enjoyed insightful, well written articles pertinent to the York community. I opened the Jan. 16 issue only to find very little of what's supposed to pass as journalism buried amid ads, terrible cartoons, and the latest Ben Johnson gossip. The last number of issues have been just as poor.

York is one of Canada's largest, brightest and most progressive universities. By no means is *Excalibur* reflecting this fact. York students pay an annual levy to keep the paper alive. Those of us who still read it expect more than one to two worthwhile articles a week.

After five years at this university it would be so refreshing for me to see our student paper take a more progressive stance. It just might be the kick in the ass that *Excalibur* needs right now.

J.A. Boyden

Death thwarts education

To the editor,

I am a student who is active in clubs and student issues at the University of Victoria. During a recent visit to York I picked up a copy of *Excalibur* (Mon, Jan 21). I had hoped to find

news and perspectives about events at York, whose active student interest groups are well-known. I was dismayed to discover that half of the contents of the paper were advertisements, and that the remainder did little to convey important events and questions facing students at York and across the country.

Despite numerous articles on the Gulf Crisis, there was little analysis of the situation. In this time of heavy censorship and misinformation in the mainstream press regarding this war and its human and environmental consequences, an alternative perspective, particularly one focussing on the many ways students are affected, would be valuable.

For example, any students who are called up will lose their entire semester, not to mention the fact that death is an impediment to education.

Also, money for education and for social programs, which benefit many students, is likely to be in short supply as the government scrambles to fund the armed forces.

Is the GST (all seven per cent of it) really going to be used to reduce the deficit? Already students are losing through the GST as it is applied to, among other necessary goods, books and supplies. Now the extra money won't even be available to shore up social programs.

I was told during my visit that your paper comes out twice a week. Perhaps you should consider publishing on a weekly basis to give you more time to develop your coverage.

Lisa Crampton

P.S. I thought the Budweiser ad contrasted nicely with the ad for counselling of date rape victims.

York needs to tighten its security

To the editor,

Can a bomb threat turn into a real bomb? Can the killing of innocent women like what happened at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989 happen at York? Yes.

If any one of these things does really happen at York there is no way for the security service to communicate with the students and staff in an emergency situation.

On Jan. 17 I was in Central Square when security went through the building telling people to evacuate. Once outside no one had any idea what was going on. Security only told us that it was an "emergency situation," and that we should move away from the building.

Last December in Montreal we saw 14 innocent young women killed. Here again the student's and staff's safety was in jeopardy because of inadequate facilities. This can happen again, maybe at York.

It is time that we tighten security around York. Along with a security officer telling people to leave a building a Public Address (PA) system is essential. President Arthurs can use the \$550 tuition increase to pay for this PA system.

Isn't it time that York update OUR safety, before a real bomb appears or innocent women are killed? Hopefully, the new buildings will include a PA system for everyone's safety. Let's all hope that safety comes before a real emergency happens!

Richard Daniel Abel

Smokers show lack of respect

To the editor,

I feel that there is a basic lack of respect shown by the persons smoking in the Central Square/Ross/Curtis complex.

This is no more true than at a time when some compatriots are attempting to help those in medical need, notably while giving blood.

This selfless act should be commended and not condemned by the actions of others who are smoking in the above ground areas. These areas are currently non-smoking areas and are signed as such (at expense to the university).

There is no way the university can, or should ensure that the air of all of these areas will not mix, thereby affecting everyone (most, unwillingly).

It is totally reprehensible that smokers do not respect the effort of persons while in the process of giving life.

in solidarity
Ilpo Lehto
CUPE Local 1356
President

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