

SPECTRUM

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See Sherry speak

The art of uniting Arts and Sciences

ELITISM/ It is always present in society, but in a university environment it could prove harmful.

by Sherry A. Morin

See Dick and Jane read. See Dick read math. See Jane read patriarchy. See Dick mark a big minus-sign on Jane's face. See Dick laugh. See Jane write a joke about Dick and submit it to the Arts Undergraduate Society, then laugh. See both Dick and Jane lack maturity.

Friends don't let friends take flack. That's not a Law of Science; it's not the butchered version of a slogan pirated from some well-intentioned p.s.a. announcement, either. It's my response to the excessive ruderick that has been putted at Arts-faculty students. This stuff is no longer amusing, just degrading-to those who fire it as well as to those targeted by it.

Art and Science are, and always will be, in a constant dichotomy. Engineers, this does not label art the evil or negative force, the "yin", and science the good or positive force, the "yang"; the two, both arts and sciences, are equal, intrinsic, and necessary to our existence. Regretfully, we have reverted backwards from those graceful civilizations like the Maya, whose wall-inscriptions were likely to prove aesthetically pleasing as well as instructive on some scientific truth of the universe.

In other ancient cultures, beautiful embroidery or weaving of threads on clothing translated into mathematical languages. The mysterious artisans of Stonehenge also integrated self-expression and science in an intricate and accurate system of charting the stars. The Nazca Lines of Peru are mile-long drawings etched into the Nazca Plain which have recently been found to chart out some of the major constellations in our galaxy. The Egyptians, in building huge monuments for which they are famed, also built knowledge of the laws of geometry and physics. The Wisdom of the Egyptians tells also of a very creative system of notation, in which certain hieroglyphs were used in place of modern decimals. 1000 was represented by a plant-sign called khaa. A finger stood for 10 000, a tadpole for 100 000, and a man with arms raised represented 1000 000. Truths of the universe were "intuitively" known by Old Worlds, through folk legend; legends of the universe beginning as a single "egg" that "hatched" are eerily similar to our generally-held version of a Big Bang Theory.

It is true that the world is leaning more and more toward a so-called "high technology"; however, setting aside its cold "technological advancement", can a society ever be just, compassionate, or truly human, without Thinkers to challenge its conventions? Science and ethics must go hand-in-hand, separate but equal; This is where the Liberal Arts come in. If scientists were to become their own "police",

there would probably be more things such as indiscriminate vivisection in company laboratories and unregulated human genetic research. Ethics is a necessary check on science, and it can only be administered by people trained in Arts. There is an alarming elitism growing on campus which seems to dirty the above relationship. Elitism is always present in society, but in an environment such as a university, where not only people's self-images, but their careers, are molded, it could prove harmful.

From a global view, elitism has had disastrous consequences. When groups operate with closed-minded and elitist attitudes, it sometimes causes a phenomenon called "groupthink".

(It's the same phenomenon that led us to bomb not one, but two, Japanese cities, incinerating both the landscape and the people on it.) Irving Janis named this phenomenon "groupthink" in 1972. He calls it "deterioration of mental efficiency, reality and moral judgement". Groupthink occurs among a group of individuals in a place of insecurity, a place where they are at risk of having their position lowered. This kind of insecurity would logically be found in the engineering faculty, which has a high failure rate.

Jeopardized Group Individuals boost each others' morale in several damaging ways. First, they stereotype perceived rivals or enemies, holding them as unimportant, or intellectually and/or morally inferior (this would explain current attitudes toward Arts students). Second, they place themselves in an imaginary bubble of invulnerability. "Individuals believe they are all smart and talented-invincible" (Le Bon, 1895). Last, they work as a whole to discredit any opinions from the inside or outside which disagree with their own, to protect the group's "moral superiority".

Academic elitism is not limited to the halls of U.N.B. In Aristotle and Plato's times, between 400 and 300 B.C., the same kind of plague gripped ancient Greece. Elitism seems to occur among any group that has privileged access to any knowledge still relatively new to other sectors of society. In the days of ancient Greece, this included all areas of education, from philosophy to physical science. The subject classes, slaves, did not obtain this new knowledge and therefore continued to be looked down on.

Here at U.N.B., the case isn't quite so severe. First, there aren't many political science or history students running around as engineering students' personal slaves. Second, the knowledge restricted to the "select few" is limited to material presented by U.N.B.'s engineering program. At this point in time, electrical engineering, for example, is a relatively new area of training and technology; hence, it now holds much interest, whereas fields such as literature and philosophy are the tradi-

tional mainstays in Western education. Today, this may encourage elitism among current E.E. students (and among those who actually graduate). However, some new area of study could "crop up" next year, such as a new branch of plant genetics, which might overshadow electrical engineering in the same way that engineering overshadowed literature and philosophy. Regardless of why or how academic elitism originates, it has no legitimate grounds.

Opportunities and resources dealt us do not yield success. Success comes from how ambitiously we use those opportunities and resources. In other words, just as

being born with a partially-occupied cranial cavity and a pulse does not guarantee attainment of a university degree (or any "degree" of success in life, for that matter), a university degree does not guarantee attainment of a job- any university degree. However, any education, used wisely, is of equal worth on the world job market when used and applied ambitiously and effectively. It is ridiculous to single out one faculty, namely the Arts Faculty, as the "easiest" or "of the least worth"...

Engineering students, doing an assignment, take for granted that the boiling and freezing points of water are 100 degrees Celsius and

0 degrees Celsius, respectively. In other words, all laws governing their field of study, their boundaries, are defined before they start. An Arts student, tackling an assignment such as an essay or research paper, must him or herself define the boundaries; in the "non-sciences", there are few black-and-white answers. In fact, several different truths may serve as the answer to one question. As John Stuart Mill, the great Liberalist, wrote, "Though in science the particular truths precede the general theory, the contrary might be expected to be the case with the practical arts,

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The Wimmin's Room

Systemic discrimination

FEMINISM/ It is not only about personal discrimination.

by Rita Hurley

Many women feel that if they or their children are not the targets of violence, harassment or abuse, that feminism is not a cause acting on their behalf. But feminism is not only about personal discrimination but also systemic discrimination. Nowhere is this more evident than in the ways women are valued in the free market system of capitalism.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution almost all productive activity was domestic and unpaid. Gradually many facets of our labor began to be paid with money, particularly those tasks which took people out of their households. Tasks were moved out of the household in order that they might participate more efficiently in the monetary exchange process. What is left behind is housework, those chores which are commonly referred to as women's work.

It is undeniable that women perform the bulk of the household chores. Women spend between three and eight hours a day on home and child care tasks depending on our employment status outside the home. Men on the other hand spend a constant average of one hour per day on unpaid domestic work regardless of their own or their wives' employment status.

This labor acts like a subsidy in the economy, a transfer of financial assistance from the domestic sphere, almost the sole preserve of women, to the public sphere where wealth is held and controlled by men. It has been estimated that this particular subsidy is worth thirty-five per cent of GNP.

The relative value of this subsidy grows in times of recession and cut backs in government spending. The first things to shrink or disappear are those programs which support women in our bid

to participate more fully in the paid work force. The most notable of these is the monies which have been assigned to day care and shelters for female victims of violence. This is particularly ironic when we consider the small cost of these programs with the size of our unpaid contribution which is approximately thirty-five BILLION dollars.

Some say economies cannot afford to adequately compensate this investment by women. The contradiction is evident. Housework is too expensive to be rewarded and too valueless to be performed by men.

The exploitive relationship between women and the economy is reinforced by a sexist perspective that men's work is more difficult, dirtier or more dangerous. The problem is that the tasks we are discussing are not easy, clean or relatively safe. Yet we all continue to pretend this work is the natural endowment of women. The system is entrenched because to protest is to fail to do our duty in maintaining the place of the free market system as the primary instrument of dis- possession of the powerless of the world.

The arguments made on behalf of having women continue to underwrite the cost of maintaining the economic status quo are similar to the characteristics of mercantilism, the economic policies of western Europe during colonization. Men today, particularly those who are employed in corporate Canada, enjoy privileges similar to those merchants who were "friends of the King" in colonial times. Their commercial efforts were supported by law and they were encouraged to take away the resources of the colonies without paying a return to the former owners of those resources.

Unlike the colonies, where indigenous people had to be subju-

gated by military force from time to time, women have a history of willing subservience in this exploitive relationship. Yet to continue to support our economy with our unrewarded labor will enhance the inequalities of our economic system. It is likely that agitation for change will be seen as unpatriotic as well as a threat to the dominance of western economies internationally.

Women are also exploited in the economy as a market for the goods of our corporate producers. This relationship is most pernicious when one looks at the products offered for controlling and enhancing reproduction. We cannot overlook the fact that methods of artificial reproduction already have a price tag and that this cost will begin to be equated with the value of natural motherhood.

That is the way a market economy works - supply and demand. Right now a surrogate mother is paid an average price of ten thousand dollars for nine months of labor. The only capital expended is the wear and tear of the woman's body. Women's bodies are still plentiful enough that we cannot expect the price to go up.

Yet sterility increases and the willingness of women to have families continues to decline. There is a continued perception that larger populations are good for the economy. But that does not mean that family allowance cheques may become worth more than the paper they are written on. What is more likely is that the assignment of cash value to reproductive and domestic labour will be so low that it will further undermine motherhood much as prostitution undermines the value of our sexuality.

On the lighter side, the gross sales of the cosmetic industry have

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