

MUGWUMP

Condoms and CHSR

by Allan Carter

The availability of condoms on the St. Thomas university campus has become an issue of great discussion among students during the last few weeks. Condoms were installed in a vending machine in the male residence of the university, Harrington Hall. However, the condoms were removed last week and University President Dr. O'Brien claims the main reason the condoms cannot be made available on campus is that, as stated in the Aquinian, condom use among students (and everyone else for that matter) is "contrary to official church doctrine."

Now, while the whole debate concerning this statement is enough to fill the white space in this column, I will avoid it because almost every opinion piece in this week's Aquinian has already dealt with such arguments. Instead, I would rather comment on the apathy of the STU Student Union, particularly the executive. According to Jeff London, acting president of the STU Student Union, while the Union has a policy supporting the installation of condom dispensers on campus, London has argued that the student body is "kind of apathetic to a point" on this issue (Daily Gleaner). Before I discuss this issue it might first be wise to point out that London has claimed that he was misquoted in the Daily Gleaner and although I'm not sure exactly what they misquoted him on, I take his allegation lightly. London is developing a history of being misquoted in articles, especially when the articles prove to be controversial.

My problem with London's (?) statement is: Who is really being apathetic? Is it the student body or the Student executive? I believe it is clearly the latter. London also (supposedly) stated in the Gleaner that the removal of condoms from the vending machine has not created "a big blow up". However, two stories pertaining to the removal ran in the Aquinian, two Aquinian readers responded in the letter to the editor's column plus two articles in the Bruns were written about the condom removal and there was an article in the Gleaner. Not a blow up? Perhaps not, but it is an issue of great concern.

Another member of the esteemed executive self-righteously told a few Aquinian staff the other evening that their articles may threaten the university's chance of expanding the facilities on the campus. In other words, bad public relations mean less funding. Well, I find this argument weak and irrelevant, especially coming from a disgruntled executive member whose Union clearly supports the installation of condom dispensers on campus. Furthermore, any media outlet should strive to report all news which is made known to them. And a Student Union not only has a responsibility to their own constitution, but also they must attempt to reflect the feelings of the students at the university. So far, the Student Union at STU has not even attempted to do this.

Yet, London was quoted in this week's Aquinian (if he wasn't misquoted) as saying that he's also concerned about this issue and feels "we (the Student Union and STU officials) are definitely going to meet on this issue in the near future." Well, London also is developing a history in being instrumental in setting up committees which never meet. It is clear what the Student Union's position is: They support condom dispensers. However, certain wishywashy individuals are afraid to publicly challenge the university and question their actions. Instead, they would rather lay blame on the media outlets. So far they have accusingly pointed their fingers at the Aquinian and the Daily Gleaner, however the only people who should be losing any sleep over this issue is the Student Union who, unlike the university and the AIDS advisory committee, have yet to make any solid public stand on this topic. Before the Union "meets" with anyone they better first let the students know if the support of condom dispensers in residences is truly part of the Union's mandate or if the Union is only worried about not upsetting the university administration and respective funding agencies.

I apologize to anyone who feels the Brunswickan should deal primarily with UNB issues.

There is, in my mind, a major set-back right now between the UNB Student Union and CHSR. CHSR appears to be having a problem with funding and VP Finance James van Raalte has decided to take control of the signing authority for the station's purchase orders. He feels that this action may force CHSR's board of directors to focus their attention in trying to solve the funding problems. Well, van Raalte's heart may be in the right place but his method stinks.

Taking over control of the purchase orders only adds insult to injury and makes a farce of the paid employees' responsibilities at the station. If the Board of Directors is van Raalte's target he should use other methods to make them aware of the Student Union's concern. In fact, the Student Union has representation on this board. Thus the pressure should come from there. Taking over signing authority will not directly affect the board but it does affect the employees and volunteers at the station who are just trying to do their job.

OPINION

The opinions found in Opinion are not necessarily the views of The Brunswickan

Women in Islam

by Yahia Fadlalla

Many societies are simmering with excitement over the rights of women and a demand on her behalf for perfect equality with men. The most noteworthy among champions of women's rights are those men and women who in the name of Islam rave foolishly, some mischievously declaring Islam has in all respects maintained *perfect* equality between the two sexes, while others, due to their ignorance of Islam, claim that Islam is an enemy of women, for it belittles her and lowers her status holding her intellectuality deficient and assigning her a position very much akin to that of animals.

Both of these classes of people are ignorant of Islam or they intentionally confuse the right with the wrong in order to plant the seeds of mischief in societies so as to facilitate the foul game they are out to play.

Islam has given the woman rights and privileges which has never been enjoyed under other religious systems. In Islam, the rights and responsibilities of a woman are *equal* to those of a man but they are not *identical* with them. Equality and sameness are two quite different things. Equality is fairness, justness; but sameness is not. A man and a woman are not identical, but they are created equally. With this distinction in mind, there's no room to imagine that a woman is inferior to a man, there's no ground to assume that she's less important than he just because her rights are not identical to his. The fact that Islam gives her equal rights, but not identical, shows that it takes her into due consideration, acknowledges her, and recognizes her independent personality.

It's not Islam that brands the woman as the product of the devil or the seed of evil. Nor does the Qura'n (The Book of Islam) place man as the dominant master of the woman who has no choice but to surrender to his dominance. Nor was it Islam that introduced the question of whether or not the woman has any soul in her. Never in the history of Islam has any Muslim doubted the human status of the woman or her possession of soul and other spiritual qualities. Unlike other popular beliefs, Islam does not blame Eve alone for the First Sin. The Qura'n makes it clear that *both* Adam and Eve were tempted; that they *both* sinned; that God's pardon was granted to *both* after their repentance; and that God addressed them *jointly*. (See The Qura'n 2:35-36; 7:19-27; 20:117-123).

The rights of the non-Muslim woman of modern times were not granted voluntarily. The non-Muslim woman reached her present position by force, and not through natural processes, mutual consent, or Divine teachings. She had to force her way, and various circumstances came to her aid. Shortage of manpower during wars, pressure of economic needs and requirements of industrial developments forced the woman to get out of her home - to work, to learn, to struggle for her livelihood, to run her race in the course of life side by side with the man. She was forced by circumstances and in turn she forced herself through and acquired her status. Whether *all* women were pleased with these circumstances being on their side, and whether they are happy and satisfied with the results of this course is a different matter. But the fact remains that whatever rights the non-Muslim woman enjoys fall *short* of those of her Muslim counterpart.

The status of women in Islam is not known in many non-Muslim societies, if not all of them. An attempt will be made in the following passages to shed *some* light on the attitude of Islam with regard to women:

Woman is recognized by Islam as a full and equal partner of man in the procreation of human-kind. He is the father; she is the mother, and both are essential for life. Her role is no more less vital than his. By this partnership she has an equal share in every aspect; she is entitled to equal rights; she undertakes equal responsibilities. To this equal partnership in the reproduction of human-kind Allah (God says: "*O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other*") (Qura'n 49:13)(also, see 4:1).

She is equal to man in bearing personal and common responsibilities and receiving rewards for her deeds. She is acknowledged as an independent personality, in possession of human qualities and worthy of spiritual aspirations. Her human nature is neither inferior nor deviant from that of a man. Both are members of one, Allah says: "*and their Lord has accepted (their prayers) and answered them (saying): Never will I cause to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female; you are members, one of another.*" (The Qura'n 3:195)(See also 9:71; 33:35-36).

She is equal to man in the pursuit of education and knowledge. Islam makes no difference between man and woman when enjoins the seeking of knowledge upon Muslims. Over fourteen centuries ago, Muhammed (prophet of Islam) declared the pursuit of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim male or female. This declaration was very clear and was implemented by Muslims throughout history.

She is entitled to freedom of expression as much as man is. Her sound opinions are taken into consideration and can not be disregarded just because she happens to belong to the female sex. It's reported in The Qura'n and history that women not only expressed their opinion *freely* but also argued and participated in serious discussion with the prophet himself as well as with other Muslim leaders (see The Qura'n 58:1-4' 60: 10-12). Besides, there were occasions when Muslim women expressed their views on legislative matters of public interest, and stood in opposition to the Califs, who then accepted the sound arguments of these women. A specific example took place during the Califate of Umar Ibn Al-Khattab.

History records show that women participated in public life with the early Muslims, especially in times of emergencies. Women used to accompany the Muslim armies engaged in battles to nurse the wounded, prepare supplies, and so on. They were not shut behind iron bars or considered worthless creatures and deprived of souls.

Islam grants the woman equal rights to contract, to enterprise, to earn and possess independently. Her life, her property, her honour are as sacred as those of man. If she commits any offense, her penalty is no less or more than a man's in a similar case. If she's wronged, she gets due compensation equal to what a man in her position would get. (see The Qura'n 2:178; 4:92-93).

Dear Reader: Islam does not state these and other *more* rights in a statistical form and then relax. It has taken all measures to safeguard them and put them into practice as integral articles of Faith. It never tolerates those who are inclined to prejudice against women or discrimination between men and women. (See The Qura'n 16: 57-59, 62; 42:47-50; 43:15-19; 53: 21-23). We, Muslims and non-Muslims, should differentiate and distinguish between the teachings of Islam and the actions of those who *claim* to be its followers. We can't blame a car for an accident while its driver does not respect traffic rules, can we?

Any further questions about Islam should be directed towards the Straight Path Group at 453-9513.