

Anger at sexual assaults

This is a letter of frustration, anger and concern. Frustration because letter writing is one of the few constructive outlets available to serve a rapidly growing need. Anger because our society is not meeting this need. Concern because there is a growing number of people being traumatically hurt. As members of Students Help we'd like to express that this letter may not necessarily represent the feelings and views of other volunteers or of Help as a group.

The incentive to write this letter comes from our own feelings of inadequacy in trying to help a victim of an indecent exposure. By sharing her feelings of shock, hurt, anger, disgust and frustration with us, she fulfilled an urgent need to release pent-up emotional strain. From this experience and others of a similar nature we have arrived at a "can-do" consensus. This letter deals with victims and their friends. It deals with the things that can and should be done in the interim whilst the ponderous machinery of social change founders in the wake of reality.

This most recent incident (to our limited knowledge - re your last issue) involves a female victim. This is the commonest case and while we discuss it in terms of this perspective we are not implying a lack of empathy or acceptance of possible role changes in sexual assault situations.

We are becoming increasingly aware of sexual assault and its ramifications for women. Perhaps our awareness is tied to an increased openness on the part of victims to tell other people of the incident. Specifically the feminist liberation movement appears to give many women the confidence and sense of self-worth to come out of their once guilt-ridden shells and talk to someone about sexual assaults. Women are acting on their needs to share their feelings of humiliation, anger and degradation; of having been treated as an object of someone's dominance needs rather than as a person. Hopefully this trend will

continue, for two important reasons. First it is a source of comfort to the victim in sharing their trauma. Also it is acting as positive feedback to the fledgling agencies dealing with the problem and their possible successors - socio-legal agencies for prevention.

One of the most destructive things that can happen to a woman following assault is to have the people she reaches out to laugh it off, not believe that it has happened to her, or to have her husband/lover become incensed by the belief that his territory has been violated. The old sanctity of the vagina trip — once a woman is sexually involved with a man her vagina is his property, only he can penetrate it.

These attitudes are not what she needs or wants. The woman at this point is dealing with her own serious emotional traumas and wants response to her own needs. She needs someone to share her feelings, share her anger and her humiliation. Someone who will see her as and show her that she is still a worthwhile human being, show her that her value as a woman and as a person has in no way been decreased.

After the assault is in the past and the woman has time to sit down and think about what has happened, she is left with a feeling of overwhelming helplessness. Who can she turn to? What can be done? It is important in dealing with the immediate emotional trauma that the woman recognize her need to reach out to someone rather than

internalizing her feelings. Trusted empathetic friends are your primary resource, followed by crisis intervention groups such as Student Help and especially the Rape Crisis Centre. Even for those who feel they have resources in their friends, other groups offer advantages in their greater experience, ability to understand, and a broader knowledge of medical and legal opinions.

A major step to consider is always that of reporting the incident to the police. What good will this do? As the victim expressed to us there seems to be a certain futility in going to the police. As isolated exposure may remain on file forever unless the same man with the same description is report repeating the assaults. It remains important to report these incidents, however insignificant they may seem, in

that each isolated statistic helps add up to something with meaning to the seemingly insensitive bureaucrats in our society.

In sharing our anger with you, we hope to make you angry too. If enough people become really angry, some meaningful things can be done. Our hurt should become a societal hurt.

Chris Olsen
Carol Ge

True abortion story

To: Katy Le Rougetel, Joan Strom, Kim Taylor, Drew Sommerfeldt, Dorothy Timko, the grandmother and anyone else interested, especially those of you who really care.

Here's a true story for you:
"C'mon baby let's make love. No one gets knocked-up the first time." Pretty convincing words to a fifteen-year old "in love." I was that fifteen-year old, Ms. Strom and Ms. Timko, and I know from experience that "it takes two to tango." I didn't get pregnant by myself. My faith in "lover boy's" words was further destroyed after discovering that he had gotten two girls pregnant before me. I ask you, is this "responsibility"?

So there I was a fifteen, caught between two opposing views. Both sides arguing, bringing out "facts," but both sides unable and unwilling to realize, that it was me, a person, someone

with feelings and a life to live, that was going to have to make the decision. (These arguments are not unlike your discussions in previous issues of the Gateway.)

My point is: that the decision of whether or not to have an abortion is not philosophical or political as Ms. Le Rougetel seems to think, genetic as Ms. Strom states, religious from Ms. Timko's side, nor medical as Ms. Taylor and Sommerfeldt argue. It's a matter of deep personal conflict. A conflict that may only be resolved by a choice between two aversive alternatives. It is an issue of which the only right and moral decision can be made by the woman faced with such a situation. This woman must live with the decision for the rest of her life, just as I have had to do.

And yes, Ms. Strom, I have accepted the consequences of my actions. How can any of you, without actually having an abortion, realize the full consequences of such an action? In my mind, they are greater by far than the consequences suffered from going through a pregnancy. I would not wish the physical and emotional agony, that goes along with an abortion, upon anyone. Sure, the physical pain is forgotten, but the emotional pain returns everytime I see a newborn infant.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that I am pro-abortion. If faced with the same situation at this point in my life, I

would not choose abortion; it was my only option, in my mind, when I was fifteen. At the same time I would never discourage any woman from having an abortion. I am behind any women 100 per cent who has to make a decision, whatever her choice may be. A woman, who feels in her mind that having a baby would seriously disrupt her emotional or physical well-being, deserves as much moral support as the woman who decides, on the grounds of religious or moral beliefs, to go through with the pregnancy.

To all of you, with your arguments as to whether or not an unborn puppy has potential to become a dog, and to you who are worried about totalitarian regimes in Spain, and especially to you who say that a 'good' girl doesn't get herself into such a situation, I implore you to quit arguing principles and start thinking, people.

(Name withheld by request)

Gateway Notices:

Gateway has surplus photographic equipment on sale: a motor drive designed for a Pentax body, complete with two rechargeable Rollei NiCd batteries is on sale for \$300. Check Room 282, SUB, for details.

FRANK MUTTON

THE WAY
I SEE IT



I was invited over to the university on Saturday to meet with the winners of the Student Union elections of Friday, and a nicer bunch of kids I've never met.

Jay Spark, the new president, is a quiet, well-mannered young man who has a penchant for Second Street Men's Wear suits and Woolco ReeLeather shoes. He has asked me to meet his slate at their new headquarters, The Inn on Whyte, so that they could explain their ideas for running the university.

The election was a hard-fought battle between equally matched teams. Mr. Spark's primary opposition came from a tinfoil-wrapped creature named Rene Le Larke, who had a bad habit of pointing out that Jay's name spelled backwards is krap.

Spark's platform was based on the highly original idea that for one week each year the bookstore should be moved to the Ice Arena. Some people felt that this move would entail enormous expense and result in even more of a mix-up than the present system, but Jay wants everyone to know that students at U.B.C. saved up to five minutes by standing in line in their hockey arena. Amazingly, only two students suffered spinal fractures when they slipped on the ice.

The rest of the Spark slate is even more interesting than Jay. Shirley Armstrong, V.P. Services

is from Montreal, where she actually lived next door to a man who spoke Quebecois. She lives in Residence and enjoys planning keg parties and Floor Socials. She hopes to introduce a program that will allow all students to live in Residence for one week. "They'll love all the friendship and happiness and keg parties and floor socials," she says.

Dale Somerville, the new V.P. Finance, is in Commerce and enjoys helping his father foreclose the mortgage on pensioners and widows. He says that all students have the potential to get their B. comms. and enter Business Management, but some of them come from poorer backgrounds and end up in Medicine or Law because they feel a need to prove themselves. He would like to see briefcases for everybody, and two tan leather coats in every closet.

The other members of the new executive, Guy Huntington and David Rand, were too busy selling ladies underwear to grad students but they did promise to drop by the Journal and show me their enormous selection of children's photographs. I can hardly wait.

Many people are worried that yet another year of incredibly boring, mundane politics from yet another waterass bunch of do-gooders will alienate more and more students from the

political scene, but Mr. Spark emphasizes that this will not be the case. He will bring a new vitality, a fresh youthfulness and a desire for realistic change to the job. He will also name his apartment in HUB the White Four-Man, and plans to have his girlfriend's name legally changed to Rosalyn.

I only wish more of these long-hairs on campus would take the Spark Team Attitude and heed the words of the new president — "I mean, face it — we're only here for those good marks that'll get us a good job, eh?"

Meanwhile, back in the real world, I understand that our own Keith Ashwell has been given a suspended sentence by Justice Michael O'Burn after being caught exposing himself to little girls at the Jubilee Auditorium last week. Ashwell claims that the Edmonton Symphony's rendition of Wagner's Prelude to Lohengrin so moved him that his pants were down to his knees before he knew what hit him. He'll be hit with a \$500 fine if he does it again.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, Jack Horner has just announced that he made a handsome profit of close to \$40,000 on his roast last week. Most of the money will go towards purchasing enough plastic explosive to "blow all the guests to hell." (his words).