

Law school reply

# Many students retain old attitudes

by Elizabeth Cusak Walsh  
The article entitled "Law School upholds Conservatism" Oct. 22, 1971 which was printed under the pseudonym, "A. Snipe", has provoked a good deal of discussion among Law School faculty and students.

Reaction has generally been unfavorable. Second and third year students who had not undergone the same orientation program as the first year students were astounded by comments about professionalism and politics. Perhaps Mr. Snipe was reading too much into the words of the speakers at orientation sessions; at least more than many other students inferred.

However Mr. Snipe and I were both shocked by the faculty's reluctance to admit we were being given "tools" to work with the legal system, much as the mechanic is given tools with which he works on machinery.

### SERVANTS OF A CLASS

There is nothing degrading to the lawyer in this analogy unless he feels a class-based superiority to the man who earns less money than himself. Both men provide essential public services. However, the lawyer has generally tended to serve an exclusive and monied public, whereas the skilled plumber, electrician and mechanic have served the general public.

Perhaps some lawyers do not

wish to think of themselves as servants of the people or perhaps they do not even wish to be thought of as employees of corporations, but rather as consultants.

Analogy with the tradesman fits, whether or not it offends the lawyer's sense of "dignity". If lawyers thought of themselves as servants of the people, then maybe things would begin to change around this province.

### NO EVIDENCE OF RACISM

Whether or not he intended to do so, Mr. Snipe gave the impression that faculty members were guilty of racist attitudes. We have had no evidence of this. The example quoted in the article is taken from an old textbook and is not a comment made in class by a professor. It certainly wasn't meant to be taken seriously.

Mr. "Snipe" should have concentrated on the evidence of racism which was displayed by first year students at a recent class on Human Rights. Guest speakers were accused of bias because they were Black and asked why they thought they had a right to fight for their rights. Very few people made similar remarks, but these examples lead me to suspect there may be a certain amount of racism in our first year class.

No matter how insignificant the degree of racism or the number of people with racist

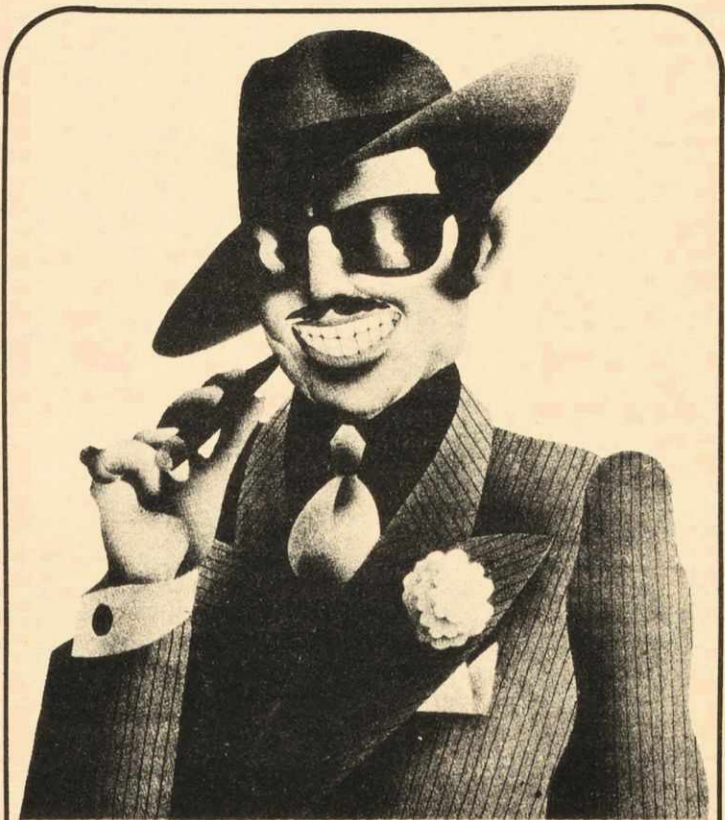
attitudes — if indeed there are any, for there is very little evidence of it — they can do great harm in the future.

Racist legislators, if our class produces any, may attempt to introduce reactionary human rights legislation or oppose progressive legislation. Reactionary prosecuting or defense lawyers, and reactionary members of the Bench tend to interpret human rights legislation as narrowly as possible. This absolves white racists of guilt or may interpret other kinds of legislation (e.g. criminal) as broadly as possible to convict Black people of crimes of which they ought not to be found guilty.

I do not know enough about our legal system to enable me to say that this has happened in Nova Scotia. I merely conjecture that it can happen. This is why I am disturbed by the thought there might be racists in Law School, who will someday have a great impact on society.

### MALE CHAUVINISM ABOUNDS

For the same reason it is also frightening to think the Law School contains many students who are male chauvinists. I do not believe that male chauvinism exists to any greater degree in Law School than in most other faculties. However evidence indicates that it does exist.



Ya say ya need a good lawyer, chickie? We turn 'em out by the dozen. Conservative? Yep! Straight? You bet — straight, clean, all-American boys. They'll get what you want when you want it with no hassles. Call at da Weldon building anytime. Tell 'em Fast Eddy sent ya.

Domus Legis, "The House of the Law", sometimes known as the law "frat" holds stag movies which are to the best of my knowledge, fairly well-attended. Rather frequently, Domus holds gala social evenings which are referred to as "nurses' parties".

They are generally advertised by posters bearing crudely drawn pictures of a buxom lass in considerably less than all-encompassing attire. Perish the thought that the nurses or other students invited to attend might actually have minds.

Any reference in class to legal mistakes made by women are treated with boisterous laughter and thumping of desks. The implication is that women are nothing but "dumb broads". The married men seem to laugh the loudest, for some reason. Admittedly women make stupid mistakes. But when they are amusing, they are no less amusing than stupid mistakes made by men.

Male chauvinist comments abound in the Law School. Examples include statements like the following: two kinds of women in law school — those already married and those there to get a husband; very few female Law students retain their femininity for three years;

that women are too emotional to serve on juries; that so and so looks like a football coach with a wad of chewing tobacco in her mouth, constant joking references to "lib chicks" or women's lib types. These indicate male chauvinism is present in this institution.

### LITTLE HOPE FOR FUTURE

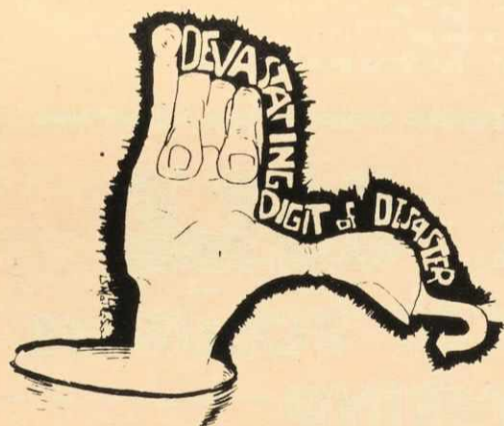
So why am I "bitching"? Basically for the same reasons that I am worried about racism. The difference is that male chauvinism is quite noticeable and open. Instead of having a potential effect on minority groups, male chauvinism in lawyers can have a potential effect on 53% of Nova Scotia's population. That's no minority.

A sexist lawyer will refuse to allow women on juries because they aren't capable of reacting objectively, but always sympathize with one side or the other.

According to a recent article in "Chatelaine", more and more rapists get off the hook every year because of the defense lawyer's attempt to make the victims look like seductive "loose women", "whores", "flousies", "sluts", etc. All male juries tend to think of women who have intercourse out of wedlock in these terms, whereas the rapist, whether or not he was obviously brutal, was merely "horny".

None of the legislators of this province who have graduated from Dal Law School have been overly solicitous to the rights of women. There is at present, no human rights legislation in this province to protect women. There is an unequal minimum wage for men and women. Several provincial laws discriminate openly against women, especially married women.

Will Dalhousie lawyers of the future fight for change in these areas? If they are as sexist as graduates, there seems little hope they will.



## SMU gets DDD

In its continuing efforts to be fair to all, the Gazette this week presents an unprecedented three hundred and one Devastating Digits.

The first three hundred go to the SMU students who last weekend wreaked mirthful havoc on the Dal campus (see story p. 3). We apologize to them for all the big words we are using.

Our three hundred and first award goes to SMU Dean of Men, Ken Bendelier, who urged that the incident be kept quiet. We suggest someone make an effort to keep Ken quiet as he sounds just as incompetent as he is (and that, SMU people tell us, takes some doing) . . .



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