

Ignorance

is not

Purity

The attitude of some notable members of this university's administration toward the distribution of the McGill Birth Control Handbook is nothing short of ridiculous.

The denial of birth control information to students is a mere continuation of the myth "If we don't tell you then you won't find out. Ignorance is not only bliss, it is purity." Knowledge of birth control methods and devices would lead to promiscuity, therefore student representatives at Shireff Hall were not allowed to openly distribute the pamphlet to women in the residence. And of course, there are The Pictures!!

The university consists mainly of young people. The idea behind a university, in the first place is education, and education does not apply only to academic learning. Young people thrown together in a university atmosphere are experimenting and learning about living, about growing up, about relating to people. To deny the existence of sexual communication is completely unrealistic.

There are then three possibilities: birth control to prevent conception of future hapless babies, abortions to erase the "mistake", or young mothers with babies they didn't want and the problems of what to do with them.

The Birth Control Handbook contains a list of abortion methods used by pregnant girls and the results are frightening to say the least: "sudden violent death; fatal almost immediately; severe burning of tissues - haemorrhage shock - death." The list is itself an index of utmost desperation and fear.

Abortion, under the present legal situation, is generally practised in the most inhuman way. Butchery would probably be a better word. Girls who have their babies either give them up for adoption or keep them. In the second case, they are trapped. Life for girls who decide to keep their babies suddenly becomes a narrow one-way street. In most cases shortage of money precludes the hope of further education, especially if the mother remains single. Neither choice is human.

The obvious alternative is simple prevention, but women are not born with the necessary knowledge.

Since our society places all the stigma of unmarried parenthood and responsibility for the child on the woman, she is the one who is forced if necessary, to make sure she does not conceive. The Birth Control Handbook was designed to fulfill this purpose in such a way that every girl who so wishes can learn all the factual details of as many methods as possible with no needless embarrassment to anyone.

Once the fear of pregnancy is removed, many people, especially parents of university students, fear promiscuity. Venereal disease is foremost in their minds. The Handbook covers that subject too. What many people fail to realize is that this handbook only takes the stand that every man and woman should be aware of all the medical facts pertaining to their sexual activity and its physical repercussions. That includes the dangers. It presents its case plainly and simply. In many ways it is a frightening piece of literature. It is not a wholesale endorsement of complete sexual freedom. Its purpose is education and any women's residence that will not let it be openly circulated on the grounds of obscenity is the last living vestige of the Dark Ages.

