

Controversy in perspective

To the editors:

Frankly, I am sick of the controversy surrounding the much talked about article, *A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex*. In my opinion, the article is pornographic and should not have been printed in any newspaper, despite the defence put forth by the gay community. I should point out that I am not opposed to education about AIDS, but the article in question goes far beyond any conventional means of educating.

An informative list of high and low-risk activities is acceptable and useful, but sordid erotic tales serve no purpose other than to offend the population as a whole — regardless of their sexual orientation. The accompanying photograph is not offensive because of its homosexual nature. It would be equally offensive and inappropriate if it depicted a heterosexual couple engaging in the same act.

Any newspaper, university or otherwise, has a responsibility to its readers to print tasteful and informative articles. Pornography is neither. The article printed would be more appropriate in a pornographic magazine where such pictures and squalid sex anecdotes belong.

I do believe in freedom of the press but we all know that this freedom has limits. The *Dalhousie Gazette* has no right to overstep these moral boundaries. I do not believe that this article was published as an educational tool, but rather as a means to sensationalize an already controversial article. That, my friends, is REALITY.

Jennifer C. Adams



To the editors:

Rumour has it that the morally virtuous, sexually pure members of the Engineering Society of Dalhousie University delivered a letter of protest to the offices of the *Gazette* concerning a recent article on erotic safe-sex practices for gay males. If this is the case, then it is indeed gratifying to know that the engineers of the future have adopted such high standards of personal and professional conduct that they will never patronize establishments catering to such vulgar tastes as those indulged in by gay males. Perhaps a Monastic Order of Professional Engineers (MOPE) might be founded to encourage them in their efforts toward perfect chastity and high-mindedness? Offending organs could then play heavenly hymns instead of providing sexual gratification which, we all know, crusading engineers never consider! No doubt their zeal will express itself in such areas as the war against pomography (no *Playboy* for them!) and the women's

movement, as they seek to alter the misogynist attitudes of patriarchal society. Their holy mission will penetrate to the Grawood itself someday...

John Carter

BSW student
Maritime School of Social
Work



To the editors:

The Student Union of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design supports your decision to print the article "*A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex*". The article presents a positive outlook on the issue of safe sex, something which is lacking in the mainstream media.

We also support the autonomy of the *Dalhousie Gazette* from its Student Union to ensure the principle of freedom of the press.

Student Union of the Nova
Scotia College of Art and
Design



To the editors:

The Gay and Lesbian Association of Nova Scotia (GALA) highly commends the *Gazette* for its printing of "*A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex*". This is in the best tradition of the *Gazette's* informed treatment of important social issues.

The *Gazette* has consistently been supportive of the gay and lesbian communities in the Halifax area, not merely those of us (at least ten per cent of the student population at any time) who attend or have attended Dalhousie. Over ten years ago the *Gazette* received the "Lavender Diesel", an award made by GALA to our supporters outside the lesbian and gay communities for "services above and beyond the call of liberalism".

The promotion of safer sex practices transcends issues of sexual orientation and censorship. While so-called street language may offend some sensibilities, reaching people making choices about sex practices with information they can understand saves lives. Wrapping the same information in cautious euphemisms may soothe sensitivities... but put those same lives at risk.

Again we commend the *Gazette* for its courageous stand in printing "*A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex*".

In support,

The Membership
Gay and Lesbian Association
of Nova Scotia

To the editors:

It's about time we got the facts straight, so to speak, on the issue of "safer sex". "*A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex*" is right on the mark in dealing with the realities of sex and education. For too long our health educators (the experts?) have neglected the erotic aspects of safer sex practices, i.e., sex can and should be a positive, enjoyable experience despite stilted condom mechanics and the clinical burdens of safeguarding oneself from STDs, namely HIV.

While mainstream heterophiles may consider sexual issues (safe sex or otherwise) to be ineffable, the article ignores mainstream's petty sensibilities and attempts to promote alternate sexual practices by depicting "sex-positive" scenarios that are well within the realm of non-violent, non-coercive, non-humiliating, safer sex. True, at first glance these may look like excerpts from some lusty porno mag, but a closer look, between the lines, should reveal some striking parallels to the lives of anyone who is sexually active. This imparts a palpable quality to the article as it also dispels the innuendo and euphemism surrounding mainstream safe-sex dialogue with explicit vernacular that has proven to be an effective means of promoting safe sex among higher risk groups, namely gay men.

The shock value of the article becomes a moot point in light of the fact that its incisiveness may help save lives everywhere — young and old, gay and straight. And that, people, are the crux of the matter.

To denounce the article as being debauched and pornographic will only serve to impede the efforts of those who really care enough to do something about stopping the spread of AIDS among people like myself, yourself and to the ignoramus' who are too damn righteous in the face of a harsh reality.

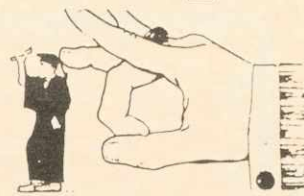
I say, "It's better read than dead!"

F. Morley



To the editors:

I have no doubts that you have received a very large influx of letters concerning the article "*A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex*". However, my concern is not with that particular article but with the one included on the page entitled "Or get Off the Toilet" by Dan Hart. To Mr. Hart I address this question: Just who the hell do you think you are?? I happen to consider myself a very open-minded person. I firmly believe in equal rights for all, be they male or female, white or colored, heterosexual or, in this case, homosexual.



Even so, I must question certain aspects of the controversial article. But still it was Mr. Hart's article that truly offended me! First of all, I have to wonder what the statement, "Girl, this article is for and about gay men" was supposed to mean. Is Mr. Hart insinuating that it is only females who will find this article offensive? Think again buddy! Just what kind of dream world are you living in? Even more infuriating was Mr. Hart's adamant stand that the only ones who passed "The Test" were those who were in total agreement with the preceding article. How dare he tell anyone what they should or should not believe? Correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought that this was a free country! Just as the *Gazette* had the freedom to print this article, so do we, the readers, have the freedom to decide what we think of it. Our opinions are our opinions, and nobody, including Mr. Hart, can tell us that they are wrong!

And so I address this conclusion to you Dan! I think you are the one who should shit or get off the toilet! The rest of us already have!

Mary E. LeBlanc

University of King's College



To the editors:

"*A Gay Men's Guide to Erotic Safer Sex*" is really making headlines all across the country, huh? When we printed the article for our Gay and Lesbian Supplement in February, life started going hay-

wire and hasn't really let up yet.

The *Muse* has received a lot of press, good and bad, about the article, but reporters seem to have missed the point. The *Guide* was meant to inform and make people aware, especially gay men, that AIDS is a serious health problem. It also attempted to make safe sex fun, less intimidating; more erotic. Unfortunately, most have focussed on the words used by the authors rather than the message.

Since, the article has received national coverage and been reprinted in several CUP papers (including the *Gazette*), however, I think more people are seeing the light. Let's hope that our headaches will save some lives. We must remember that gay men are not the only ones who could learn from the article.

Congratulations on your bravery and your progressive thinking. Thanks for supporting us.

Dawn Mitchell

Editor, *The Muse*

TO:

T. Bayne
D. Boucher
J. Curry
A. Figueroa
J. Loughheed
D. Reble
D. Robinson

M. Schweigert, and those who didn't sign their letters. Due to lack of space and publishing policy we can only print letters that are 250 words or less and signed, double-spaced. (You can request to remain anonymous). We would like to publish your letters so we've kept them and if you'd like to revamp them and/or identify yourself please do so. Thanks!

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JEREMY ROBINSON

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