

Talking gonads and Santa, too

There are days when I think you could get more out of an issue of the *Chronicle-Herald* if you were to roll it up and smoke it.

I say this because of my irrefutably infinite wisdom, not to mention the free fast food coupon booklet which I received for subscribing to the *Daily News*.

Ah, the *Daily News*! The journalistic equivalent

of slapstick comedy. It could pass for one of those cool British tabloids, except for its utter lack of panache and personality, not to mention all those editorials (almost one every day!) calling for the return of the electric chair. Although I will pause here to concede that the *Daily News* does feature, on a semi-regular basis, **many correctly spelled words!** (Furthermore, some of these words actually appear in the news articles!)

However, I do not attempt to capture your housefly-like attention, dear reader, to mock either of Halifax's daily newspapers (the mocking part out of the way already, as you may have noticed). Au contraire! (Translation: On the contraire!). I want to share with you one of the more interesting sections of the *Chronicle-Herald*. (The less interesting sections would take too long.)

On page A2 of each issue, the *Chronicle-Herald* offers a slim column of news articles which have consistently provided me with important and intelligent insights into the human condition.

Or some bullshit like that.

For proof, consider two recent capsules featured in this section:

Brazil mutes talking anti-AIDS penis. In four short paragraphs, we learn that a recent television ad campaign in Brazil has featured a man talking to his penis, named Braulio, about the importance of wearing condoms. According to the news article, "Braulio is a relatively common name (and)...people with that name complain they're being ridiculed."

I must agree with those poor Braulios who have suffered because of the insensitivity of the Brazilian Ministry of Health, which produced those ads. How fortunate they were, these Braulios, that they weren't attacked by strangers intent on enveloping them in latex (mental note: idea for a good prank!). On the other hand, imagine the Hallowe'en costume possibilities for all those kids named Braulio!

At this point, to distract you from the fact that I'm just wasting your time, let me offer this Grandpa Simpson quote: (Picking up a wrapper from the sidewalk) "La-tex con-dom. Gee, I'd like to live in one of those!"

Perhaps the Brazilian government should consider acquiring the rights to using Grandpa Simpson as its new condom pusher. After all, that quote sounds just like the thing any self-respecting penis would say, doesn't it? All the penis needs is a different name. Then it could move onwards and upwards, maybe sing a jingle or do a little dance.

The *Chronicle-Herald* article concludes with the Brazilian Minister of Health announcing that the anti-AIDS campaign will continue, but without the penis. I really think that's unfortunate. My cable's just been hooked up, and I was looking forward to

some quality satellite programming.

Santa tactics put lover in a lurch. In

Nantes, France, a "...young Romeo trying to woo his girlfriend Santa Claus-style...got stuck in the chimney and had to be freed by the fire department. Firemen... had to destroy the chimney to free the young man."

This article, although only three paragraphs in length, offers us numerous insights into the problems with modern civilization. For example, the reporter who wrote this story has mixed up his Shakespeare plays — in "Romeo and Juliet", Romeo did not woo Juliet by climbing down her chimney, he fired off a torrid memo to her from his windowless office deep in the sub-basements of an ornate Paris opera house! The ignorance of some journalists!

The only non-fictional person who breaks into houses via the chimney, to my knowledge, is Santa Claus, and frankly, I think it's time we caught on to Mr. Claus' little scam. It's bad enough that he employs only dwarves and reindeer — does Mike Harris know about this affirmative action scheme? He smokes, he indirectly pressures children to go to sleep earlier than their own free will might dictate, he breaks and enters, and while there is no overt threat to family, few parents take the risk of not leaving him some food and drink. Come on, that's just plain old extortion!

So now, to make matters worse, Mr. Claus has inspired a copycat crime, and consequently, a perfectly good chimney has been ruined. What kind of a role model is this guy? Shouldn't we be teaching our children that Santa Claus is not a role model? He makes lists of good and bad children — paging Richard Nixon! At least Tricky Dick's enemies list was limited to grown-ups!

In summary, I think these two short news articles have a lot to say about modern society. Look at the evidence: people are so influenced by television ads that they go out and make fun of other people, just because they share their name with a penis. And, at least one person considers the B-and-E example set by Santa Claus not only socially acceptable, but extremely imitable.

We need to be more circumspect in what we watch or read or are taught by our parents. We need to analyze and to think critically. We must frequently, fully, and honestly consider this question: is this really good for me?

Now excuse me, there's a two-for-one Harvey's hamburger with my name on it. Extra mayo, please!

RICHARD LIM

Next time, we're flying

This year I decided to treat myself to something a little different. Instead of rushing back to school via the airplane, I decided to take the train, via VIA.

I had a lot of romantic notions about the train. My Great-grandfather worked for the railroad for much of his life. He used to say that, "This country was built on the railroad industry." And I suppose that there is something historically intriguing about all of the immigrant workers who died laying mile after mile of track from the Atlantic to the Pacific, helping to create the Canadian dream. Every British film I've ever seen has had some gilded-age mahogany-lined coach in it. But I have to say that all of that is lost to me now, after my 27-hour journey from Toronto to Halifax.

It started in Toronto with the bitchiest ticket agent I've ever had to deal with! This woman tried to charge me far too much money, and looked stunned when I proceeded to inform her about the seat sale VIA was offering. She was then indignant when I showed her the published fares, by suggesting that I was telling her how to do her job. She was rude and nasty and wondered why I would want a sleeping compartment, implying that I was too young to travel in anything but coach.

As I was travelling with my roommate, the infamous Josef Tratnik, I expressed an interest in obtaining a room, as opposed to two roomettes. The deal being that for the price of two roomette tickets, one could upgrade one's ticket to a much larger room for two. Upon checking her computer terminal (which I had to ask her to do!), she informed me that there were no rooms left for the day on which I wanted to travel.

Having accepted that I was

going to have to settle for a roomette, the ticket agent then began to go into great detail regarding the "...closet-like place" I was going to reside in. She asked if I had ever seen a roomette (which I hadn't), and began to amuse herself by telling me that I was going to be in for quite a shock at the lack of space that I would be afforded.

OPINION

I wondered at this point if this was any indication of how the rest of my trip would be, but I thought, hey, this is only one nasty unionized employee, they can't all be that bad.

The day of my departure came, and I headed for the station. If you've never been to Union Station in Toronto, it's a lovely old building that has been completely ruined by tacky commercialism. The person who took my bags was highly put-out by the fact that I was shipping extra baggage, and suggested that it might not arrive when I did, even though I was told in advance that I could do this.

The ride to Montreal was the high point of the journey. The attendants were actually friendly. In Montreal, we had a two-hour wait, long enough to get bored, but not long enough to leave the station. So, my travelling companion and I stood around and waited with the rest of the cattle.

After boarding the train to Halifax, we checked out our accommodations. We each found our roomettes. As it turned out, the bitchy ticket agent had been correct. These things are so small, they belong on a space shuttle. You actually have to get out of your room to pull down

the bed, and if you have to use the washroom during the night, you have to put your bed away again.

So far the journey had been somewhat less than the joy I was expecting, so I decided to treat myself to a nice dinner in the Dining Car.

I thought that some wine would be nice, and was served some frightful August 17th, 1995 vintage. To make the wine really special, it was served to me in an obviously cracked glass that slowly leaked onto the table that still had someone else's dishes on it.

I made the mistake of ordering the fish, and was served an overcooked, dried-up piece of halibut that more or less resembled my shoe, and had more bones than an old fashioned girdle. My baked potato was a lovely dark beige outside and inside, and the corn which was supposed to accent the plate, looked regurgitated.

I would have to say that the best part of the meal was my ice cream. They serve the really cheap kind of vanilla that sort of resembles glue when and if it melts. It's nasty, but fortunately for VIA, that's the way I like it.

Finally, to top off my wonderful two days with Via Rail, I had to wait in line for over an hour-and-a-half for my baggage when I arrived in Halifax.

This really was an educational trip. One of the most important things I learned from it is this: the government does not belong in the travel industry. The outcome of their involvement is definitely a lack of commitment from those employed by the government, and subsequently, a lack of attention to detail and quite frankly, to class.

Boy, am I ever glad I'm not afraid of flying.

ANDREW KIZAS

NEWS

UBC won't reopen Poli Sci admissions

BY CHRIS NUTTALL-SMITH & JIM CONLEY

VANCOUVER (CUP) — The University of British Columbia won't re-open admissions to its graduate department of political science, despite a vote by the faculty of arts urging that the suspension be lifted.

Admissions to the department were suspended this summer after lawyer Joan McEwen released a report that stated the university's political science department was rife with racism and sexism.

On Sept. 7, nearly 160 members of the arts faculty and a handful of student representatives met to discuss a motion urging the university to re-open admissions.

After an often-emotional two-hour debate, the faculty passed the motion by a vote of 97 to 52.

The decision comes just two-and-a-half months after UBC president David Strangway adopted the McEwen Report's recommendation that admissions to the department be closed.

The majority of the debate's speakers supported the motion to re-open admissions, arguing that the McEwen report was methodologically flawed, punished the entire department for the alleged actions of only a few faculty, and set dangerous precedents curtailing academic freedom and the presumption of innocence.

Kathryn Harrison, an assistant professor of political science, said that she had personally experienced sexism throughout her career. She argued in favour of the motion, however, because the McEwen report did not allow accused faculty to defend themselves.

When McEwen allowed faculty to respond to allegations, it was relegated to an appendix or treated lightly, she said.

After the meeting political science professor Phillip Resnick said he strongly supported the motion to re-open admissions.

"The discussion centred on the conflict between the core values of a liberal university, which I see as pluralism, tolerance and mutual respect, from the much more sensitive implications of the McEwen report which frames this discussion in the hard language of identity politics—racism, sexism, sexual harassment— issues which turn a university into camps based on race, gender, [and] sexual orientation," he said.

Michael Smith, a member of the graduate student's society, lambasted Resnick's position.

Visibly trembling, Smith said that if the faculty accepted the motion they would send a clear message that they didn't care about students but were instead interested in protecting their own power.

"Phil Resnick has put his finger on the essence of the controversy which has followed the release [of the McEwen report]."

"There is indeed an identity politics at work here, but it is one which centres on white male identity. To defend injustice, simply invoke academic freedom and you become a hero," Smith said.

As the debate wore on, some faculty expressed their unease with the motion because it ignored allegations of racism and sexism, but said they would vote in its favour out of fear that the continued closure of admissions could harm their academic freedom.