

BLOOD & THUNDER

Letters to the Editor

Social debate needs to have base in logic

To the Editor:

Your decision to re-publish my letter in full on November 15, 1996, without any deletions, was remarkable and speaks well for your intellectual honesty. As you are probably aware, the commercial newspapers edit letters as a matter of course to suit their own agenda, or the philosophy of their masters, or out of fear that they might annoy some powerful group in society, or simply to be "politically correct." There is very little an ordinary citizen can do if his views are tampered with by removing certain critical sentences or paragraphs, or if a letter is not published at all. The newspapers assign such rights to themselves, and are free "legally" to do whatever they please. The hallowed "freedom of the press" is confined to those who own the press or to their surrogates. Of course, some papers are better than others.

You say in the editorial that the passages you had removed were "particularly offensive" to you. However, you did not elaborate as to what was offensive about them. The truth can be bitter, but need not be offensive. I stand by what I had said, and unless someone can point out a factual error or a logical flaw, I cannot revise my views just because they do not conform to the popular thinking of the day. Every university student should have a similar attitude in any intellectual discussion.

As human beings, we are all liable to make mistakes. Some mistakes are more subtle than others, and some people are more prone to making certain kinds of errors. For example, logical errors. Even mathematicians can make a logical error in a complicated mathematical proof, and may not always be logical in non-mathematical spheres of their lives. It is, therefore, not possible to "convince" a person of the correctness of a statement, if the person is incapable of logical thinking, or is not accustomed to using the language precisely.

Unfortunately, lack of use of precise

language, poor reasoning, and lack of logical thinking are not confined to some inexperienced students. Such shortcomings on the part of those who wield power in our society lead to suffering and injustice. I have noticed flaws in a judgement of the Supreme Court of Canada, and have written several times during the last few months to the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister of Canada, with copies to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, but the response has been complete silence. The Judicial Council of Canada did respond by saying that they did not want to get involved. I have been asking a very simple question: is there a recourse if the judgement of the Supreme Court of Canada suffers from poor reasoning and

logical flaws? Perhaps someone at the Faculty of Law at UNB can answer the question. I shall appreciate some specific responses from you to the suggestions I had made in my letter. For example, as to why the field of expertise or the degree program of your contributors at UNB cannot or should not accompany their names?

Matin Yaqzan
Department of Mathematics & Statistics,
UNB (Retired)

Editor's Note: Because of space restrictions, my full response to Mr. Yaqzan's questions can be found on our website www.unb.ca/web/bruns.

Council needs to embrace feminism

To the Editor:

Within last week's column "Council Watch" it was reported that the Social Issues Committee intended to "make some shifts in focus from past years." Such changes included a move from last year's "slightly feminist stance" on social issues. This new agenda put forth by council has left me some what confused.

Firstly, I'm curious to know what social issues addressed by council held a slightly feminist stance. I did not notice such activities and considering my personal interests (i.e.: feminism and gender studies), I am disappointed that I was unaware of these events.

Secondly I am concerned that such a progressive feminist stance is now threatened by these changes, especially in light of the upcoming anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. For, as it quite commonly known, ML (Marc Lépine) premeditated the murder of 14 women as an anti-feminist "statement" against the advancement of women in the positions of power. His actions spoke loudly against the social changes indicative to the feminist movement and attempted to silence the feminist voice.

For council to move away from a feminist stance would prevent a true comprehension of what the Montreal Massacre symbolizes in the lives of women. If UNB's student body is reluctant to use its feminist voice, I'm saddened by the question, "Has ML succeeded?"

In sisterhood,
Jina Rodas

To heck with Bruns

To the Editor:

I am a student at St. Thomas but I am a regular reader of *The Brunswick*. I am writing to complain about the Halloween issue of the paper. To put it bluntly, I was horrified!! In the classified section, there were several classified ads for trips to hell and to call Beelzebub at 666-4666. As a Christian student, I was very insulted and I'm sure I'm not the one. I understand that Halloween is an age-old tradition but ads like that are juvenile and uncalled for.

Patty Banks

Faith and Religiosity

Religion is one of the most contentious factors in the heated debate about homosexuality and bisexuality. The ties between church and state have produced some negative results in the treatment of lesbian people; although European countries are more firmly entrenched in religion-state policies than North American countries. Within North America, theological arguments against homosexuality/bisexuality have come from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Most Christian faiths denigrate lesbian people to the position of "abominations" or "aberrations of nature." The accusations by many religions of bisexuality as sinners, sodomites or perverts of nature ring throughout our society. This is not to say that all religious people are homophobic or bigoted; they merely believe that bisexuality is not part of the "natural" scheme of things. However, a number do hide behind religious sentiment in order to justify their prejudicial attitudes and values, using a veil of spirituality to mask a discriminative stance. In either case, the consequences can be felt in the existence of certain laws

condemning homosexual/bisexual behaviours or activities, the vitriolic bashing of lesbians in the media, violence against lesbians and the denial of equal rights to homosexuals/bisexuals. In other words, faith can be a powerful tool for those who seek to deny humanity to other human beings based on religious belief.

Most of the Judaeo-Christian arguments against homosexuality/bisexuality come from Biblical texts and associated literature. One of the main injunctions against homosexuality appears to be the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities that were destroyed by God supposedly because of homosexual acts performed within the city. Yet if we actually read this Biblical section, there is no mention of homosexuality in the reasons for the cities' destruction. Some scholars, such as John Boswell, have argued that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed due to their inhospitable nature. The Gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John do not mention homosexuality, but

some texts do have clear messages condemning homosexuality and bisexuality. Leviticus made a straightforward argument in his statement, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination." This is a clear example of Judaeo-Christianity's attitude against lesbians. However, this same prohibition also condemns the mixing of fabrics, cutting hair, eating shellfish and rabbit, and having sex during menstruation; religion's selective omission of textual sections seems to be the case in this argument.

Saint Paul is another important figure in the religious argument against homosexuality. In his classic statement, Saint Paul uses the analogy of heterosexuality and homosexuality when he speaks of polytheism versus monotheism in religion. The analogy of men with men (leaving out lesbians) as a crime against the nature of individuals is clear, but not necessarily in the manner that many people interpret it. Saint Paul apparently refers to heterosexual men going against their nature and engaging in homosexual acts. Unfortunately, he does not mention individuals who are by their nature homosexual (Sullivan, 1996). Nevertheless, the issue of homosexuality as natural in some people was not addressed until 1975. In that year, The Vatican Declaration on Sexual Ethics contained a statement that there are "...homosexuals who are definitively such because of some kind of innate instinct or a pathological constitution judged to be incurable." The key point here though is that regardless of the acceptance of homosexuals as people, homosexual activities was still not approved by the Judaeo-Christian church - "Love the sinner, hate the sin." However some churches now include and accept lesbians even to the point of sanctioning same-sex marriages. The present issues that are being debated so far, may determine the issue of bisexuality in terms of religiosity; religious intolerance, ambivalence or acceptance.



Womynsay

Not Another 'Chick Flick'!

I was watching *Thelma & Louise* on television Saturday night for about the tenth time since it was released. I could practically recite it line by line and I laughed and cried even more than when I first saw it. Without doubt, it is my favorite movie—perhaps a cliché to some, that a feminist should choose as her favorite the most obvious "chick flick" ever.

So let's talk about "chick" movies. *Steel Magnolias*, *Waiting to Exhale*, *How to Make an American Quilt*, and *First Wives Club* all but a few that have emerged in the recent trend of films depicting "strong women" and their experiences. While I'm glad to see such an interest in women's lives lately, I must say that it makes me a little uncomfortable that movies about women do seem to break forth in trends. Is it a new fad to be concerned with the woman's experience? Will we soon be lost again in an endless pit of men with guns, and cars, and attitudes? A historical look says "yes," we probably will. Before WWII was the first wave of feminism and with it were mainstream movies with aging actresses such as Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. They played the roles of independent women dealing with serious women's issues (of the time). A surge of testosterone during the war killed this trend and it didn't come back, 'til now. Why am I wary of saying that this time it is here for good? Here's why:

Many women I know are huge fans of *Pulp Fiction*, *Unforgiven*, and *Malcolm X*—all three are movies with mostly only men and are absolutely about men. These women don't need to be a man to watch a movie about the male experience and empathize with male characters. So where does the term "chick flick" come from? From the men who can't or should I say don't want to, enjoy a movie portraying the experiences of women. He walked into a video store with a woman so we know he likes them, so what's the problem? Surely he isn't afraid of becoming a woman (Bette Midler isn't that convincing!). Could it be that men simply don't want to know what a woman's experience is? It can be pretty scary stuff! Chances are, a man might learn that women are raped, beaten, exploited, and on the upside—not dependent on men for sexual satisfaction! A movie might even convey the insidious idea that women don't need men or that some are happier without them. And the problem is...

The idea that so-called "chick-flicks" are men-bashing doesn't make much sense. Many of them are a celebration of women, some celebrate the fact that women have achieved independence from men of left abusive relationships. When men are offended by these films does it mean that they don't appreciate women, that they want them to be dependent on men, or is it that they don't understand the turn-off of physical abuse by a supposed loved one? The hostility of men towards these types of movies only serves to depend the macho-ass-hole male depicted within them. If you are not one of these men then why so defensive? And what exactly is so personally painful about watching *Thelma & Louise*?

Do I think that the "chick flick" era is on its way out? Ask the men, the movies are in their hands—if they want them to be.

Juliam Fraser is a member of the UNB Womyn's Collective. The Collective will be meeting Monday, November 25 at 5:30 in Tilley 222 to work on the Montreal Massacre Silhouette Campaign. All womyn welcome.

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