

Opinion

## Your father's politics? "or dykes in law school"

Signed — Dyke At Large

I wanted to write this piece in order to explain what it's like to be white, middle class, semi-out (I sometimes describe this as having one foot in and one foot out of the closet — just waiting for the door to slam shut in your face) dyke at Dalhousie Law School. The question is how do you explain an alienating process like the Dal Law School? I chose this title because I think that's what this whole process is. It's about learning the Father's Politics and learning how to work in it without losing your self-respect and self-pride.

I've spent the last three years being a politically active lesbian feminist. Being out and being proud. But some of that has disappeared during my stint at this "beautiful liberal institution". Although I had been warned that this is what I should expect, it's still a difficult adjustment.

Part of the problem is that law school is very time consuming. This means you can't make the same kind of commitments to the community as you did before. But there's more to it than that. In law school, one's lesbian existence, reality, knowledge, political standpoint, etc. is not validated. Anger, emotion, commitment to a community, social conscience, etc. is a threat and so it is belittled. The objective reasonable person is held up as the highest standard which law students should struggle for. Ask anyone to define "reasonable person" and you will get the typical white, middle class, heterosexual man, (now that's a real objective isn't it). This means that a lesbian's viewpoint (or a feminist's, or a black person's or First Nation's, etc.) is seen as biased, emotional rubbish. Those kinds of "biases" do not belong in the study of law. The message is clear: drop

your "bias" and become the "reasonable person" if you want to have any kind of validation, if you want to be accepted

This works extremely well at protecting Patriarchal power. That's what the Father's Politics' is all about. It is about denying the existence of anything that is not white, male, middle-class and heterosexual. Anything else is a threat and has to be destroyed. In this political system, which includes the law school, the closer you are

to the norm the more accepted you are. The more your voice will be heard and the more power you will be allowed.

It's hard not to get sucked into this kind of thinking, into the kind of game playing that goes on. People are manipulating and using each other and playing up to/into male power. Something that you learn quickly is that it's white men, whether faculty or students, that have the power in this school/university. I guess I've never seen

it this blatant and it's almost impossible to feel really vulnerable in this system. Sometimes I find myself slipping into behaviours which I haven't used since I've come out and which I'm not very proud of.

Wondering if it's all really worth it? I think it is. I don't think I can change the system from within. I do believe that the things I learn in this institution can be useful to my community and to many other women who are trying to survive in Father's world.

Rape at McGill?

## Student acquitted

by Julie Crawford

**MONTREAL (CUP)** — A McGill University fraternity member charged with the rape of a student was acquitted March 1.

After a four-day trial, Judge Luc Trudel acquitted Patrick Booth, a member of Phi Delta Theta, because the judge believed the woman had consented to the encounter.

The victim's drunkenness and the accused's "good reputation" were also cited by the judge.

"Sandra", whose real name is protected under court order, was allegedly raped Jan. 21, 1990 at a frat house on McGill's campus.

Unlike the alleged gang-rape at McGill's Zeta Psi fraternity in 1988, the accusation was not made public until an anonymous caller informed the McGill Women's Union Feb. 28, even though the university administration was aware of the case.

Trudel's verdict stunned many in the courtroom.

"I believe 100 per cent that what happened to Sandra was sexual assault," said Dan Heffernan, the investigating officer from the Montreal Urban Community police force.

Judge Trudel said the question of consent is a contentious legal issue and each case must be judged on its own merits.

He cited the 1980 Pappajohn case, which set a precedent on the issue of consent. The judge in that case took into account whether the accused honestly believed the victim consented, rather than the victim's testimony. That belief could be grounds for reasonable doubt and thus for acquittal.

In an interview with The McGill Daily, "Sandra" said McGill took no action when she told the university about the alleged rape.

She said a sexual harassment assessor tried to discourage her from going to the police, but she's glad she did.

"I hope it will inspire others to press charges. It's too bad people have to hide."

"Sandra" now attends school and works part-time in Ottawa, where she sees a counsellor. She said she has trouble sleeping and is afraid to be alone.

About 150 demonstrators protested outside the fraternity house on the night of the verdict. Some chanted "Phi Delta be prepared, we will make the world aware," and others pelted the house with eggs.



## Abortion bill shot down

by Mary Jane Hamilton

Both the Pro-Life and the Pro-Choice movements lobbied against Bill C-43 which attempted to put restrictions on abortion. The result of the vote on January 30, 1991 was 23 to 23, which means a defeat in the Senate. The bill was supposed to balance the rights of the woman and the unborn child.

Sandra Lanz, a nurse at the Morgentaler Clinic in Halifax, says the bill is bad because "women should not become criminalized for a medical decision."

Paula Clarke, of the Dal-King's Pro-Choice Network, says there should not be a law at all and "if this were a man's problem, this would never be an issue."

Cynthia Haughn, executive director of Campaign for Life, says there were many problems with the Bill as it was "unacceptably broad and vague... [but] abortion should at least be regulated. Even dental procedures are regulated." She went on to say "[there was] no protection of the child or support for the woman who wanted to keep her child," Haughn says.

Karen Stiller, of Students Choosing Life at Dalhousie University, "It didn't have an informed decision-making clause in it so [there was] no protection for women... The Bill said that it [the abortion] could be overviewed by a doctor but did not have to be done by one."

Lanz says that abortion is a global issue that shouldn't be decided by a politician: "Women take things into their own hands [if they are not given the option of abortion]... Two women died last summer from self-induced abortions."

But Haughn says that women die from legal abortions as well and "we will get a new law with a new government... We will get a good law [which addresses the rights of both the mother and the child]."

The Bill said it was legal to have an abortion if having the baby threatened the mother's "health," including "personal aspirations and future career impediments."

"Hopefully, now that this bill has been defeated, the Pro-Choice [movement] should be able to organize to prevent this government or any future government from passing such legislation which is

blatantly dangerous and anti-woman," Clarke says.

"If it [the bill] had passed, access [to abortions] would be terrible here."

"Women are told abortion is 'safe and simple.' Women shouldn't die from legal abortions, and women shouldn't die from illegal abortions. Children shouldn't die from legal abortions, and children shouldn't die from illegal abortions... Abortion shouldn't be the issue. The root of women's problems must be solved first... It [abortion] is not an expression of control... we need better options for women," says Karen Stiller.

