

opinions

Not all men are potential rapists

Recently, I heard about some developments in US schools that I found to be very interesting. It seems that a feminist group at the University of Maryland posted a bulletin campus-wide upon which were listed the alleged names of all "potential rapists" on campus. Below this quite evocative heading were the names of every male student attending the University.

The obvious implication is that any and all men could potentially be rapists. As a member of this segment of society, I find this to be a completely unwarranted attack upon my character. There is something telling in this attack — the very same groups who support this sort of 'activism' are the ones who are so outspoken in the need for Political Correctness. However, inasmuch as this sort of proclamation is offensive to an entire demographic group (i.e. men), should we not expect these groups to decry it in the strongest terms?

However, I have been told (by a proponent of this sort of action) that, in fact, nothing of the sort was meant by the statement. It was just a statement of fact, like the statement that all men breathe. This made me wonder if it would be admissible to post a similar bulletin listing those women on campus who would potentially indulge in sexual activities for a small fee (of course, this would comprise all women on campus). After all, is this not just a statement of fact? If the claim is, "All men are 'potential rapists' because this is just a physiological fact about men (that some

men, unfortunately, exercise)," is it not equally valid to point out a similar physiological fact about women?

No, I have been told — it's not the same thing at all. The bulletin at Maryland was inspired by a purpose, my activist friend told me, and mine was not. It seems the detrimental comment that this 'purposeful' bulletin made upon the characters of men attending the university was a small price to pay for the 'cause'. I suggest to you that claiming that all men are potential rapists is not the same thing as claiming something about their physiology — it is a claim about their personality and character. In essence, it is a prejudiced view and has no basis in reality.

In order for this claim to be true, it must be the case that all men (including me) are potential rapists. This is not the case. I assure you of this. I know myself pretty well. However, perhaps this is not a compelling argument. The claim would also turn out to be false if there were even one eunuch in that list. A eunuch would have neither the drive, nor the equipment to rape anyone. But perhaps this is not convincing either — after all, it's not the truth we're after here, it's principles. Why do we need to bring in truth at all? That list was posted for a wonderfully worthy purpose, and we must not forget that.

Unfortunately, it turns out that the posting was lacking in purpose as it was in truth. If the claim is that all men are potential rapists and that this is simply a factual claim (like saying that all men breathe), then one wonders how a woman is ever to

feel at ease with any man, but I would submit that it remains the case that most women do feel at ease with some men that they know. How are we to account for this?

It seems more likely that the bulletin was attempting to claim that women should be careful. If this is the claim, I would point out that suggesting that all men are potential rapists is an unusually bad way of making it. If we were to assume that all men possess the ability to rape a woman, then the term 'potential rapist' turns out to be entailed in the term 'man'.

Furthermore, since women were not included in the list, it seems that only men are potential rapists. So it turns out that to say that all men are potential rapists is just to say that all men are men. However, in order to establish whether any specific man is a threat, we must evaluate his character and his personality. So all men are men, and in order to decide which men to trust, we need to know something of their characters: any idiot could have told you as much. One wonders, if this is in fact the claim being made, why anyone even bothered to post the bulletin.

So for all of you who were wondering, there are a sizable number of us men out here who are not 'potential rapists' (unless you subscribe to one particular, and essentially useless, definition of that term). To claim that all men are — even if you subscribe to that very narrow definition — is most certainly false, and — if you subscribe to a definition that is actually informative — is certainly false. To claim, of any man, that he could rape someone without bothering to look at his character is simply prejudiced.

Glenn Wylie

DSU railroaded by CFS

You get what you pay for.

Great idea, for the most part, except when it refers to Dalhousie students and the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). What did Dalhousie students get when they were asked in 1982 to pay four dollars each for the CFS? They got the opportunity to have a lobbying voice in Ottawa.

It really was a good idea; I mean, the ability to have someone on your side, fighting where it counts to make sure you got a fair shake. Great idea. Too bad it's not 1982.

Yup, welcome to good ol' 1994, where the student organization we voted for in 1982 is threatening to sue YOU, the very students who pay for it. Why? Because they have built walls

around themselves to keep you in.

Because they realized they were going to lose in the referendum scheduled for last Monday and Tuesday. Students were about to say they would rather spend their four dollars a year on beer. And worse yet, the CFS was about to lose the \$36,000 a year that Dalhousie students give them, something they can't afford. It would kill them, because they couldn't afford to pay for their debt, their do-little overpaid field workers, and their macaroni-debating Annual General Meetings.

What makes the whole ordeal even more frustrating is that the DSU Council, for fear of doing more long-term financial damage to students, had to abandon the moral high

ground and cancel the referendum that would have rid Dalhousie students of the burden of having to pay into the black hole we know as the CFS. We had a case against the CFS, but it could have taken years and hundreds of thousands of dollars to fight. So instead it was decided to stay in the CFS another year and give YOU the opportunity to speak your mind on it next year, because the CFS doesn't want to listen to you this year. The worst part? They railroaded you into paying six dollars a student. Do yourself a favor. When you get the opportunity next year, screw them over the way they screwed you over.

Jefferson Rappell

letters

No choice on CFS

To the editor:

This past Sunday, the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) had something of a lengthy meeting. A lot of it surrounded the issue of the now-cancelled Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) referendum. This has been something of a hot topic that has greatly divided the students of the university. The DSU elected to have a referendum on the issue of our membership in CFS, due to the fact that the CFS has decided to raise its fees across the board from four to six dollars per student.

Now, as it turns out, the CFS wouldn't have recognized the legitimacy of our referendum if we had carried it out. This was the result of some minor screw-ups that ended up having major legal ramifications for the DSU. If we had gone ahead with the referendum, we would have ended up in lengthy court battle, probably lasting about three years. This would not really have worked to our advantage, so we've elected to hold another referendum in the fall, making sure that all of the rules for filing are followed.

Now to the point of all this. Due to the fact that we could not go through with the referendum, we have to pay next year's fees for CFS. And with that little bit of crap came two choices. We, your student union reps, could have taken the money out of the operating budget, which would have meant twenty thousand dollars worth of services, but we decided that wasn't a good plan. Instead, we decided to allow the two-dollar increase to go through, and allow you to decide whether you want to continue with CFS when we hold a legal referendum in the fall.

Now, please understand, we aren't

happy with this increase. It was a difficult decision to come to, but the majority of the council felt that it was more important in the short term to maintain the fiscal viability of the union and not to cut services, than to go with a plan that would have maintained the fee structure and allowed us to end up in the red. And besides, if it bothers you that much one way or the other, make sure you vote in the referendum in the fall.

Josef Tratnik
BGLAD Co-Chair and DSU Rep

Ask your rep

To the editor:

On Sunday, March 27, the DSU council voted *in camera* to kill the referendum that was planned for the following two days. As most of us know, this referendum was to allow Dalhousie students to decide whether they were willing to pay the two-dollar fee increase that was proposed by CFS, and whether they wanted the DSU to remain a member of CFS. After denying students the right to say whether or not they wanted the fee increase, the DSU council then voted to increase the fee anyway.

I think that some members of the DSU council do not know or have forgotten what their role on the DSU council is. Sunday's vote was a classic case of collective butt-saving. The DSU was faced with a potential legal action as a result of mistakes that the DSU executive admitted that they made. The hard line would have been to go ahead with the referendum, inform CFS of the results, and let the chips fall where they may. Instead, the majority of the councillors took the

soft line. The killed the referendum, passed on the cost to the students, and in the process saved their political appearances under the guise of saving the union from an expensive law suit. I defence of some councillors, myself included, I should point out that some people voted no in both cases.

It seems ironic that the DSU council should take such a position. Firstly, the DSU organized all kinds of protests when it was announced that the university administration was raising fees and cutting programs without any input from students. They were upset that senior staff was not considering the option of voluntary wage roll back, and was instead passing the costs on to the students. Now that same council is passing the cost of their mistake on to the students.

Secondly, it was decided that the council should allow CFS to, in one councillor's words, 'stick it to the students'. I always thought that the role of a student council was to prevent that sort of thing from happening. It seems that 'sticking students' is something that should only be done with the DSU council's consent and help.

Thirdly, this sets a dangerous precedent. If the DSU council, our governing body, denies us the right to express ourselves on things that affect us, then arbitrarily makes those decisions on our behalf, what is there to stop them doing it again? This is the sort of political attitude that is pervading every level of our society, and the depressing thing is that as the ones affected, we do nothing about it.

As one student to another, I am suggesting that we all withhold our two bucks as a group, and then let us see what the DSU council and CFS will do about it. I know that I will be branded as irresponsible, and will probably be threatened with lawsuits, but I do not care. We need to oppose

this type of behaviour, and we need to start somewhere. Now is as good a time as any.

Dwight Neal
OPTAMUS rep

DSS disappoints

To the editor:

I was very disappointed with the Dalhousie Science Society annual general meeting held on Monday, March 21, specifically with the behaviour of members of the executive. I am a first-year student in the Dalhousie Science Foundation Year. At this meeting, a number of SFY students were running for DSS positions. I went to the meeting hoping to get involved with the Science Society, but instead I was made to feel ashamed to be present.

The executive seemed to feel that the meeting was stacked with SFY students who didn't really care about the society, and were present only to get their friends elected. They also seemed to be very concerned with the idea of having the incoming DSS executive composed entirely of first year students.

While I understand the executive's concern that the leadership of the DSS not fall into the hands of incompetents, their behaviour at the meeting was deplorable. I believe that Louis Beaubien, as chair, should have asked the executive to refrain from comments obviously meant to influence the electorate, rather than contribute commentary himself. From the beginning of the meeting, the executive made it clear how they felt about the SFY candidates before the candidates even had a chance to speak. Snide remarks from Beaubien and John Yip interrupted

several candidates speeches, and at one point the executive requested that non-council members leave the meeting in order to give "appreciation speeches" to the outgoing council. Strange that these speeches couldn't be done in public, especially at the annual general meeting.

The SFY students who were running for positions at that meeting were running because they were interested and enthusiastic, not simply on a whim. We weren't trying to grab the DSS for ourselves. While it may be hard to believe, we are actually capable of voting with our minds, not simply because we know some of the candidates.

I believe that the DSS stands for the Dalhousie Science Society, not the Stephanie Baxter and John Yip Society. Every person at that meeting had a right to be there and a right to run for any position being elected, yet an atmosphere of resentment and distrust were present. The DSS this year has done a great job, but the executive has no right to bully any individual who doesn't fit into their golden vision for the future.

The real corruption of the electoral process didn't occur because there were twenty SFY students present, but because Yip and Co. were frantically looking for alternatives to the group of candidates that Jason Morrison selected for their intelligence, ability and enthusiasm. Fortunately, next year's executive looks like they will do an excellent job, but the Baxter Bunch needn't have discounted the SFY candidates before the meeting came to order. Hopefully, Mr. Morrison has learned from this experience, and he won't run the DSS like an old boy's club.

Of course, maybe I misunderstood the whole situation. What do I know, after all? I'm just a first year student.

J. Worrall