

# SPECTRUM

## Outing abusive men

Outing used to mean something pleasant. It used to mean something nice - like an outdoor trip, usually brief, always enjoyable.

But outing has taken on a new meaning over the last few years - and it has little to do with the great outdoors. Initially, it was the gay movement that began the transformation of the word to what it means now: very briefly put, outing now means that act of revealing the identities of prominent or not so prominent homosexuals by homosexuals themselves.

In forcibly removing homosexuals from the closet, as the belief goes, the gay movement will be advance because we will realize that gays are not your stereotypical limp-wristed faggots or ball-busting dykes. In fact, they could very well be the ordinary man or woman next door.

There are several kinds of gay persons who can get "outed": 1. those who live double lives - that is, a straight one and a gay one and who enjoy the benefits of both lifestyles while refusing to make a stand on either; and 2. those who condemn the gay movement while they are "playing straight," so as to give the illusion that they are actually homophobic. These are the worst types - an anathema to gay activists who have made a personal and political commitment to their sexuality.

Well, the word outing has come to mean a whole lot more to me over the past year or so because I think that its basic concept of revealing identities can be applied to other issues - in this case, the identities of men who abuse their wives.

For just as outing closeted gays advances the gay movement because it uncloaks the mystery behind stereotypes by forcing people out into the open, similarly, outing wife abusers will advance the fact that abusers represent every social and economic class and therefore, aren't very extraordinary people. In fact, he could very well be your next door neighbour, the loving husband, the wonderful father or the hard working man.

Another important factor to remember with outing abusive men is that for the most part, violence against women has been and will continue to be a taboo subject. Whispered conversations about so-and-so beating his wife, references to black-eyes and bruised arms, and raised eyebrows when their identity is revealed through rumour have been the way these things get around in the past. Until

recently, no one ever thought of actually "naming" them.

Well the time has come to talk about it. Yes, of "outing" men whom *you are absolutely certain, through evidence which is based on fact,* have beaten, choked, strangled, stomped on, threatened, humiliated, intimidated and/or ridiculed their partners.

One thing you had better remember though, is if you have no evidence, stop right here because all you have is rumour and innuendo which won't go very far. It might not even be true, and what could be worse than ruining a person's reputation? It's just not worth it.

But if you are convinced - and if you have evidence, why not go for broke and take the smug smile off the face of the man who physically or psychologically abuses his wife and then goes to work or out in to the community as though everything is all right?

That Seems Simple Enough.

Well, it's not so simple, mainly because outing violent men brings with it a series of legal and moral dilemmas, none the least of which is: will he get so mad when he finds out people are talking that he really hurts her bad this time?

Moral Dilemma.

Well, after thinking about that moral dilemma I came to the conclusion that we certainly are not protecting women by pretending it is *not* happening. Therefore outing him isn't going to suddenly take away a diaphanous veil of protection.

The Law.

Then there is the law. I'm not a lawyer, but it seems clear to me that if you witnessed the abuse yourself, you may have a case. But what if the man and his partner decide to deny it? They can say you are defaming his reputa-

tion and try to sue you for defamation of character or libel. Then of course, the onus is on you to prove that he did actually abuse his partner.

However, if a man is going to sue for libel, his record better be as pure as the driven snow. It is not unusual for a lawyer to investigate her or his client to make sure that the case has merit. So, if the alleged abuser even had a pee behind the library last Friday night, he better be prepared for that to come out in the investigator's report. And if he actually ever did beat his wife - and there is a record of it anywhere, it's unlikely any self-respecting lawyer would even take the case because it would be a sure loser.

If you obtained the information from a professional who was being indiscreet, such as a doctor, lawyer, or a case-worker at a home for battered women for example, don't count of the professional to help you out unless they are forced to. They are under obligation not to speak publicly about the incident, unless of course, the court compels them.

When the So-Called Sympathetic Close Ranks.

What is most frustration about outing violent men - or even speaking out loud the name of an abuser - is that often the tables are turned against the person who got tired of pretending it didn't exist.

Instead of the moral and physical support you thought you would get, the persons who are most capable of actually doing something about the abuse sometimes close ranks and shut you out because you make waves which leave them dripping wet.

The Do-Gooders Versus the Good-Doers.

This is where the do-gooders and the good-doers part company.

## Presidential (rat) race

Check out the tans! There's a big difference between a ski tan and a Florida/southern where ever tan. But that's not the issue. Sure, I didn't get a chance to write about Prof. Darkside, but what the "Hey", there's only four, count 'em, four weeks left 'til finals. But HEY, boys and girls, (or is that young persons and young persons?), this term you get to have three full weeks of final exams. That's right, what planning! Naturally, all the summer jobs will be gone by the time you get home. But who needs a job? You can

stay students forever. Just think of all the little initials you can have after your name!

What about those Americans? Can you say hyp-o-crite(s)? I guess George is having so much trouble with the Japanese and Patrick Buchanan, he and his cronies decided to go after his neighbors to the north. Now that's long range planning!! Rumour has it, Lucifer himself smell sa bargain in the Whitehouse.

Enough, Bush Bashing, it's so common today, that's it practically out of vogue already. Previ-

## The Wimmmin's Room by Blanche DuBois

For you see, the do-gooders don't want to actually *do* something about violence against women that would make them personally uncomfortable - sure it's all right to whisper about it or even speak out publicly on the topic in general, but actually confront the abuser?

Let's just say it's easier to talk about the nose-picking habits of so-and-so than to bring up the taboo of wife battering. And even if the do-gooders go so far as to ask the abuser if these allegations are true, his quick denial is sufficient to convince them you are a troublemaking liar, not to mention an hysterical person.

Unfortunately, when faced with an important decision, the do-gooders prefer instead to sweep the knowledge of spousal abuse under the rug where it has collected into a very large ball of whispers, just waiting to knock the woman down... again.

So What Can I Do?

It is quite simple actually, and it is similar to the tactics of people who confront racist or sexist behaviour when they see it occurring - they confront the harasser, tell him or her they are not impressed, and finally request a cessation of the harassment.

When facing abusers, first of all, remember the golden rule, "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you". In other words, if you were the victim of abuse, what would *you* want others to do? It is a good guess that you would probably want the battering to stop.

Second of all, tell the truth, and tell it often! Remember that it is not illegal to tell the truth! Your freedom of speech is guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and speaking the truth is just that - the freedom to speak.

Finally, although you have the right to say what you want, remember that you also have the parallel responsibility to ensure what you say is the truth. Gossip, innuendo and rumour have to be set aside; there can be no shadow of doubt of the abuse.

Then, like the person confronting a racist, tell the man you know what is going on and tell them you expect it to stop. If threatened with a libel suit, dare them to go to court. If their record is not "as pure as the driven snow" and if they have a record of abuse, they would not take the chance of losing and neither would their lawyer.

We Aren't Going To Take It Anymore.

Although the good old days when an "outing" meant a pleasant short trip are gone for ever, the change in definition is a good sign that women are not going to take it anymore. In the same way that racists, sexists and homophobics could hide behind society's blind acceptance of their prejudice and discrimination, violence against women in the form of physical or psychological abuse is no longer socially acceptable behaviour and the very notion of "outing" these men proves it to be that way.

## Well, this is what I thank by D. J. Eckenrode

ously, I vowed to try and say nice things. It's so easy to pick on politicians, why not try to say something nice? Well then, howwa bout Frank McKeena? He (and his advisors) smelled an American Rat and went against the federal trend. Hopefully, New Brunswick can "make hay while the sun shines" in their own lum-

ber industry. Maybe, Frank and his crew (along with the rest of Atlantic Canada) should realize the name of the game is to beat the sluggish giant to the south at their own game. Let's take a lesson from our neighbors in the pacific Rim, EH?

Any so, I meandered over to the  
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