



DRAWING BY CAITLIN

GENDER AND EDUCATION

Johnny can read but will he use a condom?

by **HEATHER SANGSTER** and **NANCY PHILLIPS**
Reading, writing and arithmetic, drug abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse and AIDS: is that what is being taught in schools these days?

Just barely, according to Heather-Jane Robertson, Director of Professional Development Services for the Canadian Teacher's Federation. The methods of educating students on these social issues do exist but are not effective. Robertson believes that students are receiving "generic" information on issues that deserve a more detailed, gender specific analysis. Robertson sees a gradual neutering of women's social and health concerns as they are incorporated into the bigger picture of "general awareness." This occurrence is reflected in the methods of education taught at schools of all levels.

"The study of AIDS and the approach to AIDS education has ignored the gender issue," says Robertson. "There should be specific literature for each gender."

Robertson suggests that there are two objectives that should be stressed within the education community when teaching AIDS awareness. "One is that we should be teaching students to protect themselves and two, we should be creating a tolerance or acceptance for those with AIDS.

"On the issue of protection, the disease must be understood in terms of male and female. In the current literature, women are made to be typically responsible for contraceptives and protection while the male sets the standards as to what, and when, it will be used. That should change.

"The more masculine a male is, the less likely he will use a condom and the more feminine a female is, the less likely she will demand a condom be used." Robertson suggests that less restrictive gender roles are necessary for people to

become more sexually responsible.

"In terms of tolerance, we must divorce our emotional reaction to AIDS from our reaction to homosexuality. Homophobia can be stripped down to misogyny which is the hatred of women, or femininity. When a man is gay, that is seen as an insult to the male being. Women don't threaten lesbians but men go out and bash homosexual men. Homophobia involves gender valuating and it is against feminine behaviour and women in general."

Robertson feels that the analysis of AIDS should be included not only in literature available in schools, but also in all classes from science to history. The study of AIDS should incorporate the tremendous difference that gender makes with respect to all aspects of the AIDS issue.

The gender issue also arises in substance abuse. Robertson says that "schools are not treating substance abuse as sex-differentiated, but the use of drugs is sex-differentiated.

"Men learn at an early age, by TV, when they should drink. Men drink alcohol to celebrate, for confidence building and to relax. Women take drugs to cope or to kill pain. There's aspirin and pamprin, etc and they all control pain. Women take substances to maintain normal behaviour. Their abuse is more of a control or power issue. It's a substitute for controlling something bigger. That's unthinkable for men.

"The literature on substance abuse is not designed for masculine and feminine consumption. It tries to teach assertiveness . . . 'just say no.' But the population goes in different directions. Some are assertive and some are passive. Men and women are pushed to different ends."

Robertson also sees a need for a better understanding of child and sexual abuse.

"Women's experiences have uncovered things like child abuse. It becomes recognized as an "issue" by society and then it gets laundered. Child and sexual abuse has been laundered. Nowhere, in any report, is there any suggestion that values of mainstream masculinity have anything to do with this abuse. But, abuse is a reflection of mainstream masculinity.

"The man's 'right to sex' attitude, the male masculine ideal, is towards anyone, an adult or a child. The attitude today is that children are being treated like women. Maybe that is telling us that women need to be valued more.

"We have to take a look at abuse. When you study it, there is a prevalent question you ask yourself: What is it about being male that causes abuse?"

"What we have to do is pull the issue out of the realm of masculine prerogative. Males are maintaining male privilege. The issue of abuse and that question challenges masculine privilege in every domain. It's the dominant group and that group will fight for its right to 'not know.' The main defense of rape is 'I didn't know . . . I thought she wanted it.' The main defense for sexual harassment was 'Well, we were just having fun. I didn't know.' Men, generally, don't know of the impact they have on others.

"A man who believes that this kind of abuse is unthinkable and unimaginable will look at the men who do abuse and deny it or label them as terrifically disturbed. A woman will see them and believe it and know it's possible. Women have been victimized, and those who haven't been know someone who has, they tell each other. Men are engaged in disbelief but women know it's possible."

Robertson feels that the entire education process is in need of change. "In the past, schools were expected to teach reasonable literacy but now we demand

so much more of our schools. We've changed the mandate but made no structural changes. What can you change if you don't change structurally? We've asked the school's function to change but that's it."

"Teachers are politically at risk to people they don't know or share interests with. There is political control of the schools by people who don't know the issues and problems within the school. Teachers and students are hostage to the system.

"The school system must break down before we can change it. The concern about what the schools are doing must intensify. Schools are being squeezed in terms of funding, employment, etc. and it's getting intense. Schools must be uncoupled from the boards. You can't have a central office and branch plants. You can have quality control in factories, but you need caring in schools. Caring will produce quality.

"The people who care about the system and who are close to the situation within the schools are those who should be making the decisions. We must empower the individual schools to solve the educational problem.

"I don't know about the next generation," says Robertson. She feels that sexual stereotypes still exist and remain harmful.

As an example, she talked about her daughter who is in elementary school. Her daughter wanted to be a farmer when she grew up. One day she came home from school and said she couldn't be a farmer.

"And," adds Robertson, "we thought that someone at school had told her that she couldn't be one because of her disability, she's in a wheelchair. But, no, she couldn't be a farmer because she was a girl. What's the disability, being in a wheelchair or being a female?"

Pay Equity cont.

noted that although the university could post a pay equity plan that the non-unionized groups and individuals have not had input into, the administration is also "making sure that even the non-unions are negotiated with."

Once the union and the university agree to a plan, it is considered to have been accepted by all employees involved.

For the non-union employees, once the university has posted the plan, there is a 90-day period in which any single employee can lodge a complaint with the Pay Equity Office. The university has seven days to respond to this complaint. If no complaints are received within this timeframe, the plan is considered to be accepted.

The university must negotiate a pay equity plan with eight different unions: the Canadian Union of Educational Workers (CUEW) (Units I and II), the York University Staff Association (YUSA), the York University Faculty Association (YUFA), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the United Plant Guard Workers of America (UPGWA)

(which contains two groups, students and other) and the International Union of Operating Engineers (IOUE).

Besides this, the university must come up with a pay equity plan for those employees who are not members of a union. These are the YUSA-exempt employees, the professional and managerial group and all other employees who may fall under the pay equity legislation.

The list is not as daunting as it seems. Rampton said that it would appear that a pay equity plan will not have to be negotiated with the IOUE since all of the engineers are male. As such, no female dominated job classes can be identified. The same seems to be true of YUFA and CUEW, although this may change as the two groups begin to look more closely at their respective bargaining units, Rampton added.

As well, the possibility of finding female dominated job classes within UPGWA seems minimal. At this point in time, Rampton noted, most of the work has been done with the P&M group, YUSA-exempt and CUPE.

The YUSA-exempt and P&M groups are in the process of set-

ting up a job evaluation questionnaire which will be sent to all relevant employees. They are also beginning to set up procedures for job evaluation.

The other groups at York are beginning to start the process. According to YUSA spokesperson John Carter, two committees have been set up to look at the problem. The first, the Pay Equity Negotiating Committee, is meeting on an ongoing basis to discuss the matter.

Both the University and YUSA have agreed that the current method of job evaluation has a number of problems. A second committee, the Job Evaluation Development Committee, has been set up to create a new system. The Committee is currently in the process of contracting a consultant to assist with the development of the program.

As far as CUPE goes, Rampton said, the only identified female dominated job is Cleaner I which the job evaluation process has determined to be comparable with the labourer job class. As it turns out, there is a pay equity disparity between the two classes.

At the present time, the university is waiting to hear whether

CUPE has accepted the plan. If it does, then the incumbents in the Cleaner I class will receive a significant increase in wages. Rampton could not say, however, how much this increase might be.

Other groups may arise as the university begins to look further at the casual and student employees. Part of what must be done is to determine who is an employee. The Act stipulates that students who work on their summer vacations are not covered and neither are casual employees. Employees are casual if they work for less than one-third of the normal working period as long as they are not employed on a continuing basis.

The structure that negotiations are taking is straightforward. On one side is the union, and on the other is the administration-appointed Pay Equity Steering Committee. These two groups then form a number of joint committees for the purpose of negotiating a pay equity plan with the various groups.

Fines of up to \$2,000 for an individual and as much as \$25,000 in any other case may be levied against employers who fail to comply with the stipulations of the Pay Equity Act.

According to Paula O'Reilly, Director of Academic Staff Relations and member of the Steering Committee, the university is receiving no extra money to rectify any pay equity disparities that arise. It must come out of their present operating budget. O'Reilly noted that money has already been set aside, even though the Administration is still unsure of the exact amount needed.

Rampton feels that the Pay Equity Act will go a long way in creating employment equity. Although pay equity will not solve the problem, it does, he says, "help to change perceptions." One example he cites is the comparative value attributed to cleaning toilets and lifting a 50-lb. box. Those examining the jobs are being forced to consider that perhaps cleaning a toilet is of equal value to lifting a 50-lb. weight.

Will pay equity make a difference to the amount women are paid at York? To the Cleaner I group it obviously will. And "from what I can see," says Carter, "it will be discovered that certain of our [YUSA] members will benefit from the legislation."