

# Safe sex article goes national

by Ryan Stanley

An article detailing safe-sex information for gay men continues to make waves on campuses across Canada, a month after it first appeared in a Newfoundland student newspaper.

The *Muse*, the student publication at Memorial University in St. John's, printed "A gay men's guide to erotic safer sex" in its annual lesbian and gay supplement on Feb. 15. The article met an angry reaction for its use of explicit language alongside tips on how to stem the spread of HIV, the virus that often causes AIDS.

At least six Canadian university newspapers have published the article, and five more plan to do so this week.

## Halifax

by Jeff Harrington

**HALIFAX (CUP)** — Fed up with what it considers homophobia-fueled censorship of the safe-sex guide, a shadowy Halifax group called "The Safe Sex Banditos" plans to plaster the controversial article all over town.

"We want to make it available to a broader audience and students who haven't read it. What they do with it is their choice," said one Bandito, who did not want his name used.

The guide was published in the Feb. 28 issue of the *Dalhousie Gazette*. The edition disappeared from the campus within four days, prompting speculation that many copies were removed by people offended by the article.

Another Halifax student-run paper, the King's College *Watch*, tried to print the story Mar. 5, along with a commentary on the controversy. But the issue came back from the printer with a large blank space and the word "Censored" where the article should have been.

"There is a legal problem with printing anything that may be considered pornographic. And we have a lot to lose by printing anything that could affect our reputation," said Paul Fitzgibbons of WEB Atlantic, who personally pulled the article from *The Watch*.

While the *Gazette's* decision to print the article has been supported by many individuals and various groups, including AIDS Nova Scotia, some outraged critics are demanding the democratically-run paper be replaced to "better represent the student population."

Two brothers of the Phi Kappa Pi fraternity plan to push for a referendum on the *Gazette's* future at the annual general meeting of the student union in late March. They want the current newspaper "dissolved."

The *Gazette* is preparing for a possible referendum by planning an open forum on AIDS education and freedom of the press, to be held Mar. 18.

## St. John's

The *Muse*, the student paper at Memorial University which first published the article, is still under investigation by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. But editor Dawn Mitchell said the police have made no effort to interview any of the paper's staff and she doesn't expect any charges will be laid.

Mitchell added she had faxed the police and the Memorial student union a legal opinion from a law firm experienced in obscenity law.

The fax — written by Brian Iler, lawyer for Canadian University Press — cites legal precedents back to the celebrated *Lady Chatterly's Lover* case in 1962.

"In view of (these decisions) with respect to obscenity, it is, in our opinion, highly unlikely that a criminal charge would be laid for

the publication of this article, and further, highly unlikely that if such a charge were laid, a conviction would be registered," the fax reads.

## Waterloo

**TORONTO (CUP)** — Campus police threw the editors of Wilfred Laurier University's student paper out of their offices Mar. 4, after the student council effectively shut the paper down.

The council's move came three days after *The Cord* ran the controversial article. The council board of directors accused *The Cord* of sloppy journalism, and complained about the safe-sex guide.

*Cord* editor Tony Burke defended the paper's decision to run the article. He felt the article was interesting, and when he asked other staff members about it, none were "violently" against running it, although some had concerns about the article's wording.

"The language was explicit but the intent was good," said Burke.

According to the council, there are other reasons why *The Cord* should be shut down. "The *Cord* has published some poorly researched news stories and potentially libellous editorials," he said.

## Winnipeg

**WINNIPEG (CUP)** — Some students at the University of Winnipeg have asked the editors of the campus paper to resign after they published the controversial safe-sex story.

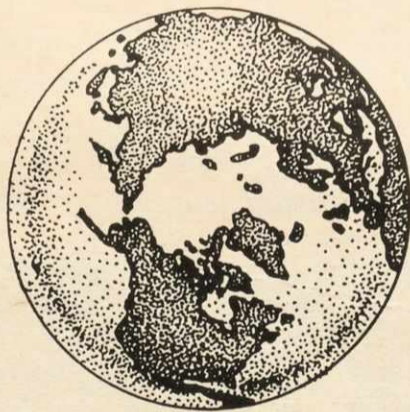
The *Uniter* printed the guide for gay men in its Feb. 27 Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issue.

About 40 students showed up to complain about the article at a Mar. 5 public forum organized by the U of W's student council. Some asked that the editors step down.

But the editors refused to resign. Instead, *Uniter* copy editor Carol Phillips read a statement supporting their Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Issue and reiterating their solidarity with other Canadian student newspapers threatened with censorship.

"The eroticization of safe sex information is one of the most effective means of educating people around AIDS issues. It works to inspire safe sex practices in ways that a clinical approach could not," Phillips told the meeting.

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