

# Women's words are never done

Every year at this time the Gazette staff votes on whether it will produce a women's issue. Usually, the definition of a women's issue is one laid out entirely by women, creating an all-woman space in the office for layout night. Sometimes the question of all-woman content is raised, but usually the paper has male contributions that aren't seen as being necessary to bump. That was the case this year, so there are stories in the issue written by men, but the paper is conceptualized and realized by women.

For the past two years I have voted against barring male staff members from the Gazette office for the women's issue. I did not understand, I did not believe, I did not feel any benefits could be reaped from this action.

The men at the Gazette worked every bit as hard to uphold the basic mandate of the paper: to alleviate societal pressures against traditionally oppressed groups by providing a forum in which to express views which, presumably, would not have otherwise been promoted. The staff at the Gazette has constitutionally sworn not to promote racism, sexism, hatred, or homophobia. The power hierarchy at the paper did not promote men over women at any

time that I worked there, so to bar male staff lacked any positive point that I could see and seemed more destructive than anything.

I am a feminist. I believe that men and women are equal in all significant ways, and I believe this equality must be publicly recognized. I believe women must look to their own lives to see how personally they have been forced to view "feminine" traits as being less viable to life processes, and "masculine" traits as being superior. I believe women should work to change the existing patriarchal power structure, not simply to win a place within it.

Men and women work together at the paper all year. The concentration of women on staff is slightly higher than the number of men this year, with maybe sixty per cent of the Gazette population being women. This ratio is maintained in the distribution of power (that is, amongst the section heads).

Only by working with men, I thought, could any gains be realized. It would do no good to eliminate the men for one night and presume we had progressed. Spending one night within the power structure erected decades ago by men, using their cultural framework from which to produce a women's issue, did not seem positive at all. A true success of this kind is Pandora, where the mandate is to actually change the structure of publishing using women's alternatives.

Instead, it seemed to me that we were penalizing men who actually wanted to help with the issue, men

who were most likely to learn from the experience. Someone told me it was good to have an all-women paper to prove that we could do it all ourselves. This was particularly dismaying, as it seemed small-minded and patronizing to need to prove anything like that, and then to tamely hand the paper back to the men, satisfied with our one issue. Of course we can do it, and well. The question is, could we do it differently enough to justify the elimination of the contributions of half the staff, and is it healthy to do that on a regular basis to right archival wrongs?

This year, I voted in favour of the women's issue barring men. Around the beginning of December I once again was forced to ask myself if men could rightfully be excluded from events honouring women. There are men who want to listen, there are men who want to learn. How can we exclude them?

It is possible, and even desirable, to sponsor women's only events. Men and women have shared this planet - working together - for over ten thousand years. There has always been the opportunity for men to listen and learn. Some men have done so, and have lived their lives quietly outside of the framework of masculine abusiveness. To these men, I say it is not women who are excluding you from their lives. It is the men who have not learned. It is not the responsibility of women to find the men who would abuse them and teach them not to do so. Police yourselves.

**Jennifer Beck**



## LETTERS

The Dalhousie Gazette welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Monday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

### Who watches the watchmen?

To the editor:

I am writing in response to your self-righteous denunciation of the removal of the "lesbigay" issue from Dalplex, which appeared in your February 18 issue. For a group of people who make themselves out to be a bunch of socially-conscious liberals, you (the Gazette's editors) demonstrate an astounding lack of sensitivity towards your potential readership. Don't you realize that young children could easily get a chance to look at the Gazette issues which are left at Dalplex? Did it occur to you that maybe this is why they were removed? Many young children are passing through Dalplex all the time, and their parents aren't always nearby to stop them from seeing the sexually explicit material and offensive language that appears in many Gazette issues and particularly in the annual "lesbigay" supplement. You may or may not think it is fine that young children see this kind of material, but frankly that is not up to you to decide. Decisions regarding what a young child should see should be made by the child's parents, not by the Gazette's editors. As long as the Gazette continues to print sexually explicit material (whether it be homosexual or heterosexual in nature) and language which many consider to be offensive, it should not be available where it is readily

accessible by young children. C'mon, Gazette, start taking more responsibility for what you print and where you distribute it!

**Adrian Cook**

### A shot in the arm

To the editors:

Congratulations to the individual(s) who decided to trash the Feb. 11th Lesbigay Gazette. Score another point for the homophobes! Your victory is a hollow one, however. I don't know who you are - man, woman? straight, bi, gay? young, old? student, dalplex member, dalplex employee? You could be anyone. That doesn't matter. What matters is that your childish act of censorship pisses me off. And when you anger bisexual, gay or lesbian people, you only give us more ammunition for our fight. Despite people like you, gay communities throughout the world are making large political efforts to gain understanding, acceptance and respect, not through juvenile acts nor with our fists. Those of us who are survivors (i.e. those of us who don't live closeted by a lifetime of denial or some of us who take our own lives, unable to line in a cruel homophobic world) - we are a tough, thick-skinned bunch. We face more shit and pain daily (e.g. the jokes, the rejection by family and friends, judgement of our "worth" by politicians and military brass, AIDS deaths of friends and lov-

ers) than a straight person faces in a lifetime. Your act was trivial, but it helped us to strengthen our cause. It won't be forgotten.

(P.S. I hope you at least threw those Gazettes into a recycling bin!)

**Wendy Mirkovich  
Richard Fisk**

### Bitchin' barbells

To the editor:

As a gay Dal student who uses the Dalplex regularly, I was perplexed as to the point of the "Gay Jock's" article (Feb. 11). There are gay men at Dalplex. So what! Men stare at men at Dalplex. Again, so what! Is this a revelation to him? He paints himself as a well-adjusted, successful, atypical, gay man. Good for him!

He sure sounds typical in his attitude, though. i.e. bitch, bitch, bitch about how the gay community doesn't serve his particular needs. So he complains about not being able to openly cruise at Dalplex, and then proceeds to trash the various gay and gay-positive bars and organizations in this city.

We live in Halifax, not the biggest not the most liberal minded city on the planet. For its relatively small size, the gay community here doesn't do too badly in serving our needs (in my opinion). If "Gay Jock" wants to see changes, why doesn't he get involved in some of these groups, instead of just bitching?

**T. Paone**

The Dalhousie Gazette is Canada's oldest college newspaper. Published weekly through the Dalhousie Student Union, which also comprises its membership, the Gazette has a circulation of 10,000. As a founding member of Canadian University Press, the Gazette adheres to the CUP Statement of Principles and reserves the right to refuse any material submitted of a racist, sexist, homophobic or libelous nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and announcements is noon on Monday before publication (Thursday of each week). Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o the Gazette. Commentary should not exceed 500 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted upon request. Advertising copy deadline is noon Monday before publication. The Gazette offices are located on the third floor of the SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on. The views expressed in the Gazette are not necessarily those of the Students' Union, the editors or the collective staff.