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Correspondence

'Careless accusations'

Rape is a serious crime. Rapists should be charged, tried, convicted and jailed. Careless accusations of rape are also serious, and the past two weeks have produced some very careless statements on the topic. Three examples will suffice:

Excalibur (March 20, page 3) refers to recent allegations of rape here at York as involving a student and "her professor." The front page story referred to the accused only as "a teacher." In fact the accused person is actually a student — a graduate student working as a teaching assistant.

The *Toronto Globe and Mail* (March 10, page 1) quotes Professor Ann Shteir as saying that one of her colleagues at York "has a notorious reputation for harassing women." However she does not identify the professor, perhaps because, as she adds, "he's never actually done anything explicitly improper." She implies sexual harassment but she does not say who it was or what he did. This sort of vague accusation may be good publicity for Ann Shteir, but it is also irresponsible and harmful to the university.

Finally, reporting on speakers at a York forum on sexual harassment, *Excalibur* (March 20, page 3) quotes panelist Leah Cohen who identifies "verbal innuendo" and "the pursuit of dates" as types of rape. This foolishness may serve to feed a kind of rape hysteria, but it does not confront any real issues involved in rape or sexual harassment.

The topic of rape is too serious to be treated carelessly. The law provides strong penalties for rapists, and the law applies to professors as well as anyone else. If there has been rape at York, it should be dealt with as a serious legal matter so that legal penalties can be applied. But treating accusations of rape as a matter to be dealt with by the university administration invites the kind of carelessness that has just occurred. This in turn serves to trivialize the entire issue of rape. It also stains the reputation of York's professors as well as the reputation of the university as a whole.

R. Goranson

3-D sex flicks 'not funny'

The editorial in last week's issue contained some inaccuracies surrounding the screening of the 3D Movies during International Women's Week.

First of all, the objections to the screening of the films did not initially come from the Women's Centre as stated in your article. Various members of CYSF Executive and Council, including myself, objected strongly to these films when it was learned that it was Mr. Wales' intention to screen these films during International Women's Week. At a time when CYSF is trying to adopt an increased awareness about women and to develop a more enlightened attitude toward women, the showing of a film of this nature on behalf of CYSF could only serve to damage the progress the present CYSF Council has made in this regard. It was particularly felt, especially by myself, that this movie being shown during International Women's Week violated the celebration of that week on campus. The films were pornographic in Mr. Wales' own words. "They are perverse and they are

bad." Unfortunately this perversity is directed at women.

Susan Brownmiller in her book, *Against Our Will, Men, Women and Rape* had this to say about porn: "The gut distaste that a majority of women feel when we look at pornography, a distaste that incredibly it is no longer fashionable to admit, comes, from the gut knowledge that we and our bodies are being stripped, exposed and contorted for the purpose of ridicule to bolster the 'masculine esteem' which gets its kick and sense of power from viewing females as anonymous, panting playthings, adult toys, dehumanized objects to be used, abused, broken and discarded."

Mr. Wales in his own words regards such movies as "hilariously funny". Well I don't regard them as fun. It is perhaps regrettable that Mr. Wales could not have shown more discretion in his choice of films. There are many good films that represent women in a realistic manner.

Anyway, upon hearing these objections, Keith Smockum decided to have an executive meeting of CYSF. After much discussion it was agreed by members of the executive to request Mr. Wales to postpone the showing of these films in respect of International Women's Week and also until Council was able to debate the implications of this matter more thoroughly. Mr. Wales felt that by making such a request we were acting in the capacity of censors. He subsequently learnt that the Women's Centre supported my position and as a consequence he attributed most of the blame to them in respect of CYSF's decision to request him to postpone the screening of this flick.

Now, to apply myself to the question of censorship. The Women's Centre was approached by me on the question of whether CYSF needs to adopt some kind of policy regarding the kinds of entertainment it provides and sponsors. It is clear from this incident, that the CYSF is at the mercy of the organizers of its entertainment to bring whatever garbage they so please on campus. It is my firm opinion that students do not want to see garbage, they want quality entertainment. Some members of the Centre indicated that they would support the adoption of guidelines which would prevent offensive entertainment material being brought on campus by CYSF. Let me state, that by the adoption of such guidelines, CYSF is not telling students what they should or should not view. If students want this kind of entertainment they can quite easily seek it out elsewhere. What we would be doing, if such guidelines are adopted, is ensuring that the entertainment that CYSF provides does not serve to offend or do injustice to any particular group of people on campus. You can call it censorship. I call it protecting people's interests.

After Mr. Wales' resignation, the issue was debated by Council. Council decided to form an Ad Hoc Committee which would investigate the whole matter of whether or not CYSF should develop guidelines for the entertainment it sponsors. This Committee will be meeting in the next few weeks and will make recommendations to Council. Any member of the community is invited to attend the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee should they so wish. Contact the CYSF office for dates and times.

In view of the above, I feel that certain allegations against the York Women's Centre by *Excalibur* were in bad taste. It is clear that the *Excalibur* Editorial did not take into account all the facts and information in respect of this matter. I might add that at no time did any member of *Excalibur* approach me and attempt to clarify the situation. As a result, the editorial prejudiced the Women's Centre and the many students connected with the Centre. As an avid reader and supporter of *Excalibur*, I was extremely disappointed that the paper failed to report adequately in this matter. I think the Women's Centre deserves an apology.

Jenny Gonsalves
CYSF
VP Women's Affairs

Evaluating evaluations

It's time again for filling course evaluation survey reports. I had to fill two course evaluation survey reports last week. Why do students have to fill a biased course evaluation survey at the end of every academic year? Defacto results have indicated that students who passed a course with high grades C+ and above often find nothing wrong with the teaching style of a professor. On the other hand students that earned low grades in a course often criticize the professor for his bad style of teaching and/or the professor is prejudiced.

So now the course evaluation survey report filled out at the end of each year is biased because it often gives a distorted result. The University authorities should make sure that such a survey is conducted during the first five weeks of a course when no marks or grades have been issued. I am quite sure more positive results can be obtained by this method.

David Agbo Esho

Grievances and cutbacks

In November six Teaching Assistants, all of them members of the Graduate Assistants' Association, filed a grievance with the Division of Social Science because they realized that their assigned workload was well over the ten hour a week average (or 270 hour total) for which they are paid. The grievance procedure is a formal method by which disputes between G.A.A. members and the University Administration are solved.

The Administration has responded to the grievance by directing the TAs to reduce their hours to 270 by withdrawing certain services which they provide to students. For example, some have been instructed that they are no longer required to attend lectures, hold office hours and/or grade final essays and exams. (One TA was given a choice between not leading tutorials for the rest of the year and not grading final exams.)

The grievance could have been settled differently. The University could have offered to pay TAs for the work which would have been performed. In choosing to settle the issue in this fashion, the Administration has

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All letters should be addressed to the editor, *Excalibur*, Room 111 Central Square. Letters must be typed, triple-spaced, on a 66 stroke line. Letters are limited to 300 words (seven column inches). Name, address, or phone number must be included or the letter will not be published. *Excalibur* reserves the right to edit for grammar and length. Deadline Monday 5 pm.