

Women's only events

BY JULIE LEWIS

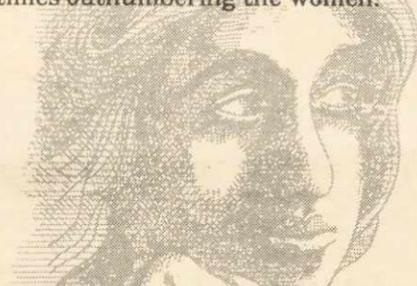
There has been a lot of discussion within the pages of the *Gazette* last term about the merits of women-only events. There have been some convincing arguments both for and against (I would say mostly for, but then again, I am completely and unabashedly biased). I won't get into the details of the argument, but I will say that the same debate has been raging within the Halifax gay and lesbian community.

Contrary to popular belief, the lesbian and gay population is not a homogenous one. The differences between lesbian and gay lifestyles are often profound. This is reflected in the very different needs and expectations gay men and lesbians have of our social club and community centre. *Rumours* is in the unique position of being a business owned by a community organization (the Gay and Lesbian Association of Nova Scotia). As such, the building at 2112 Gottingen Street is not only a bar, but a community centre. Therefore much of *Rumour's* programming and practice is determined by GALA policies and initiatives. Gender specific nights are such an initiative.

For years women in the community have been saying that the programming at *Rumours* has not been fulfilling our needs - that the club catered to the male clientele who tended to spend more money at the bar (which can be chalked up to wage disparities between men and women). Many of these women chose not to be involved in an organization which was not addressing their needs. This served to perpetuate the problem - fewer women involved means less concern for women's issues which means fewer women involved, and so on.

In an attempt to provide more entertainment for women, GALA established Women's Program Nights a few years ago. The second Tuesday of the month was designated for women-oriented programming and a committee was formed to provide special events for these

evenings. While many women were hoping to have women-only space at *Rumours* and GALA was supportive, it was believed that the Liquor Licensing Board regulations prohibited gender exclusive events. Therefore these nights were declared "women-oriented" rather than women-only, and men came - sometimes outnumbering the women.



In 1990, meetings with the Liquor Licensing Board resulted in *Rumours* getting the go-ahead to hold gender specific events. This was based on the recognition of the unique cultures of gay men and lesbians and the need to cultivate them separately on occasion. Perhaps this is more of a need for lesbians than for gay men, because we have welcomed women-only nights, while most men feel men-only nights are unnecessary or unwanted.

Gender specific programming is not for everyone. In fact, some complaints have been made (mostly by men who have been turned away on women's nights). However, most lesbians in the community enjoy the atmosphere of a women-only space. Generally, those who are indifferent still understand why it is important for others. I think it's great. Women come to *Rumours* on a women's night who are seldom or never seen on any other night. The feeling on a women's night is very different than a regular mixed night. This is not to say that all lesbians have the same interests and needs, but that women-only space provides some refuge and relief for many of us in the community.

Women-only nights are every second and fourth Tuesday of the month at *Rumours*. If you're a

Graffiti

continued from page 10

gay white men are not standing shoulder to shoulder with Others in their struggle with the social, political and cultural agenda of this Society.

Wake up, boys, you are lying to yourselves, you are playing the game of the 'oppress-or-be-oppressed'. That's really sick.

The gay white male enthusiasm for liberating Others stops with liberal-guilt, -cheque book and -pose. "One for all and all for one." "Everything would be okay if we'd all just put aside our differences and listen to each other", as though gay white male sentimentalities constitute real understanding of Others' experience...

...Others...let's add drag queens, gay men of colour, gay men living with AIDS, a list which grows and never steps outside the realm of "gay" man.

Unity in a Brave New World, where the Chair- of the Board is definitely a gay-Man. Gay white liberalism affirms difference only insofar as difference affirms a whitebread view of society safe for gay white men.

Others will never feature prominently in the official History as written by the white male victors. *Even if I do make it into the history books, the first thing written about me will be my marital status and probably my hair colour.*

I am a white lesbian. I have lots to learn, too; we all do, but I like to think I won't have to play power games with my gay-white-male friends. I don't need that shit, I get it everywhere else.

Of the suffering masses, gay white men are the pampered elite. Though it's crowded by homophobia and fear, gay white men enjoy clearer access to Power than the Others ever will. As a Natural lot, Power awaits men. Weirdly phallogentric, Power doesn't care which way your dick is oriented, just that you have one.

Graffiti, DAN HART
Italic, LEIGH ANN VARDY

SUSIE SEXPERT continued from page 9

she said, "Your breasts get bigger but so does your clit. I said to the doctor, plug in the Hitachi wand and hand it to me."

Susie told of a friend who threw a lesbian orgy with 140 women. The friend complained that there was no space to have sex. ("That's like a bad lesbian joke," said Susie. How much space do you need?)

"More gay men are long term in their relationships. Lesbians are the queens of serial monogamy," said

, warning of the dangers of ig into the 'Let's get married, let's get a cat' trap. "You can have great sex with assholes," she said.

Safer Sexpertise

Parts of her new book and a big part of Susie's talk focused on safe sex and AIDS. "Nobody knows anything about women and AIDS. The information is pathetic," said

Bright. She added that the number one question is the safety of oral sex.

"Lesbians have been guilty of thinking of AIDS as a man's disease just like straights have been guilty of thinking of AIDS as a gay disease."

"The people who are in the bigger danger from sex, physically and psychologically, are people who can't talk, who can't communicate," she said.

Bright called safe sex an incentive to exercise the imagination. She said if a vaccine against HIV could be found tomorrow, we'd be wise to hang on to safe sex practises for other STDs. "Safe sex is here to stay."

And so is Susie Sexpert. She has lectured at Ivy League schools like Harvard and recently took her road show to Amherst college, Massachusetts, where she got physical threats. "A man called me

and said, 'I did security for George Bush , and I'm doing security for you.'"

The Amherst experience was among Susie's stranger ones, the town being the stalwart, conservative penis it is. ("They've all been pussy-whipped by Andrea Dworkin.") Bright was taken to speak at, of all places, a church. "I gave them my most militant talk. Catholic areas don't seem to phase me. Must be all that lesbian nun movement."

Susie spoke confidently of the healthy progress made by women speaking and writing freely on sex, especially when it leads to more suggestions. "I almost want to say 'yes' everytime for positive reinforcement."

"Women taking sexual power just seems very down to earth to me."