

# "ombudsman"

Although we tentatively concluded, at the end of last column, that there did not seem to be a very large stress problem around this university - at least before this year - it is probable that many of you, particularly right about now, are going to be feeling something that sure as hell seems to be stress. You're right; it is.

What I want to try to do now is offer some bullshit-free suggestions as to what to do about it. Since there are an awful lot of people who will probably disagree with what I have to say, understand these are purely my views on the subject and I have no claim to any authority or agreement from any other person whatsoever.

If you have problems you want the "Ombudsman" to look into, or if you're someone who wants to help solve other people's problems, contact Dirk Schaeffer at 439-6486 or Kevin Schaeffer at 1010 Newton Place, 8515-112 St. or Kevin Schaeffer in Gateway 432-5178 (Room 282, SUB) or at 433-2136.

Generally, when you are being stressed, you know it. There are some difficult cases where you *don't* know, but act anyway, I'll get to those later.) You don't like it. And you want to do something about it. And if you *don't* do something about it, it will do something about you. So the question comes down to what can you do to it, before it starts costing you more than you can afford (in psychological "health", friends, etc.).

By definition, stress is something that comes down on you from outside; it is *not* something inside you, although that is where you experience it. Typically, friends, family, well-meaning persons are going to lay on you that it is something inside you that makes you feel stressed; that someone else experiences the same pressures you do, so how come you're suffering worse, etc. etc. That's bullshit. When you're hurt, you hurt.

Obviously then, there are two things that can be done about stress: you can remove the external stressor, or you can deal with yourself to make it stop stressing so much. Unfortunately, the first alternative, while certainly the most reasonable, is usually close to impossible. This is because you are sufficiently tied to the stressors (family, lovers, University involvement, religion, etc.) that you don't want to (can't) let go. Thus, if examination pressures seem to be what's bothering you, one easy solution is to drop out of University: usually, you don't want to do this, or you wouldn't be in university in the first place.

So usually you have to go the other route, living with the stress in some way until it goes away, or you get sufficiently tired not to feel it any more. Generally, there are two

approaches to this problem: compensation and distraction. If you can find something to *make up for* the particular shit you are suffering, the shit often becomes more bearable; if you can find something to *distract you* from it, it hurts less. In both cases, getting it out of you and onto something else helps.

With those general principles in mind, I'll try to suggest some of the specific things you can do about it:

1) Bitch. This is very useful, since it minimizes the odds on your believing that the stress is your fault, gives you something else to focus it on, provides you with stimulating topics for conversation with your friends, etc. There's a great deal of bitching goes on at this university and all others, and while very little of it may be factually justified, it goes a great way to help keep everybody's heads intact. The only problem is that if bitching escalates with stress, your friends and others are going to start thinking you have a problem, be less sympathetic, and finally compound the issue by laying you-need-help trips on you. Also, as stress escalates, bitching itself may not be enough to handle it.

2) Fight. Stress makes you hurt, angry, ultimately mad. If you can work it off physically, that helps. A friend or lover you can literally beat on is a very useful thing to have (after all, what's a friend for if not to stomp on from time to time?) Unfortunately, this option isn't open to most of us. Sometimes our friends stomp back - which isn't necessarily too bad but it ain't much fun. Mostly, we just don't have that kind of friend.

3) Screw. (Make love, whatever term you like). Preferably with someone you haven't screwed before, or at least aren't tied to like married, engaged, going steady. This is usually the best solution not just because it's the most fun, but because good serious screwing means discovering the whole new world of your new partner, and being discovered that way. The new partner distracts you beautifully, and at the same time listens more intensely and appreciatively to all the things that are bugging and stressing you. Old partners and intimates don't do this, on the other hand: first of all, because you can't discover them afresh, and secondly, because they already have expectations of you and so don't take you as seriously as new lovers do.

The main problem with this approach is that we have mostly been brought up to believe that there is something wrong or sinful about new sexual pleasures. In fact, our world is still so uptight that often just getting into new people, without screwing, is regarded as some kind of betrayal or disloyalty by many of the people we are intimate with. If you start suffering that, you're worse off than when you started. So don't try this approach unless it feels good and guilt free.

4) Get stoned. This is chancy, but common. Booze and a lot of drugs are good distractions in many cases, but again our world is sufficiently uptight that we tend to feel guilty about using them. Some of them may also take you places you don't really want to go, if you start from the wrong space.

5) Seek help. If all else fails, this is about all that's left, and it most commonly does the trick if you do it right. Again, the main thing to avoid is intimates and people with expectations of you. This means lovers, families, and here on campus-most university officials. All these people are only going to listen as

long as what you say doesn't violate their expectations of you, and are going to lay those expectations on you anyway, even if they do listen to you first.

Thus, the best agencies are those that are into helping you without laying trips on you, and probably the best of those is Student Help. Next to them, probably your best bets are some of the religious agencies (if you're into religion), which again are not tied to any particular expectations, now that they've got rid of the notion of pushing God as a solution. Also, there's me.

After that, particularly if you have a need to seek advice from "authorities" rather than peers, there are a number of heavier agencies to turn to: ranging from faculty and Deans, if the problems are academic, to Student Counselling, Student Helath, U of A's psych ward, and the Aberhart Walk-In Clinic. There are some good heads at all these places; but my advice would be to try like crazy to avoid all the psychiatric ones at the very least: the feedback I've had on these places is that their major approach is to dope you up so much you can't move or think and then lay your "responsibilities" on you. (This is obviously grossly exaggerated, of course).

Okay. Somewhere in this list there should be a "solution" for you. What matters most is that you pick the one that feels right, and *don't* let yourself be guided anymore than you have to, by what you think others expect of you.

There remains still the flip side of all these problems: what to do if you have a friend or intimate who appears to be reacting to stress but doesn't seem to be aware of it. The best thing is to let them be. If you can't do that because you're tied so closely to them (lover or family) that they really bug hell out of you, find yourself a friend to talk to about it. Remember, what has now happened is that *you're* being stressed by them, so it's *your* problem. Treat it that way, as described above. It that way, as described above.

If the stressed friend is just a friend, whom you don't have intimate expectations of, but whom it hurts you to watch getting fucked up or over, approach them as a friend. Offer whatever support you feel you can give (like letting them bitch at you, stomp on you, screw with you, get stoned), but don't try to give more than you can and *don't, don't, don't* lay on them that any of these alternatives will be "good" for them. Nothing is "good" for anybody unless they choose it themselves, freely.

Finally, if the stressed friend is in real trouble (like, suicidal or perpetually drunk out of his mind) try to get them to Student Help or a similar agency. Let them worry about it; that's what they're there for. If your friend won't go by himself, you go instead, and see what they tell you. It may be you can work something out. Maybe not: but you can't win them all.

**Note:** We're so much into maintaining anonymity around here that we managed, last week, to invent a non-existent co-worker. The name should have been Kim McKenzie: apologies to him, and anyone who feels they've been confused with him. Also, just to clarify Student Help's data used last week—all information we received was statistics and no personal information was released or requested.

## Que. administrators draw up 'procedures' for faculty dealings

MONTREAL (CUP) - University administrators in Quebec have drawn up a document outlining procedures for dealing with faculty unions.

The document, labelled "backward" by a member of the McGill University faculty union, was released in mid-November by the striking Syndicat des professeurs d'universite Laval (SPUL).

Although officials at McGill, Laval and the University of Quebec at Montreal (UQAM) emphasised Nov. 26 the document is only a "guideline," it explains certain sections as agreements between administrators beyond which they will not go" in contract negotiations.

Among these agreements is a decision by the Conference des recteurs et Principaux d'Universites du Quebec that the "right of employment is the sole prerogative of the employer that the administration."

Academic freedom also must be restricted to the right to teach and should not be used as a justification for any type of action against professors."

Gilles Dostal'er, vice-president of the striking UQAM professors union conceded the document carries no "power of decision." However he said the existence of a document outlining what were originally claimed to be basic agreements on the part of the province's university administrations "must surely

influence the negotiations" underway at both UQAM and Laval in Quebec City.

Faculty at Laval have been on strike since Sept. 7 over the issues of salaries, job security, implementation of a faculty salary structure, participation in establishing teaching criteria and creation of a grievance procedure.

UQAM faculty walked out Oct. 18 over the issues of hiring teaching assistants over full-time faculty and the right of departmental assemblies to set criteria for the evaluation and tenure of faculty. Tenure and job renewal have been faculty-controlled for five years.

## Student evaluations and sexual politics

DENVER Colo. (CPS-CUP) - Professors at the University of Delaware are bedding down with their students in return for good marks the university president charged recently.

Speaking before the faculty senate, E.A. Trabant noted thirty to forty instances of "sexual harrassment" in the past year. He said the incidents came to his attention through letters or phone calls from parents.

## U picks bone with gov't

The university has a bone to pick with the provincial government.

At Friday's meeting of the Board of Governors, the Board passed a motion asking the government to amend parts of the Alberta Historical Resources Act which "seem to interfere with the legitimate activities of university paleontologists working in the Province."

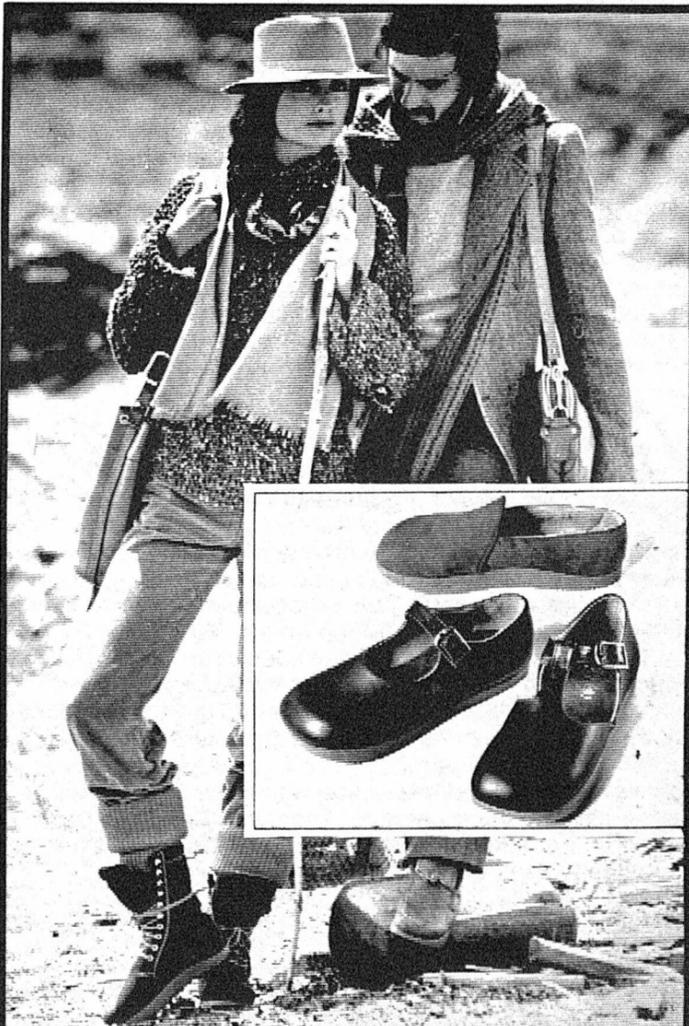
The university's associate academic vp Dr. Jean Lauber told the B of G provisions of the Historical Resources Act which require fossils to be turned over to the provincial museum for custody, will hurt research and teaching on campus.

"This means that university researchers cannot do their research and cannot use the fossils for work with their students," B of G academic rep D. Ross said.

"This is a question of custody, not of ownership," university president Dr. Harry Gunning told the board. "No one is disputing that the people of

Alberta are the owners of the fossils; it's merely a question of whether the university or the provincial museum have custody of certain fossils.

"If the university does not have custody of fossils, then this will severely limit the research and the teaching capabilities of university paleontologists."



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