

EDITORIAL

Sexism in language

Feminism! Certainly an emotive subject on campus these days. A cursory glance at this week's Letters to the Editor page indicates just how sensitive people are to sexism in language. And, believe it or not, language is sexist. In last week's editorial, Professor Bruce Cummings quoted Joseph Wood Krutch as saying, "When a MAN wantonly destroys one of the works of MAN we call HIM Vandal. When HE wantonly destroys one of the works of God we call HIM a sportsMAN." Though I'm not suggesting that it was Cummings' intention to ignore the other half of the world's population, I feel that the generic use of the term "man" deftly illustrates the marginalization of woman in language.

The "other" half of the world's population! Think about that for a minute. Over the centuries, women have been conceived of as man's "other". In modern feminist theory, women are defined by their "lack" -- their lack, in this case, of the signifying phallus. On the other hand, "man" exists as an independent signifying agent. His is the power of the word.

Language is the basis for gender stereotyping. Yet despite attempts by women's groups, academics and other interested individuals to uncover the underlying phallogocentric structure of language, sexism is deeply ingrained in every system of signification. Just look at literature, advertising and the media. "Woman" is invariably represented as an object of male desire. Chris Kane's I.C.U. cartoon falls into this category. In the cartoon, a kindergarten boy asks his older brother (a university student) if he's been "... cruisin' some hot 'n' lovely university babes for a little bit o' Bzz Bzz Bzz...?" Not very funny admittedly, but is it sexist? Yes, I think it is. As a friend of mine pointed out, try substituting "Jews", "Indians" or "blacks" for "babes" -- and wait for the response.

The feminists on campus have a legitimate cause for complaint. *The Brunswickan* is undeniably sexist. But then, so is the University's hiring policy. Sexism pervades our society: it has become an accepted form of prejudice. Even though most Canadians pride themselves on their multi-racial tolerance, sexism and sexist attitudes are a fact of life. The question we should be asking is, "Why is sexism acceptable when racism isn't?"

Feminists are addressing the issue of sexism. But it's something that should concern all of us. What we need is an increasing awareness to sexism in language, because the only way the Archie Bunker type mentality will disappear is to deconstruct society's gender-based stereotypes. That includes, by the way, the image of the feminist as a ball-breaking bra-burner. Men can be feminist too!

By MARK STEVENS



Mugwump

By PETER THOMPSON

Journal

After receiving a rather scalding reply to last week's Mugwump Journal, Ernie developed a condition which wouldn't allow him to pen this week's edition. In response to that letter, we must acknowledge our presence at the national nose-picking championships. Unfortunately, the *Brunswickan* didn't do very well as snout enough players showed up.

Blood and guts and glory, that's what we need. Enough of this piddling around in the middle east: we want a real war with bombs and guns and violence. Go Ron Go!

Did you know that the ancient Greek definition of "school" translates approximately as "freedom from business activities". Does this mean that all the business students will soon quit their endless marketing meetings and go out and try to become genuine plastic yuppies? We can only hope.

When rock videos came out, I was extremely interested because I thought we might see some thoughtful, interpretative visuals of whatever was expressed through the music. In a small percentage of videos, this is the case, but unfortunately the majority simply portray whatever is necessary to lure more sheep to buy their records. What do fast cars, flashy clothing and scantily clad women have to do with ... wait a minute, Samantha Fox's "Touch Me" is coming on.

Well, it's midterm time (still). Fortunately, I rarely go to class so I don't even know when they are.

Did you know our SRC president gets an honoraria. This brings about the \$6000 question. What does Jane do?

I heard that several members of Aitken house attempted to halt the Great Pumpkin Sacrifice by hurling dangerous projectiles at the sacrificers. Why can't those who hold themselves responsible for halting the ceremony use creative means such as stealing the pumpkin or catching it? Throwing batteries, beer bottles, and eggs is not only unfunny, it's stupid and dangerous. Nice going!

The field hockey Red Sticks were eliminated from the CIAU's last weekend in a heartbreaking shoot off against UBC. For the details, read the two great stories in the sports section. It was a good season though, and I would like to thank the Sticks for providing some good field hockey for me to watch.

Word of the Week: Encephaloplegic: paralyzed from the neck up. See Brian Mulroney and the federal government for details.