

Editorial

EDITORIAL

BY KAREN BURGESS

Textual correctness

Readers of last week's *Newsweek* [October 25] will recognize the (sort of) borrowed title. The magazine devoted its cover and an eleven-ish page spread to the debate about sexual correctness—has it gone too far, pros and cons etc., etc. It raised some interesting points in its treatment of how different campuses and institutions in America are handling sexual relations in the nineties.

At Brown University, an alleged sexual offender had his picture plastered all over campus by women concerned for the safety of their fellow female students, reads the lead article.

In the academic realm, the Eleventh Commandment—"Thou shalt not Abuse women"—is making the line between women's responsibility and legislative over-kill a politically correct nightmare, it explains.

The feminist activist endorses exposing former offenders to their peers, "brushing her long, golden-brown hair off her face," it proclaims.... Wait. Did the magazine's layout staff accidentally add a paragraph from the society pages to this examination of sexual politics, or is the author fall into a textual trap which, seemingly puts her in the position of the subjectifying superficiality that many of these women are trying to fight against?

Does the fact that she has long, golden-brown hair add credibility to her statements? Does it detract? Does it make any conceivable difference to the outcome of the current warfare on the sexual battleground?

Textuality here is just as important a component of the correctness debate as what stance one takes. The pen can be as mighty as the sword, and words can be as confining as any prison. Strange that an article which make the comment that the sixties were a time when "guys still wielded mighty swords and girls still protected their virtue" can see no self-reflective irony in discussing the degree to which coercion plays a part in rape—the author questions whether a rapist must outrightly threaten "Do me or die," or if "C'mon Tiffany, if you won't, I'm gonna go off with Heather" will suffice. Verbal coercion is the name of the whole game in the quest for textual correctness, it's just a question of what weapons you can use in polite company.

For instance, a student newspaper need not be as conservative as a mainstream paper. This is not to say that it is possessed of less credibility, just that it has a different mandate. But the world of student journalism contains considerably more grey zones than its professional parallel dimension, for all its freedom.

It would be easy, for instance, for student journalists to avoid controversy, and print only the safest contributions they receive, but could they conceivably make any statement this way? Are they supposed to make a statement? Can this be done without offending anyone? Without getting sued?

No. Yes. Probably not. Certainly.

MUGWUMP

BY JAMIE AND STEVE

Spirit of the West is coming to campus next week, but I'm still not sure whether or not I'll go. In the past four years Spirit of the West has played on Campus four times. I have seen them three times and each time they've played the same songs in the same order (I'll bet \$10, they sing *That's Amoré again*). Please don't misunderstand me, I like Spirit of the West, their new single is great but aren't there other bands touring?

The core of this problem lies with Campus Entertainment and the Student Union's method of hiring bands. The Student Union uses very few promotional companies (mainly The Agency) who have only a few bands under contract. Because the SU uses only this company we will only get to see the same acts again and again.

Did you know that the University of Maine has brought in The Fixx, The Smithereens, B-52's and next term The Lemonheads? What did

Any student journalist with any sincere motivation to fill the vocation will come up against brick walls, ignorance, small-mindedness, and red tape. In the face of exams, papers, work deadlines, part-time jobs, parents, siblings, friends, romantic entanglements and the endless other responsibilities in any student's life it would be easy to be a journalistic jellyfish. But then, after the blood, sweat and tears of it all, what would they have to show for their work?

One 'thank-you' from a student who faced injustice and was helped by the attention your media outlet provided them makes up for the endless resentment and snide comments by the professors, administrators, politicians, and know-it-alls whose toes you may have stepped on along the way. (Yes, the little digs do get back to us, it's our job to hear about everything, remember?)

Student media should make a statement. What that is will be determined by the students who get involved with the outlet in question. Does this mean that other statements can't be made too? No, although sometimes it's tempting to editorially silence the people whose opinions you have no use for, you have to see the other side to make a fair judgment. Nothing can be treated without prejudice. All journalists, professional or student, are human beings with their own priorities. All we can do is try.

It's impossible to publish a newspaper without offending anyone. Sometimes to offend is the only way one can roust a lethargic campus into semi-consciousness. This is not to say that one should solicit offensive material or provoke contention, but only that if it's thrown in your face, it shouldn't be glossed over. We study Hitler in first year history with a view to making tolerance as a policy look better, and perhaps we need a reality injection every once in a while to remind us that there are still issues out there.

Can you be all these things, maintain a level of journalistic integrity with which you can be comfortable and stay out of legal trouble? Naturally. There's a thin line between obscenity and strong language, criticism and slander, challenging presentation of issues and poor taste, but there is still a line. As a general rule, the most important rule to remember is that editorializing belongs in an editorial forum—in our case, this column, Mugwump, Opinion, Blood and Thunder, and Spectrum. The same rules apply, but these sections are for expressing opinions and attitudes which should not be reflected in, for instance, a news article or a sporting report.

The female students of Michigan College attend parties and gatherings in groups with a designated sober monitor, who steps in to make sure alcohol consumption won't result in any remorse-filled 'mornings after.' Textually, correctness, if there is such a thing, negates this form of chaperoning, though it can be said that readers should abstain from going too far into any textual intercourse until they are successfully 'engaged.'

Guest Spew

we bring...TPOH, Skydiggers, The Waltons (all which have been here numerous times). This failure by the SU may stem from their lack of investigation into who is promoting other bands and how we could hire them. The VP Entertainment should pick a band (Blind Melon for example), call their record company to get information on the promoter, then call the promoter to get information on the band and possibly make a deal.

All that I ask, is for the SU to try other promoters. Use some "elbow grease" and make some calls, we could end up with awesome acts and something we haven't seen yet.

(I'd just like to thank Steve for writing Mugwump for me. Now that Academic Hell Week is over, I promise to be back on the beat next week.)



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brunswickan

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The Brunswickan, in its 126th year of publication, is Canada's oldest official student publication. The Brunswickan is generally published every Friday during the school year by Brunswickan Publishing Inc. with a circulation of 10,000. Membership is open to University of New Brunswick-Fredericton students, but all members of the university community are encouraged to contribute.

The opinions contained in this newspaper are those of the individual writers, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Brunswickan.

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Articles printed in The Brunswickan may be freely reprinted provided proper credit is given.

The Brunswickan is printed with flair by Maritime Web in Moncton.

Subscription rates are \$25 per year. Second class mail is in effect -#8120

National advertising rates are available from Campus Plus at (416) 362-6468.

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