

## EDITORIAL

It's nice to see some solidarity between various campus newspapers, college councils, and the YFS student government as they rally around the ACT-UP/Marriott "die-in" tomorrow.

The unfortunate aspect of the whole matter is that the media blitz has been too much a case of jumping on the proverbial band-wagon, without first securing the wheels.

After some investigation on our part, it seems the whole protest has been built around unfounded allegations and erroneous information. It's a case of creating an issue where at best, there was only tenuous speculation.

The *Lexicon* last week reported that Marriott U.S. had supported the Chapman amendment (legislation that would allow for discrimination against HIV positive food workers). What actually happened is quite different, although we can see how the information became obfuscated.

Richard Marriott, the Secretary-Treasurer of the U.S. National Restaurant Association (NRA) supported the Chapman amendment.

Marriott corporation (whose CEO is Richard's brother, J.W. Marriott), however, did not in any way advocate the proposed bill before it was rejected by the U.S. house of representatives. Marriott Inc.'s only "blunder" was not that it supported a discriminatory policy, but that it did not stand up **against** it publicly.

Therefore, this month's *Vandoo* editorial blasting Marriott for fervently supporting and defending the "Chatman" bill is close, but not quite on the mark. Marriott the man, yes; but Marriott the corporation, no.

Perhaps, this was a case of too quickly accepting one side of the story, without sufficient scepticism to confirm details before going to press.

Ron Kelly, founder of ACT-UP Toronto, has relied too heavily on rumours and half-truths to ground the validity of his protest and generate as much media attention as possible.

Even if some confirmation comes in the eleventh hour, it's still inexcusable to have staged a campaign this important without having concrete proof from the onset.

Kelly originally claimed that the Chapman amendment had been passed, when, in fact, it had been rejected. He started the protest without any **substantiable** proof to back up his accusations and invited *Excalibur* to verify his information. As we followed up his leads, his claims began to seem improbable, until (much to our dismay), his original basis for protest had become virtually immaterial.

Kelly's principles are well-intentioned, but ultimately, faulty. If there was any possibility that Marriott Canada might follow suit with the actions of its American counterpart, then we could all be justified in supporting the demonstration. Unfortunately for the protest organizers (but fortunately for People With AIDS), there is nothing to compel Marriott Canada to do anything to discriminate against PWAs.

We cannot overlook, however, the impressive media support that has already been achieved in support of the protest. Nor can we overlook the fact that the demonstration will coincide with AIDS awareness week. And, of course, who can overlook the poor food and expensive scrip programme that has given Marriott its bad reputation on campus.

In short, this protest seemed the perfect way to make a strong point at a very strong time. But is it justified any longer? Can a protest really address a phantom issue?

The Ontario Federation of Students (OFS) also fell into the too-easy trap of political opportunism. Without checking any of the allegations and relying on second-hand reports, OFS chair Tim Jackson threw his support behind the protest.

Considering York is about to decide whether to join OFS as full-time members, this kind of rash judgement seems misplaced at the least, foolish at worst. After all, OFS does have paid researchers to check out details before they come out and (mis)represent dozens of universities and thousands of students across Ontario.

The YFS' decision to support the protest pending proof is also understandable. The current student council, because of their commitment to human rights, specifically battling homophobia, had little recourse but to oppose what appeared to be blatant discrimination.

The protest is scheduled to begin Tuesday at 12:00 noon in front of the Ross flagpole.



## LETTERS

*Excalibur* welcomes letters to the editor on all topics. We will publish, space permitting, letters up to 500 words in length. They must be typed, double spaced, and accompanied by the writer's name, signature and telephone number. The opinions expressed belong to the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of *Excalibur* staff or directors. However, letters judged to be racist, sexist or libellous by the editor will be refused. All material is subject to editing. All submissions must be addressed to the Editor-in-chief, Room 111, Central Square.

### Appeals to the masses

To the editor,

Re: Reader hates the word "shit"

Lighten up Christa! Your letter smacks of elitism. I fail to see why the "privilege of literacy" should mean that all written expression conform to the narrow structures of scholarly writing. Are you suggesting that the only valid form of English is written in perfectly grammatical sentences devoid of colloquialisms and, heaven forbid (!), references to bodily functions?

What exactly is wrong with shit and piss? Don't we all have to go once in a while, or are you suggesting we just pretend it doesn't happen?

I take exception to your suggestion that *Excalibur* staff mutilate the language when using such words. Language is a form of expression and as such, it is subject to a variety of usage. Variety enriches language and the use of modern idiom makes it more accessible.

To suggest there is a "proper" form of language is elitist.

What makes your privileged literacy any more valid than the naughty ten year old you so despise? By your own formula anyone not possessing and also demonstrating the language skills of a university student should be deemed illiterate.

It's too bad you weren't around to edit Mark Twain or William Faulkner. If you say it in Latin like Margaret Atwood did in *The Handmaid's Tale* would it be acceptable then? Is "Nolite te bastardes carborundorum" more

acceptable than "don't let the bastards grind you down?"

I think it is about time that you realize that language is enriched, not mutilated by colloquial usage and that by objecting to these "naughty" words you only demonstrate your own immaturity.

Let *Excalibur* staff write the way they want to, some day you might be able to enjoy it.

Giustina Tatone

### Smokers get plastic bags

To the editor,

The continued debate in your paper over the University's new smoking policies has gone on at length about individual freedoms (most recently in the October 1 article "Smoking goes way of dodo") — as long as said individual happens to be a smoker.

In your editorial "Smoke 'n' Shit" a few weeks ago, the author indicates that if a person is bothered by someone smoking nearby, they can simply move somewhere else.

This idea almost gave me an apoplexy — why the HELL should I (and perhaps a dozen other people) be forced to move because of one person's selfish action?

Or did someone forget to tell me that legislation has been enacted that gives smokers singular control over all of the air within 10-12 feet (or more) of wherever they decide to light up? Ignoring for a moment the economic costs

to me personally of smoking (health costs of caring for people permanently disabled or dying, expensive deaths from lung cancer and other health problems, losses in productivity which are passed on to consumers etc.), I could not care less what smokers decide to do with their own lungs, eyes, teeth, skin, hair, and clothes.

However I feel I must exercise MY right to "individual freedom" by insisting that they keep their smelly habit from affecting my health and lifestyle, thank you very much — if you are going to smoke near me, wear a plastic bag over your head.

James Cogill

### You dingbat!

To the editor,

Kim Cavoukian, you should do some research before you open your mouth. Otherwise, you'll look like a dingbat.

As director of Health and Safety, diminishing the disease, asbestos is pretty scary for the 50,000 people for whom you are responsible — smokers and non-smokers.

Apparently, the health inspectors consider asbestos serious enough to use protective clothing and equipment. Gee, maybe it is dangerous.

Cavoukian, if you know a way to get asbestos out of your lungs once it's in there, I can think of a few people who have worked around it for years. I know they'd like to hear from you.

Yours in humblest-faith,  
Tracy Agoraki

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