

Editorial

Mary Rogal-Black

Tune in to Ellen and watch the envelope being pushed from the privacy of your own home

When rumours began to circulate that the lead character in the sitcom *Ellen* might come out of the closet this season, a minor skirmish erupted. I wonder if there was this much uproar the first time television producers decided they wanted to have a lead character shoot someone. If so, those against a lesbian *Ellen* are justifiably concerned: ten years from now, they may be able to view over thirty acts of gay sex on television every hour!

While there are many gay and lesbian characters on television, they hold secondary roles in prime-time American network programs. Just a few short years ago, producers toyed with making *Ellen* a lesbian but the idea was nixed: viewers and advertisers weren't ready for a show centred around a lesbian character, and the star didn't want to make sexuality the show's running gag. Since then, the stakes have been getting higher for Hollywood's homosexuals. "I think AIDS more than anything else changed things for gay people in [show] business. When it became a matter of life or death, the reasons to stay in closeted paled next to the anger and the grief and the frustration," says Scriptwriter Richard Gollance (*Globe and Mail*, October 12). Now, fueled by *Ellen* DeGeneres herself, debate about the outing of the *Ellen* character has been so widespread that the Disney-produced program may already have found itself past the point of no return, and if *Ellen* does come out, the show will be making television history.

So far, homosexual characters on television have largely been limited to less-controversial sidekick roles. "It's become a stock character — like what blacks were on television 15 years ago... It seems mandatory to have a gay sidekick," says Rob Epstein, codirector of a documentary about on-screen homosexuality (*Entertainment Weekly*, October 4). For a variety of minority groups, the sidekick serves as a stepping stone between being intolerance and acceptance. However, reliant as they are on stereotypes for the laughs, history will probably look back on both black and gay sidekicks with disdain. While these secondary characters can be used to increase awareness of certain groups, they often support the stereotypes that need to be overcome, acting as a double-edged sword in the battle against ignorance and intolerance.

There is some irony to the controversy over *Ellen*'s outing. Writers, the unrecognized foundation of television, count a relatively high number of gays among their ranks. "Gay sensibilities" have been driving plotlines and punchlines for years, but it's the prospect of putting one in front of the camera that has people's knickers in a knot. Like an outdated precept of childrearing that said children should be seen but not heard, networks and advertisers have thus far avoided gay characters in lead roles, assuming that the television-watching masses prefer their homosexuals to be heard but not seen. In both cases, the I-just-want-to-pretend-you're-not-there attitude can be emotionally abusive.

The history of childhood includes evidence of child-rearing practices that are shockingly abusive by today's standards. *Ellen*'s outing, though it stands to make television history, does not represent a revolution for television or for society: each continuously push the envelope, and this is just one more example of an overall evolution that will see homophobia go the way of slavery and suffragettes. The question is not whether society will eventually accept homosexuality: the question is, how will people's lives be affected in the meantime? Even as we come to realize that it is abusive to ask homosexual individuals to remain in the closet, we will begin considering which repressed minority we should stop mistreating next.

Mudwump

Joseph W.J. FitzPatrick₃

I like blue, what's it to you?

Many people have made this an issue, (thanks Mary) and therefore, to pre-empt the critics, I shall do it now. I prefer the colour blue.

There, I said it. Happy?

Yes, against all odds, I stated publicly my preference. Now people the world over know that I am a blue-lover. A sapphire sap, a turquoise tart, an indigo idiot. Does it make you feel better?

Well, that's nice, I'm happy for you, but it doesn't sit well with me, people. Why should I tell you I like the colour blue? Is it any of your business? If I tell you I do, will you ask me why I wear green tomorrow? Will you assume I no longer like blue, or that I told you I like blue because I want you to think I do, not because I really do? What will you say behind my back? Closeted red-o-phile, perhaps?

But, you say, the more people who speak out about their colour preference, the better it is for all of us? Sorry, not good enough for me. I ask you, why should my decision to declare my affinity for the colour blue be affected by whether my declaration would make others' declarations easier? Isn't peer pressure the first evil against which we are warned to be weary?

Does my position mean that I condone colour-bashing? Or discrimination against lovers of other colours? No, but to argue that if everybody told everybody what their colour preference was, then everybody would forget about asking about it isn't good enough. Maybe it would work, but why should that influence my decision, either? Do I not have a right to my own colour preference?

And even worse, how do I know which colour I like well enough to say not just "I like blue" but to be able to say, without equivocation, that I "prefer blue"? What if I sometimes like green? What if, once (the one and only time) after a little wine, I declared my love of purple? What if I don't mind blue, but I have a secret affection for orange? Do I have to pass a colour preference test to consider myself part of the human race? And what about liking red on the side, if it's the right shade. Or maybe it depends upon the cut.

And what if I say that I haven't known enough colours to say one way or the other. Maybe I like blue socks, but can't stand blue jeans? Am I in denial? A lemon tart is nice, but couldn't I occasionally crave a sour grape?

And, after all, what does it say of all of us, when I am forced to choose one among "love's infinite variety"? Would that I could choose myself, without feeling I must because others would be better off if I did.

In short, it's none of your business what colour I like. I don't care which colour you prefer, either. If you want to tell me, fine, but don't expect me to reply and don't expect me to make a big deal out of it. And I resent that you think that my failure to disclose is an attempt to hide my love of the colour red. Or even worse, that you assume that I do like the colour blue, just because I haven't made a point of telling you otherwise. That's no better than those who would condemn me for loving a different colour than I am supposed to. Let's beat them by ignoring them, not by trying to win them over with numbers. The real reason not to hate people who like red is not because there are so many who do (and everybody knows at least one), but because it's wrong to hate people who like red, period. What message is this, toleration by the numbers? Those people who like blue and red equally or in combination, better watch out.

That being said, it's not "don't ask, don't tell" I'm advocating but "don't ask me, and don't expect me to tell you." It's just plain rude.

And, finally, the fact that I slept with Kiki as a child, and now, on special occasions, I sleep with Caldwell should no more colour your perception of me than it would follow that I preferred the company of stuffed animals to people on account of Teddy.

SPECTRUM

But I Digress...

Kelly Lamrock

Frankly, this whole toast thing has got me worried.

You've probably heard by now that the toast served patients in many New Brunswick hospitals is not, shall we say, oven-fresh. In fact, it's not even province-fresh. That humble slice of bread staring back at you in your sickbed was probably toasted in a factory in Toronto and trucked in to your friendly local hospital, where it is microwaved back to health.

Now, I am not automatically sickened by the notion of microwave foods. I am a university student, and can well remember a time when microwaved treats were one of the four main food groups, the other three being the Kraft Dinner Food Group, the Greasy Snacks In a Bag Food Group, and the Pizza Delivery Food Group.

Naturally, a student complaining about the poor diet would be like Bob Dole complaining about a prof's lecture being boring. But I digress.



If you and your friends want to order food, and need advice as to the cheapest place to order it from, do not ask the professional advice of the New Brunswick Department of Health.

In fact, food appears to be cheaper for Maritimers when ordered from some outlet in Greenville. Any Greenville. But I digress.

So, colour me skeptical about this whole money saving thing. Even more frightening is Dr. King's Assertion that hospitals don't "do toast well."

Question: Why the hell not? Am I supposed to feel reassured that, in response to a simple query about a crappy breakfast, the man responsible for our hospitals has told me that the institution into whose hands I may at any moment

place my very life cannot produce a simple piece of toast? Should I feel safe knowing that the building I am entering entrusting its inhabitants to open me up and perform surgery upon me would, if confronted with a two slice toaster, be reduce to a whimpering cry for help to the Toronto Toast Technicians?

I have seen that most lowly of culinary technicians, the residence-student-who-almost-burned-down-the-wing-making-Mr. Noodles, manage toast. Yay, verily, I have even seen students move on to more advanced members of the toast family (*genus toastius*) such as bagels and even croissants. And yet, our medical schools every day send out people who they want us to believe can operate the electric cardiac defibrillator when really, the toaster baffles them.

And what am I to think when Our Leader, Frank McKenna, gives thousands of our tax dollars slashed from our public universities to subsidize a private out-of-province firm like ITI computer schools, because he wants us to be ready to lead the information technologies sector, when he thinks we need outside consultants to show us the intricacies of "whole wheat, no butter." Good Lord, we may have to look to Europe for our bacon consultants.

Frank, you can't challenge New Brunswickers to conquer Microsoft when you don't even trust us to operate a Sunbeam.

And when our politicians dazzle us with hopes of jobs that are high-tech, high-pay and high-security, all the while getting Torontonians to make our breakfast, Floridians to build our buildings and New Yorkers to fund our image, you know what kind of message that sends to a hopeful young New Brunswicker? We're toast.



No, what concerns me is the rationale for the importing of Toronto toast, which according to our King of Health, Russ Minister (or is that the other way around?...) is twofold.

1. Toast from Toronto is cheaper.
2. "Hospitals don't do toast well."

I decided to check the cheap theory myself with a little experiment. I prepared three pizzas with similar ingredients. The first, I baked myself. The second, I ordered from Luna Pizza here in Fredericton. The third, I ordered from Pizza Pizza at Bloor and Madison Streets in Toronto. (Phone (416) 867-1111, check the delivery charges.)

My experiment confirmed one very vital hypothesis, which I will pass on to you, the student, free of charge.

BLOOD & THUNDER

Letters to the Editor

Demo '96 a valuable learning experience for FE students

To the Editor:

On behalf of the UNB Forest Engineering Student Association and the fourteen students who attended Demo '96, I would like to thank all the people and businesses who took the time and money to help many students get a first hand look at forestry technologies in the 1990s. Fourteen Forest Engineering students from UNB Fredericton recently had the opportunity to view the latest forestry technologies at a demonstration in Foret Montmorency, north of Quebec City.

This event, "Demo '96," was an active demonstration of over 100 of the newest and latest forestry machines on the market today. These machines were designed not only to harvest wood with maximum efficiency and minimum cost, but to leave the forest in the most untouched condition as possible. A lot of the machines present such as the Timberjack 1210 Forwarder have less ground pressure per square inch than an average workhorse! The entire theme of Demo '96 centred around "soft-footprint" logging and hence, the industry's move towards "cut-to-length" or "shortwood" harvesting, the most environmentally friendly way of harvesting our forests.

The opportunity to attend this demo was not cheap; registration fees, transportation and accommodations

proved to be large obstacles to our attendance at this event. Without the support of the Faculty of Forestry and Environmental Management at UNB and many members of the forest industry this trip would not have been possible.

Timberjack Canada, Atlantic Tractors and Equipment Ltd, and the UNB Alumni Grant Fund sponsored a very large portion of this trip, and basically made the whole trip possible. Without their generous support this learning experience would not have occurred. Many other organizations such as Stora Forest Products, Tigercat, Stone Consolidated, Scott Paper, Repap Miramichi, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Canadian Institute of Forestry, Devon Lumber, and Wallace Equipment sponsored the registration fees for one or more individual students, and lightened a significant financial load. These organizations demonstrate a concern for Canada and future generations with their insight into the benefits to future members of the forest industry provided by an expo of this size and expense.

We are very pleased to know that the forest industry considers improving education a worthwhile endeavor, with benefits for all in the future.

Geoff Peters
President, Forest Engineering Student Association

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This issue is dedicated to:
The Pillar He/Jo?

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The Brunswickan
Student Union Building
University of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 4400
E3B 5A3 CANADA

Phone: (506) 453-4983
Advertising: (506) 5073
Fax: (506) 453-4958
E-Mail: bruns@unb.ca
WWW Site: <http://www.unb.ca/web/bruns>