

by Susan Gartner
reprinted from The Gauntlet by
Canadian University Press

Still a long way up the ladder to higher education

Imagine being told that you should not be educated because attending university would change your internal organs and make you unfit for childbearing.

Or being told that educating you is wrong, because becoming educated would make you think about your station in life.

As early as the beginning of this century these were some of the arguments put forth against the issue of allowing women to become educated said Dr. Chaviv Hosek.

Hosek, who is with the Department of English at Victoria College in Toronto, has done extensive work in Women's Studies. She has also done research on women's issues for the federal government.

Those who support the education of women would argue that a woman should be educated in order to become a better help to her husband said Hosek. She added that arguments on both sides of the question assumed that education of women has to do with their usefulness to others.

women in universities near the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the opening of the book, the fictitious female, "I" is walking around 'Oxbridge' when she suddenly strays from the gravel path making her way across a grass plot. Instantly, a man's figure rises to intercept her.

Woolf writes: "his face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me."

A few pages later, the woman again trespasses on male territory. She finds herself at the door of the university's famous library and opens it, ". . . instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a depreciating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice, as he waved me back, that ladies are only admitted to the

education no longer exist for women said Hosek. But she added, there are many other types of barriers.

There is the problem of being taken seriously. Hosek pointed out that as long as a woman has to be smarter, more serious, and more thick-skinned than a man in order to get through engineering, there won't be equality of education.

Hosek also pointed out that a degree does not necessarily put a woman on the same level as a man in the workplace. She said there are still differences, one is salary, between men and women workers with the same education. She cited the example that only a third of the women, compared with half the men with a masters degree, make more than \$30,000 a year.

Women are underrepresented in technical and scientific fields. Hosk said the sex differences in science and math achievement start in secondary schools and intensify as the student grows older.

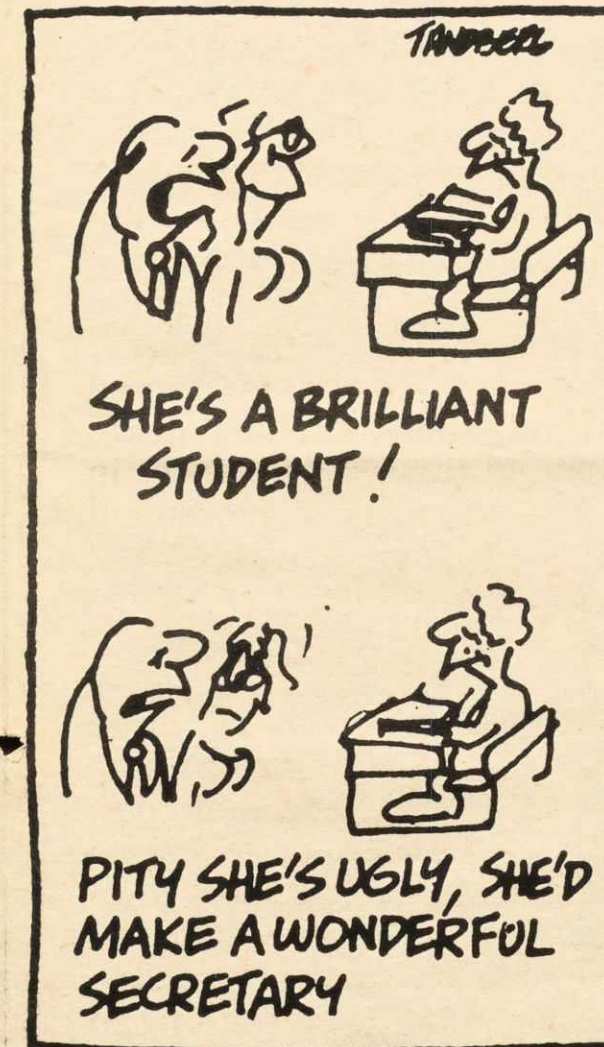
Studies on science achievement done in various countries show that in each country, the 14-year old boys performed better than the girls of the same age. However, in a cross-tabulation, different results came to light said Hosek. Hungarian and Japanese girls performed infinitely better in some areas than boys from all other countries except their own. Other studies show that women who go to all-girls schools are more likely to take sciences and do better at them than women in co-ed schools.

This then suggests that cultural and social factors cause these differences, rather than any biological gender factor.

Jack MacIntosh of the Univer-

sity of Calgary's philosophy department said he thought it was a "gross unfairness" that people are told that men have certain intellectual abilities and women don't.

He said studies associating the left hemisphere (logical, mathematical) of the brain with males and the right (creative, emotional) with females, are as off-base as computer correlations 'proving' people with blue eyes are better at math than those with another colour.



MacIntosh said there are many obstacles facing women who want to pursue higher education. He said the problem begins in childhood when girls are applauded for being docile and are encouraged to indulge in creative little "feminine" pursuits.

One way to secure an equal education for women is establishing a women's studies pro-

gram or courses in universities said Hosek. Women's studies courses sometimes transform our understanding of things we thought we knew, elaborates Hosek.

There are different events in history that can then be viewed as central, epoch-making ones. She cited as examples the time when women in Britain became eligible to own property, and the time public access to birth control advice and devices became legal. There was also the extensive role American women played in the workforce during World War II.

Hosek feels men should participate in Women's studies courses but said any real progress is going to take a long time." Women's own attitudes, as well as men's, need to be changed, and we can begin by learning not to suspect the motives of a few men who do enrol in these courses she said. Hosek pointed out that there are even many women who don't want to sign up for these classes.

One subtle unfairness we can guard against on-campus according to MacIntosh is sexism in language. He said that we live in society where very, very sexist language exists, and it is reinforced every day by the media, textbooks and lectures people attend.

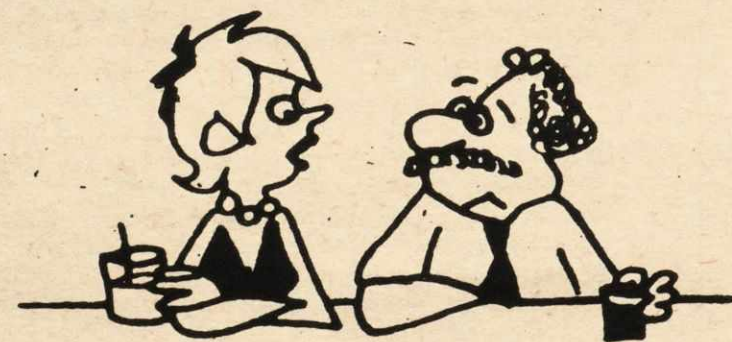
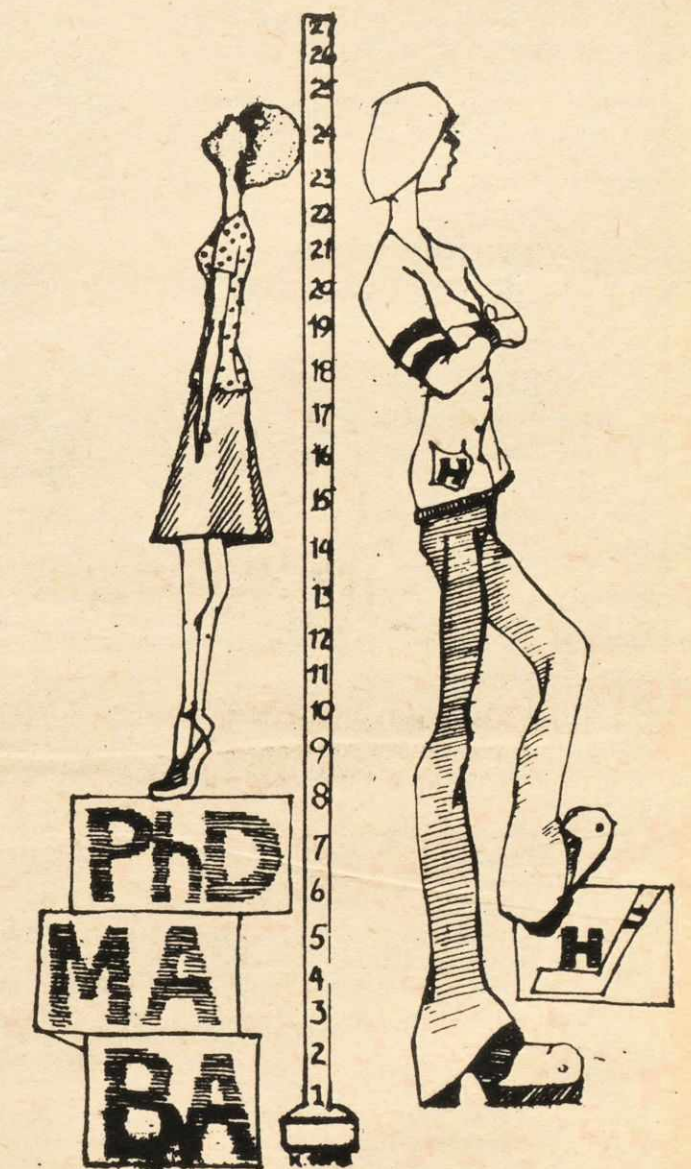
MacIntosh said every time friends or others around us use sexist language, they should be corrected. One of the worst is calling women 'girls,' he said.

Another problem women face is sexual harassment. Hosek said verbal sexual harassment of female students by male professors is a very real one. As an example, she related an incident that took place at the University of Toronto. A medical professor

described an abortion with great relish. He used extremely graphic descriptions and there was a tinge of malice in his voice. Some of the women who attended the lecture told Hosek about the incident and they said that they sat clutching their abdomens thinking, "My God, that's my body he's tearing apart."

Hosek also recounted another problem, that of female professors suffering from the "Queen Bee Syndrome." She said these professors feel they have fought hard for what they have attained and will "use their position (as a professor) to reinforce the differences between men and women" to prove how special they are.

Inequalities still exist in our educational system and not many people are aware of this. Although women are no longer banned from the library or reprimanded for shortcutting across men's turf, there is still room for improvement and much-needed change.



"No, I don't think success makes a woman masculine, professor. — Did yours make you feminine?"
(Thanks to the Women's Centre of Sarnia, Ontario.)

Hosek used examples from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* to illustrate the prejudices that existed against

library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction."

These physical barriers to