

EDITORIAL

Giving up the power of privilege

Finally the two year dispute is over. The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission ruled, on March 17, that *Pandora*, a local feminist newspaper, has the right to maintain its women's only policy.

A man filed a complaint with the commission almost two years ago after *Pandora* refused to run a letter he wrote. He felt the paper's women's only policy discriminated against men.

The Commission decided that *Pandora's* policy does not constitute discrimination because it is in place in order to empower women, a traditionally disadvantaged group.

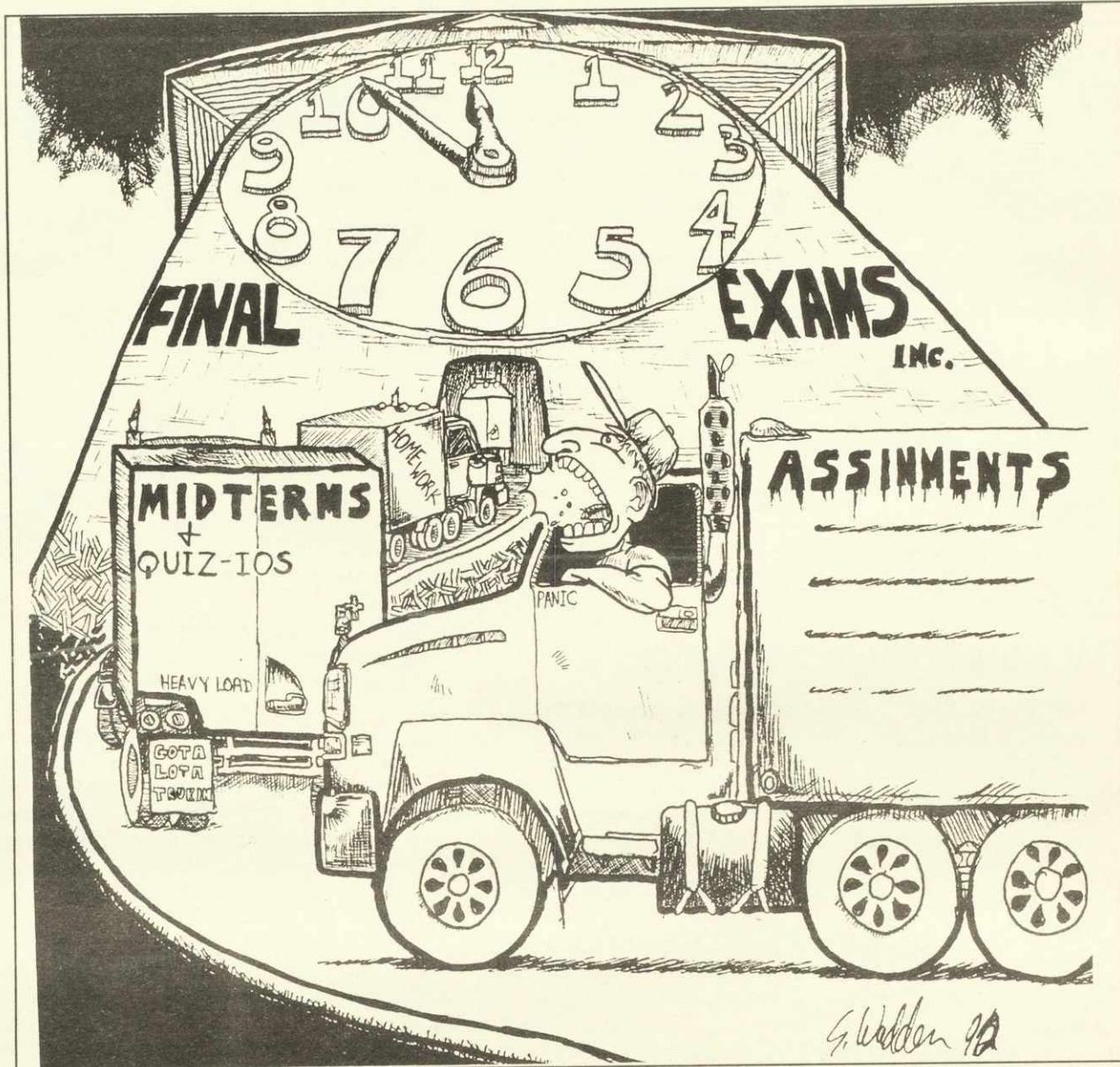
This decision confirms the attitude that reverse discrimination is not discrimination. People in privileged positions, do not and cannot face discrimination because of their membership in a privileged group. For example, white people may experience situations differently than members of a visible minority, however, this is not discrimination. When heterosexuals are not allowed into a meeting of lesbians and gays, this is not discrimination. Nor is affirmative action discrimination.

The *Pandora* decision is extremely important for anyone who is concerned with the elimination of all forms of oppression. It means the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission fully recognizes that in order to promote equality, people in privileged positions will have to give up some of their power. Promoting equality cannot simply occur through raising the status and privilege of the disempowered. Men will not have access to print their views in every newspaper in Halifax. There will be a publication that ensures women's voices can be heard.

Pandora has just won its right to promote women's equality. Hopefully now other groups will not have to be investigated by the Human Rights Commission, an organization which is supposed to promote equality, for their right to improve situations for their members.

This decision is a victory, but there is still a lot of work which will have to be done to end discrimination. Like the *Pandora* fight, it won't be easy but the rewards ... just try to imagine a world where no one had to face oppression of any kind.

Shannon Gowans



LETTERS

The *Dalhousie Gazette* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length and should be typed and double-spaced. The deadline for letters is Friday noon before publication. Letters may be submitted on Mac or IBM-compatible 3.5" disk.

Short letter saves paper

To the editors:

Are we the only two people at Dal who are disgusted at the amount of paper wasted in this year's DSU election campaign? Just wondering,

Dave Redwood
Jason Howie

Realizing Goddess reality

To the editors:

I found *The Goddess* (March 5) to be an interesting and informative way to present women's issues to your readers. Being a heterosexual white man, it made me wonder and question why so much blame is placed on men concerning problems faced by women. Is this really fair to men? Do so many men really think of and treat women in such despicable, demeaning ways?

If I found my answer last week: I was in the men's lockerroom at Dalplex and overheard a conversation between two young men (I assume, Dal students). One asked the other if he had seen the last *Gazette*. "The one with the fags and all that shit?" was the response. "No, the one with the feminist dyke stuff." The two began to ridicule *The Goddess* and wom-

en's issues in general. One brought up the Montreal Massacre and surmised that if a woman had killed 14 men instead of vice versa, women's groups would no doubt find some way to justify the killing! I was appalled by what I had heard. I wondered whether this was typical sexist/heterosexist/macho/lockerroom posturing or whether they had truly spoken their minds. I'm afraid now it was the latter. If this is typical of most men at Dal and in society, then women and other minorities have every right to say what they've been saying about men... and they need to say a hell of a lot more. The saddest thing about this encounter, though, was that I stood silently nearby, not voicing my opposing opinion. I'll never really know what it's like to be a woman or gay or black in straight, white "man's world," but I feel this experience has brought me much closer to being in their shoes. My guilt has led me to write this. I hope it will compensate for not raising my voice against such bigotry sooner. Next time, I won't think twice about speaking up.

Kirk Crivello

Demanding real justice

To the editors:

First mourn... then work for change.

These are the words on the posters commemorating the Montreal Massacre. And they are the words I thought of at the memorial service for Jane Hurshman-Corkum recently.

I didn't know Jane, although some of my dear friends did. One of my friends has just read "Life With Billy" for her social work course. I have not. I don't know if I'm willing to bear the horror of reading, described in detail, what Jane was subjected to.

I do know that Jane was a fighter, and that her own personal struggle became broadened to a struggle in defense of all women and children.

And I am familiar with the "justice" system of Nova Scotia which jailed Donald Marshall Jr. I am also familiar with a widespread mentality, especially from those in power, to "not rock the boat," not ask uncomfortable questions, "let sleeping dogs lie..." It is somehow so much easier on the whole system to say she killed herself — not to have to take further re-

sponsibility for violence directed at women.

And somehow, perhaps, and very sadly to me, it is "easier" for some who understand the struggle and who are sad, distressed and exhausted to say — "Jane died a violent death, it's not so important how — either way it comes down to the same roots of the violence." There is some truth in this — but I must ask the uncomfortable. Who killed Jane? Murder and suicide are two totally different things. It sounds trite but it is NOT, in this context. If Jane was murdered, the killer must be found and punished. As a society, we have a right to know that murderers are pursued with the greatest intensity of effort. As women, we need proof that the justice system is serving us too. We need to know that just as much effort will be made when we are the victims. The track record has been dismal.

Jane was a fighter. Did she fight against all odds for so many years to take her own life NOW, when she was so active and involved with her family and women's struggles? I apologize deeply and sincerely if I offend any of Jane's family,

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THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 1992 • VOL. 124, NO. 22

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THE GAZETTE IS PRINTED ON 100% RECYCLED PAPER

The *Dalhousie Gazette* is Canada's oldest college newspaper. Published weekly through the Dalhousie Student Union, which also comprises its membership, *The Gazette* has a circulation of 10,000. As a founding member of Canadian University Press, *The Gazette* adheres to the CUP Statement of Principles and reserves the right to refuse any material submitted of a racist, sexist, homophobic or libelous nature. Deadline for commentary, letters to the editor, and

announcements is noon on Friday before publication (Thursday of each week). Submissions may be left at the SUB Enquiry Desk c/o *The Gazette*. Commentary should not exceed 500 words. Letters should not exceed 300 words. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity may be granted upon request. Advertising copy deadline is noon Monday

before publication. • *The Gazette* offices are located on the third floor of the SUB. Come up and have a coffee and tell us what's going on. • The views expressed in *The Gazette* are not necessarily those of the Students' Union, the editors or the collective staff. •