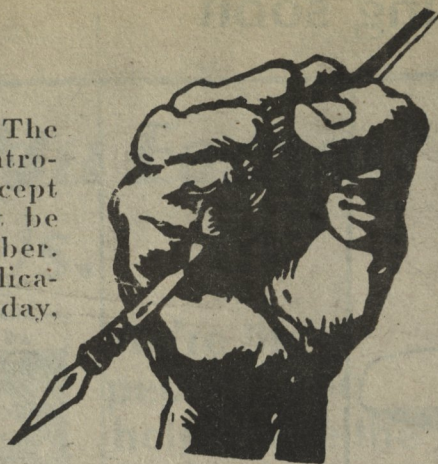


Letters...

YOUR FORUM FOR DISCUSSION. The Gem vigorously encourages dissent and controversy and prints all letters to the Editor except those of a malicious nature. Letters must be signed and include the authors phone number. However, names can be withheld from publication by request. Deadline for letters is Monday, 5:00pm.



Jargon obfuscates the issue

Dear Sir:

I feel very disturbed that, amid the recent academic discourse, psychological jargon, explicit accusations and implicit innuendoes in recent editions of this newspaper, the most important issue - the need for a policy on sexual harassment - has become submerged in a sea of rhetoric.

The question is not whether sexual harassment exists on this campus, but rather to what extent it exists. Research studies, using very broad criteria, indicate that sexual harassment is alive and well on most university campuses across North America, and the Mazer/Percival Survey confirms that UPEI is no different in this respect from any other academic institution.

Sexual harassment operates in every sphere of society, and I speak from twenty years' experience functioning in environments dominated by men. We, as Islanders, like to sit back very smugly sometimes and pretend that our "Island way of life" is less conducive to developing the ills of modern society than other urban centers in Upper Canada or the United States. Check your latest statistics. Every social ill of the 1980's exists here, whether we care to acknowledge that fact or not.

Rape, child abuse, incest, wife battering, and sexual harassment are as prevalent on the Island as in any other part of North America. Surely, these negative and hostile behaviors, largely directed at women, reflect the attitudes and presumptions of men toward women in our culture.

I think it is very naive of Prof. Rahman to state that sexual harassment exists only where there is "relentless pressure or coercion". Harassment is a form of prejudice, and sexual harassment occurs in the fabric of our lives in a variety of textures. It can be rough-edged and blatant, as in an unsolicited touch, or it can be silky-smooth, as in a subtle remark, suggestive language, or discomfiting glance. Harassment functions on many levels and, in this sense, it is as damaging as any other form of prejudicial behavior.

I am insulted by his intimation that almost anything can be called sexual harassment, and that women do not know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Prof. Rahman may not realize that women have an inherent, intuitive separator capable of filtering out innocent gestures and remarks from heavier, derogatory behavior. We do know when we are being harassed.

For Prof. Rahman to assert that Profs Mazer and Percival 'snuck' in questions on attitudes toward feminism, not only strikes me as libelous language on his part, but also illustrates to me that he sees little correlation between attitude and behavior. One does not need a degree in psychology to understand that men's sexual harassment of women corresponds strongly with the dominant/submissive attitudes which prevail in our culture.

Men who respect the ideals of the Feminist movement, who value women as equal human beings, and

who feel threatened by neither, are less likely to display pejorative attitudes towards women, and less likely to harass them with unsolicited touches, glances or remarks. I think the questions concerning feminism are totally relevant to the whole question of sexual harassment.

I feel it will be a tremendous tragedy for this university, and for the women who make up a large portion of students and staff (not faculty, quite noticeably), if Profs. Mazer and Percival now feel any further research they wish to conduct will be jeopardized because of the destructive criticism of their motives and methods, and the public attack on their professional credibility.

There continues to be a very definite need for qualitative and quantitative research on sexual harassment, for the formation of a university policy, and the establishment of a committee to deal with complaints. Without a formalized structure, women will continue to be doubly victimized - by sexual harassment, and by the lack of any recourse to handle legitimate complaints.

I commend Profs. Mazer and Percival for their efforts to determine the extent of sexual harassment (in all its forms), for attempting openly to identify and evaluate changing attitudes towards women, and for their commitment to improve the lives of women pursuing higher education at UPEI. Please do not be intimidated by all the recent intellectual harassment. Please continue with your research, and please... be relentless in your pursuit.

—Gloria Large.

Cont. on page 5

THE GEM

"We live under a government of men and (morning) newspapers."
— Theophile Gautier

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This Week's Contributors:

Heather Rossiter, Rhonda McLellan, and the Engineers.

The Gem welcomes contributions of articles, poems, short stories, or ideas. Please ask for a copy of our 'GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS'. Contributions can be dropped off at the Barn, sent through VAX MAIL to GEM, or stuck on our door down in the basement of the utility building.

We cherish typed and double spaced submissions and submissions on computer disk or through VAX mail. For legal reasons, all submissions must include the author's name and phone number. However, names will be withheld from publication on request.

Deadline for submissions is Monday, 5:00pm
NEXT WEEK IS THE LAST ISSUE OF THE GEM FOR THIS SEMESTER

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We reserve the right to edit submissions due to space or taste limitations.