

# A matter of conscience

by Craig Douglas

As we approach the end of the twentieth century and enter a new millenium, I wonder how much 'real' progress we have reached in our ability to eliminate discrimination and develop tolerance in society. One might say that One does not discriminate or that one treats each other with equality. I wonder, in practice, how much truth exists in these statements or is it a coverup for implicit discrimination of various kinds? The world around us is filled with images of dismissed discriminatory acts and of the most horrible acts. For example; the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, heightened anti-semitic riots in Germany, intolerance of refugees in many countries throughout Europe (especially, Austria): while the world is moving or converging towards one common economic structure, capitalism, the planet is becoming embroiled in an exponentially increasing environment of political conflicts. Is it logical to assume that this economic union of sorts is causing increased conflict between various entities, or is it a path with which human evolution is inevitably moving fowards? We may say, at least in Canada and the United States, that we do not commit such explicit discrimination as in other parts of the world. The truth of the matter is that we, ours, are not cured of this social disease. Examples of discrimination can be found on a daily basis in many different areas in society whether it be in the workplace or at home or on the nightly news shows; the Los Angeles Riots, The Tail-Hook Affair, Status in the Military (i.e. sexual orientation). The Los Angeles Riots were spawned by the announcement on network television of the judgement given on the Rodney King Case. The all-white Jury found the policemen involved were not guilty of beating the Plaintiff, Rodney King when, in court, documented video tape showed the policemen beating King. This caused the community of Los Angeles to go into uproar causing a state of emergency to be imposed in Los Angeles, yielding hundreds of injuries and dozens of deaths. The Tail-Hook Affair was brought to the attention of the media when a few female members of the military explained that they had been sexually assaulted by their superiors and that no action had been taken against those who were responsible. This affair is now under investigation. The third of these memorable events, Discrimination of Status in the Military, may have had the greatest effect on society, at least in the United States. This issue of discrimination of status in the Military deals with the

allowance of homosexuals into military positions based on their orientation and practice. This discrimination is merely based on status and not conduct or practice. The legal discourse the military has had in the past dealt with homosexuality as an act of sodomy and, in that case, went against the anti-sodomy regulations of military conduct. The military did not deal with the practice of the sexual orientation but of sexual orientation itself.

Is it not time to put away preconceptions and misconceptions of people based on their status whether it be visual, i.e. colour race or gender, age, or sexual, i.e. heterosexuality, bisexuality, or homosexuality? It is one thing to have one's own values and morals but it is another thing when these morals or values are imposed on another. Some would say that the values and morals they attest to, have been gained through experience due to their upbringing, whether it be religious or otherwise. Especially those in the religious-right believe that such things as "family values," and sexual orientation should be legislated. I,

myself, believe in the same God as does the Religious-right. But, I suppose, I misunderstood what God had taught me. I thought that making moral statements about others would be outside of my jurisdiction of what God had taught. I thought that God taught us to be tolerant and forgiving of each other. I thought that God was the only judge, the first judge and the final judge, "the Alpha and the Omega," but I guess not! Society of today is based on secular thought and materialism, not on humility. I never thought there was more than one God but some of the religious right have taken upon themselves to help relieve God of some of his or her responsibilities. If we are to continue on a path into the twenty-first century where we believe in equality for all, don't you think we should spend less time bickering about others and spend time improving ourselves?

P.S. I, myself, am not cured of this social disease, but am trying and hope to acquire remission in the near future. ●

## CAMPUS COMMENT

### "Do you know what Bill C76 is? If so, what is your opinion on it?"

1. "I think it is ridiculous to expect someone to have a full-time job within weeks of graduation or even six months. Where is the money supposed to come from? Who can actually save money while in university?"

--Jillian MacCallum, 3rd year Biology major

2. "Without proper parliamentary debate of the C76 that includes the opinions of the party opposition, Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin would be very proud of the way Bill C76 will be branded onto the masses."

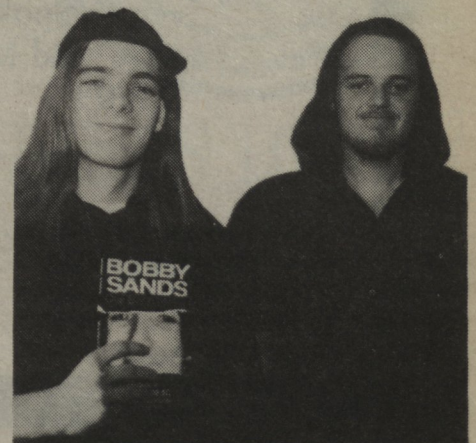
--Gerard Nowlan, 4th year Arts

3. I don't give a shit. I'm leaving the country after graduating, so as far as my loan goes, they can eat it!

--Pierce Butler, 3rd year Arts

4. It seems funny that it's so hard to get a loan, yet we are now expected to pay it back immediately. Six months is reasonable, how can anyone expect graduates to be handed jobs?

--Wendy Poirier, 3rd year Sociology



Gerald Nolan and Pierce Butler