

# Letters to the Editor

## Roseanne

Dear Editor,  
Soon after the House of Commons was recalled this fall, the government dropped the bombshell many were expecting. As a priority, the Liberal majority would be pushing passage of two bills: the hate crime bill, which would allow harsher sentences for crimes motivated by hatred against gays; and amending the Human Rights Act to add "sexual orientation" to the prohibited ground for discrimination.

In order to quell any uprising, the Prime Minister warned caucus to keep opposing viewpoints to themselves ("PM Clamps Lid On Anti-gay Talk". Toronto Star., Sept. 29/94). As this appeared to contradict former statements acknowledging the right of members to speak their conscience, many wondered why the "gag" order.

For this reason, a courageous rookie MP from Nova Scotia, Roseanne Skoke challenged the status quo, broke ranks with her government, and exercised her right of free speech. According to a report in the Globe and Mail, Skoke believes the amendment "would undermine our traditional and conventional Canadian family values" by giving special status to homosexuals.

Furthermore, when questioned why she was speaking against something her party is committed to putting into law, Skoke replied, "I have the right to express my opinion quite clearly. I've stated unequivocally that I'm opposed to the words "sexual orientation" in any federal legislation and I'm going to continue to state my opinions."

These opinions drew the ire of Government House Leader Herb Gray and gay activist MP Svend Robinson.

Robinson's denunciation was predictable. He accused Skoke of being homophobic and promoting hatred of gays.

Is it just me, or has anyone else noticed that the only argument raised by those who would reshape society in their own image is to attack the person whose opinion differs from theirs? Whatever happened to freedom of speech? Why can't someone hold a contrary opinion without being labelled stupid,

ignorant, or malicious? Is there no place for one's conscience? Not to some. Evidently, it's a conspiracy! Sinister "homophobics" deluded by hatred are out to oppress a vulnerable minority. Welcome to the '90s' version of Big Brother: Political Correctness.

A person with a label to pin on an adversary is never at the mercy of a reasonable, alternative viewpoint.

It was for this reason that I wrote both Skoke and Gray. I wanted to encourage her and rebuke him. Following is an excerpt from my letter to Gray:

"While Mr Robinson can be excused for promoting his own agenda regarding homosexuality, his reasoning in accusing Ms. Skoke of making a hate statement is pure mindless propaganda. On the other hand, your public disclaimer that Ms. Skoke was not speaking for the Party! She was simply exercising her duty as a federal representative of her constituency as well as her right-- also guaranteed by the same Charter -- to freedom of thought and expression.

"The misguided logic of political correctness suggesting anyone with another opinion is somehow motivated by hate or ignorance may ultimately be responsible for suppressing freedom of speech in this country."

The point to all this is not that I must impose my morality on the rest of Canada. I just want somebody in power to recognize and defend my right to hold a different point of view. For now that person seems to be a rookie MP from Nova Scotia.

Now there's a Roseanne we can be proud of.

R. Hiebert

D. Gingras

## Transcript troubles

Dear Editor,

Graduating students are now looking to next year and many are submitting applications to other schools for the fall. These applications must accompany a transcript supplied by the Registrar's office. I have learned the hard way that anyone who requests a transcript should check with the Registrar's

Office to make sure that it has been sent properly.

On February 13 I requested a transcript be faxed to UNB. There was an additional charge of \$7 to have it faxed on top of the usual \$3 fee. The application deadline had already passed so it was important that it reach UNB as soon as possible. I had the application itself sent by overnight courier. On February 14 I phoned the office to make sure that it has been sent. I was told that the transcript had been sent, but by regular mail and not fax. After explaining it was urgent and that I had expected it to be faxed the day before I was told that the person who does transcripts was not in today; she would try to send it but "would make no promises." It was sent later that day.

I have another friend who requested a transcript which also listed the courses in which she was currently enrolled. She explained this to the person at the Registrar's desk and made a clear note of it on the request form. A transcript was sent but it did not list the courses she was enrolled in. She returned to the registrar's office, explained the problem, made a note on the request form and requested another be sent. Another incomplete transcript was sent. Finally she had to go to the office and make them do it while she waited.

All you have to do to check on a UPEI transcript is to call 566-0684. Make sure that a complete transcript was sent and that it was sent by whichever means you requested. It is ridiculous to complete an application, arrange letters of reference and pay the application fee only to be denied because of an incomplete or late transcript.

Name Withheld

## The Island way

To the Editor:

I am doing a geography report on Prince Edward Island. Would you please publish my letter in your newspaper? If people would write me about the Island, it would help me on my report. Please answer one or more of the following questions.

How long have you lived on Prince Edward Island and what is your favourite thing about the Island? Do people travel off the Island very much, and, if so, how do they travel? What do you do for a living, and what are the main occupations on your part of the Island?

Thank you for your help.

Stephen Sande

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## Opinion

By Ed Fobes

Intellectuals have long been stereotyped as dusty old men stuck in the back end of a library puzzling out questions which outwardly seem to have no relationship to everyday life. Now we have the phenomenon of the celebrity intellectual. Such is Mr. Gwyn Dyer who came to visit UPEI on the 15th of February. Mr. Dyer has had a lot of publicity over the last decade because of the wonderfully gripping documentaries he has put together-- most notably *War*, a many volumed expose of his take on military history. Having an extensive background in the field as well as personal service in several navies, Mr. Dyer told colourful stories and made some compelling points in this documentary. Having made a name for himself, he became an occasional commentator on national news broadcasts-- filling the role of the curmudgeonly realistic optimist on foreign conflicts.

## To speak or not to speak: Should UPEI pay for guest lecturers?

On this day, Mr Dyer was asked to speak in the afternoon on patriarchy. At the outset he explained that most of he was going to say was already set down in one part of his most recent documentary on national television, *The Human Race*. Owing to the time limitations on his lecture, he stated his argument for the eventual withering away of patriarchal rule in very general terms. The approximately one hundred and twenty five people in the packed classroom were very appreciative.

The surprising thing about his talk was his self-acknowledged lack of expertise on much of the anthropological aspects of his argument, which were critical to his thesis. Dyer cited only one anthropological source by name. How does his opinion count more than an anthropologist's? One highly probable answer is his status as a media personality. In his own words, Mr. Dyer lives in, "the belly of the beast"-- the beast being the national media.

While Dyer's candor is refreshing, it does not explain the expenditure of university funds on what seemed to be in large part a media event. Why not just make his documentary available in the library and use the leftover money for a guest lecturer who may be obscure but whose views can be backed up by years of study of a specific topic? Or if publicity for its own sake can be a justified expenditure, let us see Philip Rushton on campus giving a talk on eugenics.

Dyer's lecture that same evening was titled differently but covered the same territory as his afternoon lecture. It also drew a big crowd, this time to the Duffy Amphitheatre. Maybe his celebrity status will grow so much that next time Dyer visits, the university will have to reserve the Fieldhouse.