

FOOD FOR THE PATRIARCHY



EDITORIAL !!

WITH ALL the discussion of sexism going on now, the meaning of the word can become muddled. The Gem has turned to what I hope is recognized as an authority on the subject, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Documents they courteously provided included the following definitions:

Sexism: discrimination based on gender

Sexist language: language that excludes one sex or gives unequal treatment to women and men.

Sex stereotyping: language, attitudes or representations which tend to attribute particular roles and characteristics to people on the basis of their sex, without taking them into consideration as individuals.

The controversial wording of the Mary Brown's advertisement reads "Just call for the best legs in town." This, in itself, does not fit the first definition since gender is not discussed. Nor does the ad exclude one sex or give unequal treatment to either sex because, again, there is no mention of gender. A specific sex is implied only in the name of the company - the female name Mary Brown.

However, the phrase "best legs..." is a sex stereotype familiar to us all. Because the legs being referred to are those of a chicken and not of a female, I do not believe the ad can be said to be literally sexist. However, the stereotype of a female's legs as being sexual objects is so entrenched

in society that the sexism is implied.

The member of the Advisory Council I spoke to was aware of the ad in question but did not seem to think it was outrageously offensive. The Women's Rights Coordinator for the Atlantic Region of Canadian University Press thought the ad was too mild to warrant censorship.

Censorship is an issue here as well. I cannot tell an advertiser that we can't run an ad because it is "sexist." I must provide exact details as to why. Letters written in have stated the ad is "obviously" sexist, but that is not enough. If The Gem were to censor without clear reasons, this paper would be reduced to a reactionary rag.

The Gem follows the Canadian University Press statement of Principles, which dictates that we must guard against racist, homophobic, or sexist material appearing this paper. We must also act as an agent of social change. The ad itself does not appear to fall within the defi-

nitions of sexism that I have found, but the sexist element of "best legs..." is a play on an almost archaic sex stereotype that objectifies a woman's legs. That stereotype is best left to completely wither away through disuse along with the many other sexist phrases in the English language.

To aid this inevitable process, The Gem has asked the advertiser to modify the ad. They agreed to change the wording and the new ad appears on page 3.

I am very glad that The Gem has been able to stimulate some discussion on campus and through that discussion, increase awareness of sexist language. It is a slow battle to eliminate sex stereotypes in writing but The Gem, along with many other newspapers, always attempts to provide non-sexist writing in articles and features. I do not believe that by running the ad for the length of time it was necessary to nurture this discussion The Gem has grievously offended anyone.

THE GEM

"A newspaper is something to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."
- John Wierwiler

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This Week's Contributors:

CIMN, Sean MacIntosh, Kelly VanBuskirk, Laurie Reeves, Michelle Cottreau, Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and the UPEI Information Office.

Deadline for submissions is Monday, 5:00pm


Please ensure your submissions are legible to persons other than yourself. We prefer 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.

The GEM is published by the University of Prince Edward Island Student Union. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the GEM staff, the UPEI Student Union, or of anyone in particular.

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

If you are interested in learning more about your student newspaper, drop on down to our office anytime or come to our regular meetings Monday at 6:00pm.


Our office is buried in the UTILITY BUILDING, Rm.01. Look for the plunger pointing the way. Phone 566-0629 or 566-0530 or send VAX mail to account GEM.



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