

Still an f-word: Feminism

My mother made me a feminist. But she didn't mean to. She just wanted me to be able to stand on my own two feet, to be able to earn my own living. She didn't want me to end up like her mother, abandoned by her husband, left with a daughter to raise and no money or skills to earn money to survive. So I had been brought up to believe that I should earn my own living and I was as able as anyone. I am equal, I thought. It was some time before I found out not everyone thought the way I did.

Puberty was the turning point. These breasts of mine seemed like they'd never stop growing. I was more or less indifferent to them, but the boys seemed to like them. I sort of liked the attention; self-esteem is like that while you're trying to find a place among your teenage peers. In the adolescent adventures of discovering sexuality, before AIDS and herpes, everyone was doing it, at my high school at least.

And I wasn't going to miss out on the action.

— after all, I was equal. It was years later that I realized that after the fun was all said and done, the boys got a pat on the back and I got a reputation.

I've never cared too much what other people think of me, as long as I can live with myself, but the reputation thing did have a certain ring of "this isn't really fair". It was only the beginning, however, of the reality of life in the world of equal opportunity.

By the time I reached University, I had grown bored with cheap sex. Like all good young women, I was busy looking for Mr. Right. Try as I might (I even went where no one knew of my "tainted" past), all the potential Mr. Rights seemed more interested in my bloody breasts than in me. More youthful angst. I took it very personally, thinking if only these breasts weren't so big I'd have a fighting chance.

Then, a woman got raped on campus. And then another. The local rape crisis centre came to speak about why rape happened and how to stop it. I thought I should go since I'd be a prime candidate with these

breasts that seemed to scream "touch me, squeeze me" even though I told them not to. The Crisis Counsellors said the size of your breasts didn't matter. In fact, your make-up didn't matter, your weight didn't matter, your age didn't matter. All that matters is that you're a woman.

I was angry. I was angry at myself for being so self-centred and egotistical to think me and my breasts were at such a great risk. Most of all, I was angry at the people who think they can fuck any woman they want, when and where they want, and against our will.

I wanted to use the anger constructively, to change those statistics that said a woman

gets raped in Canada every 17 minutes. I wanted to make the world safer for women, and fairer. It was obvious some people don't think of women as having equal rights. When I helped to start a women's centre on campus, and began writing about crimes against women in the newspaper, I found out I wasn't the only one angry.

People were angry at me — another bloody feminist doing what feminists do; bitching. Didn't I realize that this was the '80s? Women are equal: what's to complain about?

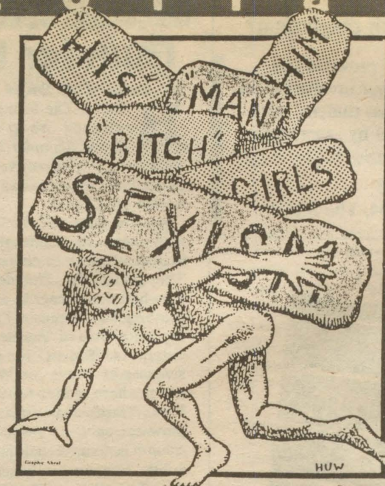
I wasn't convinced. Why should I be? Mock rapes happened in my college residence for fun, regularly. A woman

was finally gang-raped. I didn't think the man who led the attack should become head of student security, so I was called a man-hater and a lesbian. I found out that feminism is an f-word.

I still think feminism is an f-word. In fact, in this apparent age of "post-feminism", the 'f' sound is spit out with more venom than ever. Feminists don't have to worry any more, we're told, our rights are enshrined in the constitution. It's illegal to discriminate against women in the workplace. A woman's past cannot be entered as evidence in sexual assault charges. The lists of feminists' achievements in the last decade go on and on. "Enough already", the understanding and obliging men of the world cry. But it's not enough. Women still earn 65 cents to every man's dollar, women are still battered, and women are getting raped every seven minutes, instead of seventeen, when I first tuned into how equal we are. Being told that we've reached the age of post-feminism makes me angry.

It's another lie and a dangerous lie. It tells women and men that everything is okay. It turns the feminists who keep on fighting to make the world safer into bigger bitches than ever. I'm not a bitch, I'm just like any other kid trying to live up to her mother's expectations.

Donna Mayer



l e t t e r s

Bio complaint

To the Editors:

President Clarke's recent meeting with members of the Biology Department regarding the improvement of Dalhousie's undergraduate program left me troubled and deeply concerned. The opinions of faculty on the issue of improvements to the program centred, almost without exception, on what has become so many Dalhousians' obsession — money, or the

lack thereof. Faculties' overriding concerns about where finances will come from to buy new teaching equipment, and the inability to draw any more from this area or that area and so on, are somewhat exasperating.

While there is no question that financial constraints represent a major obstacle in implementing changes to the program, there should also be no question that a revamping of the undergraduate program is long overdue. I and many others simply cannot and do not agree with Mike Dunbar's statements

that the quality of teaching in the Dalhousie undergraduate program is excellent (a statement that particularly irked me because by introducing himself as a member of DABS he implied his opinion was shared by a majority of biology students). On the contrary, much of the teaching fails to reach its full potential.

In general, this does not reflect the feelings of faculty simply towards teaching (nor does it reflect a lack of dedication), but rather is due to a number of factors, including an imbalance of

emphasis placed between research and teaching, with research winning out far too often. The time has come for the prevailing attitude that this is a 'research university' to be changed. While this will be particularly difficult at Dalhousie, research being so highly stressed in relation to hiring and the acquisition of tenure, the teaching aspect of the undergraduate program must be catered to as well. While some faculty members prefer to place more emphasis on research, the freedom to emphasize teaching must

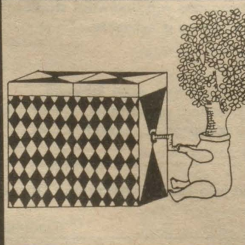
be developed. The onus is upon the faculty, as a co-operating unit, to enable this to occur.

Another factor that has contributed to the need for changes to be made to the undergraduate program is one that has affected all universities, not just this one. This is a reluctance to be introspective and self-critical as to what is being taught and in what manner. One must seriously question if it is more beneficial to teach in only a highly restricted a narrow field (as is occurring).

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Hutchinson

J A D E B A B Y



"Children, leave the string alone!"



For who dares undo the parcel!



Finds himself at once



inside it."