

GTFs need to take union responsibilities seriously

By Chris Brady

The recent controversy regarding the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation and its duties to its membership confronts issues that really should be addressed from time to time. This is because as nominally sentient beings, we should know what we are doing. I write as a full member of the GTFF. The GTFF is a labor union. Back in the 1970s, graduate teaching fellows formally banded together as a group of equals to negotiate working conditions and pay scales with their employer, the University. To protect the gains made by their organization, these workers took the GTFF through the legal procedures that would authenticate the union as the legitimate and sole representative of GTFs in the collective bargaining process at the University. The most important step in this process was the democratic decision expressed by the vote of a majority of GTFs to form a union.

But a majority does not mean every one. Workers get a pay packet in exchange for the performance of certain tasks. Some GTFs may not regard them-

selves as workers in this sense. Some GTFs may prefer to discredit their role personally in the current exchange of funds for their efforts, although I am sure they would not reject the money itself, nor any increase in its amount. Some GTFs may rationalize their low-paid jobs as an investment in their future professional status. This elevates their condition beyond that of mere labor, and certainly downplays the activist role of union participation. Some may even resent the class stigma of labor union membership. The law makes allowances for such dissent from the majority of the two-tiered dues structure of the union. Whereas union members — that is, workers — in agreement with the purpose and practice of the GTFF pay their dues to the union as full members, GTFs who don't believe in the union — but who nevertheless benefit from its endeavors — must contribute by law a much smaller fraction of their pay packet as their Fair Share dues. Full members pay 1.91 percent of their gross, or 0.3 percent more than Fair Share members.

Full members are the only ones who may vote in the union, but all members

benefit to the same degree from their membership. All members are protected by grievance procedures, allowed to participate in the health insurance plan, and privileged to collect increases in pay negotiated by the union's representatives. The same publications are sent out by the union to the membership as a whole, irrespective of membership status. But the union cannot force its membership to take notice of the communications initiated by the union apparatus. The level of involvement in union activity by members is voluntary. If we as members feel that the communication within our union is insufficient, then we as the members, that is as the active constituents, as the dynamic components, the operative parts of the union, we should do something about it. We should know our union office phone numbers, its e-mail address, where the office is, our officers or at least one or two of them, our department representatives if we have them (I am the history rep), and to what we are entitled.

But I hope people don't think they have purchased some sort of valet service contract by their payment of union dues. If the union is to carry out policies of inclu-

sion, it requires a reciprocal inclusive action by its members. This is the only way to avoid the top-down or mob unionism of the type some in the media and management love to caricature as the norm in workers' organizations. To address the most recent controversy, we must notify all that one's mistake cannot be turned into an advantage for which the rest of us will pay. If some few among us suggest that one's negligence, willful or careless, should be recompensed by the many, we should remind those few, and that one, that that is not what we in the union are all about. If, however, any creative ideas or solutions to problems perceived in our procedures can be put forward, we should, and willingly, even happily, consider them. I have met some good people in our Local 3544. People who work hard at their jobs, take their union responsibilities seriously, and value their important roles as teachers in our society. We must work together to make it work.

Chris Brady is the history department's representative to the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation.

LETTERS

Recourse

I am writing in response to an article published in the May 12 edition of the *Emerald* written by Pat Daly. On May 10, Men and Women Against Rape sponsored a slide show by Stopping Violence Against Women titled "Pornography: A Practice of Inequality." Mr. Daly writes that: "SWAV members never said pornography causes rape, but they gave statistics supporting that assumption..." and goes on to list some of those statistics. Later, in an accompanying article, Daly quoted sociologist Diana Russell as saying: "Pornography clearly does not cause rape." I must agree with both of these quotes. However, I must add a few comments of my own.

I myself would be the first to say that porn does not cause rape. I would also say that anti-semitic literature does not cause genocide. However, this is not to say that these types of material are by any means harmless.

Pornography does not cause rape, but it does reinforce rape myths and thus contributes to the rape culture. While anti-semitic/white supremacist literature does not cause genocide, it definitely reinforces ethnic/racial stereotypes and thus contributes to ethnic/racial violence.

Mr. Daly quotes Roy Zumstein, an adult bookstore owner, in response to the topic of snuff films as saying: "I certainly wouldn't carry that kind of material, those kinds of things are only found underground."

While Mr. Zumstein may not carry actual snuff films, I'm quite sure he does carry "pseudo-snuff." If he carries *Hustler*, then my suspicions are confirmed. Mr. Daly conveniently forgot to mention one such "pseudo-snuff" layout featured in *Hustler*. The layout featured four snapshots of naked, dismembered and decapitated women's bodies that appeared to be stapled onto a background of human flesh, along with an assortment of severed nipples and clitorises.

As for the assumption that society and the legal system would not allow these types of materials to exist, it was not until 1984 (only ten years ago) that the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed child pornography. Today, in 1994, it is still legal to circulate photographs or vid-

eotapes of actual rapes as "free speech." While the survivor of such a crime can sue for the rape itself, she/he has no legal recourse to get the material removed from circulation. The largest grossing porn film ever made, *Deep Throat*, is proof: Linda Marciano was forced at gunpoint to do that film, and did not receive a single penny in payment.

In premeditated defense of the inevitable debate this topic is sure to present, I am not advocating censorship. I am advocating legal recourse. This is something that all women who believe in the equality of the sexes can advocate.

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Co-Director
Men and Women
Against Rape

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