EDITORIAL

by Lynne Wanyeki

Two years ago on this day, fourteen women were killed by a man at the École Polytechnique in Montréal. The nation was initially undivided in its reactions - people expressed shock at the fact that the killings had occurred, as well as grief for the lost potential of those women. However, what came to be termed as the Montréal Massacre quickly raised a huge debate as to whether or not Marc Lépine's actions could be dismissed as being solely the result of insanity.

Lépine's victims were all women, and what words of his were recorded indicate beyond all possible doubt that this was not incidental. The question as to what in society at large influenced, sanctioned, and indeed, encouraged his choice of target becomes then a question that is valid to ask. For while his actions were brutally extreme, extreme expressions of violence always delimit a continuum of more moderate expressions of violence.

Monique Frize, the Chair of Women in Engineering at UNB stated last week that the time has come to forget Marc Lépine. But to refuse to acknowledge Marc Lépine is to refuse to acknowledge that the continuum of moderate expressions of violence mentioned above still exists, and could, in fact, produce another Montréal Massacre. The statement "We will not forget" can - and does - anger people who feel that the fourteen women should be allowed to rest in peace, without being turned into tools of the feminist agenda. But that simple slogan renders acknowledgement of the the mental and physical violence that is wrought against women in their and affirms a readiness to challenge the attitudes in society that allow for the perpetuation of such violence.

Earlier this year, an NDP private member's Bill resulted in an Act of Parliament that recognized December 6 as the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. On campus today, several groups have organized activities in memory of what happened in Montréal. This week's issue of the Brunswickan carries a four-page Feature consisting of comments from faculty members in universities across Canada. The UNB Student Women's Committee is holding a memorial service from 4 - 5 PM in the Head Hall auditorium, as well as a Healing Circle in Tilley Hall at 8 PM. CHSR will be broadcasting the memorial service live, and from 5 - 6 PM, CHSR's Wimmin's Collective will be broadcasting an hour of focus programming dealing with the implications of the Montréal Massacre for women. The effort to attend the Service, or to at least tune in, is one well worth making.

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On a much lighter note, Christmas is around the corner. But despite the displays of joy and good cheer that have inundated the city (town) of Fredericton ever since the Halloween paraphernalia was packed away, not all individual business owners in Fredericton have caught on to the sharing spirit of the upcoming holiday.

On Sunday afternoon, I was near the bottom of York Street, looking frantically for the apartment of a friend of mine. I had belatedly realized (ie. after my drive had already gone around the corner) that I had left the apartment number at home. But, the cigarette and newspaper store was open, and thanking McKenna's Sunday Shopping plan, I walked in to ask for some help. I encountered the rudest, most unhelpful proprietor I have ever come across in my entire time in Fredericton. In reply to my request to use the phone: no, I certainly couldn't use the phone, because there was a phone booth right outside the door. In reply to my next request as to whether I could borrow fifteen cents because I only had twelve cents on me: absolutely not. He proceeded to walk away from me, obviously utterly unmoved by my plight and clearly unamused by the temerity of such obvious scroungers as myself. I stared after him in utter amazement and disbelief and walked out, unsure about what to do next.

Happily, my frustration must have shown itself in the way I dazedly stood on the pavement outside the store in question. A man getting out of his car, asked me what was wrong, and on hearing that I simply wished to use a phone, offered to let me in to his business premises to make my phone call. I did this, obtained the address, and left.

The moral of the story is this. The unknown helpful man from Chippin's Ltd has my gratitude and his business has raised itself in my estimation. And in true Christmas spirit, I am tempted go along with the rather witty advice of a friend of mine and to send Mazzucca's a Christmas card and a quarter. The card will read: This quarter is to go to the next woman who walks in and asks to use your phone.

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