

Don't summon the authorities

Letter to the Editor

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Nick Simard is right that the recent Gorsebrook Lounge poster is stupid and obnoxious ("There's no business like 'you-know' business," 14 January 2009, p. 10). Let's hope that the people responsible for it learn from Simard's critique and do better next time.

But why did Simard draw attention in his article to our university's Policy on the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment and Discrimination? That policy is an absolute mess. It conflates actual harassment and discrimination with all sorts of other behaviours, some objectionable, some not. It's a policy that invites frivolous, vexatious, and ideologically-motivated complaints.

I hope that Simard's article doesn't encourage anyone to bring a complaint against the Gorsebrook on the grounds that the presence of the poster harassed him or discriminated against him. The university might well take such a complaint seriously and attempt further to erode freedom of expression on our campus.

When confronted with an obnoxious poster, we ought not complain to any authority. We ought to do what Simard, for the most part, did. We ought to explain what's wrong with the poster and why it shouldn't be displayed. We ought not summon an authority to dictate what can and can't be displayed on campus.