

# SAFS Newsletter

*Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship*

Maintaining freedom in teaching, research and scholarship  
Maintaining standards of excellence in academic decisions about students and faculty

Number 35

www.safs.ca

September 2003

## REPORT ON SAFS 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, MAY 3, 2003

*Clive Seligman, President*

The annual meeting, held at the University of Western Ontario, was attended by over 30 members, with 17 staying for the business meeting. Once again, we thank Daniella Chirila, our SAFS secretary, for coordinating the conference, arranging morning coffee and lunch, and booking the meeting rooms.

A) In my opening remarks, I noted that this year we were doubling the number of morning panel sessions and thus, in the interest of saving time for these sessions, I would not be reviewing the recent cases with which SAFS was involved. Instead, I directed the members to the SAFS website for recent updates. Additionally, I informed the audience that there would be no winner of the Furedy Award for Academic Freedom this year.

B) The first morning session was entitled, "Research Ethics Boards: Protecting the Public or Limiting Academic Freedom." The speakers were Ben Forster and John Mueller. The session was chaired by Steve Lupker.

Ben Forster reviewed the background, structure and operations of the University of Western Ontario Review Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects of which he is currently Chair. He outlined the larger national context, and urged involvement in the processes now ongoing which are to define not only a revised Tri-Council Statement on Research Ethics but also national systems of oversight and accreditation.

John Mueller, in his presentation, noted the continued growth of the research ethics bureaucracy. He said that many of the complications came from trying to

apply a model of medical research to the social and behavioral sciences, and some came from mindless insatiable bureaucratic growth. He argued the effectiveness of many of the regulations is not apparent on the surface, and it seems there is no concern with documenting effectiveness, and no accountability for the added bureaucracy. The way these ethics boards do, or may come to, constrain inquiry on campus was discussed. His full talk can be read at <http://mueller.educ.ucalgary.ca/SAFS2003/> and for SAFS response on research ethics see page 4 of this issue.

The second morning session, "Strategies and Tactics in the 'Diversity/Equity' Debates," was chaired by John Furedy.

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Published by the **Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship**, a society open to all (whether in a university or not) who accept the principles of freedom in teaching, research and scholarship and maintaining standards of excellence in decisions concerning students and faculty.

ISSN 1704-5436

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The session was a review of a prior panel, organized by several SAFS members (John Furedy, Doreen Kimura, Clive Seligman, and Philip Sullivan), that took place at the "Excellence Through Diversity" conference, held at the University of Toronto, in March 2003. The SAFS panel at that Toronto conference was the only one to disagree with the conference theme, as evident in the name of our session, "The moral bankruptcy of diversity/equity hiring policies for university faculty: Empirical, logical, and ethical considerations." Nonetheless, the session drew a large audience, almost none of whom agreed with anything we had to say. Accordingly, the AGM session was organized to discuss our failure to be persuasive. The session began with a tape of some of the discussion that took place at the Toronto session, and this was followed by presentations by Philip Sullivan and Martin Wall.

Phil Sullivan argued that the reaction of the Toronto audience, many of whom were employed in diversity positions in education, was akin to that of advocates of creation science, who see the issue as a moral crusade. Sullivan said that in equity advocacy we see moral fervor, bold assertions, dogma, determinism, and the discounting of contrary scientific evidence. He suggested that we should learn from how scientists have argued with creationists, i.e., we should assemble contrary evidence in a comprehensive way and work harder to disseminate it to the public.

Marty Wall, who was in the audience, at the Toronto session initially thought it would be a wonderful attempt to engage productively with a somewhat hostile audience and to raise some questions in their minds, even if not actually to change their minds. In Marty's view, the opportunity was lost. There was little communication. Judging from the comments,

many in the audience viewed the panel as appearing arrogant, which made it too easy for them to be dismissive toward the arguments and data presented. The atmosphere became highly charged. Marty urged us to draw from our experience as teachers, to be sensitive to where the audience is coming from, and to build our case slowly, moving from non-controversial to more controversial arguments.

Although there was not a lot of time for questions and answers after the speakers' portion of the sessions, the discussion was lively.

C) Our keynote speaker, Dr. Frederick H. Lowy, Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Concordia University, spoke on the topic, "Defending Academic Freedom in the Politicized University." Dr. Lowy gave a thorough, sensitive, and balanced account of the recent problems at Concordia University that culminated in the riot that prevented Benjamin Netanyahu, former Prime Minister of Israel, from delivering an invited talk on campus in September, 2002. He discussed the history of Concordia University, its diverse student population, and the problem of radicalized students who see the university as a defender of the status quo. The difficulties were enlarged due to the fact that in Quebec student unions have labor union status and the university has no control of the fees the students pay to support their union, and thus little control over their activities. Since the problems in the Middle East became more intense in recent years, there has been a growing tension between pro-Palestinian students, aligned with the radical students in the student union, and other groups, particularly pro-Israeli supporters. Dr. Lowy outlined various events that have occurred on campus that raised serious questions of how to defend academic freedom while trying to contain increasingly violent activities.

Dr. Lowy stated firmly that he and Concordia University believe in the core values of the Academy, including academic freedom and free speech, and they will defend them. A lengthy and candid question and answer period followed Dr. Lowy's talk. A fuller account of Dr. Lowy's remarks, prepared by Chris Furedy, is on page 11 of this issue.

D) The Annual Business Meeting was held at the end of the day. The minutes are circulated to the members with this issue. Please save the minutes to bring with you to the next AGM. □

## FEMINISTS, MASCULINISTS, BLACKLISTS

*Neil Seeman*

Researchers for Status of Women Canada have drawn up an enemies' list, and I'm on it. The list of prominent purveyors of "masculinist discourse" is posted on the ministry's Web site.

"The goals of the masculinist discourse are to regain lost privileges and to stop the women's emancipation movement," the study reads. Laval University researchers Pierrette Bouchard, Isabelle Boily, and Marie-Claude Proulx are so nonplussed by us masculinists that they moot the possibility of slapping us with hate-crimes charges.

I found out about the newly issued blacklist after receiving an e-mail from Jeffrey Asher. He's also on the list. Asher used to teach a popular men's studies course until he was dismissed in 2000 on account of what he called a "feminist managerial putsch." I know this because I wrote an article for the *National Post* three years ago about Jeffrey's fight for due process.

As far as I can tell, the only reason I'm on the list is because I've written a couple of articles about discrimination toward men, and toward male academics in particular. Several journalists and academics and researchers are on the list, including 10 citations for reporters at the feminist-friendly *Toronto Star*. In fact, the column you are now reading is doubtless an example of "masculinism," since it takes seriously the idea that men – like women – can be victims of discrimination, too.

It fell to the Policy Research Fund, a branch of Status of Women Canada, to mine media databases for examples of masculinism. The Policy Research Fund was created in 1996, because the ministry felt that "good public policy depends on good policy research."

For this particular project ("School Success by Gender: A Catalyst for the Masculinist Discourse"), the researchers canvassed a "corpus of 612 newspaper and magazine articles." They then proceeded to code 12 subcategories of masculinism, identifying, for example, articles that "discuss fathers who claim to be oppressed because their custody rights are taken away," or those that attempt to explain male malaise by reference to "such themes as the loss of the male identity or the quest for a new identity, the

consequences of redefining traditional social roles or pressures to redefine them."

It's hard to treat this earnestly as an academic enterprise, and harder still to imagine that Ottawa commissioned it using taxpayers' dollars. But the real gut-thumper lies in the chief recommendation: hate-crimes charges. "We also recommend that consideration be given to whether legal action can be taken under Section 319 of the Criminal Code."

Let us stop to consider the import of this recommendation. It advocates the monitoring of men's groups' Web sites for possible violations of Section 319. That section subjects to imprisonment everyone "who, by communicating statements in a public place, incites hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach" and everyone "who, by communicating statements, other than in private conversation, wilfully promotes hatred against an identifiable group."

What this counsels is the criminalizing of mainstream dissent. Feminists have long complained of the "white, male establishment." (Some have gone further; Germaine Greer wrote that "to be male is to be a kind of idiot savant, full of queer obsession ... doomed to aggression and injustice not merely towards females, but towards children, animals, and other men"). Should it now be criminal for fathers' groups and other aggrieved Canadians, men and women among them, to grouse about the "feminist establishment" on obscure Web sites? And should journalists be cowed into silence, afraid to cover "men's issues" for fear of landing on a blacklist?

Journalists are paid to investigate controversies – to explore, for example, "masculinist" assertions that there are fundamental differences between the sexes, or that boys and the "masculine" culture must be valued. It is one thing for an academic to take umbrage at these assertions. It is another thing, a dangerous thing, to criminalize these thoughts and to immortalize the names of would-be offenders on a government Web site.

Neil Seeman, a lawyer, directs the Canadian Statistical Assessment Service at the Fraser Institute in Toronto.

Published in the *National Post*, June 4, 2003.

*Neil is a SAFS member.* □

## SAFS LETTER ON RESEARCH ETHICS

September 25, 2003

Social Sciences And Humanities Research Ethics  
Special Working Committee  
Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics  
(PRE)  
SSHWC@pre.ethics.gc.ca

Dear Committee Members:

We are a national organization dedicated to academic freedom and scholarship (<http://www.safs.ca>). We are writing in response to a call for comment, as per <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/publicparticipation/commentondocuments.cfm>

As we understand it, PRE's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Special Working Committee (SSHWC) is presently engaged in a "*consultation on evolving the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) to better meet the needs of Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) Communities.*"

We are pleased to see this discussion, because we have had concerns about the continued expansion of ethics regulations, especially given the lack of demonstrated effectiveness for such regulations. In our judgment, changes in the research ethics review system, in the past decade in particular, have greatly increased the burdens on individual researchers in the SSH and on local university administrations, with no documented benefit, and very likely no actual benefit, to the genuine protection of research participants. This cost-benefit problem is especially apparent in the SSH, and thus we feel modifications of the TCPS are very much in order, at least in the SSH. We will summarize some issues that we believe need to be addressed.

### 1. The medical model is being misapplied.

As we see it, many if not most of the problems were due to the attempt to create a single set of guidelines for all three granting agencies. This may have some veneer of efficiency in the eyes of bureaucrats, but in practice it has not worked. For one thing, what this blending has done is to allow the discussion of research safety to be completely dominated by what is a very limited biomedical model, the "clinical trials" paradigm.

This clinical-trials domination is directly observed in many ways, for example, the preoccupation in the TCPS and other documents with the benefits for the pharmaceutical industry. A further problem, and a more serious one perhaps, is that this clinical-trials mindset also indirectly shapes ethics reviews in SSH when, in fact, SSH research does not follow that format. That is:

< The clinical-trials paradigm is merely *Consumer Reports* style testing, that is, product comparison. Thus the clinical-trials paradigm lacks the epistemological theory testing and theory building character of research in other traditions of basic scientific inquiry, such as SSH.

< The clinical-trials approach appropriately uses a fixed "protocol" for comparing products, a recipe. That is, there is a static way to do the comparisons. However, this attribute is not characteristic of research in SSH – nor basic research in general. That a "standard" method may exist in clinical trials has led Research Ethics Boards (REB) to think they can judge methodology in SSH proposals, a conclusion that is completely unwarranted.

< The commercial profit incentive in clinical trials is not typical of scientific inquiry, and particularly not research in the SSH. A profit agenda may be a reason to be suspicious about ethical and safety compromises, no matter how it is shrouded in concerns for relieving pain and suffering. That the further investment of scarce campus resources might result in further profits for the drug industry in itself seems worthy of debate, but such concerns definitely are not a reason to burden scholars in all academic disciplines on campus.

< The clinical-trials approach is accompanied by the expectation of inevitable and short-term therapeutic benefits. To quote from a recent article on research ethics (Lougheed, 2003, p. 10), "It made me think about where the line was drawn between therapy and research." This boundary line, and therefore this question, is simply not an issue in SSH research, where the objects of inquiry are not "patients," and "therapy" is not the end goal of research. In fact, this question is not relevant

even in basic medical research, it is only relevant in the applied biomedical sector that includes clinical trials. This clinical commitment to producing a better therapy has provided a gratuitous platform for REBs to review SSH proposals for "worthwhile results" and "social desirability," that is, ideological meddling disguised as beneficence.

< The clinical-trials approach frequently involves a proprietary outcome, for example, the outcome of a drug comparison and associated benefits and side-effects. This view of knowledge, and the machinations needed to achieve it, is in complete contrast to the open sharing of research outcomes that characterizes research in the SSH.

## 2. The criterion for important research has been redefined

Due to the acceptance of the assumption that the biomedical model provides a good prototype, all research areas have become implicitly burdened with the notion that the only good research is that which provides improved (medical) "treatment" (and the sooner the better). This concentration on desirable outcomes or "benefits" undermines the primary issue, subject safety, by giving prominence to agendas that make decisions about what is "socially desirable" research. That is, this clinical treatment emphasis shifts the role of research from decoding nature to producing positive outcomes, and it is a powerful mechanism by which inquiry in the SSH is being inappropriately constrained.

"Social desirability" is an ideological matter. It has nothing to do with public safety. Extrapolated uncritically to SSH, this concept is now undermining the epistemological integrity of research efforts in SSH. REBs have become involved in trying to evaluate research outcomes, which they should not be doing, nor should they be trying to direct research efforts to "desirable" areas. These epistemological matters are of no consequence to the subject's experience in the experimental setting. There is no justification for assessing SSH proposals on the basis of positive outcomes, and this confusion, derived from the clinical-trials mindset, provides a serious constraint on inquiry in SSH research.

A second reason that the criteria in the review process have shifted to therapeutic benefits and "social

desirability" appears to be that there is no evidence that SSH research has ever been an issue in terms of public safety (i.e., there is no actual evidence that these reviews are really needed in the first place re safety). The strategy of justifying ethics reviews routinely starts with the recitation of historical problem cases involving medical research, such as Nuremberg, Willowbrook, Tuskegee, and so forth. These sad events are used to create a "moral panic" to not let such unfortunate things occur again by instituting ever more regulations. In fact, however, in spite of the rhetoric from the bioethicists, nothing about the present REBs would have prevented the past problems even in medical research. That is, the perpetrators of such atrocities would have ignored the review formality, so there is no justification to reference them as a defense for present REB practices, certainly not in SSH research. It is intellectually dishonest, and unethical, to claim otherwise.

As a result, the general ideological agenda of social control now drives the review process for SSH proposals, rather than the issue of safety. That is, the SSH ethics reviews are not only indirectly driven by applied biomedical research values, that is, short-term therapeutic benefits repackaged as social engineering, but directly driven by the intrusion of professional ethicists to define the counterpart of "worthwhile" research in the SSH. This subterfuge of replacing the safety criterion with ideology has occurred uncritically, and there is certainly no evidence that the subject's research experience is improved by it.

With the ideology of "social desirability" as the REB's agenda, the behavioral difference between an REB and a  censorship  board disappears. Good intentions are not relevant, as censors always claim to be improving things. Public safety, no more and no less, must be reasserted as the focus of REB activity.

This muddle may have occurred as local REBs struggled to implement federal regulations, but the federal agencies could easily be characterized as having given passive consent by not intervening. Federal agencies need to explicitly reassert what REBs are to examine (safety), and not examine (ideology), and further assure that locals REBs do not feel justified to indulge in censorship of substance or methodology. The criteria for importance in SSH research must be allowed to once again be quality in epistemological theory testing and theory building.

3. Utopia has become a goal, even though a perfect world is not achievable.

The expectation of "zero risk" has replaced the notion of "everyday risk" in ethics reviews. The question was never to be "could something go wrong," but whether the likelihood of adverse consequences would exceed normal life, everyday risk.

Ironically, the distinction between these two notions, zero vs. everyday risk, is actually still quite clear in medical research where the concept of "side-effects" is well accepted by researchers, subjects, and review boards. Yet REBs in SSH now turn back proposals in pursuit of the fiction of "zero risk;" that is, REBs seem to require that absolutely no psychological discomfort could possibly occur. Of course, when directly confronted with such a silly notion, REB reviewers of SSH proposals may deny using this zero-risk value system, nonetheless people are viewed as far less robust psychologically than physically, judging by the trivial concerns that are often directed back to the SSH researcher.

Some of the reason for this likely follows from the nebulous nature of the "problem" that the SSH ethics review is now trying to solve, whereby hypothetical and unlikely incidents now are the only ones reviewers can identify. The task demands during the review meetings are such that if the reviewers do not object to something they fear that they will be construed as incompetent, so they grasp at something, no matter how inconsequential it is on the everyday-risk scale.

The world does contain everyday risk, everyday deception, and everyday ethics. There is no justification for the pursuit of perfection to have ever become a mandate, and allowing it to continue as the goal constitutes a serious, unrealistic, and unnecessary constraint on freedom of inquiry. With respect to this issue, it is not just a matter of rescuing SSH from the medical model but also a matter of re-establishing reality contact within REBs in the SSH. Ethics committees and reviewers need to be explicitly redirected to the "everyday risk" criterion, and how it differs from zero risk. They need to understand that finding no meaningful problem is likely the modal condition in a SSH research proposal, and not a sign of laziness or incompetence. They must also be encouraged to honor the concepts of exempt research, expedited research, proportionate review, waiver of consent, and waiver of documentation of consent.

4. There is no objective evidence for the effectiveness of, nor need for, REBs.

Is the world a safer place now that SSH researchers have to get ethics approval for everything they do? Answering this question requires (a) knowing what the reviews are trying to achieve (the problem definition), (b) knowing what the baseline (pre-regulation) level of the problem was, and (c) monitoring the change. This is simple pre-post assessment logic, and yet somehow the ethics industry has grown continuously for three decades with no one ever being concerned to document the effectiveness of any of the many new regulations that have been enacted! Further, as noted in points 2 and 3 above, the problem has been so redefined and obfuscated in the SSH reviews that now we do not really know what is actually considered "wrong" nor what the goal looks like. "Respect, beneficence, and justice" are commendable aspirations, but if self-defined by an ethics reviewer, unmonitored and undocumented, then they become an open-ended license for at least manipulating the research agenda by irrelevant ideological dictates, and quite possibly explicit censorship.

On campus we try to measure performance through annual reports, course evaluations, all sorts of things. It is, therefore, quite remarkable that REBs apparently are exempt, self-policing bodies. It is an extreme of irony that for a service directed toward research there are no data (research) on the effectiveness of any aspect of the enterprise! Review committees may think that requesting a cosmetic change in the consent form, for example, justifies the enterprise, but the only meaningful measure of value is the subject's experience, and we just do not have any data on what regulations have produced benefits, if any, there.

In fact, the failure to document both the necessity and effectiveness of REBs is irresponsible and unethical in itself. The present plan for running REBs would not survive submission to a peer-review journal (and certainly not to an REB!). We now have three decades of accumulated constraints on freedom of inquiry and freedom of association in SSH research, all of it without any evidence that any of these regulations has changed the subject's research experience for the better. Taxpayers deserve better, we all do. The lack of concern with data on the cost-benefits of the ethics enterprise no doubt contributes to the feeling of alienation from the process among researchers compared to regulators. That is, researchers reasonably

ask: "Why are we doing this if there is no evidence that it improves anything?"

##### 5. The researcher has become a nuisance.

Given the lack of evidence on effectiveness of REB actions, researchers understandably have been inclined to opt out of the process in a number of ways. However, the fact is that there are very few mechanisms for meaningful input from researchers even if or when they want to participate. The communications and regulations involving research ethics have not only come from the medical area to the rest of us in SSH, but communications and review mechanisms now operate on the presumption that the researcher is unethical and must prove innocence. Not only do researchers not feel interested, the sentiment that their involvement is not wanted, and even that the researcher is the problem, is quite clear. As sad as that is, there is every reason to believe that the relationship will deteriorate even further in the future.

Problems with this perspective have been revealed in recent ugly incidents whereby research ethics issues have been used to harass researchers, for example:

< Dr. E. Loftus, U. Washington (Tavris, 2002), investigated to suppress data on "false memory syndrome." This was clearly not about public safety, but instead an ideological attempt to suppress an unwanted finding.

< Dr. L. Pagliaro, U. Alberta (Gillis, 2000), investigated after reporting drugs in schools. This was also an outcome someone did not want to hear, not a threat to public safety.

In these witch-hunts there was considerable loss for the researchers, and yet apparently there were no consequences for the universities for behaving this way. The full extent of this type of harassment is unclear. There are other cases that appear to involve similar harassment, but it is difficult to be sure given the secrecy that surrounds these complaints – apparently in the interest of protecting the institutions rather than the researcher (Nature, 2001). However, one must realize that most of these stories involved senior scholars who could go public given some protection by tenure, whereas it is reasonable to believe that such incidents involving junior scholars, and students, are both more numerous and far less visible because they are unable to go public. Further, because of their inexperience, junior faculty and students lack a meaningful perspective on what

constitutes a reasonable, collegial question from an ethics committee, versus inappropriate censorship.

Given the lack of consequences to the institutions for such abusive treatment of researchers, there is no reason to expect such malicious witch-hunts to diminish in number or severity in the future. To the extent that (a) we continue to permit the fuzzy goal state (ethics and social engineering instead of safety) and (b) fail to document effectiveness, it seems likely that in the future there will be more such incidents rather than fewer. The most parsimonious and most accurate description of these activities is "censorship."

##### 6. The existence of REBs themselves sets up many double standards.

Why is it that academics must be so restricted in terms of human interaction, compared to others? An anthropologist wanting to conduct interviews in Central America spent two years getting clearance, whereas CBC newsreader Peter Mansbridge could be there in 24 hours or less. Just imagine how long reporting about the war in Iraq would have been delayed if an academic had wanted to be embedded with the military rather than Geraldo and Christiane Amanpour. Journalists can study hand-washing behavior in airports, without clearance and without consent forms. Are we less ethical than journalists? Why can a telemarketer simply ring up and ask "Would you mind answering a few questions?" whereas an academic would require an 8-page legalistic consent form, signed and witnessed? It is not just a restriction of freedom of speech, but restricted freedom of association for academics, with, once again, no evidence that the subject's experience is affected in any way. Would it really be an unreasonable attribution here to say that some people (and some REBs) just need to control other people's behavior, which is censorship in most dictionaries, not safety.

##### 7. The future of academic research.

As it becomes increasingly difficult to do SSH research from an academic platform, with more and more regulations of undocumented validity, it seems reasonable to expect a faculty selection process to occur. Ironically, the tactic of being obliged to deal with minor and apparently meaningless demands is a key part of the process whereby prison guards establish authority over prisoners, such as in Zimbardo's infamous prison experiment. Some faculty may

capitulate and carry on, but it would not be surprising that many senior faculty may move their efforts re scholarship to consulting activity, books, or other venues that avoid confronting unwarranted constraints on their intellectual inquiries.

There are also more subtle selection processes. For example, in the case of graduate students, it's not enough just to meet local REB criteria. We are aware of instances, where the external examiner on a PhD thesis piously objected that "This would not have been approved by my REB," even though it had been approved by the student's local REB. So, on the basis of the examiner's mere assertion (as opposed to a formal review by the second REB), the students have had to redo their thesis. The lengthy processing time for ethics proposals itself has added months in many cases to the normal time to complete a degree, even for innocuous research that takes less time to execute than the review delay, and now this added trap lies in wait for the student at the last moment.

Do such experiences encourage students to consider continuing a career in academic research? Not likely. Blend in observations of their faculty mentors being treated à la Loftus, plus the constraints of speech codes and related manifestations of political correctness in coursework, and it becomes fairly easy to see a selection process at work in defining the nature of future academic researchers. Specifically, subject matter expertise will become less important, and instead a critical trait for academic survival will be deference. Research activities will be restricted to conventional "safe" and popular questions, using non-controversial methods that fit within the proscribed limits of right-thinking ethicists. Policy bureaucrats will have prevailed.

As the meek inherit the universities, where will breakthrough research get done? Where will controversial thinking occur? But, most importantly, where is the evidence that the subject's research experience is improved by any of these constraints on inquiry on campus?

### Summary

1. The clinical-trials paradigm is a disaster as a model for SSH research. For this reason alone, if no other, SSH research should not be treated the same as the other research covered by the TCPS. Perhaps there is bureaucratic convenience to "one size fits all," but the

cost to SSH research has been and will continue to be immense. This problem is not soluble by allocating yet more local resources and "educating" researchers. The clinical-trials model just doesn't apply.

2. The research ethics industry seems to have been driven by Health Canada, as well as the attendant commercial interests of the health-care sector. There must be greater representation of the SSH sector, and there must be meaningful recognition of the limitations of the medical model for campus-wide scholarship.

3. Public safety must be reasserted as the agenda for ethics reviews in SSH, not "socially desirable outcomes." This is a matter of re-educating local REBs, not researchers, and requiring the REBs to adhere to the regulations (i.e., safety), and explicitly discouraging REBs from engaging in social engineering and censorship. Likewise the REBs must discard the preposterous pursuit of "zero risk," there is no utopian risk-free world.

4. We must have some evidence of effectiveness for the whole REB enterprise, but especially in SSH research. Changes have been implemented for over 30 years, and we have no evidence that the subject's experience has been affected at all, much less improved.

5. REBs, and institutions, must somehow be held accountable for harassment of scholars. Federal funding may be cut off when a subject dies in a clinical trial, why not cut off federal funding to the institution in a case such as that of Loftus? Some penalty to the institution is required, otherwise the censorship and researcher harassment will no doubt grow.

6. Somehow the "agenda of inquiry" must be restored to its preeminent status over the "agenda of control." It has become chic in some quarters to try to deflect criticism of the ethics industry with an observation such as "Research is a privilege, not a right." This fatuous thinking simply conceals an effort to maintain control at all costs. Research is a job requirement for faculty, and research is degree requirement for students. Freedom of inquiry is widely accepted and respected in everyday life, it is a truly just part of the natural order of human existence. That inquiry is so much more constrained on campus than in the everyday world, without good cause, is something we should all decry.

We realize that this is a strong commentary. However, the constraints on inquiry have been great, ill-conceived, and yet, as far as anyone can document, unnecessary as far as the participant's experience is concerned. Correcting this will require more than simple tweaking, and it must start with the honest admission that this 30-year "experiment" has produced null results at considerable cost to many disciplines and researchers.

We hope these thoughts are helpful to your committee. If we can provide further input, or clarify any of the points here, please let us know. We look forward to following the progress of your committee's work, because it is important that change occur.

Sincerely,

John Mueller, University of Calgary  
 Steve Lupker, University of Western Ontario  
*John and Steve are members of SAFS Board of Directors.*

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#### **SAFS LETTER TO GILLES G. PATRY, RECTOR AND VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA**

July 2, 2003

Dear Rector Patry:

I am writing to you as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship. We are a national organization of scholars whose goals are to promote academic freedom in teaching, research, and scholarship and to uphold the merit principle as the basis of academic decision-making regarding students and faculty. For further information, please visit our website at: [www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca).

In an article published in *University Affairs* (May 2003), Moira Far reported that the University of Ottawa adopted a policy whereby "no campus group may put out information that is disparaging to a country or state" (p. 15). In a subsequent issue of *University Affairs* (June 2003), Professor Kenneth H.W. Hilborn wrote to the editor and correctly pointed out that "this rule is astonishing. There are many states in the world that deserve to be disparaged for their record on human rights."

Is it, in fact, the case that the University of Ottawa has such a rule? If so, would you kindly elaborate the reasoning for this rule. I was told that *University Affairs* had requested a response from you to Professor Hilborn's letter, with the understanding that your response would be published in the same issue as Professor Hilborn's letter. That did not happen and I'm wondering whether your letter will appear in a later issue of *University Affairs* or whether you have decided not to respond.

A rule against negative characterizations of countries or states is unwise. Freedom of expression is the lifeblood of debate at universities, and without such freedom the paramount mission of the university to seek the truth is harmed. It is self-defeating to censor critical speech or to intimidate individuals into avoiding timely discussions of, for example, the actions of nations.

As has been said before by many, the appropriate response to harsh or incorrect statements is more speech, which clarifies, analyses, or rebuts prior statements. Students and faculty at the university should be respected and treated as adults who not only

can cope with speech that expresses views contrary to their own but who can add to the debate. Indeed, it is essential that individuals learn to deal with offensive speech in a civil manner without resorting to censorship or violence. As Professor Hilborn concluded "Freedom of expression is surely preferable to an enforced appearance of harmony." We concur.

We would appreciate hearing your views on this matter. We will publish our letter to you and your response on our website.

Sincerely,

Clive Seligman, SAFS President.

**SAFS LETTER TO ROCH DENIS,  
VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF  
QUEBEC AT MONTREAL**

July 3, 2003

Dear Vice-Chancellor Denis:

I am writing to you as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship. We are a national organization of scholars whose goals are to promote academic freedom in teaching, research, and scholarship and to uphold the merit principle as the basis of academic decision-making regarding students and faculty. For further information, please visit our website at: [www.safs.ca](http://www.safs.ca).

On March 26, this year, your university issued a press release "The UQAM declares Zone of Peace," in which the Board of Directors reaffirms "the resolution of the Commission of the studies of the UQAM, inviting the whole of the community to be opposed to the war against Iraq." Subsequently, one of your faculty members, Professor Stephen Schecter, responded in the *Montreal Gazette* (April 3, 2003), criticizing the university's actions in an article, entitled "UQAM Anti-War Resolution was Inappropriate."

My first purpose in writing to you is to inquire whether there has been any further development in UQAM's political activities regarding the war in Iraq, and whether you or any other official at UQAM has answered Professor Schecter publicly or privately, or taken any disciplinary action against him.

A second purpose is to ask why UQAM, as an institution of higher education, whose function is essentially epistemological, would align itself with any particular political position. Generally speaking, universities, as corporate entities, do not hold political positions on matters removed from the direct administration of the university. Universities are communities of scholars, who, individually, believe many different things about politics, society, culture, religion, and so on. The explicit expression of an opinion by the university administration on the war in Iraq necessarily threatens the academic freedom of individual scholars to state their own views by suggesting there is a correct university-approved position on the matter. It is concerning enough that the university administration took a political position, it is even more troubling that its faculty were asked to support it in an email message.

Professor Schecter, in his article, correctly points out that "the people on the commission des etudes were elected or appointed to decide questions pertaining to the academic life of the university, not on matters of politics or law." He then goes on to distinguish between political and epistemological functions and clearly believes that the university and society are better served when the university limits itself to matters of truth-seeking and avoids the politicization of the Academy. We could not agree with him more.

My final purpose in writing to you is to register for the record that our society opposes your university's declaration of a resolution concerning the war in Iraq, asks that you recommend to the relevant university committees that the resolution be withdrawn, and that UQAM refrain from further actions that politicize the academy, including the adoption of political positions and asking individual faculty members to support the university's political positions.

I would be grateful for a response and we will be happy to post your reply alongside our letter to you on our website.

Sincerely,

Clive Seligman, SAFS President.

As of today we have received no response to either letter. □

## DEFENDING FREEDOM IN THE POLITICIZED UNIVERSITY

### Summary of Keynote Address to the AGM by Dr Fred Lowy, Rector, Concordia University

*Prepared by Chris Furedy*

[Clive Seligman introduced Dr Lowy as one who always sees the good in people.]

**Dr Lowy** recalled Clark Kerr's remark as he left UC Berkeley (as president) in 1967: "I leave this university as I entered it – fired with enthusiasm."

**His themes:** Concordia University has always been politicized, and this politicization was exploited deliberately by a small group of Ontario graduate students who entered Concordia with this objective. Student activism has a long history and is not necessarily bad; it can be constructive, but this was not the case at Concordia.

**The background for the academic culture that has developed at Concordia:** It comes from the traditions of the two institutions that were amalgamated in 1974 (Loyola and Sir George Williams). Sir George Williams University had a 'political tradition' and riots in the 1960s. The downtown campus is part of the 'downtown scene' and attracts many non-Concordia students.

An important feature is the 'diversity' of Concordia – this is true of both students and faculty.

He explained **the beliefs of the radical graduate students that promoted politicization**. Their inspiration comes from anarchist thinking, and philosophers and educationists such as Herbert Marcuse and Paolo Freire. They reject the very purpose of a traditional university, holding that universities support the status quo and thus broader social change must begin with destabilizing universities.

An important factor in the strength of the student movement is that student unions in Quebec can have labour union status and independence, so that the administration at Concordia lost control of the \$1.3 million in fees students pay to the union.

The radical graduate students formed an alliance with a

group of Muslim pro-Palestinian students, although as anarchists the former were not really interested in Middle East politics and the latter do not want to destabilize Canada. It was a pragmatic alliance. (There are estimated to be about 4000 Muslim students).

Explaining how **the conflict between the student union and the Administration escalated**, Lowy said that in the beginning the Administration took the usual stand of allowing freedom of speech. He then described the evolution of his own thinking, acknowledging the help of SAFS' board member Harvey Shulman in drawing his attention to an article in *Front Page Magazine* that spelt out two polar views of universities: the university as a social-change agent vs the university as upholding a non-politicized curriculum. A thorny issue in Lowy's mind was whether the concept of academic freedom can be used to justify the indoctrination of students. Lowy stated his emphatic view that universities and professors should not be propagandists, that they have a obligation to respect truth, and that truth is facilitated by allowing the clash of opposing points of view.

**World events and Concordia:** While important world events have always provoked debate on campus, the Middle East issues since the new intifada were of a different order. There was a steady escalation of rhetoric and propaganda, often an ugly mood. The Administration only tried to limit this rhetoric a little – when it seemed that other students' rights were being interfered with.

**Incidents on campus and Administrative action:** Lowy outlined various events, such as the setting up of a "Palestinian check point" leading up to the violence when Netanyahu attempted to speak in September 2002 at the invitation of the Jewish students' organization Hillel.

The Administration imposed a three-month cooling-off period and there has been no violence since. There has been some progress. Students voted in a new student government, on a platform of 'evolution not revolution.' The Administration could not do much about the radical students, such as pursuing conviction for promoting hate, because the Criminal Code's language makes it almost impossible to convict anyone of a hate crime. However, those who could be identified as participating in the riot have been charged.

**Conclusion:** Lowy concluded by saying that he believes the subversion of the core values of a university must be contained and that Concordia's Administration must try to create a different and tolerant climate on campus. But you can't legislate civility. He quoted George Bernard Shaw on 'unreasonable people:' "Reasonable people adapt themselves to the world. Unreasonable people attempt to adapt the world to themselves. All progress, therefore, depends on unreasonable people."

### Discussion

**John Furedy:** Comment on the need to be clear about the distinction between acts and opinions.

**Bill Fisher:** Vital not to concede campuses to 'brown shirts.' The title of the talk should have been the limits to violence.

**Lowy:** Agrees authorities have to be able to anticipate violence. Now accusations are made against the Administration of repression because of the security measures.

**John Palmer:** Under what conditions would Ernst Zundel be allowed to speak at the university?

**Lowy:** There are speakers that the university invites and that are invited by student organizations. The Administration does not censor student-sponsored invitations. The university could not stop an invitation to Zundel as it would be regarded as censorship.

**Ken Hillborn:** The pro-Palestinian students declared beforehand that they aimed to shut down Netanyahu's talk, so the university should have been prepared for this.

**Ken Westhuis :** Congratulated Lowy on his politically sophisticated talk and said no university president outside of Quebec can be imagined having come and spoken like this to such a group. Has political correctness been stronger in English Canada than in Quebec?

**Lowy:** The political climate in Quebec has changed since the 1970s. Now Quebec universities are more politicized than those in the rest of Canada. But it is not a qualitative difference; perhaps there is more outspokenness in Montreal.

**Jeff Ascher:** Asked Lowy to elaborate on what specific measures the Admin has taken to create a different climate.

**Lowy:** Specifically: 1) Patricia Gabel was appointed as Special Advisor to the Rector, Conflict Analysis and Management, to have discussions on conflict resolution with the different student groups; 2) A committee of faculty, administrators and students was formed to consider ways to increase inter-ethnic tolerance; 3) An academic centre was created to study inter-ethnic conflict; 4) Sanctions were imposed, mostly on the pro-Palestinian students (much criticism from them of Lowy as a result), and non-students committing violence have been banned from campus; 5) New dean of students appointed.

**Rory Leishman:** Are numbers of Muslim students a threat to academic freedom?

**Lowy:** He does not think so. But many Muslim students have come from cultures where there is no tradition of civil discourse. About 100,000 Muslims have immigrated to Quebec in the past few years. But militancy breeds militancy, and the Jewish students are more militant now too.

**Rory Leishman:** Isn't there an intrinsic threat to academic freedom from such values?

**Lowy:** Recalled the case of a Muslim student on the board of governors who objected to wine being served at receptions. Some members of the board found it hard to understand her point of view – was it 'political' or a distinct religious value?

**Keith Cassidy:** The procedure of requiring pro-lifers at UBC to post bond with the university seems the wrong way to go.

**Bill Fisher:** Recalled that an argument used against Philippe Rushton at UWO was that 'fascists have no right to speak.' But this argument is not used against students who may be real fascists.

**Clive Seligman:** Does Lowy think that Netanyahu could be invited again next September?

**Lowy:** Not yet. Well, it is still possible that the conflict could start up again. However, there has been a fair amount of progress at Concordia in this matter.

*Chris is a SAFS member. □*

## CONCORDIA – ONE YEAR LATER

*Jonathan Kay*

On Sept. 9, 2002, former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was scheduled to deliver a speech at Concordia University in Montreal. But a violent group of pro-Palestinian protestors shut him down. Next Tuesday, the one-year anniversary of this fracas, marks a low point for free speech in this country.

What stands out in my mind from that day is not the censorship of Mr. Netanyahu, but rather the sheer viciousness of the crowd that lay behind it.

I was an eyewitness to the violence that day. Earlier on, I'd joined the *Montreal Gazette* editorial board in a meeting with Mr. Netanyahu at the Ritz-Carlton hotel. Later, I walked with a female *National Post* reporter toward the Concordia campus. Both of us had covered anti-globalization protests previously, and assumed the Concordia protestors would be cut from the same cloth – no matter that the ringleaders happened to be Arab instead of white.

But we were wrong. Protestors typically try to ingratiate themselves with the media. Not so the crowd chanting Arabic slogans outside the entrance to Concordia's Hall Building. As soon as they learned we were with the *Post* – "Zionist-owned" as several described it – they grew hostile. At one point, I tried to penetrate to the middle of the rabble to interview the organizers. As I described in a column published the day after the event, I was rebuffed, and found myself scrambling back through a knot of students kicking at me while screaming "Palestinian checkpoint." Like others, I was sprayed with ketchup from a plastic bottle – a symbol, apparently, of Palestinian blood.

The kicks didn't hurt much. They were designed to provoke me into starting a fistfight or something equally stupid. In a regular setting, many of these people were no doubt decent souls. But they'd been whipped into a frenzy by speakers shrieking denunciations of Israel and everyone who supported it. On the sidelines, I saw groups of Jewish students getting into shoving matches with Arabs. The police in attendance did nothing. A middle-aged Jewish rabbi wearing a yarmulke showed up to see the speech. They roughed him up, too, and sent him scurrying. The one consolation was that much of the fracas had been

videotaped – both by police and others. When I interviewed Concordia officials in the aftermath, they assured me they had all the information they needed to identify the main perpetrators.

So what's happened to the students accused of instigating the Netanyahu fracas and sowing violence in its aftermath? In a word, nothing – or close to it.

A grand total of 10 students were charged under Concordia University's internal disciplinary code. Of these, seven either had the charges against them dropped completely or were merely slapped with a few dozen hours of community service.

The remaining three comprise Samer Elatrash, a literature major and well-known pro-Palestinian activist; former Concordia Student Union VP Yves Engler; and Zev Tiefenbach, a Jewish former student active in the Palestinian cause. All three seem to have been little inconvenienced by the proceedings against them.

In February, Mr. Elatrash was found guilty by a panel of students of the four charges laid against him under the school's code of rights and responsibilities. But he appealed, and the case is now in limbo: The university's apparently given up on it because, according to a Concordia administration source, Mr. Elatrash was already a "failed student" at the time of his hearing. That's news to Mr. Elatrash, however. He told me he's registered for three courses this semester – and has plans to return next year on a full-time basis.

As for Messrs. Engler and Tiefenbach, they were both suspended for one semester. Mr. Engler reportedly applied his "suspension" to the summer term, when few students attend classes anyway, and is now back to college as usual. (Earlier this year, he told the *Gazette* he only intends to take one course – a "special topics" poli-sci survey on anarchism.) Mr. Tiefenbach, the school later found out, was no longer a student at the time of his suspension – so the judgment was moot.

There are also criminal charges pending against various alleged riot organizers and vandals – including a few who aren't Concordia students. But when I contacted Mr. Elatrash earlier this week, he did not seem greatly perturbed. "I have been assured that we will not be hung and drawn regardless of the verdicts," he told me. Given the complete indifference of the cops on September 9, the lax treatment Concordia

students have received at the hands of the university, and the delays in criminal prosecution, he's got a right to be confident.

No one is asking for the Sept. 9 ringleaders to be "hung and drawn." But the fact most have gotten away with slaps on the wrist is a scandal. Universities are supposed to be bastions of free speech and unfettered inquiry. When a group of militant Palestinian sympathizers are able to shut down an Israeli statesman, it signals to students that some viewpoints don't qualify for protection.

By giving the rioters what they deserved, the university might at least have signaled that things would change – and that pro-Israel speech would henceforth receive the same protection as its anti-Israel equivalent. The fact this didn't happen is more than a failure in discipline: It represents a failure in the school's educational mission.

*National Post*, September 4, 2003.

Jonathan Kay is Editorials Editor of the *National Post*; [jkay@nationalpost.com](mailto:jkay@nationalpost.com). □

### **CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR QUOTAS OPPOSED**

In a front page article of the June 26 edition of *SFU News*, it was reported that VP-academic John Waterhouse plans to apply a quota system for the remainder of SFU's appointments under the Canada Research chairs program. While I share the concern that this program may have been remiss in allowing departments to make appointments without advertising properly, I doubt that the outcome would have been very different in terms of the male/female ratio. The bulk of the program's positions appear to have gone to science faculty, and women do not choose science nearly as often as men, and do not achieve outstanding success as often.

In any case, instituting a quota system for women is not the appropriate solution even if the current procedure were flawed. This is especially important since the program's guidelines stipulate that "excellence is the defining criterion" (not group identity). A quota system violates the merit system, the program's guidelines, and presumably also policies

negotiated with the SFU faculty association. It should be unacceptable to all faculty.

Doreen Kimura  
Visiting Professor

From *Simon Fraser University News*, July 10, 2003.

*Doreen is a SAFS member.* □

### **SATIRE**

#### **NEW AFFIRMATIVE ACTION HIRING PROPOSAL**

*Mike S. Adams*

August 25, 2003

Dear Lee:

I have been meaning to write you ever since you first expressed your disappointment with the lack of diversity among the faculty at UNC-Wilmington. I'm sure you remember our conversation three years ago when you decided to change your major from political science because they didn't have a single Republican professor. You also told me that you raised the issue with one of your Democratic professors. I am sorry that he sarcastically responded to your complaint by saying that the department had a "careful screening process" which ensured that no Republican would ever be offered a tenure-track position. If that quote is accurate, it is a real sign of immaturity, not to mention intellectual insecurity. I think it was wise to seek another major.

I'm only sorry that I was unable to help you find an alternate major offering you a more diverse education as you prepared for law school. I thought that English would be a suitable alternative but my research revealed that none of their 31 full-time professors were registered Republicans. I also looked into philosophy and religion, anthropology, and sociology and found that there were no Republicans in any of those departments. Finally, I considered complaining to the Chancellor but he was attending a Democratic fundraiser the day I tried to reach him. My research also revealed that none of his seven vice-chancellors were Republicans.

For a long time afterwards, I must confess that I had given up on the prospect of creating a more diverse intellectual climate at our university. But, recently, my friend Jon Sanders at the John Locke Foundation in Raleigh wrote an article that explains how the Grutter decision may actually help conservatives remedy the lack of ideological diversity on college campuses.

After reading Sanders' article, I re-read Grutter and came to the same conclusion. After all, the Supreme Court did say that universities have a compelling interest in diversity. They also said that preferences aimed at fostering diversity were justified by historical discrimination. If such a rationale can be used to justify preferential treatment for minorities applying for admission as students, it would seem to apply to conservatives applying for teaching positions. Affirmative action for conservative professors would clearly help to create a more diverse intellectual climate. It would also go a long way towards remedying years of oppression experienced by conservatives at the hands of intolerant university leftists.

In order to test this new application of Grutter, I have created a questionnaire that I hope will be used to bring more conservative professors into higher education. I promise that this test will not be used as a device to "discriminate." Unlike student admissions policies, I will recommend its use only as a tiebreaker when universities are deadlocked on a hiring decision. I have noticed that there are a lot of these ties between equally qualified applicants. Usually the tie is between a white male and either a woman or a racial minority.

From now on, black women will not be the automatic winners in these situations. Under my plan, getting the job will depend on the applicant's performance on a test that directly measures attitudes. No longer will hiring decisions be based on assumptions about the manner in which attitudes correlate with certain demographic characteristics. My proposed test follows in its entirety:

Pick the best answer among the following options:

1. My last meal: a) had at least one type of food that had parents, or b) was comprised solely of vegetables.
2. The most evil leader of the 20th century was: a) Joseph Stalin or, b) Ronald Reagan.
3. If a burglar broke into my house this evening I would rather: a) shoot him, or b) find out why he hated me.

4. It is morally reprehensible to: a) abort an eight-month-old human fetus, or b) slaughter a chicken for human consumption.

5. I am firmly convinced of the existence of: a) moral absolutes, or b) global warming.

6. I am more likely to watch: a) Fox News, or b) Al Jazeera.

7. If I were sitting on a runway for several hours inside an American Airlines jet that was experiencing "temporary technical problems," I would want a copy of: a) *Treason*, by Ann Coulter, or b) *Living History*, by Hillary Clinton.

8. The best way to invest for retirement is with: a) an IRA, or b) social security.

9. The Constitution guarantees each adult the right to: a) bear arms, or b) engage in homosexual sodomy.

10. Kindergartners should never hear this word in the classroom: a) vagina, or b) God.

After completing the test, the number of times each applicant circled "a" will be computed. A higher number of "a" responses represents a greater contribution to faculty diversity (i.e., a more conservative applicant). If both applicants get the same score on the test, the hiring decision will be determined by a simple coin toss.

Remember Lee, I am proposing this test to benefit people like you who believe that their parents wasted tens of thousands of dollars on an education that promised diversity and delivered indoctrination. But also remember that I am only proposing this test as a tiebreaker. I promise that it will never become a part of all hiring decisions. Furthermore, I expect that 25 years from now, the use of such a test will no longer be necessary.

Mike S. Adams (adams\_mike@hotmail.com) was hired by UNC-Wilmington in 1993 when he was a Democrat and an atheist. Since then, he has turned out to be a big disappointment. □

#### SUBMISSIONS TO THE SAFS NEWSLETTER

The editor welcomes short articles, case studies, news items, comments, readings, local chapter news, etc. Longer items are preferred on a 3.5" (MS-DOS) disk in Word Perfect or Word 95, or by e-mail attachment.

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*Secretary: Daniella Chirila, Department of Psychology, University of Western Ontario, e-mail: secretary@safs.ca*

# Dues 2003

**RECEIVING MEMBERSHIPS ON TIME IS IMPORTANT FOR THE SOCIETY**

For those of you who still have not paid your 2003 year dues, please do so as soon as possible. The costs of producing and mailing the newsletter are high and we are unable to continue sending copies to past members beyond a courtesy mailing. Please check your status and send in your dues if you have forgotten! Thank you!

**REGULAR MEMBERS**

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