

Editorial

Let's hear it for the untitled

During the numerous orientation sessions that freshmen attended before the year got under way, the term "leadership skills" was mentioned an inordinate number of times. One got the impression that if you weren't an officer of an organization, you just weren't taking advantage of all that Meredith has to offer. However, when applying for a job, recruiters are much more likely to ask about what you've done rather than how many offices you've held during your college career. It seems that we are encouraging the fact that it's more important to be a "chief" than an "Indian".

Case in point: last year, a campus organization held elections for this year's slate of officers. One candidate was nominated for each office, with the exception of one position, for which two students were nominated. Rather than allow the club members to vote, the president offered to split the duties of that office and allow each candidate to fill one of the newly created positions. The club members agreed to this arrangement and went away happy that the candidates were spared the embarrassment of possibly losing an election and the members were spared the agony of choosing which friend to vote for. (Just like real life, right? Let's let both Mr. Gantt and Mr. Helms share the position of N.C. Senator.)

The president of the club in question was a fine leader and worked hard to make sure that most of the goals of the organization were met during her tenure. The students who were "elected" to the new positions will, no doubt, serve quite capably because they each have good ideas and the ability to carry out their goals.

However, this isolated incidence should give one pause to consider just what kind of leadership skills we are encouraging at Meredith. Everyone wants a title, wants to be in charge of something, wants to have their name on the list of Important Campus Leaders. True, someone has to take the role of The Person In Charge, but does a club with about a dozen active members really need seven or eight officers? Does it matter whether or not you have a title? Isn't participation the key here?

There are numerous on-going workshops, retreats, and sessions designed to teach your campus officers how to perform in a leadership role. That's good.

However, not everyone wants to or can be a "leader" with an title. Where are



the workshops for the Indians?

This editorial is dedicated to all of those unsung, untitled heroines who offer an idea, take some action, make a difference on our campus. You won't see their names on a list of official student VIPs, but our student body would not be what it is without them. They won't ask for the recognition they

deserve and they probably won't be treated to a presidential reception; hopefully they do hold a very personal satisfaction that they made, however small, a positive contribution to their school.

[The analogy drawn between "chiefs and Indians" does not intend to imply prejudicial stereotyping.]

Letters to the Editor

Dear Ms. Haskett:

It appears to me that a very interesting — and important — conversation was generated by the 8/27/90 issue of the *Herald* and I would like to add my voice to what I hope will be a lively discussion. ... In the "Herald Staff Expands" article, I was surprised by two things: "atta-boys" used as a form of praise ... and the word "man" used in the same sentence as the words "Herald staff members" ("...staff members will man the *Herald* office during regular hours."). After brief thoughts about how strange this seemed when one was talking about an all-female staff, I decided it must have been an oversight and went on to the Editorial. That was an eye-opener!

Going back to the original article, I realize how cumbersome it might have appeared to use the word "staff" to replace "man" ("...staff members will staff the *Herald* office...") and, after all, "man" is generic—everyone knows that! Even the Thesaurus function on my computer lists "man" as a synonym for the verb "staff." Funny, the word "woman" doesn't show us as a synonym for any verbs and is listed as a synonym for the nouns "dowager, matron, consort,

handmaiden, housekeeper, maid." On the other hand, "man" is listed as a synonym for the nouns "human beings, humanity, humankind, mankind, people." Isn't that interesting?

All of a sudden I find myself thinking about things that I'd begun to take for granted. I was born right after WWII and grew up during that period of time when we—women and men—didn't question these things. They just weren't issues for most of us. However, for some they WERE issues, and those people (primarily women, but some men were involved) expended a lot of energy trying to wake up the rest of us to the fact that words ARE important. Equality DOES depend on words as well as actions. When we de-emotionalize the issues and think that they don't really matter, we're putting ourselves in danger of losing important gains that have been made. With the controversy again being generated over a woman's right to make decisions about her own body, I believe, right now, every word counts.

I know that for many women, generating conflict makes us uncomfortable. We usually function better when our relationships with other

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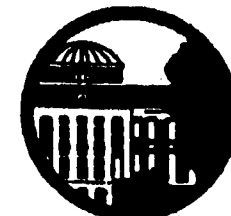
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