

## editor's note



### BACK IN MARCH OF 2001, I RECOMMENDED THAT EVERYONE READ THAT MONTH'S ESQUIRE MAGAZINE, WHICH INADVERTENTLY SET OFF A CONTROVERSY THAT'S STILL RAGING TODAY.

What was special about that issue? If you looked closely, one of the models in an advertisement for some clothing was casually reading an old copy of AISC's *Manual of Steel Construction*! We made it into a national consumer-interest magazine! So why was it controversial? The model was scantily clad and some readers took affront at the perceived exploitation of women to sell a product (and before anyone gets their knickers in a twist, this was not an AISC ad; we had nothing to do with it—the *Manual* was simply a prop someone had found in a secondhand store).

The same issue of the exploitation of women continues to create tsoris today.

For many years, some exhibitors at NASCC: The Steel Conference have featured what the exhibition industry euphemistically refers to as "booth babes" to encourage traffic at their booth. In some cases they are simply provocatively dressed models; in others they are actual staff in skimpy outfits.

Over the years, the outcry against this practice has grown—not just at the Steel Conference but in events across the country in a wide array of industries. Last year alone, conferences as diverse as PAX (for the video game industry) and RSA (a tech conference) banned booth babes. AISC's policy requires that attendees and exhibitors are attired in office- or shop-appropriate clothing (for the pedantic, that means skirts, dresses, shorts, etc. have to extend beyond the fingertips when arms are at the side, and there should be no exposed midriffs).

The policy doesn't, however, extend beyond the confines of the exhibit hall and the meeting rooms. What a company does in a private function or in a public space is

their business—and even that has proved controversial. For example, one student at this year's show said she felt debased by the women who used their bodies, rather than their intellect, to attract attention—to which another person replied, why is it okay for universities to have cheerleaders at sporting events? Still another claimed it was intellectual snobbery to subordinate the physical to the mental. Others wonder what the difference is between having an attractive woman and having an entertainer, such as a juggler or a sketch artist, attract attention at a booth.

For me, the problem is in defining what is acceptable and what crosses the boundary of good taste. As United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart once wrote: "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand within that shorthand description [hard-core pornography], and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it."

If you have an opinion on this issue or a better definition of what is acceptable, I'd love to hear it. In the meantime, I invite everyone looking for an intelligent discussion to visit [www.aisc.org/2015nasconline](http://www.aisc.org/2015nasconline). We've posted more than 100 sessions from this year's Steel Conference and you can view them for free at your leisure. These are full sessions, including a recording of the speaker and their slides. I hope you enjoy this free peek at our incredible conference, and I hope to see you at next year's conference (April 13-15) in Orlando!

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