

Student harassed after criticizing U of T club

Canadian University Press

TORONTO — A bucket of urine and feces was dumped in the residence room of an outspoken critic of a University of Toronto student club.

Farhan Memon, a student at U of T's Trinity College, has publicly criticized the Trinity club, Episkopon, for its discriminatory practices.

Memon said someone buzzed his residence room and when he answered the call, a bucket of feces and urine propped up against his door fell into his room.

The incident took place two nights after the college announced the creation of a committee to investigate allegations of racist, sexist and homophobic behaviour by Episkopon members.

At a recent event, a Sri Lankan woman was paraded on hands and knees with a sign around her neck reading "Token Ethnic". The club has decided to suspend their activities until the committee makes its report.

Episkopon's regular activities include a twice yearly "reading" where gossip is recounted and college

members are publicly smeared.

Memon said he was surprised by the reaction to his criticism.

"I may be naive, but I didn't think something like this would happen," he said. "I expected ostracism or verbal harassment, but not this."

"What bugs me is we have people at Trinity who come from pretty prominent backgrounds, and they're being socialized in an environment like this."

Trinity dean of men Michael Thompson said he thinks someone in

the residence is responsible, although it is easy to get into the building at night.

Thompson said he thinks the harassment is related to Memon's vocal opposition to Episkopon.

"It's unacceptable," he said. "If Farhan had done the worst thing in the world, he doesn't deserve to have this happen. He is perfectly within his rights to raise his objections and the college is responding to that."

Memon said other people who have objected to Episkopon in the past have also been harassed.

Trinity student Richard Berman said he was hassled when he spoke out against Episkopon in his first year. He came back to his room one night

and found broken glass and water over his bed after someone threw a snowball through his window, he said.

However, he said it is unlikely Episkopon members are responsible for either of the two incidents.

"As much as I dislike Episkopon, (its members) are not stupid," he said. "More likely it was some first- or second- year student. There's a feeling at the college that if you oppose something at Trinity, you are anti-Trinity."

Trinity provost Robert Painter said pressure from the university lead to the creation of the new committee.

Memon said he has been offered space in another university residence but has decided to stay at Trinity.

NDP may cut student grants

by Clive Thompson

Canadian University Press

TORONTO — Ontario's New Democrat government is planning to vaporize grants to post-secondary students, warns the Liberal critic for colleges and universities.

Hans Daigeler said he has heard that a working group in the province's Treasury Board is examining a proposal to turn the Ontario Student Assistance Plan into a loans-only program.

And when he grilled colleges and universities minister Richard Allen about the rumour last Thursday during question period, Allen didn't deny the existence of such a study, Daigeler said.

"I gave the minister a chance to put the rumours to rest right then and there and he didn't do it," Daigeler said. "He shied away from dealing with the question, which gave at least an indirect confirmation."

This year, OSAP will give out \$220 million in student aid. Roughly 40 per cent of that is in grants, according to Ontario Federation of Students communications officer Asha Batt.

Critics say there is need for more grants, pointing to the average \$10,000 debt load of graduates who receive OSAP loans.

"The NDP will force students to deal with more and more debt" if grants are cut, Daigeler said.

Government spokesperson Shelagh Nerney said the loans-only option was being discussed.

"All options are under consideration," she said. "But certainly we're committed to ensuring access. Nothing will be done that will undermine aid."

But eliminating grants would do just that, because they are more crucial than loans for improved access,

Batt said. High student unemployment — which reached 15.9 per cent this summer — has also increased the need for grants, she added.

"It would definitely hurt."

The current review of OSAP will probably wrap up in the spring, Nerney said.



Carlton security breaks into club office

Canadian University Press

OTTAWA — Carleton University security illegally entered the gay, lesbian and bisexual student centre, following a complaint about AIDS awareness posters in the office.

Rick Percival, public relations officer for Carleton security, said officers investigated the centre over the weekend of Oct. 20 for "possibly offensive material," and photographed posters on the walls.

Security officers have a key to the centre but they are not supposed to enter without the authorization of the student council or the building manager.

Officers didn't need permission to enter because the centre door was unlocked, Percival said. Staff were not present during the investigation,

Tobacco companies targeted

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should question the wisdom of investing in tobacco.

"There are a lot of dark clouds on the tobacco industry's horizon. Those who sold their investments in South Africa early did much better than those who refused."

Krevor said the tobacco divestment campaign owes a debt to the push to divest companies with investments in South Africa.

"As a result of the anti-apartheid movement, people can look at the concept of tobacco divestment and it makes immediate sense."

But he said the tobacco divestment movement is very different.

"Any of the divestment initiatives

he added.

But according to centre volunteer Michael Dawbar, security officers must have entered the office by using a master key, because staff locked it.

"Carleton security is undermining AIDS awareness with this kind of action," he said. "These messages convey safe sex, that is their purpose. They certainly are not pornography."

"The supposed offensive materials are nothing more than AIDS awareness posters that are available throughout the city," he said. "It's ironic that we are not being harassed by students, but by security."

Carleton's peer counselling centre has the same posters on its walls.

Percival said the peer counselling centre wasn't investigated because no one complained about it.

for tobacco began at the top — a trustee, a major contributor."

Krevor also said it was much easier to divest from tobacco companies than it was to find companies during the anti-apartheid campaign.

"In the South African movement, it was really complex. Here, (in the tobacco divestment movement), we're talking about only 6 major companies."

But neither Krevor or Sweaner see the movement becoming as widespread as the South African one.

However, Sweaner said universities set an example.

"I would expect universities would continue to take the lead in issues like this."

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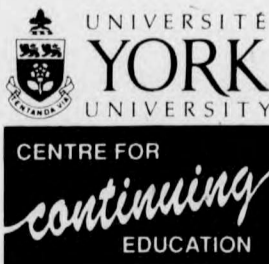
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