

## cross-canada briefs

## Bill would punish women

BY CRAIG SAUNDERS

VICTORIA (CUP) — Pregnant women who drink could spend up to a year behind bars if Reform MP Keith Martin has his way.

Martin, MP for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca, recently introduced a private member's bill that would make it illegal for pregnant women to consume "certain substances."

"It would enable the courts to put women that have been using significant quantities of a damaging substance into a treatment facility for up to a year," said Martin.

The intent of the bill, says Martin, is to prevent women from causing long-term damage to their unborn children.

"Criminalizing is never the answer," said Sherry McLeod of the University of Victoria's Family Health Centre. "It doesn't prevent women from becoming drug addicted."

McLeod also worries that the bill will change the definition of "child" under Canadian law. The bill defines "child" as being "every fetus that its mother does not have a fixed intention to abort."

Dr. Margot Young, an assistant professor of law at the University of Victoria, also points out that this bill will keep women with addictions from seeking help because they'll be too afraid of being locked up.

## Nigerian activist faces death

BY DAVID GAMBRILL

MONTREAL (CUP) — The Nigerian government's military regime is trying to suppress free speech by intimidation and imprisonment, says Nobel prize-winning author Wole Soyinka.

A fierce critic of his country's military dictatorship, Soyinka was in Canada to raise funds for his pirate radio station, Radio Kudirat International.

Soyinka's three-day visit to Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto came just two days after Nigeria charged the exiled author and 11 other Nigerian activists with treason, which is punishable by death in Nigeria.

Soyinka dismissed the Nigerian government's official claim that he is responsible for recent bomb blasts on Nigerian army buses. He maintained the military's treason charges were more likely the result of his establishing Radio Kudirat on June 12, 1996.

"Because of the fact that we were able to give the lie to this regime, we were accused of acting treasonously," Soyinka said. "The government said if the Nigerian media ever quoted anything from Radio Kudirat, that will be considered treason."

"If that is treason then I am absolutely guilty. Long live treason."

Radio Kudirat broadcasts for one hour each day, providing alternative views to the perspectives presented by Nigeria's military officials. Soyinka's visit to Ottawa coincided with deteriorating relations between Canada's department of Foreign Affairs and officials in General Sani Abacha's military junta.

## Sexes wired differently

BY ALEX BUSTOS

(CUP) — A growing field of work suggests that the sexes may indeed view the world through different minds. The controversial research has added fire to the age-old "nature versus nurture" debate.

Doreen Kimura, a professor of psychology at the University of Western Ontario, argues that males and females have different mental abilities.

"Women and men differ not only in physical attributes and reproductive function, but also in the way in which they solve intellectual problems," she wrote in a 1992 Scientific American article.

Lisa Serbin, a professor of psychology at Concordia University, found that spatial-visual skills and toy preferences were related. Serbin found that boys and girls who play with traditional male toys scored 16 per cent higher on spatial-visual skills than those who primarily played with dolls and kitchen sets.

"I'm pretty sure if you give a kid a lot of construction material, their spatial-visual skills will be improved," says Serbin.

In 1995, Sandra Witelson, a professor in the psychiatry department at McMaster University, released a study that claimed women have 11 per cent more brain cells in a part of the temporal lobe associated with language skills than men.

This followed a 1991 U.S. study which found that the back part of the corpus callosum — the bundle of neurons that serve as the main bridge between the right and left side of the brain — is up to 23 per cent bigger in women.

Kimura makes a point of saying that her findings don't conclude that women are less intelligent than men, or that women cannot enter such fields as mathematics or physics. Instead, brain differences mean exactly that: just differences. This doesn't, however, translate into inequalities.

## Union vote: who's counting?

BY SHELLEY ROBINSON

Student Union Building employees turned out in droves to vote on joining a union — although it is still not known which votes will count.

The vote on whether to form a local of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) took place Thursday, March 13th. Many Corner Pocket and Grawood employees — excluded as they are not members of the Student Union Part-time Staff Association (SUPSA), the group who launched the bid — cast their ballots regardless.

Brian Kellow, the Grawood's kitchen supervisor, voted — but with reservations.

"I don't think any of the votes should be counted. I think the whole vote itself has been a fraud since the get-go," Kellow said.

"We were deceived. We found out about this thing two days before it happened. When we did find out I called the union rep and that person didn't return my call. It just seemed to me that there was a pattern of deception from the start."

The Labour Relations Board of Nova Scotia is responsible for determining whose votes count. Should the union be ratified, these votes determine union membership.

The Board lets all concerned employees vote, then holds a hearing to weed out those ballots which will not be counted. It was this procedure which enabled the Grawood and Corner Pocket staff to vote.

"Under the Trade Union Act the board has to make a determination on the appropriate unit [for voting towards union membership]. The board will certainly hear any interventions [from employees] and consider those, and certainly consider the position of the employer and also consider who the union is seeking to represent," said Labour Relations Board chief executive officer Gary Ross.

Local CUPE representative Kelly Murray was under the impression that Grawood and Corner Pocket staff were never interested in applying for union membership.

"I have no quarrel with [Corner Pocket and Grawood staff] being part of the bargaining unit," said Murray. "It's [SUPSA] that said to CUPE, 'We want to be organized save and except the [Corner Pocket and the Grawood]. We accepted the fact that [the Grawood and Corner Pocket] did not want to take part at all.'"

SUPSA is an unratified society of the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) that formed in November. Grawood and Corner Pocket employees currently belong to the Grawood Society.

"[SUPSA] was formed because bar services already had their own society...the Grawood Society. So we formed our own society," SUPSA president Andrew Younger said.

Younger said SUPSA jobs are unrelated to those in the Grawood and Corner Pocket.

"[Corner Pocket and Grawood jobs] are strictly supply and demand," he said. "The more people that come to the Grawood, the more Grawood staff they require, the more they hire. The fewer people come, the fewer people they hire...nobody else in the SUB is really hired on that basis."

"The Grawood and Corner Pocket have never been involved in anything before — they've always

chosen to be a separate entity in everything. Nobody's ever even breathed any interest until all of a sudden, the day before the vote, [Grawood and Corner Pocket staff] are like, 'Oh my God, what's going on?'" Younger continued.

While the DSU is bound to remain impartial about the CUPE bid, DSU president Brad MacKay recognizes employees' right to vote.

"I would think that Grawood employees felt they had a right to vote as well, because this is something that affects the entire building," he said.

Last year there was a wage rollback and freeze for all SUB staff and, regardless of how long they have been working, each year every staffer goes through a three month probation period during which they may be dismissed without grounds.

"The biggest thing is job security. [The DSU] won't be able to fire us without reason [if SUPSA unionizes]," said SUPSA member Meg Green. "We're students. We need to know that we have job security, otherwise we may not be able to go to university."

Ironically, Grawood staff are uneasy about a passed union bid negatively affecting their own job security.

"There will be a lot of layoffs in the building and the layoffs will only affect those people who are non-unionized," said Kellow.

"The Grawood Society does not exist to cover the needs of Grawood employees or Corner Pocket employees — it's a social club. There is no clear definition between SUPSA employees and Grawood employees as to jobs. If anything, our guys work in the kitchen — 85 degrees in there most days — for the same wage [as Enquiry desk employees] and [SUPSA members] are telling me that people upstairs deserve to earn more than [Grawood and Corner Pocket] people. It's so insulting."

CUPE represents the interests of student employees in 16 universi-

ties and colleges across Canada.

Len Bush is president of CUPE local 1281, responsible for sub-locals in the student associations of Carleton University, Ryerson Polytechnic and three associations at the University of Toronto. He recognizes the need for students to protect their jobs from student government, particularly in this economic climate.

"Whereas in the past a job for a student association was something that people did as extra money to go out on Thursday night — people really need that [money] now," said Bush.

"Working for students can be hell. People who have very little experience themselves, little to no management training...can be very bad employers. A lot of arbitrary decisions get made, a lot of rights that people do have are not enforced."

CUPE membership allows union members to negotiate the terms of their employment — a collective agreement — with their employer using CUPE's resources.

"With a student organization where there's a high turnover in the employer...[a collective agreement] really helps working conditions," said Cathy Remus, a research officer in CUPE's national office.

While the counting of the votes is on hold to determine which votes count, Younger is pleased with the process.

"Our best guess is [the yes vote] is almost a sure thing. It looks as though even if [the Grawood and Corner Pocket votes] are counted it's still a yes. Even if they all voted no, the percentages are there," said Younger.

It's the process more than the outcome that bothers Kellow.

"If the union vote was held fairly, and conducted properly, if there wasn't this pattern of deception then I would accept the results and never mention another word about it," Kellow said.

## Funding

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allocated for rural university travel expenses, salaries of faculty, enrolment and various other costs.

"What we're trying to do is offer some predictability," said Wetmore.

Mount Saint Vincent loses money not only because of their primarily undergraduate programs, but also because there is dispute over how to evaluate who is considered a student. The university is penalized because over 60 per cent of its population are part-time students. Part-time students are not considered as using the same amount of services as full-time students. Sheila Brown believes "a student is a student is a student."

Brown also expressed concern that this proposal is the only option.

"I would have much preferred to see three or four scenarios," she said. "I find it very difficult to access (the council's proposal) when we're given one scenario and people get the impression that this is it. This is not it."

Dalhousie University could also be hurt by the council's proposal. Three to four per cent of the Dal budget would be lost, amounting to a cut of about \$2.9 million. The University of King's College and the Nova Scotia College of Art and

Design would see big increases of 14.1 and 17.2 per cent respectively. Saint Francis Xavier and the Technical University of Nova Scotia would also see modest increases in their budgets.

"Everybody agrees we're on the right track (by proposing a funding formula), so let's just start to fine tune it," said Wetmore of the reaction at other Universities.

The Council has stated that this is only the beginning of their process. They will listen to the concerns of the Nova Scotia institutions to make the plan more feasible.

"There's only really one thing that I can guarantee in this whole funding formula: that the numbers are going to change," said Wetmore.

Brown urged the Mount community to express their opinions to the NSCHE.

"I want to stress that it is a scenario and we have the opportunity to share with the council our views on that. I have already assured them that we will be sharing our views," said Brown.

The Mount community plans to express its views with the help of a student lobbying group, planned letter writing campaigns to MLAs and MPs, public forums on the proposal hosted by the Mount and input from various campus groups. A public forum will be held on March 25th for students to express their views.