

International Women's Day: A look back

BY DANIEL CLARK

Friday, March 8 is International Women's Day, and millions of women around the world will be marching, celebrating, and remembering.

"In New York on March 8, 1907, a long cortege of war-ravaged, widowed and poverty-stricken women garment workers carried picket signs demanding improved working conditions and the recognition of equal rights for women," reports the Feminist Dictionary under the heading of International Women's Day (Pg. 212).

These women, when they approached the richer districts, were trampled and dispersed by police. Many were arrested. The Dictionary continues that a year later, to the day, another group of protesting women were met by police. Two years later, International Women's Day was officially born, states the Dictionary. "In 1910, Clara Zetkin, a German Socialist leader, placed a resolution before the Second International."

International Women's Day also remembers the fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company on March 25, 1911. In a paper pro-

vided by Dr. Shirley Tillotson, a history professor at Dal, it is explained how 146 women died in a fire which broke out in the lofts of the Asch building near Washington Square, in New York, where the company was housed.

The fire occurred one year after the resolution of a 90-day garment strike organized by the Women's Trade Union League. The strikers had protested, along with many other items, the appalling safety conditions in which the employees worked. The Triangle Company never improved the conditions, and a year later the

employees were caught between bails of burning clothes and building. They were unable to escape because all the inter-floor doors were locked to prevent the employees from stealing. There were no sprinklers and no fire escapes. Several women were killed trying to jump from the building's windows.

Russia has always been a strong celebrator of the International Women's Day. It has been speculated that the first 1917 revolution in Russia, which started on March 8, was sparked by a group of women who marched to protest a shortage of food.

"They may have been aware that this was International Women's Day, too," said Dr. Norman Pereira, history professor and Chair of the Russian Studies department.

The March 8 revolution removed the czarist regime from power.

"They were not demonstrating to overthrow the Czar; that grew out of the four or five days of escalation, and the soldiers sent in to restore order mutinied," said Dr. Pereira.

In October of 1917, the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, seized power in the famous October revolution, and turned Russia over to communism, which was only made possible by the removal of the Czar.

The day did not receive widespread celebration until the late 1960s when feminists assumed it. Dr. Tillotson asserts that the first International Women's Day recorded to have been celebrated in Canada was in Toronto in 1978.

The Dalhousie Women's Centre (founded in 1981) is organizing this year's event. This year's International Women's Day will be marked by the International Women's Day Variety Show, an event designed to promote women's music. Heather Gibson, Program Coordinator for the Women's Centre, promises that, unlike 1917, "This is the most fun thing we do all year. Less politics, more fun."

"There are going to be different events around Halifax that night, and again there will be different things all across the country, but here most events are focused around Dal because we have the largest student body," said Kelly Redmond, Women's Centre Volunteer Coordinator and Office Manager.

The Women's Centre is expecting about 350 people for Friday's show.

"There's this thing on at the Mount, and we usually get the same people," said Gibson. "Last year we had about 550."

Tickets are still available for the show at the Dalhousie Women's Centre; all proceeds go to charity.



GAZETTE PHOTO BY DANIELLE BOUDREAU

Candidates line up for questioning in the Green Room yesterday.

The race is on

BY THOSE GAZETTE STAFF WHO
AREN'T RUNNING IN THE
ELECTIONS

The campaign period for the Dalhousie Student Union General Elections is underway.

According to Chief Returning Officer, Andy Doyle, student interest in the elections has been highest at the residence forums. The turn-outs for the forums at the Student Union Building and the Tupper were "pretty meek," said Doyle.

Doyle also noted that the Elections Committee has taken additional steps to ensure that students are informed about the elections this year.

"...we've done a mail-out to all Dalhousie students — an informational pamphlet about elections and referenda questions as well as polling stations and their hours of operations," he said. "As well, over the past year, we've been publicising elections electronically. As far as I understand, these things have not been done in the past."

Last year, the DSU's General

Elections were overturned due to the fact that they were deemed inaccessible for students with disabilities. This year, the Elections Committee has taken steps to ensure that the elections are accessible.

"In consultation with the CNIB [Canadian National Institute of the Blind], the student accessibility fund, and the Dalhousie/King's Students Association of Students with Disabilities, for this year's general elections we've implemented the use of a brail template to allow blind voters an opportunity to vote without a reader," said Doyle. "We have sign language interpreters available upon request at any of our forums, and one quarter of our ballots are large print ballots which may be used by students with visual impairments."

Doyle and the rest of the Elections Committee are hoping to be able to draw a larger number of students to make their mark on the ballots than in previous years. He said he and the elections committee are hoping that the additional publicity they have attempted to generate will bring out at least 3,000 students to vote in the election period running from March 11-13.

Watts attackers sentenced

BY GAZETTE STAFF

The six men convicted of aggravated assault in the beating of Darren Watts received sentences of up to 10 years on Friday, March 1.

Stacy Skinner, age 21, and Herman McQuaid, age 22, were handed 10-year sentences. They were given eight years for aggravated assault on Watts, and another two years for aggravated assault on Phi Kappa Pi fraternity brother John Charman.

Cyril Smith, age 21, also got 10 years — eight years for aggravated assault on Watts, and another two years for aggravated assault on fraternity brother Rob Gillis.

Damon Cole, age 21, received a combined sentence totalling eight years — six years for aggravated assault on Watts, and two years for aggravated assault on Gillis.

Guy Robart, age 25, received eight years for aggravated assault on Watts.

Spencer Dixon, age 19, received a reduced sentence of seven years for aggravated assault on Watts. He was credited for time already served.

The maximum sentence for the crime of aggravated assault is 14 years.

Danny Clayton received immunity from prosecution in return for his testimony on behalf of the crown. He was the only witness to identify all six attackers as those who had assaulted Watts.

An eighth male still faces charges in connection with the attack. On September 11, 1994 Darren Watts became a victim of violence when he went to the aid of a girl who was being dragged down the stairs of the fraternity during a party. He was quickly surrounded by eight men and beaten to the ground, where he was continually kicked. Watts fell into a coma for two weeks and suffered permanent brain damage from the incident.

Watts is reportedly considering filing a civil suit.