

# Walden 3 conference on future builds on ideas from the past

Sheree-Lee Olson

Professor Peter Keehn of Atkinson College, has a novel name for unemployment; he calls it 'leisure.' This may be an unusual point of view, but it's just the sort of thing Keehn expects will be explored during this weekend's conference, which will feature speakers from universities in the U.S.A., Scotland and Lebanon, as well as several from Atkinson College, had its origin in what Keehn calls his "concern with progression." He explains: "Walden was to do with the person, Walden II was to do with society and Walden 3 has to do with the relations between societies."

That people are worried about the future is obvious, says Keehn: "Look at the peace movement." And although we live with the threat of mass extinction, the idea for Walden 3 didn't originate specifically with concerns about nuclear war.

Henry David Thoreau's Walden was a personal testament, in which the author argued that reducing the demand for goods would reverse the cycle of need. Accepting those demands, B.F. Skinner's Walden 11 put forward a utopian blueprint that provided fulfillment at minimum cost and a maximum of leisure for all. Like most Utopias it was a closed community and its external relations were problematic. Walden 3 represents a progression, embodying the concerns and recognizing the solutions of its predecessors.

"Walden 3 is basically about two separate things--about the state of affairs within a community and about the interface between communities." The community Keehn has in mind is Canada. On one hand we have the unemployment problem; yet we are "not so badly off." In fact, "there's a sense in which we're living in Walden 3 now...The whole objective of Western society has been to get people to work less. We've got our needs fulfilled." So why not see the surplus of labour as an achievement rather than a failure?

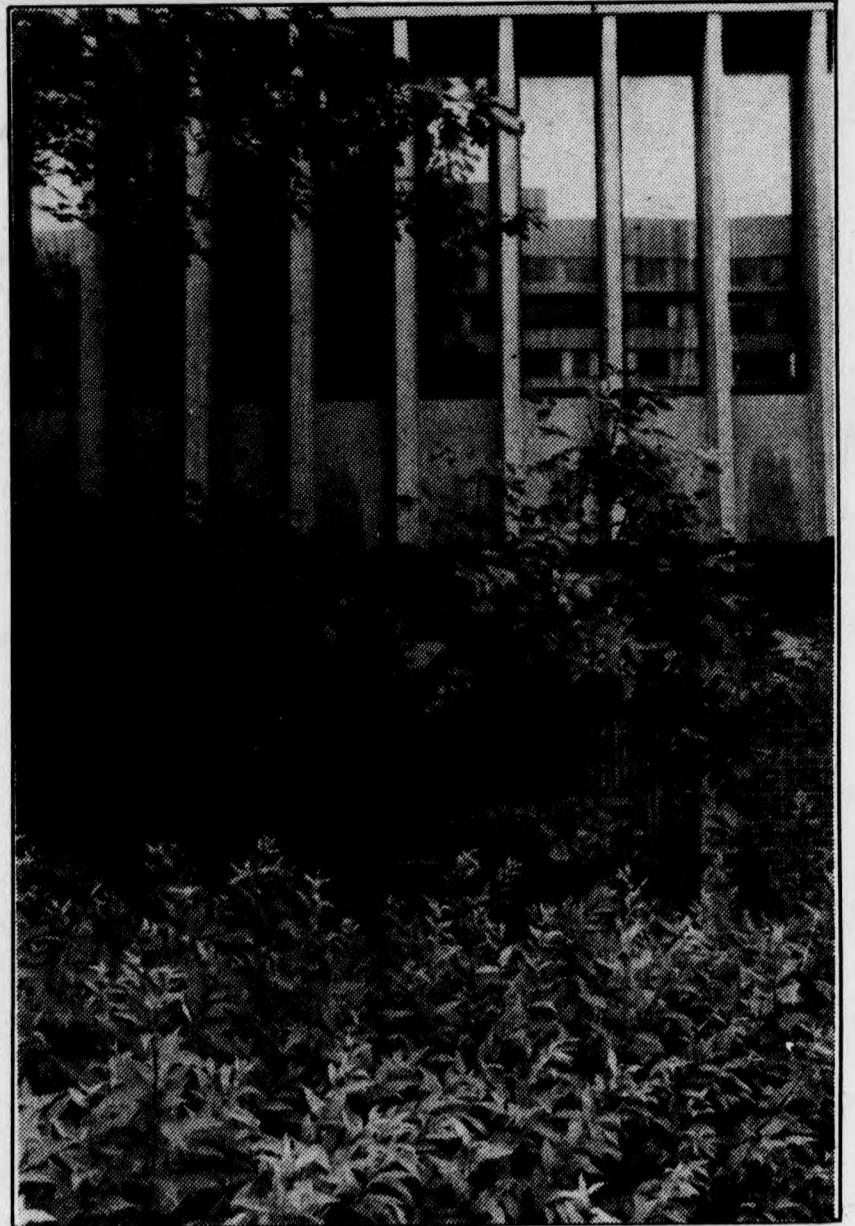
It's a question of values Keehn believes, "What we have to do is reduce greed, reduce demand for more and more things, that's a problem psychologically we haven't solved." Keehn works with rats in the Behavioural Sciences Building, "the greediest things you ever saw." But as rational animals it's within our grasp to eliminate greed; that's where Thoreau's solution comes in. "I don't want to take a cut in pay and you don't want to take a cut in pay and we're against each other," says Keehn.

Once people change their attitudes, we could begin to "educate for leisure...show us how to structure our lives without someone there telling us."

As originator and co-ordinator of the conference, Keehn will only make opening remarks. Keehn says the speakers know basically where

he stands, but he'll "be surprised as anyone as to what they come out and say." That's because "nothing in this conference is predetermined." Rather it's a question of opening up "the kinds of possibilities, the sorts of things where one might look." Among the speakers will be Professor Prothro from the American University in Beirut, who will talk about *Paradise Lost* and Professor Segal of San Diego University who will report on an actual Walden 11 in Mexico. Historians, psychologists, political scientists and professors of English will speak, but "one thing missing from the conference, and this is deliberate, is an economist. Because obviously an economist is going to say 'you can't do this and that'. And of course that's not really the issue." Keehn says the issue is not whether it's economically viable to continue to pay the ten men who've been replaced by a machine, but whether it's a good idea. "There's no real reason why they shouldn't be paid just as they have always been paid."

Keehn wants people to know that the final segment, on Saturday afternoon, has been left open for audience participation. "Here is a large body of university educated people, the intelligentsia, the people who are responsible for the future of Canada." Keehn has made his point. "People think utopias are way out of reality. Utopia's aren't way out of reality at all."



Thoreau would have appreciated the leafy environment chosen for this weekend's Walden 3 conference at Atkinson College.

## "Men feel threatened by it"

# Awareness Week reignites filmic controversy

Barb Taylor

The reaction of a York audience of 500 men and women to a showing of the controversial film, *Not a Love Story*, ranged from silence to laughter. The movie was screened on October 1st as part of the Women's Awareness Programme.

Sometimes lauded for its attempts to denounce pornography, the movie has also been criticized for what detractors see as its narrow analysis of pornography; it has been said that the film only contributes shock value to the discussion.

Responding to these charges, Karen Pearlston, a member of the panel discussion and Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), said, "Many of the worst clips of violent scenes were taken from the film during editing." Another audience member pointed out, "There are actually snuff movies that film the real killing and mutilation of women which is much worse than what we saw here." Thelma McCormack, panelist and Chairperson of the Atkinson Sociology Department, had some reservations about the film, but said, "If you had a film of feminists discussing the roots and purpose of pornography, no one would show up."

Visual shots in the film included: a woman's body being put through a meatgrinder (*Hustler* magazine); a woman's breasts bound tightly with rope and her body hung upside down; and a woman sucking the barrel of a gun.

The film also pointed out the following facts and statistics:

- income from pornography has increased from \$5 million to \$5 billion annually in the last 12 years.
- there are 32 pornographic magazines available in stores compared to 8 two years ago.
- \$10 million a week is grossed by pornographic theatres.
- the pornography industry is larger than the film and recording industries combined.

● there are 20,000 peep shows across America (four times the number of McDonalds).

There are some attempts at analyzing this information in the film. Susan Griffen, a feminist writer, says, "pornography is filled with images of silencing women. It's a cultural ritual in which a woman's body is desecrated." The main message is "pornography is violence against women."

Dr. E. Donnerstein, a psychologist, says pornography causes us to be "de-sensitized; when you confront a real situation of a woman being raped, it doesn't mean anything."

Writing in the *Village Voice*, critic Ruby Rich agreed that pornography is a problem in itself, but she goes further: "Not a Love Story alludes to the intersection of pornography and advertising, even illustrates it as points, but never explicates the connections."

"In order to use women to sell products, in order to use pornography to sell genital arousal, there has to be an economic system that makes the use profitable. Pornography is just one product in the big social super market. Without an analysis of consumer culture, our understanding of pornography is pathetically limited, bogged down in the undifferentiated swamp of morality and womenly purity."

McCormack suggests that some of the problems lie with the film itself, "there is constant attention in the film to male consumers. The film treats pornography as a special freaky kind of entertainment." The camera lens follows the women on the screen from a man's point of view: the stripper from the audience, the peep show from the booth where men usually sit.

After the York showing, men's comments included, "I find the concept of women's rage offensive", "I had problems dealing with the fact that the man in the pornography shop is supposed to typify the

average male." and "It's a man hating film." Many men were laughing before and during the show.

McCormack sees this as a typical response; "men feel very threatened by it--they respond with a great deal of hostility." Pearlston also comments, "most of pornographers are men: store owners, pimps, procurers. All men benefit from pornography because of its role in keeping women down." In the film feminist writer Robin Morgan states, "It is our purpose to heighten men's shame--not their guilt--their shame." and she turns to her husband and son for comfort.

According to McCormack the reaction from women is different: "for a lot of young women it has given them some information on pornography for the first time." Another reaction: "women get very angry--they feel they have a trip being laid on them." McCormack says, "pornography makes everything else that women need like equal pay for work of equal value, child care, etc., the more difficult to achieve."

Critics such as Rich have attributed this reaction to the film's subjects, who are exceptional women: Linda Lee Tracy as the stripper who is "converted", Suzie Randall who resembles a madame, and the numerous feminists interviewed in the film. The reaction of the majority of women to everyday violence in their lives is not highlighted.

McCormack also says, "It was always made for a U.S. audience--the tendency for Canadian audiences is to remove it--to see it as a New York problem." Although the National Film Board financed the production of the film, Canadian scenes, including one with McCormack, were removed. The only exceptions were scenes with Margaret Atwood and E. Donnerstein.

The film has been very controversial

The film has been very controversial in Ontario. After one showing at the 1981 Festival of Festivals, the Ontario Censor Board only allowed private screenings, where no admission is charged. A woman, whose invitations to the screening featured clips from the film has been charged with distribution of obscene materials. In the U.S. and in most other provinces, the film goes through regular distribution channels.

Regardless of criticisms, Pearlston still thinks the film has value: "the film functions to get people thinking--it is important to start discussing pornography."

Louise Mahood of the York Women's Centre sees pornography as "a social political problem which is embedded in our history and our institutions. It is the responsibility

of the women's movement to make men and women aware of issues affecting women."

"Women are more affected than men, but men also have to deal with that because they are the aggressors," said Judith Santos of CYSF. "It plays an educational role," said Santos of the film. Santos also puts pornography into the context "women's problems are part of the society's problems." She feels that "rape, violence in the home and pornography are three of the most blatant aspects that violence takes against women."

Both Santos and Mahood felt that it was important to include the various aspects of violence in the Awareness Programme. They are working on upcoming programmes dealing with a variety of other women's issues.

## Undisturbed by inebriation

# The Quiet Hour for frayed nerves

Leala Birnboim

Not everyone thinks Friday nights are for painting the town red. For those who prefer a relaxed atmosphere undisturbed by inebriation, The Quiet Hour at the Argh Coffee Shoppe in MacLaughlin College is an alternative to the usual pub scene.

Initiated near the end of last year by Ameen Keshavjee, a host at the Argh, The Quiet Hour runs from 10 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. every Friday night. Keshavjee, a second year economics student says the idea of The Quiet Hour is "to provide an oasis of calm at the end of the hectic University week. On Quiet Hour evenings, soft music, soft lighting and soft chairs are provided in the 'Romantic Corner' of the non-licensed Argh and the usual array of health and junk-food snacks are available.

Keshavjee has received backing for The Quiet Hour from the two managers of the Argh, the shop's revenue increases on those Friday

nights when The Quiet Hour take place. Keshavjee attributes The Quiet Hour's success to "good music, nice people and a pleasant ambiance."

## NEXT WEEK IN EXCALIBUR

■ Why the Sexual Harassment Centre still hasn't opened.

■ Excal interviews Murray McLaughlan

Please note that Laurie Kruk's bi-line was omitted from her review of Professor Summerhayes' book, *Winter Apples. Apologies to one and all.*