

Women's faculty can still use improvements

by Geoff Martin

Discrimination against women is a perennial problem on North American campuses, and Dalhousie is no exception. However, Dal's Senate has taken action to correct this problem. While some applaud, others question its ultimate effectiveness.

In January 1979, the "Committee on the Status of Women at Dalhousie" issued a study on the extent of wage discrimination against women in the faculty. The committee, chaired by Sociology professor Virginia Miller, concluded that even when differing experience and education were taken into account, women were making less money than men with the same qualifications and experience. Using "regression analysis", the study determined that salaries were not dependent solely on academic functions. For example, married men on average received more money than single men, while married women on average received less money than single women, other things being equal.

Since the report was published, four years ago, there have been important developments. The creation of the Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) has served to undermine the arbitrary differences in faculty salaries. In addition, The Dalhousie Women's Faculty Organization (DWFO), and the "President's Committee on the Employment of Women, Handicapped Persons and Members of Minority Groups" have been actively working in this area.

Professor Judith Fingard, History Department chair and DWFO vice-president, says while conditions have improved for women in the faculty, especially in terms of salary, there is still a need for hiring more women. "There are now more women in teaching and administrative positions and relative salaries have improved," she said. She suggested the DFA has been helpful to

women academics at Dalhousie because career evaluations under the first collective agreement standardized salaries for both men and women. To remedy the imbalance of men and women in the faculty, affirmative action has been suggested.

Affirmative action is the controversial subject now being discussed in the Dalhousie community. Affirmative Action, or AA, is a deliberate structural approach to improving employment opportunities for minority groups and women, often supervised by an Affirmative Action Officer.

In January 1982, the President's Committee on the Employment of Women, Handicapped Persons, and Members of Minority Groups, otherwise known as the "President's Advisory Committee", delivered the first of three reports to the President outlining actions which should be taken to remedy discrimination against women and minority groups in the University.

Made up of representatives of the administration, senate and the DFA, the committee's first report recommended an administrative official be appointed or hired to act as Employment Officer. The report suggested the university adopt a policy designed to provide women with increased opportunities.

This officer would be responsible to the President and would supervise the hiring activities of departments to see that women (specifically) are not being discriminated against. The report also proposed the university adopt a policy of hiring women when a male and female of equal ability applied for a position, until an equal number of men and women were in each faculty.

On December 20, 1982, ten months after the President received the report, a motion was made in Senate to adopt a modified

affirmative action program. Norman Horrocks, administrative rep and committee chair, says that after circulating the report, the President and Deans felt the Deans could be relied upon to enforce the new university policy of affirmative action.

"There is no evidence of systematic discrimination in the hiring process, but there is a systematic, or institutionalized, discrimination which is inherent. An example is the fact that women often leave the profession during childbearing years, and this lessens their chances of being hired later," he said.

Horrocks said he has received assurances from the administration that the report's recommendations would lead to an excessive amount of work that is not necessary to accomplish the goal. "We accepted the idea that the President will make an annual report on the state of hiring in the faculty," he said.

Horrocks also said he believes the Senate will take further action in the future if these problems continue. "Besides, President MacKay chairs the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, and he does care very much about this issue," he concluded.

Horrocks' optimism about the effectiveness of the Senate motion was not fully shared by all the members of his committee. Professor Clare Beckton of the Dalhousie Law School, representative for Senate on the committee, appreciated the adoption of the affirmative action principle, but termed the suggested method of enforcement as "a laugh, because the Dean is sometimes part of the hiring committee". Therefore, the administration is in essence asking the Deans to police themselves.

The third report the committee is occupied with deals with employment of women in the university's non-academic areas. "We are starting with the idea that there should be

equal pay for work of equal value," said Horrocks.

The Dalhousie Women's Faculty Organization (DWFO) is also very active in women's issues here at Dalhousie. Vice president Judith Fingard says "part of the DWFO's job is to act as a 'watch dog' on the Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA)". She says the DFA has generally been receptive to women's issues on the Dalhousie campus.

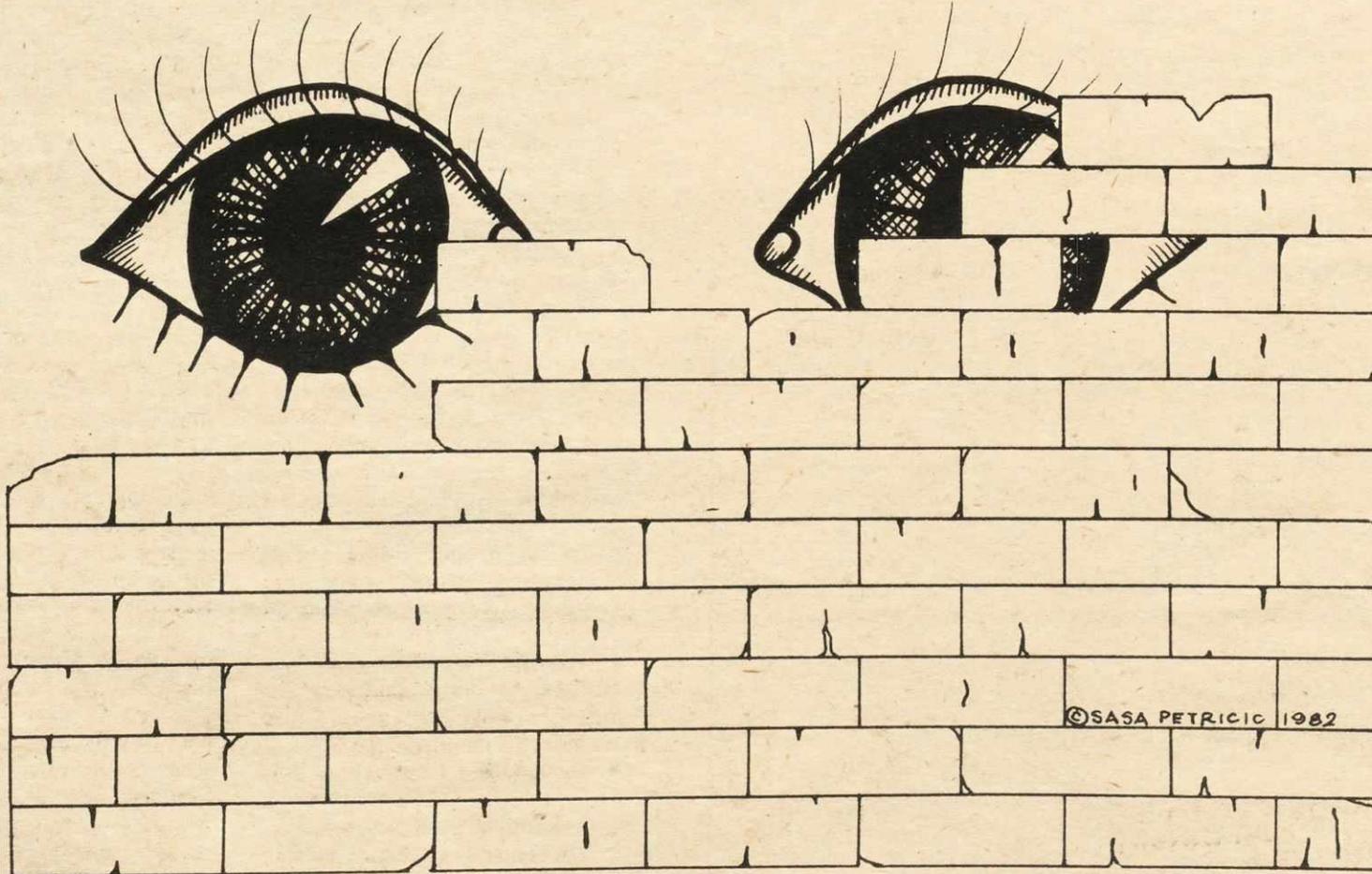
Two issues important to all women here at Dal, including faculty, are sexual harassment and sexual assault. Sexual harassment concerns interpersonal relations on the job or in the classroom in which a person (almost always a man) in a position of power coerces another person under the threat of occupational or academic punishment. Sexual assault is an overtly violent act. They both happen here at Dalhousie.

The DWFO has also been active in the recent contract negotiations between the DFA and the Board of Governors. Law professor and DWFO president Christine Boyle sat on the DFA negotiating team during the negotiations. "One of the victories achieved during this negotiation was the agreement that "part-timers" (part-time faculty) are now eligible for tenure unless they sign a limited term contract," she said.

Previously, part-timers had no job security and could be hired and dismissed at the will of the faculties, depending on demand. In economic lingo, part-timers are in the "secondary market". Part-timers are also primarily female.

"We are all very pleased (with the new Collective Agreement)," Boyle says. "It shows that this university is a progressive employer that is not prepared to allow women to wallow in the ghetto of secondary employment and job discrimination," she said.

He had to make a statement. He had to throw a brick.



THE BRICK

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