

Rape laws-rape victims?

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MONTREAL (CUP) — Women are still the property of men under Canada's rape laws according to McGill University law professor R. Gray.

Speaking at a rape symposium held at McGill Oct. 15-17 Gray said this aspect of the law is evident "in the legal definition of rape which is a male person having forced sexual intercourse with a woman who is not his wife."

But there have been some recent improvements to rape legislation, according to Gray.

He cited as an example a recent change allowing a rape victim's testimony to be considered as evidence by the jury, whether or not the evidence is corroborated by another source.

Joanie Vance, National Assistant of Rape Crisis Centres of Canada, noted that under revised legislation, the rape victim's sexual history can no longer be routinely entered as evidence.

The rationale behind the old law was, "When she said 'yes' once,

she lost the right ever to say no again", said Vance.

Such testimony can only be allowed now if the defense attorney can show sufficient cause in a hearing before the judge, she said.

Other problems still exist said Vance, one of them being the stiff penalties for rape offences. All aspects of rape laws should be brought into line with the laws covering common assault, she said, noting that a rape conviction can result in life imprisonment while common assault only carries a two year sentence.

FUNDING FOR RAPE VICTIMS

OTTAWA -- A resolution that Government funding for rehabilitation and treatment of rape victims be made available was endorsed here at the joint meeting of status of women council.

Kathryn Logan, co-ordinator status of women--Nova Scotia, said in Ottawa that rape treatment in Canada is now done largely by volunteer groups.

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