

# Rape crisis centre for Halifax?

by Bobby Morrison

Halifax has been without a Rape Crisis Centre since 1978, but if Dr. K.E. Renner, a professor of psychology at Dalhousie, and the students in his Community Psychology course have anything to say about it, it soon will have one.

Susan McIntyre, Women's Committee Chairperson on Student Council, said the current rape relief situation in Halifax looks very dismal. She added that when Halifax is compared with other Canadian cities of comparable size and population, it stands alone in being without such a facility.

Dr. Renner agreed, saying the need for such counselling in the city has reached epic proportions. His estimate places the number of rapes in Halifax at 300 per year. Of these only 10 per cent are reported. He said this reflects the "real need" for a 24-hour counselling service for victims.

"At the moment there is no one place where people can get all of the information they might

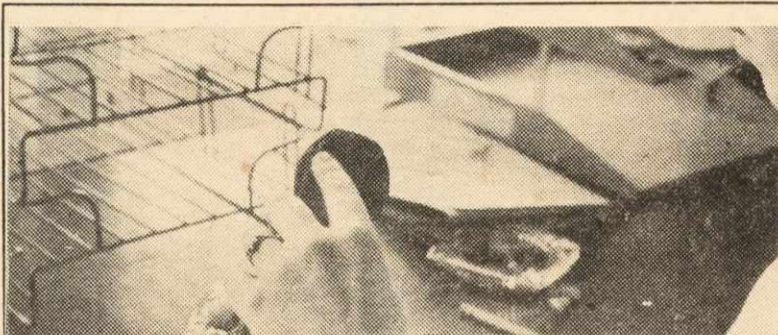
require," said Brenda Rothwell, a student in the class. While Dr. Renner recognizes the work currently being done by organizations such as Help Line and A Woman's Place as invaluable, he stressed the need for one main center continuously available for rape victims. Present organizations are restricted to specific hours of operation due to limited funds and volunteer staff.

Renner's class has organized the research because the course requires field projects which help to

solve a need in some direct service areas. What the eleven member class has accomplished to date is quite substantial.

"The students are developing resources and background material that would be useful in supporting rape council work by existing agencies, and which would be helpful if some groups were to be able to start a direct rape crisis centre," said Renner.

The students have observed all



Students attempt to set up Centres to receive rape crisis calls

recent rape and sexual assault cases in the Halifax courts. From this they have written material which would prepare a rape victim for her appearance in court. They also have evaluated the effectiveness of the new Criminal Code as it relates to rape.

The class has focused on rape, not only from the viewpoint of the victim, but also from the viewpoint of her husband or boyfriend. It was found that many such males see themselves as also being a victim. What the students have done is to determine what can and should be done in helping such couples cope with any problems caused in their relationship.

Recently students in the class have made themselves available as public speakers for any interested organization. Brenda Rothwell said the demand for such speakers is already overwhelming. She added that any interested groups can now call the University Information Office (at 424-2517) to arrange to

hear such a speaker.

The only real obstacle standing in the way of the establishment of such a center is a lack of funding. Renner said what will most likely be required is a community organization, with access to funding, that will step in and establish the center. He sees government funding for the project as being very unlikely due to recent cutbacks in spending.

He ruled out the possibility of the students in his class attempting to establish such a center on their own. He said it is "too big an undertaking" and impractical since most of the students are transients.

There does, however, seem to be some light at the end of the tunnel for the establishment of a center. The organization Help Line, which now provides telephone service for rape victims, is considering taking on the project. Whether they will be able to do it is totally dependent on receiving a funding grant they have applied for.

## Sexual harrassment, women and work

by Bryan Bedford  
of the Ontario

"Miss Wilson, I see that the air conditioning is making you too cold. I can see your erect nipples through your blouse."

This comment directed at a secretary in a United Auto Workers (UAW) organized office is not an uncommon remark in the workplace. Miss Wilson (a fictitious name) ignored the remark and continued to work until she felt watched. She looked up from her typewriter and found her supervisor - the same who had made the previous comment - leering at her and licking his lips. She promptly left her typewriter and took refuge in

the only place she felt safe - the women's washroom.

The situation is neither funny nor innocent. According to a survey by *Redbook Magazine* in 1976, 88 per cent of the respondents reported sexual harassment of one form or another at least once in their working careers. Four years later, a survey of federal employees in the United States revealed a 42 per cent incidence rate of sexual harassment of the 694,000 women workers. The estimated cost of this harassment was almost \$189 million in a two year period in job turnovers, health insurance plans, absenteeism, and lost productivity.

The reaction of men to the issue

of sexual harassment has been mixed. Many want to ignore the problem and avoid discussing it. Some, particularly the offenders, do not recognize the problem and claim it is only meant in fun. But sexual harassment is not flirtation. Flirtation is based on mutual consent and attraction, but sexual harassment is coercive and is often accompanied by threats.

### Repeated comments

The Ontario Government has defined sexual harassment as "any repeated and unwarranted sexual comments, looks, suggestions or physical contact that a woman

finds objectionable, or offensive, causes her discomfort on the job, undermines her job performance, and threatens her economic livelihood." Sexual harassment violates the Ontario Human Rights Code. Violations can be reported to the Human Rights Commission. But this avenue is inappropriate for students because their "workplace" rarely involves salaries or benefits.

The Sexual Harassment Coalition at the University of Toronto has been attempting to set up grievance procedures for sexual harassment throughout the entire campus.

### Education needed

Education is fundamental to the issue of sexual harassment. This problem is not new, but it has only been recently brought into the open arena of discussion on campuses, at labour conventions, and at bargaining tables. Some men believe women have no role in the workforce despite the fact that over 40% of working women are single, divorced or widowed. This makes them either the sole "breadwinners" of a family or self-supporting. It has been suggested that if women were not in the workforce, there would be no sexual harassment. But, to quote Golda Meir, "If men were not allowed on the streets, there would be no rape."

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