

NEWS

What a wet and wild womyn's night out

BY MADELAINE MAIZE

Yellow raincoats, multi-colored umbrellas, the aroma of incense, heart felt speeches and insistent cheers filled the spaces between City Hall and the Town Clock. Grand Parade was chock full of women and children ready to take back the night last Friday.

Despite the rain, hundreds of people came to walk together through the streets of Halifax, to take a stand condemning violence against women.

"It is a symbolic event"

It was the tenth annual Take Back the Night March held in Halifax. It has its roots in a spontaneous event in Europe in which women took to the streets to protest violence against women.

Maureen Meek, a member of the organizing committee of the march explains its purpose. "It's an opportunity for women to come together to talk about violence and demand to walk in the streets safely at night." As a staff member of the Service for Sexual Assault Victims she added, "We wanted to emphasize the extent of women's safety at jeopardy, for the majority of abuse is in the home."

Many women expressed how good it felt to see their peers, clad in fluorescent orange, guiding and controlling the crowd of marchers. The various chants, bellowed at the tops of their lungs, were energizing. "No means no, yes means

yes, wherever we go, however we dress."

However, one woman felt that there was not a lot of support from onlookers. "Many people watched the march, but it seemed to be more out of curiosity than anything. I did not hear any drivers beep their horns in support," she noted. "Then again, maybe, at least, people will want to know the reasons behind the march."

A melodic round was practised in the Grand Parade, then sung in the streets as people gazed from bar windows. "There are women all around the world, trying to be who they want to be. There are women all around the world, trying to set themselves free."

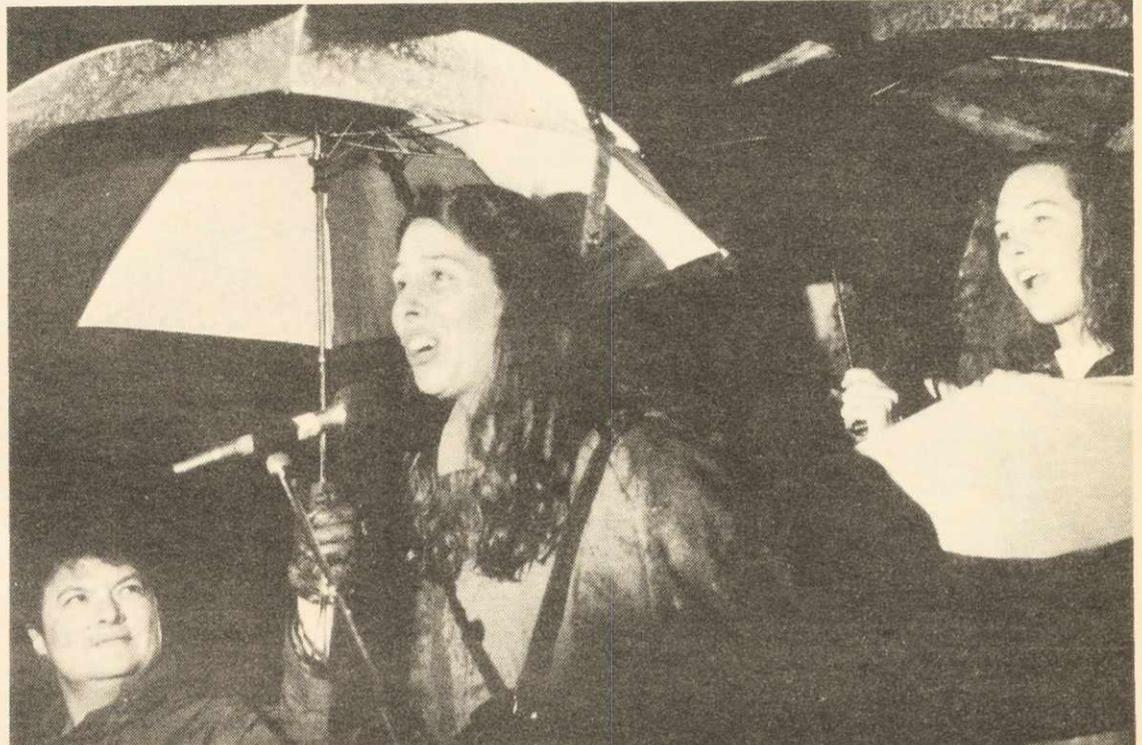
Meek said the "women only" nature of the event was essential to its effectiveness. "The issues are violence against women, safety for women and demanding the right for women to walk safe at night."

"It is a symbolic event, and we want to do it on our own - without the protection or the permission of men."

Some men did not like the idea of not being included.

"A woman got up in class and announced the Take Back the Night March today. She said all women and children are welcome, but 'men, you can cheer us on from the sidelines, but you're not invited to march,'" recounted one law student. "How do you expect men to understand if they are being excluded?"

One student, a member of a local fraternity, expressed that he also felt unsafe walking alone at night. Men are victims of violence, too.



Speaking up downtown.

DAL PHOTO: MARIA PATRIQUIN

Meek counters this. "I do not think that men feel the same way as women do," she pointed out. "I don't mean to minimize the effect of violence affecting men. Many women suffer violence simply because they are women. Men do not suffer violence just because they are men."

The march organizers wanted to address additional concerns of women. For some women, violence is not the major factor in their oppression. For example, women of colour must deal with racism on top of sexism.

Dolly Williams, representing the women of colour of the community, gave a controversial speech asking women to unite, while tell-

ing men to "get your acts together, and stop taking out all your problems on women. Stop making women feel inferior, because in fact, women are superior," she said.

A number of marchers expressed their disagreement with these statements. "We want equality, not superiority."

Many women who did not attend the March felt that it was simply too extreme for them to participate in. "I can't picture myself there, marching, 'taking back the night.' I would not be comfortable," said one female law student. "But maybe next year, if I understand it better, I will be there."

On the other hand, others believed that seemingly drastic measures had to be taken. "It may be

necessary in order to balance the scales that have for so long been tipped so overwhelmingly against women," commented a marcher.

The march ended in the George Dickson Centre on Gottingen St. where participants were greeted by Earthwitch, an all-women's band. Many stayed for the festivities, others dispersed downtown or to the Dalhousie medical school co-ed frat to watch the lip sync contest where the grand finale was a rendition of "Tits and Ass."

One marcher went to the Seahorse where "I used to love her but I had to kill her" was blaring...she decided to go home after complaining, disconcerted by the manager's assertion that everyone else seemed to be enjoying it.

SWEAT group offers Spicey treat at lunch hour

BY MUNJU RAVINDRA

The sounds of stomping feet greeted students walking through the S.U.B. lobby last Wednesday at lunch hour.

The traditional Gumboot dance, as performed by the South African Democratic Students Association (SADESA) was part of a half hour show addressing the issue of Apartheid in South Africa. While they did not have time to show excerpts from their two-hour epic "Umzabalazoo" (Zulu for "struggle"), SADESA members did perform two poems dealing with the South African people's struggle against Apartheid.

The SADESA performance was the first in a series of unconventional lunch hour programs called "The Spicey Commission - A D.S.U. Response to Disunity Everywhere."

The purpose of the Spicey Commission is to demystify high profile, topical issues that have had a

minimum of explanatory news coverage, and to generate awareness of low profile issues. To this end, the noon-hour programs are not in a lecture format. Instead, they are intended to be active, inspirational and entertaining.

societies show interest in lunch hour programs

Like the SADESA performance, further Spicey programs will take place in the S.U.B. Lobby, or in the Green Room, where students who might not otherwise be interested in a particular issue will be exposed to a variety of topical concerns.

The Spicey Commission is a project of SWEAT (Students Working on External Affairs Things), a working group of the office of VP External.

The goals of SWEAT are to develop policy for the DSU on external matters and to develop programs which address external issues on campus. SWEAT plans to deal actively with such student concerns as cuts in student aid, AIDS education and academic racism.

Alex Boston, V.P. External and initiator of the Spicey Commission, says that although every Dalhousie student is a member of both the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) and the Student Union of Nova Scotia (SUNS), students are rarely active contributors to those organizations.

He says, "we have to become proactive and we have to recognize that we have a legitimate right to determine what goes on in our campuses."

SWEAT has been formed to encourage students to become proactive.

Through SWEAT, Dalhousie students can influence both DSU and SUNS policy. For example, one of SWEAT's current projects is a proposal for the DSU policy on Apartheid.

The Spicey Commission is the public education arm of SWEAT. Performances, or "hearings" are scheduled to occur every second and fourth Wednesday of the

"students encouraged to become proactive"

month at noon. However, due to what Boston describes as the "slow process" of democracy, upcoming

presentations of the Spicey Commission are tentative.

A number of different societies have expressed an interest in participating in the lunch hour programs, including Gays and Lesbians at Dalhousie (GLAD), the Dal Christian Fellowship, and the Russian Society. The latter has proposed a visit of MUN professor and Russian folksinger Yvegeny Tejaikov, who was formerly incarcerated in the Soviet Union.

The Campus Environmental Action Group (CEAG) is hoping to show the film "Canada - Amazon of the North," during the second week of October. This highly controversial film has precipitated boycotts of Canadian lumber products in Europe.

Confirmed for October 23 is a performance of rap music, theatre, and dance by the Black Canadian Students Association, designed to address the issue of racism in Canada.