

Ridley puzzled by sudden dismissal

# Visual arts axes administrative assistant

By AGNES KRUCHIO

Jack Dale, lecturer in the visual arts department of the faculty of fine arts, describes the work of Sheila Ridley in the following terms:

"She knew more than anyone else in the department and we all owe our survival to her; she knew the budget inside out, what money was available, she knew about student programmes — everything.

"Everyone always said, when confronted with a problem, 'Talk to Sheila'. When nobody else seemed to care, Sheila did.

"My daughter came home from school one day after Christmas and exclaimed 'Everything is in utter chaos in school!' When I asked her why, she said, 'Because Sheila isn't there'.

"We all had tremendous respect for her," Dale added.

When Sheila Ridley came to work on January 9, she had no idea she was leaving her job.

But by that afternoon, acting chairman of the visual arts department Ken Lochheed had received her resignation, and the 30-year-old administrative assistant (with a University of Toronto M.A. in art history) is now job-hunting in a market where her kind of qualifications find few openings.

"I was told by Ken Lochheed on January 8 that the dean (Joseph Green) wanted to talk to him and myself in two weeks about the nature of my job," said Ridley. "I did not wait out the two weeks, but went to see the dean the following morning. He told me at that time that they wanted to see someone new, with the new chairman coming in July 1, and that I would be given a five and a half month notice.

"It was a long conversation, and about five minutes after I left his office the dean came after me, to ask me how I would handle it. I said I would resign.

UNWARRANTED DISMISSAL

"I resigned because I did not feel that the situation in any way warranted my dismissal, and I did not feel I could stay on under those circumstances."

Ken Lochheed, acting chairman of the visual arts department, was unwilling to comment on the causes of Ridley's departure, since he considered it a "personnel matter", but said "she was very committed".

Lochheed is the latest in a long series of chairmen and acting chairmen in the department, over the past few years.

At the inception of the programme, current associate dean Douglas Morton headed visual arts, to be succeeded in the following year by Luke Rombout, followed in turn by acting chairman David Silcox the next year.

FLEW THE COOP

The most remarkable of the procession was last year's chairman, Edward Fry, who, one day towards the end of the academic year, excused himself momentarily from a conversation with some of his colleagues, donned his coat and hat, got into his car and drove away, never to return. His letter of resignation was postmarked 'New York'.

"I have been through five chairmen in my three and a half year stay here," said Ridley, "and I have changed each year to fill in in whatever manner the new chairman required.

"No one has ever told me that what I was doing was wrong. I was promoted, got a few raises, so I assumed that whatever I was doing was correct. I very often had to fill in for absent or nearly absent chairmen — I seem to have had responsibility, but not authority."

FREQUENT SHIFT

According to faculty of fine arts dean Joseph Green, the very fact that Ridley's job shifted so frequently was a source of stress to her.

Green refused to comment on Ridley's ability to adjust to new chairmen, but said the dismissal was the result of his "feeling that the



C.T. Squassero photo

need of a new chairman would be to come into the department with a sense of uninformed vision".

"Mrs. Ridley has seen four chairmen through with some significant service. I guess it (the dismissal) was carried out to see what it would be like for a new chairman to come in without her help."

"I don't understand what the grand plan is," said Ridley. "It takes at least a year to learn the day-to-day operation of that job.

"As for a new perspective, the new chairman and his assistant will find out within a few days what they did not know before — that there are problems in the department. There is no way they will not notice that."

TOO MUCH TOO SOON

Ridley said the department was too big and had grown too fast, but

she would not attempt to explain the frequent turnover of chairmen.

"Any such statement would only be theorizing on my part," she said. She conceded, however, that the turnover rate has lowered student morale.

"The department was in better spirits when the programme started. Students are apathetic as a result of the frequent changes.

"There also seems to be a conflict between the academic and the ad-

ministrative aspects of the job." (Ridley filled in as a seminar leader in art history during the last academic year, and is listed as a lecturer in the calendar.)

"Obviously something is wrong in the department," agreed Green, "and I think it's largely a structural problem and partly a curricular problem.

"There are times when it's advisable to change the administrative personnel. A major administrative restructuring will be taking place in the department."

CONFUSION REIGNS

But Chris Gurney, administrative director of the faculty, told Excalibur he didn't "see much change in the (Ridley's) job description".

"I really don't know what's going on," said Ridley. "I was classified as a grade 7 (salary category), and now I see they're advertising the job in the Daily Bulletin as grade 8."

D. J. Mitchell, director of personnel services told Excalibur "there are no 'sufficient cause' categories set up to govern the dismissal of an employee of the university. In general, a sufficient cause for dismissal would exist if the agreement between both parties had been violated.

"The relationship is between the chairman and his administrative assistant," Mitchell continued. "If the chairman wanted to take drastic steps, most deans would require that he discuss the assistant's dismissal with him — the ultimate responsibility for all personnel is the dean's."

"My concern is not purely personal," said Ridley early this week. "But there are many other people in similar situations who do not know what surprises await them."

New sex found

Recent American studies in the north-east section of Oregon have uncovered conclusive medical evidence of the existence of a new sex.

"It's uncanny," said Dr. Jessica Barnes, the Minnesota scientist who headed the expedition. "I've never known anything like it."

She or any other person with a hot news tip or a penchant for reporting is asked to contact Excalibur, either in Room 111 Central Square, or by telephone at 667-3201.

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