

Commission report accused of ignoring women

by Sara Singer

A high-profile federal government report on Canadian universities has all but ignored the concerns of women, a feminist group says.

Stuart Smith, head of the Commission of Inquiry on Canadian Universities, concluded in his final report last month that Canadian universities are "fundamentally healthy" and serve the country well.

York student Sheelagh Conway, a founding member of the Caravan of University Feminists, disagrees.

"From the standpoint of women, particularly marginalized women, the Smith Commission is a failure. All told, Canada's universities are

elite, outdated institutions, sullied by sexism, racism and classism. And they are certainly not healthy," Conway wrote in *The Globe and Mail* last week.

The Caravan, an organization of women students and faculty, was formed a year ago to address the issue of sexism in Canadian universities in the wake of the University of Montreal massacre.

According to Conway, the Commission's report fails women in two main areas.

"First, male violence against women on campuses is conspicuously ignored. Quite simply, many women fear for their lives on Canadian campuses.

"Second, in treating women as a homogenous

group, the commission fails the vast majority of women who remain either shut out by the university or marginalized within it," Conway wrote.

The Caravan presented a report to the Commission in 1990 addressing the regulation of non-sexist material, sexual harassment on campus, misogynist atmospheres in disciplines such as engineering, and the discrimination faced by women of colour, Native women, lesbians, working-class women and women with physical disabilities.

The Commission chose to focus on funding issues, the accessibility of student loans and curriculum quality, giving minimal attention to the Caravan's recommendations.

Anne Innis Dagg, a Caravan member and a professor at the University of Waterloo, found the Commission's final report more inclusive than a preliminary report which made even less mention of women's issues in Canadian universities.

"I was pleased [Smith] had as much on women as he did this time. But still no one is addressing the fact that the curriculum is male-dominated," Dagg said.

Dagg concluded that more women should be hired as professors — especially considering the number of women doctoral graduates — in order to combat sexist bias in the curriculum. According to Dagg, "that is where the battle should be fought."

New shuttle bus called no substitute for escort vans

by Nancy Grosso

The new campus shuttle bus service may not be as safe or efficient as the escort system it replaced, a student government representative has charged.

"York had the best escort service on any Ontario campus and that's what is being compromised," said Nikki Gershbnain, internal vice president of the York Federation of Students.

But Tom Arnold, coordinator of student security and parking services, argued that the changes will improve the system. "(The system) is being revamped to make it safer and easily accessible for all students," he said.

According to Arnold, the new routes serviced by 3 vans will pick up patrons at designated points with a guaranteed wait of 15 minutes or less.

Individual foot and bicycle escorts will be available on a "call-in" basis for destinations not covered by the shuttle.

"The shuttle service is inconvenient for students who used the security escort service on a regular basis," said York Arts student Vanessa Boudreau, who said she was a regular user of the old escort system.

"It (the new system) takes away from the little safety we have," she added.

Sharon Chimming, advisor for the Sexual Harassment Education and Complaint Centre (SHEACC), said

she has received a number of calls from concerned women students who were unaware of the changes to the escort system.

SHEACC will be organizing a meeting between a number of women's groups on campus to discuss the issue, said Chimming.

According to Arnold, the escort service was originally designed to serve users of the parking lots and this was not taking place.

The new shuttle service was developed "because people in the parking service were not using the escort."

Arnold denies he was under pressure by the administration to make changes to the service as a budget-cutting move.

"No pressure was on me to streamline or to save money on the escort service. The only pressure is that \$7.00 per escort is not cost efficient and that can't be tolerated," said Arnold.

According to Arnold, by reducing the \$7.00 cost per escort to \$3.50 per ride for the shuttle bus, student security will be able to double the ridership and ensure more value for the money spent.

But Gershbnain said the service is no substitute for the shuttle system.

"The way to improve the problem is not to dilute the system we had in place. What we have to do is let people know that the escort system exists. Advertise it, improve lighting on campus and make the campus a safer place to be in general."

Caters to students, part-timers

Unique childcare celebrates opening

by Maggie Borch

An innovative new on-campus childcare centre is celebrating its opening this week, after more than four years of planning.

The Student Centre Childcare Centre caters to the needs of students and part-time faculty by offering more accessible, flexible and affordable daycare than other centres.

Founded by the Canadian Union of Education Workers, the SCCC is an alternative to the York Cooperative Daycare Centre on Moon Road, which provides full-time childcare.

According to Denise Brand, Program Coordinator for the SCCC, many students put their children into full-time daycare even though they only need part-time.

Students or faculty who only have classes for a few hours a day or evening courses are often left without any option but to put their children in a more expensive full-time program.

"The whole system is lacking," said Brand, "but you can never satisfy everyone."

The SCCC is a pilot program initiated to find a permanent solution for part-time users by taking into account student and faculty schedules and the high

costs of full-time daycare.

Traditional daycare schedules typically run from 8:00 in the morning to 6:00 in the evening and cost from \$550 to \$925 a month.

According to Brand, the SCCC has split its hours into three blocks from 8:30am to 12:30am, 1:30pm to 5:30pm and 6:00pm to 10:00pm. The blocks cost \$15 each, plus \$4 for the evening hours. Each member is guaranteed five blocks a week for the \$15 annual membership fee.

Unlike the Co-operative Daycare, the SCCC is not government subsidized or financially supported by the university. "It would have been nice to have more support from the university," said Brand.

Most of the SCCC's support has come from the Canadian Union of Educational Workers (CUEW), which represents teaching assistants and part time faculty.

CUEW included childcare in their contract negotiations and formed the Student Care Childcare Committee in the summer of 1987.

The union won \$22,000 in research and startup funds from the university in November, 1987 — just as plans were being drafted for the Student Centre.

The SCCC committee worked with the newly-formed Student Centre Corporation and eventually designed a 3,000-square foot space on the second floor of the Student Centre.

The York community is also served by a second childcare centre, the York University Cooperative Daycare. The two facilities aren't competitive but instead help two distinct groups, Brand said.

The Co-operative Daycare Centre offers full-time care from 8:00am to 5:30pm with special programs in art, music and French. The monthly fees range from \$740 to \$582 but subsidy is available through the government.

"We recognize the importance of the other daycare [SCCC] to address the needs of evening students," said Judy Mdikle, coordinator of the cooperative centre. "We will address other needs if changes in funding occurs"

Brand said the SCCC could be improved. Ideally, it would ensure that no child would spend over six hours at the centre, it would accommodate more children and would guarantee consistent service

"It is a model but (it is) not yet perfect" said Brand.

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