

# Women speak out against violence

By Kim Llewellyn

Last Thursday's noon hour bearpit brought out an enthusiastic crowd to hear representatives from various women's groups in Toronto speak on violence to women.

Self defense instructor, Judy Abrams, and Mimi Meckler of the York Women's Centre, soon had the halls of Central Square filled

kind in North America.

The stereotyped image of the wife beater is an alcoholic from the lower economic groups of society. But statistics reflect wife beaters are from the entire range of society," she said.

The average woman at Interval House is 28 years old, has been married six years and has two children.

- The victim is continually changing her mind about pressing charges;

- Domestic relationships are so intense, charges laid by the police only enrage the offender.

"Society has the idea that rape doesn't happen to nice girls. That attitude is deeply ingrained in society," said the fifth speaker, Mary Ruth Morton of the Rape

fascist pieces of hanky panky I've ever seen." It said, according to Sturnam, only 337 out of 740 reported rapes were prosecuted.

The reason for this, the report concluded was that the attacks were often provoked.

"Provoking included hitchhiking, going out alone at night and even attending picnics," Sturman declared.

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Panel at last week's presentation on violence to women

with chorus of feminine voices chanting "Ke-ais" - a phrase designed to ward off assailants.

After the chants, humanities professor Johanna Stuckey got her chance. She opened the discussion with the observation that man's historical domination over women is related directly to their superior physical strength.

Sociologist Shirley Small then addressed the issue of marital violence.

"The stigma is attached to the woman, not the man," she said. "The feeling of society is that she must have done something to deserve it. She is damned if she leaves home and damned if she doesn't. She must face the trauma of lowering her standard of living if she leaves."

Small cited a series of statistics which indicated women are the victims in family homicides in the vast majority of cases.

"When a man is assaulted by another man, he is not encouraged to make up, to fix tea for him and go to bed with him," she quipped.

Marilyn Wilcoxon from Interval House, a temporary residence downtown for women seeking refuge from marital problems. She said it has been in existence for six years, the oldest organization of its

Our resident has to overcome problems on her own. She makes the decision herself whether to start life again or go back to her husband. Of the ones that go back to their husbands, 39 per cent return to Interval house in a year's time," she noted.

The next speaker, third year criminal law student, Lois Sparling, of the Osgoode Women's Caucus, said assault and rape were the most obvious examples of violence to women.

She criticized the police, listing four reasons they usually give for not pressing charges for domestic assault:

- The marital situation is so complex it is impossible to find out who's at fault;

- The couple has a sado-masochistic relationship;

Crisis Centre. "If you want to be a free person and are not strong, that's your problem."

"We have had more calls than the police. Figure that out. We've been around five years. The police are an institution. The strongest feeling the rape victim has is guilt," she said, adding that women internalize how they are seen—the unwitting seducer.

The final speaker, Susan Sturman is an activist from Women Against Violence Against Women.

"We shouldn't be denied the right to control our own bodies, the freedom to have abortions or be lesbian," she said. "Legislative reforms are important but are not enough. Women must fight back in the streets."

She said a recently published OPP report "is one of the most

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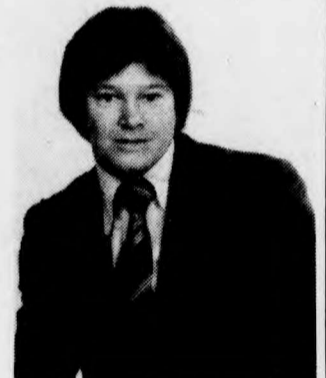
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