

# Procedures to help deal with sexual harassment

By LOIS CORBETT

Saint Mary's Senate has passed a set of procedures that some members of the university community say will help deal with cases of sexual harassment.

The procedures, passed at the Senate's December meeting, call on the university president to appoint a half-time sexual harassment advisor and include what sexual harassment committee chair Harold McGee calls a "very good way of dealing with the problem."

"It's a very good document. Its success will hinge on how it resolves actual cases," says McGee.

If SMU president Kenneth Ozmon agrees to the committee's proposal, the sexual harassment advisor will be a woman with experience and/or education in personal counselling.

The committee also requests that a male faculty member be designated as an alternate to the advisor.

McGee met with Ozmon on Monday and says their discussion went "very well." He says the president is also moving to set up the sexual harassment hearing committee called by the new

procedures. "In a month or two, everything should be set up," he says.

The procedures include what some critics have called a broad definition of sexual harassment, and McGee, an anthropology professor at Saint Mary's, agrees.

"When we started, we decided we wanted something that would not be so narrowly defined as to exclude incidents of harassment or so broad as to be meaningless. We think we came up with a meaningful definition, one that is workable."

The procedures define sexual harassment as "unwanted and unsolicited sexual attention of a persistent or abusive nature, made by a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwanted." Implied or express promise of reward for complying with a sexually oriented request or implied or expressed threat of reprisal, in the form of either actual reprisal or the denial of opportunity, for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request is also defined as sexual harassment.

The definition adopted in the procedures also states that "sexually oriented remarks and behavior which may reasonably be

perceived to create a negative psychological and emotional environment for work and study" is sexual harassment.

McGee says the purpose of the procedures is to ensure that members of the university community do not face problems that could interfere with their educational activities and goals.

"The idea of equal access to education for women and men is important. There should be no discrimination on the basis of sex. The underlying question has to be the educational and scholarly goals of the institution, and what kind of atmosphere is necessary to support those goals. Anything that interferes with that pursuit, if it has a sexual basis, is less than acceptable," he says.

Sexual harassment procedures have been adopted at a number of Canadian and American universities in the past ten years, and the Saint Mary's committee relied heavily on their definitions and experience during the two years it took to prepare procedures for SMU. The committee also collected information from federal and provincial human rights commissions.

The president of the Saint Mary's student association, Mark

Bower, says sexual harassment procedures have been "something we've been pushing for the last couple years. Finally the university has done something

Bower says SMUSA has received a "small number of complaints" about sexual harassment in the past, and always from students.

"We've tried to act as an intermediary, and have tried to point the complaints in the right direction. We try to get something going on the students' behalf," says Bower.

McGee says sexual harassment traditionally takes the form of a senior male harassing a junior female, but he hopes the new procedures will deal with all forms of the problem.

"No established power relationships should be used exploitatively, whether it's student-teacher or employee-employer," he says.

While the committee suggests the president hire an advisor with

counselling experience the procedures are designed so that it is not the victim of sexual harassment who has to make adjustments.

"It should be understood that these procedures are designed to protect the victim," says McGee.

The sexual harassment committee that drew up the definition and procedures included administration representatives, staff and faculty union members and a student.

"The unions are concerned with creating a safe environment for their members, so they see this as something to their advantage," says McGee.

A number of universities have used sexual harassment procedures randomly, he adds, to get rid of faculty they don't like.

"So the union wanted to make sure we came up with something that has equitable procedures, to protect members from unfair, or inconsistent application of the procedures."

# Taskforce hearing out of students

By TOBY SANGER

After five months in planning, the Students Union of Nova Scotia's taskforce on student aid is finally going to the students.

This Thursday — February 12 — taskforce members will hold an open hearing for students and others at Dalhousie before visiting other universities in the province to hold similar hearings.

Jamie MacMullin, chair of the taskforce, says the group wants to hear complaints and suggestions from students about the student aid system in Nova Scotia. They have a broad mandate, explains MacMullin, and will welcome any comments — from individual complaints about how students are being treated to wide-ranging

proposals on restructuring the whole system.

The 11 member organizations of SUNS have split up research work into the student aid system so every aspect can be examined. The Dalhousie Student Union has taken responsibility for analyzing the financial need formula and is circulating a questionnaire to collect information.

MacMullin says SUNS has made student aid a priority this year because of problems with the present system and because university administrators will not take responsibility for it. "If we don't take responsibility for it, nobody else will," he claims.

The final report is expected to be completed by mid-March for presentation to the provincial government.

MacMullin is hopeful some of their recommendations will be implemented in coming years, although he concedes it will be presented too late to result in changes to the system this year. If the suggestions are not adopted, MacMullin says the exercise will still have been useful as SUNS will have the report as a resource document.

SUNS members say they don't have any significant proposals they personally wish to present, but SUNS chair Barney Savage says: "I hope we'll come up with some bright new ideas, but that depends entirely on the quality of the submissions received."

Hearings at Dalhousie will be held between 1:30 pm and 4:30 pm February 12 in room 224/226 of the Student Union Building.

# Bye bye Savage

Following last week's story in the *Gazette*, former student union vice-president Reza Rizvi informed the paper that DSU community affairs co-ordinator Barney Savage is no longer employed by his firm which was awarded a cheap rent deal for space in the student union building.

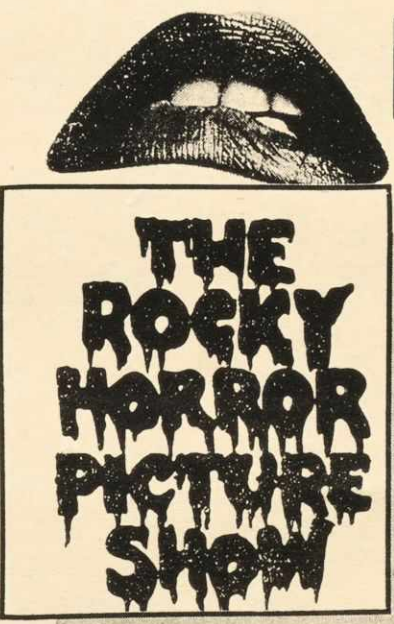
Rizvi and student union officials denied allegations there had been any conflict of interest either in offering Rizvi the office space for his typing service (with two

months rent-free) or in the hiring of Savage, who also wields considerable influence as chair of the Students' Union of Nova Scotia.

Savage lent some credence to the charges when he told the *Gazette* "I resigned because they hired someone who knew how to type."

With his plans for future employment still in limbo, Savage denies rumours he has been offered a consulting position with the Montreal law firm of Jean Bazin et Freres.

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