

Food banks hit campuses

Canadian University Press

HALIFAX--Higher tuition fees, dwindling loans and skyrocketing unemployment have forced more students to seek support from local food banks.

In response, some Canadian student governments have set up food banks for students.

Approximately 21 per cent of food bank users are those with some university or college background, according to Gwen McLachlan, a coordinator of Toronto's Daily Bread food bank and a Social Science lecturer at York.

"This is contrary to the garbage we're told that those using the food banks are uneducated," said McLachlan, adding that another 25 per cent of users are employed at inadequate-wage jobs.

Two Nova Scotia universities have already given food banks a test drive.

Dalhousie University's mature students' society president Russ Pevlin said the service offered at the

Halifax university was informal, but its success demonstrated a need for something more structured.

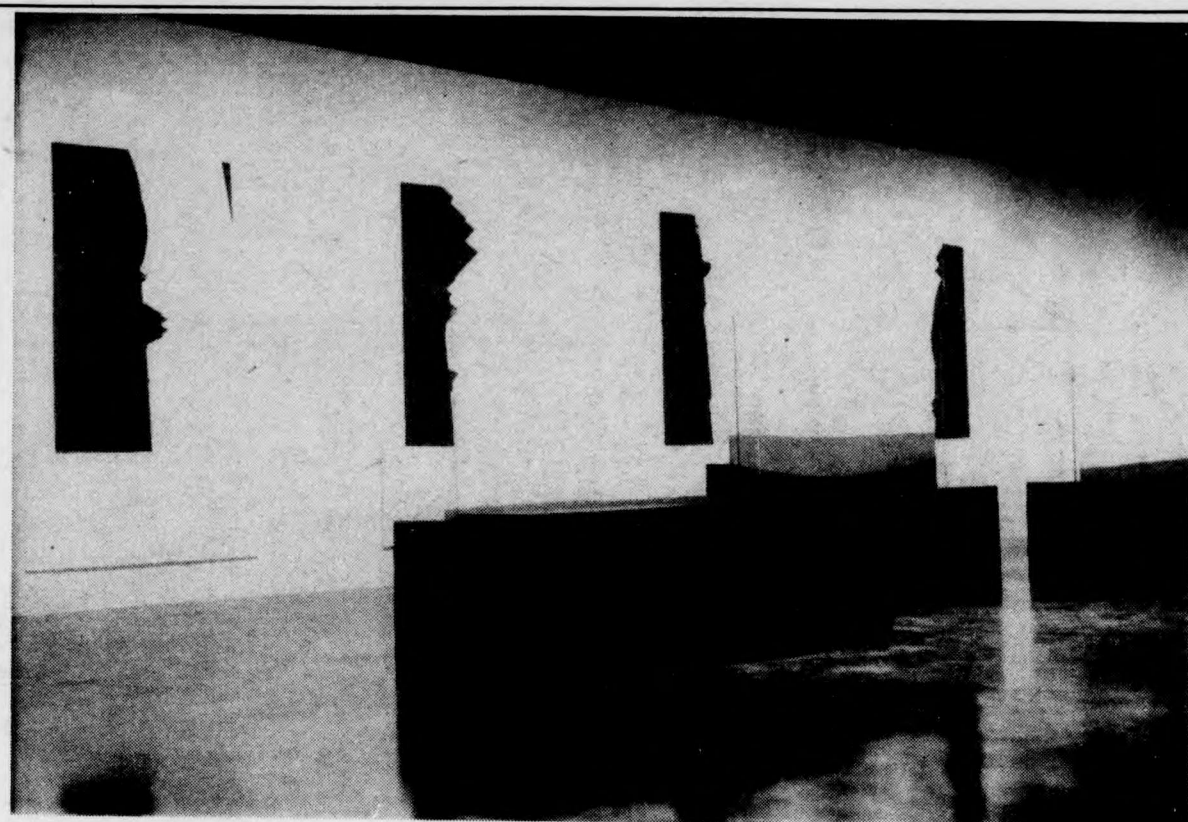
The student council at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish is planning a permanent campus food bank, according to councillor Pierre LeBlanc.

McLachlan said there are currently no plans to open a food bank at York. "If there was enough demand at York, it might make sense to start one," she added.

"You would need volunteers and a location and the Daily Bread Food Bank, which acts as an umbrella for all food banks in Toronto, would help set one up."

York Federation of Students President Michelle Hughes said the YFS would fully support the creation of a campus foodbank.

As well as the two Nova Scotia universities with food banks, Montreal's Concordia University campus chaplain distributes food stamps, and the University of Alberta has a food bank.



Sublime simplicity:

Multi-media instillation by Jocelyne Allouche on display at the Art Gallery of York University. The exhibition will be on display until February 23. See page 9 for more details.

photo by Alok Sharma

Bomb threat at UofT follows long line of anti-feminist backlash

by Naomi Klein
Canadian University Press

Toronto — An anonymous caller threatened to bomb the University of Toronto's Women's Centre last week, and some women say the threats are part of an anti-feminist backlash on Canadian campuses.

Several calls came during a meeting at the centre for lesbians and bisexual women. According to Shenaz Steri, Women's Centre co-ordinator, a young male said, "I'm going to bomb your fucking dyke groups. You are going to get it."

Steri said the calls came the day after the centre advertised the group for the first time.

The centre's answering machine recorded one of the threatening calls. U of T police constable Michael Bell said it is unlikely the caller will be

caught unless he persists.

Bell said if the caller is caught, he could be prosecuted for "intent to injure or alarm" under the criminal code. The crime is punishable by up to two years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$2,000.

The threats made to the centre are similar to those made to Surface, a paper at Queen's University, and to the co-presidents of Concordia University's student council, who were elected last year on a feminist platform.

Surface editor Suzanne Kim received a letter in October which read "We're gonna rape u dykes...In fact, we will kill all feminists slowly."

Kim said the threats should be examined as part of a continuum of anti-feminist hostility permeating campus life.

"Women are harassed on a day to day basis in the classroom and through personal phone calls," she said. "The threats are ongoing."

Kim sees the rise in harassment of outspoken feminists as part of a backlash against women gaining power.

"As more and more people who have been traditionally silent become more vocal, the threats become more and more violent," she said. "The status quo is lashing back at those who are stepping out of place."

"When a Women's Centre has a coming out group or feminists have their own newspaper, it is seen as a threat to a lot of men because it is about women trying to empower

themselves and striving to make changes in their lives."

Eleanor Brown, one of Concordia student council's co-presidents, received a note the day before the second anniversary of the Dec. 6 Montreal murders which read "Bitch dykes you're dead tomorrow."

Brown said her feminist politics were the motive behind the threat.

"We ran on a 'feminism works' platform, so we are very visible. Because we won as feminists, there is a lot of hysteria."

But Brown denies the threats are part of a new wave of anti-lesbian and

anti-feminist sentiment. She attributes the apparent rise in threats to women's growing willingness to report the crimes.

"We shouldn't feel more frightened," Brown said. "This is not a new thing. We have always been getting threats."

"We didn't used to tell anyone because we were afraid that we would get harassed in the media. But I'm not going to be quiet anymore."

Steri agreed women should go public with these incidents, but she said members of the centre's collective are more afraid and have tightened security on the building since the threats.

Equality activist convicted

by Clive Thompson
Canadian University Press

Toronto — Guelph University student Gwen Jacob is going to fight a recent indecent exposure conviction for walking around topless last summer.

Jacob, who was fined \$75 and left with a criminal record after her case wrapped up in January, said the judge invoked sexist community standards to back up his decision.

"His decision legally reinforced the sexual stereotyping of women, which is a dangerous precedent to set," she said.

Jacob was arrested last July after two senior citizens complained about her toplessness.

During the trial, Jacob argued women's breasts are the same as men's, and treating them differently violates her constitutional rights to equality.

Judge Bruce Payne, however, said she wasn't playing by community rules, which discriminate between the sexes.

"Anyone who thinks that the male breast and the female breast are the same is not living in the real world," he said.

"The female breast...is part of the female body that is sexually stimulating to men, both by sight and touch, and is not therefore a part of the body that ought to be flagrantly exposed to public view."

Jacob said her constitutional rights are more important than social standards. Her appeal will hinge on this issue, she added.

"Obviously men's and women's breasts aren't exactly the same, but I think there is a danger when the law is differentiating between the two in terms of rights." Payne also said the law already treats men and women's breasts differently. Touching a man's breast is assault, whereas touching a woman's breast is sexual assault, he noted.

But a legal expert said the comparison between sexual assault law and indecency law isn't valid.

"The kind of harm that occurs to a community on account of having seen a woman's breasts is not comparable to the type of harm that occurs to a woman who is sexually assaulted," said Denise Rauceme, a University of Toronto law professor.

"He didn't consider the context of the two situations at all."

By ruling that Jacob's rights are subordinate to community standards, Payne accepted those standards as immutable rather than try to change them, she added.

"I think it's a bogus argument."

Jacob said she is willing to appeal the conviction up to the Supreme Court because she wants to set a new legal precedent in this area of women's self-definition.

"It's really important that this be an appeal on constitutional grounds, because I want it to affect the country."

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