

Sexual Harassment Centre accused of sexist hiring policy

Paula Todd

It is up to the Ontario Human Rights Commission to decide whether guidelines stipulating the sex of the York Sexual Harassment Centre Co-ordinator are legal. The Centre, which was scheduled to open in August, is under investigation by the Commission for an allegedly sexist hiring policy.

The controversy concerns the Presidential Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment which issued its official report in May 1981 in which it was stated: "The Centre should initially have one part-time co-ordinator, who shall be female, and another co-ordinator should ensure that, where complainants request male assistance or advice, such assistance is available."

Not personally involved

Associate Dean of Atkinson College, Paul Grayson, notified the Commission of this clause because "it is inconsistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code. It is discrimination." Under the 1981 statute in that code, Grayson "asked the Commission to take on a complaint in which he was not personally involved," explained Ann Shteir, the Atkinson professor of Humanities who chaired the Sexual Harassment Committee. She received a letter from Grayson after the position of co-ordinator was advertised in the York Bulletin. "He wrote saying he was assuming error on our

part." Shteir wrote back, outlining in detail, the reasons for the Committee's decision to hire a female. "We thought carefully about our decision," she said. "We think it will be easier for women to talk to other women about sexual harassment."

Committee stipulation

Human Rights Officer, Perry Arnot, met Tuesday with Shteir, Vice-President of Employee and Student Relations, and Sue Tacon a member of the committee from Osgoode Hall. "I am not surprised that someone complained," said Farr, "but I think that there are bona fide reasons for the committee's stipulation. If you consider the nature of sexual harassment and the sex composition of the university, the chance are statistically that the cases are going to be of women sexually harassed by men."

When Grayson was asked for comment on the Committee's reasoning, he said, "To my knowledge, there are no statistics available. I am not opposed to the Centre, I am opposed to sexism."

There were 18 people on the York committee and "while it was not an unanimous decision to specify the sex of the Co-ordinator, everyone felt the issue had been thoroughly discussed and the decision arrived at fairly," said Shteir.

The Committee consulted the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and reviewed pertinent

material. "We believe that it is the correct decision and we had a number of qualified applicants. It would be gender-blind to ignore the problems faced by women who want to report incidence of sexual harassment." Shteir acknowledges that there are cases of male victims, but "they are rare."

The Centre, for financial reasons, cannot hire two co-ordinators, but the report stipulates, "The co-ordinator should ensure that, where complainants request male assistance or advice, such assistance is available."

Awaiting decision

The University has designated Room 143 of Founders as the Centre. The room sits empty and the applications for the job of co-ordinator unprocessed as the Committee awaits the decision of the commission.

"We don't want to make an appointment under a procedure that has been challenged. It would invalidate the decision about the person or the Centre." The Commission's report is expected in late November and Shteir is "most unhappy" about the delay.



Photo: Himbara

York filmmakers enjoying success of *The Best Kept Secret*: (L-R) Kathy Smith, Marshall Golden, Alexander Van Ihinger. Story page 8.

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John Chang abandons position

Internal Affairs Director resigns over "inefficiency"

Paula Todd

In protest of what he sees as inefficiency in the CYSF, Internal Affairs Director, John Chang resigned his post effective Tuesday night. His letter of resignation was read by the CYSF speaker, Tye Burt after Chang made a report to the Council on his work with the Food Committee and the development of a Consumers' Services Committee. Mark Pearlman, Director of Academic Affairs praised Chang's work and made a successful motion to grant him a \$200 honorarium.

In his letter of resignation,

Chang explained his reasons for leaving: "Circumstances at CYSF have forced me into a position of either ceasing my duties or resigning from my position. I believe these are some circumstances prohibiting the other directors from properly carrying on their duties. I hope these problems can be solved so that CYSF can realize its potential as central student organization."

He told *Excalibur* that he was "dissatisfied with the work of the council." Charging that "no-one keeps regular business hours" and

that "council meetings are bogged down by semantics, fundamental problems with the constitution and personal vendettas", he expressed his frustration with attempts to institute the programmes he feels are necessary. "I've been trying to speak at the last four meetings, but haven't been allowed to. If I had not resigned tonight I wouldn't have been able to speak today," he said.

"They took 3 or 4 hours arguing semantics over Tony Finn's contract. I think its an unwillingness to move onto the business. I am not totally

happy with Tony as Business Manager, but the Executive is happy with him and I want to see the council do its business." While he was unwilling to name the people who are seen as preventing the CYSF from functioning, he said, "there are people on Council who don't wish to see CYSF reach its potential. How can anyone do their work under those conditions?"

Contract needs debate

Winters College representative Ellen Leibman, one of several council members who advocated changes to Finn's contract argues that the contract needs to be debated, but agrees that time is being wasted in council meetings: "I don't think we're arguing semantics. The contract that is on the table now needs to be changed, but it should have gone over to committee. The refusal to argue the contract point by point in committee is the only reason time is being taken up in council meetings."

Chang is also displeased with the performance of the other directors. "I don't want to point the finger at anyone in particular. I just hope they get the message. Judith (Santos, Director of Women's Affairs) and Mark (Pearlman, Director of Academic affairs) are really working hard. But a lot of people are not taking the job seriously and I question whether the students are getting their \$18.50 (the fee given by each student to

CYSF)."

Chang believes too, that there is no "flow" from the political decision making to bureaucratic action." He cited, as an example, the motion passed in Council during the summer to renovate the student government offices at 105 Central Square. "I waited and waited and no-one did anything so I ended up hiring people off the street to do the job."

It is this waiting that precipitated Chang's resignation. "The constitution is interfering with our business. It's so vague, no-one could even figure out if they had the power to fire Tony Finn in the first place." When reminded that CYSF President Bevilacqua had struck a committee to rewrite the constitution, he said: "But they haven't done anything. I keep waiting but they haven't even called a meeting of that group."

Personal vendetta

Chang feels that others shave his opinion of CYSF. "I've talked to a few college reps who are just fed up. We can't get quorum and nothing gets done. I encourage the colleges to withdraw from the CYSF."

He denied that there was a movement within Complex 1 to succeed from CYSF: "That's just a personal vendetta that someone has with the council. It's

revenge."

When asked whether he believed such a separation movement would be effective, he replied: "CYSF is a great idea. You can see that from other universities. Maybe I just want to pressure them to shape up. But really, if push comes to shove, it (college withdrawn) could be done very easily. I would prefer that doesn't have to happen."

Chang was elected in last April's general election and a by-election will be called to fill the post he vacated. He plans to resume a normal academic life and participate in university sports. He will not continue in any capacity with the CYSF.

Bevilacqua commented briefly on Chang's resignation, "CYSF sticks together in the good times and the bad times." He has not yet set a date for the by-election.



Photo: Mark Cutforth

Highjinx opened for Teenage Head. Story page 8.

INSIDE

- Security van....3
- Typing service...5
- Editorial.....5
- Typing service...4
- York Cabaret....9
- Football score..15
- Jock Talk.....15