

U of T students upset by sex washroom closures

BY NICOLA LUKSIC

TORONTO (CUP) — Students concerned by the University of Toronto's decision to close campus washrooms that were being used for sexual trysts are examining possible alternatives.

Last month, students and janitorial staff complained that two campus washrooms were being used as meeting points for sexual encounters.

The university responded by locking the washroom doors and implementing limited usage hours for some other facilities — an approach student activists are calling misguided. They would like to see a more constructive approach adopted by the U of T.

"It's just patronizing that the university feels it has the authority to shut washrooms," said Jaeson Adams, communications coordinator for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgendered of U of T. "They should keep their nose out of students' sex lives."

Along with Adams, representatives from the campus women's and sexual education

centres plan to look at ideas such as compiling a public sex etiquette brochure and preparing a bathroom users bill of rights that would extol the right to sexual privacy.

"We're still at the discussion point," said Gillian Morton of U of T Women's Centre. "We're just

"People really need to get together and talk about possible solutions and come to terms with washroom sex."

getting together interested students who don't think that washroom sex should be considered a problem."

Some university officials believe that the discussion is long overdue.

"People really need to get together and talk about possible solutions and come to terms with washroom sex," said Paddy Stamp, U of T's sexual harassment officer, who is involved with the upcoming discussions.

Stamp, who is against the

recent washroom shutdowns, says sexual activity in washrooms is nothing new.

"From my understanding, the sex that goes on is not unwanted. People have been having sex in washrooms since time immemorial," Stamp said. "We all need to use washrooms simply to go to the toilet. It's just silly to close them."

"So long [as] it's clean and safe, I have no problem with it."

Avi Meni, external coordinator with U of T's Sexual Education Centre, says safety is the number one concern when it comes to the issue of sex in washrooms.

"It's hard for us to say what's

right and what's wrong," Meni said. "Our concern lies in promoting safer sex."

Despite criticism from some students that closing the washrooms has been ineffective, U of T public affairs director Sue Bloch-Neveite says the

approach has gotten results.

"Measures taken seem to be working and unwanted activity seems to have settled down," she said.

But critics of the university's approach point to contrasting solutions devised by other schools dealing with the same issue.

Ryerson Polytechnic University is funding the renovation

of washrooms identified as sexual locales on its campus in response to increasing complaints of indecent acts from patrons.

The school is also in the process of redesigning stalls and urinals in its main washroom in order to discourage sex acts.

"It's a long and expensive process," said Terry Ladoucer, manager of Ryerson's campus safety and security.

"But the acts that were taking place were making people feel uncomfortable. We care about comfort levels of our school's community."

The U of T won't be following that tack, Bloch-Neveite says.

Feds hypocrites for funding anti-APEC groups, activists say

BY ALEX BUSTOS

OTTAWA (CUP) — The federal government is being hypocritical by giving money to a conference of non-governmental organizations in Malaysia, social activists say.

Last week, the government granted \$50,000 to the 1998 Asia-Pacific People's Assembly, to be held from Nov. 10-15 in Kuala Lumpur.

The meeting is being held just before this year's Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation summit, which will run from Nov. 16-18.

Jonathan Oppenheim, a student at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and social activist, says Ottawa decided to fund the People's Assembly in order

to divert attention away from the APEC scandal engulfing the federal Liberals here at home.

"It's a token gesture they make for public relations," said Oppenheim.

"They use it because when people say APEC is only business-oriented they can reply, 'we support the people's summit.'"

The government also gave money to organizations opposed to the Asia Pacific trade group at last November's APEC conference in Vancouver.

Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy has repeatedly said the fact the government funded last year's meeting is proof it listens to opposing views.

But Kerry Pither, national

spokesperson for the East Timor Alert Network, is suspicious of the government's motives behind funding the anti-APEC groups.

"If they were really interested in hearing dissenting voices about APEC they wouldn't have pepper-sprayed those dissenting voices last year," she said.

But government officials say their intentions are straightforward.

"All we can say is that Canada is committed to the integration of civil society into APEC," said Claude Demers, a spokesperson for the ministry of foreign affairs and international trade.

"We think that it's important that NGOs play a role in APEC, so the organization gains credibility and transparency."

20 years ago this week

The "Battered Wives" blow off bad band name

(CUP) — The Toronto new wave band Battered Wives has bowed to pressure from women's and student groups and changed its controversial name.

The group announced it would now call itself simply The Wives.

The change in name was a result of women's organizations across Canada protesting the group's use of violence against women as a promotional gimmick. The group's logo featured a fist with the impression of a woman's lips on it.

According to the band's manager, John Hughes, the group faced cancellation of their 13-city tour of Canada because of planned demonstrations and disruptions.

Several of the band's performances have already been cancelled. A concert at Carleton University in Ottawa was cancelled after the campus Women's Centre and an Ottawa centre for battered women protested the planned appearance.

The National Union of Students passed a motion condemning the use of violence against women in promotional campaigns at its semi-annual conference Oct. 15.

King's fit to be tied — for \$21

(Gazette) — University of King's College students will now be able to tell the difference between silk and a sow's ear thanks to \$4700 spent by university president John Godfrey on 221 English woven silk ties bearing the institution's crest.

The action came as a result of a student's dislike of the \$2.00 model previously sold to students and faculty.

Godfrey said a student approached him last year wanting to replace the existing tie with one of higher quality. The student then designed the new tie and Godfrey approached a weaver in England for production.

He says the new product is "a very expensive but rather splendid tie."

Godfrey also said that at the time of purchase the situation of the Canadian dollar was very different and "in retrospect we made a mistake."

But, he added, King's students face a "very democratic situation in tie selection." The new silk tie is on sale in the King's bookstore for \$21.00 along with the older \$2.00 model.

Godfrey defended his actions by saying the previous tie "looked terrible." When asked why an English weaver was chosen over a Canadian one he said it's difficult to get silk ties made in this country. He made no mention if he had, in fact, spoken with a Canadian manufacturer.

A King's student described the incident as "unfortunate and a useless waste of money."

He says when he confronted Godfrey about the English weaver he exclaimed "It was the least we could do for George III!"

King's student council president Wally Stephen expressed disgust at the decision. He says the money could have gone towards the greater benefit of the university and described Godfrey's actions as "very Oxfordian."



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