

## Editorial

# A step forward

Sexual harassment has been declared illegal by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, but it appears the problem needed further attention within these hallowed halls.

It is ironic that while a student may enter university in hope of gaining further mobility and autonomy in his or her life, he or she may find these things directly threatened in the very same place. Students who were victims of sexually-oriented abuse from their professors and suffered from threats which could totally undermine their academic studies, have had very little protection from the university in such situations.

The report released by the President Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment is a first step towards clarifying what until now have been vague boundaries of 'what was or wasn't sexual harassment within

the university. As the news story on page points out, the 29-page report includes a definition of sexual harassment, "guidelines on conduct" for members of the university community, and the installment of The Sexual Harassment Complaint Centre.

We will examine the full report once it becomes available and its implications become known.

But the biggest danger is not that the proposals err in some respects nor that they fall short on some point.

Rather it is that the report be greeted with the same lack of concern that has kept sexual harassment a closet issue for so long.

Unfortunately, this is more likely than we might wish.

Front page stories of lecherous profs and naive co-eds would get people's minds on the problem. In fact, at Monday's press

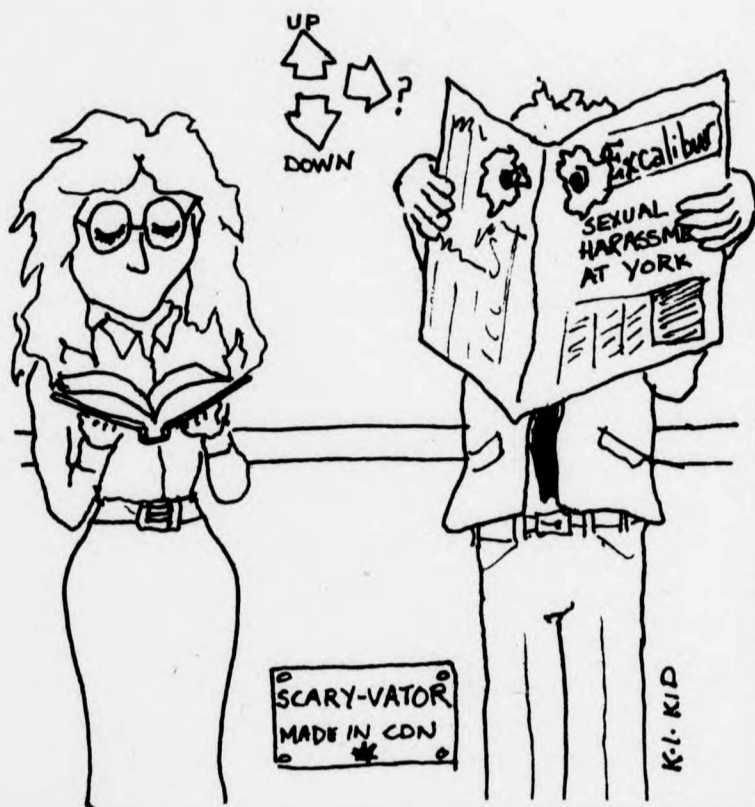
conference presenting the report, Prof. Ann Shteir was called upon to recount just these sorts of stories. When she said that she was unable to, that the extent of sexual harassment can only be guessed at, the members of the press were noticeably disappointed.

The reporters, writers and Tv types thought that there was no point pursuing the matter without those stories, that there was no issue.

What they failed to see is that the silence which surrounds sexual harassment is the issue.

Were Ann Shteir to rattle off dozens of cases of individuals hauled off to court, or fired because of misconduct, her case for new procedures and attention would lose much of its force.

For on this case it is the subtlety of the disease which makes it all the harder to cure.



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