

High price and red tape block sexual harassment complaint

by Clive Thompson
Canadian University Press

TORONTO — A group of students say the Queen's University sexual harassment complaints procedure is so flawed and expensive it's forced them to drop a complaint.

"We fully intended to go through with this complaint exactly as the rules say, like good students, but it was just too expensive," said Rachel Gorman, one of the complainants. "The procedures made it impossible."

"We need to ditch the whole procedure and start from scratch."

Gorman -- along with three other students -- brought a complaint against nine Queen's men two years ago, after the men had posted their residence with signs saying "No Means Kick Her In The Teeth" and "No Means On Your Knees Bitch".

Two weeks ago, the university's sexual harassment board found two of the men guilty of sexual harassment. The board recommended to the principal that the men write a letter of apology and attend a workshop on violence against women.

The complainants disagree with the ruling, Gorman said. Though they were glad the university recognized the posters constituted sexual harassment, they would have liked to see Queen's find all nine men guilty, she added.

"We're very pleased that they recognized it as harassment," she said. "But they could have gone further."

The complainants decided not to appeal the decision because it required a \$250 deposit, and legal counsel that could cost "tens of thousands of dollars," Gorman said.

"It was nothing we could afford," she added. "We were prevented from carrying on the appeal by the rules."

The students are calling for drastic revision of the procedures, including provision of legal aid.

Law professor David Mullan, who chairs a committee revising the pro-

cedure, said they are considering changes to allow for legal aid.

"We tend to think that in fact there should be a provision for the costs of individuals," Mullan said.

"Obviously, it's not a good situation if you have the people that can afford high powered lawyers able to participate and those that can't, don't."

At other universities, such as the University of Toronto, complaint procedures make it possible for the institution to pay for an individual's appeal.

"It has to be demonstrated that there's a compelling case, that there's a compelling reason," said Paddy Stamp, U of T sexual harassment officer.

U of T would pay the costs of defending a complainant from a respondent's appeal, but only if the university had originally ruled in favour of the complainant, she said.

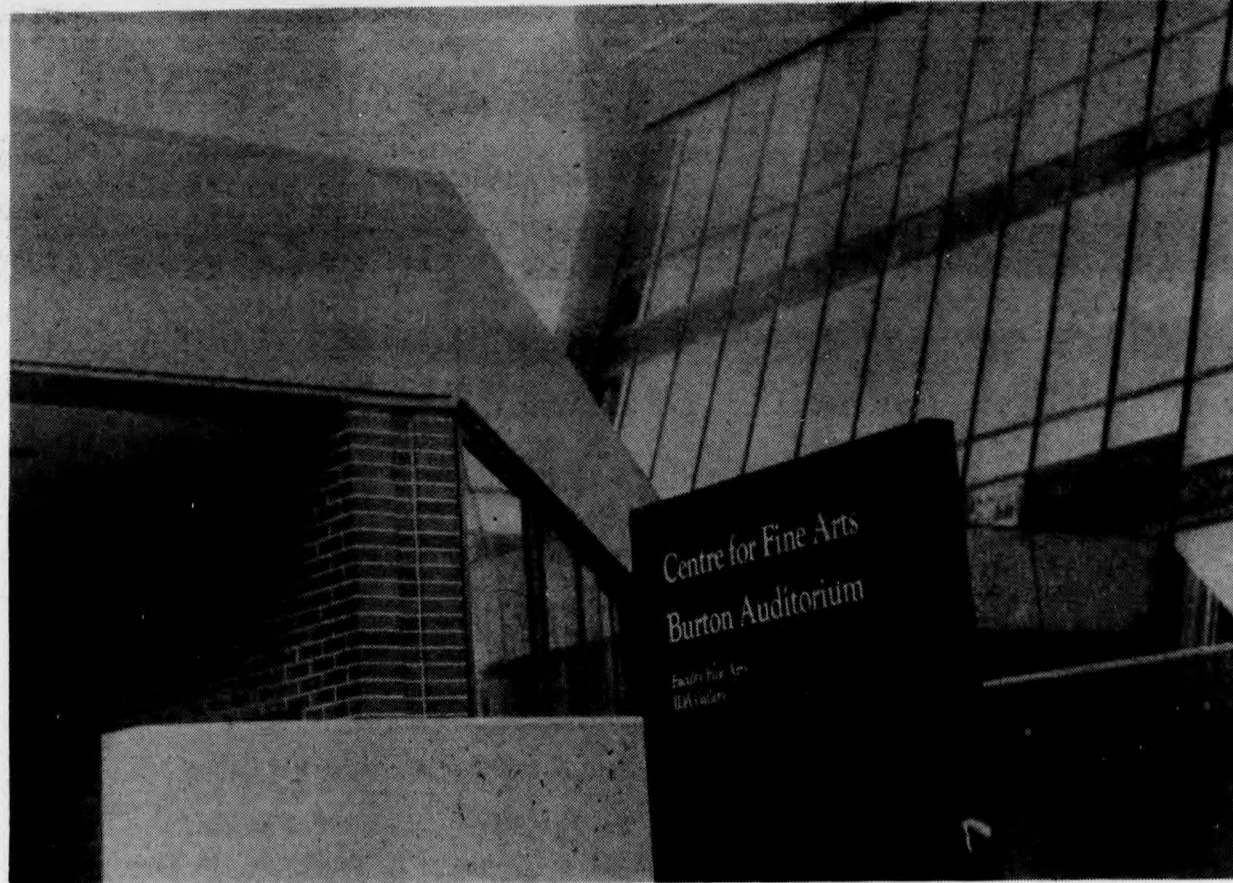
The women at Queen's, however, also want the composition of the harassment board changed. Currently, the complainant, the respondent and the Queen's principal each select one member from a pool of candidates for the three-person board.

Gorman said there's no guarantee the members chosen by the principal or complainant will have any background in sexual harassment.

"Obviously, they can be nice people, but in the case of faculty, they have ties that go outside the [board] and they have no training in sexual harassment," Gorman added. "And they're chosen by a man who has no concept of sexual harassment, [Queen's principal] Michael Smith."

Mullan said the review committee has no plans to recommend changing the board composition, because nobody else at Queen's has raised concerns about it.

"When we spoke to the university community about this... there seemed to be satisfaction from most points of view."



Dance students were charged a fee to attend Burton and downtown concerts. Administration later realized they mischarged the students but performers still have to pay.

Administration blunder costs students

by Christine F. de Leon

The dance department is doing little to make amends for an auxiliary fee it wrongly charged dance students.

The fee took the form of ticket voucher sales for the fall and winter concerts at Burton auditorium and a downtown concert to be held this spring at the Betty Oliphant Theatre.

A Feb. 11 memo sent to dance students and faculty by Department Chair Mary Jane Warner recognized the error, "Due to an administrative error, you were informed that the \$14 ticket voucher fee was compulsory; it is technically an extra-curricular fee," the memo stated.

The memo also said that "students who request a refund will not be permitted to perform or present work in dance concerts this term."

"I think (restricting students from performing) is stupid because dancers (will be) paying for a show they're in," said Chris Waghorn, president of the Creative Arts Student Association.

According to Nikki Gershbain, internal vice-president for the York Federation of Students, this stipula-

tion is "totally unacceptable. It's exploiting the emotional dedication of students."

According to Warner, making the fee compulsory was an attempt to increase the usually poor attendance by dance students at the Burton and downtown concerts.

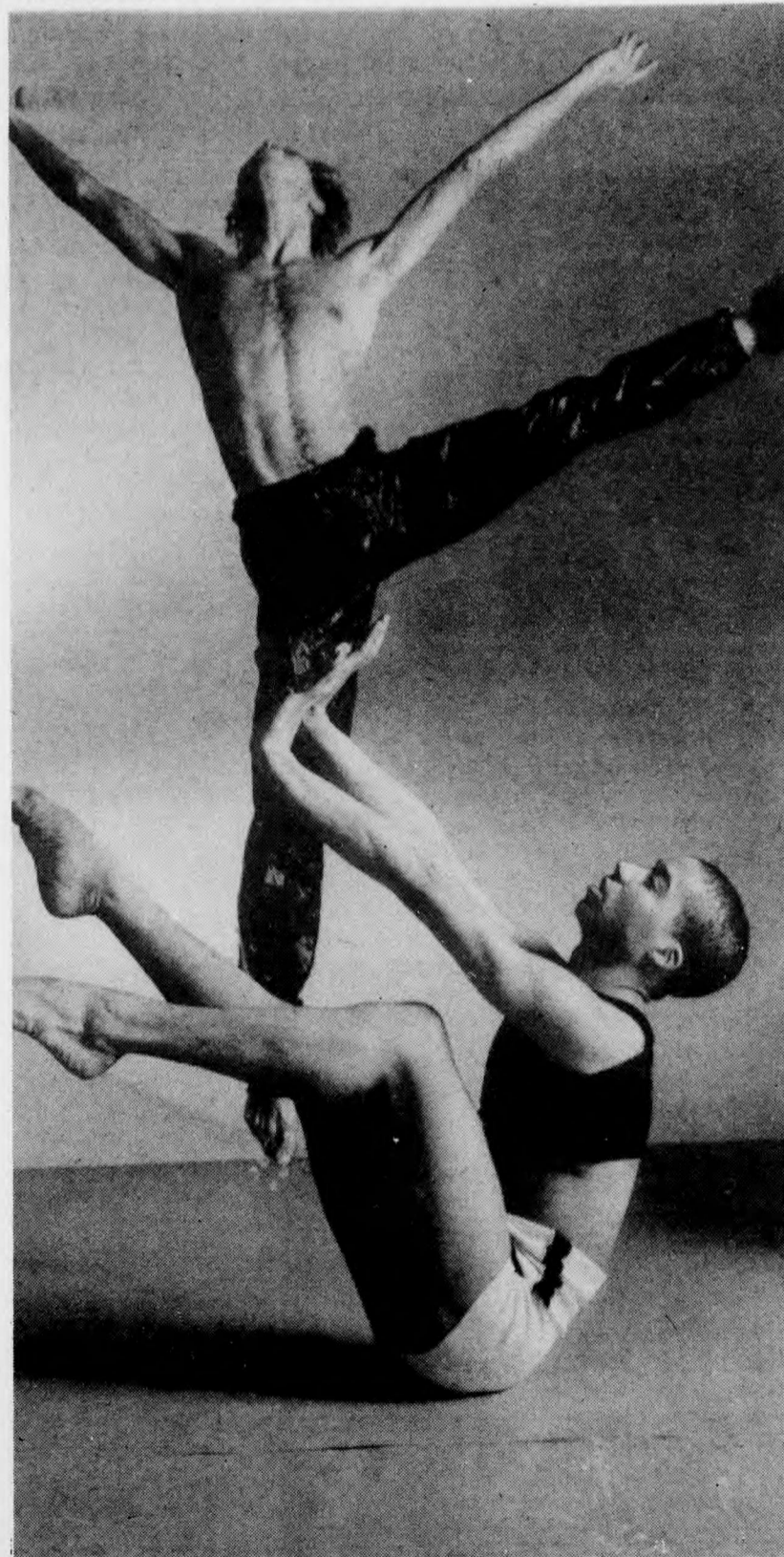
Warner said the dance department also depends on admission revenues to fund the concerts.

"Our department does a lot of extra curricular activities and the fees students pay only cover inter-depart-

ment activities," she said.

But according to Fine Arts student Erika Loughran, "If (the department) urged us to fundraise, everyone would've pitched in, but as soon as you threaten people, they get angry. We're angry, but we're disappointed above all."

"It's a tough situation," said Gershbain, you screw students now by doing this, but if you don't (make them pay the fee) the department is left with a situation where they may not be able to afford their shows."



York students go garbage picking

by Peter Mallet

Three students from York will be taking out the trash in Nepal's Himalaya Mountains this summer. They will join seven other Canadian students in the month-long environmental campaign to rid the Himalayas of garbage deposited by Western tourists over the past forty years.

Youth to Everest, a New Zealand-based organization, plans to bury the waste and donate solar panels to area villagers, who are suffering from a lack of firewood.

John Gully, founder of the organization, places the blame on tourists who have managed to render the formerly tree-covered hillsides barren and unprotected by removing trees and underbrush for firewood.

"Monsoon rains create massive landslides that wash this fertile ground into the rivers," said Gully. "Virtual deserts are being created and the Sherpas (local people) can no longer farm or graze animals on this land."

Canadian students have been

involved in the project since its inception in 1988.

Jessica Steinberg, an environmental student and one of the three York students going to Nepal this summer, is enthusiastic. "I like to help out others and think globally instead of locally. This is my chance to make a contribution to rejuvenate the environment that is so quickly deteriorating."

One of the main tasks of the environmentalists will be to collect tons of garbage which litter the mountainsides and bury them in "wastepits."

According to Steinberg, there are other groups who believe a ban on tourism should be enforced, but this would have a disastrous impact on the local economy. "The responsibility lies on Westerners to clean up the mess themselves," she added.

Youth to Everest is a grassroots organization which began in New Zealand in 1988. Gully was surprised with the waste he saw in the region and wanted to get youth involved

with the solution.

According to Jill Sharpe, Canadian coordinator for Youth to Everest, the environmental cleanup does not eliminate current job positions. "We live with the Sherpas, and assimilate our role to assist them with the clean up by volunteering our labour for a month."

The program has also provided jobs in the community throughout the year by hiring the Sherpas to help with cleaning up. "Environmental awareness has become a priority with the Sherpa people."

Costs for the expedition to the Himalayas by Canadian students will either be covered by fund-raising or out of their own pockets.

Sharpe says the group is currently in negotiations with corporate sponsors to help subsidize the trip. "We are confident that the sponsorship will lower the expedition fee to half of [the current] \$3,600."

The three York students will depart for Nepal in May and return in June.