

Violence against Women

by Paul Creelman

There is still a danger of assault to women on the Dal campus, according to feminist lawyer Mary Clancy.

"Basically, the security situation has not changed much on campus since I was a student," says Clancy.

"One of the major problems is a lack of awareness that the situation exists. For instance, the two main women's residences are hard to get to safely at night. To get to Shirreff Hall from the campus, most people would cut down by the football field and the tennis courts. No matter what lighting has been installed, that's a pretty deserted piece of property. The same thing for Alexandra Hall, and even in some cases for the houses where the Grad students are."

Diana Gifford, who was chairperson of the ad hoc Security Sub-committee of the Committee Concerned with Violence Against Women, says that the improvements in security at Dal are substantial, but not complete. The committee, which formed after a violent rape was reported in the Life Sciences center building last year, submitted a report to the administrations suggesting changes to help prevent a recurrence.

"The changes which have been made are important and substantial improvements," said Gifford.

"There is a lot that remains to be done. The committee disbanded when we felt that we had achieved our objective by setting improvements into motion. If at any time we felt that things were getting worse on campus, or if more serious incidents occurred, then we could certainly be reformed again."

Gifford says that thirteen general recommendations were made to the administration last summer, including improved exterior lighting, increasing security personnel, foot patrols by security on campus, key control, and signing into buildings at night.

Of these suggestions, sev-

eral were considered doubtful because of the limiting effect of available funds, and the most attention has been given to improvement in the exterior lighting, says Gifford.

"Increases in the security personnel, and changing of keys in the buildings were considered to be severely limited by funds. We also suggested that a uniform sign-in policy be put into effect for all the buildings at night. The administration said that this might not be too well received by certain members



of the academic community, however. Our point of view, of course, is that if people were made aware of the reasons why they had to show their ID and sign in, they wouldn't object so much."

Mary Clancy voiced the concern that many on campus still have: "Many men don't understand the fear that is constantly with women when they are in these dark and deserted sorts of areas. I think it is really unfortunate that women have to limit their

movements because of this danger."

"What we really have to do is make people aware. People will still go and study in a large deserted building like the life science building to get away from the crowds. Women have to be made aware that they're not safe all alone in a big deserted building, even in the day."

Clancy also expressed concern about the way rape victims are treated in the trial process, noting that the old saying of putting the victim on trial is still very true today.

"Many women, looking at the trial process, the grilling testimony and the stress involved, feel that the entire experience has been too much. In that case, if you don't prosecute, then the rapist is free to go out and grab someone else."

"Those that do go through the trial process are doubly scarred—first by the experience of the assault, then secondly by the trial process."

A recent case, Regina vs. Papignon, has made this problem worse, according to Clancy. Due to this new precedent, recently set, if the rapist thinks that the woman consented, then there is no conviction. This is a setback which offsets the ruling some years ago that the woman involved could not be questioned on her past sexual history.

"I'm afraid my perception of the trial process is still imprinted by a case that occurred in my first year here at Dal. It was a case that most of the first year students followed closely. The girl involved was 14 years old and had been gang-raped. The one thing they did do was keep her name out of the papers, but every day, she was required to go over what had happened to her in lurid details. I'm sure that the poor child was scarred for life, first by the event itself, and doubly so by the testimony and trial process."

Gay club faces bomb threat

TORONTO (CUP)—Meetings of the newly-organized Ryerson Gay Student Association have gone underground as a result of several bomb threats directed against them.

Group organizer Mike Balz said the gays decided they would no longer publicize their meeting places.

"Our main concern is that new members may be intimidated," says Balz. "The idea of the group was to get gays who were leary of stepping forward to do just that."

During the group's first meeting November 5, three Toronto police officers informed them that a call had been made claiming that a

bomb was planted in the student union offices.

Balz contends that "Neither of the calls have scared anyone... but we are worried all the media coverage will ruin our group."

Balz says the group—which is not yet officially recognized by the student union—will continue to hold their private meetings until things have calmed down.

No links have been made between the two bomb threats which interrupted the meetings.

The Gay Student Association has been concerned with the appearance of an anti-gay poster on the walls of a Ryerson building.

"We have some supporters" at Ryerson, said Mike Keller of the League Against Homosexuals, the group responsible for the poster.

Keller, who said the League has about 20 supporters at Ryerson ("most of them are students"), added that the league did not have permission from the institute to put up the posters.

Keller said that the League Against Homosexuals was formed in September as a reaction to homosexuals "getting into schools."

"We believe in staying strictly within the law," he said, adding that the league's members are in the majority "family people."

Dalhousie Student Union

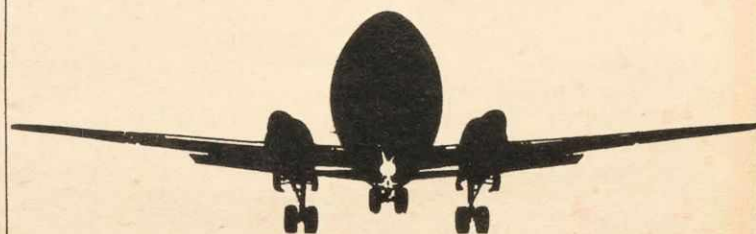
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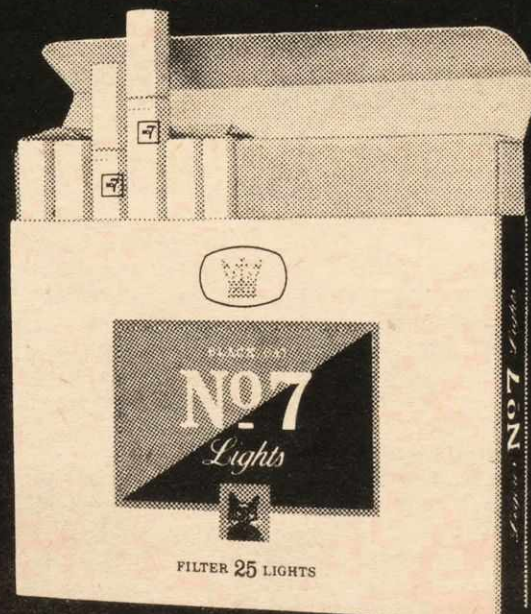
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