

# Sociology committee letter slanderous: Itwaru

By JEFF SHINDER

In response to comments made by the Sociology Department's Appointments Committee in a full page ad taken out in this week's *Excalibur* (page 19), Professor Arnold Itwaru has commissioned two lawyers to determine whether or not the remarks constitute grounds for slander.

The controversy surrounding the rejection of Itwaru's application for a tenure-stream position climaxed last week when the Appointment Committee decided against recommending the professor for the CUEW competition for six future tenure-stream positions. Professor Itwaru's application for one of two advertised tenure-stream positions in the Sociology department had previously been rejected. In addition, the Appointments Committee, in response to allegations made against the selection process, published an advertisement to rebut the charges.

In an open letter to various representatives of the York community, Itwaru indicated the sections of the advertisement that he finds slanderous. His argument opened by citing the passage from the Committee's letter concerning "the propriety of soliciting support of this kind (petitions) from students currently in Dr. Itwaru's courses, and who have yet to receive grades."

In Itwaru's viewpoint, the contention constitutes slander. "At no time did I solicit support from my students. I did not discuss my employment situation in any of my classes, and hence at no time was anything said about grades in relation to the protests and petitions conducted by students," said Itwaru. According to Itwaru, the committee's assertion implies that Itwaru solicited support from the students using intimidation, if necessary, to garner their

support.

Appointments Committee member Professor John Fox indicated that the passage does not necessarily imply Itwaru's participation in the protests. He added that "we (the committee) understand that teaching assistants from Professor Itwaru's classes were involved in the circulation of petitions and feel that this in itself, if true, is problematic." This situation, he felt, might put students in an awkward position.

Itwaru also took offense with the department's analysis of his literary accomplishments. According to the Appointments Committee advertisement, 28 of the over 50 publications which were cited by the professor as scholarly accomplishments appeared in non-academic sources. In addition, the letter notes that works published in non-academic sources are not customarily considered during selection processes for tenure-track positions.

The advertisement also indicates that "of the remaining publications, Dr. Itwaru's list of books and monographs includes several works of poetry, his unpublished MA thesis and his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, but no published work in Sociology. We are neither competent nor willing to judge Arnold Itwaru's poetry, but it is in any event not relevant to his qualifications as a sociologist."

The section of the advertisement dealing with Itwaru's literary accomplishments concludes by noting that he has not published in "either of the two major sociology journals in Canada, nor in any major sociology journal. He has no books in sociology." According to Itwaru this assessment ignores four books he has written. He specifically cites an upcoming book entitled *Consciousness and Otherness in the*

*Colonial Experience*. He further, notes that the Committee's evaluation ignores "the May 1988 coming publication of a novel of mine." Fox, however, indicated that the Committee did not ignore his upcoming book, but noted that the manuscript to the book was not forwarded to the Appointments Committee.

According to Itwaru, the major sociology publications referred to by the Appointments Committee are ideologically ill-disposed to his sociology approach. He indicated that he has submitted pieces to these publications, only to receive rejections which suggested to him that the works did not accord with the "conservative" bent of these sources.

Fox, for his part, said that perhaps these rejections reflected the journal's assessment of Itwaru's work. "If they rejected his work people can draw their own inferences. (In any case) a rejection is certainly not an endorsement," he said.

In Itwaru's viewpoint, the Committee's "narrow and questionable conception of sociology" made it possible for them to rationalize the dismissal of many of his works. As an example, he cites his publication entitled *Being and Non-Being and the Production of the Subject*, as a piece that was not acknowledged by the Appointments Committee. In addition, Itwaru notes that "Two of my referees dealt specifically with the absolute relevance of my literary production to cultural sociology."

Fox, however, said that the committee did consider his works. "We didn't ignore them, but we didn't feel they were relevant qualifications in Sociology," said Fox. He added that "being a poet is a meritorious thing in itself, but there is a distinction between poetry and sociology. Sociology is a broad discipline, but that does not include everything."

In Itwaru's viewpoint, the committee members were incapable of understanding his original presentation during the application process for the tenure-stream position. "None of the committee members does critical sociology, and I suspect they seriously misunderstood the presentation I made to the department," Itwaru indicated. "Professors who understand critical sociol-

ogy and are esteemed internationally (Distinguished professor of Sociology John O'Neill being an example) thought my presentation was brilliant," Itwaru added.

Fox replied by noting that "I believe that all members of the Appointments Committee was present at his colloquium and listened carefully to what he had to say."



The signing: Amnesty's Victoria Bowman with president Arthurs.

## Human Rights Campaign

By MARGOT GRAFSTEIN

The Osgoode chapter of Amnesty International has launched a campaign on campus entitled "Human Rights Now," in order to raise the York Community's awareness of the kind of oppression which still takes place in countries throughout the world.

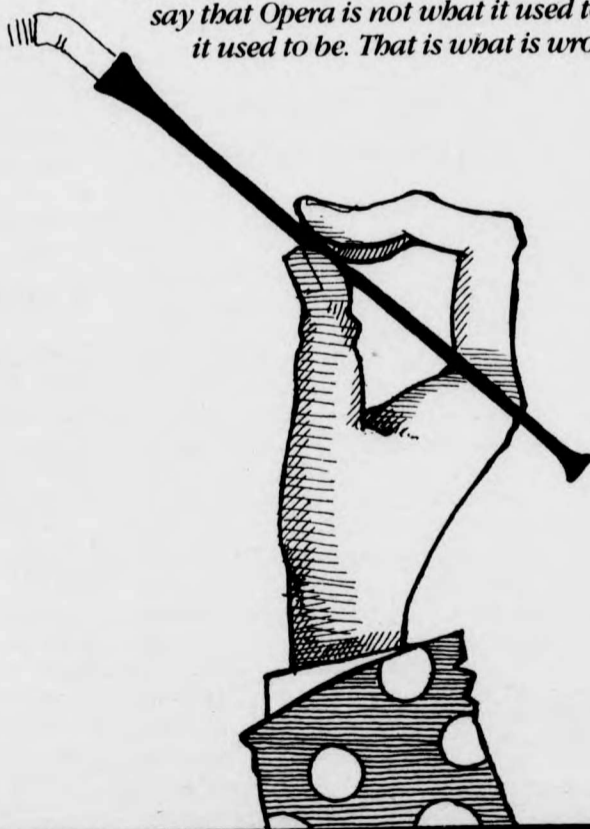
The campaign is part of a worldwide effort by Amnesty International to pressure governments committing human rights transgressions to stop. According to Victoria Bowman, a member of the Osgoode chapter, "Torture is still used in at

least 60 countries and the death penalty exists in almost 130." Bowman also noted that nearly half the countries in the world are holding prisoners of conscience—people held in prison on the basis of their colour, sex, religion, or political beliefs.

Students are urged to donate to the campaign at all pubs and coffee shops on campus. Also, a petition will be circulating on campus demanding that all governments pass legislation which guarantees these rights. For more information, call 739-0898.

# CHOICE · CRACKS

Noël Coward, on being asked about the current state of Opera, quipped: "People are wrong when they say that Opera is not what it used to be. It is what it used to be. That is what is wrong with it."



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