

Montreal Massacre Survivor Led Gun Bill Fight

by Keren Markuze

(*The Link*, CUP) Amidst a clutter of boxes and surrounded by a massive backlog of papers and files sits the woman responsible for last month's passing of Bill C-68, Canada's new gun control law. Tired and relieved, Heidi Rathjen is in no rush to organize her office, nor is she feeling pressured to do anything at the moment. She is simply relishing the accomplishment of a goal which has been her sole purpose for the past six years.

Rathjen, president of the Coalition for Gun Control, will soon resign her position after a lengthy and draining battle for gun control legislation that began in June 1990. It was at this time that Kim Campbell's proposed gun control bill was sent to a special committee for review, virtually eliminating any possibility that it would be considered seriously.

In effect, it was a violent slap in the face to the victims of the Montreal Massacre which occurred less than a year earlier, still overwhelmingly vivid and painful for the families and friends of the victims.

For Rathjen, who had been present in the classroom at the Ecole Polytechnique on the day of the massacre, the failure for anything concrete to come out of Campbell's proposal stirred in her an urgent need to take action.

"At the time," says Rathjen, "I had no confidence that individuals could effect change. But I knew I had to do something, so despite my fears and insecurities, I just did it." Rathjen chuckles in retrospect when she thinks about how naively she initially approached her campaign. Despite her self-confessed lack of know-how or experience, however, she never reached the point where giving up seemed like the only solution.

Despite her persistence, Rathjen does not consider herself an idealist. "It is not my mission to better society. I just wanted to right a wrong. We deserve gun control. It is part of who we are as Canadians."

This conviction, rather than a prolonged state of mourning for the victims of the massacre, was the motivating force in Rathjen's passionate

campaign. "A lot of people expect me to be a lot more traumatized than I am. They put me in the same light as the victims' families, but it doesn't affect me that way," she explained.

She admits, however, that her active involvement with the coalition did start as a reaction to the massacre, and in a sense ended as a tribute to the victims. "It does make their death not in vain, because they became martyrs for a cause."

But Rathjen does not feel that the task of the Coalition for Gun Control is fully accomplished. She sees its future role as working to sustain the bill and ensuring that there is sufficient counter-balance to the gun lobby.

Rathjen does have faith in the current government. "I think the government is committed to stringent regulations and eliminating loopholes (regarding the bill)," she said. With this confidence in those parties working towards the implementation of the bill, Rathjen breathes a sigh of relief that she can move on to something new.

Rathjen admits that she wants to continue lobbying or doing public relations, and she has certainly gained the right experience for it. While the wisdom in Rathjen's face indicates that she cannot possibly explain in words what valuable lessons she has learned from her intense experience in the last six years, she stresses that individuals can make a difference. Her inspiration came from all those who helped her along the way, and in return she stands as an inspiration for anyone who aspires to change things for the better.

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Prostitute Prof Back in Classroom

by Vanessa Benedek

(*The Varsity*, CUP) Controversial journalism professor Gerald Hannon is back in the classroom. Hannon was suspended from teaching duties by Ryerson Polytechnic University in November after revealing to the Toronto media that he worked part-time as a male prostitute.

At the time of the suspension, he was already under investigation by the university for comments he made in his freelance journalism class relating to paedophilia. Following the prostitution revelation, a second investigation was launched into Hannon's behaviour.

On Dec. 20, Ryerson released the results of the two investigations. The university found that in the first case, Hannon had not breached the limits of academic freedom with his comments on intergenerational sex.

Hannon says he believes intergenerational sex is not always harmful. He maintained throughout the investigation that he mentioned this view only in passing to his class and that it was not a subject of class discussion.

But the second investigation found Hannon guilty of violating the collective agreement. The investigation found that "Mr. Hannon's decision to raise this issue [of his prostitution activities] at this crucial juncture" was "conduct unbecoming the status of a member of the teaching community of an academic institution."

Consequently the university issued Hannon a letter of discipline, but it also said he was allowed to resume his teaching duties until his contract expires in May.

CUPE local 3904, the union representing part-time instructors at Ryerson, has filed a grievance against the second ruling and the disciplinary letter. "Had Hannon just said that he was a prostitute, that would not be unbecoming conduct. But because he described particular acts in explicit detail, the administration thinks this impinges on its reputation and effects their ability to do business," said Angela Ross, staff representative for the union.

This is the second grievance filed

by the union regarding the Hannon case. The union and Hannon filed a grievance back in November following his original suspension. Ross says there will be one hearing to arbitrate both grievances.

John Miller, chair of Ryerson's School of Journalism says he is glad Hannon is back teaching

"We are happy that Gerald Hannon is back in class and we hope to get on with the business we are in, which is teaching journalism," he said.

Stacey Langbein, a student of Hannon's, says she was pleasantly surprised when she heard he was being allowed to teach again. "I did not expect that Ryerson would have the courage to take an ethical stand and I thought they would cave to special interest groups," she said.

Langbein says it was wrong for Ryerson to ban Hannon from the campus and not allow him to talk to his students during the investigation.

"To me what they were saying was that Gerald Hannon was dangerous to students," she said.

Hannon says he will not allow the controversy to affect the way he teaches and the issues he brings up in class. "I am not going to let the administration restrict what I do. I am not a cautious person," he said.

During the investigations, Hannon says he received support from academics all across the country and from a surprising variety of students. "People have had strong reservations about all sorts of aspects, but overall they have been supportive," he said.

Hannon's colleague and fellow journalism teacher Don Obe agrees that support for Hannon was mixed among faculty. "The whole faculty is unanimously behind Gerald Hannon to hold his views in man-boy relationships, as long as he does not push his views on his class. On the other hand, some members of the staff are troubled because he is ready to talk so openly about everything he does in his private

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