

Racism: Queen's white supremacist filmed for TV documentary

By David Chokroun
TORONTO (CUP)

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY HAS DECIDED TO allow Queen's University has decided to allow footage taken of a white supremacist student in a university classroom to be used in a television documentary.

The filming of part of the documentary at Queen's without the permission of university administrators caused some controversy last month.

In mid-September, a production company making a film on the Canadian racist right-wing for CTV filmed a second-year history class at the university. One of the members of the class is a member of the white-supremacist Heritage Front. Queen's reacted by protesting to the network, asking that the footage not be used, according to university vice-principal Tom Williams. However, the university decided to allow the use of the footage if the instructor consented. "At this point the professor has agreed to let us use the footage. He's signed a release and we consider the matter closed," said the documentary's associate producer.

On Oct. 4, the associate producer defended

the actions of the film crew to the class. "We wanted to keep our visit to Queen's as quiet as possible," he told them.

The objective of the filming was to capture a normal day in the life of the Heritage Front member, he said, and this would have been impossible had the crew gone through official channels. The associate producer says he is worried that the controversy at Queen's might derail the documentary, which is still incomplete. "None of [the white supremacists] are under the illusion that we're on their side, but there's a certain rapport that we've built up over a period of months. If the publicity gathers more steam, it could be disastrous," he said.

The professor whose class was filmed, Geoff

Smith, said he was writing an article on the incident for "a large national newspaper." Smith would make no further comment.

The Heritage Front tried to have criminal charges brought against the newspaper on the grounds that it promoted hatred against white males.

Sean Purdy, a Queen's history instructor and a member of the International Socialists (IS), says his group was also contacted by the film crew. Purdy himself was interviewed for the documentary. "The idea was to show the anti-racist presence on campus," Purdy said.

Purdy added that while the Heritage Front member who was filmed is not active in recruiting for the group at Queen's, she has been active in other ways. "One of her roles in Kingston is to funnel information back to Toronto," Purdy said. Over the last year, the student has attended meetings of leftist and anti-racist groups

on campus, presumably to gather information. "She spied on the IS, and she also actually attended a meeting of an anti-fascist group," Purdy said.

According to Purdy, the student played part in the demise of Surface, a left-leaning Queen's paper that was shut down last year after criticism from conservative elements on campus. The Heritage Front tried to have criminal charges brought against the newspaper on the grounds that it promoted hatred against white males. "Her sort of launching-off point was to criticize Surface. She thought it was racist, and she wrote in letters under a pseudonym criticizing the paper," Purdy said.

Purdy added that the student's identity has become well-known at Queen's, and that since classes began this fall, she has kept a lower profile than before. "She put up posters and left pamphlets in study carrels in the libraries," Purdy said.

Since the filming, the Heritage Front member has dropped Smith's class, as well as a course on race relations, Purdy said. She could not be reached for comment.

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