

# The legacy of soc/anth

By Peter Gillis, Billy Zane and Melanie Ascot

In January of 1997, Jennifer Caseley wrote a news story for the then Panther Prints, detailing a long history of problems in the Sociology/Anthropology department.

The article related twenty years of reviews, infighting, violations of rights, and a general policy of 'turning a blind eye' adopted by the administration. The following two-part story will review many of the original points put forward by Caseley, will add to the chronology of events, and will examine the results of her piece. We will see the documented actions of the Soc/Anth department, and the following reactions of the governors of this university.

An asterisk (\*) denotes that name has been changed.

Tensions first arose in the Soc/Anth department in 1978 during the proposed joining of the two then-separate faculties.

At times, the conflicts were so great that there was talk of completely eliminating one of the two departments as a solution. These tensions continued through fall of 1981, when the Senate adopted the recommendation of an Adjudicatory Committee.

This recommendation required a joint major as the main programme for both faculties. This joint major was to be instituted over a period of four semesters, with the project to be finalized by January of 1983.

A second report, released by the Senate Ad Hoc Review Committee that January, indicated that the experiment was a failure and that no joint major

was ever attempted in practice.

The report suggested two quick remedies for the continuing Soc/Anth conflict. "(a) for the meaningless competition: firm structures and administration. (b) for the personal factors: surgery, if necessary."

The review further recommended, as a solution to administrative problems, that a single Chairperson be hired immediately, preferably from outside the department.

This final recommendation was ignored and a Rotating Chair policy was instituted instead.

According to this policy, each faculty member was required to serve a one year term as Chair of the department. This rotation was designed to force professors to take responsibility of the affairs of the department, and to curb the temptation to abuse the power of the office.

In 1988, the Robb Report on the Rotating Chair policy was released.

The report described the previous five years as the 'Golden Era' of the Soc/Anth department. Cases of infighting were fewer, and there was an increased willingness to cooperate.

Though there were some problems with continuity and varying styles of leadership, the Rotating Chair policy was recommended for another six years, with a review to take place in 1994. Still, it was brought to the attention of the staff that there existed a serious lack of women in the department. This was to remain for several years to come.

A new review was completed in May 1991, written by Dr. John Crossley and Dr. Pieter de Vries.

De Vries, a former student and assistant professor of

the department, recommended the elimination of the Rotating Chair policy and a search for an external candidate for a three-year term. The review suggested that a semi-permanent Chair would facilitate the creation of an Honors program and add much needed continuity. The review further stated that: "Every effort should be made to fill the position with a suitable woman candidate."

This recommendation was ignored and the Rotating Chair policy continued for another three years. At that time, there were still no women faculty members.

Fall of 1994 saw the return of the underlying conflicts as the Rotating Chair policy was eliminated. Though the Robb Report had called for a Senate review of the Rotating Chair policy before changes were made, no such review took place.

Satadal Dasgupta was subsequently appointed to a

three-year term as Chair of the department.

Following this, the next conflict affected students intending to graduate in 1995. Dasgupta, in conjunction with the Dean of Arts, approved sabbaticals for half of the faculty for Winter 1995. To this end, all graduating students were forced to readjust their schedules, and to take required 400-level courses during the Fall semester.

Fall of 1994 also bore witness to a charge of human rights violations.

When Laurie LeClair attempted to show the movie *Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death* in her Anthropology 100 course, some posters protesting the movie were put up around campus.

A Soc/Anth professor caught removing the posters was charged under the Human Rights Act. No fines were ever levied.

Complaints increased the

fall of 1995.

That October, \*Rachel MacDonald, a student of Anthropology 201, sought help on one of her essay topics.

Confused by the question, she twice asked for advice from her professor, Bruce Holbrook. Still unsatisfied, she turned to Dan Wolf, who lent her two books on the subject.

The next day, Wolf was confronted by Holbrook who was insulted by what he considered Wolf's interference in one of his courses. He stated that Wolf's "behavior constituted an unwarranted intrusion into his class, and as such, was both unprofessional and uncollegial."

On the afternoon of October 31, 1995, Rachel once again turned to Wolf for help. She had received a mark of 49

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