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PARKDALE: LAW IN THE FILTHY LANE NO MORE?®

BY HART SCHWARTZ AND BOB COOPER

Page 4—OBITER DICTA— Monday, February 9, 1981

Up until last week, Osgoode's famous Parkdale Legal Clinic was the recipient of a bevy of "dirty" jokes. The Parkdale building had become the Queen Street Dust Bowl for many of the troglodyte students burrowing within its filthy confines. Students arriving each morning had to decide whether or not to cross a picket line of cockroaches that refused to enter the premises until conditions were brought up to illegal bachelorette standards.

Rumour has it that Metro Police, who have been keeping the place under surveillance, are convinced that only a bookie would feed 63 phone lines into an apparently abandoned warehouse. Safety concerns were also expressed: the hottest new game at the Parkdale Tavern across the street is no longer "galaxians," but placing bets on when the next client will take a nose dive off the clinic's front steps. Parkdale, once dubbed the "Cadillac of legal clinics" by "Fred the Zed" was about as safe as a '72 Pinto in a demolition derby.

Alas, (At last?) redemption is in sight. Thanks to a massive "collective" effort (what other kind of effort is there at Parkdale), the twenty-one Osgoode students in the program (directed by the one student from Windsor with expertise in pollution matters) mounted a massive painting and clean-up campaign. Parkdale staff have even promised that the floors might be cleaned next week, and, following that, who knows? Maybe lights will be placed in the interview rooms so students will feel safe with their criminal clients, or vice versa. Maybe chairs will be found that don't collapse with the weight of our heavier clients. Maybe doors will be found which these clients can fit through, (the present ones are more aptly suited for a gnome's home in the side of a tree). Maybe tables will be placed in the rooms, so clients don't think they have walked into a Bob Newhart encounter group. Maybe an adequate sign will be placed at the front of the building, so people won't

mistake it for a pinball warehouse; no wonder our caseload is so low this term! Maybe the cardboard boxes cluttering the front street-level windows could be replaced with a more appropriate display.

The Parkdale Clean-up Team (the student one, that is) are holding back from the necessary final assault. Although all feel that the clinic must provide adequate legal services to the low-income community in at least a middle income aesthetic form, they are waiting for the clinic's funders and organizers to provide direction, money, or overalls. Either way, it is everybody's hope that in a few weeks "Law in the Filthy Lane," will at least be replaced with a metaphorical "Driving on the Shoulder."