

Teacher launches lawsuit against college

Montreal (CUP) — A Dawson College teacher who claims he was maligned by the college with accusations of sexual harassment is launching a \$200,000 lawsuit for defamation of character.

Psychology teacher Mark Cummins said he is suing director of personnel Eric Bernier, as well as New School co-directors Greta Nemiroff and Pat Powers. Cummins alleges they defamed his character when they asked him to leave the New School and undergo psychiatric evaluation last semester.

The complaints stemmed from Cummins allegedly touching female students on the knees or shoulder, and comments he made to a female student at a party.

Cummins said the female student told him she was looking for volunteers to fulfill a fantasy and that he responded if he was not married with two children, he would volunteer.

Under the college's sexual harassment policy, all

formal complaints must be directed to the ombudsman or the college nurse. When a case involves a teacher, it is sent to the director of personnel.

"I have no idea what he is thinking about," said Greta Nemiroff, denying that they maligned Cummins, "I did exactly what the college said and they directed the student (who filed the first case) to Eric Bernier."

Both Powers and Nemiroff claimed that all procedures had been followed, and that the case had been properly handled.

Cummins, who was given a medical leave of absence from the New School in late October, said he was asked to have a psychiatric examination and was subsequently told not to return to the New School, regardless of the outcome of the exam.

He also stated that the sexual harassment charge was not filed until two days after he was asked to leave.

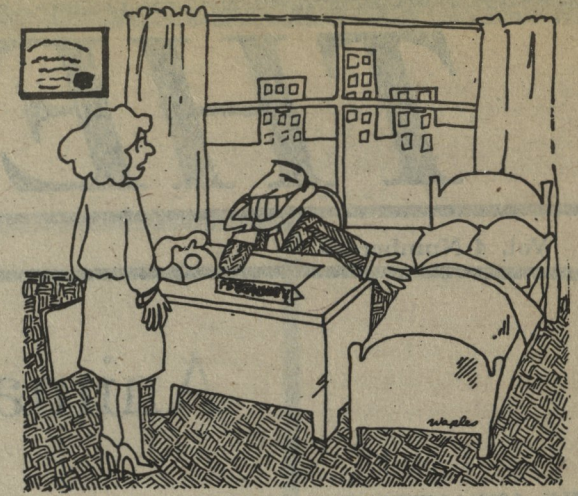
Cummins said the complaints were compiled together and taken out of context. He denied that any of the attention he gave students or staff had been sexual.

"My complaint is not with the sexual harassment policy per se, but when things I did fall under that (policy), I wonder what doesn't," he said.

One of the main complaints was from a student who, according to Cummins, asked him privately whether he ever "checked her out."

The student, who was in Cummins' Human Sexuality course titled 'Secrets', said she had mentioned in a discussion of body image that she felt she was attractive but that her "bum was too fat."

Cummins said that when she approached him privately, he told her that



he did notice her and said "sometimes when I look at you I notice that you have a nice bum."

He maintained that the remarks were not sexual.

"If somebody says that their nose is ugly, if I care about them, (I would say) your nose is fine." When asked whether he still felt this had been an appropriate response, Cummins replied, "Perfectly, given the context."

A source close to the case said up to five complaints may have been filed against Cummins.

Cummins said both Bernier and Nemiroff refused to tell him the cru-

cial number of complaints but that he understood it was more than one.

Attempts to contact students involved in the case were unsuccessful and Nemiroff said she would recommend against them coming forward to talk to the press.

"(Students would be) putting themselves in serious point of liability," she said.

Cummins, who said he "doesn't give a damn" about the money involved in the case, but only wants to pay his lawyer's fees, expects to file his civil action suit soon.

Let them wear tweed II

Toronto (CUP) — In a dramatic move, the University of Toronto Governing Council has voted overwhelmingly to reject the administrations proposed Sexual Harassment Policy.

A motion to refer the policy back to the administration passed a vote of 25 to 7 March 6, and is considered to be a major victory for student and staff groups who considered the policy to be too weak.

"This is a victory for the victims of sexual harassment," said Brian Burchell, full-time undergraduate representative to Governing Council who presented the 'refer back' motion to Council.

The motion instructs Provost Joan Foley, who is responsible for the administration's policy, to re-evaluate the policy's four-month limit for launching grievances. The time-limit has been a major stumbling block between vari-

ous campus constituencies who have been negotiating a code over the past three years.

The U of T Faculty Association had recently lobbied for a two-month limit, while a coalition of student and staff groups have lobbied heavily for a six-month code.

"Council sent a clear message that they won't settle for anything less than six months," said Terry Johnson, Liaison Officer for the Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students. "I was elated after the meeting,"

UFTA Vice-president and chief sexual harassment negotiator, Hank Rogers, however, was quite disappointed at the results.

"I don't know what's going to happen," he said. "The problem is now with the Provost. Governing Council's vote may mean that there will be no policy for several years."

Sexual Harassment Research Project At UPEI

by Don Mazer & Beth Percival
UPEI Psychology Dept.

Two weeks ago a number of UPEI students received a questionnaire in the mail. What they got was a survey about sexual harassment. It's a research project we, both professors in the Psychology Department, have undertaken with funding from the Grant in Aid of Small Universities at UPEI. We've distributed questionnaires to a random sample of students and to faculty. Next we'll be surveying staff to complete the picture of the perceptions and experiences of those who study and work in the university community.

In recent years there has been a growing interest within universities about people's experiences of what they regard as unwelcome and unwanted

behaviors, comments, and gestures of a sexual nature. Sometimes these behaviors are referred to as sexual harassment. Recently the Netted Gem ran a full page article about a study of sexual harassment at Simon Fraser University, and UPEI has a Presidential Committee on Sexual Harassment. The committee is preparing a draft policy on sexual harassment for our university that includes procedures for dealing with complaints and an educational component. The adoption of a policy will, no doubt, be a subject of interest and debate on campus in the near future. That makes this a particularly important time to study sexual harassment at UPEI.

At present there is no clear, agreed upon definition of sexual harassment, so one of the things addressed in the survey is how different people de-

fine it. People are given descriptions of a variety of incidents and we ask whether or not they would call each one sexual harassment. The survey also asks for perceptions of how commonly they occur, and whether or not people have had the experiences. A wide range of opinion is being sought, and, of course, complete confidentiality and anonymity are assured.

We would like to encourage those students who received the questionnaire to complete and return them, and to thank those who have already returned them. Your cooperation is very much appreciated and is essential to the success of the project. If you didn't receive one but would be willing to fill one out, you may pick up a questionnaire from either of us, Prof. Beth Percival or Prof. Don Mazer at the Psychology Department in Memorial Hall.