Prof Goes To Human Rights Commission

By Isabel Vincent

TORONTO (CUP) – A Trinity College ethics professor who filed a sexual discrimination complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission last month says the college refused to deal with her charges.

In her complaint, Marsha Hewitt, an assistant professor at Trinity College's faculty of divinity, said she was denied a tenured position on the basis of sex, marital status and family status.

The complaint, filed against Trinity College and a senior faculty member, states the professor rebuked her for not attending college social functions because she had to breastfeed her baby, and speculated about a possible sexual liaision with another faculty member.

"It's an outrage to my integrity," said Hewitt. "From the moment I came to the college I was being harassed. I'm amazed that in 1988 a woman can have her career destroyed because of breastfeeding her baby."

Dean of divinity Peter Slater, who was named in the complaint, refused to return calls.

Hewitt is also upset that appeals within the college seemed to go nowhere.

Gwen Brooks, Trinity's sexual harassment officer, is also Provost Robert Painter's executive assistant. Hewitt said Brooks went to the provost on her behalf and was turned away.

Trinity College is affiliated with the University of Toronto, so Hewitt went to U of T sexual harassment officer Nancy Adamson. Adamson said there was nothing she could do: The university's sexual harassment policy does not extend to professors whose salaries are 100 per cent paid by an affiliate.

"There was nothing for me here," said Hewitt. "Entrusted myself to the complaint process within the college, but it was frustrating."

Hewitt approached Trinity Provost Painter herself last November but said little help was forthcoming. Painter declined comment, saying "It's not my business to educate you (the reporter)" on these matters.

Hewitt said when she was hired in July 1986 on a probationary basis she was assured that if she completed her dissertation and published a few articles she would be given a tenured teaching position.

Hewitt said although she met these requirements, the job was advertised. Hewitt said a search committee that included the senior faculty member she has accused of sexual harassment offered the position to an American who had not yet been granted landed immigrant status.

Fred Wilson, president of the U of T Faculty Association, said it was questionable whether Trinity complied with federal regulations when the American was hired.

According to Canadian immigration requirements, jobs must first be offered to qualified Canadians and permanent residents.

Said Hewitt: "I hope that Trinity in future will think three times before they treat a woman in this fashion. This should be a warning to women that the forces of patriarchy are very strong. I have to do what I think is right. I am the ethics professor, after all."

A charge of sexual harassment at St. Mary's University in Halifax took nine months to resolve. Fourth-year sociology student Rachel Osborne laid a complaint against 29 football team players for an awards ceremony in the student pub which included prizes for team members who had "fucked the ugliest girl, who fucked the fattest girl, for the guy who got a blowjob from a retarded woman."

Twelve negotiated redress with the university's sexual harassment officer. Five didn't show up, and the 12 who refused to settle were found not guilty.

The final report on the incident was released nine months later, after Osborne took her case to the commercial media.

Said Osborne, "Initially, we put our faith in the system. I can say in retrospect that it was a mistake."

Graphic: The Brunswickan

Mr. Jones **by Brian Linkletter**

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