

# Profs at odds over harassment policy

by Tamara Dinelle

The discussion of "freedom of speech" versus "political correctness" has become a volatile issue on many university campuses in recent years. Professor Matjın Yaqzan's article on date rape, published in the student newspaper at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton last fall, has stirred much debate over the fine line between his "academic freedoms" and whether his opinions cross the boundaries of "respectful exchanges." Should a university be a place where anything and everything goes, or should there be regulations regarding "respectful conduct and speech?"

Dalhousie has been grappling with this problem for some time. A Proposed Policy on Discriminatory Harassment will be presented to the university Senate on Monday, February 14. The document is the work of the Committee to Develop a Policy on Sexism and Racism, appointed by Dalhousie President Howard Clark in November 1990.

The committee was set up to draft a policy to deal with discriminatory harassment of all kinds within the university, so that "groups that are typically marginalized can fully participate in university life." An initial draft of the policy was presented to Senate in April 1992, and was sent back for revision. After open forums and discussions, the committee

drafted a second and third proposal. The latter will be presented to Senate on Monday.

Already professors are arguing over its implications.

Members of the committee have come out strongly in favour of the product of three years of their work.

Sue Sherwin, a Philosophy professor on the committee, feels the policy will be "setting standards for the realm of respectful exchanges and encourage respect for diversity."

Nina Butlin, a PhD student in French who is the only student on the committee, said the policy is extremely important for students and staff. "It provides a place for guidelines to be developed," which she said Dalhousie needs badly. "The alternative to this is nothing."

As it stands now there is no policy which regulates or monitors incidents of racism or other discriminatory behaviour at the university, although there is a sexual harassment policy in effect.

However, there is also another side of the issue which has been debated just as vehemently. A recent issue of the *Dalhousie News* featured an opinion article by Dr. Robert Martin, a professor of philosophy, who feels that if the policy is passed it will "infringe on academic rights and freedoms," and that problems cannot be solved by "restricting speech."

His article stresses what he describes as the ambiguity of the pro-

## Stated aims of the Proposed Policy on Discriminatory Harassment

- an articulation of the rights and responsibilities of members of the university
- a definition of discriminatory harassment and the limits of protected free expression
- a commitment to an education program
- the establishment of an ongoing committee to oversee the implementation of this policy
- a procedure for mediating alleged violations of the policy and a means of referring unresolved issues to the appropriate bodies for disciplinary action

posed policy which "does not clearly define its rules," and will lead to "behavioural policing."

Sherwin disagrees. Since the first draft of the policy was presented to Senate in 1992, it has been watered down. The main difference between previous versions and the draft to be presented to Senate on Monday is the lack of any punitive aspect to the policy.

"The policy as drafted will have very little prohibitive power, and will instead encourage mediation," said Sherwin. She feels that the pro-

posal has "no power to police," and that it will work "in favour of freedom of speech for those who are now silenced by discriminatory harassment."

Martin feels that other universities which have adopted similar policies have had bad experiences as a result, and that Dal should beware of making the same mistake.

"Wherever this policy is in effect it has done more harm than good. It is too open to abuse," he said.

Both Butlin and Sherwin disagree, and said that if anything the university can learn from these ex-

periences. Furthermore, Sherwin stresses the lack of any punitive action within the policy. "Our goal is not zero tolerance but zero occurrence."

The committee also included Robert Berard, a professor of education, Mayann Francis of the Employment Equity Office, President's Advisor on Women Barbara Harris, and Eric McKee, Vice President Student Services.

If passed the policy will be up for review in three years.

# Modern cupid works in mysterious ways

by Lana Larder

Valentine's Day is the year's most romantic day. February 14 is sacred to lovers.

The history of Valentine's Day may have begun in an unromantic way, with two Christian saints named Valentine who suffered martyrdom in the second half of the third century.

In ancient Rome, young men drew names of young women from a box every February 14, to choose a partner for the feast. Christian clergy objected and substituted the names of saints for young women.

In rural Europe in the Middle Ages people believed that birds began to mate on February 14.

In England in the 1400s, folklore held that the first person of the opposite sex whom one met on Valentine's Day would be one's true love.

By the 17th century sending Valentine cards to one's favourite began.

on the second floor of the SUB with a group of friends was Stephen Sinclair, a major in physics. Stephen was not embarrassed to admit what he is getting for his Valentine. "I'm going to buy her some hair dye," he said. He went on to say, "Valentine's Day is not a big deal, not like Christmas."



Rachel Weigers

Over in a crowded corner in the smoking section upstairs sat Rachel Wieggers, a first-year student. Rachel said, "No, I don't have a Valentine, but I would like someone who's very honest, a wonderful partner, natural and a free thinker." When asked if she hoped to get a Valentine she replied, "Yes, yes, yes." She called Valentine's Day "great, if people don't restrict it to couples. You should be friendly to everyone, show your feelings, tell them how much you love them."

At the Grawood, Tyri Chapman, a major in sociology, was sitting watching television with a friend. "I



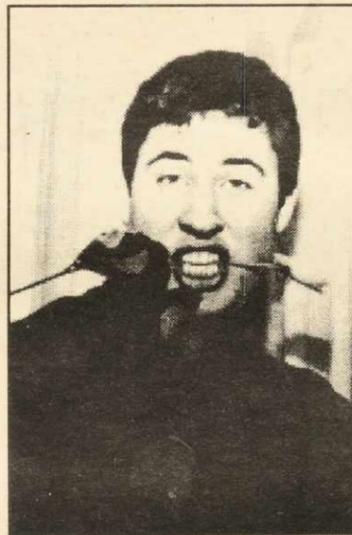
Tyri Chapman



Praveen Goel

have a Valentine and I love you Marcee," she said. "It's a sad day for people who don't have a mate. Society puts pressure on the lovenest. But if you do have a Valentine it's a beautiful day to celebrate."

Wandering into the Games Room, Praveen Goel, sporting a Braves hat said, "No, I don't have a Valentine, but my choice would be Claudia Schiffer." When asked what his most memorable Valentine's Day was, he replied, "Two years ago in '91, a lustful day and evening..."



Mike R. Cowie

Out through the SUB entrance, snow settling on everything, over to the Grad House. Mike R. Cowie, a major in theatre, sits with a friend. "I don't have a Valentine. I'm busy with my schedule from hell from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm." Mike wanted a Valentine who "would be happy getting good sex and still being my best friend." He felt, "Valentines Day is all right. Everybody needs to vent their cheesy feelings and it challenges people to be inventive."

At a table by the window, the sun pouring in, sat Lindsay Cook, a major in anthropology. "I don't have a Valentine, and if I could choose anyone I would probably pick someone from a different culture to show



Lindsay Cook

them how we celebrate. I will be giving out Jurassic Park cards to my friends, like the grade two cards I used to give out." Her most memorable Valentine's was "in grade eight, when my first boyfriend gave me a huge Hershey kiss and his dog ate it."

Shannon Webb didn't have a Valentine but if she could pick anyone, she said, "I would pick David Gahn, the lead singer from Depeche Mode." Her opinion on Valentines Day? "I usually hate it because I never had a boyfriend on Valentine's Day."

In the cafeteria, bustling with students gobbling their lunches, was Margaret Broderick, a part-time student. "I don't have a Valentine, but if I could choose anyone, I would pick Kevin Costner." She added, "I don't imagine I'll have a Valentine in the future. I have a husband and have been married for 28 years."

Valentine's Day remains, as ever, a day to express love.



Stephen Sinclair

Valentine's Day sure has changed. A week before the big day, lounging