
CANADIAN TEACHER HARRASSED FOR EXPRESSING VIEWS ON HOMOSEXUALITY

By Roy Waller

An article in the May 18, 2003 edition of the *Edmonton Sun* details the consequences suffered by British Columbia schoolteacher and counselor Chris Kempling for publicly stating his views on homosexuality.

Mr. Kempling's troubles began when he was handed a one-month suspension from his teaching position by the British Columbia College of Teachers, for writing a series of letters to newspapers setting forth his opinions about the way local school sex-education programs present homosexuality to children.

Kempling, a Christian, pointed out that many religions consider homosexuality to be immoral. Further, he cited scientific studies which show instability and health risks associated with a gay lifestyle, all of which were omitted from mention in the school programs.

The *Sun* story says that Mr. Kempling specifically addressed his comments to the public forum of the newspapers' letters column, refraining from sharing his viewpoints in the classroom.

But that didn't spare Kempling from being suspended from his job. He received virtually no negative feedback concerning his letters from other members of the faculty, students, or parents. However, the College of Teachers charged that "Mr. Kempling used his status as a teacher to give credibility to his views."

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Following his suspension, Kempling sought assistance from his professional union, the British Columbia Teachers Federation. After initially offering him some legal help, the union then categorically refused any further support. "His views are antithetical to our position about the inclusion of gays, lesbians, transgendered and two-spirited people in our society," said the union president.

Neither would the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association take up the free speech issue. "If there are gay students in that school - and you can bet your bottom dollar there are - they're going to keep their heads down and they certainly aren't going to resort to Mr. Kempling for advice," declared Association president John Dixon. Dixon also suggested that Kempling's religious beliefs would bias his performance in his counselor's duties.

Kempling's church, however, contributed \$30,000 to his defense fund, and several voices in the media spoke out positively on the matter. One Canadian newspaper, *The Victoria Times-Colonist*, noted the irony that the College of Teachers would focus so intently on the homosexuality issue, "yet it can't bring itself to get rid of demonstrably rotten teachers, and can only issue reprimands to some who have had improper relationships with students—or, in one recent case, flashed them."

Mr. Kempling told the *Sun* that the College's ruling has the potential to end his teaching career because its decision will be distributed to educational institutions throughout the continent. ■