

One answer to University sexism

Last term the University Feminists formed the Women's Rights Defense Committee. We would like to tell you about the Committee and why we believe it is necessary.

Women on the campus, as elsewhere in society, face incidents of discrimination every day. The H.E.W. investigation last spring documented the University's sexist hiring, promotion and salary practices. The University's efforts to improve the situation are moving at a snail's pace. In fact, from all available evidence, the budget cuts will eliminate women disproportionately from positions; and the administration has taken no measures to prevent this.

As serious as discrimination in employment is, it is only a small part of the problem. Following are the kinds of incidents which have come to our attention: We are asked to buy expensive textbooks which either contain erroneous and derogatory information about women or offend at all. We were expected to attend an instructional movie which was billed as a "skin flick," which portrayed women as stupid and silly, and which used a woman's nudity unnecessarily to attract the class's attention.

We take classes from professors who use class time to insult women in general and women in their professions in particular. (This kind of behavior is not limited to the campus: When U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Douglas spoke at the law school this year, he made derogatory comments about women's rights and was astounded when nobody laughed.) We are expected to smile and accept flirtations, unpleasant jokes, and comments about our bodies as the price for permission to register for a course, for a good grade, and for continued employment.

Money needed

One thousand people gathered in the streets last Tuesday to protest President Nixon's criminal and irresponsible decision to blockade the harbors of North Vietnam. During the course of the demonstration 37 individuals were arrested, the majority of whom were guilty of no other crime than exercising their constitutionally guaranteed rights of freedom of speech and assembly. Many arrests were needlessly violent and in flagrant violation of the civil rights of the individuals involved, a number of whom were in no way active participants in the demonstration.

Whatever the legal outcome the expenses of bail and legal aid will impose a severe burden, regardless of guilt or innocence. Bails ranged from \$150 to \$750 and lawyers fees are expected to exceed \$200 per person. A conservative estimate of total expenses exceeds \$5000.

An organizational meeting was held Saturday night by those arrested to develop strategy to deal with these issues. To successfully carry on their defense these individuals are calling upon the community for support.

Both legal and financial support is crucial to a successful defense. A desk will be set up on the EMU terrace this week to solicit contributions for the 9th of May Defense Fund. Collection jars will also be placed at various locations in the community. Dance and movie benefits are also being considered.

Arrests centered in the vicinity of Pearl street between 11th and 12th and the tennis courts at 16th and Alder. Witnesses are desperately needed; observers of any arrests are strongly urged to contact ASUO Legal Services, room 307 in the EMU.

These people need your help!

Hale Powell
Greg Skillman
Bill MacDaniel

As graduate students we hear explicit statements that men are given priority by our departments in the awarding of

fellowships. We hear male colleagues and professors say we do not make good researchers and they will not hire us. A particularly insidious problem are the correspondence and the letters of reference which go back and forth in sealed envelopes between the men who run universities. Women have discovered something about the content of several of these letters and have found the content to be prejudiced and sexist. All women employees and students are subjected to prejudiced assessment of their work and qualifications, doubts which would never occur if they were men.

On campus and in the surrounding area we are subjected to an alarming number of physical and sexual assaults. These range from offensive remarks to men exposing themselves at knife point to attempted rapes to rape-murders. Only the most serious of these incidents make it into the papers.

Women students have to wait three to four months for an appointment with the Health Service gynecologist, who is there only two hours a week (and that thanks to the University Feminists). Staff members, overwhelmingly women living on no more than students, can't use the Health Service at all. Staff are often not allowed out of the building on their breaks, because they are not trusted to return in time. EMU staff are not allowed to mingle with students or they get a reprimand in their file.

Only in the last year has there been any open swimming in the men's pool and there are still hours of recreation swimming for men only. The women's pool is small, old and full of bacteria; it is a symbol of the well-known discrimination against women's athletics. In other words, there is an absurd class system on this campus—the pool for men, Faculty Club for faculty, EMU and Health Service for students, and very little for staff.

Our student fees go to support a student newspaper with a sexist editorial policy. The Emerald misreports and fails to report women's issues. The Emerald prints inane commentaries which ridicule us. We are glad to see that the Emerald has just changed an editorial policy of referring to us in a demeaning way and differently from men. Specifically, the Emerald referred to women by our first names (a review of Sylvia Plath's poetry referred to her as "Sylvia" throughout) or continuously prefaced our last name with Ms. Men were referred to by their last names only.

We could go on, there are other examples, but the picture should be clear: Women on this campus are living in an environment which constantly and overtly discriminates against us, insults us, physically assaults us, and continuously reminds us that we are thought to be weak, inferior and unimportant and had better stay that way. The most pervasive and destructive aspect of sexism on the campus may well be the fact that virtually nothing about women is taught here. The proper study of mankind is man, apparently.

This discrimination is economic, professional and social. It destroys our ability to earn a living, our careers, our self-confidence and self-respect. Sometimes our health and our lives.

There is no grievance procedure at the university for dealing with these problems. Women have complained individually about some of the examples above and have accomplished little except to endanger their grades, their jobs, and their personal files. An employee is supposed to take her-his grievance to her-his immediate superior and on up the line to the vice presidents. Yet these are the people who have been perpetuating sexism on the campus in the first place. This in an intimidation procedure, not a grievance procedure.

The Women's Rights Defensive Committee was formed to deal with these

problems. We are not members of the university power structure, and you can speak to us without fear of reprisals. Our goal is to help women facing discrimination in whatever way you need help. We will abide by whatever restrictions you place on the use of the information you give us. If you just want to talk to someone who will know you're telling the truth and aren't crazy, call us up or come and see us.

If you want to enter a complaint anonymously in our file, you can do that. We plan to build up an information file on the kinds of sexism that goes on at this campus. This kind of documentation is very important. Too often we let offensive incidents pass by, and so they continue to happen to many women, and each one feels it is happening to her alone. Imagine the effect when a university department is told that 10 or 20 or 30 women complained about the same course, or personnel procedure, or text book.

If you would like the help in filing a formal complaint, to the person who committed the offense or to someone else, we will support you and go with you. If you want to make a more direct and forceful protest, we'll help.

The philosophy behind the Defense Committee is that women acting together are much stronger than the same women acting individually. When you act alone, you can be humiliated, disregarded, treated as deviant. It is more difficult to treat an organized group of women this way. There is still risk involved, of course. Each of us has to decide for herself whether the consequences of continued discrimination are worse than the consequences of action.

You can write us anytime: Women's Rights Defense Committee, P.O. Box 3244, Eugene 97403. Monday through Thursday, 3-5 p.m., you can call us at 686-5038 or you can drop in to see us in Room 605 P.L.C. We are sorry we don't have a full-time office, next Fall we will. 'Til then we hope you'll make the extra effort to get in touch.

Dennis Gilbert-SUAW

Protests not condemned

Editor's Note: Dennis Gilbert is a member of the Students' Union Against the War. SUAW representatives criticized the Emerald coverage of a Thursday press conference. Following is their reply to that story as well as the complete text of a statement presented at the press conference.

Students' Union Against the War noted several errors of fact and emphasis in the Emerald story on the Thursday news conference.

Misrepresented was the fact that the various anti-war groups specifically did not condemn the acts of destruction and war supporting institutions in Tuesday's march, as they have done in past years. There was a feeling of unity of purpose and seriousness that the story did not convey. The statement of Students' Union Against the War and New University Conference were completely left out of the story, even though these are the existing campus anti-war organizations.

The only correct reference specifically to SUAW—none to NUC—was that it "urged continued demonstrations and responsibility on the students' part." Presumably the "student responsibility" part of the statement came in the context of an answer to a question about parade permits. The SUAW representative said "marchers should not flaunt the law, but the absence of a parade permit would and should not stop protest of the war any more than the Constitution stops Nixon from waging war or stops the Supreme Court from refusing to rule on the constitutionality of the war."

The SUAW-NUC statement follows: "Students' Union Against the War supports and works with all people working to get the U.S. government out of Indochina and for real self-determination for the Indochinese peoples. I'd like to stress the kinds of things we're working on that others may not cover.

"At this time it is important that Americans show their concern in every way they can, and we support all means of doing this. We support and will help with all demonstrations which show support for the Indochinese and show disapproval of U.S. war policy and the institutions that aid the war. There will be a demonstration this evening and SUAW supports it.

"It's important that people understand what the war is really about. Our government has lied to us, and the Eugene-Springfield news media does not contain a lot of significant information. We are making leaflets with facts and explanations. There are too many people trying to rationalize what the U.S. is doing with total disregard of reality. We hope people will read our information. We also will speak to groups and show films and slides.

"It's important to show that the American people do not consider the Indochinese peoples as their enemy. As a way of doing this, SUAW is working on getting a sister-city in North Vietnam for Eugene.

"There's a lot more that's being done to end the war which we aid and support, like talking with Congressmen, inviting speakers, and working for people running for office.

"SUAW hopes everyone wakes up and takes some concrete action to stop the war.

"The U.S. government was wrong in Vietnam from the start. If you don't understand this, or if you don't understand why our government has stayed in Indochina, then take the time to find out.

"The American people were used. Our labor, resources, and lives were used, and for what? We've got to stop being used.

"If you think the war doesn't effect you, then you're being used. Wages that don't keep up with inflation is a war tax. Unemployment and speed-ups are war taxes. Using our resources to build bombs instead of health care is a war tax. And if you think you can live free while others are being destroyed in your name, you're fooling yourself.

"And next, if you're worried about honor and surrender, you're love of the United States is being used. Step back and look what has happened. The U.S. government was wrong in Vietnam from the start. The majority of Americans could have seen this—but we never got the chance. Our government lied and withheld information. But now most of us understand enough to want the U.S. out of Indochina. Now what does our government say? Our honor is at stake, we are asking for surrender.

"We say: Whose honor? Who is surrendering? It's not the American people. It's Richard Nixon's honor and his people. Nixon had his chance to get out. If Nixon is forced out, it will be his self-defined honor that is lost. It will be a victory for Americans and Indochinese."