

Loan defaulters face garnishing

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government will garnish the pay or pensions of 46,860 current or former employees if they do not meet demands to repay \$68 million in defaulted student loans, Education Secretary T.H. Bell said Monday.

Bell said it "is the beginning, the kickoff of a new game in collecting on our loans." The deadbeats on the federal payroll are among 800,000 ex-students who owe the government \$1.1 billion in loans.

Bell found the defaulters by using a computer to check the Social Security numbers and last names of 10.3 million past or present civil servants and military employees against a list of student loan defaulters.

The crackdown follows enactment two months ago of legislation authored by Sen. Charles H. Percy, R-Ill., that for the first time gives the government the authority to garnish up to 15 percent of the pay of student loan defaulters on its payroll.

Percy, joining Bell at a news conference, said the large number of defaulters in the government's employ "is really a slap in the face to every taxpayer in the country."

Bell also noted the defaulters were cutting into the amount of money available for loans to current students.

The computer match showed 46,860 present or former federal employees defaulted on 50,393 loans, some skipping out on more than one loan.

The loans, some dating back to the early 1960s, were made under four heavily subsidized programs: Federally Insured Student Loans, Guaranteed Student Loans, National Direct Student Loans, and National Defense Student Loans.

The crackdown comes almost five years after a computer match by President Jimmy Carter's administration uncovered 17,657 defaulters on the government payroll, most in the military. Education department officials say about half the military workers and two-thirds of the civilians were convinced then to pay off the debts.

Bell said his department mailed letters Monday warning defaulters to work out a payment schedule in 60 days or, in 60 more days, face deductions of 15 percent of their biweekly paychecks. With a court order, federal prosecutors can garnish up to 25 percent of a federal worker's pay.

Bell said he also will dock pensioners' checks. "The federal government means to collect money that its employees borrowed in good faith from citizens of this country," he said.

Percy said people who feel the action is "too tough" should recall the case of a defaulter uncovered in a Senate hearing last July. He said the man, making \$36,000 yearly in a federal job, claimed "financial hardships" in refusing to repay a \$4,000 loan but was later found to have bought an \$18,000 sports car.



Photo by Bob Baker

Pipe replacement tears Alder

Blend liberal portions of dirt and gravel with Oregon precipitation and the result is gritty mud. Workers from the Eugene Water and Electric Board will serve up such a dish on Alder Street over the next three months, says Tom Santee, EWEB public information manager.

Crews began work excavating strips of Alder Street last week.

The reconstruction is scheduled to follow a slow course down Alder from East 19th Avenue to 11th Avenue for most of the winter. "It's certainly going to be an inconvenience," Santee says.

But such is the reality behind turn-of-the-faucet water delivery.

Workers will reconnect water service lines from a 70-year-old steel main beneath the shoulder of Alder to a cast-iron main directly below the middle of Alder. The steel main is reaching the end of its useful life, Santee says.

The iron main was installed 10 years ago to increase water flow to fire hydrants. It is a main of superior quality and capable of supplying domestic service as well as fire service, Santee says.

The gay experience: coming out in the 1980s

By Harry Esteve
Of the Emerald

Editor's Note: This is the second of a three-part series dealing with sexual attitudes, behaviors and problems on campus.

Before Debbie Kester came to the University, she worked as a prep cook in a restaurant in the Central Oregon town of Bend.

"I was involved in a relationship with another woman in the restaurant at the time," Kester remembers. And that led to her being laid off.

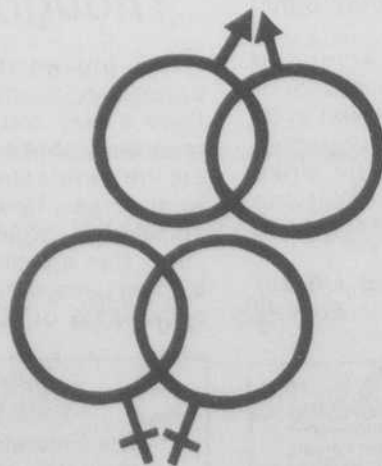
She was told work had slowed down, and she wouldn't be needed. But a week later the restaurant hired another prep cook.

Although that was not Kester's first lesbian relationship, it was the first for the Bend waitress with whom she had an affair. "I think I was looked upon as someone who had recruited her into that lifestyle," Kester says.

As a student, Kester has remained an outspoken lesbian, although she has tempered her openness with caution.

She says the University community is "safe" for homosexuals of either sex.

The University wasn't safe for a young gay man who was badly beaten last



Graphic by Shawn Bird

month by a group of men who didn't like his sexual orientation, says David Funk, director of the student-funded Gay and Lesbian Alliance.

Although violence against gays is rare, it does happen, Funk says.

"It's a real scary subject," he says. "Some people prefer not to think about it. But it's just something we have to live with — just as women have to live with the possibility of rape."

For most people, the subject of homosexuality — like the subject of rape — is uncomfortable at best. If it comes up in

conversation, it is usually in the form of a joke. When it comes up in college sexuality courses, students walk out of the lecture.

But for a large portion of the American population the subject of homosexuality is a fact of life.

Sexuality studies conducted over the past 30 years show an increase in homosexual behavior, says University psychology professor Harry Hoberman.

In some studies, 50 percent of the men answered "yes" to the question "Have you ever been strongly attracted to people of the same sex?" Rates among athletes were even higher, Hoberman says.

In one of the most famous — and most hotly contested — studies, sex researcher Albert Kinsey found 37 percent of males had experienced at least one homosexual contact to the point of orgasm.

When these studies are brought up in his class, Hoberman says the negative response is intense. "It's clear that people are very defensive."

Homosexuality rates are much higher than most people think, but students become uncomfortable when that's pointed out to them, Hoberman says.

Funk and other GALA members spend

much of their spare time participating in panel discussions on homosexuality and counseling other gays — ways they say can help ease uncomfortable feelings some people have about homosexuality.

How are gays treated at the University?

"There's an extreme range from open 'homophobia' — politely known as bigotry — to open acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle," Funk says. The numbers of students falling on either end seem to be equal, he says.

Funk says he hears rumors and stories of violence against gays. The most visible evidence of attitudes about gays often appears as bathroom graffiti.

"I mean, I walk into the head downstairs and I see 'kill fags' written on the wall," Funk says. Although he doesn't think the graffiti is a real reflection of society's beliefs, he says the messages bother him.

But what bothers Funk most is how poorly educated most people are about homosexuals.

"So many people have absolutely no information on the subject, which is amazing when you consider how many gay people there are out there."

No firm statistics on how many gay people are enrolled at the University

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