

Editorial

Maternity vital to University, society

Maternity leave benefits for employees at the University are good, and the University is actually one of the better environments for an expecting working woman. However, the University should develop a comprehensive maternity leave policy that includes:

- Eight weeks of paid leave for parents who are having or adopting a baby;
- Up to 10 additional weeks of unpaid leave to allow the parent to care for the infant;
- Existing options of "borrowing" sick-leave time or applying accrued vacation time to the maternity leave;
- A guarantee of being able to return to their job or a comparable job, with the option of coming back part-time before returning to full-time.

These measures are similar to those found in industry; for example, they closely match the maternity leave policy of Lotus Development, a leading edge software firm.

Such a policy would benefit University employees who feel crushed between economic need and the desire to have children. Many women rely on their income to support themselves and their families, and simply cannot afford to take six to eight weeks off, which is the length of recuperation after childbirth that many doctors recommend.

The decision to have children is a healthy one, and a woman's workplace should not inhibit her desire to be a mother. Likewise, men should be able to participate in the early rearing of their children, which is healthy for both the child and the father.

An immediate objection is the cost of such a policy; for every dollar spent supporting an employee on maternity leave, one dollar less can be spent on classes. Thus, the benefits that the University provides to its employees directly affect the benefits the University can provide to its students.

However, the University must act also as an employer, not just as a teacher, and clearly the burden of this policy would be easier on the University than on the parents.

The burden is similar to that faced by employers who have employees who leave for two weeks every summer to participate in the National Guard.

The other critical aspect of the policy is the time a parent can spend with a newborn, providing the infant with a sense of belonging that will stay with the child for the rest of his life.

This is termed "bonding" by psychologists, referring to the special bond that occurs between parent and infant.

With the proposed policy, a parent can spend up to 4 months with the infant, providing it with the special attention that will shape the child's early development. The length of this period would depend on the parent, who can use sick leave or vacation time to pay for this time.

The effect would be to allow a parent to spend this time without committing career suicide.

With 52 million women currently working outside the home, 80 percent of whom are likely to have children during their working lives, the question of maternity leave and benefits is vital to society, and it is one that is being worked out hesitantly now.

Women have become a vital part of the work force; America cannot afford to squander the skills they bring to the job market. At the same time, parental concerns are central to society, and good child rearing is essential to the growth and development of tomorrow's citizens.

The University should investigate ways to establish and take a strong stand with its employees and assert the importance of new parents and the time they spend with their children.

GARY MARZETT
OF ADDITIONAL PAPERS
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Letters

Pro DeFazio

Bruce Long supports the Contras, who torture Nicaraguan peasants and community workers (see Amnesty International or America's Watch reports, or talk to Eugene-area Witness for Peace delegates who've been there).

This policy shames America. Peter DeFazio understands the challenge and opportunities for U.S. policy in Central America. He opposes contra aid. He knows who and what the contras are.

If ever there was a choice on a crucial issue of our time, it's before us in the 4th District congressional election.

Call 683-3950 and volunteer a few hours with the DeFazio campaign if you're a person who cares about this.

Dan Goldrich
DeFazio supporter

Crucifixion

It was too nice of a day to think of the war
the sun too warm, the sky too blue
her eyes brown, like her skin
her hair black, like a night with no moon

she had come from the city, not quite a woman
to teach others to read and write herself a poet, she often came to this place

to sit by this mountain stream, not far from the village and try to capture the words that flowed from her heart in this very special place she would come to find the words to speak of her land, her people, herself

Maria, named after the holy mother she fondles a crucifix hanging from a delicate chain and gazes into a cool mountain stream, wondering if perhaps the ancient ones inhabit this place she does not hear the soldiers she does not have time to get to her M-16

the rape is vicious and brutal, as rape always is and when they are through with her, one of the soldiers drives a bayonet deep into her left breast, a bayonet made in the USA, and the faces of the soldiers begin to look like you or me, 100 million in aid for the freedom fighters of Nicaragua, the Contras by a cool mountain stream, hidden by the most beautiful flowers who quietly whisper the secrets of the ancient ones to each other there lies a silver crucifix, and a broken chain.

Ron Phillips
Vietnam vet

Sell grain

I don't know why some people have been critical of grain sales to the Soviet Union. We have massive surpluses of food going to waste and the Soviets have a need for grain. Why not build up relations between our two countries through such trade?

Sure, we're subsidizing these grain sales, but our government also spends millions of dollars each day to store surplus food.

Eventually much of it will either rot away (and have to be dumped) or merely destroyed before it wastes away. Wouldn't it be better to let the people of the USSR have it than to let it go to waste?

Also, these food surpluses are hurting our farmers. We don't have a domestic population big enough to keep up with growing food surpluses and many Third World nations are now producing food surpluses too — so they don't want to buy our grain anymore. So our farmers are being seriously hurt.

Let's continue selling grain to the Soviets. If it helps our farmers, puts food on the plates of people instead of going to waste, and helps build relations with the USSR, then what's wrong with that? Anyway, doing good for all people is what Christ urged us to do.

Tereasa McNew
Elmira

Government

It wasn't until I got involved with the citizens' effort against the Air Force GWEN tower for Eugene that I came to fully appreciate the merits of representative government.

Key to that effort was the contacting of two Oregon elected officials, Sen. Mark Hatfield and Rep. Les AuCoin. Their follow-through is what enabled the citizens' group to defeat what had been an arbitrary action of big government.

So if, as a student, you have not registered to vote this fall, do so. Your vote can make a difference.

If you agree with the NO-GWEN philosophy, you can go an important step further in the 40th District congressional race: vote for Peter DeFazio, who has pledged to fight the policies of the Reagan administration which take us ever closer to nuclear war.

George Beres
Speakers Bureau

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