

Student turnout low in city voting

By Stephanie Mencimer
Emerald Reporter

Despite appearances of political activism on campus, University students make up only a tiny fraction of the voters who participate in city and county elections.

Although students make up nearly one-fifth of the population of Eugene, said Lane County Elections Division director Dave Spriggs, most people would be surprised at how little students contribute to local elections.

In the 1988 May primary, out of 784 voters registered in one University precinct, only 264 actually cast ballots. In this year's March special election, 825 people were registered in the same precinct, yet only 38 people cast ballots.

Betty Burgess, senior office assistant at Lane County Elections Division, said there have been times in the past when only three people have cast votes at the polling station set up in the

EMU.

"Students are issue-oriented," Spriggs said, adding that he didn't pay much attention to local politics while attending the University. He said students tend to be tied up with school and social activities but they tend to get more involved once they graduate.

Burgess said usually it takes a particular candidate or issue to get students "psyched up" to vote, such as Jesse Jackson in 1988.

This year's primary election is on May 15, and the deadline to register to vote in the primary was April 24. For the first time, the Republican Party has opened the primary to non-affiliated voters, meaning that anyone who is not registered with one of the major political parties may vote on the Republican ticket.

To obtain an absentee ballot, registered voters may write to or drop in at the Lane County Election Division, 135 E. 6th Ave., Eugene, OR 97401.

Speaker links struggles of women, animals

By Christopher Blair
Emerald News Editor

The struggle for the rights of women and the struggle for the rights of animals are one and the same, a visiting Bay Area attorney said Tuesday.

Lauren Smedley, co-chairwoman of Feminists for Animal Rights and co-founder of the Bay Area Lesbian-Feminist Bar Association, spoke to a crowd of more than 150 about the similarities between the plight of animals and nature, and the oppression of women, people of color, lesbians, and gay men.

"Men attempt to deny their feelings of dependency on nature and women by dominating both," Smedley said. "Males identify things as 'other' — that 'other' is woman. Animals and the outside world also count as the 'other'."

Even when men use the natural environment for seemingly non-threatening purposes, their intention to dominate is still the same, Smedley said.

"Men explore the land, plunge into the depths of the sea, drive trucks and planes, probe into space," she said.

Smedley also used the example of animal terms given to people of color and to women as one obvious way men lump the two groups together.

Gays and lesbians especially are targets of persecution by society because they do not play their expected roles in the domination of the environment. Gay men who refuse to "penetrate" women, and women who refuse to be relegated as childbearers are doubly persecuted, she said.

Smedley showed slides in

her presentation to illustrate her point about the exploitation of women and animals. Some pictures showed animals in laboratories where, ironically, women's cosmetics are tested.

Smedley also cited male-dominated reproductive technology as a way of controlling the human species. When the founders of a cloning lab were asked to name their ideal male genetic models, they listed men such as Albert Einstein. Smedley said the researchers named Mae West and Marilyn Monroe as their ideal female specimens.

Smedley said that because females are not seen as dominators of the natural environment, they subconsciously empathize with animals, who share their persecution. This pattern was evident in the Middle Ages in Europe, when women were burned at the stake as witches for befriending animals, their "familiaris."

Women were also persecuted for practicing herbal medicine

and for being midwives, Smedley said, because they helped women through the pain of childbirth, which in Christian philosophy is their curse for Eve's original sin.

Most members of vegetarian and animal rights groups are women, even though men are recognized as the leaders, Smedley said.

Smedley, an attorney, pointed out that until the 1800s courts viewed women as "chattel," or nothing more than moveable property. This is exactly how animals are seen, and how the courts deal with animal abuse, she said.

"Animals are the property of people," she said. "In the courts, you can't recover for the loss of companionship or sue for the animal's pain and suffering."

"We have a society that is destroying the planet at an alarming rate," Smedley said. "We don't just face an environmental crisis, we are the environmental crisis."

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