

Right-wing cronies deny 'S' word exists

In a bold victory for ignorance, conservative groups throughout the country have applied enough pressure to force Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan to temporarily block a survey of teenage sexual behavior.

After successfully blocking an adult sex survey for the past two years, Rep. William Dannemeyer, R-Calif., and other conservative lawmakers, have now turned their puritanical efforts toward blocking a scientific survey intended to learn about teenagers.

In a time when the debate over abortion has again become an important national question, parties from all sides of the political spectrum should be welcoming any information pertaining to teen sexuality.

However, in the true spirit of repression and ignorance, the members of the righteous right would rather deny the fact that teenagers have sex. In fact, they would like to pretend that teenagers know absolutely nothing about sex until "evil" leftist educators start telling them about it, or, even worse, ask the teenagers themselves what they already know about it.

The five-year, \$18 million survey, which was scheduled to be conducted at the University of North Carolina, would question about 24,000 junior and senior high school students on teen sexual practices. The questions would be asked with full knowledge of all the participant's parents. The program was initiated to help the Public Health Service develop programs to combat teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, among other issues.

Critics of the survey say the program is a waste of government money and that the nature of the questions would promote an invasion of privacy. Gary L. Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, a right-wing political lobbying group, told the *Washington Post*, "The questions are so explicit that it will be extremely offensive to the moral values of many young people."

Of course, because a survey like the one Bauer is trying to block has never been conducted, no one can really be sure what the "moral values" of many young people are. More likely, the people whose moral values will be offended by the survey are sexually-repressed parents of children who probably already know more about sex than their parents ever will.

The survey would be a good scientific tool in helping fight teen pregnancy and STDs — a problem most conservatives want fought. However, if it means actually looking the problem in the eye to see what they are up against, lobbyists on the far right would rather bury their heads in the sand and pretend it doesn't exist.



1967 QUOTE



1991 QUOTA

COMMENTARY

Language used to justify research

By Liam Kellen

Recently a University official philosophized (in response to political protest), "Only humans use true language." Statements of this Brand, miles of them presumably, lie sedimented in academic stratas of discourse. Linked to such fossil ancestors, the above statement emotes tradition and heritage. Cartesianism, the great chain of being, the institution of reason with the big R, all may be traced in an enlightened anthropocentrism which claims to honor language with the maxim: "Truly humane."

When we learn this message from the fossils, when we get our minds right, we know that the true or at least the higher language is scientizable logic from the pen of humans. True human language is in turn analytically digestible by humans in all its significations.

In March our family adopted a 3-year-old puppy which we began learning to live with in a manner very much like communication. We are lucky enough to live near Wayne Morse Park and each morning puppy and one or more of our family members walk to the ranch where from five to 20 other dogs and sapiens congregate. Once in the large meadow (and out of view of the city dog catcher), the dogs are customarily unclipped from their leashes. Then they chase each other through the mud and bark, wag their tails, present sticks to each other, and show aggressions or submissions in the semiotic exchange familiar to any dog or human who has lived in the proximity of dogs without keeping their eyes tightly shut.

Myrdene Anderson, an anthropologist/linguist at Purdue University, has completed more than 14 years of fieldwork among herders and dogs in Lapland. Anderson has concluded that there is no categorical separation between the language of a herd of dogs and the language of the Lapland natives. In short, the herders' language is full of expressions, whistle calls, that have evolved in the common work of herding sheep in the company of dogs.

From the other side of the relationship, the

dogs' semiotic patterns (language) have been changed by the cultural influence of the humans. This is demonstrated by the herders' custom of an older lead dog being put in charge of teaching the young puppies. The dog community has learned to talk to humans, just as the human language has picked up the capacity to be effective with dogs.

In the fields of Lapland there has been no separate and special human language but instead herding has produced a large, expressive language, a language that cuts across the phantom wall of the Linnean species in a way that can be seen in any Eugene park to all but the most die-hard Cartesians.

Of course, individual participants in the Lapland herding don't get the same significance out of the common signs. A visitor to China who was issued token inscribed in Chinese could exchange these tokens for meals — two tokens for a large meal, one for a small meal, etc. It could be argued that the visitor makes use of the signs but does not understand the importance to the Chinese of the writing on the tokens. But conversely, the Chinese don't get the same meaning out of the ideograms as does the hungry visitor.

I suggested at the start that the humanist aporia of language (adorned with analytic rigor and canonized in cognitive linguistics, logical semantics, even the journalistic prose, prescriptions), besides being meshed with heritage, is politically savvy. This opportunism goes beyond the intentions or conspiracies of a few administrators. Reasoning is probably never practiced from the disinterested scholarship of academic folklore. It is no secret that the University conducts experimentation on live mammals other than sapiens.

When Portuguese traders captured black natives in the African jungle and forced them at gunpoint to carry their ivory booty on its journey to Europe, it was convenient to view these blacks as less than human. When a researcher elicits a scream from a research animal, it is soothing to consider that scream as a mechanical response rather than a communication in genuine language.

Liam Kellen is a resident of Eugene.

Oregon Daily Emerald
P.O. BOX 3159, EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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