

The age of women

Those of you who, like me, have seen movies like "Mary Poppins" approximately 5,400 times, get ready to sing! "Cast off the shackles of yesterday, something-and-something into the fray ... Our daughter's daughters will adore us, and they'll sing in grateful chor-us; Well done, sister Suffragettes!"

The time was 1910, "the age of men," as the movie points out later. But these women singing the suffragette songs had an inkling of what was to come. Because ironically, the first International Women's Day (IWD) happened the very next year.

It occurred March 19, 1911, in several European countries. The date was chosen as a symbol, for on March 19, 1848, the Prussian king offered a promise of voting rights for women, an offer that still stood unfulfilled when IWD first came around a century later.

Well, the United Nations came close to making it official in 1975 — International Women's Year — and now the United Nations calendar lists March 8 as the 2000 IWD. In general — and in Eugene — it is observed on the second Sunday of March. More specifically, it's going to be at the Hilton at 9 a.m.

You may have never heard of International Women's Day. I know that, despite almost four years on a liberal campus — including two terms of Women's Studies 101 (one as a student, one as a discussion-group facilitator) — I've never heard of it. As a United Nations-declared day, you would think it would get some national attention. Unfortunately, none of the major on-line news services have said anything.

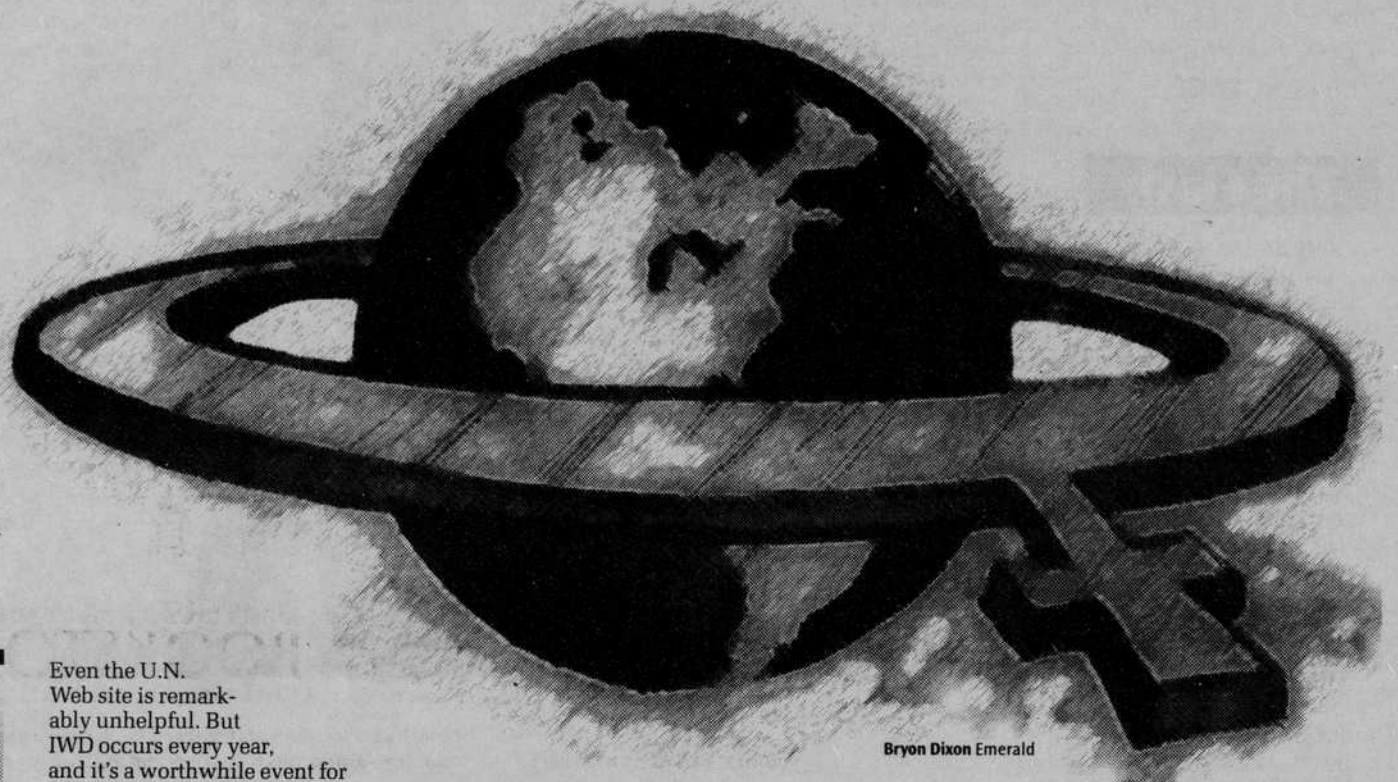


Jonathan Gruber

Even the U.N. Web site is remarkably unhelpful. But IWD occurs every year, and it's a worthwhile event for all people to consider attending.

While many of us have never heard of IWD, I'm sure you have heard of some of the results that the event has affected throughout the years. For instance, now we celebrate yearly a "Take Back the Night" march. It began in March 1976 as a result of an IWD conference in Brussels, Belgium. The first United States' Take Back the Night occurred in 1978, when thousands of demonstrating women shut down San Francisco's largest pornography strip for a night.

According to Kyra Kelly, one of the Eugene event's many coordinators, every year "the goal is to be more and more inclusive." The theme this year is "Blending Our Voices." Note that, despite the successful labor and social demonstrations that have been part of IWD celebrations around the world, the Eugene event is a little different. "We always bill it as a celebration," Kelly said. I agree. It's a celebration of how much women have achieved in the fight for gender equality, and it's a



Bryon Dixon Emerald

celebration of hope for future action.

I know that some men have already stopped reading. Either they think they can't go or they don't care, either of which is unfortunate. Kelly said that part of this year's theme means "getting people to drop their attitudes about who can or can't go." She said that the coordinators welcome men to the event, in spite of the fact that separatist feminist groups criticize the idea. And they welcome students. And community members. Get it?

So what does one do at an International Women's Day? Listen to speakers? There is certainly ample opportunity for that. But there's a half-hour break between every session. That length of break is very intentional because audience participation is a vital part of the day. "It gives people a chance to converse with presenters," Kelly said.

As many of the presenters and attendees

are Eugene-based, it also gives everyone the chance to network within our community. The fact that we can all come together on the second Sunday in March is not nearly as important as the fact that we can all come together every day, as long as we have some familiarity with who "we" really are.

Lastly, if you've been itching to do some service on Sunday, they still can use volunteers. The volunteer coordinator, Sarah DeVore, has more information at 346-4095.

So this Sunday, you can talk, listen, volunteer, enjoy performances and celebrate the fact that the movement for women has come this far and is still making everyone's lives better.

Jonathan Gruber is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached via e-mail at jgruber@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Letters to the editor

Many are concerned

In response to Bret Jacobson's editorial (ODE, March 3), I doubt that John McCain's target audience, with respect to his "war on campaign finance reform," is merely college students as Jacobson suggests. As much as Jacobson would hate to admit it, campaign finance reform is something that many people are concerned about.

There is nothing crippling about removing the right of the extremely rich to bribe public officials. There is nothing American about special interests with huge wallets having their concerns taking priority over those of the American public. If donating \$6 million to John Doe's campaign in (unspoken) exchange for legislation that will (one year down the road) save me ten times that in tax benefits is a shining example of free

speech, than color me communist.

Should being elected perhaps be about something other than the amount of money spent? If limits were set, would candidates have to rely on themselves rather than commercials and outspending each other? What if media exposure were standardized, and each candidate were given equal representation?

I am not at leisure to fill the pages of the Emerald with examples of campaign finance gone wrong; rather I suggest that anyone interested pick up a current newspaper or magazine on the subject. Personally, I don't feel it is in America's best interest or its constitution to allow our governmental representatives to sell the United States to the highest bidder. The power of our government should flow from its citizens, not special interest groups.

William J. Moglia
German

SAFE sets record straight

As a co-chair of SAFE (Sexual Assault Free Environment), I'd like to set the record straight on a few things.

While we as a group acknowledge and admire the courage of Andrea Fuller Cooper who told Kristin's Story on Wednesday, March 1, we'd like to address the issue of counseling for sexual assault survivors.

Counseling is an important part of the healing process for survivors. Because survivors have already experienced a violation of their trust, it's imperative that we, as friends and supporters, give the power of choosing whether or not to seek counseling back to them. Counseling is very beneficial to some, but we must not resort to "tricking" them into seeing somebody for help.

Responding to the March 1 article, SAFE wants to clarify its mission statement and correct some inaccuracies. Our mission is:

"to reduce the incidence of sexual violence on our campus by increasing awareness of the rape culture and creating an environment that supports survivors of sexual assault." We have been fulfilling this by planning and organizing events on campus, such as the Speak Out on Feb. 29.

SAFE works primarily with ASAP (Alliance for Sexual Assault Prevention), the Office of Student Life, and the ASUO safety advocate. As a team, we are working toward improving general lighting on campus.

Mira Levine, OSL sexual assault educator and advocate, was also misquoted in the article. She said, "There are ways to reduce your risk, but the only real way to prevent rape is for rapists not to rape."

Contact SAFE with questions/comments at safe@darkwing.uoregon.edu.

Suzanna Ward
SAFE co-chairwoman