

When Women's Issues Become People's Issues

Editor's Note: Pay equity, child care in the workplace, safety and health, sexual harassment, mid-life concerns and stress management are all issues that are of considerable importance to all workers, especially working women.

These topics were the primary focus of workshops at the Third Annual SEIU Women's Conference. The April 3-5 conference, which was held in San Mateo, Calif., attracted six OPEU members—Karen Noonan, Mary Hiser, Jane Goodenow, Terri Anderson, Jan Beals and Steve Green (the latter three at their own expense)—and two OPEU staff members—Eleanor Meyers and Jean Moyer.

Over the next few months The Oregon Public Employee will report on these workshops. However, our coverage of this important conference begins from a slightly different angle; Steven Green, District 2 Director, has written an analysis of the meeting from the perspective of a male.

Why would a man attend a conference dealing with "women's issues?"

That is a question that I am sure some of you are wondering; it is one that several people posed to me before I went to San Mateo.

analysis

The fact that such a question is asked points to one of the biggest misunderstandings both men and women have about the issues of child care, comparable worth (pay equity) and sexual stereotyping. They are not just women's issues. They are people issues and important ones at that.

Take the issue of child care. Many people think of this as strictly a women's issue, because when thinking of the family, they automatically picture the stereotypic American family. You know, the husband who is the breadwinner and the wife who stays at home and raises the two children. Well, that picture is not reality. Today the majority of two-

parent families consists of two wage-earners; not to mention the significant numbers of single-parent families—an increasing number of which are headed by men.

In short, what this difference between myth and reality tends to hide, is that affordable, convenient, quality child care is an increasingly important issue to men.

Pay equity, or comparable worth, is another example of mislabeling of an important people's issue, as one of interest to women only. Comparable worth is the concept that different jobs that require comparable skills, education and responsibility should receive equal pay. While it is true that the job classifications which will be affected by this movement are largely filled by women, it is also true that there are significant numbers of men in these classifications.

In the long run, acceptance of this concept will be beneficial to the large number of public employees who hold jobs for which no job of comparable duties exists in the private sector. By accepting comparable worth, jobs from the private sector, which require equal skills and entail equal responsibilities, can be used when attempting to support wage adjustment requests.

Finally, the elimination of sexual stereotypes is certainly a people's issue. Men and women are artificially constrained from undertaking certain jobs and following certain lifestyles, because of society's view of what their role should be. Just ask a divorced man who tried to gain custody of his children in the divorce proceeding or a woman who entered a previously all-male occupation, whether society's view of their roles did not frustrate their wants or limit fulfillment of their potential.

In closing, I urge men to get involved in these issues and I caution women to avoid the temptation to exclude men from these fights. As with all issues of importance, we need each other's help if we are to succeed.

Steve Green
Dist. 2 Director

Major Motions from April OPEU Board Meeting

That the Union Operation Committee draft recommendations for choosing members to attend the SEIU Women's Conference in Connecticut, May 31 to June 4, and how to cover costs of sending members.

That there be no host District for the 1981 General Council.

That a committee be formed by the OPEU president to act as host for the 1981 General Council.

Accepted Aldrich, Kilbride, Naas & Tatone's (certified public accountants) audit report of OSEA Districts and Locals.

Sent a letter to the president of the national Bank of Detroit, urging him to investigate whether or not Oregon PERS funds (some of which his bank invests in Core Industries) are being used to support the union busting activities of Mueller Steam Co., a division of Core Industries.

That OPEU take whatever action is necessary to organize the Curry County Sheriff's Department.

That a letter be sent to the McMinnville Police Department at the end of their contract, informing them, that since they have shown no interest in supporting OPEU, we will no longer represent them.

Adopted a policy statement rejecting District 3's request that the Board endorse two of Gov. Atiyeh's revenue-raising proposals and that the legislature be asked to earmark these funds for Higher Education and Human Resources programs. Their policy statement reads as follows: "Although the joint CASE/Government Relations Committee accepts the general concept herein, because of some ambiguity and confusion and because certain special interest groups are favored to the detriment of other bargaining unit employees, we cannot endorse this specific resolution.

Allocated an additional \$250, to the \$600 already approved, for the first annual OPEU Women's Conference.

Extended a \$400 loan or advance to OIT Local and a \$400 loan or advance to SOSC Local, until such time as money is received from the Union Operations Committee for bargaining expenses.



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