

THE NEWSLETTER of WOMEN'S CONCERNS

Edited by Rachel Brown

March 16, 1983

Notice of Events

- Currently- Several bills are before the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate that would limit or take away the the legal right to abortion. Please write Senator East and your local Congressman to voice your opinion about this legislation.
- Currently- The N.C. Legislature is voting about continuing the state abortion funds which finance abortions for the desperately poor. Please write your state representative to express your views about these funds.
- Currently- Two injunctions stand against the "Squeal Rule".
- April 4- The Committee on Women's Concerns is co-sponsoring a focus on people's values and attitudes concerning human sexuality with the Y. Discussions will range from living alternatives to the double standard. Resident experts will lead discussions Monday afternoon. At 7:30 p.m. in the 900 Room, Dr. Mary Thornberry will discuss the double standard.
- April 7- Women's Reach in Charlotte is sponsoring a workshop titled "I was, I am, I will be" led by Pat Heard. The workshop will last from 7-9 p.m. . If interested, call Women's Reach at 334-3614.
- April 11 Women's Resources of UNCC will begin a women's week. Details about events will be posted.

Changes and Goals for the Committee

Ellen Papadeas

The Committee on Women's Concerns was formed last May to replace the Women's Center. With the leadership and enthusiasm of chairperson Sherburne Laughlin and secretaries Elizabeth Kiss and Debbie Williams, the committee had a successful year highlighted by "Celebrate Women" week.

As chairperson of the Committee on Women's Concerns, I would like to describe a few changes. First of all, more officers have been added in order to divide responsibilities. The committee will be led by a chairperson, co-ordinating and programming vice-chairpersons, a secretary, a publicity chairperson, and a campus/community liason. This newsletter and the position of editor are recent innovations too. Meetings of a small "core" group will be held every Wednesday at 5:00 in Canon lounge; all are welcome to attend. Each month a program and meeting will be held for the whole campus.

In addition to monthly meetings and programs, the committee has a wealth of ideas and is always open to suggestions. Some ideas for this term include a rape prevention seminar, a potluck dinner with the community, and a get-together with women from Queen's College. The Committee and the Y will be co-sponsoring programs which focus upon human sexuality on April 4th.

The Committee on Women's Concerns has many goals for future events.

The committee wants to promote awareness about women's issues, interaction between the campus and community, and understanding between men and women. The committee is not for women only; it is not for just those who hold feminist beliefs; it is for everyone who is involved in Davidson life. I look forward to meeting and working with all!

Sincerely,

Ellen

The Double Standard

Mary C. Thornberry

The notion that separate standards of proper moral conduct exist for women and for men has a long literary and philosophical history. From at least the middle ages, the notion has existed that women had a different nature (usually imagined as "more pure") than that of men and that therefore their behavior ought to conform to a "higher" level of morality. Quite often these notions were mixed with assigned spheres of activity which were proper for women and which would keep their purity (usually sexual chastity) intact.

This separation of women's activities and roles was attacked directly by the woman's movement, beginning in the last century and continuing through the debates on the ERA. Much of the notion as to whether women have a separate nature has persisted, with some feminists arguing that women do have "better" and "higher" views of the world. Such people urge increased rather than lessened participation.

It is my observation that there exists at Davidson a double standard of conduct for males and females, primarily relating to social settings and having sexual overtones. Matters such as drinking of alcohol, dating multiple partners, outgoing behavior at parties, and sexual intimacy allow males more latitude in what is considered acceptable behavior. At its worst, the stereotypes contained in the terms "slut" and "stud" summarize the differing standards. What it takes to acquire a "reputation" requires far more egregious behavior for a male and even then is likely to be tinged with admiration.

As a social scientist I would like to hypothesize that such a dualism is a power tool that divides women and helps to perpetuate female subjection by males. It creates anxieties in women, hinders them from developing fully in many spheres, and deprives them of leadership opportunities in many fields. It clearly continues the role of woman as sex object, a thing less than fully human to be exploited by males. It excuses male behavior and blames women for deviations that would not be noticed in a male.

As a Christian I would argue that such a standard is against Biblical teaching. There is no dualism in the concept of sin, some being peculiarly female. One devastating aspect is that many of the virtues associated with the Christian tradition (the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians is an ideal list) become the exclusive province of women and men are never expected to take them seriously. Standards of purity are gender neutral in Scripture.

One sin which Christians ought to take more seriously in this regard is gossip. Christians help perpetuate the dualism and needlessly cause pain by violating this prohibition with great enthusiasm and self-congratulation. "Truth" may be no excuse here; we need to re-examine our motives in repeating any stories. Certainly pre-marital chastity remains a valid ideal--but not for women only.

About the Newsletter

The "Newsletter of Women's Concerns" will be issued the first week of each month. Each issue will have a notice of events sponsored by women's organizations in the Davidson area. Articles may range from activities of the Committee on Women's Concerns to significant legislation affecting women. The newsletter's purpose is to inform the campus and community about women's issues. If there are suggestions for the newsletter or the Committee on Women's Concerns, a "suggestion" box will be placed in the Dean's Office.