



Kerry Smith speaks at the environmental conference. Photo by staff

Rolston

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"Can we have an appropriate respect for the whole Earth?" asks Rolston. "We need a new idea of who we are and where we are as residents of the Earth."

Dr. Rolston points to such commons as air and water as mod-

Homosexuality

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bian students nor possess a non-discriminatory clause on the basis of sexual orientation. (The faculty and staff of Middlebury College have endorsed a non-discriminatory clause which is presently pending trustee approval.) When told this fact, the student responded, "I'm encouraged that not all colleges are like Davidson."

In another interview a homosexual student explained, "It was a traumatic moment to admit to myself that I am a homosexual. . . Not all gay men go clubbing in the big cities dressed in leather and chains. Some homosexuals wear fraternity letter, button downs and duckheads. Some even have girlfriends." Because of social expectations, this student dated a woman for a year before admitting to himself he was a homosexual. "I am not romantically or sexually attracted to women. I was sexually active with my girlfriend because that pleased her, not because I wanted to."

Criticizing the "naive blindness" on campus, the student recounted, "Once an acquaintance told me, 'Oh, there aren't any gay students at Davidson.'" This assumption not only pervades the student body, but also influences some professors. The homosexual student noted that in a lecture a professor remarked, "We will all have to deal with the opposite gender in sexual relationships." Not 10% of the population. Discussing the immoral life of a playwright, another professor commented outside of class, "First of all he was gay, of course that is not that nasty. . ." On hearing of this remark the gay student asked "If racist remarks are unacceptable, why isn't the disparagement of homosexuals?"

This fall Dr. Maloney of the religion department conducted a survey in his contemporary moral issues classes. He asked fifty-eight students if they would vote for a

qualified woman for president. Ten percent responded "no." When the candidate was Jewish, five percent refused; when the candidate was black, 7% refused. 57% of the students said that they would not vote for a homosexual.

In response to these statistics, the gay student suggested, "There aren't any visible homosexual role models on campus." Dr. Rosemarie Tong, a philosophy professor who taught ten years at Williams College before coming to Davidson, agrees. She largely attributes the success of the gay and lesbian alliance at Williams to the respected faculty members who openly joined the organization. According to Leslie Marsicano, a similar phenomenon occurred at Duke University.

Advocating homosexual rights, a gay professor at Middlebury College has written columns for the campus newspaper. A recent survey at Middlebury determined that only 5% of 110 students surveyed "strongly feared or hated homosexuality."

The gay Davidson student I interviewed described his experience here: "College is supposedly the environment in which you explore who you are. I missed that at Davidson. One essential part of my life has been neglected for four years. I have had some gay friendships, but overall they are hard to find in this repressive atmosphere. I often feel no one understands me. I'm leaving Davidson without people really knowing who I am and that feels dishonest. I would be afraid to come out publicly here. Davidson can be brutal socially if you are different in any way. Intellectually, I have really grown here; unfortunately, I have had to sacrifice my education in other areas."

Both Leslie Marsicano, the assistant Dean of Students, and Ruth Pittard, the Union Program Advisor, admit, "Currently, we do not take care of the gay population at all." In the past four years, the Dean of Students Office occasion-

ally advertised a post office box for gay and lesbian correspondence. However, of the few responses, most were abusive. This year the post office box is altogether defunct.

Davidson's history and size do not excuse this apathy. Amherst, a student body of 1600, not only offers support groups for its gay and lesbian population but also films, speakers and discussions open to the entire campus. Known traditionally as a conservative "rich white boy school," Amherst was an all male college until 1976. Today, its Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Alliance has 35 members; a second organization for the friends of lesbians, bisexuals and gays has a mailing list of 400 students. Most colleges with which Davidson compares itself similarly educate their campus communities. Swarthmore, a student body of 1330, and Bowdoin, a student body of 1350, also present forums and speakers addressing gay and lesbian discrimination.

A few members of the Davidson community are initiating efforts to understand homosexuality. The campus forum committee is scheduling speakers on gay and lesbian issues for an eleventh hour next fall. This April, during alumni week, Karen Hester, a Davidson graduate, is sponsoring a reception for gay and lesbian students, faculty and friends.

Davidson's liberal arts education is ideally a social education. As Dr. Tong expressed, "It is an invitation to expand one's sympathies, to eradicate narrowness of mind and constrictions of heart." A heterosexual student I interviewed accepts this invitation. One reason he did not attend an equally competitive liberal arts college was its high gay population. Ironically, he now rooms with a homosexual at Davidson. He comments, "Homosexuality used to scare me. I know my parents would not approve of my friendship with my roommate, but he has helped me overcome a prejudice. I think that is very healthy."

Rolston believes that the chief worry of the last half of this century has been, will humans destroy themselves? He thinks, however, that the chief worry of the upcoming century is going to be, will humans destroy the world?

"The military is a threat to any sort of Earth ethic," claims Rolston. "The distribution of natural resources has been the center of many wars throughout the ages."

As people change, the world also changes. Dr. Rolston pointed out that the relative size of the planet is decreasing as man's population and man's ability to travel across the world quickly increase. From a philosophical standpoint, this will force man to make trade-offs and decisions about what is truly valuable in the world.

Dr. Rolston agrees with the Bible's prophecy of who will obtain power here on Earth.

"The meek shall inherit the Earth," only in an environmental sense the meek will be powerful creatures who are able to control their power."

Fowler

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said Fowler. "Environmental control went from a political liability to an asset for politicians."

Yet, Fowler noted, much has changed in the last 12 months, particularly with the Persian Gulf War. "History will judge the war as a classic conflict of natural resources," said Fowler. "Nobody can imagine a more heinous act than the deliberate oil spill and setting 600 to 800 oil wells on fire. No one, in my mind, can excuse Saddam Hussein from environmental terrorism."

The war, Fowler said, also showed our own failures as well. The fact that we have begun to dig deeper for fossil fuels indicates the need for a new environmental policy. "We thought we crossed the river in 1990, but we have a lot of ground to cover," stated Fowler. "Bush deserves accolade for putting together an international coalition for the war, but wouldn't it be wonderful if such a coalition was put together for the environment?"

Fowler, however, admitted that while running for Senate he never foresaw the environment as an election issue. What was amazing, according to Fowler, was the

amount of people who asked, "Why is it that the government cannot insure that the air we breathe, the food we eat and the water we drink is not contaminated." "All of a sudden the environmental problem had mystically been transferred into an issue of health," said Fowler. "It does not go away."

Fowler then focused on the future of the environment. "The next war in Middle East," predicated Fowler, "will be over the water in the Gulf." He supported his hypothesis by stating that the Governor of California has to decide whether or not to import water from Canada because of the drought that state is experiencing. Seventy percent of all water used for agriculture, noted Fowler, is imported.

Although Fowler found Bush's environmental policy "woefully inadequate," he was hopeful that the President would be able to address this problem during a time of extraordinary unity in Congress, especially the energy crisis. "The more dependent we become on fossil fuel," concluded Fowler, "the more dependent we become. More benign forms of fuel would lessen our dependence."



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