

Wife beating result of today's visible violence—speaker

By Shelley Smith

Wife beating is acceptable in today's society because of an increasingly violent culture, according to an authority on women's studies.

Irene Frieze, associate professor of psychology and women's studies at the University of Pittsburgh, told about 70 people Friday afternoon that she felt wife beating is acceptable today because violence is becoming visible.

Frieze's speech was a part of the Women in Science Career Symposium, and was geared to inform the listeners of the situations of women who are beaten in the home, and to better understand their problems.

Frieze said throughout history, wife beating has been acceptable to society.

In Roman times, men felt an obligation to discipline women, and enforced this discipline violently, she explained.

She said today, this idea is still somewhat in effect and presented several examples of record albums with beaten women on the cover.

"It's appalling to think that these pictures of violence sell records. It proves that wife beating is still accepted."

Opinions on causes

Frieze said there are several opinions about why wife beating occurs.

She said one opinion is that the battered wife provokes her husband into violence. While this isn't a popular societal belief,

many battered wives feel this is true, Frieze said.

"Many explanations are 'He thought I was cheating on him' or 'I yelled at him', or 'I embarrassed him in front of his friends.'"

Frieze also said battered wives may want to be beaten because they feel they are the cause of marital problems, and should be punished.

The battered wife is the least likely to attribute the violence of her husband, but most often the husband is at fault, Frieze said.

"This is true because many times he has a drinking or severe emotional problem that causes him to react violently to his wife," she said.

She also said she has found that if the husband beats his wife, he is very likely to beat his children.

Wives refuse to leave

A wife could have been abused for a long period of time but still feel it is an unstable process, and refuse to leave their husband, Frieze explained.

"Many stay because they thought he was in a bad mood when he hit her, or that it would just go away with time.

"But, the beatings can go on for a period of ten years, with the last reported incident last week. This is not temporary violence," she said.

Battered wives may refuse to leave because they are afraid to try.

"Many husbands threaten their wives if they try to leave. It scares them, and so they stay."

She added that many wives are financially dependent on their husbands and lack the needed support to leave.

Studies done on battered women show that 84 percent attempted to leave, 78 percent left and 69 percent went back again, Frieze said.

A battered wife may be more apt to leave her husband if she could admit that the violence is his fault, and not hers, she said.

Environmental conditions

Frieze also listed environmental conditions as a possible cause of wife beating.

She said if a family is subjected to poor living conditions, or dependent on welfare and social security, they may feel depressed to the point where violence relieves their frustrations.

There are known cases in which the wife reacts violently to her husband, but said this is usually in self-defense, she said.

"He may come at her, and she pushes him and he falls and hits his head."

She said that violence between husbands and wives is difficult to cure.

Therapy is given individually because the treatment is different for each partner, she said.

With the husband the goal is to first teach him how to control his temper.

She said he is given support and taught how to handle situations without resorting to violence.

The wife is given assertiveness training to teach her how to understand the cause of her husband's violence towards her, and help her handle problems by dealing with these causes, Frieze explained.

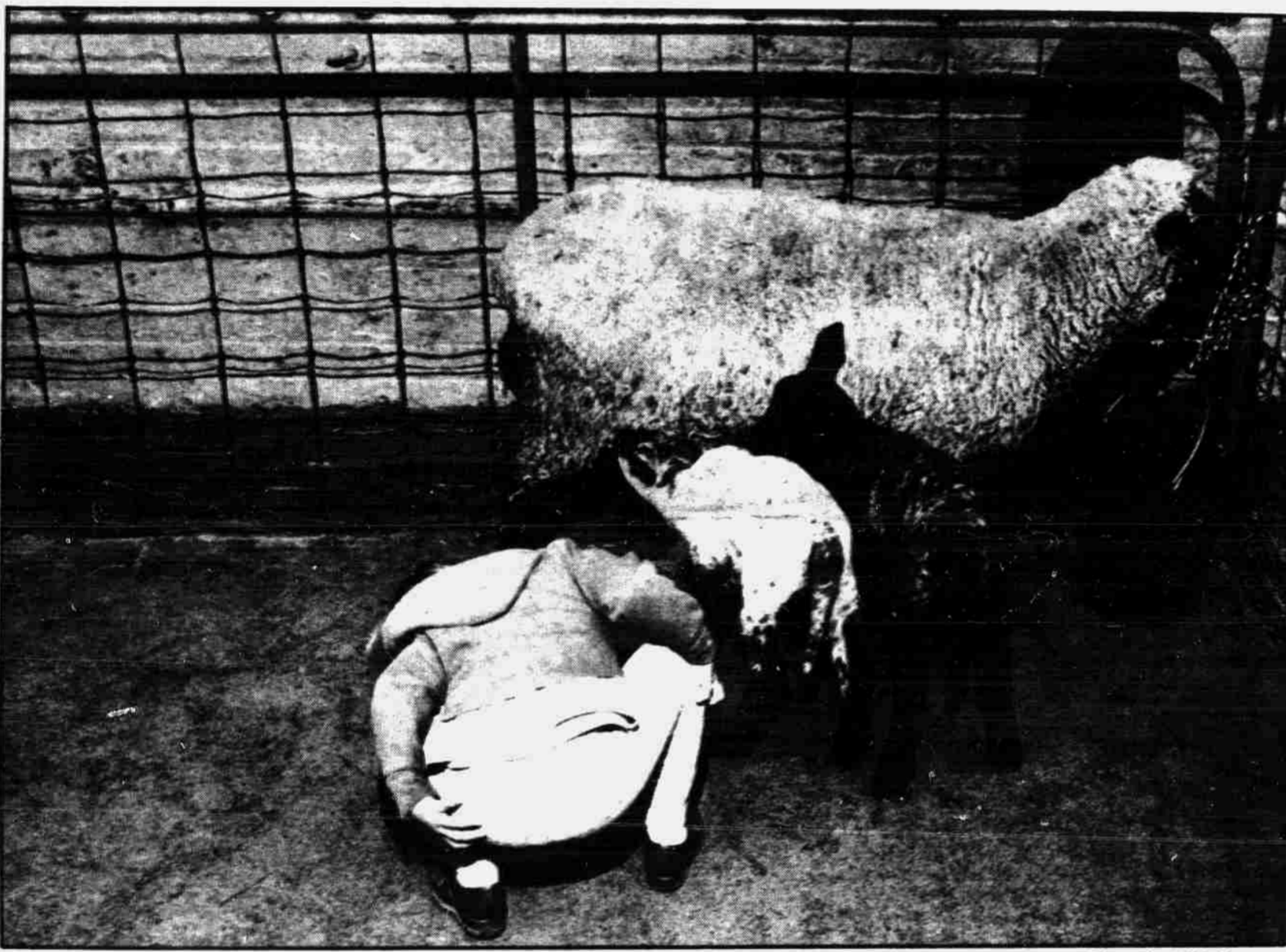


Photo by Bob Pearson

What's going on here? This unidentified youngster checks out the lunch habits of sheep at the eighth annual "Kid's Day" on East Campus. Sponsored by the Block and Bridle Club, the event is designed to orient city grade school students with farm animals. The event was at the Judging Pavillion where students from 16 different grade schools were able to get into the pens and discover the animals.

Pre-trial diversion criticized, but director backs purpose

By Val Swinton

The jury is still out on the worth of the Lancaster County Pre-trial Diversion program, but its director, Eric McMasters, insists the city and county should continue funding the project.

After two years of operating on a federal grant, the city and county agreed to fund most of the project expenses this year, but there is opposition to pre-trial diversion, especially among police and prison officials.

Pre-trial diversion is a program which allows a person convicted of a crime, if it is the person's first felony or misdemeanor, to enroll in a program of counseling and community service. If that person successfully completes the program, the charges are dismissed.

Last summer, while the debate continued over whether local funds should be used to keep the program in operation, Lincoln Police Chief George Hansen and Pat Rackers, city corrections coordinator, led opposition to the project, insisting the middle-class defendant is catered to, that the program is not cost-efficient and that it impedes law enforcement.

System 'offended'

"The criminal justice system tends to be offended when pre-trial diversion is discussed or implemented," McMasters

said. "They don't consider different ways of doing things very often."

McMasters insists that pre-trial diversion is a more humane way to handle first time offenders. "Pre-trial diversion tries to set up a situation where a person can earn his dismissal," he said. "We try to set up a positive approach. The criminal justice system is a negative approach."

McMasters said only first time felons or persons committing their first misdemeanor can enroll in the program. He said the person has to achieve certain goals, such as employment, more education, vocational training or drug, alcohol or mental health treatment. The person, if he or she is financially able and the crime warrants it, must make restitution. The person can also get involved in community service projects, or they can enroll in a class at the pretrial diversion center.

The type of program, McMasters says, depends on the individual. When the individual successfully completes the program, the charges are dropped, and the accused maintains a clean record.

"The biggest payoff," McMasters said, "is to the individual who participates in it. He doesn't get off. But, he isn't over-criminalized either."

Part of the criticism concerning pre-trial diversion is the inconsistencies in-

working on a budget reduction so that for the fourth straight year, the budget will be less than it was the previous year.

involved in who gets accepted to the program and who doesn't.

The county attorney has final say over who is enrolled in pre-trial diversion, and, according to McMasters, that decision is normally based on a recommendation from his office. But, the criteria for enrollment standards give the county attorney a lot of leeway. For instance, McMasters said drug dealers normally are not eligible, unless a prosecutor in the county attorney's office feels the sale was "casual or incidental." Also, the accused must not have an established pattern of criminal behavior. McMaster's says that too, can cause inconsistencies.

Cornhusker accepted

A situation involving a former UNL football player is a good case-in-point. Earlier this year, Monte Anthony, a Cornhusker fullback, was charged with selling cocaine and marijuana to an undercover agent. He was admitted to the program, a move which caused much criticism from opponents of pre-trial diversion. But County Attorney Ron Lahners defended Anthony's admittance, saying he was not a serious drug dealer.

McMasters admits that in previous years, the program was "overvalued," and more money may have been spent than was needed. But, he said his office is

working on a budget reduction so that for the fourth straight year, the budget will be less than it was the previous year.

McMasters said a recent study revealed about the same number of persons who enter, but not necessarily finish, the diversion program commit subsequent crimes as those who go through the criminal justice system.

Those figures, McMasters says, constitute a good reason to continue the program. "If the people you convert don't do any worse," he says, "then why submit people to the full criminal justice system?"

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