

Editorial

Women deserve equal pay for valuable work

About 40 percent of UNL's graduates will earn 33 percent less in average salaries than other UNL graduates.

The inequity isn't fair, and yet it exists. The reason is that 40 percent of UNL students are women, and when they graduate, on the average they will be paid 33 percent less than their fellow male graduates.

This and other equally alarming statistics came out during testimony before the Nebraska Legislature's Business and Labor Committee Thursday night.

According to an article in The Lincoln Star, professional women earn about 62 percent of the average wages of male professionals. The reasons for this seem to be based on the traditional ideas about female workers. Women's jobs consistently have been perceived as an extra salary for her family, as some extra money to invest in a new house, to pay for that new car or to splurge on a vacation. Rarely have women been regarded as "breadwinners."

The stereotypes of women workers have not caught up with the reality: More and more women are the sole wage earner for their families. More women are fast becoming the single parent, responsible for paying the rent, feeding and clothing the children, and generally trying to keep body and soul together on significantly less wages than a male head of household.

According to the Star article, they often receive little or no child support; the default rate in Nebraska on child

support payments ranges between 50 percent to 60 percent.

Although, legally, women often are entitled to equal pay for equal work, there is little recourse to encourage that pay because men and women seldom hold the same types of jobs. At the committee hearing, Helen Moore, UNL assistant professor of sociology, pointed out that 655 job classifications are male dominated and 207 classifications are female dominated. Many of these 207 jobs pay wages at the bottom of the pay scale. These typical "women's jobs" may pay low salaries because the jobs are categorized into the kinds of services often seen as an extension of traditional housewives' duties: nursing, school teaching, food services and secretarial work.

Because housewives' work is seen as subordinate and of lesser value, wages become subordinate, too. Salaries are seen as some sort of compensation for the woman's time.

There are no fast and easy solutions to end wage inequality in the job market. According to The Star, many witnesses at the hearing suggested the Legislature enact a state policy of comparable worth — that is, pay a woman what her labor is worth to society compared to an equally valuable male job. If a secretary and a construction worker are perceived as having equal value to society, for example, then they would earn the same salary.

While the idea of comparative worth has a lot of

appeal, for all practical purposes it would be impossible to carry out. A labor value policy would require drastic economic reforms and would fix certain jobs at a specific value to society, eliminating the demand and supply of the labor market.

But there are some things the state could consider doing to help eliminate some of the discrimination against women. First, the state can begin by looking at and reforming the state's own policy of pay inequity, and by opening up more opportunities for women to move up to higher-ranked jobs. In addition, the state might consider offering tax incentives to businesses that offer training for workers in dead-end jobs.

The state also should offer tax incentives to businesses which offer child care centers at work. An increase in child care tax credits for single parents also might help to ease the burden.

And finally, the state should encourage stricter enforcement in collecting delinquent child support payments.

Pay inequity and the relative poverty of women in Nebraska is not just a women's issue; it should be a concern of everyone. We cannot claim this is a society of equal opportunity for all when some 40 percent of us may earn 33 percent less than our male classmates when we graduate.

Leslie Kendrick



Holiday Inns' 'Great Sign' to make its final beckoning

I bring you sad, disheartening news today.

You know those big old Holiday Inn signs? The huge, towering neon monsters with the flashing arrow pointing



Bob Greene

toward the motel and the blazing star on top?

They're dead.

That's right. Holiday Inns Inc. has announced that it has made the corporate decision to phase out the signs. But the end of 1985, the signs will have disappeared from the majority of the world's 1,750 Holiday Inns. The signs will be replaced by a smaller, sleeker, rectangular model designed to promote an efficient,

businesslike image.

James L. Schorr, president of the Holiday Inns division responsible for the decision, said: "We are changing our sign in order to project a more contemporary image that better reflects our hotel chain's current range of property types, customer base and product quality."

A word about the old signs: They were each 43 feet tall. They were green, yellow, orange and white during the daytime; at night they added pink, blue and red lights. They each were composed of 836 feet of neon tubing and 426 incandescent bulbs. They each cost \$35,000 to erect, and approximately \$6,100 a year in electricity and replacement parts to run. Inside the Holiday Inn corporation, the sign was officially referred to as the "Great Sign."

The new sign, in addition to being simpler in design, will cost less to construct (\$23,000 each) and less to maintain (approximately \$2,500 a year).

The main reason for the change, however, has nothing to do with economics.

Alas, Holiday Inns has commissioned research that shows its customers now consider the old signs — the "Great Signs" — to be tacky. Tacky and cheap-looking and old-fashioned.

It seems that when the first Holiday Inn was built in 1952, almost all of the company's customers were families traveling by automobile. The purpose of the huge blinking-and-flashing Holiday Inn sign was to attract them. The Holiday Inn people hoped that travelers would follow that giant arrow right in to the registration desk.

Almost all of the Holiday Inn customers back then were "walk-ins" — folks who would see the signs and drive into the parking lot without a reservation. Today, all that has changed. Eighty-five percent of the Holiday Inn rooms sold today are sold to business travelers or to couples traveling without children. Fewer than 3 percent of the Holiday Inn customers show up without reservations.

Thus, the old sign was no longer needed. Michael Purvis, vice president of S&O Consultants Inc., the firm hired to design the new sign, said the consensus of travelers surveyed was that the old sign was outmoded.

"The identity of Holiday Inn needed to be modified," Purvis said. "They are not a roadside hotel company anymore. Now they're competing with the best hotels."

Purvis said that, back when the huge, flashing Holiday Inn sign was the main tool to persuade people to stay for the night, it served its purpose well.

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Herpes viewed as penalty for sex

I never expected to see Phyllis Schlafly get into the sex-education racket. I thought she disapproved of that sort of thing. Didn't the hawk of the Eagle Forum always have her eye on other creatures preying on school children?

But here she is beginning to distribute 100,000 pamphlets to junior and



Ellen Goodman

senior high school students about, gulp, sex.

Well, not to worry. Phyllis hasn't lost her balance. The scourge of the Equal Rights Amendment has taken on a new target — herpes — and she is still trying to scare people straight.

The brochure that she has published features a cover picture of the Herpes simplex virus and goes on, in a fit of misinformation, to blame the epidemic of genital herpes on the four Ps: Playboy, Penthouse and Planned Parenthood. Schlafly's pamphlet then lectures the young about the dangers of this disease in a style reminiscent of Army sergeants in World War II: "There is only one way to be sure you never get herpes: Avoid sexual relations. Remain a virgin until you marry, marry a virgin and remain faithful to each other."

Frankly, I don't know a soul who is in favor of herpes, a disease which has

been on more magazine covers lately than Jacqueline Onassis. But I have an uneasy feeling that the Schlaflys of the world regard this virus as a godsend. At last, a modern punishment for sex, a warning from the heavens above that human beings must mend their ways or suffer the sores of sex.

The lady from Alton, Ill., isn't alone in portraying herpes in the bright light of sin. Time magazine recently called it "Today's Scarlet Letter" and wrote the word Herpes across its cover in bright red. Mother Jones, in a fine cover for its November issue, calls this media coverage the "sex-as-sin/disease-as-punishment thinking . . ." The author also suggests that sexual guilt is "perhaps the most pervasive of all herpes symptoms."

There are others, outside the Eagle Forum, who regard this as good news. As the Time magazine piece concluded: "But perhaps not so unhappily, it (herpes) may be a prime mover in helping to bring to a close an era of mindless promiscuity."

This week a Washington Post-ABC News poll suggests that fear of herpes is indeed changing sexual behavior. A full 22 percent of the unmarried people ages 18 to 37 agreed with the statement, "I have changed my behavior to avoid the risk of contracting herpes."

The people interviewed offered comments like, "People are thinking twice" and "I don't just hop into bed with anybody."

The whole herpes social syndrome is fascinating. Not long ago, extramarital

sex in any form was weighted down with fears of brimstone, not to mention pregnancy. Many people continue to need some sort of deterrent, some external reason to abstain, some fear of punishment, to deal sanely with their sexuality. We have gone from hell to herpes in three generations.

Imagine, needing a fear of herpes to make you "think twice" about a one-night stand, about a stranger in your bed, about having sex with someone whose toothbrush you wouldn't share?

We went through a period when sex was portrayed as a need to be fulfilled rather than a relationship to be explored. There was a time gap between the sexual revolution and the emotional revolution. Many people still find it difficult to sort out their own standards of caring and exploitation. Surely some of the singles who cite "herpes" as their reason for "thinking twice" were looking for a reason.

Still, I refuse to applaud the epidemic of herpes as the heavenly harbinger of a renewed right and sexual wrong. I'd rather have a cure than a deterrent. I'd rather people made decisions about their sexual lives carefully than fearfully.

The pamphlet that blisters on my desk this morning makes me realize how disappointed some will be if the new Finnish remedy, something called gossypol, actually works against herpes. What would the Schlaflys do with a cure? Ban it?

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