

Wage discrimination must end

In 1963, the U.S. Congress passed the Equal Pay Act in an attempt to bridge the gap between salaries of men and women. At that time, 38 percent of all adult women were part of the paid labor force, and they earned 59 cents to every dollar earned by men, according to statistics compiled by the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women.



Janet Ward

Today, 20 years later, more than half of all adult women are part of the paid labor force, but the earnings gap remains exactly the same — 59 percent, the statistics show. To look at the pay gap another way, consider the fact that working women with college degrees earn less than men who have an eighth-grade education.

What society is telling us, and what current laws reinforce, is that jobs performed by women are worth less than jobs performed by men.

Obviously, the laws which intended to protect women from wage/gender discrimination are, at best, ineffective, and our attempts to make new federal laws that better protect women have not been ratified. Because of the dim outlook for federal laws to protect women, we need to shift our focus to our state lawmakers.

In Nebraska, statistics show that there are thousands of women in the work force who are earning wages that put them barely above poverty level. In 1980, 52 percent of the women in Nebraska had paid employment, however, 71 percent of those women were concentrated in the

lowest paying jobs: blue collar, clerical and sales. Men in those same fields earned 65 percent more than women, just by virtue of the fact that they were born male.

The tremendous need for fair wages is even more evident when you consider that of the working women in Nebraska, 45 percent are single heads of households, and unfortunately only 19 percent of divorced fathers continue to pay alimony and child support three years after being divorced, the statistics show. Those women are doing their best to feed and clothe their growing children, and to pay ever-rising bills.

You can do something to help an immeasurable amount. LB581, currently in the Appropriations Committee of the Nebraska Legislature, if passed, will have a huge affect on discriminatory wage settings. Its passing would mean that the doors for a philosophy of fairness and equal opportunity could be opened. In order for LB581 to be heard and voted on by our Legislature, it must be approved by five members of the Appropriations Committee. At this time, only one more vote is needed to get LB581 on the floor of the Legislature.

You can help by writing in support of LB581 to the five members of the Appropriations Committee who have not cast their "yes" vote, and tell them that you want to end the wage discrimination American women have endured for decades.

The five senators who have not voted "yes" to LB 581 are: Glen Goodrich, District 20, Omaha; Don Wagner, District 41, Ord; Lowell Johnson, District 15, North Bend; Howard Peterson, District 35, Grand Island and Martin Kahle, District 37, Kearney. You can write these senators at the state Capitol.

Souper salad alley



75¢

Heinekin (light or dark)
Moosehead
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6-9 p.m.

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475-1407

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Thursday and Friday
November 16 & 17
7:00 & 9:00 pm
Union Rostrum

UPC American Films

City comparisons indicate bigger is not always better

In a relatively short period of time I had to shuttle back and forth repeatedly between two cities: New York and Kansas City. Something struck me about the two.

In New York most people I met were cocky, even arrogant, about the joys of living in their city. They behaved as if anyone who lived anywhere other than Manhattan was one of life's unfortunates; that the wonders of New York City were so obvious and so thrilling that a grateful New York resident should feel obliged to proclaim his good luck to anyone who would listen. They all seemed like Frank Sinatra singing "New York, New York."



Bob Greene

In Kansas City, on the other hand, the people I met were almost apologetic about their town. They all said they personally liked it, but in the next breath they were confessing that "it's not New York," or "it's not Chicago." The unspoken sentiment was that they were somehow lacking because they had wound up living in Kansas City.

And yet . . . anyone with any sense could see within an hour of arrival in either city that, as far as the pure pleasure of living was concerned, Kansas City was a far more logical choice for a home. Where New York was filthy, Kansas City was clean; where in New York the mixture of people on the streets included a startlingly high percentage of unsavory sorts, in Kansas City the people on the streets were clearly people a stranger could trust.

In short, if an alien from another planet were to land on Earth and to touch down in New York and Kansas City in succession, he would not have to spend five minutes thinking about which place any sane person would choose for a home. He would probably marvel at the fact that New York and Kansas City were even part of the same country, so obvious were the advantages of Kansas City life.

But of course that's not how the two cities are perceived. New York is seen as desirable, as No. 1; Kansas City is seen as the sticks, as not even qualifying as a high runner-up in the nation's civic sweepstakes. The "great" cities are supposed to be New York and Chicago and Los Angeles; the others are supposed to recognize implicitly that

they are lacking.

The city where I was born — Columbus, Ohio — has always had an inferiority complex that traces back to this way of thinking. I subscribe to the city's excellent magazine, Columbus Monthly; the latest issue features a cover story titled: "Can Columbus Ever Be Great?"

In the story, writer Herb Cook Jr. asks if Columbus is content to remain a "Grade B city"; he writes: "It's no secret that Columbus has an image problem. When we look at ourselves in the mirror, we see a stable, solid, relatively prosperous community, the proverbial 'good place to raise a family.' But when people from New York or California look toward Columbus, too often they see . . . nothing."

Well . . . maybe that is the general perception about Columbus. I'm not sure what's wrong with being a "stable, solid, relatively prosperous community, the proverbial 'good place to raise a family'"; people who live in Columbus may think that's an easy thing to accomplish, but people who live in New York certainly can't say those words about their city.

It's good, of course, for people not to be satisfied with the status quo in the towns where they live, and to strive for improvements. But the way society has been evolving for the last 20 years, it seems foolish to cling to the old "bigger is better" thinking when ranking the quality of cities.

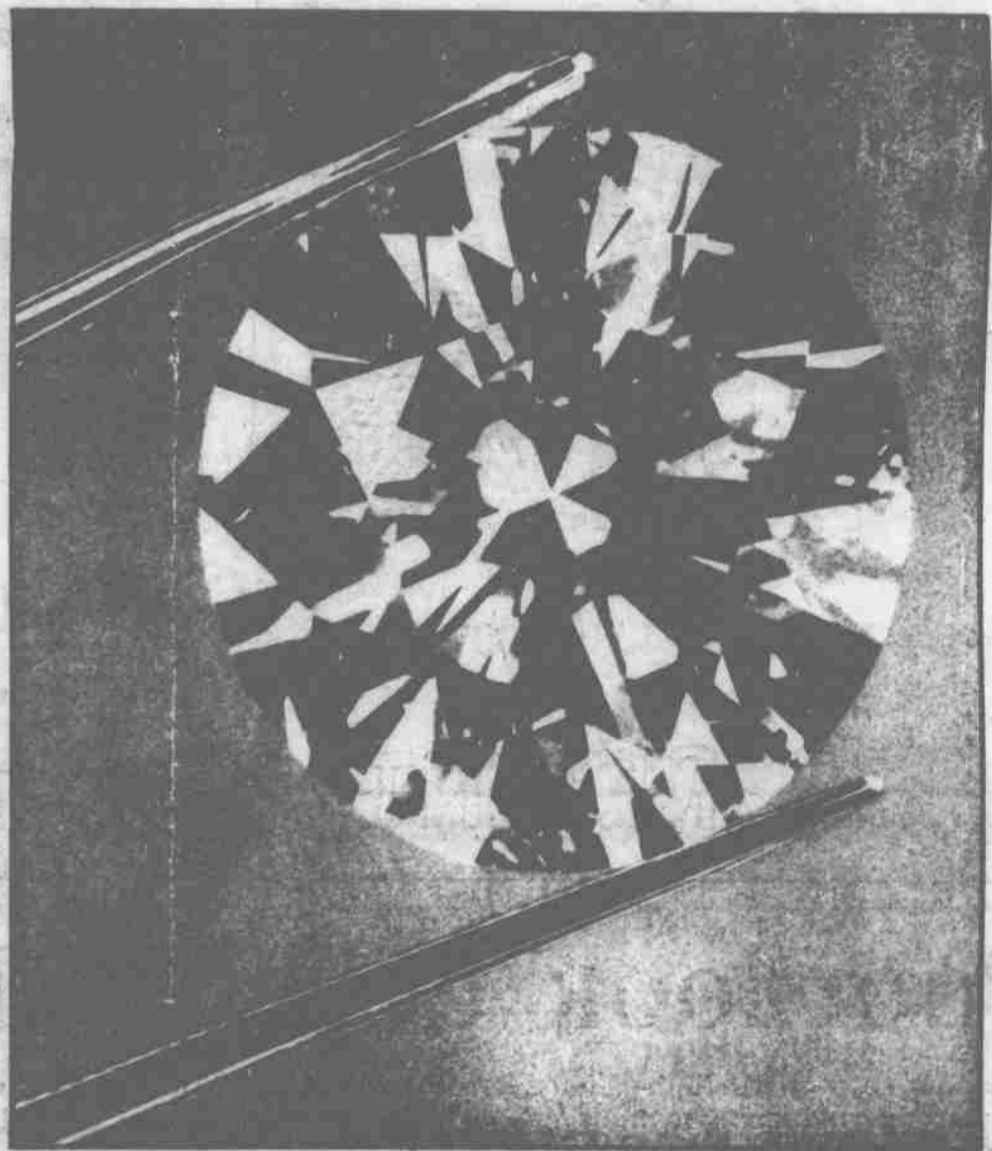
But I flew into Columbus recently, and as I was walking through the airport something happened that made me think anew about all of this.

"Will the person who dropped the dollar bill in front of the United Airlines ticket counter please come back to claim it?"

A small thing, but it stopped me. Somehow I could not envision that announcement being made at New York's LaGuardia airport or Chicago's O'Hare.

In Columbus, though, the announcement made sense. In a lot of ways something like that is more important than all the grand operas and network headquarters and Broadway theaters in the world. After you've been to the theater at night, or after you've been to the Metropolitan Opera, you still have to go home; in the grand scheme of things, the going home should play at least some part in whether a city is considered "great."

How Would You Grade This Diamond?



Color _____ Clarity _____
Cutting _____ Carat Weight _____

To Compare Your Grading
Or If You Feel You Need
More Information On The Subject
Stop In and Visit Our Diamond Specialists.

Wright's
JEWELERS
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