Guelph university professor says

Universities perpetuate social stereotyping

By DERWIN GOWAN
News Editor

Little girls are given books about little girls and are made fun of for being tomboy, but later on in life they are sent to an analyst if they show more interest in girls than boys.

This shows how social attitudes force people, particularly women, into stereotyped roles said professor Norma Bowen to an audience at the University of New Brunswick last Thursday. She is associate professor of psychology at the University of Guelph and a member of the Status of Women Academic committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers and was invited to UNB by the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers.

Salary differences can be corrected through legislation but people's attitudes are harder to change, Bowen said. Salary differences between men and women is a reflection of the belief that men are superior to women, she said, and universities perpetuate these roles. Further, she said, most universities do not presently have the resources to correct salary anomalies.

The successful businessman is usually considered a good father and husband but a career woman is usualy considered a poor mother. "We need to bridge the communication gap between men and women," she said.

Husbands usually get their choice of career over wives, thus determining location. This means the women must take what they can get, said Bowen. A study undertaken at Guelph university suggests women there are paid less even though they have qualifications equal to those of their male counterparts.

"Very few women are taught to value their worth," Bowen said, "...they do not bargain." She continued, saying one assumes the husband is the breadwinner in families and therefore should be paid more than women. However, she pointed out that unmarried men are not paid less than married because they have no families to support.

One questioner suggested that when women in Spain and France were given the right to vote, the political situations in those countries regressed as reactionary parties came into power. However, Bowen said this was due to the way the women were brought up and that with proper education this could be changed. "If women are ... conditioned to a particular lifestyle...what do you expect...?" she said. "You have to accept goals and objectives...We are talking about making sure males and females have equal opportunity of achieving their full potential."

One questioner suggested Bowen was chauvanistic towards other women because she was implying that she, unlike other women, would not have to be re-educated. However, she said she did not say she would not have to be re-educated.

Bowen is from the Carribean where women are not prevented from pursuing careers, she said, but not all the jobs are high level or highly paid. Schools are segregated there, and she said this may be part of the reason for a greater number of career women. It is not unusual to find women school principals there, Bowen continued. Her own country, Trinidad, has a female deputy prime minister and a number of female mayors. However, said Bowen, women are still in charge of keeping the home, and the society is matriarchial in this respect. Still, men still dominate man-woman relationships, she said.

The correction of salary anomalies will have to be the first step in bringing about equality of the sexes as changes will have to be made in practices before there can be equality of opportunity. However, Bowen said, the basic changes will have to be made through the educational system - elementary, high school and university.

Bowen said, "...deep down, the majority of students still maintain a lot of the values of the larger society." Social sciences and the humanities still portray men as the great achievers, and , "They (students) go out reflecting this imbalance."

She said women in professional programs at Guelph were completing their programs the same as men, but the drop out rate was higher in bachelor of arts programs due to the pressure to find a husband.

"It is not going to be the same society," she said. "We don't know what the changes are going to be but we have to be prepared for them."

Although she said she did not recommend that all women take up careers or that the family ststem be broken up, she said women should have the opportunity to pursue careers if they wanted to. Further, she said, it might be appropriate in some families for the husband to stay home and look after the children while the wife went out and worked. "... and just because a man is a house-husband does not make him any less a man," said Bowen.

She recounted an incident where she had three research assistants in a row because they all got pregnant and had to leave. She said this pointed out she was so concerned with her studies on the rights of women that she forgot about the rights of the women working with her.

Further, said Bowen, when jobs become scarce, it will have to be decided who gets the jobs - do women take jobs from men or vice-versa and why should one family have two incomes while another has none?

The family unit is changing, she said, but these changes cannot be vusualized. The family unit might disappear and it might not.

Bowen said the advances made in recent years by women are permanent as women will not settle for anything less than they have now. That is why she objects to the term "women's liberation movement" - it suggests the whole is a "passing fad." Bowen said she is not involved in any liberation movement, but wants to free people. "Men are pressured like women," she said. Both have their lifestyles dictated, but women are more dictated. She re-iterated that she wants to bring about the "freedom of men and women to pursue their potential."

Therefore, Bowen warned against "piecemeal kind of change" which would leave people largely unaltered.

Male-female inequalities do not depend on social class, said Bowen. "It's an individual thing." However, she conceded that middle class women do most of the talking about making changes. Upper class women are free in that they have enough money to do what they want. However. The middle class woman, although she does not need a job, wants one for personal fulfillment. The working class woman usually works because she has to, Bowen said, whether as a housewife or on the labour market.

UNB women's status survey 'long overdue'

Although only in town for two days, guest lecturer Norma Bowen had some comments to make with respect to male-female equality at the University of New Brunswick. Although there are some problems, she said, there is potential here.

There has been no study done with respect to the status of women here, she pointed out, but she hoped that if one is done, it will include students and staff as well as faculty.

"This study is long overdue," she said, but it should not be "a study for a study's sake." Problems are different at different universities and we must "zero in" on the problems peculiar to this institutions. Further, the study should be put into effect and not shelved.

"Attitudes will not change as rapidly as practices," said Bowen, "and practices, somehow, bring about a change in attitudes."

Professional programs at UNB have few women in them by and large, she said, noting forestry, engineering, law, and business administration in particular.

Said Bowen, "This is an opportunity for UNB as a small institution, as an institution not encumbered with a lot of structures...to show leadership... As a small institution you could do a lot to encourage women who are motivated to go into these (professional) programs."

One hindrance at UNB is that there are few women in the faculty, Bowen said. Women faculty members can act as role models, she explained. The reason for this, she said, is that there is not enough women with doctorates.

"Let's start providing them for the future," Bowen concluded.

A leadership conference hosted by the University of New Brunswick alumni will be held all day November 30 in the faculty club.

"If you think you are a campus leader, you're welcome," said student council president Warren McKenzie.

This is an annual event put on by the alumni to discuss common student problems.

The Federation of N.B. Faculty Associations

The Federation of N.B. Faculty Associations cordially invites the general public to an address by the Hon. Hugh Faulkner, secretary of state of Canada on "The Universities' Response to Bilingualism".

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