

Affirmative action vital

If you have a fat cat and a skinny cat, giving them equal amounts of food won't help.

The analogy was made by Jo Evans, addressing a group meeting for International Women's Day Saturday on affirmative action.

"There have been years and years of preferential treatment for male WASPs," she said. "We want to give preferential treatment to other groups temporarily."

However, affirmative action is illegal because it contravenes the Individual Rights Protection Act, which precludes employing or not employing anyone on the basis of sex.

Evans, the New Democratic candidate in Edmonton East in the last federal election, is also on

the executive of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee.

The problem with Alberta, according to Evans, is that even without legal affirmative action programs, there is already backlash. As an example, she cited a Ted Byfield editorial in *The Alberta Report*.

Byfield contended that two wrongs (to discriminate against men to compensate for discrimination against women) do not make a right.

It is not a case of two wrongs, said Evans, but a case of rampant discrimination controlled by no one, versus carefully monitored, temporary discrimination in order to redress a wrong.

Byfield also argued that

preferential hiring practices are unfair to the employer because he may not be able to hire the most qualified person.

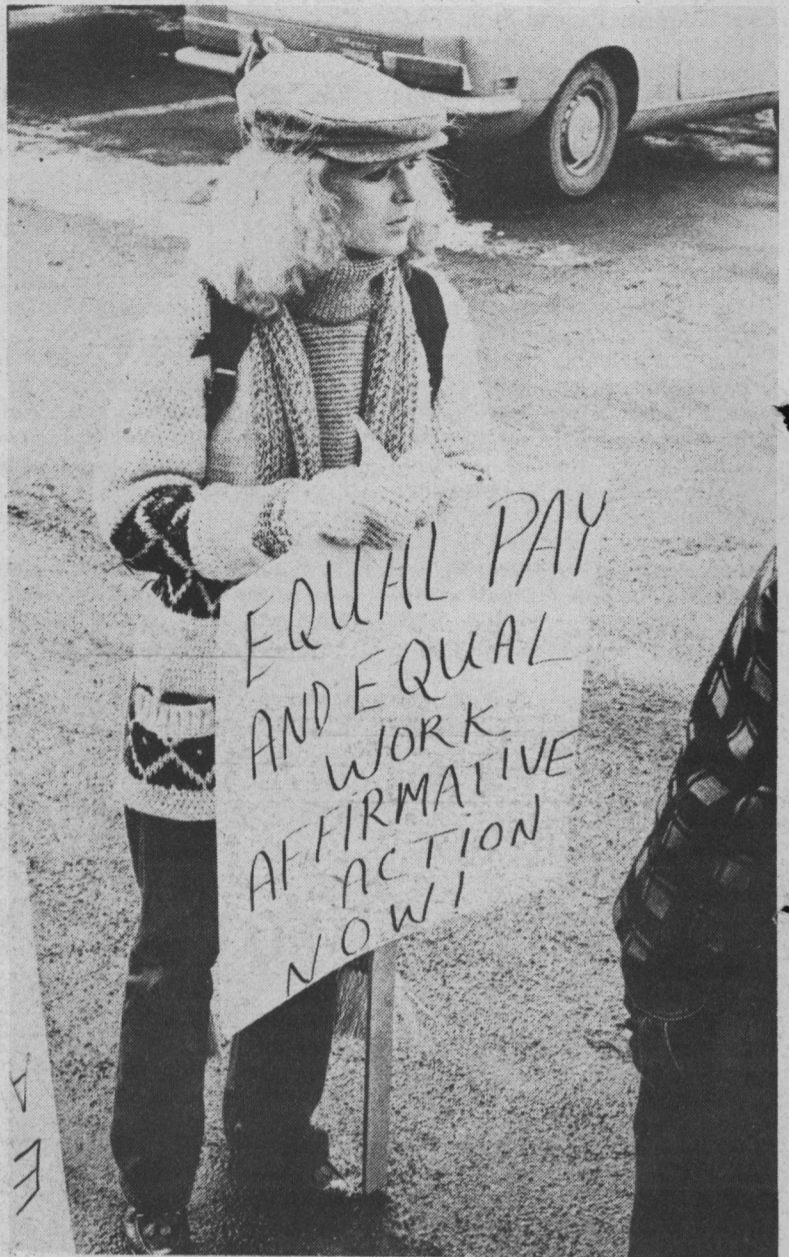
Evans says this assumes the most qualified person is being hired now. "There's no point denying an Old Boy network exists," she said.

"I don't know if Mr. Byfield is very naive or evil," she said.

Evans said the important tools in the fight for equality are compulsory quotas of women and preferential seniority lists.

She suggested retroactive seniority to recognize the years women have worked without pay.

"Feminists must not be some group on the sidelines saying you ought to do this," she concluded.



One of the participants awaits the march from the legislature Saturday for International Women's Day.

*International Women's Day stories
by Alison Thomson
photos Lucinda Chodan*

Escaping dead end jobs

Affirmative action is an opportunity to escape boring, low-paying, and dead-end jobs, according to Mary Jo Weetrich, a steel worker from Chicago.

Weetrich spoke to over seventy people Friday as part of International Women's Day celebrations, organized by the Edmonton Women's Coalition and the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee.

She was hired as an appren-

tice wire person as a result of an affirmative action program and is now a shop steward in her local of the United Steelworkers of America.

"We soon proved our worth in the mills and were accepted by other workers," she said. "But that didn't stop harassment by foremen and managers."

Weetrich said the only way to stop the harassment of being a woman on a traditionally male

job is to build a strong union.

Weetrich described the Weber case, in which a white man charged reverse discrimination and lost.

"Discrimination is part of the American way of life," said Weetrich. "Just like motherhood and apple pie."

"We've been paying all our lives and our mothers' lives and our grandmothers' lives. And now we want to collect what's owing to us."

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