

Men's rights organization claims inequality

by Bill Doskoch

What sort of man heads a men's rights organization?

Fred Hayward is the director of Men's Rights, Inc. (MRI). He is well educated, well travelled, and would make a perfect Yuppie except: "I only make 59 per cent of the average women's wage." He jokingly adds, "And women still expect me to pay for their drinks when I ask them out!"

MRI was formed in Boston in 1977. Hayward moved to California last year and formed a chapter in Sacramento.

He said the men's movement in the U.S. is primarily a Yuppie phenomenon.

"Two main types of men get involved: those who have lost everything in divorces and/or those who are very successful in their careers but feel ripped off by the system," said Hayward.

He added that, despite recruitment efforts, blacks and other minorities are under-represented.

He claimed that 13,000 to 15,000 people belong to the National Congress of Men, which is the umbrella organization for the men's movement.

He also claimed that if you included Vietnam veterans organizations, father's rights groups and other single issue men's organizations, the number of people involved escalated rapidly.

Hayward said between 20 and 30 percent of people actively involved in the men's rights movement are women.

He said they were similar in philosophies to the Coalition of Free Men and enjoyed good relations with them, but added that the two organizations serve different purposes: "Free Men is directed towards serving its membership, we are directed outwards towards raising public awareness."

"Philosophically speaking, we're anti-sexist, not anti-feminist," said Hayward. He described relations with individual feminists as good and agreed with many aspects of feminist philosophy but described feminist organizations as "awful."

"On issues like the draft or joint custody, feminist organizations become very traditional," said Hayward.

He argues that, "the draft is really important because no other law specifies responsibilities for a specific gender."

He added that during the Carter administration, MRI mounted a court challenge to the all-male draft. It was defeated but MRI plans to try again in the near future.

Hayward claimed the attitude of most feminist organizations toward the issue was "Shhh!" and that the attitude of some feminists was,

"men start wars, so men should die in them."

Hayward wondered what the reaction would be if the Reagan administration passed legislation making it mandatory for all 18-year-old women to serve two years in a government daycare centre or else be jailed. He added that given the choice, he would rather serve in a daycare centre than in the military.

Joint custody is another issue considered very important by MRI.

"Joint custody gives everyone access to equal sex roles," said Hayward. He felt it would eliminate many of the inequities of the present system, but more importantly, it would save children from being objects to be fought over in a messy divorce.

Hayward said feminist organizations support the current bias of the courts toward women in child custody decisions because it gives power to women.

"It's dehumanizing to men because it robs them of the joys and rewards of parenting and leaves them with only the responsibilities," said Hayward, adding that the issue is further complicated when visitation rights are blocked.

"Courts are quick to prosecute a man for non-payment of alimony or child support but rarely get involved when the woman interferes with his visitation rights," claimed Hayward.

Hayward said under those circumstances, he would support any man who refused to pay child support.

Hayward felt out-of-wedlock situations were also stacked against the father.

He stated that if a woman does not want the responsibility of a child she can have an abortion or put the child up for adoption, no matter what the father's wishes are, but if the man accepts paternity, he cannot evade responsibility that easily, and is bound to the woman's wishes.

"The assumption that only the man is responsible and that society must force responsibility on men is false and unjust," said Hayward adding, "if a woman is allowed to evade economic responsibility for an unwanted child, a man should be given the same rights."

Some other issues of concern for MRI include sexuality, paternity leave, and health.

Hayward said, "The main problem with feminist thought on sex is the fact it is sexist, men were never asked about anything."

He said what feminists say about women is valid but what they say about men is "completely off the wall."

"Susan Brownmiller's claim that

rape is a conscious conspiracy by men to dominate women is, to me, absurd" stated Hayward.

"Rape is a reaction against feelings of powerlessness," claimed Hayward. He noted that in interracial homosexual rape in prisons, almost 100 percent of attacks were blacks against whites and said, "Blacks are not generally taught that whites are subservient to them."

He also said that in his opinion, sexual fantasies of rape were common to both genders and were probably related to the restrictions placed by society on both sexes with regards to sex roles.

Hayward said more sexual information, education and honesty was the solution and that promoting hostility towards either sex was self-perpetuating.

On the subject of pornography, Hayward said, "Censorship is far more offensive than any kind I've ever seen."

He said when he lived in Denmark, pornography of all sorts was readily available and perhaps femi-

nists should compare the social and economic opportunities of Danish women with those of women in Iran, where pornography of all types is banned.

He also claimed that what really upsets a lot of feminists about porn is that sex is the root of women's power over men and porn strips them of that power.

Paternity leave is an area of active concern.

"MRI has a paternity leave project going on in Massachusetts right now," said Hayward. "We support maternity leave for women but feel the same right should be extended to fathers."

Health, especially the increasing gap between men's and women's life expectancies, is of concern to MRI, said Hayward.

Also of concern is gay rights, said Hayward but that is a thorny issue.

"We want to attract as many men as possible, but we don't speak to actively about gay issues because we don't want to scare off the 90 per cent of men who are straight,"

said Hayward.

"On the other hand we've been raised to believe that the worst failure we can commit is to be unmasculine or homosexual. All men are suspect to that accusation; therefore, all men can be manipulated by it."

"That's why, to prove ourselves as men, we join the marines and get our brains blown out. Proving ourselves by getting killed doesn't make sense. So, if gay rights can somehow liberate straight men from these irrational fears, it will be important to support gay rights," said Hayward.

Hayward finished by mentioning a portion of Betty Friedan's latest book, *The Second Stage*, where she mentioned that women who were successful in business wound up asking themselves "is this all there is?" and finding the answer was "no."

"Well, for men, the answer is 'yes,' and that's all it's ever been for men," said Hayward, concluding "but we'd like to change that."

Feminists likened to Nazis

Radical feminism attacked

by Bill Doskoch

Tom Williamson, president of the Coalition of Free Men (C.O.F.M.) is not amused by the name S.P.E.R.M.

"Oh really?" he said when told of the U of A men's rights club's name. "That's an old joke that's been around (U.S.) colleges for years. You can buy that on desk plaques in joke stores."

"But if they're serious, we'd be happy to help them," he added.

C.O.F.M. was started in Maryland in 1980, and is presently based in Manhasset, New York. It claims 2,000 members across the U.S., 30 per cent of whom are women. They have branches in England and Germany but presently are not active in Canada.

"We deal with all issues affecting men," said spokesperson Naomi Penner.

Penner, who was a founding member of the National Organization of Women, also said, "We want to help men break free of the stereotypes that trap them."

Penner also claimed there was an important difference between themselves and feminist organizations.

"We're not looking at blaming anyone. We feel it's a problem with the system and that the system must be changed to deal with men's women's problems concurrently,

ly, not separately," said Penner.

Williamson said they "have been damned" by "radical feminists" such as Susan Brownmiller, Laura X, Andrea Dworkin and even Phyllis Schaffly.

He described Brownmiller's book *Against our will* as the "Mein Kampf of feminism."

He used that analogy because, "it tries to portray men as the problem in the same way *Mein Kampf* did with Jews and homosexuals in Nazi Germany."

Williamson also said, "Don't confuse the feminist movement with women and don't confuse the men's movement with men."

"There are lots of feminist men who are trying to determine which specific groups of men are responsible for women's problems, such as scapegoating is dangerous," he said.

Williamson said the term "radical" didn't apply anymore because the ideas posed by these feminists were being accepted by the political establishment and even worse, being passed into law.

Williamson also claimed the only difference between left and right-wing feminists was how to achieve political power, not equality (note: John Gordon, a member of C.O.F.M. will have an article in the *March Playboy* entitled "Feminism

as a Political Action Committee").

"Men must learn to feel a sense of urgency and fight just as hard or else they've won," stated Williamson.

Some issues where men stand to lose (or are losing) include divorce and child custody laws, statutory and marital rape laws, paternity rights, insurance, higher suicide and death rates, and more severe prison terms for men than women, said Penner.

To discuss these issues, Penner hosts a radio program on Long Island called Man-to-Man. She said it provides an opportunity for men to talk about everything, in a non-judgemental atmosphere, from military service in Vietnam to vasectomies and early retirement.

Penner indicated there was a similar radio program and a cable T.V. show called Man-talk in Maryland.

Williamson said there are now men's studies courses at the universities of Wisconsin and Dayton.

He also seemed to feel the deeds and not just words are starting to become more important.

"Men don't like it but we are going to have to become radical to protect our rights," said Williamson, concluding: "Maybe it'll take more people to get screwed by the system before they get active."

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