

Wage equality explained

by Roberta Franchuk

"Pay equity flies in the face of supply and demand."

This was one of the points noted by Ronald Capell as he spoke to a small campus audience Tuesday about the implications of pay equity.

Capell has designed job evaluation systems to comply with pay equity legislation in Manitoba. He addressed concerns about gender inequalities, unions and the marketplace.

"Pay equity is the product of good job evaluation systems," Capell said. He detailed the processes used in evaluating jobs within organizations, noting that systems can be tested to eliminate bias.

"In the truest sense, it has nothing to do with gender specifically," he said.

Capell's job evaluation systems involved breaking down jobs into

more representative. Systemic bias against gender or race can also creep in at the level of scholarship demanded for the job — if the academic qualifications are set higher than the level actually needed to do the job, systemic bias is created against minorities with less opportunity to acquire these qualifications.

A method to remove bias in job evaluations is to select "gender neutral" job factors — those that aren't specifically related to one or the other sex and do not bias the results for or against one gender, said Capell.

Pay equity, said Capell, is often considered to address only the concerns of women. "This is because it's not politically expedient to address other minorities," he added. The unfairness of noting only the concerns of women may be one of the reasons that Alberta has been reluctant to address the pay equity issue, said Capell.

Pay equity would result in moving the pay scales of many female dominated jobs upward, he noted. However, Capell downplayed the size of the "gender gap" between male and female jobs. Of the 40 percent wage difference between jobs held by men and those held by women, only four or six percent of this can be attributed to gender discrimination. The remainder can be explained by job service, level in the organization, or other factors. The 40 percent figure is, he said, "a great selling point."

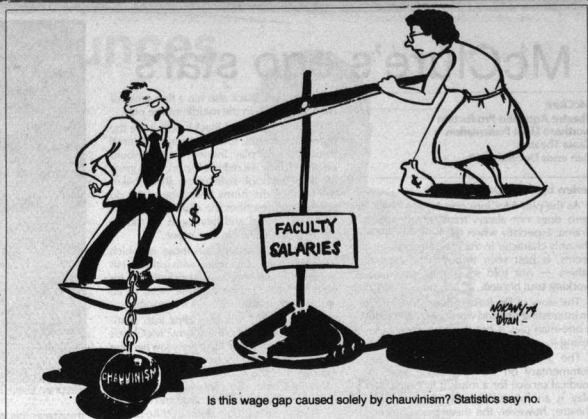
Capell admitted that instituting pay equity legislation would be tampering with the marketplace. But added, "if it's politically expedient to monkey around with the market, governments will do it at the drop of a vote." He pointed out the government interference in the marketplace is already happening, citing minimum wages, job standards and child labor laws.

In reply to a question, Capell said the law of "supply and demand" would not be ignored in job evaluation systems, but would be "reflected in the level of dollars awarded" for a particular job. Thus

It's not politically expedient to address other minorities.

their component skills, and determining how an increase in the level of the skills could be used to predict an increase in job worth within the organization. Using statistical methods, (of linear multiple and regression analysis), groups of skills can be used to determine the proper level of a job, and thus its proper level of remuneration.

Capell noted that gender or racial bias can creep into a job evaluation system. "The system is fraught with opportunity to screw it up," he said, citing such examples as undervaluing traditionally female job skills or choosing male job skills as being



the supply of workers for a job would be considered as one of the factors in the determination of job worth.

Another concern brought up was that of international competition. Capell agreed that if pay equity is legislated in North America, "it will affect North America's ability to compete in the international market." However, he added that the market had survived other economic upheavals, such as the introduction of powerful unions.

A member of the audience noted that free trade will affect pay equity plans in Canada, since Canadian firms would have to compete with American firms that may not have

such plans in effect. "It always comes down to a choice between social programs and economic programs," said Capell.

The reaction of unions to pay equity was also questioned. Capell said that job evaluations in the public sector in Manitoba were developed with the consultation of unions, in an atmosphere of full cooperation. "Cooperation was just oozing under the door."

Union demands for wage increases were dealt with by freezing the wage rates of some union positions until the underpaid positions caught up to their same pay level. This system will be installed in Manitoba over the next three to four

years, noted Capell, as legislation takes effect to equalize wages.

"Where will the money come from?" asked a member of the audience. Since salaries can not be lowered, said Capell, "you and I are going to pay for this — but then we've already paid for getting kids out of the coal mines."

Eventually, concluded Capell, society will come out of pay equity with a "changed set of values" as to the relative importance of various jobs.

Capell was the guest of MERGE, the Movement for the Establishment of Real Gender Equality, a group of university staff and students.

Students sexually illiterate

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) — Students don't know much about sex according to a recently published survey on the sexual behaviour and attitudes of 1,547 Memorial University students.

"We know that young people are sexually active, but they have a poor knowledge of sexual anatomy and sexual functioning," said Dr.

Paul Sachdev, a professor at Memorial's School of Social Work.

Sachdev's study reported that 80 per cent of students had "poor sexual knowledge" while only 17 per cent rated good and three per cent rated excellent.

Highest scores went to students studying medicine and nursing,

while students in Social Sciences Education and Humanities and finally Physical Sciences scored lower. But even among medical students, seven in ten rated poor in the sexual knowledge test.

Women scored higher than men overall.

Men and women still have significantly different attitudes toward sexual behaviour, according to the study. Two-thirds of the men surveyed approved of pre-marital sex compared to only one-half of the women.

Sachdev concludes that more sexuality courses need to be introduced into the education system.

"For those people who have chosen to engage in sexual activity, information must be available so they can learn how to have safe and responsible sex," he said.

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