

# THE Backlash

A Column for the Politically Incorrect

Coeditors: Peter Hanus & Joseph Murphy

Every individual should have an equal opportunity with other individuals to make for himself or herself the life that he or she is able and wishes to have consistent with his or her duties and obligations as a member of society granted.--The Canadian Human Rights Act

UPEI has in the works a proposed affirmative action programme for the hiring of female faculty. This proposal states that the three best qualified candidates will be considered for a faculty position from the job applicant pool, but two out of the three best qualified **HAVE TO BE WOMEN**. In this article, we will look at both the necessity of such a programme to create positions for women in universities, and the problems with such programmes. (And why does an article on affirmative action belong in a column for the "politically incorrect"? Because it is most often politically correct university professors who support such programmes, such as here at UPEI. Affirmative action is considered "politically correct.")

For those who don't know, an affirmative action hiring programme is a programme whereby members of minority groups, such as women, are given preference in job competitions and promotions. Usually the members of the minority group only have to meet a minimum set of qualifications to get the job or promotion, never mind if any individual who is a member of a majority group (usually white males) may have more or better qualifications for the job or promotion (the Philosophy Department should know about this). These are the "means" of affirmative action.

The "ends" or "goals" of such programmes include the following: to eliminate stereotypes that women (or any other minority) cannot do the same work at the same level as men; to "correct" past hiring discrepancies and bring statistical parity to the work environment (often referred to as "social engineering"); to eliminate discrimination in hiring; and, in the case of the hiring of female faculty through such a programme, to make the university environment more amiable to female students.

Affirmative action fails to eliminate stereotypes held of certain minority groups, if anything, it tends to

reinforce such stereotypes. First of all, these programmes may hire women who have below average qualifications. Such women in the workplace tend not to help alleviate the stereotype that the workplace is the "man's place." Second, studies by Heilman and Herlihy (1984) and Jacobson and Koch (1977) found that women who were hired because of affirmative action programmes tended to be blamed more for failure and given credit less for success than women hired without affirmative action programmes. Third, a recent study by Russel Summers (1991) found that fellow employees would devalue a woman's qualifications (regardless if they were good or not) if she was hired at an institution that had an affirmative action hiring programme. In this case, the female employees devalued the preferentially hired woman's qualifications more so than the male employees.

In addition, studies by Chacko (1982) and Heilman, Simon, and Repper (1987) have found that affirmative action also has negative impacts on the woman hired. In Chacko's study, women hired through affirmative action reported lower job satisfaction, lower satisfaction in relationships with supervisors and co-workers, and less commitment to their organisations. In the Heilman, Simon, and Repper study, women promoted through affirmative action devalued their success as leaders, downgraded their leadership abilities, and were less interested in engaging in the leadership role in the future.

Even if these problems did not exist with affirmative action, it still would not be justified. By implementing hiring programmes that may exclude an **INDIVIDUAL** from gaining a job or promotion due to their sex (or race), just because that person's sex is considered that of a "majority" or "socially privileged" group, discrimination against that **INDIVIDUAL's** rights as protected (?) in the Canadian Human Rights Act occurs. Whether politically correct professors want to admit it or not, people are **INDIVIDUALS** before they are members of any social group. There are such things as poor white males; that is, **OP-PRESSED WHITE MALES**. A study by David Gray (1974) found that working-class whites (including the males) suffer virtually the same discrimination as any minority group. Programmes that exclude such people based on their sex (or the colour of their skin) make it more difficult, if not impossible, for such individuals to bring themselves out of such oppression.

Affirmative action also punishes those males who had the least to do with the low numbers of women on