

Opinion

NOW needs to nullify Knepper's nasty knock

As the Vice President of the A&M Chapter of the National Organization for Women, I was interested in Houston Astro's pitcher Bob Knepper's recent comments concerning women in general and NOW specifically. He said that Pam Postema should not be allowed to umpire because she is a woman, and that women should not have authority over men.



Jill Webb

Later in a Sports Illustrated interview he said, "NOW is such a blowhard organization. They are a bunch of lesbians. Their focus has nothing to do with women's rights. It had everything to do with women wanting to be men."

He later apologized for the remarks saying they were "careless and insensitive." Yes, to put it mildly, they were careless and insensitive. I need to say first of all, that this column is my opinion only. I do not speak for any part of NOW nor any other member of NOW.

Molly Yard, the National President of

NOW, gave a less than memorable response to Knepper when she said, "He obviously doesn't know many members of NOW. We are made up of all types." And then she said that she sure wasn't a lesbian, that she had been married for almost 50 years. Feminists have been accused of being lesbians for as long as there have been feminists. Yard's remarks were very defensive, and it would have been better to unify NOW members rather than using her marriage as an excuse to defend her beliefs. As long as people like Knepper can use the lesbian remark to scare and divide feminists, it will continue to be used as a weapon.

NOW supports the right for consenting adults to choose each other for a partner. I do not think that is anything to be ashamed of. Frankly, it is just no one's business how two adults love each other.

When enemies of equality call feminists lesbians, they are just attacking a minority within the group to try and make the whole group look bad. It is using a stereotype to trivialize the important issues NOW deals with. NOW educates people about sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, birth control,

abortion, pornography and the Equal Rights Amendment. And NOW has task forces that lobby politicians on the local, state and national level to make sure these issues are not ignored.

NOW defines a feminist as "a) a person who believes that women should have political, economic, and social rights equal to those of men. b) one who believes the implementation of feminist principles will create a more humane type of political power." A feminist can be anyone. Our goals are the same. I don't believe any group should dominate another. I think sexism, like racism, is institutionalized. I do not understand how people, especially in this community, could fail to see the blatant sexism around us.

We had to fight to get women in the school, the corps and the band. They threw women, literally, out of bonfire when the women were not performing their traditional roles. At the Quack Shack, women's health care was assigned to a pediatrician. There is still much to be done.

Many of the people who are against feminism know nothing about it; their views are based on stereotypes. They throw around words like "anti-family"

willy nilly. If there is one group that has taken action to help the needs of the family, both before it was popular to do so, and today, it is feminists.

When Knepper said that we were just women wanting to be men, he brought up an interesting point. If he means that we are women who want the same rights, respect, opportunities, power, responsibilities and choices that men have, then well, yes, we would like to be like men. If he means that we want to behave like a stereotypical "macho" male who is irresponsible, uncaring, totally lacking in social conscience and who is extremely aggressive, then no, we do not want any part of that. In fact, women who are feminists celebrate their womanhood. They do not reject it.

"Feminist" is not a bad word. If you believe in equality, that isn't anything to be ashamed of. Feminism does not make a woman into a man. It broadens the world for women by increasing their choices and potential for their lives. For men and women it cuts through the games we seem to play with each other. We can care for and relate to each other based on our real needs as human beings, not on our expectations of how we should act based on what society dictates.

Some people think feminists want everyone to be the same. Actually, that is not true. If everyone were the same, there would be no individuality; there would be more conformity and less creativity. The feminist philosophy allows all people to be themselves, people who are individuals; there would be more individuality and more creative ideas. The feminist philosophy allows all people to be themselves, people who are individuals; there would be more individuality and more creative ideas. The feminist philosophy allows all people to be themselves, people who are individuals; there would be more individuality and more creative ideas.

If Knepper did anything, he should be ashamed of his sexist attitude about women. There is still a need for educating and changing people's minds about what women can do. He is in his remarks about NOW members being lesbians, that women are defined by their sexuality (the date reotype about our intelligence by sex partners). He showed a statement that NOW members women wanting to be men, that organization must continue to fight myths and get our peaceful, equal sage out more clearly. Finally, a parody showed that feminists have a difference because women no longer stand by helplessly and themselves be slandered.

Jill Webb is a senior secondary education major and columnist for The Battalion.

Why the giant stink over Knepper's remarks?

June 10-17 — the week in review:

• A U.S. district court, for the first time, finds a tobacco company partly responsible for the death of a smoker.

• White House chief of staff Howard Baker resigns.

• The U.S. trade deficit shrank to its lowest level in three years.

• The FBI announces that it is investigating several top Pentagon officials suspected of fraud.

These are all big news stories. But, for some strange reason, they were overshadowed by a flip comment a baseball player made about the sexual preferences of members of a feminist organization.

Houston Astros pitcher Bob Knepper opened his mouth and inserted his cleated foot for the second time this year when he referred to members of the National Organization of Women as "a bunch of lesbians" and "blowhards."

In March, Knepper said he was against women being umpires because he didn't think God intended for women to have authority over men.

Knepper later apologized for his NOW remarks saying that even though he jokingly made the comments during an early morning interview, he shouldn't have said it.

Undoubtedly, Knepper's comments were sexist and probably shouldn't have exited his mouth whether he believes them or not.

But judging from the reaction to Knepper's remarks, people are taking this issue much too seriously. For goodness sakes, it's not like the man shot the pope, spit a loogie on Nancy Reagan and claimed to see Elvis Krogering for red creme soda in Kalamazoo.

NOW has especially gone overboard with its reaction. NOW's Houston chapter nominated Knepper for a Neander-

thal of the Year award and sent him a leather muzzle. Those kind of actions would tend to lend credence to those who agree with Knepper about women's place in society.

Instead of sticking out their tongues and slinging mud at Knepper, NOW could have used this opportunity to improve their image and educate the public about their organization.

And people have seemingly forgotten who made the comments. It was a ballplayer, folks, not George Bush.

Athletes certainly have a responsibility to children to be good role models. That would include displaying good sportsmanship and not becoming involved with drugs and alcohol.

However, the public is wrong to put athletes in the position of being socially conscious opinion leaders. That should be the responsibility of community and industry leaders, not men who make a living playing a game that requires wearing double-knit polyester, accurate spitting of tobacco juice and grabbing themselves in inappropriate places in front of large crowds.

It's strange, for instance, that Knepper has seemingly caught more flack for his comments than Jesse Jackson did in 1984 when he referred to New York City as "Hymietown."

Jackson was running for president at the time. Now if we want to criticize racist, sexist or otherwise inappropriate comments, it seems only appropriate that we scrutinize presidential candidates more closely than we do left-handed curveball pitchers.

Hmmmm. Seems kind of curious that we are now expecting baseball players to be the upholders of social consciousness instead of civil rights leaders who are running for the country's highest office.

Now if Jackson really wants to get the public to listen to his views and stances on the issues, the Houston Astros could use a slick-fielding shortstop.

Anthony Wilson is a senior journalism major and sports editor for The Battalion.



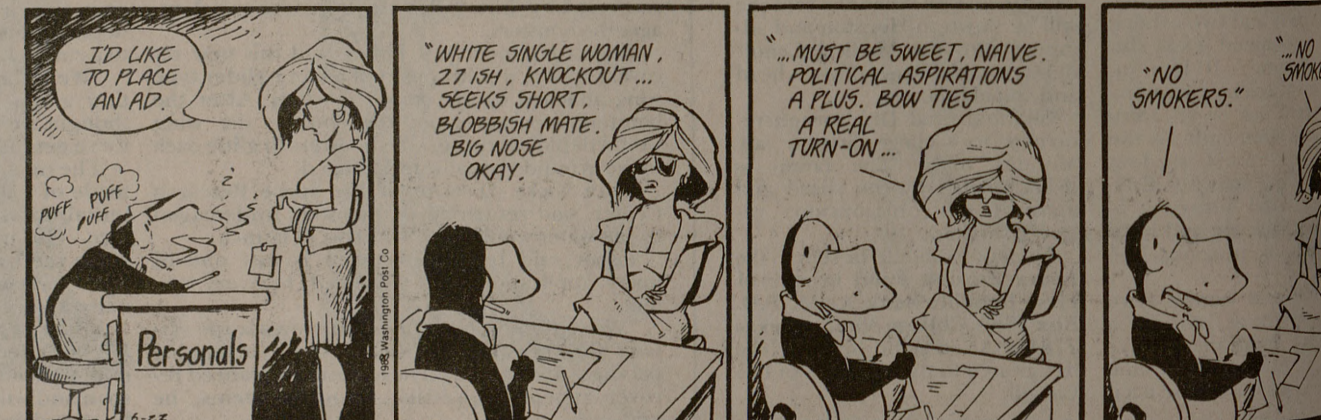
Mail Call

What a screw up

EDITOR:
I really appreciate Mr. Mahinda Karunaratne for his article on THE WORTHLESS ELI PROGRAM. The ELI program is not only a pain in the neck of International students but also a psychological torture that demotivates the students.
As pointed out by Mr. Mahinda the courses offered are grossly inadequate to improve any student with a TOEFL score over 550; further improvement in their capabilities can only be developed by the exposure to American university environment. A good example for this my own case. I was forced to take "Oral Skills" and "Grammar" classes because I did not score the required grade in ELPE. At the same time I was a teaching assistant for a lab in which I had to teach for six hours. Because of my placement in "Oral Skills" class I suspected myself that I may not be able to communicate well with my students. On the contrary, most of my students found my class to be very interesting, were very happy to attend. Finally at the end of the semester they told me that I was one the very few good TAs they had ever encountered in TAMU!
There is one more situation where I saw that the ELI is a big humbug: it is my pre-qualifying exam for Ph.D. In this exam I had an English section in which I had to write an essay for about 40 minutes. Because of my placement in "Grammar" class I was sure I wouldn't be able to do well in

English section. On the contrary, to my delight I was that I did very well in that exam and was not asked to take any technical writing courses, which are generally taken by many graduate students (both American and International students).
The reason why I gave these examples is to show the whole process of ELPE/ELI is nothing but a way of survival for some people. The evaluation process and the course contents are grossly inadequate to do anything good for paying \$550 for two courses. Probably this is what Americans call a "RIP OFF."
I am sure that most of the international student body feel the same and is very unhappy about the ELI. I also request fellow international students to raise their voices (rather than their pen) on this issue. This letter may not make much impact among the university policy makers but at least will give a hint to them that the whole ELI is a big "SCREW UP" and requires to be scrapped or else requires drastic changes to be more realistic.
I once again commend Mr. Mahanda for voicing the issue.
B. Ram Prasad
grad student
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BLOOM COUNTY by Berke Breathed



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