

ISU must recognize all minorities

22/4

by James Schafer

10-22-90 ID

I would like to apologize to the participants of the National Coming Out Day rally for my choice of language Oct. 11. I tend to use abrasive language, and in the emotion of the moment, I chose words many people find obscene.

I cannot, however, apologize for the use of the "h-word." I cannot retract the statement that I believe former Iowa State President Gordon Eaton is homophobic. The events surrounding our request for the University to make a statement cannot be construed as anything but homophobic.

Eaton was asked to make a statement saying ISU is dedicated to creating a positive educational environment for all members of its community, including those who are gay, lesbian or bisexual. He declined, saying that the inclusion of "affectional preference" in the University's affirmative action policy was sufficient and needed no further "embellishment."

Considering the University told us last year the affirmative action policy was virtually unenforceable, it hardly serves as an appropriate positive statement.

If we are to create a better environment for those members of our community who are of differing affectional orientations, we must start by stating the facts. We cannot afford the ISU administration the luxury of saying this University is supportive when it isn't. Eaton's actions are a splendid example of the entrenched homophobia present in this University's hierarchy.

Oppression need not be overt or violent to be damaging. The quiet

heterosexism that this University practices is just as oppressive. Institutional discrimination must be addressed and confronted for it to be dealt with properly. The first step, as in any recovery program, is for the University to admit that it is there and is a problem.

If the University truly wants to create a better environment for the bisexual, lesbian and gay members of the community, there are some steps it can take:

1. Recognition: The University needs to recognize we are a significant campus minority and decidedly the most openly oppressed. It needs to publicly state its obligation to creating a better environment for our community's lesbian, gay and bisexual members.

UP NEXT

2. Guarantee of non-discrimination: The University needs to publicly and enforceably guarantee that ISU students will not be discriminated against on the basis of affectional orientation in the classroom, in scholarships or in housing. A more forceful policy on non-discriminatory employment needs to be put into effect.

3. Focus for concerns: The University needs to provide an office for the concerns of the gay, lesbian and bisexual community.

4. Lesbian & Gay Student Center: The University needs to provide a safe environment for students to gather on campus. It should be both a resource center and a protective atmosphere for ISU's bisexual, lesbian and gay commu-

nity members.

5. Lesbian & Gay Studies: The University needs to begin filling the void in education regarding the nature of sexual orientation and the lesbian, bisexual and gay community's contributions to society. Education is the beginning of disarming discrimination.

6. Lesbian & Gay Scholarship: A fund allowing people to anonymously contribute to a scholarship for bisexual, gay and lesbian students attending ISU should be set up to relieve the financial fear created by coming out.

7. Multicultural Orientation: ISU freshmen should attend an orientation seminar that raises awareness of the diversity of the ISU population, including the gay, bisexual and lesbian members of our community.

These concrete and workable ideas are the best steps the University can take. The University must realize that two empty words in a hidden policy is *not* supportive. Actions do speak louder than words. Positive change needs to be open to be effective.

We want the University to extend the same obligation it has toward the many racial and ethnic minorities to those of us with differing affectional orientations. We want them to go beyond the very necessary addressing of sexism to addressing heterosexism as well.

To be a positive environment for minorities, ISU cannot pick and choose which minorities it supports. It must support us all equally.

James Schafer is president of the Gay/Lesbian Campus Organization.