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Women most oppressed group  
social work lecturer says

women are the most oppressed group in society and traditional social work practice is doing little, if anything, to rescue them from a state that marks them as second-class.

That was the message delivered by Helen Levine, a social work faculty member from Carleton University and an active women's liberationist, who gave a guest lecture at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Prof. Levine said women are shaped by a society that allows them only a subordinate role to men, and denies them a separate life in the adult world. They are regarded as something "less than," and never as "OK, but different."

They earn 60 cents to every man's \$1, are subject to a rage that manifests itself in rape, incest and battering, and are treated by the helping professions only for their "dysfunctions" and failure to live up to society's expectations.

"Is it any surprise, then, that many women are always coping with anger, bitterness and a kind of rage, or that depression is endemic among women?" she asked.

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She said this was reflected in social work faculties, among others, where a women student is lucky to ever see women faculty members who are full professors. It is also reflected in curriculums, which rarely take notice of the particular concerns and needs of women.

while courses that deal with women's problems have been introduced at Carleton, it was a battle every step of the way against strong male unwillingness to see their worth, Prof. Levine said.

When she asked what was being done here to introduce appropriate courses dealing with women, one student called out "nothing." Others nodded their heads in agreement.

She said that social workers, in their rush to make social work a profession, act as mini-therapists, helping women to cope with basic unfairness, instead of helping them to break free of their present ghetto.

"I think we've missed the boat in that area."

She said there is a power struggle under way. "I'm not saying that men are the enemy, but where this inequality continues there will be rage."

As a married women, she said she knows exactly what people will say if her marriage breaks up. "They'll say I was impossible to live with."