

# Emily Taylor: Committed to Equal Rights for Women

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"Woman may be said to be an inferior man."

—Aristotle  
Emily Taylor, dean of women, has spent most of her adult life trying to dispel this common attitude wherever she has found it.

For the past 17 years as KU's dean of women she has maintained an administrative and teaching goal of educating young women to become self-sufficient adults, aware of the career options and lifestyles available to them.

During those years at KU Taylor has earned the reputation of being one step ahead of everyone. She started building that reputation with the formation of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1968, five years before President John Kennedy established the national commission.

In 1971 Taylor joined the Affirmative Action Board, attempting to provide economic justice for young women and their teachers.

Now she has attacked academic priorities, demanding and participating in the expansion of women's studies courses at KU. There are presently 12 such courses. According to only through liberal higher education will the dignity of work and the equality of opportunity be instilled both in students and society.

Taylor's duties as dean of women do not include receiving plaudits for her accomplishments in the women's movement, she says, but her accomplishments do provide a base for helping students.

AS HEAD of the dean of women's office,

she does not exclude herself from the duties of the two associate and 10 assistant deans. Not only has Taylor increased personal contacts with students during the past 17 years, but also she coordinates the office's position in the administrative hierarchy of the University.

When Taylor came to KU, replacing Martha Peterson, she brought three methods of approaching students: speaker series, group activities and individual conferences. That approach has not changed, and the demand for services has increased greatly, Taylor says.

As counselors to one-half of KU's students Taylor says, staff members of the dean of women's office have a constant problem trying to keep students up to date on what is happening. The Women's Resources and Career Planning Library in the dean of women's office is her major weapon.

Taylor is proud of the development of the library. At every chance she points out how rapidly the library is growing and how it serves students.

IN 1968 the women's library began to organize subject notebooks with topics ranging from human sexuality to women in religion. The subject notebooks presently number more than 50. The library is the second largest women's resource center in the United States, Taylor says.

The women's library receives much of its information and material from organizations in which Taylor is active and from contacts she has made in the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor.

Taylor says she considers it her responsibility to be active in many organizations so she can keep students

abreast of the various aspects of the women's movement.

She belongs to the National Women's Political Caucus, Women's Equity Action League, National Organization for Women, Intercollegiate Association of Women Students, American Association of University Women and National Association of Women Deans and Counselors.

Taylor is a major speaker, organizer and



Emily Taylor

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has never accepted a job anywhere without asking whether the employer was committed to the principle of equal pay for equal work, she says.

Taylor is extremely concerned with equal job opportunity because she elected not to marry and instead remained in the labor market when women were being forced back into the home after World War II.

"I did not have the problem of somebody saying 'you have a husband to support you, and you should be in the home,' she says.

Taylor is a woman who succeeded on her own. After receiving a bachelor's degree in English and history and a master's degree in counseling from Ohio State University, she earned a doctorate in personnel administration at Indiana University. Taylor came to KU in 1956 after being associate dean of women at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

**TAYLOR'S CAREER** has been so deeply imbedded in the progression of the post-World War II women's movement that her thoughts on the movement and its history seem to be identical.

As existing myths about jobs befitting women and the inadequacies of women have gradually changed, Taylor feels that she has also grown and changed psychologically. Her usefulness has increased and her ideals have been realized, she says.

"We want equality now, not way off in the future sometime," says Taylor. "We want it now so that none of you have to go through a phase as I did where someone can tell you that you are only worth two-thirds as much as someone else just because that person took on responsibilities which the rest of us have ended up paying for."

everybody to get out and work, to force them to give up the choice they have made and that is certainly not what it's all about."

#### "WOMEN'S MOVEMENT"

OR "Women's Rights Movement" are the terms Taylor prefers to use because "they clarify what we are talking about, and, after all, every rights movement boils down to a choice of alternatives.

"There is nobody in the feminist movement that I know of who is saying that all women ought to do the same thing, that all men ought to do the same thing, that all humans ought to do the same thing," Taylor says. "What they are saying is that they should all have an open choice and that they should come to recognize that choice and recognize that they are making choices even if they think they're not."

The acceptance of alternatives and the equal opportunity to choose are the goals for which Taylor is striving. She says there still exists discrimination in educational access, in pay and in job promotion, and will exist until the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The fact that several equal pay and opportunity laws exist today, Taylor says, has led her to believe that the women's movement is an inevitable process. Taylor says the women's movement has finally gone beyond enforcing basic civil liberties to attacking the roots of discrimination in the "economic mainstream of society."

"Women could manage to live with being barred from many public places, but they never will stand for being barred from the places where economic and political decisions are being made," she says.

**TAYLOR HAS** always been committed to the women's movement in the economy. She

contributor to each of these groups. Taylor says she accepted speaking engagements several years ago for many of these groups but has since been forced to turn down many offers because of the time involved.

Her favorite speaking series is the "Feminist Perspective" radio program she started in January, 1972 with KANU. Taylor is moderator of the weekly half-hour program.

**MANY PEOPLE** have the impression that she has changed her philosophy on the women's movement, she says. Taylor maintains she has not changed her ideas and approach in the slightest.

"It's just that more people are listening now so that it makes it seem as though there has been some change," she said.

Although Taylor has gained recognition at KU because of her commitment to the women's movement, she does not consider herself a radical feminist. In fact, Taylor calls herself a conventional feminist concerned with equal opportunity for women in the labor market and with equal access to training for jobs.

She says radical feminists want to restructure society whereas her special interest is with the American society as it exists. This society, she says, offers more opportunity to change whatever needs to be changed to make things more fair for everyone.

Taylor refuses to use the term "women's liberation" which she says has an emotional connotation that identifies it with the New Left of the '60s.

The phrase, she says, gives many women satisfied with traditional roles the impression that someone is going to force