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NEWS RELEASE
#71-10

FOR RELEASE: APRIL 15 P.M.

Richmond-----The Virginia Commission on the Status of Women heard testimony today that the inferior status of women is rooted in Virginia's educational system.

Citing evidence that two all-female state-run colleges, Radford and Mary Washington, receive less than half the amount of money per student as, for example, the University of Virginia - until recently all-male - the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia contended that such discriminatory practices are a violation of women's rights to equal protection under the Constitution.

A spokesman for the Union, Mrs. Phyllis Conklin, cited statistics showing that Radford, Longwood and Mary Washington, all women's colleges, enroll 11 percent of the state's students yet receive only 6 percent of the state's funds. The three "prestigious", predominantly male schools, University of Virginia, VMI, and VPI, while enrolling 30 percent of the students, receive 48 percent of the funds for higher education.

Mrs. Conklin contended that "there has clearly been a conscious policy of restricting female access" to the state's better and male-dominated colleges and universities.

"Until 1971, the State denied women the right to attend the University of Virginia's undergraduate divisions," said Mrs. Conklin. "No state statute sanctioned this denial; rather the deprivation was the consequence of culture and tradition."

Further, the ACLU's testimony showed that, although more Virginia women than men applied for admission to co-educational William and Mary College in 1970, only 39% of the female applicants were accepted.

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Such practices have denied opportunities for excellence in education to Virginia women, the ACLU contended, and have "blunted their ability to pursue numerous careers." Sexually segregated education is "consistent with the concept that women are inferior to men and undeserving of or unqualified for full rights in a society that is male-dominated," the Union stated.

Barriers to admitting women to the University of Virginia fell last year when a federal court, in a suit brought by the ACLU, ruled that the University may not exclude women applicants on the basis of sex.

The 1970 General Assembly removed the statutory barrier to sexual integration at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg. Radford and Longwood Colleges are still segregated by law.

The Union urged the Commission to seek both executive and legislative action that would end statutory barriers to co-education at Longwood and Radford, and asked for concrete action to implement "true integration" of Mary Washington, VPI, William and Mary, and Madison College.

The ACLU statement also cited evidence of discrimination against women in faculty hiring practices and in salary scales for women professors. The Union asked for action to end such discrimination in hiring, promotion, and pay.

News Release 71-10

4-15-71

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