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Governor’s remarks evoke concerns of sexism

By Brooke Bailey

Governor Paul LePage has been known as a politician who ‘tells it how it is.’ He’s based his campaigns on throwing political correctness out of the window and catering to the voters who agree that our country has gone too soft. But being less politically correct does not give you the right to be sexist. At a town hall meeting on Wednesday, LePage was asked a question about a citizen initiative to increase clean elections by limiting public financing in the state of Maine. LePage’s response was, “That’s like giving my wife my checkbook. I’m telling you, it’s giving your wife your checkbook.”

Though the audience replied with supporting laughter, this statement did not settle well with women in Maine. Eliza Townsend, executive director of the Maine Women’s Lobby, responded to the comment, “The governor’s attitude toward women, toward relationships and toward money are so dated and bizarre.” Multiple people and groups around Maine have even called for an apology by the governor.

It’s interesting that the governor mentioned his wife when referring to irresponsible spending, since according to a recent WGME article, “The governor’s press secretary, Adrienne Bennett, pointed out that the governor’s wife, first lady Ann LePage, controls his checkbook, drawing a laughing acknowledgment from the governor.”

So if the governor’s allusion to his wife’s financial irresponsibility wasn’t even true, why did he say it? Why did the audience laugh?

LePage implied that women are not good with money. Apparently, we are back in the 1950’s, a time when people knew that women can’t possibly be trusted with finances. Our feeble minds must be unable to comprehend what we are doing as we spend hundreds of dollars on dresses, doilies and tablecloths. What’s the big deal, doesn’t money grow on trees?

These comments were not funny, or accurate, they were extremely sexist. Believe it or not, women do have the capability to handle money, just like men. Are there women who are rather reckless with their money? Sure, just as some men are.

Governor LePage, along with every other human being, needs to realize that he cannot lump together an entire population of people and make these types of generalizations and presumptions. I am a college student who works countless hours at a pizza stand during the summer in order to save up for my college tuition, rent and other expenses throughout the year. It is not easy to save nine months worth of money within one summer, and I was greatly offended by the governor’s recent statement. Just because I am a female does not mean that I do not know how to handle my finances.
So I’m sorry, Governor, but maybe our country hasn’t become too politically correct, maybe people are just realizing how offensive certain words and phrases can be. So next time, instead of saying that our country has become too sensitive, try to realize why people are taking offense to your statement. When women make up half of the state that you are governing, I would suggest you stop saying sexist comments.

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