Summer 1979

The Delegate Assembly

Shirley Frank
COORDINATING COUNCIL MEETINGS AT THE CONVENTION

The National Women's Studies Association's Coordinating Council met before, during, and after the First NWSA Convention to prepare for and carry out its conference-related responsibilities; to elect its leadership for the coming year; and to begin clarification of priorities, functions, and tasks growing out of the experience of this year's Convention.

These several Council sessions included the participation of newly elected caucus representatives to the Council, and that of many regional Council members-elect, whose formal terms of office will begin at the February 1980 Council meeting. A full listing of the 1980 Council will appear in a forthcoming issue of the Newsletter: names and addresses of the Council's 1979-80 Steering Committee and of Standing Committee chairs appear in this issue.

At the post-Convention Council session, each member of the Council introduced herself by sharing the item or issue she considered a priority for Council concern in the coming year. Consensus was evident in the frequency with which membership development and Association finances were listed as organizational concerns; work on elimination of racism and other biases as programmatic concerns.

The Council heard detailed reports from 1979 Convention Coordinators Emily Abel, Shirley Harkess, Deborah Rosenfelt, and Peg Strobel as background for a discussion of Convention planning for 1980. A report of the Women's Studies Newsletter Advisory Committee, recommending continuation of the current arrangement between NWSA and The Feminist Press for another year, was accepted by the Council. Annette Kolodny presented technical information on the potential functioning of a proposed NWSA Standing Committee on Title IX and Title VII, and a legal defense fund for Title IX and Title VII litigants.

Small working groups met and reported back to the full Council on nine items raised at the beginning of the post-Convention session: membership; regional development and liaison with caucuses; mechanisms for dealing with resolutions and constitutional issues; organizational processes; racism and other biases; conference planning; women's studies issues and support of women's studies faculty; Delegate Assembly procedures; fundraising and financial priorities.

Subsequent discussion was primarily devoted to further exploration of issues related to NWSA dues structure for 1980, in the light of financial and membership reports from the 1979 meeting, and to development of a procedure for reviewing the many recommendations of the Delegate Assembly. To expedite this work, an ad hoc committee, chaired by Karen Blackwell, was appointed to assist the Steering Committee in advance of the Council's next meeting.

Submitted by Kay Towns

NWSA STEERING COMMITTEE 1979-80

Pat Gozemba  
(Co-convenor; Caucus Liaison)  
Center for Interdisciplinary Studies  
Salem State College  
Salem, Massachusetts 01970

Kathryn Towns  
(Co-convenor; Regional Liaison)  
Interdisciplinary Social Science and Education  
Pennsylvania State University/Capitol Campus  
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

Sirelean Newton  
(Standing Committee Liaison)  
Women's Studies Career Advisement Resource Center  
KER 109  
University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, California 90007

Elizabeth I. Goodman Hallowell  
(Treasurer)  
1042 Seventeenth Street S.E.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414

Jan Meriwether  
(Secretary)  
Center for Self-Reliant Education  
808 West McKinley  
Sunnyvale, California 94086

THE DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

The 1979 NWSA Delegate Assembly, a body made up of more than 300 regional, caucus, and group member representatives, met for a full day at the NWSA Convention to hear reports on the state of the Association since its founding and to continue the process, begun in San Francisco, of developing governance structures and organizational priorities.

Reports were presented by Jan Meriwether, who spoke for the 1978-79 Steering Committee and described the activities of the Coordinating Council over the past two years; by Elaine Reuben, NWSA Coordinator, who reported on the efforts and accomplishments of the National Office in its first 18 months; and by Barbara Hillyer Davis, outgoing Treasurer, on behalf of the Membership and Finance Committees.

Additional reports were made by representatives of the Convention Committee, and by representatives from the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions on their agreement to include Virginia within the Southeast region.

The remainder of the morning session on NWSA business was devoted to discussion of constitutional issues, and to the evident need for clear procedures by which such issues might be brought before the Assembly. The NWSA Coordinating Council was mandated to examine the several constitutional issues referred to it, and to create appropriate means for informing the electorate about them before next year's Assembly.

In the afternoon session of the Assembly, delegates heard over 150 recommendations and resolutions from the Coordinating Council, from constituent caucuses and regions of the Association, from individuals, and from ad hoc groups formed at the Convention. It was clear that membership concerns extend beyond the narrowest limits of the academic, with feminist education seen as being within the context of a feminist movement for social change. It was also clear that this large number and wide range of proposals would require for their implementation far greater resources than
those currently available to NWSA. Thus it will fall to the Council to consolidate, refer, sort into priorities, and begin to act upon particular recommendations of the Delegate Assembly.

The meeting was ably chaired by Shauna Adix, assisted by Barbara Gerber and Kathy Brooks.

Submitted by Shirley Frank

THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

One of the many challenges to the NWSA in Lawrence came from the Association’s Finance Committee, who, after a summary of the Association’s financial history, made several specific recommendations based on their reflection about the relationship between our past financial behavior and our continuing effort to understand ourselves as a feminist organization. The recommendations should be the beginning of a discussion among all our members of the relationship between feminism and money.

The Finance Committee recommended that the NWSA as an organization dedicate itself to developing an attitude of fiscal responsibility in the Coordinating Council and the membership as a whole. To this end, the committee recommended that a membership drive be a top priority for the next year and that each member make that drive a personal responsibility, basing her efforts to enlist her friends’ and colleagues’ support on the importance of paying for the value received from sisters at least as much as we must pay for what we receive from the patriarchal marketplace.

The remaining recommendations suggested ways of developing consciousness about the relationship between feminist philosophy and the Association’s financial policy. They are: first, that the Coordinating Council dedicate its next Council Exploration Session to the subject of our attitudes as feminists toward money. Second, that the next National Convention include sessions on fiscal responsibility for all of us. Third, that we consciously work in our own administrative and organizational activities on providing a model for running an organization in a nonexploitative, pro-feminist manner. And fourth, that each proposal or resolution to the NWSA henceforth include a financial statement projecting direct and indirect costs as well as potential and actual funding sources.

The Finance Committee report challenges the Association to begin a dialogue about feminist philosophy and money, in which we invite all our members to join — in the pages of the Women’s Studies Newsletter, as well as in regional meetings and at next year’s Convention.

Submitted by Barbara Hillyer Davis, chair of the NWSA Finance Committee

THE MEMBERSHIP TABLE

In the month before the First NWSA Convention, the National Women’s Studies Association doubled the number of memberships received in the first four months of the 1979 dues year. On the first day of the Convention, 100 more members joined, followed by another 50 to 75 in the remaining days of the meeting, when we were not able to staff the membership table full time. Returning to the National Office, we found we had received approximately 50 additional memberships, and numerous requests for membership information.

As of June 1979, this year’s NWSA membership was already more than twice the total figure for 1978: around 600 in 1978, more than 1,200 so far in 1979. Many of the new memberships are group members, thus bringing us closer to the goal of involving all women’s studies programs, feminist school and community educational groups in the work of the Association. Many of the letters received mentioned the Convention or reports from Kansas as being the deciding factor in the decision to join and support NWSA.

The Convention served membership development in another way as well. The Association did not have money or personnel to send out renewal notices in 1978; at Kansas we were able to remind people of lapsed memberships. We were also able to talk with members who have missed mail or Newsletters.

Success in building membership brings more work. We know that new members should be contacted after they join, and that all current members need to be reminded that the dues year expires in December. Caucuses need to be informed of new members who indicate interest in their

The end of a long day.