Winter 1980

Readers' Speakout

Cathryn Adamsky

Anne Thorsen Truax
Dear Elaine Reuben:

The Association for Women in Psychology wishes to call your attention to a case that we think should be of considerable interest to the National Women's Studies Association. Maija S. Blaubergs, currently AWP Liaison to the NWSA, an active member of SEWSA since its founding in November 1976, and former Southeastern regional representative to the NWSA Coordinating Council, has brought suit against the University of Georgia for denying her promotion and continued employment on the basis of her activities and research in connection with women's studies and women's rights and on the basis of her sex.

In September 1977, after serving five years as an Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology, Blaubergs was recommended by her Department and her College for promotion to Associate Professor. The promotion was denied at the University level in a split-vote decision that alleged in part that her "publications are limited beyond the candidate's own thesis." Blaubergs' record includes over thirty presentations at conferences, eight articles in refereed journals, four chapters in edited books, and eight book reviews. A year later, a man in her Department with three negative votes noted that "his service to the University through the Women's Studies Program is apparently the subject of some concern to her peers in the Department." The Dean failed to forward her promotion dossier for consideration by the University-level Committee.

After exhausting all administrative remedies, Blaubergs sued the Dean of the College and other officials at the University and was subsequently ordered reinstated for the coming year. Since then, she has been considered for and denied promotion a third time and has been subjected to many forms of retaliation for filing suit, including the elimination of secretarial assistance. The case may well set needed legal precedents concerning First Amendment protection of work in women's studies.

Blaubergs is also suing under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and under Title IX, and has requested a right-to-sue letter which will allow her to sue under Title VII. However, funds are desperately needed to continue with the suit. Local supporters have set up a legal defense fund, and NWSA members who are able to do so are being asked to send a contribution to the:

Maija Blaubergs Legal Defense Fund
c/o The Catholic Center
1344 South Lumpkin Street
Athens, GA 30605.

We in the Association for Women in Psychology are deeply concerned about the outcome of this case and have committed ourselves, as an organization, to her support. We hope you will help us.

Yours sincerely,

Cathryn Adamsky
Spokeswoman
Association for Women in Psychology

Dear Florence Howe:

I write to second the remarks of Joan Huber in the Fall 1979 issue. Unlike her, I was present at the NWSA Annual Meeting and I also participated in the AID Women in Development sessions.

In the name of Susan B. Anthony, how can feminists expect to alter the institutions in our society if we refuse to participate in them? Recent foreign assistance legislation, including Title XII of the 1975 International Development and Food Assistance Act, has mandated that universities include consideration of the effects on women and families of projects funded by AID; it also necessitates greater participation of social scientists in these projects. Both these requirements ensure better opportunities for women working on the projects and better assessment of women's needs in the countries where they are situated. The Office of Women in Development in AID has as one responsibility the oversight of these Title XII mandates.

Women all over the world are fortunate that a feminist like Arvonne Fraser was appointed to head this agency. She has a history, both in Washington and in her home state of Minnesota, as a feminist of the finest kind. She has been active in the founding and leadership of feminist organizations at both the national and local levels, and in her position as director of AID/WID has extended that feminism to women all over the world. Of all the women I have met in my ten or more years of activity in the women's movement, she is the least deserving of being trashed by her sisters.

But there is also another principle that must be considered here. . . . In the interests of the ultimate success of feminism, we need to do more than trash male institutions. We must learn all about them, understand them, infiltrate them—and ultimately reform them. I have no illusions about the length of this process. I do know that at no step along that path will it help to cut down a sister who is part of a male institution, thinking that by harming her any damage to that institution results.

Sincerely,

Anne Thorsen Truax, Director
Minnesota Women's Center
University of Minnesota