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Editorial

The Feminist Press
Four Cheers for Elaine Reuben

When Elaine Reuben became National Coordinator of NWSA in 1978, there was no established National Office, there was no national profile of NWSA, the first Annual Convention had not been held, no NWSA projects or publications were in view, and no voice of NWSA was present in the Women's Studies Quarterly (then the Women's Studies Newsletter). We were about to become an institution, but we needed the builder, the person who could supply the vision, the bricks and mortar, and a bit of style as well.

Our first cheer is for Elaine Reuben's style—or styles, for she has several. At business meetings, she has been the appropriate executive of a feminist organization, welcoming the elected representatives of the Association, and assuming that the Steering Committee would take the leadership at meetings. As representative of the Association out in the world—with the media, on stage at the Annual Convention, in the office of Foundation officials, at Washington meetings—Elaine Reuben has been correctly the glamorous feminist, the strong intellect, the astute political leader of a very complex organization. And in both cases, her style has been sparked with humor and wit.

Second, the bricks and mortar. No organization gets built by whim or wish. It takes daily hard work in an office, on a phone, at a typewriter, and in countless meetings to accomplish what Elaine Reuben has accomplished for all of us these four years. It also takes a grinding travel schedule to build a national organization, and it takes a toll of one's personal life. The bricks and mortar are not only those years in the National Office or out on the road; they are the countless persons across the country, in addition to the slender support staff, set into motion by Elaine Reuben's energy and her vision of NWSA as a national force and forum for educational change.

The third and fourth cheers are for her vision, without which NWSA would not now be an organization. She understood the dilemmas of a Constitution-created conflict of interest between regional organizations and a National Office, between regional memberships and dues and national memberships and dues. And she has worked supportively with regional leaders to form and then strengthen the national profile of the Association. She understood also the still more complex dilemma presented constitutionally through the creation of caucuses that, without budget, could meet but once a year, at the Convention. And within the constraints imposed by a slim budget, she helped caucus members to communicate with each other. Her vision has consistently comprehended the delicate balance between campus and community that recognizes the roots of women's studies as a movement for educational change.

Elaine Reuben's vision has been women's studies/women's movement centered. She has pushed the Quarterly further in the direction of reporting on public education and on women's centers, and of including news from women's caucuses in the professional associations. As early as 1978, she knew that the Association could serve women's studies programs and the women's movement by taking a close look at the ways in which students were prepared to be "interns" as part of their women's studies curriculum. The Service Learning Project, now a permanent part of the National Office, having produced its first Handbook under a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), is the palpable product of this vision. The vision has informed all of us who have worked with her these four years, the teachers and academics, the community organizers, and that special kind of teacher/scholar/activist that Elaine Reuben will always be.

We won't miss Elaine Reuben, only because we expect her to be right there, in Washington, working with the National Office, even as she assumes her new job in the Department of Education. We need her vision as we attempt to reform the Constitution. We need her vision as we continue to build an organization committed to the feminist connections between learning and life.

Florence Howe