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Guest Editorial

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GUEST EDITORIAL
FROM THE NWSA NATIONAL OFFICE

The spring term has been completed; conference participants at our Third annual meeting have departed Storrs. Some will be participating in one of the several summer institutes for women's studies curriculum development offered around the country, the world; or attending other feminist workshops and conferences; or taking part in summer school sessions, or simply savoring and looking forward to continuing activities in the fall.

This year, though, more than ever, it is hard not to be painfully aware of powerful contradictions to an old "story-book" picture: teachers, students and academics at their leisure for a privileged three-month vacation, free to take advantage of opportunities for rest, research and renewal.

By more recent tradition, these few months are the season in which many of us (NWSA included) wait to hear from Federal agencies and private foundations about the fortunes of proposals submitted; this year, most of those agencies are themselves waiting to hear about their own fortunes for the coming year, and demands upon the resources of the private sector increase. Meanwhile, school budgets and faculty lines are being cut in many areas; student scholarship and loan programs reduced; employment and training projects that served low-income women eliminated, and civil rights enforcement efforts threatened.

Even as the postsecondary educational establishment moves toward recognizing women's studies as vital to liberal education, elected officials and organized pressure groups across the country are moving to "purify" libraries and schools of books and ideas that challenge fundamentalist prescriptions for women's roles and work in family and society.

It is "the best of times; it is the worst of times," for NWSA as well. More interest in women's studies, more persons and projects involved in feminist education, mean more calls upon the Association and the National Office to provide information and services, to serve as a clearinghouse and coordinating center for an increasingly expanding field, while costs of postage, supplies, telephone and travel increase as constantly. Budget cuts at every educational level and in every educational setting have already begun to "trickle down" to our disadvantage.

We cannot afford a "summer vacation." Campaigns against women's basic rights to control of their bodies and definition of their lives demand that feminists deepen their commitments to collective engagement and strengthen and increase their contributions to groups that can serve and protect women's needs. If NWSA is to continue growing, members need to spend the summer season planning events like the 1980 Colorado Women's Studies Day described elsewhere in this issue; and preparing for state and regional meetings throughout 1981-82 at which feminist educational work can be shared and made visible. Now is the time to be pledging time, and monies, to organizational development and intensified membership outreach.

The story-book picture of leisured teachers and academics is long since out of date for most, but it is not completely false: relative to many, those who work in and around educational institutions are a privileged group. If we do not support and promote our own concerns, no one else can be expected to.