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International News: First National Conference on Women's Studies in India

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An interplay between individual initiative and institutional imperatives seems to have characterized the developing interest in non-sexist education at the pre-college level in Ontario. The Ontario Ministry of Education is currently conducting a review of its anti-sex-role stereotyping policy. The province-wide survey, addressed to principals, school board superintendents responsible for curriculum, and high school heads of guidance, is based on a random sample of 316 schools spanning grades K-13. The report, when it is issued next fall, will reveal how many schools have instituted women's studies courses, and how many have chosen to oppose sex-role stereotyping in other ways.

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**International News:**

**First National Conference on Women’s Studies in India**

*by Florence Howe*

Nearly 350 delegates from all parts of India—from Gauhati to Gujarat, from Kashmir to Kerala—attended the five-day National Conference on Women's Studies, held at the S.N.D.T. Women's University in Bombay, April 20-24, 1981. Teachers, researchers, students, voluntary workers, and government personnel were among the participants—including 25 men. In addition, delegates from such neighboring countries as Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh attended, as well as representatives of Unesco, UNICEF, the Ford Foundation, and such Indian organizations as the Indian Council on Social Science Research (ICSSR).

More than one hundred papers were presented; and, through a number of working groups, the conference sought to identify major problems affecting women in all areas of life.

Recognizing the crucial role of the educational system in perpetuating or changing social attitudes, values, and institutions that tend to exploit, oppress, and marginalize women in all spheres, the conference recommended urgent and imperative changes in educational curricula, and in the ethos and organizational patterns of educational institutions. Such changes would help to remove those ideological or conceptual ambiguities and biases that currently prevent both the development of independent and democratic consciousness among women and the acceptance of such women's consciousness by men. Spokespersons at the conference observed that women's problems have to be understood in the context of general patterns of inequality, poverty, unemployment, and exploitation. These maladies can only benefit from a movement for the liberation of women from the forces that oppress and exploit the mass of them.

Conference participants examined a series of documents about the male-centered curriculum prepared by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), and made recommendations for revisions in social sciences, literature, science, technology, and mathematics. It was agreed that, in general, the Women's Studies component be incorporated into all disciplines, rather than organized into separate courses. The University Grants Commission Chair, Madhuri R. Shah, former Vice-Chancellor of S.N.D.T. Women's University, promised grants to faculty for the revision of course syllabi.

At the Conference, a proposal to establish an Indian Association for Women's Studies won approval. Its goals include the following:

1. To provide a forum for interaction among individuals, institutions, and organizations engaged in teaching, research, or action for women’s development.
2. To provide and develop information centers in different parts of the country for the promotion of women's studies and for the scientific analysis of actions for women's equality. To this end, to develop a network for the collection of information relating to women's studies teaching, research, and action program.
3. To develop documentation, bibliographic, and other services needed for women's studies.
4. To disseminate needed information to all agencies engaged in teaching, research, and action programs for women's studies.

5. To organize conferences periodically to carry forward the awareness and momentum generated by the first National Conference.

6. To organize specific action programs for the development of women's studies perspectives in different disciplines, and for the development of appropriate indicators for measuring women's participation in social and economic development.

7. To mobilize the necessary services and resources, with a view to strengthening the access of women to develop their talent as scholars and writers, etc.

8. To assist institutions seeking to develop programs of teaching, research, and action for women's equality and development.

9. To take all action necessary to bring about a change in social values with a view "to eliminate attitudinal, conceptual, and class biases that hinder an understanding of the role and situation of women and their movement toward equality."

10. To collaborate with institutions and agencies working for similar objectives at the national and international level.

Note: A more detailed report of this National Conference, including some of the talks and papers, will appear in the first issue of the new International Supplement to be published by the Women's Studies Quarterly beginning this fall (see below for further details).

WOMEN'S STUDIES INTERNATIONAL NETWORK AND RESOURCE CENTER

The idea has begun to become reality now that The Feminist Press and the Women's Studies Quarterly have received word from the Ford Foundation of the award of a grant with which to begin the research and collection of information and materials about women's studies internationally. We will describe the project at length in the Fall issue of the Quarterly. All members of the NWSA and subscribers to the Quarterly will receive the first issue of the International Supplement free of charge. Future issues will be available at reduced rates to those who are interested in international women's studies and in cross-cultural studies.

One urgent project we have been asked to work on by women in many different countries is a collection of course syllabi, and an annotated bibliography of especially good texts and articles on Women and Development. If you teach such a course, or have such a useful bibliography, or wish to recommend particular sources, please write to the Women's Studies International Network and Resource Center (WSI/NRC), Box 334, Old Westbury, NY 11568.

Can Consciousness be Lowered?

by Judith Stitzel

You've been working as part of the women's movement since 1968. It's changed your life and the lives of the people you have touched. The job you have probably didn't have a name ten years ago. You're a women's studies coordinator, a rape and domestic violence counselor, an affirmative action officer. You are more involved in women's issues than ever before. You wake up planning strategies and go to sleep drafting rationales. You subscribe to more journals—in spite of inflation—not only to support them, but to buoy yourself up. But something is wrong. There is a new sound in the air.

The sound of the seventies wasn't the Beatles or the BeeGees, not Carly Simon or Holly Near. Not even Margie Adam or Cris Williamson. The sound of the seventies was—the click. Do you remember how it went? Those castanets of connection? The air was full of them. Not all the same length. Not all the same pitch. But each one immediately recognizable and a cause for rejoicing. "The privilege of having the door held open costs approximately $4,000 a year." "Most women are only one man away from welfare." The click was the sound of connection, of someone leaping beyond the isolation of the personal to the potency of political analysis, of someone moving from depression to anger, the sound (magnified perhaps) of someone hugging herself or her sister. I understand; therefore I am. Ready. The problem that had no name was finding its tongue. The clicks were exhilarating. No sooner did you hear one within yourself than you recognized it as the sound you had been hearing all around you. With a leap of imagination, you were