

The Society: Minutes of the Women's Caucus Meeting

1997 HSS Annual Meeting, La Jolla, California

Peggy Kidwell, out-going chair of the caucus chaired the meeting. Karen Rader the other co-chair, assisted and also acted as official secretary. The meeting opened with the traditional introductions of those present, and a circulation of a sign-in sheet (for purposes of future contact). Approximately 25 people were in attendance.

First order of business was announcement of WC-sponsored sessions at the La Jolla meeting. This year, the WC sponsored two sessions: "Engendering Masculinity in the Cultures of Science and Technology" and "From Wilderness to Reform: Women Scientists in the Field," but there was also a third gender/women/science session on the program: "Gender Theory and Images of Science." Rader reminded everyone that, in the future as in the past, WC co-chairs would work to put together annual meeting sessions on topics of women, science and gender -- so Caucus members were encouraged to approach co-chairs with their subject and/or presenter ideas.

Then came the election of a new co-chair for the Caucus. Andrea Rusnock was formally nominated, and she was unanimously elected. Rusnock will serve as co-chair for 1997-1999 (NOTE: WC co-chairs's term dates are from annual meeting of election through last annual meeting over which she will co-preside).

Kidwell reported on the inauguration of the Women's Caucus Prize for Younger Scholars. This prize came into existence through a generous one-time donation of \$200 to the Caucus, earmarked by the (anonymous) donor for purposes of encouraging undergraduate women with professional interests in the history of science to travel to and participate in this year's annual meeting. After hearing of the donation in June, the WC co-chairs conferred with the Executive Office on possible means of administering and awarding the grant on such short notice. Fortunately, there was one such woman who had both contacted the Office requesting travel support and whose home institution was willing to chip in the additional funds necessary to enable her attendance. This woman was Tanya Levin of Fairbanks, Alaska, who Kidwell introduced as the first recipient of the WC Prize for Younger Scholars. Kidwell also took this opportunity to suggest that we think about possibly trying to raise an endowment -- either through Caucus member donations or a larger HSS-wide campaign -- to make this a permanent feature of the Caucus's mission.

Marilyn Ogilvie, chair of the History of Women prize committee, announced that her committee (herself, Sylvia McGrath, and Ken Ludmerer) had submitted their choice for the 5th annual prize (which alternates between the categories of books and articles: this year is was books). Ogilvie noted although there were a number of very good books in contention (in and of itself a commentary on the vitality of the field), "the book that won this year was terribly deserving." [Later: we were all to learn that it was Margaret Rossiter's *Women Scientists in America: Before Affirmative Action* (JHU, 1995) -- a fact we celebrated that night, along with her Pfizer Award, at the 25th Anniversary WC reception.]

Rader next introduced Janell Robisch, associate editor of the "Women in Science" book series at Harwood. Robisch said she just wanted to make WC members aware of the new series -- she handed out flyers with a fuller description and encouraged members to come and talk with her if they wanted to have their own manuscripts considered.

Toby Appel reported on the Women's Caucus WWW page, which has been up and running for nearly six months already. So far the site includes minutes of WC meetings, e-mail links for co-chairs, and a complete list of WC prizes. Information for the page should be sent to toby.appel@yale.edu for periodic postings -- but sent (please, she requests) as an e-mail file, not as an attachment. As with last year, the possibility of putting member course syllabi and/or links to Web learning courses on the Web site was raised -- as was the accompanying issue of privacy and confidentiality, e.g. some instructors give home phone numbers for their class: should these go on the Web? also, what about the syllabi being easy targets for the political mobilization of anti-feminist, anti-women individuals or organizations? One solution suggested was that everyone send their syllabi in, and that Toby Appel could either: 1) remove personal info and then post them or 2) post simply the general course description, and the prof's institutional address and then the interested party could write for more info. In the end, however, the issue was not resolved and Leslie Burlingame volunteered to undertake some outreach to the Committee on Education, to learn more about how they dealt with such matters in publishing the "HSS Syllabus Sampler." Rader reminded the group that the HSS had budgeted money for a WC Syllabus Sampler, and promised to check into the fate of this original project. Some members suggested that it might still be a good idea to do just this -- create a printed version of a women, gender, and science syllabus sampler.

Michelle Aldrich spoke about her on-going project to coordinate and produce a Directory of Women in the History of Science. She noted, gratefully, that the HSS office had agreed to provide funds for mailing this directory to anyone on the list. Producing it, however, has been a more difficult matter, due to such things as software-related delays, costs to obtain mailing lists from certain societies (e.g. SHOT free, HoMed -- \$150), and the time-intensive purging of her master list. In the meantime, Aldrich agreed to work with Toby Appel in possibly posting the list electronically,

Angela Creager, former WC co-chair, reported on the status of the project to make possible a Conference on Feminism and 20th-Century Science. Creager noted that the \$4000 project initiation grant WC received last year from HSS enabled a focused Planning Meeting, which took place last February in Princeton; a dozen WC members attended and there is a full report of this workshop in the July 1997 HSS newsletter for those who are interested in the details of the discussions that went on there. The first part of the two-part plan the group settled on -- namely, a small workshop for historians of science, technology, and medicine -- will take place next October in Princeton (due to the generous support of Princeton's Program in the History of Science and the Davis Center for Historical Studies). The program, as soon as it is finalized, will be posted electronically. Meanwhile, Creager has been working intensively with Londa Schiebinger, Liz Lunbeck, and the grant-writing subcommittee of the Planning Meeting (headed by Arleen Tuchmann, but also members: Pam Mack and Karen Rader) to submit an NSF grant for the remaining funds needed for the workshop, as well as for the second part of the plan -- namely, a conference in Cambridge, MA in 2001 on "20th-Century Science, Technology, and Medicine:

The Differences Feminism has Made." There was a brief discussion of whether or not this conference could be planned to coincide with the IUHPS of the same year (so that more international scholars might attend), but it was noted that since the IUHPS meeting was in Mexico City (not New York), it was probably not a practical plan. Creager noted the Cambridge site was firm, that MIT's STS Program and Harvard's History of Science Department would provide financial as well as moral support, and that Evelyn Hammond (another former WC-chair) has negotiated with MIT to do the conference planning.

A spirited discussion then ensued on the relative merits of having Harvard and MIT as co-sponsors of this 2001 conference. Some issues raised included: would HSS be willing to co-sponsor as well? How about approaching Mike Sokal to add Section L of the AAAS as a sponsor? What about other Boston institutions and groups which have well-established Women's Studies programs such as Northeastern? [Others suggested: Bunting Institute, the Schlesinger Library] Will the elitism of MIT and Harvard exclude their participation? Especially in response to this latter question, the issue of accountability was introduced: should we be concerned about having too many sponsors, so that we are putting ourselves in a situation where we are trying to be accountable to everyone, and no longer have any meaningful focus and control for putting together the conference program? One compromise solution suggested was that in the early stages of planning, we widely circulate the Call for Papers for the conference -- through all HSS and all Boston-based professional science, science studies, and women's studies networks -- to encourage the broadest possible participation.

In Julie Newell's absence, Peggy Kidwell presented Newell's written outline on the tasks and history of the WC Job Survey. Newell is 'retiring' as Job Survey Coordinator after this year. Amy Bix (in absentia, via Newell's contact with her) and Gwen Kay offered to co-coordinate in this transitional phase. Also, Nancy Slack volunteered to do follow-up calls to individuals contact with her) and Gwen Kay offered to co-coordinate in this transitional phase. Also, Nancy Slack volunteered to do follow-up calls to individuals who were known chairs of search committees yet did not complete the survey sent to them. Several questions were raised about this long-standing WC project, to which members with some experience responded. What jobs were surveyed?: post-docs are included as well as any jobs listed with the Society (should we make an effort to send out blank forms to other jobs, e.g. on HNET). Should the job survey forms be sent out by the executive office?: this has the advantage of administrative constancy, as well as the weightiness (and therefore, more likelihood of response) coming from an official HSS body (as opposed to an individual). What is the purpose of the survey -- does it provide incentive for interviewing women, or is it just for our own information?: usually, interpreted as a service function of the WC, to get a sense of the market, and the kinds of things employers want. Especially in response to this latter point, several members wondered: if the Survey can not be shown to be demonstrably changing job interview policies (i.e. providing women candidates fairer access to this process), then why should a WC subcommittee (typically composed of junior, non-tenured women scholars) have to devote their time and energy to doing it, instead of committing general HSS resources? Michelle Aldrich pointed out that if the Society were to take it up, perhaps the explicit 'women and minority' angle would be dropped, and this would be a huge statistical void. The HSS has the longest running published job survey in the history of science (NSF keeps statistics but does not publish them). It was decided that these issues should be raised with CORP, our parent committee, and that some sort of retrospective analysis of the job survey

would need to be taken up to answer this question of effectiveness. The Co-chairs agreed to write a letter spelling out our concerns about the Job Survey to CORP chair, and to the Executive Office.

The meeting concluded with an invitation to that evening's Women's Caucus 25th-Anniversary reception. The co-chairs also extended a formal thank you to Constance Malpas and Keith Benson, for all of their help in handling WC business through the Executive Office this year.