

## The Society: Minutes of the Women's Caucus Meeting

### 2000 HSS Annual Meeting, Vancouver

Abha Sur, out-going chair of the caucus, called the meeting to order. The session opened with the traditional introductions of those in attendance, numbering approximately twenty-five.

The first order of business was the announcement of a session sponsored by the Women's Caucus on Saturday, November 4. The session, organized by Abha Sur, was entitled, "Representations and Reality: Iconography and Gendered Careers in Science." Amy Slaton chaired the session; paper presenters were Maura Flannery, Robert Hendrick, Abena Osseo-Asare, Marianne Gosztanyi Ainley, and Elizabeth Hanson. The Women's Caucus hopes to continue this practice of organizing and sponsoring annual meeting sessions focusing on issues of women, gender, and the history of science.

Rima Apple and Sally Kohlstedt then reported on the conference "Writing the Past, Claiming the Future: Women and Gender in Science, Medicine, and Technology," which had been held in St. Louis, October 12-15, 2000. Rima explained that the intent had been to encourage historians of science, technology, and medicine to talk with each other (and with practitioners). Sally indicated that in order to keep such cross-disciplinary discussions going, similar gender and sci/tech/med conferences should ideally be held every three or four years. Londa Schiebinger and others supported that idea. It was suggested that the new Radcliffe Institute, which had expressed interest in gender and science issues, might be a possible sponsor for a future meeting. Sally noted that organizing such a conference required substantial fundraising and planning, but also stimulated intellectual excitement on campus. She indicated (and others echoed) disappointment that the History of Science Society declined to contribute any financial support to such a valuable conference. Rima noted that a new e-mail distribution list has been started among St. Louis attendees (open to any others who express interest) to keep dialogue going. The Women's Caucus expressed thanks to Sally, Rima, and the others who organized the St. Louis conference.

Amy Bix reported on the annual HSS job survey, results of which were published in the last newsletter. Londa Schiebinger asked how the statistics on women as a percentage of successful hires compared to the overall percentage of women as Ph.D.s in history of science. Sally Kohlstedt noted that the Committee on Professions used to collect such data. Jay Malone noted that there was talk of putting together a new HSS guide which might shed light on such matters. Amy will talk with Jay and the HSS office about that or ways of otherwise expanding the job survey to address such unanswered questions.

Pam Mack reported that the HSS Women listserv is going strong, reaching scholars not only in the US, but abroad. That listserv functions primarily for announcements, while the new link growing out of the St. Louis conferences seems intended more for conversation.

Jay Malone described some important recent changes in HSS policy. Last year, the Committee on Research and the Professions met to define its focus and decided to modify its description to take over issues of diversity and independent scholarship. The upshot is that the Women's Caucus will retain its independent status; it does not fall under the purview of CORP. The HSS Council has approved this

policy. Sally Kohlstedt emphasized that this change in policy will have no impact on the Women's Caucus. The Caucus is still mentioned separately as an entity of its own in the HSS bylaws (which can be found on the HSS website). Pam Mack recommended that independent scholars might want to set up their own caucus, but there was some disagreement, a feeling that independent scholars should be a concern of the whole society.

Londa Schiebinger reminded people that Andrea Rusnock had put together a syllabus sampler centering on gender and history of science, available for \$8 through HSS. The Caucus discussed the problem of having topics of women and science "ghetto-ized" into separate classes, the challenge of having such scholarship integrated into survey courses. Londa suggested that the Caucus might consider putting together a sampler of syllabi for survey courses which mainstream gender issues. Jay Malone reminded people that the HSS newsletter now runs a column on education, edited by Paul Farber, and encouraged people to suggest topics to him. Londa said that people needed to be more assertive about drawing more attention to the history of science by using publications such as AHA Perspectives.

Pam Mack then raised the subject of the HSS Women's Prize; its current \$10,000 endowment does not cover annual expenditures (now that the award has been raised to \$1,000, like other HSS prizes), and so we need to raise another \$10,000. Pam expressed the hope that many people would contribute and that those small donations would add up. She advised people to write checks to the History of Science Society and send them to Mark Rothenberg, HSS Treasurer, noting "women's prize" on the checks. Pam encouraged people to donate in honor of Margaret Rossiter. Pam will spread the call for donations through the HSS Women listserv; Amy Bix suggested that an announcement appear in the HSS newsletter. Jay Malone said that the HSS office could help by supplying mailing labels, etc.

The next item on the agenda was the election of a new Women's Caucus co-chair for 2000-2002. Rima Apple nominated Pam Mack, Sally Kohlstedt seconded, nominations were closed, and Pam was elected.

The meeting then discussed women's representation in nomination for HSS offices. Sally Kohlstedt chaired this year's nominating committee, composed of four women and one man. Jay Malone announced that Margaret Osler (Calgary) would be the new HSS secretary. Jay also mentioned there was concern about low voter participation in elections and that HSS was exploring the idea of electronic voting.

There were a number of announcements. Marilyn Ogilvie is heading a Harwood biographical series of women in science; Sally Kohlstedt is co-editing a biography series for Cambridge. The new Radcliffe Institute has year-long fellowships, information on which can be found on their web page. The Caucus congratulated Marilyn Ogilvie on the publication of the encyclopedia of women in science. Finally, the group closed with thanks to Abha, the HSS office, and others who facilitated the morning's meeting.

Amy Bix,

Women's Caucus co-chair, 1999-2001

November 3, 2000