

WOMEN

in libraries



Newsletter
of the ALA/SRRT
Task Force on

WOMEN

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Ed. Kay Cassell

ON PROFESSIONAL UNIONS - AN INTERVIEW

I looked up Anne Nelson initially to talk about participatory management. She guided me towards her real interest, unions, and the potential impact they can have for professionals in influencing their profession. The interview with Anne Nelson, Associate Director of Trade Union Women's Studies, New York State School of Industrial & Labor Relations, Cornell University, New York City, took place on Oct. 21, 1974.

Ms. Nelson and I got to talking about professional unions. I was so struck by many of her observations that I'd like to report the interview as verbatim as my notes allow. Ms. Nelson speaks of professional unions:

Unlike industrial unions, the members of professional unions often have a special interest beyond the bread and butter issues of job security, wages and work conditions. They are likely to wish to effect quality control over their service. For example, in libraries concern over book budgets and space might become important issues for librarians. It is not unreasonable to expect that at some time librarians will seek to use their unions as a means of influencing such priorities.

What is interesting to note now, however, is the on-going tension in professional unions between the members' interests as employees and the members' interests as professionals. This tension will fluctuate over the life of the union with one or the other ascendent. The tension may be responsible for the unwillingness sometimes seen among professional union members to fight. It may be because they are trained to see issues in their greater complexity or because they seek harder answers, they distrust a simple call to action. But certainly professional people often appear to prefer to argue. They may have difficulty falling into line with the union's position because the allegiance to the union is not yet there.

Apart from the basic reasons for joining a union, job security, salaries, work conditions and, above all, a grievance procedure, the advantage to professional people in union membership is that they can say things through the union that they can't say as professionals. They can challenge the prerogative of management, and they can begin to change the kinds of priorities that are placed on the bargaining table. They might use their union to present professional suggestions as union demands since the whole area of work conditions, permitted as bargainable, is now undergoing reinterpretation.

They can speak with authority about the quality issues which concern them in the performance of their professional duties and we can expect that they will seek to speak through the tool that is available to them, their union. And unions do speak with considerably greater force than individuals or groups of professionals. If members of a professional union have quality priorities of concern to them in the performance of their duties, they should participate in union affairs, educate themselves about unionism and then draw the attention of their union leaders to their job realities as front line professionals. And it is most particularly from the professional unions that Ms. Nelson believes there will be a lot of rewriting of what is bargainable.

To accomplish the goals set out above, Ms. Nelson outlined how the grievance procedure can be used to change the priorities of what comes up for contract negotiations. If you wish to grieve something that is not in the contract, you need a body of information, perhaps from such authoritative sources as ALA standards, legal precedents, etc., which if not applied will be illegal or adversely affect working conditions (or some other bargainable rights). A strong case should be presented to the supervisor that the policy or practice grieved really does affect your work. A ruling will be made that the issue is outside the contract, but in raising the issue, the groundwork is prepared for it to be raised again at contract time. This is a way members of a professional union can use the grievance machinery and the organizing tool of unions to implement professional standards.

Interview was conducted by Renee Feinberg.

JEAN LOWRIE RESPONDS

Dear Prof. (Betty-Carol) Sellen:

I am replying to your letter of July 25 regarding my stand on the tie vote at ALA. I am sorry to be late in answering, but I was out of the country when your letter arrived and did not return until September. Since then, I have been trying to catch up in all my correspondence.

I want to make it very clear that I am not in any way opposed to the work which is being carried on by the SRRT Task Force on Women, or to the efforts of any other groups striving to bring equality to our sex. As a matter of fact, I have been fighting for many years and have had some important "firsts" on this university's campus (including being the first woman president of the Faculty Senate -- a highly powerful position here), and am currently a member of the Affirmative Action Program Coordinating Committee of the University. I have a very high regard for the role of women and shall continue to support and argue for their needs in whatever way I feel I can honestly do.

May I say first of all that the laughter that came with the tie vote was, I believe, because of the fact that the tie should come on this resolution and that it was really rather a tension reliever in a long session. I do not feel that in any way it could be construed as a derogatory reaction to the efforts of the SRRT Task Force on Women.

Secondly, I feel that there are other far more burning issues in this field than this kind of a surface change of terminology. There are concerns where the SRRT and all "Women's Cause" groups could be most effective by getting at the root of the situation. Not the least of these efforts would be to help women truly understand that their unwillingness to accept the gaff, hard work, change of hours and job responsibilities thrust upon them is the greater difficulty we have to overcome if there is ever

Until we have come up with a sensible change in the English language itself which will not call all academic librarians "he" or elementary school teachers "she" nor will denote all male and female, for such we remain, as neuter persons, I feel we are spinning our wheels. I object just as strenuously to the utterly impersonal emphasis of the non-sexist terminology. I'm sorry, I simply do not feel that the resolution either gets to the real roots of the problem or recognizes that balance is essential. It is far more important to clear up implications than it is to merely change words that in the long run do not effect any attitudinal change.

I am taking the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to Joan Marshall and to Elizabeth Futas since they have also written me along this same line. Resolutions are not always the answer to a problem and sometimes are an easy way out.

Since I was whole heartily in favor of your preconference on women's rights, I am pleased to know you are planning another for San Francisco and hope you will tie it in to International Women's Year -- 1975.

Sincerely,

Jean E. Lowrie
Past President

IDEAS NEEDED

The SRRT Task Force on Women program organizers need your ideas for the 1975 conference. At the TFW business meeting in New York, the suggestion was made to have a "women's conference" during the week of the ALA convention. This "women's conference" might include consultants, workshops, publishers, guides to resources, a sharing of solutions, and perhaps a clearinghouse for bibliographies on women's issues.

We want the program of the "women's conference" to include your ideas on the specific areas that should be discussed. Some areas may require in-depth workshops. For example, there are local women's organizations who do workshops on action training (tactics for change), assertiveness training (personal development for change), and older women. Or instead of workshops we could have speakers--or maybe the issues will require both.

What are the issues that are important to you as a woman librarian? Please let us know so that we can include them in our planning. Send your comments to: Helen Josephine, 2569 Hilgard Ave., Berkeley, Ca. 94709.

THE LIBRARY AS A FEMINIST RESOURCE - a report on Boston area women in libraries

Four dedicated feminists, only one of them a librarian, spoke to a capacity crowd, with the five or so male attendees outnumbered about twenty to one. Sponsored by the Boston Area task force of SRRT, Women in Libraries, the program was moderated by Diane Holzheimer of Cary Memorial Library in Lexington.

Judy Norsigian of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective spoke of the now famous book Our Bodies, Ourselves, which her collective wrote and is now revising. The primary concern of her group is that their book reached as wide an audience of women as possible and that women, as health care consumers, learn more about their bodies and about health care.

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Mary Jane Gillespie told of her experiences with a series of informal discussion programs on various women's issues which she had helped to organize and lead at Salem State College in 1973/74. Called the Share Series, the programs attracted a wide variety of women of all ages and were a big success. A resourceful library might sponsor programming of this type. Ms. Gillespie emphasized how much women have to learn from one another and contended that, where women are together, there is a feminist resource center.

The third speaker, Ginny Rankin of the Sense and Sensibility Collective, which is responsible for producing Women and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Women Writers, said that public libraries were a major resource in producing the bibliography. She suggested that libraries display or highlight some of the classic works by women authors who are not well known today but have recently been rediscovered by feminists, authors such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Rebecca Harding Davis, and Kate Chopin. Librarians should include books by women in displays and bibliographies. Her collective's goal is "to restore forgotten and unknown women writers to women readers." This excellent bibliography can be ordered by mail from Sense and Sensibility Collective, 56 Ellery Street, Cambridge, MA. 02138 for \$1.25.

The final speaker was Helen Earley, an extension home economist with extensive programming experience. Ms. Earley described an eight-week series called "The Woman Alone", which she had organized and conducted on the North Shore. This series was geared toward the single woman and included programs on consumerism, housing, and cancer. She told the audience of some of the problems as well as the pleasures of running such programs and suggested that poor women, women raising families alone and older women are groups that badly need to be reached. It would be a tremendous challenge for librarians to make what information we have attractive and palatable to people who are not normally library oriented.

A range of feminist periodicals and reference sources was on display.

From Bay State Librarian, Summer '74.

"WOMEN IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION" - CONFERENCE

A diverse group of organizations in the Madison area are sponsoring a two day institute on "Women in Library Administration" November 25 and 26, 1974. The institute, to be held in Madison, Wisconsin, follows the Washington meeting of IFLA and will have several foreign librarians as participants. The program will focus on the problems women face getting into administrative roll as well as problems encountered as administrators. All types of libraries will be discussed.

The conference organizers sought outside funding so that costs to individuals would be minimal. Registration fee is \$12.00. For further information, including housing, contact the University of Wisconsin, Extension Department of Communication, 610 Langdon Street, Madison, Wisconsin. 53706, (608) 262-3566.

WEST COAST ACTION

A Bay Area SRRT Task Force on Women has been organized to combat problems especially unique to women in librarianship. So far the group has submitted a resolution to California Library Association membership to change the sexist terminology in CLA publications (a resolution similar to the one rejected by ALA council this summer!). In addition, the Task Force will be heavily involved in planning for activities in conjunction with the national SRRT Task Force on

RESOLUTION TO CALIFORNIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

WHEREAS many California Library Association publications and official documents use nouns and pronouns denoting masculine gender to describe the membership at large and specific positions and titles, and

WHEREAS the consistent or exclusive use of the masculine gender perpetuates the traditional language of society which discriminates against women, and

WHEREAS numerous other professional organizations such as the American Association of University Professors, the Modern Language Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English have resolved to avoid sexist terminology in their official publications, and

WHEREAS major publishing companies such as McGraw-Hill are eliminating sexist terminology in their publications, and

WHEREAS the United States government has revised sex-stereo-typing in the Census occupational classifications, changing clergyman to clergy and mailman to letter carrier for example,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that future publications and official documents of the California Library Association be revised to avoid sexist terminology.

NEW YORK MEETING

Librarians from the New York area concerned with women in librarianship met on Sunday, October 20, to discuss possible plans and programs for the year. The discussion was sparked by the remarks of two library school students who told the group that no professors address themselves to the issue of women in librarianship and that they received little assistance in developing career ladders. The librarians attending felt that it was important for representatives from the Task Force on Women to visit the library school in the area and discuss the Task Force and other mutual concerns. If possible the group hopes to raise enough money to rent the film "Antonia" to show at these meetings.

It is hoped that in the future a plan can be developed for encouraging library schools to develop career counseling programs which do not exist at the present time.

It was announced that editing sessions for the Pre-Conference tapes will begin soon. Anyone interested in assisting with this project should contact Renee Feinberg at Brooklyn College (212) 780-5341.

CORRECTION

The review of alicejames books in Sipapu was written by Dora Biblarz. Dora is now co-editor of Sipapu and will be reviewing feminist literature as well as self-help books and children's books "which portray human beings in a manner contrary to the usual ticky - tacky stereotypes"

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A WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE

In 1973 the Montclair (N.J.) Public Library received a \$500 grant from the New Jersey Commission on Women to provide an information service for women as part of the library's total information bank. The library agreed to amplify existing resources on women, begin a data bank to back up a referral service and provide for visual display and public communication to notify residents of the service. Now in full operation, the women's information service answers questions, handles referrals and does searches of print and non-print materials.

In addition to the information service, the library has organized programs on women. A recent three part program on "The Women Alone" included presentations by a psychiatrist and a social worker on living alone, another on the legal and financial dimension of the independent career, and a third on career dimensions.

An exhibit of women's art is being planned.

For further information, contact Caren Brown or Betty Turock at the Montclair Public Library, 50 South Fullerton, Montclair, N.J. 07042.

THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES ANNOUNCE THE WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS PROGRAM

The Women Administrators Program, established at The Claremont Colleges by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, is now receiving applications for its next group of Administrative Residents.

The program is open to mature women applicants from faculty and administrative positions in educational institutions, associations, and foundations, who have the qualities and qualifications for upper echelon academic administrative positions, including substantial academic experience beyond the baccalaureate. Each Administrative Resident will receive \$9,500 annually, with up to \$1,000 dependent's allowance. Completed applications must be postmarked no later than January 6, 1975, and applicants will be notified in April. Application forms are available from: Mary Ellen Mead, Project Coordinator Women Administrators Program, The Claremont Colleges, 160 Harper Hall, Claremont, Calif. 91711.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

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