



New Letter

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The WCAWH was created in 1969 to promote the professional needs of women interested or engaged in the study and teaching of history. Its goals today are three: to encourage **women** in the historical profession; to improve the status of women historians; and to promote historical research and teaching. We draw our members from the same territory as the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association.

The WCAWH maintains close ties with many national and regional historical associations. We correspond regularly with the AHA Committee on Women Historians, exchanging ideas and information. We have acted to better the status of women in the FCB by suggesting candidates for offices, by electing a candidate by petition to the FCB Nominating Committee, by obtaining a jointly sponsored panel at the annual FCB program, and by presenting resolutions at the FCB Business Meeting. Our officers, as members of the Steering Committee of the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession, help determine the policy of this important national organization. Our graduate student representative corresponds with other graduate students through the graduate coordinating office of the CCWHP and the graduate student member of the CWH.

Our own activities include an annual meeting, a tri-annual Newsletter, job surveys, and a Placement File. The sixth annual meeting of the WCAWH will be held at Santa Cruz, California, April 26-28, 1974. The program will include a speaker, a special panel on **women's** history, workshops, and media **productions**. Our Newsletter contains information on the AHA, CWH, FCB, and CCWHP. In addition, we have published special reports on **discrimination** and the job crisis, and a valuable bulletin on grants for women. We are currently **up-dating** our 1970-71 survey on the employment of women historians in 4-year colleges and universities in the Western States, and our report will be discussed at our annual meeting. The CAWH also maintains a placement file for use in filling temporary and part-time vacancies, for referring **members** of line interests for research and panels, and for **suggesting** nominees for AHA and FCB offices.

We encourage you to join the organization by filling out the **membership** application. Dues are \$2.00 per academic year. To date, we have sent our Newsletter to all interested women, but increasing costs of publication will inevitably restrict it to members only. Please send your \$2.00 and the form to Gretchen Schwenn. We need your support.

NAME _____ INSTITUTION _____

BUSINESS ADDRESS _____

HOME ADDRESS _____

FIELD OF INTEREST _____

AHA NEWS ITEMS

Committee on Women Historians: The new chairwoman of the CWH is Jane DeHart Mathews of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. In a recent letter to Sandi Cooper, CCWH, with a copy to the WCAWH, she indicated the following activities in which the CWH is presently engaged. ". . . Briefly, there are a variety of areas in which we are making real progress. Maryland is computerizing the roster and we are doing a major updating this fall so as to make it more comprehensive and therefore useful to HEW and for research purposes. We will also be doing a follow-up on all roster lists mailed in '73 asking how the list was used, who was hired, etc. We intend to make the results known to the Profession and to HEW. Pat Dubuisson is doing preliminary work this summer on the "Profile" which concerns career patterns for women historians. She is especially concerned with problems related to the job squeeze and is probing the question of academic preparation and the needs of employing history departments. With the Committee backing, Willie Rose will hopefully go ahead with a grant application for a major study. Probably most important, we started a Coalition for Affirmative Action, since farmed out to the Federation of Organizations for Professional Women. I trust Eleanor Straub will become active in pressure group activities which the Federation is now exerting through AES. As you may also know, the Committee is sponsoring a session on Affirmative Action at San Francisco. Mary Berry will be in charge and the session we hope will be followed by direct action (letter writing, lobbying, etc.) There's much more, Sandi, which I will get to you in a fashion which can be disseminated--the above are my quick jottings and hence aren't very organized or comprehensive. . . ."

Assistant Executive Secretary: The new assistant executive secretary is Eleanor Straub. She sent the following letter to the WCAWH: ". . . I received my A.B. in history from Radcliffe College in March 1970 and my A.M. from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia in 1972. At Emory I have been a Ford Foundation Fellow for the past four years, and I have recently completed my doctoral dissertation and will formally receive the Ph.D. on December 11, 1973. As an American historian I have long been intrigued by the relationship of women's status and feminism to American culture. In my research I have explored a number of such areas including Margaret Fuller's feminism, women's higher education in the late nineteenth century, the relationship of the temperance and suffrage movements and, more recently, the impact of World War II on American women (my dissertation topic). I presented a paper on government policy towards civilian women during World War II at the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians' Historical Perspectives on Women conference at Douglass College last March; this paper will appear in the Winter 1973 issue of Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives. In addition, since taking a course under Professor Erik Erikson in 1968, I have maintained an active interest in the field of sex-role research. I served last spring as a consultant to a private research organization developing a program to analyze sex-role attitudes towards women in the Army. Over the past two years, I have taught recent American history at Emory University.

In my position with the AHA, my duties will not focus exclusively on women's issues; approximately one-half of my time will be spent working on problems such as the job crisis for history Ph.D.'s. As a regular staff member of the Association rather than simply a women's specialist, I feel that women's concerns can assume a greater importance and visibility in the organization. It is vital, I think, that we guard against the view that women's problems can be solved by simply shutting the women off in their own little corner.

I am committed to achieving equality for women in our profession; in that regard, old projects like the women's roster will continue and expand. During the summer agreement has been reached with the University of Maryland to computerize the roster. This development will allow a thorough updating of the roster beginning in the fall. Computerization will aid in disseminating employment information and in providing a source of data for HEW investigations. Expansion of the roster to include administrative experience will continue as will the effort to encourage greater use of the

(Letter from Eleanor Straub, con.) roster by academic and non-academic employers. The Coalition for Affirmative Action, an **informal** group organized by Charlotte **Quinn** in the spring of **1973**, will serve as a pressure group on issues such as affirmative action in higher education; the Federation of Organizations for Professional **Women** will receive our support as a lobby for women in all professions. Work on the Profile of Women Historians project has proceeded during the **summer** as well. Efforts to survey and publicize part-time employment possibilities for women historians, to offer assistance to women applying for research grants, and to serve as liaison with **women's** groups will receive my full support.

As the initial public interest in **women's** issues fades a bit and the job crisis threatens to cause a retreat from the principle of equal opportunity, **it** becomes paramount that efforts in this direction not slacken. I feel certain that the West Coast Association of **Women** Historians can offer invaluable aid and advice on matters of concern to **women** historians. In **my** two **years** at the AHA office, I shall welcome your continuing inquiries, suggestions and criticisms.

My best regards to you and to the West Coast Association of **Women** Historians."

Graduate Student Member of CWH: The newly appointed (finally) graduate student member of the CWH is Suzanne Lebsock. She is very eager to contact graduate students for opinions and ideas. Her address is **44** University Circle, **Charlottesville**, Va. 22903.

The **WCAWH** congratulates all of these women on their new positions. Please keep in touch with them.

PCB NEWS ITEMS

The 1973 election: The **WCAWH** has been in correspondence with **Prof.** John Schutz, President of the PCB, since last **May** in regard to the last **FCE** election. We have strongly protested the appearance of a ballot, due in twelve days, as being a negation of the right to petition and to obtain information on the **candidates**. We have asked for time at the **PCB** Business Meeting at San Francisco to discuss electoral procedures, and have drafted a tentative by-law to the **FCE** Constitution, to be offered at Seattle, defining **the** procedures to be followed in elections. We also requested, in October, the numerical results of the election. Prof. Schutz answered he would have to get Council approval to release the figures. To date, the results of the election have not been made public. We are baffled by the secrecy surrounding this election.

Future of the PCB: The AHA Review Board in the November 1973 **AHA** Newsletter has agreed to the continued subvention of the **PCB** for five more years. However, they indicate that if the proposed changes in the location of the annual program are accepted, that the subvention should be discontinued. The **WCAWH** is calling for the **immediate** establishment of an ad hoc committee of the PCB to study the future of this society. Judging from the number of panels and papers submitted by women for the 1974 Seattle meeting, the **PCB** has become an important **forum** for women scholars in the western states, and its continued existence is vital to our professional exposure.

CCWHP ITEMS

The **CCWHP** is **compiling** a roster of scholars who will make themselves available for outside review panels where women feel there has been discrimination in failure to get re-appointment or tenure. When complaints have been filed with state or federal discrimination agencies, frequently outside panels are convoked to pass on the scholarly merits of the **complainant**. In such cases, the complainant can contact **CCWHP**, which **will** make

(CCWHP, cont.) available to her a list of recognized women scholars in her area of specialization, with an attempt to limit the list to the particular geographical region in which the complaint will be heard.

Will women who hold the rank of Professor or Associate Professor who would be willing to be available for such panels please send their vitae to Sandi Cooper, Associate Professor of History, Richmond College-CUNY, Staten Island, N.Y. 10301.

Thanks are due again to the CCWHP for providing its membership with letters from the various candidates for office in the AHA. It is a policy which should be adopted by the AEA, although perhaps their questions and our questions might not be the same.

Berkshire Society

The Berkshire Conference of Women Historians announces its second conference on the History of Women, to be held at Radcliffe, October 1974. Those interested in participating should send proposals for workshops or papers on the following themes: Woman as Consumer and Producer; Woman as Educator; Woman's Health and Life Cycle; Woman's Self Consciousness; The Double Minority (e.g., woman as black, immigrant, etc.); Women in Religion; Women as part of Demographic History. Some attention should be given to methodology in each area. Send proposals by January 15, 1974 to Prof. Mary Maples Dunn, Department of History, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pa. 19010.

Note: Last year's conference was very successful, with over 500 women attending the Conference. Many of the papers will be published in a special edition of Feminist Studies.

WCAWH ITEMS

Sixth Annual Meeting: The next annual meeting of the WCAWH will be held at Santa Cruz, California, April 26-28, 1974. The cost is approximately \$15 for row and board. The program tentatively includes a guest speaker, a special panel on women's history, workshops, and media production. Please send your suggestions for panels or papers to the officers by February 15. The program will be sent to you the first of March. We have many exciting things to discuss at our next meeting, including the election of new officers, resolutions for the 1974 PCB meeting, and the results of our new survey on the employment of women historians in the Western States. Plan now to attend.

The November 1973 issue of the AHA Newsletter contains an edited version of the report on sex discrimination in San Diego County Community Colleges by Margaret Bearden, Pat Fouquet, and Karen Leonard which was discussed at our last annual meeting and published May 1973 issue of the WCAWH Newsletter. It is pleasing to see the interest which the AHA seems to be taking in the community colleges.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

San Francisco State University: Renaissance and Reformation; training in the "new" social history of "Annales School" variety, interested in historical demography, popular culture and mentalites; historical methods and comparative history. Will interview at San Francisco. Contact Jerald Combs, Chair, Hiring Committee.

University of California at Los Angeles: History of Women in the United States. Must have completed at least three chapters of dissertation for review. Contact the Chair, Lynn White, for further information.

Employment, cont.) **University of Iowa**, Iowa City, Iowa: American History, junior level, Ph.D. in hand, consideration for tenure; research interests in 19th or 20th century; helpful interest in quantitative methods for possible teaching of graduate **seminar** in mathematical techniques in historical research; but also open to any candidate of strong intellectual calibre with **promise** of creative scholarstip.

University of California at Davis: Russian History. For further information contact the Chair, Prof. **Woodfill**.

SPECIAL REPORT: "Sexism in Letters of Recommendation: A Case for Consciousness Raising "

The following article has been condensed by the WCAWH from an article by Nancy Jo Hoffman, **MIT**, for the Commission on the Status of Women, and appeared in a recent **MLA** Newsletter. Any of us who has applied for a job should read it carefully, for it deals with the taboo area of letters of reference. If you suspect that such things have happened to you, **you** might have a case for Affirmative Action. Grit your teeth and read on.

As the job market grows tighter, and the inferior status of women and minorities comes more into public consciousness, the **MLA** Commission on the Status of Women has become increasingly aware of the role played by confidential recommendations in preventing a job seeker from finding a suitable position, or even being interviewed. One **young woman**, for example, was finally told by a frank department chairman that phrases in her dossier like feminine timidity and sweet, retiring nature suggested that she would be unable to survive in the competitive world of the university. Another young woman finally learned that being labeled intellectually assertive, aggressive--qualities appropriate to a male job applicant--had kept her from being granted interviews; male-dominated hiring committees are prejudiced against hard-headed women.

The problem of dossiers is a complex one. At present, **however**, we would like to point out instances of inadvertent or deliberate sexism in **recommendations** as they are written and read in the university world today, and we will propose some practical guidelines for letter writers. We will treat three crucial ways in which letters work to discriminate against women: descriptions of physical attributes and **personality**; marital status, especially if the spouse is also in **academia**; participation in women's studies and in contemporary feminism.

Physical appearance; personality. Male dossiers do sometimes include phrases such as dresses well, poised, charming, but such language does not represent a tacit comment that what the male lacks in brains he makes up in beauty. Our experience of women's dossiers confirms that a letter writer, often unselfconsciously, diminishes a **female candidate's** intellectual power by stereotyping her as too feminine, too pretty. Women candidates, to win entire approval, have to be both chic and brilliant, and so the woman who is plain-looking, a spinster-scholar **type**, evokes a negative response for she is not a complete woman; she lacks sociability, and will not **flatter** the egos of male department members. Men writing recommendations see **women** as objects of regard, pleasing or otherwise. I mean objects to be regarded, looked at, as mistresses, as wives, as mothers; women are already tracked in their minds, and they simply track them for employers, reinforcing the vision of **woman** as helpmeet or playmate, not as intellectual equal and full human being.

Marital status. Dossiers on women show two distinct patterns--overt discrimination against older women--married, divorced, or single--especially those just entering the job market; and an almost **humorous**, but revealing, **tendency** of male letter writers to praise, contrast, describe the work of a **female candidate's** husband rather than her own, while in men's dossiers wives are rarely mentioned, except as social **adornments**.

A **woman** seeking her first job at age thirty-five simply does not compete with a twenty-seven year-old **woman** or man who has lived continually within university confines. By contrast, the dossier of one forty year-old man asserted that someone should hire

(Special report, Cont.) this man; his distinguished career record (army, public relations) "has been a better preparation for the university than uninterrupted schooling could have been." The spare statistics of a woman's dossier--divorced, two children, age thirty-four--represent a woman who interrupted college to support her husband through graduate school, helped launch his career, then experienced the dissolution of the marriage. Certainly prejudice against the older woman should be ended, and her varied experience be considered an asset, a valued richness in the often narrow university community.

The invisibility of the female job candidate emerges nowhere more unselfconsciously than in the dossiers of young, married graduate students. The dossiers of undeniably brilliant, serious, promising women, filled with letters of eminent advisers, very frequently compare the woman with her husband, stereotype her as the teacher not the scholar-thinker, and so the less valuable member of the couple. Indeed, one often wonders for whom the letter was written. Such letters affect the reader by reinforcing his notion that a woman is an appendage, her career second to her husband's; her talents shine in the light of his.

Antifeminism. Some dossiers provide a commentary on the extent to which the women's liberation movement and its academic component, women's studies, present a threat to the university. One recommender praises his candidate by saying, "If you want a woman who can compete with men on absolutely equal terms--but does not take kindly to letters from the Women's Liberation Front addressed to 'Dear Woman'--then I recommend. . . ." Another, enjoying his wit, says she is "feminine indeed, but not feminist. . ." Another, apologizing for his candidate's decision to write a thesis on 19th-century women novelists, claims she is "no fem lib type," but a "real gentlewoman;" that is, her feminism is safely confined to the scholarly. The message from the job market is "we must hire women, but no feminist activists need apply."

The need for consciousness raising and for change should by now be apparent. The MLA Commission on the Status of Women proposes three guidelines for letter-writers:

1. **Physical appearance: personality.** Comments on these matters are irrelevant to a candidate's ability to succeed in a university career. Comments on personality should individualize a candidate, not stereotype her.

2. **Marital status.** Marital status, number of children, sexual preferences are irrelevant; private facts of a woman candidate's life are to be divulged as she wishes, and should not be assumed to affect her ability to fulfill career obligations, any more than marriage, children, a lover affect a man's capabilities.

3. **Antifeminism.** Comments on the relationship of the woman to the women's liberation movement, or women's studies, are appropriate, as any political comments might be, only when they apply to the candidate's field of teaching or scholarship--a teacher of Marxism, a scholar of Virginia Woolf or Jane Austen, an administrator of a women's studies program. (End of summary)

(Note: Now the question arises of what can be done about such letters. As a start, graduate students might post this article on their departmental bulletin board and discuss it among other graduate women. They might also show it to the department chair, and encourage him to discuss the problem at a faculty meeting. They can distribute it to their professors, upon whom, hopefully, they have been doing a little consciousness raising during their graduate years. If all fails and such letters are sent out, perhaps the student could ask for a review of the letters (without identifying names or addresses) by an impartial committee such as the roster of scholars proposed by the CCWHP (see pp. 3-5 above). In spite of the traditional secrecy surrounding letters of recommendation, there do appear to be ways of approaching the problem without violating any professional ethics. But first we must make everyone aware of the problem. Hopefully, the above article will help to achieve this.)

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION 88th ANNUAL MEETING
SAN FRANCISCO, DECEMBER 28-30

Events and Panels of Special Interest to Women Historians:

INFORMATION DESK: Throughout the conference, near AHA registration desk, West Lounge, Ballroom Floor, **Hilton**

WOMENS MEETING ROOM: Throughout the conference, Shasta Room, **Hilton; Thurs. 7-10 pm, Fri.-Sat. 9 am to 10 pm, Sund. 9 am to 5 pm**

THURSDAY, DEC. 27th

8:30 pm **"Women as Image."** Special media production by Joyce Baker, **UCSB**, Shasta Room, **Hilton**.

FRIDAY, DEC. 28th

7:30 am **AHA-Committee on Women Historians**, Breakfast. **Sears Restaurant**, 439 Powell Street. **\$3.50**. Notify Dr. Dorothy **Sexter**, **CWH**, 6241 **Riverside Blvd.**, **Sacramento, California**

9 am Panel: **"Form and Function: Women as the object of Scientific Study,"** (**History of Science society**), **Franciscan Room**, **Sir Francis Drake Hotel**

9:30 am Panel: **"Socialism and Feminism,"** **Continental Room 8, Hilton**

12:30 pm **CCWHP Business Meeting**, **Borgia Room**, **St. Francis Hotel**

2:30 pm **AHA-CWH Meeting with graduate students.** **Shasta Room, Hilton**

6:30 pm **National and regional groups of women historians.** **Cocktail Party.** **Cash Bar.** **Cypress Room, Hilton**

SATURDAY, DEC. 29th

9:00 am Panel: **"Women, Technology and Social Change,"** (**History of Science Society and Society for the History of Technology**), **Franciscan Room**, **Sir Francis Drake Hotel**

9:30 am Panel: **"The Use of Film and the Study of Women's History,"** (**AHA-CWE**), **Colonial Room**, **St. Francis**

11:30 am **CCWHP Business Meeting or panel on feminism and professionalism**, **Georgian Room**, **St. Francis Hotel**

1:00 pm Panel: **"Three Critical Transitions in French Thought in the Education of Women,"** **Tamalpais Room, Hilton**

1:00 pm Panel: **"Old Bolshevism and its Diversities,"** (**Kollontai and Krupskaya**), **Continental Parlor 1, Hilton**

3:00 pm **AHA Business Meeting**, **Hilton**, **Continental Ballroom**

6:00 pm **AHA-CWH colloquium: "Improving the Status of Women Historians, the Government, and the University,** **Mary Berry, University of Maryland,** **Cypress Room, Hilton**

SUNDAY, DEC. 30th

9:30 am Panel: **"Teaching Women's History: Problems and Possibilities** (**CCWHP**), **Cypress Room, Hilton**

2:30 pm Panel: **"Women and the Churches in America: Historical Inquiries** (**American Society for Church History**), **Room to be announced.**

In addition the the panels specifically dealing with **women** or **women's history**, there are many women on the program who **will** be giving papers in other fields, **Please consult your** program for sessions.

The National and Regional Groups of **Women Historians** wish you an **exciting conference and** a pleasant stay in San Francisco.

S. Joan Moon, President
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