

bluestocking

Edited by the Blue-Stocking collective for the Australian Women's Education Coalition.

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PERIODICALS

Budget Cuts Delay Funding

A national coalition of women in education has called for urgent action on recent Schools Commission report on sexism in education.

At their inaugural meeting in Melbourne the Australian Women's Education Coalition also expressed concern at the lack of available non-sexist resources for teachers.

Over thirty women from all States and the ACT the conference held at Monash University from May 7 to 9. It was the first time that representatives from the major women's groups associated with education had met.

Support for the meeting came from Women in Education, Sydney, the Sexism in Education Action Project, Adelaide, the Women's Movement Children's Literature Co-op, Melbourne, Women's Electoral Lobby Education Groups, Melbourne and Canberra, Community Learning Centres, Melbourne, the Women's Action Programmes of the Queensland Teacher's Union and the NSW Teacher's Federation and the Women's Studies group, Perth.

Representatives of these groups said they were concerned that education cuts in the autumn Budget could delay action by the Schools Commission on the recommendations of **Girls, School and Society**. Recurrent and future education for women had been shamefully neglected, education lecturer Gwen Wesson told the conference. Innovative projects such as the community learning centres in Melbourne could not get funding for courses which primarily attracted housewives and older women.

The twelve community learning centres, which include Diamond Valley, Nunawading and Fitzroy were in danger of having to wind down their activities because teachers could no longer afford to give their time for free.

Representatives from Queensland told the conference that all girls in grade 9 are forced to study mothercraft; there is no fathercraft course.

In other states Government enquiry into sexism in schools in Western Australia is about to present its report to the Minister and the Victorian and NSW enquiries are continuing.



Margaret Dowse from Tasmania, Margaret Bearlin from Canberra and Bev Rangott of Melbourne at the AWEC Conference.

Women from the smaller States complained of isolation and problems with organisation and a lack of resources which made action and progress difficult. Reports from women working in pre-schools and primary schools suggested that these areas had been neglected so far in action on sexism in education.

Bev Rangott, a teacher-librarian from Melbourne said that the decision to form AWEC arose from a need for more regular contact and exchange of information between groups in different States. The meeting also agreed that a national lobby for women's education was needed.

Other decisions made at the meeting were:

- * to hold the first national conference of AWEC in Melbourne on 1-3 October, 1976

- * a membership fee of \$5 to include a year's subscription to *Blue-Stocking*

- * co-ordination of AWEC and the editorial group for *Bluestocking* to rotate between States every year.

See **RESOURCES** for a list of AWEC contacts.

New guide to stereotyping in Primary School texts

A Perth study has found that teaching children to read involves some rather strange sex role stereotyping.

Primary school reading materials, if they are taken literally, show children that two-thirds of humans are male who are "large, colorful characters with a store of

knowledge and skills and a great capacity for fun and adventure."

The study was carried out by three West Australian teachers Astrid Gwynne, Pauline Hutchinson and Esme Justins who met during a course on sex roles and social change at the West Australian Institute of Technology last year. They analysed a ten per cent random sample from the *Primary Schools Reading Materials Selection Guide* — 76 and found:

- * Only one in five main characters were female

- * Female characters appeared as "smaller and less significant"

Of the 22,775 characters studied, women were invariably at home preparing meals or minding children. Ninety seven per cent of home duties in the reading materials were done by female characters but:

- only six per cent of doctors

- nine per cent of tradespeople

- and fewer than two per cent of skilled workers were women!

The research including a guide to sex role stereotyping in reading materials for primary schools is to be distributed to interested primary schools in WA. Only two reading series present a positive female image according to the researchers — the *Scott Foresman Reading System* and their new publication *Open Highways*.

Astrid Gwynne, who is the acting deputy principal at Carnamah District High School, 200 miles north of Perth, told *Bluestocking* that the 60 page research report would be sent to any interested schools free. Send 75 cents for postage to Esme Justins at the Home Economics Department, West Australian Institute of Technology, Bentley, 6102.

The cost to interested individuals is \$2.

Women's Advisor for teachers?

Seminars, workshops, a resource centre and school visits are the key elements in this year's Women's Action Programme for Queensland teachers.

Co-ordinator Sylvia Innes has a network of at least 50 contact teachers from Cairns in the far north to Warwick in the west. Sylvia began working as co-ordinator in January.

She told *Blue-Stocking* progress was slow "but there are a number of people responding so I'm quite pleased so far. I have not visited a very wide cross-section of schools yet, but it seems to me that primary school women teachers seem to be most aware of sexism."

The resource centre at the Teacher's Union building in Spring Hill, in Brisbane is a central ingredient in the process of disseminating ideas and information on sexism to primary and secondary

least 25 per cent of the population. Blue-Stocking, term used rather depreciatively of a woman of learning or affecting literary tastes; especially of those who air their erudition to the exclusion of more traditional womanly activities. About 1750 a literary circle was estab. in London consisting of ladies and gentlemen, among whom was a distinguished Mr Benjamin Stillingfleet, who habitually wore blue stockings—hence the name. With the changed attitude towards the education of women, opportunities

teachers. Material held includes books, government reports, tapes, articles, magazines and curriculum materials in most subjects.

Non sexist materials for primary and secondary classes and guidelines for non-sexist pre-school and early childhood education are held.

The Queensland Teachers Union with 18,600 members is the second teacher organisation to establish a Women's Action Programme (see *Blue-Stocking* no. 1). Funds for the first 12 months have come from the International Women's Year Advisory Committee.

The Union's annual conference begins on August 16 and one of the reports they will consider is from the Status of Women Committee. A major recommendation is to create the new position of assistant secretary for women's affairs, which if it is accepted will make the QUT the first union in the country to appoint a "women's advisor".

Experts to decide

Publication of the non-sexist curriculum materials developed at a conference sponsored by the International Women's Year Advisory Committee has been delayed by the Curriculum Development Centre.

The Council of the CDC in Canberra has decided "to seek assessment of the material's suitability, educational value and potential use" from State Education Departments and non government schools.

"A decision to publish in quantity will depend on the nature of expert reaction to the materials," said acting director of the CDC, Mr. Bert Townsend.

The material called "**Viva La Difference? The Feminist Approach**" includes a primary and secondary kit concentrating on sex-role socialisation, language, conflicts, families and the women's movement.

Teachers interested in trialling the material should write to **The Director, Curriculum Development Centre, PO. Box 632, MANUKA, 2603.**



L to R: Judith Crabtree, Judy Atwood, Cathy Ryan and Sylvia Innes at the AWEC conference.

QLD Mothercraft Course

The mothercraft course in Queensland high schools has come under attack.

Many girls do not realise they are being discriminated against, according to the feminist high school group from Brisbane. "Sexism is so much a part of society that girls do not see their position in schools as being any different to their overall position in life.

"Besides what alternatives are there for girls?"

Mothercraft is compulsory for all girls in grade 9 (average age 14). The feminist high school group has prepared a detailed critique of the course and plans to distribute it to students throughout Queensland.

While they are critical of the inclusion of mothercraft, they also want the curriculum to include questions about women's role in society, the struggle for women's rights.

"Girls are asked to wash up after school functions, to arrange flowers and help in the tuckshop. But we're never asked to carry chairs or organize the loudspeaker system for parade."

Further information: Glenda Wenck at Women's House, 106 Little Roma St, Brisbane, 229 5922

RESOURCES

Women's Studies Resource Centre in Adelaide.

The Women's Studies Resource Centre plans to concentrate this year on producing curriculum materials for Australian schools.

In its first year of operation the Adelaide Centre has already collected some thousand book titles, posters, periodicals, pamphlet and newsclip files, audiotapes and kits. These materials have been organised according to a counter sexist version of the Dewey system and are available on loan.

A collective of women working in education initially formed to design a women's studies course for high schools but as the work progressed it became clear that teachers of such a course would face great difficulty in obtaining materials.

The centre opened at the Wattle Park Teachers Centre in July 1975 with a \$12,000 grant from the International Year Advisory Committee. Funds for 1976 were obtained from the S.A. Education Department and the Schools Commission.

Contact: Suzanne or Trena at Wattle Park Teacher's Centre, 424 Kensington Rd, Wattle Park, SA. or phone (08) 332-4555. Hours are 9am - 10pm Mondays and 9-5 Tuesday-Friday.

KITS

Re-educating a generation: avoiding sex bias

Guidelines for the avoidance of sex bias in educational materials and media for teachers, librarians, writers, parents and publishers are available from the Curriculum Development Centre, P.O. Box 632, Manuka, ACT, 2603.

The kit is available FREE and includes background papers on the images of women in Australian literature, in pre-school, primary and secondary school textbooks.

ROLE YOUR OWN

Is a kit about Womens Liberation for fourth form students. The booklet and seven stimulating posters explains ideas from the Movement like "sexism", "sex role stereotyping" and "consciousness raising" in language suitable for students. The text covers seven basic areas - childhood, education, sexuality, reproduction, work, the media and self image; and each poster



Women's News Service



focusses on one of these questions. Send (includes postage) for a kit - seven full color posters and 10 copies of the booklet to Women's Movement Children's Literature Cooperative, 11 Maple Court, Kilsyth, Vic. 3137.

see page 4

Official Report — "A Foundation for Constructive Change"

Women learn they are inferior at Australian schools according to a recent government report reviewed here by Pam Waugh, specialist counsellor for girls in the NSW Education Department.

Girls, School and Society is a new Australian Government publication of major significance in the field of education. It is about the relationship between women's second class status and the schooling of girls. The report has been compiled for the Schools Commission by a study group chaired by Dr. Ken McKinnon. Group members were Jean Blackburn, Cathy Bloch, Jean Martin, Elizabeth Reid, Susan Ryan, Bill Thiele, David Widdup and Dany Torsh (Executive Officer).

Good education is incompatible with sexism

The study group commenced from a belief that "it is no longer defensible to act on unconsidered assumptions about the sorts of people either girls or boys should be because they are born female or male". Sexism "is a process through which females and males not only progressively learn that different things are required and expected of them because of their sex, but learn those things in an unexamined way." *Good education is incompatible with such a process.*

After 18 months of investigation, it was established that girls are at least as capable as boys, yet, "in a predominantly co-educational comprehensive (education) system, half the students, who have demonstrated a capacity at least equal with that of the other half, are slowly but surely relegated to an inferior position."

The report attempts to uncover the role of the school in this process.

It examines data on subject choices, peer group and teacher attitudes in addition to bias in counselling and careers education. The picture gradually emerges as one of learned inferiority.

The report shows how school fosters and reinforced damaging aspects of male-female relationships, points to the omission of women in the curricula studied, and to the ways in which women are stereotyped in all school literature, even infants' readers. In these sections there is material on sex-segregation in schools, differential treatments (as in discipline) of boys and girls which work against the development of an awareness of a common humanity. The "hidden curriculum" — or system of hidden messages — is analyzed and found to lead to the internalization of damaging beliefs.

Recommendations

Chapter 14 puts forward many suggestions and outlines many ways in which education systems and schools could begin to address the issues. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that both boys and girls see the full range of life's options open to them and know how to exercise individual (not sex-typed) choice. Information about the outcomes of important choices and about changing roles must be deliberately conveyed. "Custom", the report shows, "is no longer a guide".

This means that, for the active promotion of sex equality in education, teacher education must be revised to incorporate the type of material contained in this report. Curricula must be renewed so that women and their contributions become visible. Time must be provided so that students, teachers and parents can examine current theory and practice. The quality of vocational education must be vastly improved. Research needs to be directed towards a greater understanding of causes and remedies, and in this area the Schools Commission has stated priorities for funding and other assistance.

Girls, School and Society, brings together a mass of relevant, current, local data in an official document, for the first time. It provides much needed resource material, analysis and argument which will provide a foundation for constructive change. It is the first major step towards a time when, to quote Dr. McKinnon, "girls and boys (will) live in a world where sex need no longer dictate patterns and in which the social rules of the sexes are becoming increasingly fluid."

(Courtesy Education)

Girls, School and Society, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975. \$3.95 from any Australian Government Publications and Inquiry Centre.



Editorial

Sorry about the long delay in the appearance of this issue. From now on we hope to come out every two months. Copy deadlines are September 1 for number 4 and November 1 for number 5. Now that we are self supporting we badly need your subscriptions to keep publishing. THIS IS THE LAST FREE BLUE STOCKING. Send your subscriptions in time for the next issue.

We also need contributions — short articles, reviews, photographs and cartoons. Please send them to our new address P.O. Box K 73, Haymarket, 2000.

People who worked on this issue were Gail, Jozefa, Dany, Lindy, Elaine, Dimity and Sara.

RESOURCES

WOMEN OF THE WORLD UNITE

African, Indian, Aboriginal, Chilean and Japanese women are just some of the nationalities and cultures included in a new kit produced by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid. *WE WOMEN* looks at the lives, and experiences of women from Russia and Bangladesh, from China and Arabia and finds many common feelings. Marriage, children, work and women's struggles to free themselves from oppression are documented by the editors Kate Moore and Sue Tuckwell of the Education Unit of ACFOA. The kit costs \$2.25 plus 60 cents postage. Discount of 25 cents on orders of 10 or more and 45 cents on 50 or more orders. Write to P.O. Box 1562, Canberra City, 2601.

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Sexism in Education Action Project
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AWEC CONTACTS

A national coalition of women

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FROM WE WOMEN

WORKSHOPS

Women, education and social change is the subject of the next workshop on women and education in Melbourne on August 5 & 6. Each workshop is for 10-12 people only so contact Peter Parsons at the innovations centre, La Trobe University, School of Education as soon as possible. Interstate people are billeted and meals arranged for \$3 per day so it will only cost you your travel expenses. The next workshop will be on September 23 & 24 at the Diamond Valley Learning Centre. Group leaders are Helen Gribble, Robyn Hartley and Dianne Parsons, with the topic still to be decided. The aim of the workshops is "to allow communication between people facing common problems in providing appropriate educational opportunities for women." Ring Peter Parsons at (03) 478 3122 XT 29 on Mondays only for further information.



New Women's Survival Catalogue 1974

FILMS

Stirring is a film for teachers about handling controversial issues — in this case caning boys. Directed by Jane Oehr for Film Australia, it looks at what happens at a city boys' high school and what students at a co-educational and private girls' school think about caning and discipline. Available from Film Australia and through State Education Department film centres. Ring Sydney 463241 or write to Film Australia, Eton Rd, Lindfield, 2070.

BOOKS

Brisbane has a women's bookshop at 68 Wynnum Rd, Norman Park.

Thanks to Gwen Wesson and the women who contributed to Brian's Wife and Jenny's Mum for their financial support.

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