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Women's Caucus for the Modern Languages  
SAMLMA Regional Branch

Bulletin No. 2  
December, 1971

REPORT FROM THE 1971 SAMLMA MEETINGS

Petition. The petition for the inclusion of a Discussion Circle or Special Meeting to be called Women's Studies (general topic for 1972: The Image of Women in Literature) has now been sent to Prof. Bratton, Chairman of the Program Committee. The petition was signed by 103 SAMLMA members. The rationale for this Discussion Circle, accompanying the petition, is:

1. The reports of the MLA Commission on the Status of Women in the Profession have shown that women have indeed been discriminated against in the profession, and for these reasons we have not always felt comfortable in competing with men, although we have the potential to do so. The MLA has recognized this problem and taken steps to rectify it. Last year in New York one of the major Professional Forums was devoted to Women in the Profession, and a number of workshops were scheduled on related topics. Both the Midwest MLA and the Northeast MLA have also devoted sections and forums to Women's Studies, and we feel that the South Atlantic MLA should follow suit. We need a forum where we can come together and investigate a new area of study for, about, and by women.
2. Women's Studies would be a place to investigate new approaches to critical literary study. Rather than approach the study of literature from a purely chronological or national point of view, we would like to break down some of those barriers and see if we might not find a new, and perhaps better, way of looking at literature.
3. Women's Studies would not, of course, preclude women from actively participating in other sections. We have urged women to submit papers to all sections, but we also recognize that there are special topics that belong to Women's Studies. The fact that many schools have set up Women's Studies programs is a case in point.

We have requested a Saturday morning time for the Discussion Circle and also time Thursday or Friday to schedule workshops on related subjects, including problems of women in the profession.

Elections. As we had been denied time during the 1971 convention, our gathering Friday evening conflicted with a number of other important meetings, and many of those who signed the petition were unable to attend. However, enough interested members were present to carry out an election:

SAMLMA-WCML Officers:

President: Nancy Hume, (English), Essex Community College, Baltimore  
County, Maryland 21237  
Secretary: Elinor Miller, (French), Rollins College, Winter Park,  
Florida 32789

Discussion Circle on Women's Studies:

Chairwoman: Nancy Riffe, (English), Eastern Kentucky University,  
Richmond, Kentucky 40475

Secretary: Margaret A. O'Conner, (English), University of North Carolina,  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27515

Nominating Committee: Edna Saffy, (English), Florida Community College,  
Jacksonville, Florida 32205  
Jenny De Vries, (German), Randolph-Macon Women's College,  
Lynchburg, Virginia 24504  
Roda Roberts, (French), Birmingham Southern College, Birmingham,  
Alabama 35204

At this meeting we also planned for further action, some of which depends on the acceptance of the petition and inclusion of the Discussion Circle. This action is specifically to encourage women to submit papers, both to the appropriate already existing sections and also to the proposed Women's Studies.

Regular Sections. At the 1971 meetings, 134 papers were read in all--16 by women. (We do not, obviously, know the proportion of papers submitted by women.) The Spanish I (2 out of 4) and II (4 out of 5) were by far the best represented; many sections had no women reading. We would not want the establishment of a Women's Studies Circle to effect still further discrimination against women in regular sections; this could happen if women did not submit papers in the regular sections, and the feeling developed that, after all, a woman could go read her little paper to the sewing circle. Therefore, if you have a paper partly completed, or one you have hesitated to submit knowing it would not get fair consideration, the consensus at Atlanta was, go ahead and try. The suggestion was made that in submitting to regular sections, it might be effective to sign one's name as "Prof." and use first-name initials.

A resolution was discussed and tentatively worded, to be put in final form at Chicago and submitted to SAMLA before the next annual meeting. If you have suggestions about the wording, or the appropriate channels, or if you will not be at Chicago and wish to vote for or against, please write Nancy Hume:

RESOLVED, that in accord with the affirmative action principle enunciated by H.E.W., papers written by women members of SAMLA be given equal consideration for acceptance to be read at the annual meeting as those written by men, and, other things being equal, that the paper written by a woman be selected over the paper written by a man.

Women's Studies. The general topic for 1972, The Image of Women in Literature, was deliberately broadly defined in order to provide as much latitude as possible for contributions. Papers should be submitted to:

Ms. Margaret A. O'Conner  
Department of English  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

As Secretary of the proposed Discussion Circle, she will have a committee of SAMLA women from the various languages, all from Chapel Hill in the interest of expediting reading of manuscripts. Since we will be able to schedule only 4 or at the most 5 papers, clearly all those submitted cannot be accepted. If you enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope, the unaccepted manuscript can be returned quickly so that you may submit it to a regular section where appropriate.

Please send two copies of the paper, one of which may be carbon or copy machine. They should follow the MLA Style Sheet and be no longer than 10 pages--shorter if possible, as we hope for time for questions and discussion.

It was the feeling at Atlanta that there would be no problem in finding enough good papers for our Discussion Circle. Indeed, most women present felt that they already had an appropriate study ready or that they could complete one in a short time. This is the time to get them typed up and sent in.

Reminder. We are not funded for a regular SAMLA regional WCML newsletter, and therefore further news would reach you only through the SAMLA newsletter, to the extent WCML news might be included in it. Our reports will, however, definitely be included in the national WCML newsletter, Concerns. If you do not already belong, you may join by sending \$5 to Ms. Leonora Woodman, Sec'y-Treasurer, WCML, [redacted]. Make checks payable to WCML. Concerns issues job opportunity bulletins to subscribers, and distributes quarterly listings of research in progress on women in literature and women in the academic world. Information about WCML activities on the program for the 1971 MLA convention in Chicago was published in the May 1971 Concerns, together with reports of other activities: organization of the Seminars at the convention, the soliciting of papers for the Women's Commission Forum, job openings as investigators into employment discrimination against women, election of women to the Delegate Assembly, the formation of a curriculum committee of WCML, the organization of the discrimination committee of WCML, and the progress of regional caucuses.

Editorial. You will have read that the Equal Rights Amendment passed in amended form, which, as Verna Wittrock said in her appeal earlier this year makes it "virtually meaningless." "Crippling changes in it...make ERA vulnerable to all sorts of exceptions to its rule." We have equal rights now under law--unless there are "physiological or functional" reasons to deny them. In other words, we are right back where we were before: less equal than others.

Recommended reading: a startlingly sound article in Ramparts, September, 1971, by Susan Griffin: "Rape: The All-American Crime."

We have lately run across a feminist Spanish (!) poem, which we include herewith:

Hombre pequeñito, hombre pequeñito,  
suelta a tu canario que quiere volar...  
Yo soy el canario, hombre pequeñito,  
déjame saltar.

Estuve en tu jaula, hombre pequeñito,  
hombre pequeñito que jaula me das.  
Digo pequeñito porque no me entiendes,  
ni me entenderás.

Tampoco te entiendo, pero mientras tanto  
ábreme la jaula, que quiero escapar;  
hombre pequeñito, te amé media hora,  
no me pidas más.

Alfonsina Storni  
1919

Remember to join the national WCML, send \$5 dues to Ms. Leonara Woodman, Secretary-Treasurer, [redacted]. Make check payable to Women's Caucus for the Modern Languages.

The actual state of the ERA is described below (from the ACLU CIVIL LIBERTIES, Dec. 71) and NOT as reported in my Editorial. My information came from the Orlando (Fla.) SENTINEL, squeezed between Mickey and Minnie Mouse, and I should have known better than to believe it. I include the columns at right, a report of ACLU activities during the past year, for your information. --ESM

# WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## Equal Rights

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), designed to guarantee for women equal rights with men in all fields, passed the House in late October after the efforts of Rep. Charles Wiggins to cripple the bill were defeated.

Wiggins sought to do this through a pair of amendments which would have created two exceptions to the ERA. The first would have excepted women from the draft; the second would have preserved state "protective" labor legislation. Women's rights advocates contend that the provisions of most state protective laws — such as limited hours, limited weights to be lifted or moved, special rest breaks — only serve to narrow the range of jobs available to women.

Proponents of ERA were sufficiently opposed to the Wiggins amendments to announce opposition to the entire bill if the amendments remained, but fortunately both were defeated on the House floor.

ERA has now moved to the Senate, where Sam Ervin is again preparing to lead the opposition, as he did in defeating the amendment last year (the denouement was administered to last year's bill, however, by Sen. Howard Baker, who attached a school prayer amendment to the bill, whereupon the entire package promptly sank).

Sen. Ervin's opposition is apparently based on his belief that the bill is simply bad constitutional law. The ACLU felt that way too until 1970, when the National Board changed its policy to support the Equal Rights Amendment on the ground that the 14th Amendment — which Sen. Ervin contends is all the protection anyone needs — was not in fact providing women with equal rights.

Opponents of ERA in the Senate include Ted Kennedy, who is among those persuaded by organized labor that nothing should be done to overturn the protective legislation labor fought so many years to achieve. ERA advocates counter labor's contentions on three counts: They oppose the work limitations mentioned above, saying this reduces the availability of certain jobs; they say labor unions themselves have been among the worst discriminators against women, and that labor's stand is really a disguised attempt to preserve certain jobs for men only; and they point out that the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission has ruled that state protective labor laws are a violation of federal civil rights acts.

Women's rights was one of the most explosive issues of the year. While just a few years ago, ACLU litigation on behalf of women's rights numbered only a handful of cases, in 1970-71 scores of cases were undertaken. The U.S. Supreme Court decided the case of *Phillips v. Martin Marietta Company*, advancing a woman's right to equal employment opportunity. The high court also agreed to review the case of *Reed v. Reed*, a challenge to the constitutionality of a state statute which favors men over women in appointments of administrators of estates. The ACLU appeared *amicus* in the *Phillips* case and is handling the *Reed* case directly.

The Supreme Court also acted in the field of abortion. In a case in which the ACLU appeared *amicus*, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the District of Columbia abortion statute. However, the case was not a complete loss since the court construed the woman's rights to an abortion under the statute more broadly than heretofore. Two more cases challenging abortion laws have been accepted for review by the Supreme Court, one of them a suit brought by the ACLU of Georgia.

The issue of women's rights was debated in Congress in connection with the equal

rights amendment. ACLU testified and lobbied in support of the amendment.

Women's rights, especially the right to abortion, was also an issue in state legislatures. ACLU affiliates lobbied for repeal of criminal sanctions on abortions in Arizona, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont and Virginia.

The following partial list of ACLU women's rights litigation gives some idea of the variety of issues being pressed:

- \* the constitutionality of abortion laws in California, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Vermont.
- \* denial of Medicaid payments for abortions in New York.
- \* inspection of hospital records of abortions by the district attorney in Pittsburgh.
- \* women's rights to sterilization operations in Massachusetts and New York.
- \* discharge of a WAC following a legal abortion in an Army hospital.
- \* display and sale of contraceptives in New York and Wisconsin.
- \* dismissals of pregnant soldiers in Alabama and Washington State and of a woman officer stationed in Turkey who gave birth to a child.
- \* equal rights to Air Force housing allowances in Alabama.

\* sexual discrimination in hiring by the Air Force in Massachusetts.

\* denial of equal rights to dependency benefits for Air Force servicewomen in Washington, D.C.

\* denial of equal rights to dependency benefits for women veterans whose husbands are students in Maryland, Minnesota and Washington State and to military dependents benefits in Washington State.

\* compulsory retirement of a District of Columbia WAC reservist who took custody of her child.

\* prohibition of women's participation in inter-scholastic sports in Indiana, New Jersey and New York.

\* right of women to work during pregnancy in Louisiana, Minnesota and Pennsylvania.

\* expulsion from school for pregnancy in Washington State.

\* discrimination in school admissions to the Boston Latin School and the University of Virginia.

\* District of Columbia rule requiring female applicants for study grants in schools elsewhere to furnish assurances that their husbands will return to D.C.

\* right of women to have legal residences different from their husbands for purposes of state college tuition charges in Colorado and Virginia.

\* women's hours in university dormitories in Wisconsin.

\* discrimination in facilities at the State Capitol in Connecticut.

\* exclusion of females from certain school programs and classes in New York and Pennsylvania.

\* requirement that girls attending school in Washington State take home economics.

\* sexual segregation of want ads in Chicago and Pittsburgh.

\* automatic right of women in Virginia to refuse jury service.

\* deprivation of the right to property for a woman found guilty of adultery in Nebraska.

\* right of an Ohio woman not to be bound for voting purposes by state law which designates her husband's home town as her residence.

\* denial of equal pay and promotion practices in New Hampshire; of equal employment with the South Carolina State Senate; and of equal pay and promotion practices at *Newsweek Magazine*, ABC Television and the broadcast industry generally.

\* threatened dismissal of a government secretary in the District of Columbia for having affairs with several men over several years.

The ACLU also undertook some cases on behalf of males seeking benefits traditionally restricted to females:

- \* the right of an unmarried man to secure a tax deduction for expenses for the care of his invalid mother.
- \* the right of a male teacher to paternity leave for child care.
- \* the right of a male to be a cabin attendant on Pan American Airlines.
- \* the right of male employees and students to wear long hair.