

Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession

It comes as no surprise to economists that sex discrimination depresses women's wages or salaries, and the concomitant underemployment of women lowers total economic production. Great gains in productivity could be realized if barriers to occupational segregation by sex were removed.

The surprise to some economists has been the pervasive and subtle nature of sex discrimination within our own profession, and the long-run nature of any solution. The surprise to women economists has been the extent to which advances toward equality of opportunity create resistance towards further movement. Within the internal labor markets of business, government agencies, and universities, it can be seen that many men these days are apprehensive and perceive reverse discrimination when in fact women are making little or no progress. In this setting, the stand of our professional association to obviate sex discrimination and this Committee's efforts to help the process remain a major priority.

Economics is a field that has typically been male-dominated. We economists in colleges and universities have urged all undergraduate students, female as well as male, to take principles of economics, problems courses, and even more advanced work to enhance their general education. As public interest in economic policy has grown, the number of students in our classes has increased. We have stressed the value of studying economics as a foundation or complement for further specialization in areas such as business, law, and engineering as well as for research and teaching of economics. We have sought female majors as well as male. The proportion of women among undergraduate majors in economics has grown somewhat in

recent years, but is still low. In 1974-75, of the B.A. degrees in economics, 22 percent were earned by women compared with 16 percent in the two previous years. The proportion of Ph.D. degrees in economics earned by women was only 11 percent in 1974-75, which represents only a slight increase in recent years (see Reagan, 1976). Even though we want to end occupational segregation by sex, it is not enough for educators to advise young women to go into fields of specialization that are atypical for women such as economics. Increasingly it is clear that support systems for the young women in atypical fields must be developed, and barriers to their career growth must be removed. Our Committee has worked on various aspects of these issues for the economics profession.

It has been now five years since the American Economic Association (*AEA*) created a Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (*CSWEP*). This has been a hard-working group of women and men dedicated to carrying out the Association's mandate to a) support and facilitate equality of opportunity for women economists in all aspects of economists' professional activities, and b) help eradicate any institutional or personal discrimination against women economists. A brief summary of the activities for the five-year period with notes on the increments made this year by the Committee is given below.

The Committee membership has rotated to include representatives from various segments of the country; from business, universities, government, and private research organizations; and within universities from economists currently working in departments of economics, agricultural economics, and schools or departments of business, and at various ranks from as-

sistant professors to full professors and administrators.¹ I want to thank these members for their commitment and service to the Association on this committee.

The Resolutions under which the Committee has been operating were adopted at the December 1971 meetings of the *AEA* in New Orleans and published in the Appendix to the Minutes of the Annual Meeting, pages 473–74 of the May 1972 *American Economic Review*. For the first three years of the Committee's life, the Association funded its activities with two grants from the Ford Foundation to enable the Committee to undertake at a rapid rate the various projects in line with its charge from the *AEA*. It was understood in accepting the start-up grant that if the experiment worked, the *AEA* would continue the activities and take over their financing. *CSWEP* has been a Standing Committee of the Association for nearly three years now, and basic operations have been fully financed by the Association for the last two years. In addition, grants were received from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and from the German Marshall Fund of the United States for special activities of the Committee.

The major guideline developed by *CSWEP* for its activities and follow-up to these activities by Association members is a call for good-faith efforts to redress the present low representation of women in the economics profession. To effect this, following the December 1971 mandate of the Association, *CSWEP* has developed

the following areas for its activities. We have identified women economists throughout the country, encouraged membership in the *AEA*, and increased the effective supply of women economists. We have tried to help meet the demand for women economists for job openings and professional activities such as committee work and program participants, and have tried overtly to stimulate such demand. We have worked to improve the workings of the labor market for economists. We have built an informal network among women economists across the country and provided informal support for our women colleagues who have often felt isolated in our profession. This is a necessary step to increase the supply of women economists. A steady, unsolicited stream of letters over the past five years attests to the appreciation of our women colleagues for *AEA*'s efforts through *CSWEP* to provide this informal support. We have counseled on request with individual women and their male colleagues (particularly department chairmen). Guidelines for implementing the affirmative action resolutions passed by *AEA* in December 1971 were developed by *CSWEP*, subjected to public debate, and published (see Boulding and Reagan). We have worked to avoid duplication and to help centralize the efforts of all women's organizations by having a close liaison with the Federation of Organizations for Professional Women. Perhaps most important of all, *CSWEP* has conducted and published ongoing research on the status of women economists. We have encouraged research on the broader issues of the role of women in the economy and sex discrimination with respect to wages and occupational segregation, which affect women economists along with all other. *CSWEP* feels that it is vital that such research provide the basis for its policy recommendations. It is *CSWEP*'s acceptance of the responsibility to collect and analyze data relevant to the status of women economists and to further the theoretical and applied research related to the status of women in general that most sets the work of this Committee apart from that of caucuses in some other professional as-

¹In addition to presidents of the *AEA* who served *ex officio*, membership from March 1972 to date has included: Walter Adams, Michigan State University; Carolyn Shaw Bell, Wellesley College (Chair, 1972 and 1973); Francine Blau, University of Illinois; Martha Blaxall, Health, Education & Welfare, Washington, DC; Kenneth E. Boulding, University of Colorado; Janice Madden, University of Pennsylvania; Collette Moser, Michigan State University; Barbara B. Reagan, Southern Methodist University (Chair, 1974–76); Isabel Sawhill, Urban Institute, Washington, DC; Margaret Simms, Atlanta University; Myra Strober, Stanford University; Nancy Teeters, Budget Committee, House of Representatives, Washington, DC; Phyllis Wallace, Sloan School, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Florence Weiss, National Economic Research Associates, New York City.

sociations. Many of the specific activities of the Committee discussed below support more than one of the above general goals.

I. Roster

From the beginning, compilation of a roster of women economists with their fields and professional qualifications has been a major project of *CSWEP*. *AEA* membership lists had no sex identification when the Committee was organized, and even the subsequent *Directory of Members* in 1974, which did include sex in the basic coding of the data at the request of this Committee, gets out of date quickly. (Such a list is invaluable as a benchmark.) *CSWEP*'s roster of women economists has grown from the 300 or so entries at the end of our first year to well over 1,800 this year. The roster has been computerized for several years now, and in the fall of 1976 we again updated our file by sending each woman economist listed a copy of the material she previously supplied us and asking for the most recent information in areas of specialization, highest degree in economics, professional grade or rank, and address. This fall we added a question on availability for new employment even though we realize that availability depends on the nature of the job offer. New names are added to the roster at the request of individual women. Sometimes this comes about because they hear about our work and write asking to be put on our list. Some have come through open meetings we have held from time to time in major cities such as New York, Chicago, Boston, and Washington, D.C. Many women economists come by the room we "women" at the *AEA* annual meeting, and when they register with us, they ask to be added to our roster. In addition, we have asked academic departments of economics to give us names of women economists employed. In the fall of 1976, to save time of the respondent, the question on the Universal Academic Questionnaire was limited to asking for the names of new employees hired who are women economists. Another year, the question will revert to the broader question asking for names of all

women economists employed. *CSWEP* has an ongoing problem of identifying women economists in business and government and urges all our colleagues to help us find and register such women.

Prospective employers may contact *CSWEP* and, for a fee to help defray Committee costs, they may receive a list of women economists who meet criteria specified by the prospective employers such as highest degree in economics, number of years of experience, field, or present rank. They can then contact the women so listed to ask for more detailed data on their careers and ascertain their interest in particular jobs. The use of this service is growing.

II. *CSWEP* Newsletter

Quarterly *CSWEP* Newsletters have been sent out to all women economists on our roster. The newsletter gives our associate members news of committee activities, asks for their help in various *AEA* activities, lists requests for articles, conference and program plans and participants, grant and fellowship opportunities, and regional activities, and notes research findings or publications of possible interest. *AEA* members who would like to submit short items for inclusion in the *CSWEP* Newsletter are encouraged to send them in to us in writing. The Newsletter clearly is an important way in which we have widened the informal network and reduced the sense of isolation felt by some. Numerous associate members have contributed \$5.00 or more to help defray the costs of the Newsletter in appreciation of this service. Additional contributions are welcome.

The *CSWEP* Newsletter for the past five years has carried brief announcements of job openings for economists for any prospective employer who asks us in writing to do so. In the fall of 1976 a survey of a sample of employers for whom we have carried such notices is being conducted so as to help evaluate the usefulness of this service.

III. Annual Meeting

Each year since its founding, *CSWEP* has

taken responsibility for organizing one session of the program for the annual meeting of the *AEA*. We have used this opportunity to present findings of the Committee or to organize presentations and discussions of research papers related to discrimination, women in the labor market, or other economic aspects of women's roles. This year *CSWEP* organized a session on the economics of the two-earner family. The quality of the papers presented was high and interest in the topics was great.

At the Atlantic City meetings, as last year, a special room in the heart of the meeting room area was set up for *CSWEP*. The room was kept open throughout the meetings by committee members and volunteers from among our associate members. It became an open seminar on the economic status of women economists, job opportunities, and general discussion of colleagues' concerns and *CSWEP* activities. The room was well used throughout the meetings and discussion was lively.

Because of the early date of the 1976 annual meetings, less than normal activity occurred at Atlantic City related to job opportunities. *CSWEP* will have informal supportive services for women economists at the follow-up Job Market Session planned by the *AEA* for early January in Chicago to meet the special needs for a job market this year.

IV. Research

Occupational Segregation. The nearly three-year effort of *CSWEP* funded by a special grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to analyze occupational segregation by sex, the forces behind it, and its implications for women's economic standing was brought to completion in 1976. The final results of this effort were published (see Blaxall and Reagan). *CSWEP* members designed, planned, and participated in the national workshop conference on occupational segregation in May 1975 on which the book is based. The conference was jointly sponsored by *CSWEP* and the Center for Research on Women in Higher Education and the Professions at Wellesley College. Papers for

the conference were commissioned 1) to accompany economic analyses of labor market phenomena with analysis from other disciplines in the social sciences and discussion of that work by economists so as to analyze occupational segregation as an interlocking set of institutions with sociological, psychological, and economic aspects and with deep historical roots; and 2) to consider what policy changes might be needed to achieve a society free from denial of job opportunities on the basis of sex. This book fulfills *CSWEP*'s promise to disseminate the research findings. We again thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York for making this effort financially possible. Occupational segregation by sex and the forces behind it are major factors in the low proportion of women currently among economists. Furthermore, even within economics, *CSWEP* research has revealed that some fields of specialization have considerably higher proportions of women than other areas of specialization, thus demonstrating the pervasiveness of sexism in occupational segregation down to micro levels. *CSWEP* hopes that this research effort to better understand occupational segregation will help provide the understanding of basic forces that is needed to overcome occupational segregation in general, and in particular to overcome the view that economics is a more appropriate professional field for men than for women.

1974-1975 Survey of Economists. Work continued this year in building a computer tape of the data from *CSWEP*'s survey of a paired sample of more than 1,200 male and female economists who did their academic work for their highest degree at the same time in the same university. Data collection was completed in 1975. Preliminary results from the first 710 women respondents and the first male matches received were published in three articles in the May 1975 *American Economic Review* (Alice Amsden and Moser, Strober, and Reagan). The major preliminary finding was that salaries of women economists are substantially below those of their male counterparts even when their educational attainments and work histories are simi-

lar. More refined analysis of the complete sample, particularly the returns from economists with Ph.D.s, is continuing with emphasis on reasons for salary differences between men and women, and a search for differences in career patterns since obtaining Ph.D.s in economics.

Academic Labor Market for Economists, by Sex. Starting in the fall of 1972, CSWEP undertook a survey of departments of economics and agricultural economics in colleges and universities to obtain more information on the demand for economists, promotion rates, and production of graduate and undergraduate majors in economics, all classified by sex. This project, on recommendation of CSWEP, grew in 1975 into the Universal Academic Questionnaire administered by the Nashville office of the AEA, CSWEP has continued to analyze the resulting data by sex. In previous years, such analysis has been published in the May issue of the *American Economic Review* in the annual report of CSWEP. This year our analysis of the 1976 data will be published in the Notes section of the June 1977 issue of the *American Economic Review* because the survey had not been made at the time this report had to go to press because of the change in the time of the 1976 annual meeting of the AEA.

As a service to the AEA this year, CSWEP bore the costs of putting on the computer the

results of the 1975 survey made by the AEA with the Universal Academic Questionnaire.

BARBARA B. REAGAN, *Chairperson*

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