

Vlth National Conference, 1993: Mysore
Statement of the President

Devaki Jain

It is a great moment for me to be here with you on the occasion of the IAWS General Body Meeting, coinciding with the sixth National Conference of the Association. In the twelve years since the Bombay Conference, we have all grown together. Our membership has registered an impressive increase, details of which will be presented by the Secretary and the Treasurer.

I will make only a very brief statement. It has been the constant endeavour of our Executive Committee, that the IAWS should build a lobby of women's opinion on critical issues facing Indian Society. We felt that the Association should be in the centre of the Women's Studies movement and should provide legitimacy to a formation based on gender. We felt that a dialogue with mainstream social sciences should be initiated and sustained.

The choice of theme for this Conference has been an apt one from this point of view. The Association has brought out a publication of background papers on the same subject, in collaboration with many institutions and individuals. We want not only to consolidate and strengthen, but to provide space for convergence of facts, opinions and action.

The main activity of the Association has been the holding of the biennial conferences at national level. During the tenure of the last EC as well as ours, there have been certain movements, some opinion building and action, towards regionalising IAWS activities. There has been talk of forming regional Associations, of holding regional Conferences to highlight local issues and perceptions which could also feed into National meetings. There is already a Maharashtra Association of Women's Studies. We need to clarify many issues, such as the relationship between the regional and the National Association of Women's Studies. Some spade work has been done already on this topic by the present Executive Committee.

During this EC tenure, we have been approached by two foreign institutions for collaboration. One was a proposal from the Association of Women in Development, USA (AWID) for holding of a Conference on the New Economic Policies and Women. We had to turn down this request for lack of time and other reasons. The other was a proposal from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague for IAWS-ISS collaboration in theory building and methodology training. This is still under our consideration.

Our two year tenure as Executive Committee has been a happy, if somewhat strenuous one. We held eight EC meetings and brought out 4 issues of the Newsletter. Two volumes of selected previous Conference papers have been published by Vikas. Two more are to be brought out shortly.

As members are aware, IAWS has no permanent office establishment. We have a system of a floating secretariat, which moves along with the office bearers. Our EC has found this to be a very enervating method of management. It has taken us all of 18 months to set the house in

some order. I think the time has come for IAWS to consider this situation in the light of new demands being made on us, our own pace of growth and to take decision in the matter.

I would like to place on record my deep appreciation of the co-operation extended to me by my colleagues, and of the hard work put in by all, especially the Vice President, General Secretary Treasurer, Editor and Joint Secretary. A special word of appreciation for the Local Organizing Secretary for her enthusiastic response to the challenge of mounting this conference. As you know, Maithreyi Krishnaraj's absence from India created the vacuum which I was called upon to fill. I must say, I miss her very much and want to record my sense of gratitude and appreciation for her leadership.

I would not be truthful if I did not acknowledge the energetic support given by the staff of Institute of Social Studies Trust at New Delhi for the secretariat work of IAWS. I want to thank each one of them, especially as both the Joint Secretary and I made too many demands on their time and practice.

I must also record my deep sense of appreciation to Dr. Madaiah, the Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University and Dr. Seshadri, the principal of the Regional College of Education, Mysore for giving us their unstinted co-operation in making the Conference a success. Thank you.