

Three Decades of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

In 2003, CWI published ["Women Networking: Three Decades of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues."](#) It reveals a broad range of meeting topics, although major issues continue to be emphasized in employment, education, health, welfare, civil rights, and the economy. With the growing interest in recording the history of the second and third waves of the women's movement, it was timely to chronicle the activities of CWI with input from some of the original members. The Clearinghouse also sought a fitting way to honor the memory of our longtime member, Mary O'Connor, to whom this report was dedicated. A special acknowledgment was made to Dvora Lovinger who conducted the substantial research of our records and the interviews; Lovinger organized and wrote the basic narrative of this publication. Many thanks were due to Brett Geranen for his valuable assistance in the publication process. Additional appreciation goes to Joy Simonson, Harriett Harper, and the late Roslyn Kaiser, and Ruth Nadel of the CWI Board of Directors, who brought institutional memory and editorial judgment to the final document.

Introduction

The Clearinghouse on Women's Issues was incorporated in 1974 in Washington, DC, by a diverse group of women and representatives of women's organizations to provide a channel for exchange and dissemination of information on a variety of issues of mutual concern. At the time that CWI was organized, there were few sources of easily available information on the fight for women's rights. Organizations and newsletters that addressed specific issues in the women's movement were just emerging. As a source of news on feminist progress, CWI filled an important need.

The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, the Equal Rights Amendment was sent out to the states in 1972, and Title IX was passed in 1972.

The founding year was one of preparation for the United Nations First World Conference on Women that took place in 1975 in Mexico City. CWI's contributions to the women's agenda through discussion and clarification of issues continued through the International Women's Year, the UN Decade for Women, the 1980 Copenhagen World Conference, the 1985 World Conference in Nairobi, the 1995 Fourth World Conference in Beijing, and in New York in

2000, Beijing + Five. Evidence of Clearinghouse influence is to be found in the number of CWI members who helped plan and attend these meetings, as well as those who were officials and organization delegates at these historic events.

The women who formed the Clearinghouse, like the current members today, were committed to the core values of feminism: to achieve political, economic, and social equality for women. Out of this commitment came a shared dedication to social change, education, and sisterhood. For almost forty years, a changing group of people – women and some men – have participated in the Clearinghouse monthly meetings and discussions about women’s issues, sharing ideas, thoughts, and concerns about the ongoing problems that women face in America and abroad. The topics discussed during the early meetings are similar to the ones being discussed today.

CWI members and guests continue to gather on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 12 noon in Washington at a brown-bag lunch meeting that is open to the public, to learn about and discuss the continuing struggle for women’s rights. Members today are every bit as committed, energized, and excited to hear speakers who are at the cutting edge of issues related to equity and gender discrimination. Nevertheless, despite much progress in 40 years, the goals of the women’s movement remain as challenging as they have been since the founding of the Clearinghouse.

The Clearinghouse received a flow of letters from all over the country, such as from women in prison, inquiries about employment, students seeking information for term papers and reports, and requests for funding. Jean Linehan, who was the longtime corresponding secretary, responded to letters sent to the Clearinghouse and provided helpful information whenever possible. This is further evidence of the organization’s contributions both to its members and to the larger community over the years.

A striking characteristic of the Clearinghouse is its longevity. With modest dues, a minimal budget, no paid staff or formal office space, CWI has outlasted many other national and local women’s groups, based solely on committed members and volunteers dedicated to its goals and activities. Many present-day CWI members have been attending meetings since the early 1980’s, forming lasting friendships and professional associations with people they might otherwise not have met.

Foundation and Structure

CWI was formed as a non-profit organization within the limitations of section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code so that its purpose and activities would be solely educational, scientific, literary, or charitable in nature. The initial articles of incorporation dated March 27, 1974, list the incorporators of the Clearinghouse as: Bobbie Deister, Kerry A. Thalhim, and Alison A. Bell. The first board of directors were: Alison Bell, Bernice Frieder, Ellen McCartney, Helen Tibbitts, Marjorie Blaufarb, Jan Liebman, Pearle Eisenberg, Abigail McCarthy, Gloria Johnson, Mary Lou Hennessy, and Marge Gates. The original bylaws established that CWI, "would not take any action or position in the name of the group" (this was changed in 1992). The bylaws stated that CWI, "would merely provide the machinery by which member organizations and individual members interested in a given measure can pool their efforts" and they outlined that CWI would focus on the following issues, particularly as they affect women:

- Relief of the poor, the distressed or the underprivileged;
- Advancement of education;
- Elimination of prejudice and discrimination;
- Defense of human and civil rights secured by law;
- Lessening the burdens of government, by disseminating non-partisan educational materials related to government policies affecting women and assisting in locating groups researching the impact of government policies;
- Aiding in the scientific education of college or university students, as pertains to public and private policies;
- Conducting public discussion groups, forums, panels, lectures, or other similar programs on public and private policies;
- Printing, publication or distribution of Clearinghouse material or the distribution of materials printed or published by others relating to public or private policies as enumerated above exclusively.

Regrettably, other than the original bylaws and articles of incorporation, there is virtually no existing written material dating from the early days of the Clearinghouse.

In August 1982, the board revised certain sections of CWI's bylaws. These changes included simplification of the lengthy list of pertinent issues, allowing for a more focused organizational purpose. The re-worded mission called for the dissemination of non-partisan educational materials and information on issues affecting women, specifically:

- Advancement of educational opportunities;
- Elimination of prejudice and discrimination;
- Conducting public discussion groups, forums, panels, lectures, or other similar programs on public and private policies;
- Printing, publication or distribution of Clearinghouse material or the distribution of materials printed or published by others relating to public or private policies.

Other changes to the bylaws were a new section under membership which stipulated that the board of directors could establish dues, elimination of the assistant treasurer position, an additional meeting during the month of June, elimination of the personnel committee, and a change in the beginning of the fiscal year from January 1 to July 1. The new bylaws were approved and passed on September 10, 1982.

More changes were made to the bylaws in 1986. As explained in the May 1986 newsletter, "the original bylaws for CWI...were lengthy, formal, legalistic and highly structured. After years of experience they were found to be too cumbersome and impractical, given the nature of the organization." A new version was adopted on May 1, 1986. The primary changes were to:

- Eliminate the Corresponding Secretary position (subsequently restored).
- Change titles of officers from Chair, First Vice Chair and Second Vice Chair to President, Vice President for Programs and Vice President for Membership.

- Change date of annual meeting to June instead of May so that new officers can have the summer months for transition of duties.
- Change the term of office of members of the board of directors from three years to two years.
- Assure that at least one member of the board of directors is an organization representative.
- Eliminate the requirement that membership applications be approved by the board of directors.
- Increase the number of members of the board of directors from four to six (in addition to the officers). Three will be elected in even-numbered years and three in odd-numbered years.
- Require that to be eligible for office, an individual must have been a member in good standing for at least one year.

One of the most significant changes for the Clearinghouse resulted from the board of directors' decision in 1992 to allow CWI to take an organizational position on certain issues as long as those positions align with CWI's stated goal – combating discrimination against women. The amendment to the bylaws, adopted in July 1992, stated: "The CWI, by a two-thirds vote of the members of the board of directors, may support positions central to the well-being of women." The first instance of CWI using this power was in October 1992 when Elaine Newman, as president of the Clearinghouse, sent a letter to Governor William Donald Schaefer of Maryland urging him to retain the Maryland Commission for Women which had been set to lose two and a half positions due to budgetary constraints. The board of directors exercised this power extensively over the next 10 years, adopting numerous positions on an array of women's issues, both foreign and domestic.

The board of directors made another update to the CWI bylaws in April 1997. Of the minor changes, the most significant was dividing the role of "secretary" into two positions – corresponding secretary, the person who would conduct the general correspondence of the organization, and recording

secretary, the individual who would be responsible for recording the minutes of board meetings.

Early Years (1974 - 1987)

Although there is scant information on the first years of the Clearinghouse, it is believed that Abigail McCarthy, wife of former Senator Eugene McCarthy, was the founding president, as reported among her accomplishments in her obituary in the February 2001 Washington Post. The article noted that McCarthy had been interested in women's and human rights issues for most of her life, also serving on the board of the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL). A 2001 issue of the CWI newsletter carried an article on McCarthy's death and included the following information on the founding of CWI in the early 1970's: Daisy B. Fields, who later served as a CWI president and editor of the CWI newsletter, was involved in CWI in the early 1970's. She reported that Arvonne Fraser organized a group of friends (McCarthy among them) who were interested in women's issues. Fields and Catherine East then joined the informal group as did Mary Keyserling, who later served a term as CWI president.

Arvonne Fraser was subsequently director of the Women, Public Policy and Development Project at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs; Daisy Fields was active in Federally Employed Women (FEW); and Mary Dublin Keyserling was a former director of the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor. They and others met informally to discuss women's issues and to take the information back to their various organizations.

Gloria Johnson, long-time president of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and also a founding member of CWI, remembers very distinctly that the Clearinghouse was, "unlike any other organization at that time." She recalled that the founding members wanted a forum to raise and discuss issues of importance to women. Johnson lauded the range of issues that CWI covered at such an early stage of the women's movement and also enjoyed the fact that members could suggest specific topics to be discussed, thus creating a cooperative yet challenging environment for the meetings.

Keyserling, then a consulting economist, became president of CWI in October 1981. She said that she did so despite an already heavy workload because, "I

feel strongly that the CWI now confronts exceedingly urgent challenges." Her goals consisted of working, "actively together to strengthen CWI and mobilize our efforts to the fullest extent possible to educate the public on where women are, what has been affecting their basic interests, and to do all we can as individual and organizational members to achieve gains and knock out losses. This is no moment for CWI to weaken or disappear." Keyserling proved to be a strong and inspirational leader of the organization, serving as a board member until 1988.

At the December 1, 1981 CWI meeting Keyserling spoke about "Where Working Women Are in Our Economy - The Outlook." She ended her presentation of statistics and trends with these words: "The CWI has many challenges to respond to. We should do much to inform national, state and local organizations about where women are, are going and should be going in the interest of equity and justice and society. The Board will do all it can to expand CWI membership, increase its funds, and extend its outreach." CWI boards have continued to follow her path to the current day.

Ruth Shinn, a former CWI board member, began attending meetings immediately after the group was formed. Through her position at the Women's Bureau, she was able to provide CWI members with crucial information on upcoming legislation affecting women. She found CWI meetings extremely helpful because of the exchange of knowledge among members, many of whom worked in various organizations at the forefront of the feminist movement. Even in its earliest days, she added, CWI had a very important role in the dissemination of information on women's issues. The high quality of speakers was a great draw for participants from government as well as non-government organizations, she said, noting that the excellent quality of programming has continued over CWI's 30 year history.

Newsletter and Brochure

The CWI newsletter has been a major asset in the development of the organization, serving not only as the vehicle to inform members of upcoming meetings but providing a detailed report on the past meeting. Many out-of-town members continue membership in order to receive the newsletter and keep informed on current issues.

Although a short version of the CWI newsletter was reportedly published as early as 1974, the earliest available newsletter is from June 1981. That issue recounted the May 1981 meeting, entitled "Opportunities for Women in Government," with speakers Wendy Borchardt, Associate Director of Personnel at the White House, Ann Zabaldo, a free lance researcher and trainer, and Carmen Rosa Maymi, the first Hispanic Director of the Women's Bureau and later the Director of Equal Employment Opportunity for the Office of Personnel Management. The report stated: "There was general agreement among the participants that effective training for management and career development are essential for women in the 1980's. It was also agreed that women must continue building and using their network and support systems for gaining access to positions and moving between the public and private sector." The newsletter also announced the topic of the June meeting to be "Role of Voluntary Organizations in Public Policy" with Diana Lozano, Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of the Office of Public Liaison. Clearly, as early as 1981, although CWI was less than ten years old, the organization was already able to attract high-level professional speakers to address its members. This demonstrates the group's early importance and set the stage for its successful future.

Sometime between 1982 and 1984, the first brochure of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues was published. The brochure gave a brief history of the organization, its purpose, guidelines for membership, and a list of the current board of directors. It also included a section on areas of interest and listed equality in the workplace, equal legal rights, advancement of educational opportunities for women, women and health, protection of human and civil rights, and problems of low income women, all of which remain as the primary concerns for members into the 21st century. Some issues listed that were later deleted were the status of the homemaker, problems of older women, and the National and World Plans of Action, though a general topic area of global issues affecting women was added in their place.

The November 1983 CWI newsletter was the first issue to list events or announcements in addition to a short account of the previous CWI meeting. This newsletter also included an announcement for an AAUW conference that CWI had been asked to co-sponsor. The conference, to be held in New York City in October 1984, would cover the, "critical issues affecting women today

and in the future” and would be the first major conference co-sponsored by the Clearinghouse. The newsletter also included an announcement for a new book, *A Woman’s Guide to Moving Up in Business and Government*, written by CWI’s vice-chairperson, Daisy Fields, as well as the publication of *Choices: A Teen Woman’s Journal for Self-Awareness and Personal Planning* by CWI member Mildred Wurf, and *Consumer Activists – They Made a Difference – A History of Consumer Action Related by Leaders in the Consumer Movement*, which included an introduction written by CWI board member Caroline Ware and a chapter by CWI President Mary Keyserling.

Mid 1980’s

The October 1984 newsletter included information on recent legislation that affected women. A short summary detailed the new Retirement Equity Act, which was a key part of the 1983 Economic Equity Act. The bill expanded private pension coverage for workers and guaranteed pension rights for homemakers whose working spouses die before retirement. The October newsletter also had an announcement for a seminar sponsored by the Federation of Organizations for Professional Women on “Career Success Skills and Strategies” as well as a course on “Stress Management and Professional Women.”

The Clearinghouse on Women’s Issues newsletter underwent many positive changes in 1985. From that year onward, the newsletter consistently included additional news articles, reports of recent publications, and announcements of conferences or meetings of interest to CWI members. This greatly enhanced the value and usefulness of the newsletter. Members outside of the Washington area commented on the benefit of receiving the newsletter.

In January 1985, for example, the newsletter summarized an article that many CWI members would have found very pertinent to their daily work. The article, published in December 1984 in the *New York Times*, explained the guidelines used to detect patterns of discrimination in employment, and was an important addition to the Clearinghouse newsletter. The February 1985 newsletter contained an announcement of the release of a report on women’s mental health by the American Psychological Association Women’s Programs Office, a notice from the Women’s Pension Project seeking women who may have been left out of pension plans, as well as a short message regarding

Women's History Week and activities planned by the Washington DC Commission for Women.

In the April 1985 issue of the CWI newsletter, Mary O'Connor, the recording secretary, included a section entitled "Bills Introduced in Congress" and described three bills affecting women: a Social Security earnings sharing bill, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1985, and the reintroduction of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The monthly publication underwent even more changes in 1986. The newsletter now regularly included sections for coming events and other publications, helping to keep members informed and connected to other Washington activities and events regarding women's rights and additional issues of concern. On March 9, 1986 many CWI members took part in the National March for Women's Lives in Washington, DC, spearheaded by the National Organization for Women. They participated in many other conferences, including the Bureau of National Affairs' conference on work and family. The newsletter also occasionally included quick and interesting facts: for instance, the May 1986 issue reported a survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics which found that women held 6,938,000 of the 13,847,000 jobs in 50 professional occupations. However, the story also reminded readers that the wage gap between men and women continued at an astonishing rate as professional men earned \$851 per week compared to \$419 for professional women.

In 1987, the CWI newsletter chronicled additional news, including an announcement of the new Director of the Women's Bureau, Shirley Dennis. She promised to continue advocating for employer-sponsored child care programs, which had been developed under the leadership of future CWI President Ruth Nadel.

One conference in which CWI members took part during 1987 was the Spirit of Houston Tenth Anniversary of the National Women's Conference: A Decade of Achievement, a meeting to commemorate the groundbreaking 1977 conference and to review progress in implementing the Plan of Action passed by that first national women's conference.

The September 1987 newsletter also contained an alert regarding the nomination of Robert Bork to the US Supreme Court. Bork's ultra-conservative record and beliefs on civil rights, civil liberties, and women's rights were considered a serious threat to women and people of color. According to an analysis of Bork's record by the National Women's Law Center which was quoted in the CWI newsletter: "Judge Bork has precluded the application of the two constitutional rights, equal protection and privacy, that have formed the cornerstone of legal protections for women under the Constitution." Newsletter editor, Daisy Fields concluded the section on Bork by stating: "If your freedom and existing rights mean anything to you, you will immediately write to every member of the Senate Judiciary Committee and voice your opposition" and she provided a list of the members of the committee. Robert Bork, of course, was eventually defeated, due in large part to concerted efforts by women and the women's movement.

The last newsletter in 1987 closed with a New Year's resolution to continue working on the unfinished agenda for women's issues, including the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and of legislation on non-discrimination in insurance, the Reproductive Health Equity Act and improvement of child care standards.

Late 1980's and 1990's

1988 brought a change of venue for CWI meetings. From the early 1970's, the Clearinghouse had held its monthly lunch discussions at the American Association of University Women's board room at 2401 Virginia Avenue NW, but in February 1988, AAUW instituted a new policy that banned any food in their board room. For the remainder of the year, most of the CWI meetings were held at the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees' board room at 1625 L Street NW. From October 1993 onward the American Council on Education at One Dupont Circle was host to the CWI meetings.

The Clearinghouse on Women's Issues joined with more than 50 national organizations in September 1998 to reactivate the Coalition for Women's Appointments. The coalition, similar to the one first developed in 1976 to encourage the incoming Carter Administration to include more female appointments, worked to identify qualified women to fill key policy-making

positions within the next administration. Fields served as the CWI representative on the Civil Rights, EEOC, Labor, Office of Personnel Management, and Merit Systems Protection Board Task Force.

On April 9, 1989, many members of the Clearinghouse participated in the National Organization for Women's National March for Women's Equality and Women's Lives, called by some: "The most important mass demonstration for women's rights in the decade." The march was a rally to save legal abortion and birth control rights and to gather more support for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. Later in 1989, many members also attended the 10th Anniversary Conference of the National Committee on Pay Equity.

CWI members experienced a sad loss when Marguerite Rawalt, a longtime advocate for women's rights and member of CWI, died in 1989, at the age of 94. She retired from the federal government after a 33-year career as an attorney for the Internal Revenue Service. She was also a member of President Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women and a founding member of the National Organization for Women and its Legal Defense Fund. The CWI newsletter said: "She was an inspiration to those of us who were privileged to know her and work with her. We will long remember her commitment to equality for women, her sense of humor, and her warmth, caring, and concern for others."

CWI suffered two more losses in 1990. On April 5, Dr. Caroline Ware, a past board member of the Clearinghouse and a staunch supporter of women's rights, passed away at the age of 91. Though frail and legally blind, she rarely missed a CWI meeting and remained active on women's issues right up until her death. Several months later in October 1990, Olya Margolin, a longtime board member of CWI, also died. The Clearinghouse members missed the inspirational and spirited presence of both women at their monthly discussions.

In 1991, faced with increased postage and printing costs, CWI board members made the difficult decision to raise membership dues for the first time in more than 10 years. An individual membership went to \$18.00 from a modest \$15.00 per year and organization dues rose to \$35.00 from \$30.00 per year.

CWI members received well-deserved commendations in 1992: Joy Simonson, a former CWI board member and future CWI president, was inducted into the DC Women's Hall of Fame for her long and varied professional career and volunteer work, and Carmen Delgado Votaw, later a board member, was inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame for her role as a national and international leader on civil rights, particularly for Hispanics and women.

Many CWI members participated in the 1993 Health for Women in the 21st Century Conference, the 40th annual forum of the National Health Council, to examine the impact of changing demographics, forecasts of advancements in medical research, and other major health trends affecting women. Members also attended a conference sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women entitled "Challenges in an Aging Society: A National Conference on Older Women" held in September 1993 in Washington, DC.

In 1993, the Clearinghouse became a member of the Council of Presidents (later called the National Council of Women's Organizations), a group composed of heads of national women's organizations who collectively take positions on current women's issues. As a member of the Council, CWI signed on to *amicus* briefs submitted on behalf of women in various cases, some of which involved breaking the glass ceiling and supporting the Family and Medical Leave Act.

In November 1993, CWI received word that Dr. Caroline Ware had bequeathed \$1,000 to CWI for such purposes as the board of directors deemed appropriate. Accordingly, the board established the Ware Grant to provide for the award of that money to an individual or organization member of CWI for new or ongoing research on an issue of concern to women. An application form for the grant appeared in the January 1994 newsletter and, in May 1994, the Ware Grant Committee, composed of board members Mary O'Connor, Colleen Challenger, Jean Linehan, and Felice Sorrett, awarded the money to CWI member Mary Haney for her project of developing an instructive history of U.S. preparation for and participation in International Women's Year, the UN International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City (1975), and the First National Women's Conference in Houston (1977). Haney interviewed women who were instrumental in the organization and outcome of these meetings.

CWI members took part in a new initiative of the Women's Bureau in the spring of 1994 called "Working Women Count," an effort to find out how America's 58 million working women felt about their jobs and what they would change if they could. CWI President Ruth Nadel said of the initiative: "In keeping with CWI's ongoing commitment to our women members and to working women across the country, we are proud to join this landmark effort to give voice to women's views through the 'Working Women Count' questionnaire." The Clearinghouse distributed the Women's Bureau questionnaire, which asked women questions about issues ranging from pay and benefits to job training and opportunities for promotion, in the April newsletter and responses ultimately were reported to President Clinton, Congress, and the public. Women's Bureau Director Karen Nussbaum said: "We are delighted that CWI has joined this unprecedented effort to help define the critical issues women face in today's workplace."

August 1995 marked the 75th anniversary of women's suffrage. There was a huge women's rights march in Washington, DC, to celebrate the milestone. Many Clearinghouse members participated in the march and other activities planned around the anniversary and helped in the efforts to relocate the woman suffrage statue from the depths of the Capitol Crypt to a permanent place of honor in the Capitol Rotunda.

1995 was the first year that the Clearinghouse made several organizational "sign ons," when the board agreed to add CWI's name to a letter or cause that furthered the goals and mission of CWI. In 1995, along with 58 other women's organizations as part of the Council of Presidents, the Clearinghouse signed on to a letter urging President Clinton to continue his support of affirmative action. CWI also wrote to President Clinton and Senators Edward Kennedy, Nancy Kassebaum, and Robert Dole in support of the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster for Surgeon General of the United States, as well as other letters in support of Title IX and a fair minimum wage.

Sadly, in August 1996, Catherine East, a leader in the women's movement who was instrumental in the formation of the National Organization for Women and a recurring speaker at CWI meetings, died of congestive heart failure. That loss was felt not only among Clearinghouse members, but by all people fighting for women's rights.

Throughout the year, the Clearinghouse remained active in national issues by supporting various initiatives concerning women's rights. CWI wrote letters urging the Senate to pass minimum wage legislation, signed on to testimony presented by the President of the Women's Legal Defense Fund (along with 65 other organizations) in support of the Family and Medical Leave Act, urged President Clinton to continue the Interagency Council on Women which was set to expire at the end of 1996, wrote to numerous Senators regarding the Istook Amendment, a proposed bill which would put additional restrictions and record-keeping burdens on non-profit organizations, and urged members of Congress to maintain funding for the Women's Educational Equity Act. Many CWI members also took part in the UN Women's Conference One Year Later, held in Washington, DC, in September 1996 to address the progress since the Fourth World Conference on Women.

In 1997, the Clearinghouse received a \$1,000 grant from The Women's Institute at American University, a non-profit education organization established in 1975 by Dr. Dorothy Ferebee and Meg Connor. CWI board members Daisy Fields, Florence Perman, and Mary O'Connor had been very active with the Institute. During its 22 years, the Women's Institute established the Myra Barrer Library Collection on Women at American University's Bender Library and also sponsored several scholarships for female students as well as a variety of conferences and seminars on women's issues. However, recognizing that its mission to address the International Women's Year objectives had been accomplished, the board of directors of the Women's Institute dissolved the group and distributed its assets to worthy organizations, one of which was the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues. In the award letter, Rita Johnston, President of the Women's Institute, wrote: "The Clearinghouse on Women's Issues has been designated to receive a grant from us to continue your work in providing a channel for dissemination of information on a variety of issues of mutual concern to diverse women's organizations."

The Clearinghouse continued to be very active on national women's rights issues, writing to Senators regarding the re-authorization of the Perkins Vocational Education Act and encouraging funding for international family planning programs. CWI was also an official supporter of the 150th anniversary of the women's rights movement.

CWI experienced another sad loss in 1997 with the passing of Mary Dublin Keyserling, a past president and board member of the Clearinghouse and former director of the Women's Bureau. Keyserling's book, *Windows on Day Care*, launched a national debate over publicly funded day care facilities. She was a lifelong fighter for women's rights.

Long-time editor of the CWI newsletter Daisy Fields retired in November 1998. In her last issue, she wrote: "As a founding member of CWI, I worked for and watched it grow from a dozen women to the nationwide membership we enjoy today. I have served the organization as program chair, president for two terms, and newsletter editor for the past 16 years. It has been a significant part of my life and I have enjoyed every minute." Although Fields' hard work, skill, and sense of humor would be greatly missed on the pages of the CWI newsletter, Roslyn Kaiser volunteered to fill her position as newsletter editor. Kaiser, a recent retiree from the US Department of Transportation with a strong background in writing and public affairs, was a natural replacement for Fields.

In 1998, the Clearinghouse signed on to numerous letters and causes to advance women's rights, among them a letter to Senators urging support of the Patients' Bill of Rights, a National Women's Equality Act, and a fair minimum wage. CWI also signed on to two *amicus* briefs. The first was a brief filed by the National Partnership for Women & Families in support of the appellant in *Thomson v. Ohio State University Hospital*, a case involving important issues for state employees who need protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act, filed in the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. In the second case, *Smith v. NCAA*, the Clearinghouse, along with the National Women's Law Center, argued to the Supreme Court that the NCAA is subject to Title IX and is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of sex in its governance of intercollegiate athletics.

During 1999, the Clearinghouse sent letters to national and international leaders on topics of gender apartheid in Afghanistan and the Equal Rights Amendment, and signed on to an *amicus* brief in *Neal v. The Board of Trustees of the California State University*, another Title IX case defending the legality and constitutionality of the "three-part test" and, in particular, the proportionality test.

Twenty-first Century and Beyond

In 2000, CWI President Joy Simonson was elected to the National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO) steering committee, a testament to the importance of the Clearinghouse. The Council had become a coalition of some 150 women's organizations representing millions of women nationwide. Also that year, the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues was a co-sponsor of the historic Feminist Expo 2000 in Baltimore, organized by the Feminist Majority Foundation. This conference attracted thousands of feminists from around the globe and featured more than 100 symposia, roundtable discussions, and training seminars. Simonson, who attended the event, said: "The presence of women from many countries reinforced the spirit of sisterhood throughout the gathering....An enormous number of young women were there from colleges (and some from high schools) in all parts of the country....Their active participation in workshops and long plenary sessions was heartwarming evidence that feminism is far from dead, as some have said. One could virtually see the torch being passed from the veterans of the early battles through the 'mature' fighters for the Equal Right Amendment to their daughters who will be fighting for their vision of women's rights."

The Clearinghouse was very active in 2000, having co-sponsored Equal Pay Day and signed on to letters opposing changes to pension nondiscrimination rules, supporting the Women's Health Office Act of 2000, and endorsing the October World March of Women 2000. CWI also signed on to a Supreme Court *amicus* brief in *Brentwood Christian Academy v. Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association* arguing that high school athletic associations are state actors and thus covered by the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution.

The Clearinghouse was a co-sponsor of the National Council of Women's Organizations' September 2001 conference, the Women's Equality Summit. This major event brought activists from around the country to Washington to lobby Congress on important women's issues. Also in 2001, after the tragic events of September 11th, CWI sent a letter to members of Congress urging them to remember the long-standing needs of women and children and not put those issues on the "political back burner" while addressing issues of terrorism.

In September 2001, Mary O'Connor, who served as CWI's treasurer for more than a decade, died in her sleep, after a long and impressive career fighting for women's rights. She worked for the Women's Campaign Fund and later for WEAL. She served on the board of several women's organization including Girls' Club of America, Centennial Branch, and DC State AAUW, the Women's Institute, and US Committee for UNIFEM. As recalled in the CWI newsletter: "Mary was a witty, loyal friend and devoted to feminist causes...She will be missed by all who knew her." Contributions in her memory facilitated this report.

In June 2002, CWI sent a letter to the US Department of Education regarding proposed amendments to Title IX. It explained that CWI members were convinced that Title IX, along with other Constitutional protections, has been responsible for much of the progress toward gender equity in education made in the last few years and that it was premature and unnecessary to amend Title IX. Clearinghouse members rejoiced at the Education Department's decision the next year not to alter its interpretation of Title IX. CWI also wrote to Secretary of State Colin Powell urging him to support hearings and ratification of the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao regarding funding for training and technical assistance services provided by Women Work!, to members of Congress urging them to co-sponsor the Chance to Succeed Act, a bill that would provide much needed assistance to poor women and their families, and to the Office of Management and Budget in support of a letter to federal contractors ensuring compliance with non-discrimination requirements.

The National Council of Women's Organizations organized a Women's Equality Summit and Congressional Action Day in 2002 to develop a "scorecard" on congressional voting records and sponsorship of NCWO's key issues. As part of the conference, the NCWO developed a Women's Agenda which included protecting Social Security and ending its disadvantages for women, securing affordable, quality child care, improving access to health care, including family planning and abortion services, ratification of CEDAW, fair pay legislation, and ending violence against women. The event was a huge success and many CWI members participated in the activities and celebrations.

Conclusion

The Clearinghouse on Women's Issues has been on the front lines of feminism for 30 years. One can trace the growth and development of the women's movement by reviewing the history of CWI meetings. The programs reflect the range of public policy concerns that are most relevant for women.

Some issues recur, year after year: gender discrimination and women in the workplace, women and girls in education, the Equal Rights Amendment, reproductive rights, Social Security, welfare, and equal pay. Unfortunately, these problems remain on the agenda, but CWI has not given up on the search for new solutions.

Ruth Nadel, a former president of the Clearinghouse, observed that CWI programs have consistently presented expert speakers who have brought meaningful perspective as well as information to the discussions. She said: "Our members, mostly professionals and activists, have been involved in the women's movement for many years. They are not just colleagues, but friends as well. Also, we have been fortunate to have a top-notch newsletter and excellent leaders who were committed to the group's goals."

The Clearinghouse, although a relatively small organization, has made a significant impact through its networking outreach. Its continuing activities and contributions to national and international campaigns for women's rights make CWI a respected voice on women's issues.