

NWEC

NEWSLETTER

A Biannual Publication of the National Women's Education Centre of Japan

WOMEN'S NETWORK FORGES LINKS

October 29-31, 1985 was marked by a conference on "International Information Networks for Women," hosted by the National Women's Education Centre (NWECC). It featured reports by nine information specialists from Japan and abroad that served as the basis for lively discussion of women's information issues.

A key topic was the formation of an international network of women's groups to develop and consolidate a worldwide data base on women.

The quantity of data on Japanese women has kept pace with the development of the women's movement--and has ballooned lately, thanks to pressure exerted by International Women's Year. The data reveals that stereotyping of women at work and home, and commercialisation of sex, continue unabated. NWECC and other world groups strive to ameliorate the situation by gathering data and disseminating it to raise the consciousness of both sexes. Networking is a critical step in this direction.

NWECC is actively strengthening its domestic and international information network and is at work on a computerised data base system.

Other groups joining the network include International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC), since 1976 the "glue" for women's group activities all over the world. IWTC distributes *The Tribune* in three languages to



Yoko Nuita (left) chaired the networking conference.

13,000 organisations and individuals worldwide; produces a directory of women's organisations, resource books, and A/V materials; actively supports women's group activities; sponsors workshops and training programmes; and has developed a microcomputer data base.

Another group, Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange, works to improve the status of women by publishing *Women's World* and supporting training and cultural exchange opportunities.

The European Community Committee Women's Information Service, founded in 1976 at the behest of 120 women activists and politicians, distributes information on its efforts to reflect the needs of EC women in government policy. The group publishes *Women of Europe* in seven languages, conducts surveys, and promotes conferences and seminars.

The ESCAP women's programme works to break down legal and social barriers to women's participation in the political and economic spheres. The group is also planning to establish a

Women's Information Network System. The Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) was launched in 1983 to promote policy that will improve women's status. It also conducts research, sponsors training, supports women's groups, and publishes information on women's issues. KWDI, too, is developing a computerised network to distribute its findings.

Animated discussion of networking techniques, alternative forms of media, and sources of women's information punctuated NWECC's October conference.

Participants applauded Japanese women's groups' effectiveness in joining with international organisations during the UN Women's Decade to rail against nuclear proliferation and sex tours, and to promote world peace.

Discussion focused on the fact that, although all women's groups share in common the goal of improving women's status, different organisations require different types of data. For example, grass-roots groups need practical data aimed at raising individuals' consciousness, whereas government bodies call for comprehensive information to assist in formulating policy.

Communication through workshops, counselling, radio plays, and satellite communication were discussed at length.

The conference closed with remarks from Chairperson Yoko Nuita: "The three world conferences held between 1975 and 1985 convened government and private bodies separately. I hope that this conference, which gathers both, will enable government and private groups to boost each other's impact."

A summary report of the conference will be published shortly.

NWEC ACTIVITIES

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EXCHANGE MEETING



Participants from 15 nations exchanged customs and ideas.

On February 19-20, 1986, NWEC convened 193 Japanese and foreign women living in Japan to discuss shared concerns and foster international understanding. Countries represented included

the U.S., the Philippines, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Taiwan, Cambodia, South Korea, India, Ghana, Kenya, Belgium, and West Germany. Male participants hailed from the Ivory Coast and

the United Arab Emirates. Truly, "Living together--knowing your country and my country through cultural exchange" was an appropriate theme for this event!

The programme featured writer Chieko Homma discussing "International Exchange through the Family." She stressed that inviting foreign friends to family dinners is one ideal means of cultural exchange for women.

Consciousness-raising films aired at the meeting centred around the sex industry in Japan, medical practices in Bolivia, nutrition tips, and the lifestyles of European women.

At one point, participants split into four regional groups (North/South America, Middle East/Africa, Asia/Pacific, and Europe) to discuss ways to build happy families in the face of recent changes in the family structure of each area.

A colorful exhibition displayed India's desert culture, woven products from the Philippines, embroidered hangings by the Inuit tribe of Canada, and photos of farm women in Asia and Africa.

THE LATEST WORD ON WOMEN'S STUDIES IN THE U.S.

On March 11th, 1986, Mariam K. Chamberlain, President of the National Council for Research on Women, enlightened an audience of 80 women about the roots and current status of women's studies in America. Here's her report, in brief:

The study of gender differences dates back to the 1830s but women's studies were actually launched in the 1920s, following women's entry into the

labour force during World War I and the earlier hoopla attending the women's suffrage movement. Popular study topics included women's political participation, working conditions, education, and family roles.

The next 40 years saw sluggish growth in the field, but Americans were jolted awake in 1963 by the publication of Betty Friedan's eye-opening work, *The Feminine Mystique*. Women's studies soon turned to the topics of sexual discrimination in employment, education, government, and the family.

The 1970s were the boom years, with women's studies centres and courses established at hundreds of campuses nationwide. Interest has continued into the '80s, but attention has shifted to gender-based research and focused studies on women's employment issues, including the

controversial concept of "comparable pay for comparable work." Today's courses tend to be interdisciplinary, weaving together education, psychology, literature, history, and other fields.



Dr. Mariam K. Chamberlain

Dr. Chamberlain provided information NWEC can use in planning our third three-year women's studies programme, and her visit has strengthened our links with U.S. groups.

NWEC PRO- GRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Thesaurus on women and family

In 1984, the Centre began to develop a thesaurus on women and family. Seven scholars in such fields as women's studies, sociology, education, and labour have been assisting our lexicographic labours since December. The Centre is also cooperating with the U.S. National Council for Research on Women to develop the *Women's Index*.

On to the third women's studies programme

NWEC's third women's studies series (1986-88) looks at today's changing sex roles--their impact on men and women, social limitations, and ways to accelerate change. NWEC studies in 1986 will examine changing relations between men and women.

One of this year's major events will be a seminar at the Centre on August 29-31 that examines how social and biological factors affect sex roles, sexual discrimination, human rights, and motherhood. It will

also focus on the ways women's studies programmes are conducted on campus and off.

Global views on family education

Among the highlights of NWEC's three-year research project on working mothers and family education are our International Seminars. The Second International Seminar, slated for September 29th to October 2nd, will bring together such eminent scholars as Swedish psychologist Dr. Carl-Philip Hwang, West German sociologist Dr. Franz X. Kaufmann, American labour economist Dr. James P. Smith, and Dr. Berry Mayall, a British specialist in social administration. Chairing the seminar will be Prof. Hiroko Hara, who will present the results of a NWEC survey of Tokyo school-children and their parents.

Dr. Kaufmann will present the keynote speech: "Children, families, and society--today and tomorrow." Much of the discussion during the seminar will centre on ways mothers, fathers, and the community can contribute to family education.

Tokyo kids, parents get along fine, says survey

What generation gap? According to a recent NWEC survey of family life and attitudes, communication between Japanese parents and their children is relatively problem-free. The survey of 1,500 Tokyo children aged 10-15 was followed up by 817 interviews with both parents and 116

interviews with mothers only. Here are preliminary results:

More than half the mothers denied that there should be a sexual division of roles and responsibilities, while fathers' responses were evenly divided between agreement, denial, and "don't know." Over 60% of the children responded that they had "no particular problems," while 80% of both mothers and fathers felt that their families had mutual understanding.

Women tell why they're involved

Why join women's studies activities? Of what benefit are they?

These were among the questions asked 463 participants in the National Women's Educational Exchange Conferences held in August and September of 1985. NWEC conducted the survey to evaluate the effectiveness of its programmes and to learn more about participants.

Almost 90% of the respondents are active in women's group, social welfare, or volunteer activities. In addition, 90% are involved in a study program. Many respondents noted that the Centre conferences sparked "a strong desire to encourage other women to be active." Others credited the conferences for boosting their confidence and widening their perspectives. They suggested that NWEC establish new groups, publish works on women's history, and become more active in overseas training projects. These suggestions will be reflected in future NWEC activities.

VISITORS FROM OVERSEAS

Visiting VIPs attending NWEC's 1985 International Exchange Meeting included Eirene Amisshah, wife of the Ambassador of the Republic of Ghana; Noela Pantoja Clespo, Second Secretary of the Embassy of Peru; Hamad S.H. Al-Zaabi, Second Secretary, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates;

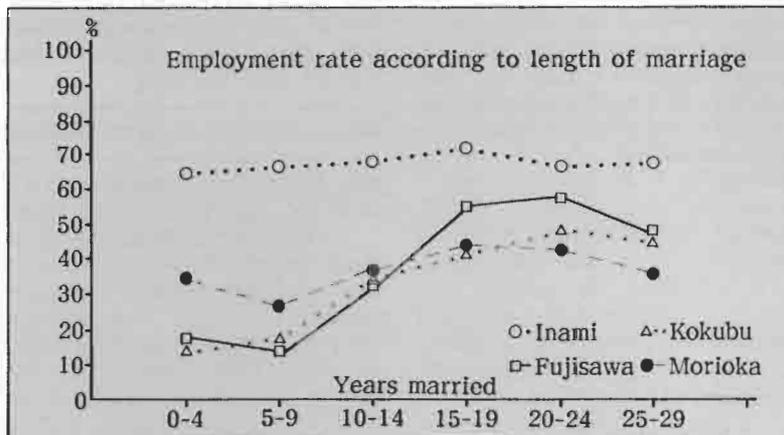
and Irene Waluse, wife of the Commercial Attache, Embassy of the Republic of Kenya.

Touring NWEC's facilities from March 12th to 14th was Ursula Goh, Area Vice-President, South East Asia and Far East, of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW).

The following Malaysian women came to Japan on UNESCO fellowships to conduct research on family education programmes in Asia: Rohana Ahmadun and Noriah Mohamed, respectively Director and Home Economics Officer, Community Development Division, Ministry of National and Rural Development; and Aini Rashid, Training Officer, Family Life Education Project.

JAPANESE WOMEN TODAY

FAMILY, REGION INFLUENCE WOMEN'S DECISION TO WORK



The Demographic Survey on Married Women's Labour Force Participation, conducted by the Institute of Population Problems, Ministry of Health and Welfare, revealed some interesting regional and family differences in

married women's employment patterns. The Institute surveyed 8,635 married women aged 20-50 living in four cities in widely different regions of Japan.

According to the results of the survey, the rate of women

who work, grouped by length of marriage, greatly depends on their ages, numbers of years married, and the age of the youngest child.

For example, the majority of women in their early 20s work, but the workforce participation rate falls drastically in most areas when women reach their late 20s and early 30s. The working rate tends to be higher among women who have been married a short time, irrespective of age. But this is not always the case; women in Inami, Toyama Prefecture, which is dominated by weaving and other small-scale home industries that largely depend on female labour, show very high, consistent labour participation rates until their late 40s. Women in Fujisawa, Kanagawa Prefecture (a dormitory town near Tokyo and Yokohama) display more typical working patterns. While some women who married 20-25 years ago returned to work in their late 30s, almost all of them retired in their early 40s. Among women who were married 10-15 years ago, however, the rate of returning to work increases throughout ages 30-50.

COMPANIES ADMIT GENDER BIAS

Some 70% of 550 large Japanese companies recently surveyed by the Labour Administration Research Institute affirm that their promotion and placement policies will change as a result of Japan's new Equal Employment Opportunity Law. Most of these companies, however, have not yet decided how to conform to the law, which guarantees women equal treatment in the workplace but lacks provisions for punishing companies that don't comply.

Although half the responding companies asserted that their employment policies treat men and women equally, nearly 88% admitted that discrimination occurs in actual practice.

HEAD- QUARTERS CONTINUES PRO-WOMEN WORK

The Headquarters for the Planning and Promoting of Policies Relating to Women was established in 1975 to publicise and

support the UN Women's Decade (1975-85). Today, much remains to be done to improve the status of women. Consequently, on January 17th, 1986, the Japanese Cabinet elected to continue the Headquarters' activities with some structural renovation. Major revisions include:

1. Decisions made at last year's Nairobi Conference will be implemented domestically, and measures will be taken to fight discrimination against women and better apply existing policies.
2. Administrative Vice-Ministers from all Government ministries and agencies will join the Headquarters group.
3. A new 28-member committee charged with advising the Headquarters will replace the Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Women's Affairs.

CLASSES FOR WORKING PARENTS

The number of working mothers with young children is on the rise, raising awareness of the special concerns of dual-income families. Parents often worry about the lack of time and opportunities to care for and communicate with their children, and fathers' contributions to housework and child-rearing become essential.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture is addressing some of these issues in a set of parent education classes for working mothers and fathers. Participants will study the problems that arise in trying to balance demands of work and family, the role of the father in the home, and children's needs and perspectives.

This year will mark the start of 134 Ministry-subsidised classes for working parents offered by local boards of educa-

tion. They will join the huge number of parent education classes already offered nationwide. In 1985, a total of 22,737 locally and nationally funded courses were attended by more than 1.5 million parents and prospective parents.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY LAW GOES INTO EFFECT

Japan's Cabinet enacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Law on May 17th, 1985 and it went into effect on April 1st, 1986. The controversial law marks a milestone in Japan's legal treatment of women workers; whether it will actually have a great impact in promoting

sexual equality in the workplace remains to be seen. Passage of the law was the major thrust of an effort to seek compliance with the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which Japan signed last year.

The law mandates equal opportunities for men and women at all stages of the employment process: recruitment, hiring, promotions, education and training, health and benefits, retirement, transfers, and dismissals. It also notes obstructive corporate activities, although the legislation lacks provisos for punishing non-compliance.

Whether or not the spirit as well as the letter of the law will be observed depends on corporate will, activism by women, cooperation between men and women at work and at home, development of adequate day-care facilities, and more flexible working hours for mothers, among other factors. Whether it alleviates the situation or not, this law is raising public awareness of the disparate treatment currently received by men and women workers.

HELP FOR EXPLOITED ASIAN WOMEN



HELP offers clean, cheerful accommodations to Asian women in distress.

Japan's current prosperity has had some unexpected side-effects. One is the increasing

number of young Asian women--from Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand--lured here by the promise of employment and money to remit home. Once they arrive, these women are often exploited and find themselves in need of emergency aid. To lend a helping hand, the Japan Woman's Christian Temperance Union (JWCTU) opened a Tokyo emergency shelter for Asian women on April 1st. The shelter, called HELP (House in Emergency of Love and Peace), was first conceived by the JWCTU in 1980, the 100th anniversary of the group's founding. The next six years were spent in preparation and in soliciting the needed ¥50 million (\$280,000) to reconstruct the facilities from individuals, citizen's groups, and church organizations in Japan and abroad.

The two-floor shelter, lo-

cated in JWCTU headquarters, can house up to 11 women at one time. Women of any age and male children aged 12 and under are welcome, and they can stay up to two weeks. During that time caseworkers and lawyers will meet with the women to offer counselling services and discuss their future plans. In many cases, the women decide to return to their home countries.

As publicity builds, more women will undoubtedly be turning to the shelter for help, but securing ample funds to continue operations--\$5,600 per month--is always a problem, and the JWCTU seeks contributions. It will be reporting on HELP activities and related news through a new publication titled *Network*. (Write: HELP, 2-23-5, Hyakunin-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo. Tel: (03) 368-8855.)

WOMEN'S GROUPS IN JAPAN

This issue reviews the development--and previews the future--of three of Japan's most influential women's groups.

The National Federation of Regional Women's Organisations



On July 9th, 1952, 19 local women's groups banded together as the National Federation of Regional Women's Organisations, targeted to serve as a liaison for women's groups nationwide. Early on, the Federation campaigned for clean elections and lobbied for anti-prostitution legislation. Subsequent activities have ranged from local to national to international in focus, including campaigns for the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese administration and against nuclear proliferation; provision of aid to the children of developing countries; promotion of the Federation's line of cosmetics; and exchange with foreign women's groups.

Today, all of the organisation's activities are aimed towards achieving sexual equality, development, and peace by the 21st Century. Specific goals towards this end include establishing sexual equality in the workplace, healthy child-rearing practices, family and social reform, new measures for coping with Japan's graying society, improved local social welfare programs, and more.

Highlights of the Federation's wide-ranging projects in 1985 included joint activities with consumer groups towards legislative reform; local energy conservation efforts; campaigns to reduce obscene content in

print and broadcast media; and conferences on prostitution, urban and agricultural problems, and peace promotion.

Today, the Federation boasts some six million individual members belonging to groups that represent every prefecture in the nation, as well as numerous government organisations. All members receive a monthly newsletter entitled *Zenchifuren*, and February 1986 was marked by the publication of *Thirty Years of Zenchifuren*, a book detailing the history of the Federation.

For more information on the National Federation of Regional Women's Organisations, please write: Zenkoku Fujin Kaikan, 1-17-7, Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150. Tel: (03)407-4301/3.

The Japan Housewives' Association

Established as a consumer protection group in 1948, the mandate of the Japan Housewives' Association (*Shufurengokai*) has expanded to embrace the promotion of peace (especially anti-nuclear activities), consumer rights and compensation practices, environmental protection,



housing policy, welfare measures for the aged, consumer education, and the status of women. The Association's founder, Mrs. Mumeo Oku, still serves as President.

Consumer education is a major thrust of the Association's work. Themes explored this year--through seminars, study committees, travelling classes, and publications--include Japan's

"throwaway culture," nutrition issues, savings packages, the perils and advantages of consumer credit, and the impact of TV commercials on children. The Association also collects and publishes news of specific consumer complaints, using this material as a "textbook" for such consumer education courses as its Housewives' College, a three-day seminar that addresses issues related to daily life.

Today, the Japan Housewives' Association's dues-paying membership totals 445 women's groups and 535 individual members. For more information on the Association's activities and publications, or for copies of *Shufurendayori*, a monthly newsletter, please write: Shufukai-kan, 15 Rokuban-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102. Tel: (03) 265-8121.

The Fusae Ichikawa Memorial Association

Voting rights were conferred on Japanese women in 1945. To commemorate this historic event, a modest centre was opened; it became a base for many activities and movements--representing diverse political stances--promoting the liberation of Japanese women.

The years took their toll, and in 1962, a much larger ferro-concrete building replaced the original centre. It became home to Women's Suffrage Centre, a corporation born of enthusiasm fermented in the old structure.

To commemorate the life and work of Centre founder Fusae Ichikawa, who died in 1981 at age 87, the building was altered in 1983 to accommodate the Fusae Ichikawa Memorial Museum. At that time, the organisation's name was changed to Fusae Ichikawa Memorial Association (though the building is still called the Women's Suffrage Centre).

Today, 40,000 people take advantage of the Centre's facilities each year. Its programmes include various classes and seminars aimed at expanding and in-

tensifying women's participation in political and civic activities; lecture meetings for housewives and working women; management of a reference library that serves students, journalists, and researchers--both Japanese and foreign; culture exchange; English classes; and counselling services for civic activists.

In 1975, with the Centre's assistance, Ichikawa founded a Liaison Group to help implement resolutions aimed at elevating women's status in association

with the International Women's Year Conference of Japan. The committee is represented by a broad cross-section of political affiliations.

The Centre is also available for meetings of groups and individuals, providing ample physical and documentation resources, plus coordination as necessary.

The Fusae Ichikawa Memorial Association is located at: Fusen Kaikan, 2-21-11 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151. Tel: (03) 370-0238.



The Centre displays these photographs of Fusae Ichikawa.

WOMEN IN THE NEWS

Freelance journalist **Makiko Arima** was recently appointed a member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women by the Economic and Social Council, replacing **Yoko Naita** as Japan's representative. Arima began her career as a reporter for the *Asahi Shimbun*; later she served a stint as newscaster at Fuji Television. She is presently active as a freelance writer and lecturer specialising in women's issues. Arima launched her new role by attending the 31st meeting of the UN Commission held in Vienna, Austria from February 24th to March 5th, 1986.

January and February 1986 were marked by a first: Seven women were invited to join

the *Keizai Doyukai* (Japan Committee for Economic Development), one of Japan's four largest economic associations. The list includes **Ichiko Ishihara** (Managing Director, Takashimaya Department Store Co., Ltd.), **Reiko Okutani** (President, The R Co.), **Kinuko Kojima** (President and Chairman of the Board, Tokyo Soir Co., Ltd.), **Masako Tabei** (owner/operator of Kanjuku, an Osaka-based chain of private grammar schools), **Hanae Mori** (Rep. Executive Director, Hanae Mori Co.), **Atsuko Banno** (Vice-Chairman, Familjar, Ltd.), and **Kinko Sato** (Exec. Director, Fuso Publishing Inc., and attorney-at-law). The *Keizai Doyukai*, established in 1946, is an association of individuals deemed successful in the business community. The admission of these talented women is expected to add new vitality to the or-

PIONEER ACTIVIST FUSAE ICHIKAWA (1893-1981)

In 1919, Fusae Ichikawa helped found the New Women's Association to battle laws prohibiting women from political activities.

In 1924, she joined the Tokyo Branch of the ILO, where she helped launch legal measures forbidding women's employment as pit workers or on midnight shifts. Also that year, Ichikawa founded the Woman's Suffrage League of Japan.

After World War II, Ichikawa was instrumental in organising several important groups, including the New Japan Women's Alliance (now the League of Women Voters of Japan).

Ichikawa was elected to the House of Councillors in 1953, where she fought political corruption wherever she found it and sought equitable solutions to "women's problems." Her participation in the International Women's Decade was of incalculable benefit to Japanese women.

ganisation.

Ryoko Akamatsu was appointed Ambassador to Uruguay on January 23rd, 1986. She became Japan's second woman ambassador. A graduate of Tokyo University, Akamatsu entered the Ministry of Labour in 1953, where she has been a tireless worker for women's employment rights. As Director-General of the Ministry's Women's Bureau, she oversaw passage of the Equal Employment Law on May 17th, 1985. Akamatsu has also served in the Japanese delegation to the United Nations and to the UN Decade of Women Copenhagen Conference, and was Japan's official government representative at the Nairobi Conference. She was also elected to the Committee for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which met at the UN on March 25th, 1986.

INTRODUCING NWEC

The National Women's Education Centre was founded in 1977 by Japan's Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture. The Centre's activities include:

Training for women in the form of seminars, lectures, group discussions, individual study projects, and other educational programmes. The Centre's comprehensive training facilities are available to any group whose subject matter relates to women's education.

Exchange of information among women's education leaders from Japan and overseas, as well as others who are interested in women's issues.

Information gathered and disseminated by NWEC's extensive libraries of printed and audio/visual materials.

Research of issues touching on women's and family education.



NWEC's facilities are comprehensive—and attractive.

Apart from NWEC-sponsored programmes, our facilities are available to women's groups and individuals for study programmes and cultural exchange free of charge (excluding meals and accommodation). To use our facilities, please complete and submit a NWEC application form no more than six months nor less than two weeks in advance.

NWEC welcomes your questions and comments.

NWEC Newsletter
c/o Yoshimori Suzuki
National Women's Education Centre
728 Sugaya, Ranzan-machi,
Hiki-gun, Saitama 355-02
Japan

PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH OFFERINGS ON WOMEN JAPANESE

Asian Women's Liberation, a journal of the Asian Women's Association (annual, since 1979). The Asian Women's Association was established in 1977 to bring together Asian feminists seeking to foster women's liberation throughout the region. They publish materials in English and Japanese, and

media when it was originally published in 1935. Shizue Ishimoto was a noblewoman/social activist, who shocked pre-war Japan with her work in family planning and was later active in politics. She wrote the book to share her perspective on women's lives and limitations in the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa period. Those wishing to know more about family planning, women's activism, relations between husbands and wives, domestic education, or women labourers in this period are well-advised to read this compelling autobiography.

Feminist Forum: Feminism in Japan and the World,

(monthly, US\$19 per year air-mail, US\$14 seasmall). This monthly journal provides the latest information on feminist issues in Japan and abroad, filtered through the perspectives of Japanese editors. Recent topics have included Negros Island in the Philippines and the Nairobi Conference. The editors

アジアと女性解放

Asian Women's Liberation



host lectures and conferences as well. Issues of the journal to date have covered prostitution and sex tours, population policies, and Japan's economic exploitation, among other topics relating to women's rights. Write: Asian Women's Association, 211 Shibuya Co-op, 14-14 Sakuragaoka, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 160.

Facing Two Ways:

The Story of my Life, by Baroness Shizue Ishimoto, with an introduction and afterword by Barbara I. Maloney (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984). This is a reprint of a book that earned positive notice from the *New York Times* and other Western

seek news about current feminist topics and activities around the world. Please write: Ohnuma, 2-39-3 Zenpukuji, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 107.

