

NWEC

N E W S L E T T E R

NWEC CELEBRATES TEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY



In the fall of 1977, the National Women's Education Centre (NWEC) was established in Ranzan-machi, Saitama Prefecture. The establishment of this, Japan's first and only national educational centre for women, must surely be one of the principal achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-85). Ten years have now gone by, and with the help and support of many individuals and organizations, and encouragement from the current emphasis on lifelong education and self-improvement, the Centre has grown and flourished.

In May of this, our tenth year, the total number of people using the Centre surpassed 1 million. In recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of working women and young women who use the center.

NWEC has always judged its operations and activities in the context of whether they contribute to the advancement of women, which is the principal objective of the U.N. Decade for Women. For example, the Centre has always been a strong supporter of international women's exchange forums, and the number of foreign visitors to the Centre has now reached 5,300 people from 110 countries. The Centre has sponsored numerous international conferences, covering various themes in the fields of women's education and family education. Meanwhile, the Centre has come to be known in many foreign countries. NWEC has a reputation as a unique social education centre which promotes learning activities among women and also functions as a research centre in the field of women's education, thus linking education, theory, and practice.

I believe our information gathering and dissemination activities strongly support this reputation. We work hard to collect, store, and furnish information covering a range of topics related to women. In addition, with the introduction of our new computer system this year, we have begun developing databases and a thesaurus. On the occasion of our tenth anniversary, we renamed our library, which will now operate under its new name: Information Centre for Women's Education. Through this revitalised information service, we hope to broaden our domestic, Asian, and international networking capacity with organizations as well as with individuals. Through our combined efforts, I feel confident that we can make a valuable contribution to the solidarity of women, both in Japan, and around the world.

This past May, the new "National Plan of Action: Towards the Year 2000" was formulated by the government in order to raise the status of women in society. The centre's first ten years were marked by a great deal of effort and energy. As we look ahead to our twentieth and thirtieth anniversaries, we reaffirm our determination to grow, and to play a role in the advancement of women.

Mizue Maeda

Mizue Maeda
Director General of NWEC



NWEC ACTIVITIES

Major activities marking NWEC's 10th anniversary on 14 November included the opening of a new information centre, seminars, and an awards ceremony for papers on "Learning and its Applications: towards the Year 2000."

INFORMATION CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S EDUCATION



Groundwork for NWEC's new Information Centre for Women's Education began in October 1983, with the establishment of an information and research committee. Three years of research and discussion went into the formulation of a framework for the new Centre, which will collect, analyse, and disseminate information on women and families the world over.

The Centre presently houses 35,000 Japanese books and government papers, and another 750 Japanese magazine titles. Foreign-language resource material includes 10,000 books and 250 separate magazine titles. This collection already makes the Centre the largest repository of information on women and family topics in Japan, and the Centre plans to aggressively pursue its acquisition of new materials.

Centre staff are presently compiling numerous databases using the Centre's office computer, which has been connected to an optical disk system. Already well on their way to completion are two separate databases, which make up a computerized bibliographic reference system for magazine articles and books. The

database for magazine articles contains bibliographic information on some 8,000 relevant items culled from 110 women's and family magazines published in Japan. On 14 November 1987, NWEC published the "Index for Japanese Periodical Articles on Women and the Family," which contains bibliographic information on some 5,000 articles published from 1982 to 1986.

The database for books consists of a computerized card catalogue of books and local government papers housed at the Centre's library. Bibliographic information on 12,000 books should be available by the end of fiscal 1987. Work on several other databases has already begun, and comprehensive reference services should soon be available in several new areas of interest to women.

Prior to the Centre's efforts, databases covering topics related to women and family issues were virtually non-existent in Japan. Developing efficient research methods and information services is currently at the top of the Centre's project agenda.

In addition to developing better domestic information services, the Information Centre is trying to promote more international information networking through greater contacts with women's information centres in foreign countries. As part of this effort, the Centre sends 900 copies of the quarterly NWEC Newsletter to interested organizations and individuals in 115 countries overseas, and exchanges information of interest to women with roughly 90 foreign organizations.

SEMINARS, PAPERS MARK NWEC'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

SEMINAR ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION

With the theme "Cooperation Between Men and Women: Towards the Year 2000, the National Women's Education Centre commemorated the 10th anniversary of our opening with the Seminar on Women's Education, held from 12 to 14 November.

Participants from women's groups and centres all over Japan discussed women in society, problems of the elderly, and joint participation of men and women.

A key point in the discussions was the importance of the network between groups, and the role of the women's education facilities as the place to form such networks.

Talks on the aging society confirmed two points, the need for both men and women to help care for the elderly and the need for programs to help the aged to live on their own.

A lecture entitled "Towards the Year 2,000: Current Tasks for Women," pointed out that although women's lives have changed since developments such as the United Nations Decade for Women, sexual stereotyping persists. Hence, our most immediate goal is to strive for "realization of a society in which men and women jointly participate," as outlined in the new "National Plan of Action: Towards the Year 2000."



WOMEN'S EDUCATION PAPERS PRESENTED

From April through July of 1987, the National Women's Education Centre invited interested persons to submit papers on the theme: "Learning and its Applications: Towards the Year 2000," as part of NWEC's 10th anniversary celebrations. A total of 134 papers were received and a nine-member screening committee selected four particularly distinguished papers for special recognition at a 10th Anniversary Commemorative Event held on 14 November.

The goal of this project was to provide a structured opportunity for people to think about and write on issues of concern in the field of women's education and family education. It was also hoped that a valuable contribution to these fields could be made at the same time.

The themes and content of papers selected for special mention are presented below in summarized form.

Lifelong Education: A case study of a group of mothers who organized a children's library while attending adult education classes

Using the case study method, the author examines problems faced by members of a housewife study group in trying to continue their education.

Finding Out Who I Am: A personal approach to lifelong learning describes a public puppet show performance that grew out of a mutually managed housewife childcare cooperative inspired by mothers' needs for more free time to participate in other learning activities. The women involved in the group decided to make the cooperative a location for mutual learning, rather than simply a place for watching over and teaching children.

Stories from the Ten-year History of the Women Architects and Engineers Association tells the ten-year history of an association for women working in construction-related fields. In addition to describing how these women deepened their relationship with their fellow workers, it gives an overview of the association's goals and outlook for the coming years.

Working Mothers and Child Rearing was written by the mother of a farming family who is gradually losing her eyesight to a degenerative eye disease. Writing as if in conversation with her children, the author talks about their relationship and shares her views on life before going blind.

The above papers were published in their entirety in the March 1987 issue of "The Japanese Journal of Education for Women" (*Fujin Kyoiku Joho*).

A statistical breakdown of people submitting papers revealed that 88.1% were women, of whom 23.1% were in their forties, 22.4% in their fifties, and 21.6% in their sixties. Working women comprised 36.6% of the respondents, while unemployed women accounted for 58.9%. The majority of the latter were engaged in full-time household work.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR HELD



NWEC recently sponsored an international seminar on the subject of information network systems for women. Officially known as the "International Seminar on Women's Information Network Systems: Towards the Year 2000," the seminar provided an excellent opportunity for speakers and participants to exchange views on the establishment of women's information network systems. Eight experts in the field of women's information, representing Denmark, Greece, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, U.N. ESCAP, and the U.S.A. were invited to the event, which ran for four days between 14 and 17 November at the National Women's Education Centre in the suburbs of Tokyo.

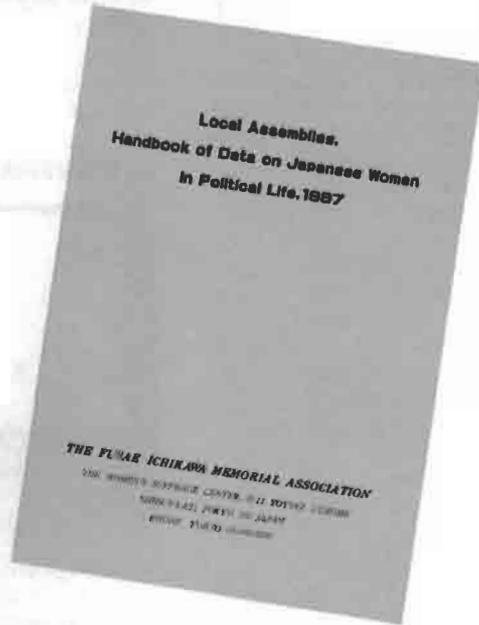
The first day of the programme was given over to a symposium on the subject of "Women's Information Network Systems: Towards the Year 2000." Reports were presented by a number of distinguished foreign speakers, after which the floor was opened to general discussion.

Following a second day of free activity, the third and fourth days were devoted to seminar work on the theme "Development of Information Network Systems for Women in the Asia-Pacific Region."

The four-day seminar was packed with activity, thoughtful deliberation and lively debate, and when the event was over, there was a feeling that the goal of significantly strengthening and enlarging women's information network systems by the year 2000 seemed a little bit closer to realization.

JAPANESE WOMEN TODAY

BOOK TRACES WOMEN'S POLITICAL PROGRESS



In September, the publications department of the Fusae Ichikawa Memorial Association published a book entitled *Local As-*

semblies: Handbook of Data on Japanese Women in Political Life. Published in Japanese, the book is a compilation of statistics from the unified regional elections held in April 1987. It presents the aggregate results of women assembly candidates in all elections held in urban and rural prefectures. The figures are based on data provided by the election control committee in each prefecture, and the book includes the names of all of Japan's assemblywomen, along with their party affiliation. The present work is the fifth in a series of statistical handbooks published every four years following unified regional elections across the country. The first in this series was published by the Fusae Ichikawa foundation in 1971. According to the book, there were 1,420 assemblywomen in Japan as of 1 June 1987, out of a total number of 70,711 seats. This number represents 2.1% of the total assembly seats, an increase over 1983, when women held just 1.4% of the seats. Compared to figures following the first unified regional elections held 40 years ago, the representation of women in local assemblies has increased 1.8-fold from the 793 women elected in 1947. Although no women were elected to lead local governments during the most recent elections, 956 won seats at local assemblies, and significant advances were made toward greater female participation in Japan's political process.

SURVEY RESULTS: PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY ON WOMEN

On 9 August 1987, roughly one year after the promulgation of the Equality of Employment Opportunity Law, the Prime Minister's Office released the results of a recent survey regarding the status of women in society and the workplace. The survey, which was conducted in March of this year, covered 5,000 men and women from across the country, and achieved a response rate of 75%. The following items were covered: changes in the workplace, entry and advancement of women in the workplace, and opinions about work, the home, and politics.

Status of men and women: Roughly 60% of the respondents felt the status of men and women to be unequal "in the home," "in the workplace," and "as a generally accepted idea."

Marriage and the home: Of those surveyed, 73.6% felt that "women should get married." Broken down by gender, 69.8% of women agreed with the above statement, while

24.7% of those surveyed maintained that "it is all right for women not to marry." One in four women, therefore, believe it is acceptable for women to remain single. Generally speaking, women in their 30s and men in their 20s agreed that staying single was acceptable, while men and women over 50 felt it was better to marry. Of the respondents, 61% felt that divorce was a viable option, particularly women in their 20s, who had a high affirmative response rate of 72%. This result indicates a remarkable growth in the percentage of people who consider divorce acceptable, a strong shift in attitude from 1984, when only 30% of the respondents felt that divorce was acceptable.

The role of men and women: Of those polled, 43.1% agreed with the statement "Men work; women take care of the home." In a 1984 survey which targeted only women, 35.9% of the respondents supported traditional gender-related roles. It would seem that more women are inclined to support the traditional division of labour nowadays than in previous years. Roughly 10% fewer women today disagree with the idea that "a woman's place is in the home" than did their counterparts two and a half years ago.

REPORT: WOMEN PREPARE FOR WORKING LIFE

In 1984, the Japanese Ministry of Education commissioned Fukui and Yamaguchi Prefectures to determine how women should prepare for working life. The following year, the ministry commissioned Saitama and Niigata Prefectures to do the same study. Below is an overview of the findings:

A growing number of women have been seeking to enter the work force in recent years. This has been particularly true of those women who are reentering the labour market after spending time away raising children. Unfortunately,

many women who reenter the job market after a long interval find it difficult to get the right job. Often, these women are unsure of their abilities in the labour market, and occasionally fall into poorly-paid labour located through word-of-mouth or handbills.

For such women, it is necessary to offer opportunities to learn basic knowledge and aptitude necessary for reentering the labour market and coordinating occupational life and family life.

Based on the findings of the research programmes, the Ministry of Education has been encouraging local governments to set up preparatory seminars for women's working life as part of "Women's Class." It is hoped that this report will be used not only for more skill training, but for women's education that will help women acquire confidence as working adults.

RATIO OF FEMALE TEACHERS RISES

According to the Ministry of Education's Basic Statistics on Schools, issued last August, the ratio of female teachers in primary, junior high, and high schools is rising. According to the survey, there

were 23 female principals of public elementary schools, 6 in junior high schools, and 4 in high schools, an increase from previous years. There were 288 more female head teachers at public primary schools, 25 more at public junior high schools, and 8 more at private high schools.

NEWSMAKERS

SOCIETY TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS ESTABLISHED

At the inaugural meeting of the Japanese Association to Promote International Women's Rights, held on 20 September, Sumiko Itoh, who is also the president of the Japanese Association of University Women, was chosen to act as the new group's General Secretary. The society, which currently has 44 members, intends to promote wider recognition and understanding of the basic tenets of the treaty concerning the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women. The society also plans to set up an international women's legal aid system. Members hope that the group will be able to make a nonpartisan contribution to improving the status of women.

NEW JUDGEMENT ON DIVORCE PETITIONS

Following a landmark decision by the Japanese Supreme Court in 1952, the nation's courts consistently refused to recognize divorce petitions submitted by the spouse responsible for the breakdown of a marriage. In a partial reversal of this position, the Supreme Court ruled on 2 Sep-

tember that such petitions may be entertained in certain special circumstances. Divorces may now be granted in cases where the number of years the couple has lived apart is significantly greater than the number of years they lived together, and provided there are no children to be taken care of. In addition, there must be no other extenuating circumstances; for example, the spouse contesting the divorce must not suffer extreme psychological, social, or economic hardship as a result of the divorce.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELFARE NAMES FIRST WOMAN BUREAU CHIEF



On 25 September, Japan's Ministry of Health and Welfare appointed Ritsuko Nagao to the directorship of the Children and Families Bureau. Nagao is the first woman to be named bureau chief by the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

WOMEN'S GROUPS IN JAPAN



The president (centre) of the Japan Women's Bar Association and members on a recent study trip.

This continuing series introduces some of Japan's most influential women's organizations

JAPAN WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

The Japan Women's Bar Association got its start on 13 August 1950 at the suggestion of Ms. Mary Easterling, a lawyer with the judicial affairs department of the occupation forces. On that very day, a meeting was held to set up a women's bar association. On Mrs. Easterling's suggestion, the association joined the International Federation of Women Lawyers. Ms. Ai Kume, one of the first three women admitted to the bar in Japan, was appointed the association's first president.

The association endeavours to advance the practice of law in Japan, and to promote friendship among its members. Its main activities focus on the research and study of, and the submission of opinions on justice and law in Japan, as well as the status of women in society. The association also promotes friendship with lawyers in other countries, and maintains contact and is associated with other women's groups.

This year's activities included lectures and seminars on the current situation, as well as legal problems in Japan. Social activities included a members' fellowship meeting and a welcome party for new women lawyers and students of

Japan's Legal Training and Research Institute. Anyone wishing to become a member of the Japan Women's Bar Association must either be a lawyer, a judge, a public prosecutor, a professor of law at a university, or an associate professor of law with a degree in law.

Currently, the association lists some 600 members, each of whom pays ¥6,000 in annual dues, and the association's budget for fiscal 1987 is expected to amount to some ¥5 million. The organization's official magazine, "The Japan Women's Bar Association Bulletin," is published annually. For further information, please contact: The Japan Women's Bar Association, 106 Kanda-Surugadai, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101. Or call (03) 291-4445.



The JWBA bulletin

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DIVORCED AND WIDOWED MOTHERS

Until the end of World War II, Japanese women did not enjoy a particularly high social status. Widows, in particular, were considered utterly helpless. World War II left approximately five hundred thousand war widows, most of whom had young children to care for. Only a few had skills which they could use to support their families. And in the general confusion which followed the war, the government made no provision to care for them. The plight of widows and their children was so appalling that it was obvious something had to be done.

In 1949, the Diet passed a resolution to aid the widows and families of the war dead through public assistance aid, the construction of houses and dormitories, employment services, legal advice, and loans for special projects.

Meanwhile, the widows organized themselves into local groups which expanded into larger organizations on the prefectural level throughout the country. In the spring of 1950, the first National Conference of Widows was held. This conference led to the birth of the National Widows Association of Japan in November of that year.

Since its inception, the association has worked to promote the welfare of widows and their dependent children, and has been instrumental in passing a number of laws that directly benefit that group, including the Principles of Welfare Services for Widows with Dependent Children, the National Pension Law, and the Child Rearing Allowance Law. On 18 August 1982, the name of the organization was changed to reflect expanding services to another group of neglected women. Today, the National Association of Divorced and Widowed Mothers covers all 56 prefectures, and includes approximately 510,560 members (as of 1986). Currently the association is lobbying for a law that will protect widows from poorly-paid jobs, inadequate housing facilities, and high taxation. At the same time, it is working on measures to ensure a comfortable retirement for older widows.

Anyone can join the association, simply by paying an annual membership fee of ¥200-500. The association's budget for 1986 was ¥1,032,000. For further information, please write to the National Association of Divorced and Widowed Mothers, Shin-Kasumigaseki Bldg., 5 F., 3-3-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, or call (03) 580-0587.



The NADWM quarterly

SURVEY REPORT

SURVEY ON WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSES AT INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION: FIVE-YEAR TRENDS

(Part one of a two-part series)

Since 1983, the National Women's Education Centre has been conducting annual research into the status of women's studies courses at Japanese junior colleges, colleges, and universities. This research project, entitled "Survey on Women's Studies Courses at Institutes of Higher Education," provides the only information currently available on research and educational trends in women's studies programmes in Japan. An overview of the trends and overall character of women's studies on the tertiary level of education in Japan is given below, based on the results of this five-year survey.

1. Number of colleges offering women's studies

By 1983, 75 universities and junior colleges across the country had provided women's studies courses, a number which swelled to 128 by 1987. In just five years, the number of institutions offering women's studies had increased by 70%. A breakdown of coeducational and women's two- and four-year colleges reveals that in 1983, only 25 coeducational and 50 women's colleges offered coursework in women's studies. By 1987, that number had jumped to 56 and 72, respectively. Over the past five years, the number of coeducational and women's two- and four-year colleges offering women's studies has increased by 120% and 40%, respectively. The rapid spread of women's studies at coeducational institutions is particularly striking.

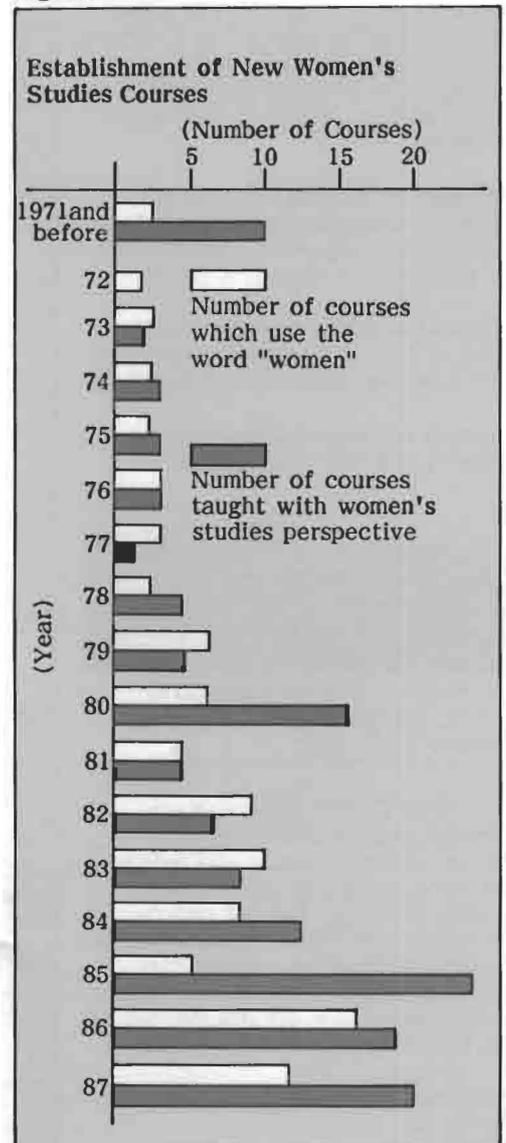
2. Content of women's studies courses

Women's studies courses can be divided into: 1) those courses which incorporate the word "women" into the title ("women's studies proper"); and 2) courses with a women's studies perspective. One-third of women's studies courses taught in Japan are considered to be women's studies proper, while the remaining two-thirds are taught with a women's studies perspective as adjuncts to existing academic disciplines such as psychology, history, literature, etc.

3. Relationship between the United Nations Decade for Women and the establishment of new women's studies courses

Fig. 1 charts the growth in women's studies courses over the past 15 years. It is clear from the chart that the number of courses in women's studies has increased markedly in Japan during the U.N. Decade for Women. Even now, women's studies courses are continuing to expand in this country.

Figure 1



4. Number of students enrolling in women's studies courses

In 1984, enrollment in women's studies courses numbered 10,236, a figure that leaped by 90% to 19,347 in 1987. At the same time, male enrollment in such courses expanded from 1,059 in 1983 to 3,470 in 1987, an increase of 230%.

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.



The National Women's Education Centre, located in Ranzan-machi, Saitama Prefecture

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 and no less than two weeks in advance.

NWEC welcomes your questions and comments.

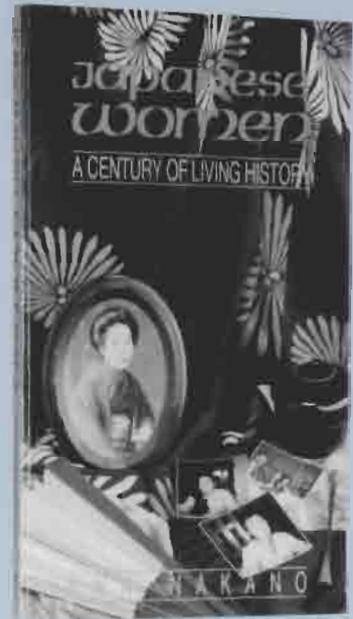
NWEC Newsletter
c/o Ms. Hiroko Hashimoto
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PUBLICATIONS

FOREIGN-LANGUAGE OFFERINGS ON JAPANESE WOMEN

Japanese Women: A Century of Living History by Ann Nakano (Adelaide, Australia: Rigby Publishers, 1986, 142 pages)

In the eyes of much of the rest of the world, the lives of Japanese women remain shrouded in enigma. In her recent book, Ann Nakano presents in-depth conversations with 26 women born between 1881 and 1975, all of whom grew up in different environments, received different educations, did different work, and had very different life experiences. From the recollections of a 103-year-old woman born and raised in the Meiji Period to the memories and experiences of a doctor, a geisha, a daughter of a samurai family, a fashion designer, a political activist, and a mountain climber, the struggle for equal rights in a male-dominated society is revealed. The interviews shed light on how women were affected by the war, their growing independence in democratic postwar



Japan, and the very different lives led by women in those contrasting periods. No rose-coloured idyll this, Nakano's book conveys the drama of Japanese women's lives in a manner accessible to a wide readership.

FOREIGN VISITORS TO NWEC



Officials from around the world visited NWEC for a seminar on "Public Administration Officers on Women's Problems 1987."

As of 30 November 1987, NWEC has received 5,300 visitors from 110 countries. Below is a list of some of our most recent guests.

6 August: Dr. Donna E. Shalala, President of Hunter College and President-elect of The University of Wisconsin, U.S.A.

30 August: Cathy N. Davidson, Visiting Professor of English, Kobe College, Japan.

1-2 September: 11 participants in the seminar, "Public Administration Officers on Women's Problems 1987." Visitors included dignitaries from Gabon, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Uruguay.

30 September-3 October: Dr. Marilyn Yalom, Deputy Director, Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Stanford University, U.S.A.

9 October: Huang Day Ying, Managing Director of the All Chinese Women's Association, along with 14 other members of that group.