

# Global Women's Forum

Mary Warren at the Global Priors Council, July 27, 1977

You may wonder what is left to be said about the Global Women's Forum. If that puzzles you, you may be sure it was of more concern for me. I ask some of my colleagues, "What should this report be about?" They were extremely helpful and gave me written notes and reflections. One thing they agreed about was that the talk should be short. So I cut it to three points: about the treks, the Global Research Assembly, and about this Global Council and the future. After what has been said about the forum today by the people from Europe and India, I simply want to try to put a frame around it.

It has become increasingly clear that the wave of the women's revolution is a reality throughout the world. It has been seen in the International Decade of Women, a United Nations program stretching from 1975 to 1985. This is apparent in the Philippines where I was this past quarter. Events like the New York state International Women's Conference point to the same wave; they anticipated 3,000 women and 11,000 showed up. The question is how to make the most of that and move into the future in a positive way.

First, our intent in the spring treks was to address ourselves to the 15% of privileged women of this planet. We went on four treks to Europe, India, and north and south east Asia. In the Europe report we heard this morning we heard of key women who attended the forum. India colleagues reported this afternoon on the business executive who after attending the forum in Bombay, visited Maliwada and subsequently wrote a 28-paragraph letter to her company detailing our work and urging the company's participation. It appears this letter may be the key that unlocks that company's decision.

In Taipei, Taiwan top level women participated in the forum. In Manila, there were women who had positions in government, in businesses and wives of top businessmen. There were also women from the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women. The Director of the Commission was in the first Manila forum. She stayed all day long. The Program Director commented, "I don't believe it. The Director never stays anywhere for the whole of anything!" The Director sat at my right all day and was key in moving the workshops. She had a tremendous time.

Second, the treks were also to deal with the 85% for the sake of our own integrity and credibility and to test the forum in to get a clue of what we needed to do in the future. We had twelve forums in the villages: six in India, three in northeast Asia and three in southeast Asia. In Kawngyung Il, Korea they planned for 40 and 150 arrived. In Maliwada, India, one of the women said, "I'll never again be afraid of speaking out in a public meeting." It is hard for us to understand what that might mean. In Kelapa Dua, Indonesia and Sungai Lui, Malaysia, when we asked them to give their names in the introductory conversation, it was difficult for them to do. Everyone in the room began to giggle. The time was interminable simply going around the room to get their names out. It is impossible for us to get inside that; yet that is the situation of women in rural villages around the world.

New marks of sophistication began to emerge in the village forums. In Kelapa Dua, when we served lunch for some seventy women, we used baskets because there were not enough plates. Woven baskets were lined with banana leaves, lunches put in, banana leaves put over the top, and then distributed. In addition to the seventy women there were 20-25 children crawling around the room and being breastfed. Previously women were intent on getting food to their children creating chaos. This day, the baskets were served and no one touched them, not a single person, until everyone in the room was served. It was staggering to the auxiliary because they didn't know why. They thought maybe the preschool training had begun to seep through. Anyway, I just report that it happened.

Third, the treks were an experiment with faculty training and getting women intimately acquainted with the forum itself. We had three or four women on every trek representing various nations. That was a fine address for our teams as well as the women in the forums. Maria Paul from India was on the southeast Asia trek; Connie Widyatma from Indonesia was on the India trek with Kamala Parek or Himalatha; Annie Hsu from Taiwan was on the northeast Asia trek; Sheila Clark was on the European trek. This gave us experienced people across the globe and leaven for the future.

The treks also provided grist for the Global Research Assembly. The Global Women's Task Force worked on revising the construct, creating promotional materials, and thinking about future strategies, budget and self-support.

What does the day look like? The forum is a seven-hour day.

- The morning focuses on "Today's Woman and Her World." During the 45 minute prelude, there is mixing, mingling and introductory conversations. After the prelude there is a 45 minute "group talk" focused on today's woman, her integrity and selfhood, followed by a one hour workshop focused on the world.
- The two-hour block in the center of the day is lunch with a conversation which recalls for the participants their own meditative council of women.
- The afternoon focused on "Today's World and Its Women". The talk deals mainly with the moral issue of our time. The workshop is more individually oriented toward grounding responses to the moral issue in terms of women's own gifts.
- In the 45 minute postlude there is a final plenary and story.

The Global Research Assembly was a time of verification of our methods. When you look at International Women's Year conferences and the horror stories of those who have been around this country, it is clear that the women of this planet have to have methods which take their concerns and move them into the future. We have those methods. Our task force experienced a tremendous kind of collegiality through the two weeks. Someone said in our evaluation, "I was worried because there wasn't more struggling going on in the task force. Then I realized there was plenty of struggling, but the corporateness, methods and style of the task force took the struggle, worked with it, and moved through it. We had a tremendous time and great sense of collegiality." As people participate in the forums, they get a whiff of this style of corporateness, of globality, and the methods underneath which this world is yearning for.

This brings us to this moment in the Global Council and the future. We still need more finesse on the construct. We would like to get a group of women together and do a trial run on the day. We know there is work to be done on the workshops. The lectures are phenomenal; we are eager to try them out. We are going to have to work on training models immediately. During this Council our task is to relate our awakening programs for women, youth, corporations and communities to form into a single thrust. In our task force with thought about how to do away with compartmentalizing each program and simply have some people do program scheduling, and others do training, finesse and assignments.

The women's revolution is not going away. The question is what kind of shape is it going to take? Women of the world are ready to have their creativity stuck into the civilizing process. We have the possibility of unlocking and engaging that creativity. The reports at this Council have given us a peek at the possibilities. The last reason I am interested in this program is that all women know me and therefore an awakening program of women is going to affect the men of this planet. Nothing less than this is what this body has set as its task.