

SCIENCE, VOL. 198

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Women Researchers Analyze Education, Job Barriers

"Some big monstrous barrier" faces women after "the first few steps of the ladder" of upward mobility in scientific research careers, according to National Academy of Sciences president Philip Handler, a keynote speaker at AAAS' October Conference on the Participation of Women in Scientific Research.

For 3½ days, the 60 women scientists invited to participate in the Conference struggled with that "monstrous barrier," analyzing their own experiences in the education-career battle that traditionally leaves women underrepresented and underpaid in the world of science.

With the Nation's Capital displaying a week of the most beautiful fall weather in recent memory, the women sequestered themselves in small rooms of the Hotel

Washington to dissect the issues: the early education biases that steer women away from science and math courses, the later problems of social rejection in graduate school, the pervasiveness of sexual pressures both in graduate school and on the job, inequities in distribution of funding, the need for professional recognition of part-time employment, the demands of marriage and family life, and many others.

In addition to small-group working sessions, the women attended panel presentations, during which speakers addressed such topics as industrial and government employment settings, the publication process, priority research issues on men and women, and the roles in science education of the National Sci-

ence Foundation (NSF) and the HEW Office of Education. One general session featured Margaret Mead, who presented her views on biocultural determinants of scientists' careers and various aspects of women's participation in the natural and social sciences.

To close the Conference, the participants, first in small groups and later as a whole, identified a number of policy and program recommendations. Among these was the problem of girls' inferior academic preparation for college science due to sex-stereotyped socialization patterns. The conferees recommended removal of barriers to girls' studying mechanical and electronic "shop" courses, for example; encouragement of girls' interest in mathematics and science; and unbiased career and curriculum counseling by teachers and guidance personnel. They endorsed programs, such as science fairs, which stimulate girls' interest in science at an early age.

A second major concern reflected in the preliminary recommendations is the dilemma which many beginning scien-