

Margaret
Cuninggim
Women's Center

Second annual Cuninggim Lecture features Janet L. Norwood

Elaine Goleski
Project Manager, Library Annex

The Bureau of Labor Statistics: the name sounds like another of those faceless government departments that tally the minutiae of contemporary working life. The image is quaintly Dickensian--rows of minor functionaries churning out reams of numbers for reasons no longer fully comprehended but nonetheless conscientiously upheld. Since it's 1989, we'll allow our functionaries computers instead of quill pens, but these bureaucrats are Victorian in their efficiency and their isolation.

Part of that fanciful image is true: the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the United States Department of Labor was founded in 1884 in an effort to collect data regularly that the decennial national census had previously accumulated only periodically. And, surprisingly, that initial charge to the Bureau specifically called for the collection of data on "laboring men and women" [italics mine]. Both the goal of the agency and the inclusion of women in its charge show the influence of reform-minded American Victorians.

But the quiet and isolation in which our imaginary bureaucrats toil is hardly true of the Bureau of Labor Statistics today. The Consumer Price Index, whose smallest changes are endlessly discussed and which governs everything from collective bargaining agreements for workers to Social Security payments for retirees, is a product of the Bureau. So too are the monthly data on employment and unemployment among workers of various ages, races, sexes, occupations, and geographic areas. Less well-known, but equally significant, are the Employ-

ment Cost Index, which details not only salary costs, but also costs of fringe benefits and other non-wage items; and regular reports on collective bargaining agreements and union membership. Consider the political impact of upturns or downturns in any of these reports, and you will realize how far from quiet isolation the BLS is.

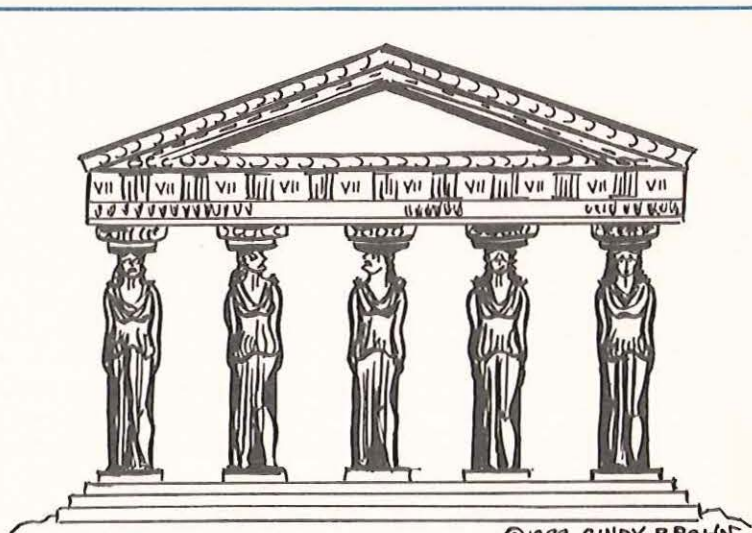
And at its head is Janet L. Norwood, Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Dr. Norwood will be on campus November 8 to deliver the second Margaret Cuninggim lecture on women in culture and society. Her topic will be "Working Women: Where Have We Been, Where Are We Going?" The lecture will be given in Underwood Auditorium at 8:00 p.m. followed by a reception in the Alexander Room.

Dr. Norwood was appointed Commissioner in 1979, after having served in the Bureau since 1963. She is not only the first woman to head

the BLS, but also its first employee to be promoted through the staff ranks to chief administrator. Her undergraduate degree is from Douglas College of Rutgers University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. are from Tufts. She taught economics at Wellesley. Norwood is a fellow of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Statistical Association and is currently president of the latter organization.

Norwood's name appears regularly in the *Monthly Labor Review*, a publication of the BLS. Her contributions generally are in an introductory section called "Labor Month in Review," and quite frequently, they are summaries of speeches she presented or Congressional testimony she gave. Reading these articles, one gets the impression that Norwood has time to do little else than write speeches. Subjects over the last several years have included the quality and type of statistics the BLS collects (an area that appears to be of particular concern to her), the earnings gap, comparable worth, working women, economic recovery, and many others. She has spoken to groups as regional as the City Club of Cleveland and as national as the American Economic Association and

(continued page two)



Sol We all got suckered by the same ad: "Wanted for ornamental architectural work - a woman who can use her head."

Norwood (from page one) the International Symposium of Forecasting.

Many of her topics are of particular relevance to women's economic status. She writes in 1984 that unemployment for women who are heads of households is particularly severe because these families are least likely to contain other adults who are working. Indeed, she notes, the percentage of such families with another wage-earner has always been less than 20%. She later relates that

"the labor force of the future...will be more notably female and minority"

economic recovery comes slowly to these families, which are most likely to be black (44% of black families are maintained by women) and poor (average annual income of \$9,500 in 1987, compared to \$16,500 for white families headed by women).

Beneath all of these studies is an ongoing concern for the integrity of the data on which so many economic, political, and social decisions are made. In her overview of the Bureau at the time of its centennial in 1984, Norwood identified six areas she felt were critical to the furtherance of its mission. They are:

- "a commitment to objectivity and fairness"
- "an insistence on candor at all times"
- the "protection of confidentiality" for those who participate in surveys
- "the pursuit of improvement" in statistical strategies
- a "willingness to change"
- constant striving after "consistency" in performance.

These goals are appropriate ones for many types of endeavors, and they express a commitment to excellence that we rarely ascribe to government agencies.

Norwood's belief that the Bureau needed to be more responsible to changing social and economic conditions was noted at the time of her appointment. Recognition of

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these changes illuminates her writings. She reports that "the labor force of the future...will be more notably female and minority," and this increase in number of working women means that satisfactory resolution of child care issues will directly affect productivity.

She speaks from a statistical perspective on many of the most controversial political and social issues of the day. That clarity and certainty is bracing since these issues tend to generate so much opinion and so little fact. Her introduction to the comparable worth discussion at the American Statistical Association, for example, indicates that, when men's and women's earnings are compared, "the trend generally has been up" in the past six years. She states equally clearly, though, that a stubborn problem remains: some 25% of women workers are concentrated in three low-paying job categories: secretarial/typing, retail sales, and food preparation and service. Such candor is welcome and necessary.

Norwood quotes the first commissioner of the BLS, Carroll D. Wright, who said that the Bureau's chief goals should be "judicious investigations and the fearless publication of the results thereof." Janet Norwood has made fulfilling that goal a priority for her agency. We applaud her single-mindedness, and we look forward to hearing her analysis of economic realities for women today. ■

It's your health

*Beth Colvin Huff, RN, MSN
Department of OB/GYN*

Much is written about cancer in women, yet cardiovascular disease actually kills more women than cancer. Heart disease is rare before the menopause, but postmenopausal women develop heart disease at the same rate men do. Because this sharp increase in incidence occurs at the same time as menopause, research interest has been directed toward the relationship between hormones and heart disease.

The two factors that are strongly associated with the risk of heart disease are high blood pressure and elevated blood cholesterol levels. Hypertension may be related to

unhealthy lifestyles -- high salt and high fat diets, obesity, smoking, lack of exercise. If these can be avoided or corrected, hypertension may also be avoided.

Drug therapy may be necessary to lower blood pressure. If a woman is on medication to lower blood pressure, she needs to take the medicine regularly, not just when she "thinks" her pressure is up. It is also important to be monitored regularly with blood chemistries.

Cholesterol is the other important factor related to cardiovascular risk. HDL (high density lipoprotein) is considered the "good" component of cholesterol in that it protects against heart disease. LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol increases the risk of heart disease. Ideally, a woman would want her total cholesterol to be low (< 200), with a high HDL (> 60) and a low LDL (< 130).

Studies show that as women go through menopause, the HDL levels decrease while LDL levels increase. This accounts for the high incidence of cardiovascular disease in this age group and declining estrogen appears to be responsible for the shift in cholesterol.

If estrogen is taken orally as replacement therapy, HDL increases, while total cholesterol and LDL decrease. Early studies show that the transdermal method of estrogen replacement (the "patch") may decrease total cholesterol and LDL, but HDL does not rise.

Because of the risk of cancer of the uterus when estrogen is used alone, most hormone replacement includes progesterone. The addition of this hormone, however, seems partially to counter the benefits of estrogen on cholesterol.

The decision regarding taking hormones after the menopause is a complicated one and there is no right answer for all women. There are risks and benefits to be derived no matter which choice is made. Staying aware and informed allows you to make the best decision for you. ■

"It's Your Health" wants to hear from you! Please submit any health related questions you have or topics you would like to read about in this column to Judith T. Helder, editor, Women's VU, Vanderbilt University, Box 1513 Station B, Nashville, TN 37235.

Speaking of women . . .

Reba Wilcoxon, now retired, was the first woman at Vanderbilt to hold the title of Associate Vice Chancellor. From 1979 to 1986 she was Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations. Here she interviews Lauren Brisky, who was named Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance in September of 1988.

Lauren Brisky, who reports to Vice Chancellor William Jenkins, came to Vanderbilt in September of 1988. When asked what she considers most important or most fun in her job, the answer came after a brief silence: "Truly, the most enjoyable part is working with such a dynamic team of individuals. The quality and caliber of people at Vanderbilt are so significant and so apparent in day-to-day operations. I like the process of defining our common goals and getting them done together."

Brisky was Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Business as well as Assistant Treasurer for Foundations at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. She was responsible for divisions employing 1100 persons with budgets of \$50 million; her role as treasurer involved managing fourteen non-profit university-related foundations with \$65 million in endowments. When she went to North Carolina State in 1982, she was the first woman ever hired at a senior level in administration.

Why choose Vanderbilt?

Why, with a senior position at North Carolina State, in which she played a part in policy-making, did she come to Vanderbilt? "One reason was that some of the key areas of responsibility were not the same, and I saw Vanderbilt as a broadening experience." Two of these new areas are Administrative Systems, central to computer processing and services, and the Office of Accounting. The director of Telecommunications also reports to Brisky, but these operations are not new to her.

A very different project, she began to work with last fall, is the Integrated Financial Information System (FOCUS). "Although I function as a chairperson for the management committee of three, I want to say that

this project is not a one-woman show," Brisky said. "Indeed, it involves a hundred employees who are helping to set up the system." Software designed by a professional vendor provides a way to computerize different segments of financial records so that access will be easier and timely. The first module in operation is for the general ledger, which tracks 250,000 transactions each month.

Started in liberal arts

"All of this sounds terribly technical, but I am really not a technician. In fact, I was in liberal arts as an undergraduate. In most management positions, I believe, the skills for planning and organization are paramount. One of my roles is to translate the technical to others in management."

In high school, Brisky participated in a special program in Washington where she learned about Simmons, a women's college in Boston, and also "about women's issues in general." At Simmons, she majored in history and government, and wrote her senior thesis on the history of the Equal Rights Amendment from 1921 to 1948. Her interest in women's issues was also fed by an internship through Harvard in which she catalogued the books and documents donated by a prominent suffragette to the Schlesinger Library.

"My objective as an undergraduate was to have a well-rounded liberal arts education, and to be able to think and reason. I am a very strong supporter of the liberal arts. But at graduation in 1973 I had to ask 'What are my goals?'"

Going to business school (rather than law school or a Ph.D. program) seemed the most challenging route. "For me, it was a quantum leap. But what Cornell University understood, in accepting persons like me, was that there is no correlation between quantitative skills (demonstrated at the undergraduate level) and success in management and leadership in business organizations."

Brisky earned the Master of Business Administration at Cornell in 1975. She had seen herself in a career in the non-profit sector, such as in



photo by Lesley Collins

Lauren J. Brisky
Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance

government, until she became aware of the possibilities at universities.

She became increasingly active in professional organizations and in community services, and eventually became president of the Women's Forum of North Carolina. "It is made up of about 150 movers and shakers in the state, from all over North Carolina. They are judges, politicians, business owners, volunteers -- women that you read about in the newspaper." The Forum brought in prominent speakers, provided a networking system for women, and offered scholarships to young women in the community.

Fascinated by the arts

Two of the service organizations Brisky participated in at North Carolina State promoted and raised money for the performing arts. "I don't have any in-depth knowledge about the arts, but they fascinate me, and they are very important." Brisky has yet to become involved in Nashville community activities, for she wanted to give herself a year to learn her job. She is, however, a member of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center Advisory Board.

When asked what she finds special about a private university such as Vanderbilt, Brisky said, "Public institutions, although they contribute to the well-being of their states, have intrinsically rigid systems. In a private university such as Vanderbilt there is more flexibility at many levels. That flexibility helps to create an environment where I can contribute to positive change and take part in creative growth." ■

Calendar of events

Call 322-4843 for further information on the programs listed below.

FROM FEMINIST PROTEST TO FEMINIST PROJECT: One student's effort to give women writers their place. Laura Hotchkiss Brown, 1989 summa cum laude graduate of Columbia University, will describe events leading to her arrest at commencement for hanging a banner across Butler Library bearing the names of several women of letters.

This feminist protest against the all male inscription subsequently led to a sanctioned project of programs about women writers and re-hanging of the banner. The lecture on Wednesday, November 1 at 4:10 p.m. in Furman 114 is co-sponsored by Women's Studies.

Lunchtime Book Review will be given by Miriam Bassuk, L.C.S.W., on *Dance of Intimacy* by Harriet Goldhor Lerner. This book is a thoughtful, provocative account of the meaning of true intimacy in relationships and the hard work and courage it takes to develop and sustain this intimacy.

Miriam Bassuk, a social worker in private practice, will review this book on Monday, November 6, at 12:15 p.m. in Sarratt 118.

Second Annual Margaret Cunningham Lecture. Dr. Janet L. Norwood, Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor (see page one article), will deliver a lecture entitled "Working Women: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?" on Wednesday, November 8 at 8:00 p.m. in Underwood Auditorium. A reception will follow in the Alexander Room of the Law School. Parking spaces are reserved in lot 6, behind Underwood on the 21st Avenue side of the campus. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Before Dr. Norwood is introduced the **Mary Jane Werthan Award** will be presented. This award was established last year to honor a person who has made extraordinary contri-

butions to the advancement of women at Vanderbilt.

The **Book Group** will discuss *Fried Green Tomatoes At The Whistle Stop Cafe* by Fannie Flagg on Monday, November 13, 5:15 p.m. until 6:15 p.m. at the women's center. Margaret Meggs will lead the discussion. New members are welcome. Light refreshments.

Noontime Seminar: Sexual Harassment will be led by Douglas L. Henne, Assistant Professor of Management, Owen Graduate School of Management on Tuesday, November 14 at 12:15 p.m. in Sarratt 118. Dr. Henne will describe the current legal status of sexual harassment in both academia and the business world and will review current research in the field.

Match With A Mentor is an opportunity for women in pre-med or biomedical sciences to meet a potential mentor. Undergraduate women may come to the women's center on Tuesday, November 14 at 5:30 p.m. for refreshments and "mixer." Dr. Mary Ellen Clinton, Assistant Professor of Neurology, along with some of her colleagues, will be there to link up with interested students. Reservations are requested. Call the women's center at 322-4843.

"From Roe to Webster to?: What Are Women's Reproductive Rights?" Virginia Trotter Betts, Associate Professor of Nursing, will discuss the recent Webster case and other pending legislation and how it will affect women's rights both in Tennessee and in the United States. Betts is a Senior Fellow for VIPPS, 1st Vice President of the American Nurses Association, and the mother of two daughters. The lecture and discussion will be held on Wednesday, November 15, from 4:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. in Calhoun 204. ■

Domestic Violence Internship

Susan Pavlin
A & S '90

Sixty percent of all women who go to the emergency room suffer from battery related injuries. One case in every twenty five is identified. Though not a new phenomenon in our society, there are new approaches being developed to deal with the problem.

Each summer, the Appalachian Student Health Coalition develops paid internships dealing with a wide range of health issues. Margaret Horn (A & S '89), currently co-director of the Coalition, participated

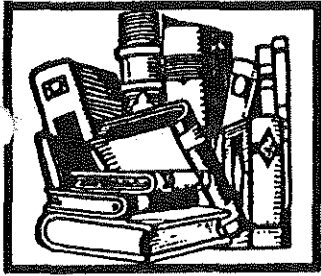
"I learned that we are all victims of a sexist society. Our society says that it is okay to degrade women," said Horn.

along with Mary Lowe, a recent Vanderbilt graduate, and Laura Stolle-Schmidt, from St. Olaf College, in innovative programming for a domestic violence shelter in Lawrence County, Tennessee. "This is the second such program in the U.S. and the first of its kind in a rural, Southern community," said Horn.

"Men won't let women go to the doctor for fear of discovery, and as a result medical problems of these women have been completely ignored," said Horn. Accordingly, one of the first goals was to develop a physical assessment program for women entering the shelter, staffed by volunteer doctors and nurses from the five counties the shelter serves.

Another project centered on education within the medical system itself. In-service classes were held at local hospitals and mental health clinics to alert medical personnel to common signs of abuse. Through role playing and statistical facts, it was possible to dispel common misconceptions of women who are abused by their spouses and to develop practical methods for confronting the problem.

(continued page five)



In the library

Naomi E. Heiser
Women's center librarian

We have of late received a wonderful variety of donations to our library which are authored by women from many different countries and which cover a wide range of subjects and writing styles.

Bibliography of African Women Writers and Journalists by Brenda Berrian is an extensively researched presentation of African women writers from Queen Hatshepsut to our contemporaries. Berrian has arranged the authors by genre, including autobiography/biography, fiction, children's literature, drama, poetry, folklore, conference papers and speeches, journalistic essays, and broadcast literature. In addition, there are sections which list critical essays and book reviews of the authors' works, as well as biographical/bibliographical information sources.

In her introduction, Berrian explains that it has only been in recent years that African women writers are beginning to draw the same interest and serious attention as their male counterparts. Berrian's purpose in compiling this sourcebook is to facilitate the study of African women writers, therefore hopefully bringing them, and their works into the mainstream.

Australian author Elizabeth Jolley has also only recently received critical attention with the publication of *Mr. Scobie's Riddle* (1982). This is a darkly hilarious novel about the daily lives of the inhabitants of St. Christopher and St. Jude's Hospital for the Aged. Jolley creates definitive, extreme, and horrifyingly realistic characters by intensifying perfectly normal everyday conversations, interactions, and activities through careful distillation and

choice in representation. The tableau therefore takes on the quality of allegory, although the seriousness is somewhat diluted by how closely the characters approach parodies. The laughter that Jolley evokes is often of the nervous variety, or perhaps the kind that arises as an antidote to pain.

Although the reader may often feel as if she is in a nuthouse, the characters have much to say about Life, especially since they are now one step removed from it, and are, in most cases, approaching the end of it. Jolley's writing technique is ingeniously experimental, combining various forms of expression (letters, bulletins, soliloquy) to provide a disjointed picture of the whole that contributes to an already surreal atmosphere. A particularly witty element of Jolley's book is an arbitrary list of single-sentence descriptions of the plot in place of a table of contents, and entitled "A Guide to the Perplexed."

American women's writings (fiction and non-) are presented in an anthology compiled by Susan Ware, *Modern American Women: A Documentary History*. Ware has consciously chosen primary source material written by and about women from 1890 to the present that illustrates the great diversity of experience among women in the United States. She states in her introduction, "There can be no such thing as a 'typical American woman'; instead there are stories of a varied multitude of American women." This belief is conveyed through a rich presentation of pieces by immigrants, African-Americans, Native Americans, farmers, factory workers, suffragists, popular magazine writers, anti-feminists, and more. Each work is introduced by an essay which provides an explanation of the context of the piece and other relevant historical information. In addition, the anthology is extensively illustrated with photographs. ■

Domestic violence (from page 4)

In the shelter, information on nutrition, sex education, and general health issues is always available.

Living in the community and spending endless hours in this shelter became a daily personal challenge. Depression was stimulated by a constant stream of true, horrifying stories. "What do you say?" asked Horn. "How can it ever change? We were called welfare women and countless other names (sluts, lesbians) simply for trying to tell men in the community that it is not okay for you to hit your wife."

"I learned that we are all victims of a sexist society. Our society says that it is okay to degrade women," said Horn.

The Appalachian Student Health Coalition will be working again this summer with domestic violence issues. For more information please call 421-4174. ■



Call for papers

Southeastern Women's Studies Association (SEWSA), March 23-25, 1990, Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia.

Main theme: WORKING FOR CHANGE: THROUGH POLITICS, EDUCATION, THE MEDIA.

Papers are welcome on topics directly related to the theme or on any aspect of women's studies or issues of importance to women. Presentations should be no more than twenty minutes long.

Please send title and abstract to: SEWSA Conference Coordinator, Susan Millinger, History Department, Roanoke College, Salem, VA 24153, phone: (703) 375-2411.

Deadline for receipt of entries is January 31, 1990.

Announcements et cetera

Students for Choice. If you value life and believe in every woman's right to decide for herself whether or when to have children, and want to help protect women's reproductive rights, contact Students for Choice, P. O. Box 1513, Station B or call Paige Baker (383-5946) or Catherine Scallan (327-2581).

Breakfast for faculty women, co-sponsored by Women's Political Caucus and Students for Women's Concerns will be held in Mr. Hebbs (basement of Towers 1 & 2) on Wednesday, November 15 from 7:30 a.m. until 8:30 a.m. All faculty women are invited to share bagels, coffee, and discussion about women's concerns on campus.

Flu Vaccine offered free to all Vanderbilt employees. Occupational Health Service will offer the 1989-90 influenza vaccine free with a current Vanderbilt Clinic Card during the month of November, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. If you have questions, call Occupational Health Service at 343-9438.

Nashville NOW is chartering a bus to Washington, DC, for the November 12 demonstration to keep abortion legal, **Mobilize for Women's Lives.** The bus will leave on Saturday, November 11 at 6:00 p.m. and

return early Monday morning. Cost \$65. A few spaces on the bus and some scholarships may be available. For more information call 269-7141.

Students for Women's Concerns sponsors a discussion of the VUT production of "Quilters" after the performance on Sunday evening, November 6 in Neely. There will be a short break for refreshments at the end of the play before the program begins. Professor Elisabeth Perry, Terry Holquist, director, and several members of the cast will comment and answer questions.

Tickets for "Quilters," available at Neely box office, are free with an undergraduate ID; \$2.50 for graduate students; \$4.00 general admission.

YWCA Racial Justice and Human Rights Series. Part II -- The Southern Africa Region -- slides and discussion. As the "civilized" Western world continues to wait for democratic and humanistic principles to emerge in South Africa, the white minority regime is determined to maintain the racist system of apartheid. Join Dr. Margaret C. Lee, author and lecturer, for this highly informative evening of questions and discussion from first-hand reports. Thursday, November 9, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m., YWCA, 1608 Woodmont Blvd. Free.

No rest for the weary.

The U.S. is the only major industrial nation without a nationwide family-leave policy. Sweden allows 38 government or employer-paid weeks; Austria, 20; France, 16; and Japan, 12.

Savvy, November 1989

How to Research an Occupation: Resources, a publication of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, is available free at the women's center. It is a useful and comprehensive guide to available information about government agencies, education programs, employment rights, worksite safety, sexual harassment, and day-care. Come by the women's center for a free copy of the publication.

Edited by JUDITH T. HELFER

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