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Letter from Mildred Persinger to Laetitia Van Den Assum, May 30, 1979

Mildred Emory Persinger

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30 May, 1979

Ms. Laeticia van den Assche^{III}
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The Hague
The Netherlands

Dear Laeticia, (Gunder)

Before it is finished, this letter may look pretty bad, as I am in bed with a bronchial infection contracted during a week at a YWCA confention in Texas where they do everything Texas-style, including too much air-conditioning blowing too hard on everyone's head. (Three or four hours of sleep each night probably did not help.) And the Olivetti is different.

As hard as it is to be out of the office when we are so busy, as always, at least I am writing to you, which I have tried to do in the office ~~for~~ a long time. Instead, we have tried to meet each day's production schedule, if all else waited.

There is never a dull moment. Sonia Mills, Jamaican media specialist, is working with us now on a series of slide-tapes on women in the labor force. Vicky Mejia, having completed the current LA TRIBUNA (you have already received the English edition of Women and Appropriate Technology II), is hard at work on the Resource Book in Spanish being requested by Latin American groups. They want a somewhat different version than the others, but we are equally enthusiastic about the way it is shaping up. By the time you come in August we hope to present you with copies.

Women and AT II is already in great demand. The "AT Kit" which will include the two AT newsletters, should fill a real need. If it is finished, we hope it will be used at the Session on Women and Science and Technology at the NGO Forum in Vienna during the UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development.

If we were not so busy, I would love to accept the World YWCA's invitation to represent them at the Conference, but they have also asked me to attend the World Council meeting in Athens in September. This should be a better choice, since a choice must be made, as I will have a chance to talk with women from 84 countries, most of whom are involved in development projects, or in supporting development projects. Some will be from The Netherlands. I really appreciate their good English.

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There may be an NGO forum in Copenhagen, but the Danish representative, to whom Elizabeth Palmer, chair of the Committee, spoke, said they did not think they could handle the Conference and a parallel meeting...that they would prefer that the NGO-sponsored forum, if any, come first. You can imagine how this will go over with the women who seem determined to come to Copenhagen, in their ~~campuses~~, if necessary, during the Conference. The government's concern is understandable, but the Danes may be thinking in terms of Mexico, which was a special situation, and heavily politicized. The Population Tribune in Bucharest is a better example. About 1200 people attended. It was held in the Law Faculty, not a large building, and was so structured that at no time were the facilities overtaxed. As they will probably have a great many women in Copenhagen during the Conference who are not themselves delegates, the government people may come to see in time that with the help of the women's organizations, they can swing parallel activities and save themselves trouble in the end.

When I get back to the office, I will send you a few internal memos for your files, so that if anyone wants to know what we are doing, you can get them out. Meanwhile, we very much look forward to seeing you in August (and you will doubtless hear from some NGO representatives about their despair over the "list of speakers" concept. If it has to be renegotiated, I hope it will ~~not~~ be as difficult as the original decision was.), and will try to contact you early before the pressure of work becomes so great that we lose you. You will like the new quarters so much, we predict, that you may want to come over to do your work as Elizabeth Reid did when she was in New York discussing her new job working with Lucille Mair on the Conference.

Meanwhile, have a good vacation, if indeed you are taking one this summer. I never seem to get one, but hope for a little time in Greece after the YWCA meeting.

We speak frequently of the "Coordinators of Women's Affairs," originally described to us by Mr. Pronk as the "emancipators", and hope you will give them our greetings and let them know how this project is going. From the report I have just received from the team (4) at the office, this has been a good week. Without Anne and Vicki, they are discovering they can do things they had not believed possible!

With very best wishes,

Mildred Persinger