

**All India Democratic Women's Association
23, Vithalbhai Patel House, Rafi Marg, New Delhi-110001**

To
The Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare,
Government of India,
Nirman Bhavan,
New Delhi

Jan. 15, 1997

Dear Shri Sherwani,

We would like to express our disappointment as well as our protest against your reported statement that you would be pressing for the passage of the Bill to amend the Peoples Representation Act to disqualify all those who have more than two children from standing for elections for the Assembly and Parliament. We believe that such a measure is against democratic rights of the people. It is now internationally recognised that family size is linked to non-demographic factors of underdevelopment, poverty and related issues. In the Indian context there is the added reality of son preference, which often is the cause of producing more children. Without dealing with these issues a draconian measure like the one you have proposed is tantamount to punishing the poor for their poverty. Your Government has claimed that it is giving up the target and quota approach towards family planning. While such a change would certainly be welcome, the present proposal is contradictory to the target free approach. This is all the more objectionable given the Women's Reservation Bill which promises to reserve one third seats for women. This measure will affect the poorer sections of women who would be rendered ineligible. We strongly oppose this proposal and urge you to withdraw the Bill which was circulated by the previous Government. We would like to draw your attention to the memorandum submitted by our organisation on June 6, 1996, through which we had drawn your attention to the objectionable family planning policies of the previous Government and had urged you to recast the policies in favour of women. We had specifically requested you to stop the clinical trials being conducted with harmful contraceptives like Norplant. You had assured us of action. As far as we are aware the trials still continue.

We urge you to look into these matters.

Thanking you,

Yours Sincerely,

Brinda Karat
(G. Secy)

Subhashini Ali
(Jt. Secy)