

# HOUSING FOR PEOPLE, NOT HOSTELS

- Three women froze to death in Toronto in the winter of 1985-86.
- In 1985 3500 women used Metro's hostels, and the occupancy rate continues to rise.
- Of the women in the hostels, virtually all were unemployed, 26% were 24 or under, and a high percentage were Native. 17% were there because of domestic breakdown, 14% because of domestic violence, 33% were psychiatrically disabled, and 33% were chronically homeless.
- 66% left the hostels with no stable place to go.
- 75% of the rooming houses listed at a downtown housing registry will not rent to women, and a massive number specified "No Blacks".
- Women on welfare living in a rooming house in Toronto pay an average of 65% of their income on rent, leaving \$140 per month for all other expenses. In some cases they pay 95%.
- Of single parent female led families who rent, 33% spend 50% or more of their income on housing.

The affordable housing crisis is a product of our racist, capitalist system, not an accident. Housing is provided for profit, and the government has never tried to control speculation in real estate. In Toronto, with the decline of manufacturing and the growth of the service sector, skilled workers are needed in the outskirts, and former working class neighbourhoods in the core are transformed into expensive office space, housing, or shops. Those displaced by the resulting affordable housing crisis and high unemployment are used as cheap labour — in the service industries and elsewhere — and forced into homelessness, intolerable housing, or in neighbourhoods not of their choosing.

Due to our role in the labour force, women are hit harder by this than men. Women, women with children, and especially women of colour, immigrant women, women on social assistance, disabled women, women who have received psychiatric care, and lesbians face open discrimination in our search for shelter. This is done on the basis both of racism and sexism, and our weak economic position. Commonplace is our inability to get past the door once the landlord sees us or hears our accent. Even if we are allowed to apply for a place, we do not have the economic power to compete. Racism and sexism have combined to ensure that we are unemployed more often, and that the jobs we do find are lower paid. Rents today are well beyond our means. If we are on social assistance it is even worse. We are left at the mercy of a state that decides where, how, and on how much we live.

In our housing we often must tolerate grossly oppressive conditions. The 24,000 names on the Cityhome waiting list are a legacy to years of racist and sexist housing policies which imprison so many of us in intolerable buildings at exorbitant rents. 80% of women renters live in inadequate housing! The low vacancy rate in Toronto makes women very vulnerable to rape and sexual assault. The horrible death of Shirley Sameroo, beaten to death by her husband, and the eviction by thugs of Eleanor Folland point to the violence from partners, spouses, landlords, and neighbours that we regularly suffer. Racist immigration laws force us, as domestics, to exchange our labour for shelter. And at least 1,000 women are chronically homeless in our city.

Women's shelters were developed to provide emergency shelter and short-term support for women in crisis. Unemployment, loss of cheap housing, low wage and social assistance rates, racism and the neglect of women who have received psychiatric care, force so many women and their children to use shelters that the shelters are increasingly unable to fulfill that role. We need appropriate transitional housing for those escaping oppressive situations in families or those leaving institutions.

We need a long term government commitment, beginning now, to publicly funded, non-profit decent long-term affordable housing. It must be designed and managed according to tenant standards and to meet our needs. We will no longer tolerate the racism which we experience with the current management of public housing, and which allows continuing harassment of people of colour and immigrants in the housing.

Racism and sexism are used by employers and landlords to divide workers against each other in the workplace and in the community. That is why we need to fight for long-term affordable housing at the same time as we fight for decent incomes.

### What can you do?

1. Organize your union local, organization, Church group, etc. to understand how serious the housing crisis is, and DECIDE WHAT ACTION YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP. There are lots of organizations involved in the issue who could be resources.
2. Keep up the pressure after 1987, the International Year of Shelter For the Homeless, to ensure that long-term affordable housing is a priority. (Remember there is a provincial election coming up — make housing an issue.)
3. Say "No To Hostels As Permanent Housing". Write your concerns to: Hon. Alvin Curling, Minister of Housing, 777 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5.

## EVENTS

### Saturday, Feb. 28

Justice for Cleaners Night. Meeting for Postal Cleaners on Strike (CUPW). Scadding Court Community Centre, 8 pm, Bathurst and Dundas. 461-0711. Cash bar, Arlene Mantle, Reggae Band.

### Sunday, March 1

Towards the Year 2000 Without Nuclear Weapons — for Peace, Equality and Development. 252 Bloor Street West, 2 pm. Speakers from the USA and USSR. Sponsored by the Committee for March 8th and the Congress of Canadian Women.

### Monday, March 2, 8 pm

The Working People's Picture Show. 427 Bloor St. W. Comedy and music. Co-sponsored by the March 8th Coalition and Canadian Action for Nicaragua. Tickets \$8 and \$6 for unemployed at Women's Bookstore, DEC, CAN and the Big Carrot. Signed for the Hearing Impaired. Proceeds to women's programs in Nicaragua.

### Wednesday March 4

Native Self-Determination. Time and Place TBA. A forum sponsored by members of the Native Women's Association. Call 978-8201.

### Saturday, March 7, 8:30 am

"A Day To Move" meet for breakfast before the rally. 349 Ontario Street, sponsored by Women for Housing. Daycare provided. 366-4319.

### Monday, March 9

Five Minute Feminist Cabaret, 9 pm. Theatre Passe Muraille, 16 Ryerson (near Bathurst and Bloor) Bar not accessible. Tickets at Women's Bookstore and DEC.

All events wheelchair accessible

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH 7<sup>th</sup>, 1987



# FIGHTING RACISM AND SEXISM TOGETHER

## NATIVE SELF-DETERMINATION CHOICE • AFFIRMATIVE ACTION HOUSING

10:30 AM

Rally, Convocation Hall, University of Toronto

1:00 PM

March to Ryerson Polytechnical Institute

2-6 PM

Fair, Jorgenson Hall, Ryerson Workshops, information tables, crafts, food, entertainment, etc.

8 PM

Dance at the Concert Hall, 889 Yonge Street.

All women welcome.  
\$7 advance \$8 at door.  
Tickets at Women's Bookstore  
Sliding scale at SCM

13 PRODUCED BY UNION LABOUR AT OUR TIMES

I would like to endorse International Women's Day, 1987

I am sending a contribution of \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be on the mailing list \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL TO: MARCH 8TH COALITION. Phone: 978-8201  
P.O. BOX 70, STN. F, TORONTO, ONTARIO M4Y 2L4



# FIGHTING RACISM AND SEXISM TOGETHER

On International Women's Day '86, women in Toronto declared our intention to build "a new women's movement" — a women's movement which would bring together the fight against racism and the fight against sexism. We said that IWD '86 was only a beginning. That's why we are back in the streets in '87 "Fighting Racism and Sexism Together". It is not enough to simply add racism as one more item to a list of feminist issues. An anti-racist perspective must be integrated into our feminist organizing.

We do not believe that racism is merely a misunderstanding among people, a question of interpersonal relations, or an unchanging part of human nature. It is, like sexism, an integral part of the political and economic system under which we live. This system uses racism and sexism to divide us and to exploit our labour for super-profits and it gives some of us privilege. We must fight this in our daily lives. We cannot just educate racism away, and even legal reforms are not enough. We must change the economic and political structures which maintain the oppressions which we face.

# NATIVE WOMEN SUPPORT INDIAN SELF-DETERMINATION

We, Native women of Ontario support Indian Self-Determination because we need control to heal our people and to provide our children with a future that will allow us to become productive members of Canadian Society.

We, called Indian, call ourselves the First Nations, not to signal separatist intentions, but to illustrate our view of ourselves. Nations is how we see ourselves, as groups of people with a common language, culture, history and who identify with each other as belonging to a common political entity.

We, First Nations, have been stereotyped as savages and unknowing of religion, needing the instruction of the Europeans on how to live. We know ourselves to have been many Nations who were productive, cultured, spiritual, intelligent civilizations. When the Europeans first came to North America they recognized the Indigenous peoples as sovereign Nations. The Europeans made treaties with the First Nations, they formed alliances with us and respected our internal customs and laws.

It is widely believed among the non-Indian peoples that political structures were unknown to Indians prior to European contact. Actually, the First Nations had a variety of complex forms of government which were suppressed by the Canadian government. Shortly, after Confederation a piece of legislation called the Indian Act, initiated a century long campaign to wipe out Indian culture and assimilate us. We moved

through that time from free, self-sustaining first Nations to a state of dependency. This state of dependency brought our people to the brink of despair and self-destruction. Our poverty, poor health and powerlessness has provided others with jobs, prestige and access to the good things of Canadian life. We want a change in this relationship.

What the First Nations of Ontario want from the First Minister's Conference in April of 1987, is that the Constitution explicitly recognize these, our historical rights:

1. Aboriginal Title, Treaties and Treaty Rights. — reasonable settlement of the land claims and fulfillment of the Treaties.
2. Inherent Right to Self-Determination. — our right to govern ourselves in the manner we choose; our right to full jurisdiction over our territories to be recognized unconditionally
3. Commitment to negotiate intergovernmental relations. — First Nations' governments must have the commitment of federal and provincial governments of not only negotiating but also implementing how First Nations will co-exist with non-First Nations governments.
4. No changes to the Constitution without the approval of the First Nations. — since these changes to the Constitution are supposed to be for our benefit and we are negotiating in good faith, both sides must agree that there is benefit to proposed changes — to do otherwise is to continue the destructive paternalistic pattern "we know best" and the facts prove otherwise.

April, 1987, is the final scheduled First Minister Conference, this is a critical point in Canadian history. You will either see continued the destructive relationship of the past or see negotiation of the future for a new mutually beneficial relationship.

If you want to help, the time is now. Write to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Premier David Peterson and demand they support the above positions of the First Nations of Ontario.

# CHOICE

Choice is an illusion for most Asian, Native, Black, South Asian and other women of colour and immigrant women. The laws, institutions, and economic structures of this society perpetuate racism, sexism, and heterosexism, denying us our reproductive freedom. Our right to choose whether or not to have children, our right to determine our own sexuality as women, our right to reproduction itself, have all been denied us.

The lack of decent jobs, free childcare, paid parental leave, affordable housing, and non-discriminatory benefit plans for same-sex partners, have taken away the right to choose in every area of our lives. Even our right to enter Canada is controlled by the labour needs of the employers. Most of us are admitted as sponsored dependents of husbands. We are denied the right to family benefits of subsidized English (ESL) classes. Lesbians and disabled women are denied admittance entirely.

We face false assumptions about our lives and sexuality, and prejudicial health services insensitive to our specific needs. We face language and cultural barriers. Racist myths and stereotypes abound. Doctors frequently take it upon themselves to control our fertility. The effects of these are obvious in the numerous cases of women — disabled, native and black, who have received unwanted sterilizations, and suffer from the long term effects of unsafe contraceptives.

Historically colonialism has forced Black women to produce children for slavery. Today many of us are the victims of population control programs, as if fewer of our children will solve the problems of poverty and oppression. Harmful contraceptives such as Depo Provera are tested and dumped in the third world. In Canada it is used on native and disabled women. When we choose not to be pregnant, we are denied full access to free abortion. But we are fighting back. For example, the present campaign for the legalization of clinics and repeal of the federal abortion law was begun because of this lack of access. It is Black, Asian, Native, South Asian, and other women of colour, immigrant, rural and white working class women who are presently denied abortions, because we don't have the money to pay for them. The situation is even worse in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Alberta. Today the Supreme Court is deliberating the people's acquittal of Drs. Morgentaler, Scott and Smoling. Charges have been laid against Dr. Nikki Colodny. All the charges must be dropped, it is the women of Canada who have the right to decide. We must continue to build a fighting movement to force the repeal of this racist-sexist law. We demand:

- safe and effective birth control with information and services in our own languages
- the right to determine our own sexuality
- an end to the forced or coerced sterilization of Native, Black, disabled women, and women of colour.
- the banning of depo provera
- an end to the harassment of lesbian and native mothers by the courts and Children's Aid
- the licensing of midwives and the recognition of non-Canadian midwifery experience
- full access to free abortion
- an end to the economic and social restrictions that limit our lives

- Write Murray Elston, Minister of Health, Hepburn Block, 10th fl., Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, rejecting the Powell Report recommendations, and demanding the charges be dropped against the doctors and that free standing clinics providing medically sound abortions be legalized.
  - join the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics. Call (416) 532-8193.
- All of these must be demanded and won if every woman is to have choice.

# AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

We, immigrant women and women of colour, face both racism and sexism in every aspect of our lives. This is particularly true in the workplace, where we are trapped in segregated, low-paying jobs. Many of us are unorganized and face the worst exploitation. In our society racism and sexism have become part of the system. They are embedded in the politics, practices, and procedures of our economic and social institutions. It is racist and sexist practices in the hiring procedures which prevent us from getting jobs. Culturally-biased requirements, such as no-turban-only hats, or the acceptance of only Canadian experience, in spite of extensive education and non-Canadian employment, is common.

As unemployment grows in Canada, racist and sexist explanations about the state of the economy blame women, visible minorities and immigrants, instead of blaming the economic system. As long as this system continues to place more emphasis on profits instead of people, there will be racism and sexism. The myths that women's place is in the home and that immigrants take jobs away from Canadian born, white workers must be corrected. We contribute positively to the economy as workers and as consumers. The government's economic policies should be blamed for persistent unemployment. We reject racist and sexist excuses.

Native women, immigrant women, women of colour, disabled and mentally-handicapped women all face heavy burdens. Generally it is difficult to find jobs, and when we do, they are low-paying, doing work that no one else will do. Our jobs in the public sector are usually found at the bottom of its wage scale: cleaners, cafeteria workers, nurses aides, and clerical workers. In the private sector we are employed in difficult to organize small businesses that offer little more than minimum wage and no benefits. As domestic and garment workers, or as farm workers, we work long hours with little legal protection, often under unsafe working conditions. In large multinational corporations we are kept at the bottom because of the discriminatory attitudes of the owners who have much to gain by dividing the work force along racial, ethnic and sex lines.

Lack of affordable housing and universally accessible childcare, discriminatory health care practices, lack of accessibility for the disabled and mentally-handicapped, and limited educational opportunities further impoverish our lives. The majority of immigrant women, without facility in English do not have full access to social services. Because of our double day of work in the home and in the workplace, we have little time to learn English. Many who escape to this country live in fear of deportation and reprisals from military dictatorships in our home countries.

Despite these difficulties, women of colour, and immigrant women have been in the forefront of major labour struggles in recent years: Puretex, Bell, Visa, Irwin Toy, Graham Cable, First Canadian Place, Superplastics, and the strikes of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and CUPW cleaners. The courage and militancy of these strikers have provided a cutting edge to the struggle to end the racist and sexist oppression we face.

We demand **mandatory affirmative action**. We want what historically has been denied us — a decent standard of living and the right to a job. We want strong enforcement mechanisms for affirmative action programmes with goals and timetables. We demand the implementation of:

- a) preference for visible minorities, women, Native, disabled and other disadvantaged peoples
  - b) English Language training on the job
  - c) equal pay for work of equal value
  - d) free, universal childcare
  - e) improved training programmes — both skill upgrading and job retraining
  - f) barrier-free transportation and work environments
- We demand an end to racism.

Immigrant, Native, disabled women, women of colour and trade unionists are all working to put affirmative action on the political agenda. We want these measures to make recruitment, hiring, promotion, and earning more equal. Existing human rights, labour, and Charter of Rights codes deal with racism and sexism on an individual basis. This puts the responsibility on the victim, as well as deflecting the real cause. It is not an individual problem. There is a system which discriminates through policies, practices and behaviour, which is why we call for a system to change it: **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**. We want access to opportunities as well as direct mechanisms to address past injustices. Our rights have been denied for too long. Society must accommodate difference. We will continue our struggle to expose class exploitation, and the racism and sexism which oppresses us.