

1225

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Supported by the shaky stem of cooperation among women



International women's year

Volunteer women and men

women restoration workers

YWCA

YWCA

# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A NAME IS MEANT TO REVEAL YOUR PURPOSE  
AND IDENTIFY WHO YOU ARE.

A Woman's Place - Forrest House was chosen to reflect the vision of what we wished to become and our beginnings--the coming together of two different interest groups; women committed to preserving a historic house and women committed to developing a resource and activity centre for women. The vision of what the centre would be was not done in isolation, but rather in consultation with many community groups and individual women (Spring 77 and Fall 77). The purpose and aims were reflected in a widely circulated poster in the Spring 1977 entitled "Raising the Question" inviting women to give further input; in the first brochure; and in the first newsletter, December 77.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

A place for women to relax, to learn, and to develop with one another;

A place to find support in times of need, as well as information and resources in areas of common concern;

A place to gather and work together on our common struggles;

A forum for collaboration among and with other women's groups working to change the status of women;

A place to encourage cooperative working relations and liaison with other community organizations.

In the following months as we tried to realize these aims and objectives, they turned out to be too vague and general to guide us in day-to-day

decision-making and in establishing priorities for action. We became an easy target for radical feminists in the community who specifically criticized our involvement in 'Project 80' (the restoration workers training project sponsored by Social Planning and Manpower) and 'Project 50' (a project of City Social Planning intended to involve participants in volunteer community service work.) This criticism speaks for itself on Page 8). The critics say that we have not "earned our credentials to call ourselves 'A Woman's Place' or a women's centre. In their opinion, the name deceives women into thinking we are part of the Women's Liberation Movement, when in fact, the vagueness of our philosophy and some of our early misguided decisions make that questionable in their minds. In fact, they go one step further and tell us that we are co-opting the Movement. Their commitment, they say, is to preserve the hard-earned integrity of the Movement, thus their recommendation that we change our name.

The cover attempts to express where we are now--THAT WE HAVE NOT CLEARLY BEEN BUT MIGHT BECOME 'A WOMAN'S PLACE.

Now we are back to the drawing board, to the commitment of working out an operating philosophy and a functional process for making decisions, to provide a framework for future action. In that process, a major concern is to decide for ourselves what COMMITMENT TO THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT REALLY MEANS, to develop a COMMITMENT AS A CENTRE THAT WILL HAVE STRENGTH FOR SOCIAL CHANGE, and at the same time CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN WHO ARE AT MANY DIFFERENT STAGES OF EXPLORING NEW OPTIONS TO COPE WITH THE STRUGGLES IN THEIR LIVES.

The cost of creating a resource and activity centre for women by rehabilitating and adapting a 125-year old house has been very high indeed in terms of casualties--exhausted volunteers and staff resignations. Though views on what this centre should be vary, we've reached this point through collaboration and cooperation, through dialogue and debate but chiefly through hard work. In the process, we are forced to acknowledge that we have exploited our own labor in an attempt to implement something we believed in. But that's another hard learned lesson and a VERY POLITICAL TOPIC...That's another story for another time,...

FORDHAM REPORT

Several major decisions made at a Woman's Place in the last few months have caused considerable controversy. As a direct result several meetings have been held to look at past directives, discuss the issues at hand and the future direction of the centre. It's been unanimously agreed that A Woman's Place needs more clearly defined aims and objectives, a firm philosophical base upon which policies can be made for the day-to-day operation of the centre. It was also agreed to plan educational discussions on issues pertinent to A Woman's Place to develop this philosophy, which would be open for all women to attend and participate. At a General Meeting, Mar. 28, it was agreed that these discussions would take place both in the afternoons (with free childcare provided) and evenings to maximize participation by all women. General Meetings would be held to make decisions regarding the development of the philosophy. Commitment was considered to be important: attendance at at least one discussion is necessary to be involved in making decisions at the General Meetings.

DISCUSSIONS IN MARCH WERE AS FOLLOWS: Feb. 28, Katimavik; Mar. 6, Property; Mar. 20, Can the Women's Liberation Movement be for all women where they are at? - the discussion paper being "Building the Movement", an analysis of the Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont. Woman's Place; Mar. 28, an information meeting on the present Finances, Philosophy, and 'Structure' - relationship with the YWCA and internal committee-decision-making structure - of a Woman's Place.

SOME CONCLUSIONS:

- the community needs clarification of our position and our direction.
- regarding employment programs: that further discussion is needed on the exploitation of women in work, especially in view of the drastic degree of unemployment and implications of involvement of the centre in employment programs such as Katimavik, Project 50 and Project 80.
- agreed to take the philosophical statement from "Building the Movement" and to develop it for discussion in the areas of HEALTH, ECONOMICS, EMPLOYMENT, CHILDCARE and EDUCATION. This information would be presented on Mon. Apr. 3 and Wed. Apr. 12. Need to consider how the adoption of policies within each area would affect programs planned, services offered and attitudes towards property - the use of physical space in the centre.

cont'd page 4.....

CONCLUSIONS cont'd

- the financial base of A Woman's Place needs to be considered and how to proceed to financial security in the future.
- a more effective way to make decisions needs to be developed. It is felt committment is important. This will be defined through the development of a new decision-making-system.
- SOME OF THE QUESTIONS RELATING TO 'HOW TO PROCEED TO FINANCIAL SECURITY, DECISION-MAKING, AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO THE YWCA ARE BASICALLY PHILOSOPHICAL ONES AND THEREFORE HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED IN LIGHT OF THE NEW GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

DATES FOR DISCUSSIONS - APRIL

Monday Apr. 3 (1:30-3:30) and Wed. Apr. 12 (7:30-9:30)

Information developed in the areas of health, economics, childare, employment and education was presented. This is available at A Woman's Place for those who wish to attend another discussion and would like to read this material.

Monday Apr. 10 (1:30-3:30) Project 50 - Project 30

-Social Planning was invited to give information regarding these projects.

-evaluation of involvement in these projects.

-decision regarding action A Woman's Place should take.

The conclusions of this meeting will be reported in the next newsletter.

Monday Apr. 17 and 24 (1:30 - 3:30); Wed. Apr. 26 (7:30 - 9:30)

Discussion of information presented on Apr. 3 and Apr. 12.

Recommendations from these discussions to be presented at the General Meeting.

GENERAL MEETING MAY 2 7:30 p.m.

- Agenda:
1. Decisions regarding philosophy to date
  2. "Membership" Should A Woman's Place have a membership?  
If so, how would it be defined?
  3. Voting procedure.

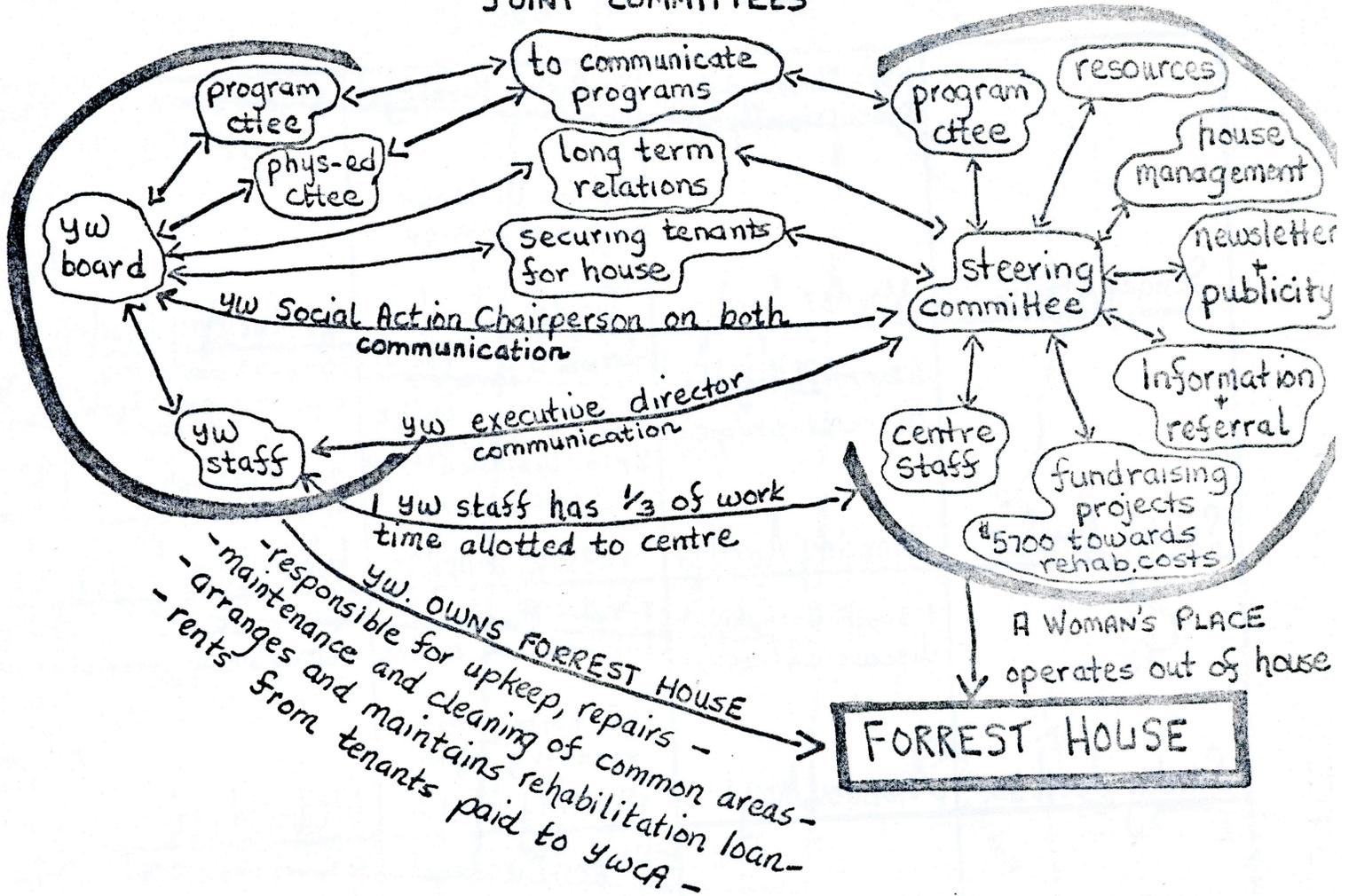
Regular discussions will be taking place in May. Dates for these will be determined within the next two weeks. A General Meeting will be held on June 13 to make a final decision regarding a working philosophy for A Woman's Place.

COME AND PARTICIPATE - bring your ideas, criticism, philosophy

# Y.W.C.A. ⇐ STRUCTURE ⇒ A WOMAN'S PLACE

- A YWCA SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT -

## JOINT COMMITTEES

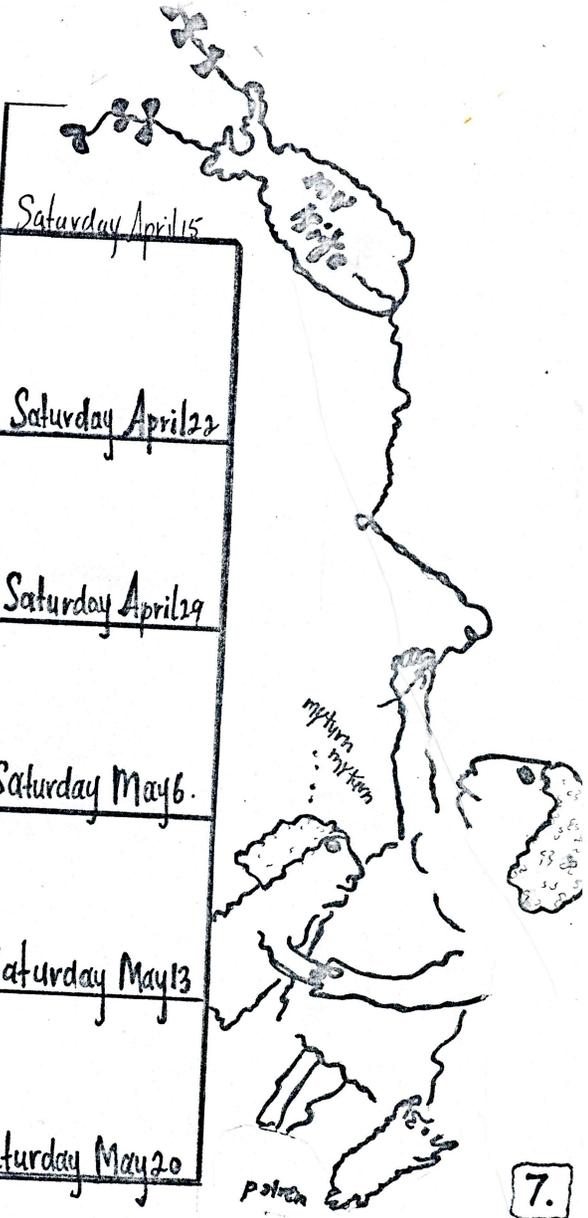


Throughout the project the volunteers were responsible for the organization and the implementation of the rehabilitation of the house and the development of the centre. The YWCA was legally + financially responsible. As the house neared completion and the centre opened it was evident that the interrelationship between the YWCA, the centre + the house was not clear. Who was responsible for the house? Several joint meetings resulted in a clear definition of that relationship (shown above). A Woman's Place is a YW Social Action Project, but has its own decision-making system for making policies for the day-to-day operation. The YWCA has developed a proposal for a future relationship to be considered in the months ahead (page 10)

# April - May calendar of events

open hours: 9:30 am - 4 pm Monday through Friday  
7 pm - 9 pm Monday through Thursday.

Sunday April 16	Monday April 17 1:30: Philosophy Discussion (open)	Tuesday April 18 7-9 pm: Paralegal 8 pm: Violence against women *open	Wednesday April 19 9:30-12:00 am coffee & conversation *open	Thursday April 20 7-9 pm: Paralegal information centre 7:30 Assertiveness training 7:30 pm - Creativity workshop	Friday April 21	Saturday April 22
Sunday April 23	Monday April 24 1:30 pm: Philosophy Discussion (open)	Tuesday April 25 7-9 pm: Paralegal Information centre 7:30 Stirling Committee 8 pm: Violence Against Women *open	Wednesday April 26 9:30-12 noon coffee and conversation *open 7:30 Philosophy discussion (open)	Thursday April 27 7-9 pm: Paralegal Information Centre 7:30 pm: Assertiveness training 7:30 pm creativity workshop	Friday April 28	Saturday April 29
Sunday April 30	Monday May 1 1:30 pm: Philosophy discussion (open).	Tuesday May 2 7-9 pm: Paralegal Information centre 7:30-9:30 pm - general meeting *open	Wednesday May 3 9:30-12 noon coffee & conversation *open	Thursday May 4 7-9 pm: Paralegal Information centre 7:30 pm: assertiveness training 7:30 pm: creativity workshop	Friday May 5	Saturday May 6
Sunday May 7	Monday May 8	Tuesday May 9 7-9 pm: Paralegal Information centre 7:30 pm: Stirling Committee *open	Wednesday May 10 9:30-12 noon: coffee & conversation open.	Thursday May 11 7-9 pm Paralegal Information Centre 7:30 pm - Assertiveness training. 7:30 creativity workshop	Friday May 12	Saturday May 13
Sunday May 14	Monday May 15	Tuesday May 16 7-9 pm - Paralegal Information centre	Wednesday May 17 9:30-12 noon: coffee and conversation open.	Thursday May 18 7-9 pm: Paralegal Information Centre 7:30 pm: Assertiveness training. 7:30 pm creativity workshop.	Friday May 19	Saturday May 20



open - means interested women are all welcome to attend.

This poster, distributed around the community, is the harshest criticism of A Woman's Place

## "WOMEN'S CENTRE HIRES WOMAN TO WORK AS DOMESTIC:"

The poshly restored Forrest House located in the South End of Halifax recently hired a woman as a domestic to clean the house. For her work this woman is receiving from the government a low TOKEN PAYMENT ON TOP OF HER WELFARE CHECK. The Forrest House is run by a group of women who claim it is a "women's centre" providing services to meet the needs of women in Halifax. One of these women a feminist, has resigned over the hiring.

Women's centres began with the women's movement and women's centres have always fought the exploitation of domestics and worked for government benefits and protective legislation. Male-dominated capitalism reserves this lowest paid domestic work for women: poor women, non-white women, immigrant women, disabled women, uneducated women and IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES... ALL WOMEN. The women's movement is dedicated to the elimination of the practice of a few privileged men and women benefitting from the exploitation of a servant class and is dedicated to the equal opportunity of all people to meaningful work, decent wages and living conditions and to support groups of women who raise the skills of all members on an equal basis.

The Forrest House was restored for the "Women's Centre" by women on welfare while earning less than the minimum wage, without paid day care on a welfare department training program.

After completion it was evident that no work existed in the market for the skills learned. Those who are benefitting from their labour are unequipped to offer anything to welfare women because they have chosen to develop an elite 'support' group for themselves at the expense of those who must work for them in order to live in the present system. Poor women, women in the work force (domestics, non-professionals), women faced with parental kidnapping, welfare women, women needing self-help (single parents), women confronting their status in the penal system, do not go to Forrest House because its activities are irrelevant to their needs.

THIS SO CALLED "WOMEN'S CENTRE" HAS NOW CHOSEN TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN CAPITALISTIC EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN.

We hope this newsletter and the may newsletter will express our hopes and clarify our problems and how we are going about solving them.

By initiating this twofold project;

- ① restoring a house
- ② starting a women's centre

we have been up to our ears in problems of exploitation through overwork and underpay of ALL the women who have been part of it.

Poster by REEL LIFE

Here's what really happened Virginia....

The YWCA bought the house next door in the 1960's planning to tear it down to make room for expansion of their main building when it's mortgage was paid off. A reverse in the economic situation in the 1970's made this plan unfeasible. By 1976 the house had become an eyesore and a financial drain.

Meanwhile... At the close of International Women's Year → 1975 the YWCA organized a meeting of individuals and groups of women to plan for future collective social action. The women present listed the most important problem areas for women and set up a committee to take constructive action. By Fall 1976 the YWCA Board passed this committee's proposal to set up a women's resource centre and to have a social action committee working politically for social change. The first resource centre was set up in cramped quarters in the YWCA building. It needed more room to develop.

Deliberations on the house next door... The YW decided NO to commercial use of the house and YES "if possible" to community service use of the house with women as the main priority. A transition house was needed above all else but tough fire and layout regulations made this possibility too costly and the transition house committee thought at the time that they already had a better location.

A women's resource centre was the next priority. The Bargain Box was interested in renting the bottom two floors on a five year lease; Profemina was interested in using a room in the house for an office\* Project 80 would train women on the job in rehabilitation work. Many women volunteered time and energy to help with the restoration work.

Rehabilitation of the house and development of a resource centre went ahead hand in hand in a big unruly muddle. The women who took leadership responsibility had to struggle with many dilemmas and had to face strong criticism every step of the way. We need a clear decision making process and a concrete philosophy to guide us better from now on. It is also important to begin a process of clarifying the nature of commitment which each individual woman brings with her to the centre

\*The next newsletter will go into a detailed evaluation of projects & grants the centre has been involved with

# Y Executive DRAFT Proposal

## re. Future Relationships

Y Executive recently presented for consideration recommendations

Re: Working Relationship - that A Woman's Place and the Y cooperate where possible but that each organization be independent.

Re: Forest House - that Y function as landlord with attendant responsibilities and privileges.

Re: Tenancies - that a committee be activated with a Y Board member, Y Executive Director, and Woman's Place representative to negotiate leases with prospective tenants, recognizing the "vital" of tenants is vital to Woman's Place programming.

Re: Rehab. Debt - that the Y Finance Committee and appropriate Woman's Place committee work cooperatively on a plan for retirement of the loan, and A Woman's Place fulfil its commitment to raise \$10,000 of the Rehab. budget (\$5600 balance).

Re: Program - that A Woman's Place be responsible for its own program, including applying for + administering appropriate grants.

- that the Y be prepared to give letters of support for such grant requests.
- that A Woman's Place attempt to become more familiar with + make better use of Y facilities + programs.
- that Y Board make a concerted effort to understand the philosophy and operation of A Woman's Place + to develop mutual trust + cooperation.

The Y proposed to reaffirm its support by:

- assigning an additional Board member to attend steering Cttee
- allocating staff time as determined by Y priorities
- supporting A Woman's Place financially wherever possible
- cooperation on social issues, THOUGH A STAND BEING TAKEN

BY ONE WILL NOT NECESSARILY BE SUPPORTED BY THE OTHER, THE ORGANIZATIONS BEING INDEPENDENT.

# Pro-feminist squashed!

The feds are once more saying that women are not a priority. Manpower (whatever happened to Womanpower?) has cut off funding for Pro Feminist.

Shortly after Pro Feminist began 4 years ago, Manpower slashed its budget in half so that there were 2 part-time workers: just enough lip service to women to appease them and keep them in their place (which we all know is the home!)

Women are affected by work and unemployment, whether it's by discrimination in work (and it does exist!), low (est) wages in low-value work, no opportunity for alternatives in work, or the actual lack of jobs.

Undoubtedly Pro Feminist was a thorn in the sides of MANpower and the hierarchy (male). Probably the woman "issue" (male) was not a budget priority. (male). In any case Pro Feminist is not a Canada Works project and should not be shunted about like it was a short-term "make work" project.



Women are "shunned out of the labour force in times of surplus and growing unemployment." Trudeau has pronounced that "...unemployment rates are being pushed to false highs because of the abnormally high participation rates of Canadian women: they aren't getting out of the race fast enough."

We can't let this go without making it quite clear that women and the community opposes this cut-off! We can plan strategy to furthermore demand Pro-Feminist be continued and on an ongoing basis not as a government present but as a RIGHT. Women demand to be heard and represented in WORK as well as the home.

To plan action in response to the government's position call 4294063.

## PROGRAMMING

The Program Committee, A Woman's Place, has been very active during the past six months in carrying out the objectives specified for programming when the project began. A review and assessment of these activities is presently being undertaken, the results of which will be communicated at a later date. Briefly, the Committee has been successful in:

- (1) initiating and developing a number of educational programs at Forrest House with the cooperation of resource people in the community;
- (2) communicating and working with agencies, groups and individuals who have offered programs at Forrest House;
- (3) organizing informal gatherings such as coffee and conversation mornings and pot luck suppers;
- (4) communicating needs of women to existing groups or agencies which are better equipped to offer programs.

The Committee is guided by requests and needs expressed by women in the community or groups and agencies working on their behalf.

## PRESENT PROGRAMS

1. "Women as Victims of Domestic Violence". The last in a series of four presentations by the "Transition House Board" continues on Tuesday, May 9, at Forrest House at 8 p.m. Discussion will center around (a) What Pressure Groups can do; (b) Law Reform and Procedural Changes; (c) Criminal versus Civil Charges.
2. Assertiveness Training. A six-week course given by Dr. Nina Woulff, offered every Thursday evening, is now full.
3. Creativity Workshops being offered every Thursday evening by Ms Elizabeth Greenhavens combine Gestalt, psychosynthesis, and community development workshop techniques in an intuitive approach to problem solving.
4. Single Parents Support Group meets every Thursday (9:30 - 11:30) with Ms. Valerie O'Brien, Social Worker with Association for Family Life and Ms. Dola Aucoin. Childcare available at the YWCA.
5. Co-sponsored series with Dartmouth Library continues with panel discussion on INCEST on Tuesday, May 16 at 8:00 p.m. and another on RAPE on Thursday, May 30 at 8:00 p.m., both at Dartmouth Regional Library.
6. Coffee and conversation and introduction to resources and activities of A Woman's Place every Wednesday morning.

## FUTURE PROGRAMMING

1. Women's Addictions - Members of a follow-up group to a national conference on Women and Alcoholism held in Halifax last fall have formed a committee on Women's Addictions. They will be meeting regularly at A Woman's Place which is also represented on the committee. Barb Unroe, Coordinator, Women's Issues in Addictions, Non-Medical Use of Drugs, Health and Welfare, will coordinate the committee's work. One of their first tasks will be preparation of an educational package on Women and Alcoholism to be presented at Forrest House.
2. Outreach to Widows - A community committee, of which A Woman's Place is a member, has been exploring the possibility of starting a program for widows. Widows who would like to become involved, or who would be willing to contribute ideas are asked to call Vicki Grant 429-4063.
3. New Mothers Support Group - We have at present four women interested in starting a support group to assist in communicating problems faced by new mothers and developing strategies to cope with post partum depression and problems. Anyone interested call 455-2384.
4. Health Education - Committee meets next week to plan two follow-up sessions to the successful Women and Health Seminars last month. Suggestions or ideas welcomed.
5. How To Be Assertive - Course to be offered in late spring. Interested persons call 455-2384.

## NOTICES

RENTAL SPACE AVAILABLE - A WOMAN'S PLACE - With Pro Feminae and Canada Works funding terminating, offices will be available for rent on the third floor of the house. We'd like to rent to women's organizations, social agencies or action/self-help groups whose purposes are directly related to women's needs and interests. Proposals for "compatible use" also considered \$100 - \$150 per office (negotiable). Revenue essential to cover operating costs for A Woman's Place, so volunteer activity, programs, services and resources can continue to be made available on the second floor. Inquire Vickie Grant (429-4063) or Alexa McDonough (422-4971).

PARA-LEGAL INFORMATION CENTRE is now operating every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. from A Woman's Place, 2nd floor, Forrest House. They deal largely with uncontested divorce action, offering counselling, a para-legal kit with legal forms and assistance in the completion of legal forms.

NOTICES (cont'd)

NOVA SCOTIA WOMEN'S ACTION COMMITTEE and A WOMAN'S PLACE STEERING COMMITTEE will hold a joint meeting at Forrest House on April 25 at 7:30 p.m.

SEE CALENDAR pages 6 & 7 for dates of all meetings and programs forthcoming at A Woman's Place.