



a women's  
liberation  
newspaper

.15

# Pedestal

Volume II Number 10 December 1970

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Have  
Yourself  
a Merry  
Little  
Christmas

canadian  
postal  
service

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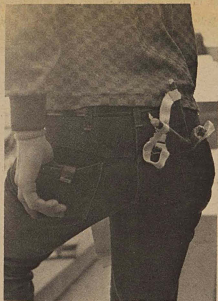
# women together

A National Conference of the Women's Liberation Movement, the first ever in Canada, was held on November 21-22 in Saskatoon. The Saskatoon women called the conference, and did all the work. Over 200 women attended, nearly 100 of whom were from cities across Canada, outside of Saskatoon. Five Women's Caucus members went from Vancouver.

Everyone expects somewhat different things from a conference, but a major problem at Saskatoon was that most participants held one of two completely different ideas of what the conference was all about. One group, led by, but not exclusively composed of YS/LSA women, came to argue for a national strategy focused on a national day of protest against the abortion laws. The other group, much less conscious of itself as a group, hoped to discuss and analyse immediate problems of various groups; how to become more than campus-based groups; how to avoid becoming a social service bureau around abortion counselling, how to develop a political analysis and strategy that will lead to revolutionary change. Women wanted to raise questions like, whether a national strategy is possible or desirable, and whether abortion should be top priority.

Another complication was that the Saskatoon women planned the first day as an educational session for new women.

However, things got off to an unexpected start when Marlene Dixon and Peggy Morton decided not to talk about theory (their scheduled talks were on Political Economy of Women), but about strategy and the relevance of the women's liberation movement. They cut across the agenda of the first day and raised the questions that most women looked forward to discussing. From then on, the conflicting aims of the conference meant that the focus kept shifting, and no discussion could be carried to the depth needed.



On Sunday, the differences over the purpose of the conference became clearer. After a series of talks on strategy, a proposal to stay in plenary to debate the National Day of Protest was defeated. The majority voted to divide into two groups, one to discuss the abortion campaign, the other to go into more depth about problems of strategy.

The overwhelming majority of the conference attended the second workshop, which began a good discussion.

When we came back together, the abortion workshop presented the Day of Protest proposal for ratification. The session decided that since it wasn't a representative conference, it shouldn't vote at all on this. The proposal from the "revolution"/"organizing" workshop was that everyone should return to their groups and continue the discussion that was barely begun at the conference.

The conference was an important one — it gave us the chance to begin learning from each other and to begin a serious discussion of strategy. It was also a chance to assess the distance women's liberation in Canada has come since the Western Regional Conference in Vancouver a year ago. At that time, the only groups in existence were small discussion groups. The problems that now exist are problems created by the fact that we are acting and growing.

# STRATEGIES

The following is a talk (reconstructed from notes) given by Jean Rands. We may print more of the conference discussion next month — if we get the tapes.

I'm overwhelmed at the thought of trying to explain Women's Caucus strategy in just ten minutes, particularly since there have been basically two alternatives presented to the conference so far, neither of which I agree with.

There is the position put forward by the YS/LSA and the Vancouver Women's Liberation Alliance. This is essentially that the women's liberation movement should be an amorphous united front within which individual women draw conclusions about the nature of our oppression as women and its relation to the system we live under, and then, as individuals, join "political" organizations. To say as they do that the women's liberation movement should include "women of all political philosophies" "reformists, liberals, etc." is to say that the movement itself is not political, that it cannot develop a total analysis of our oppression, or the long-term strategy that can only flow from such analysis.

On the other hand, the alternative expressed by Peggy Morton, which is somewhat similar to the position of the Vancouver Women's Liberation group, is that women must organize around support for the struggles of all oppressed people.

In criticizing the women's liberation movement, Peggy said "we used to think the struggle against imperialism is a man's struggle; as women we must fight against our own oppression."

We all seem to agree that the oppression of women is fundamental to capitalism. If that means anything, it means that the struggle for women's liberation is a struggle against imperialism. It means that an autonomous women's movement can and must be a revolutionary movement.

As Marlene pointed out, this does not mean that any struggle of any group of women is revolutionary. Part of discussing strategy is looking at how women are divided, how the system oppresses different groups of women differently. We must determine strategic priorities on that basis — which groups of women are most likely to fight for the liberation of all women, rather than for partial victories which benefit only a few women.

Peggy said "we used to think we should organize only around our own oppression as women." First, it's funny to use the word "only" to describe the oppression of half the population, which permeates

every aspect of the society we live in. Second, while we may have thought we should organize that way, we really haven't done much organizing. So far we have mostly been discussing, analyzing, and spreading some ideas around; we are only beginning to organize.

I'd like to go back to the abortion campaign.

That campaign was very important and successful in terms of reaching thousands of new women with the ideas of the women's liberation movement; but it was not very successful in involving new women, in organizing, in building the movement — at least in Vancouver.

Both Women's Caucus and Vancouver Women's Liberation agreed that the abortion campaign showed the serious limitations of single issue campaign-type organizing. The alternative posed by Peggy, and posed last spring by Vancouver Women's Liberation, is that women should organize within, or at least together with, a general revolutionary organization (in Vancouver last spring, the Vancouver Liberation Front; in Toronto now, "Rising Up Angry"), and that organizing of women should be done in the context of the global strategy and program of the general revolutionary organization.

In Women's Caucus, the conclusion we drew was that the main effort should be directed towards organizing groups of women who are able to confront their oppression in a day-to-day way — on the job, in a school, etc. And that through learning from the experience of the abortion campaign, through attempting to fight our oppression the way we really face it — as a totality, not as a series of single issues — that we can develop a strategy which comes out of our own experience as women and as a women's movement. Our relationship to other struggles can come out of our growing understanding of our oppression as women, and the different ways in which women are oppressed. For instance, our support for the struggles in Quebec comes out of our understanding that the oppression of French Canadian women is also our oppression, that we face the same enemy and are part of the same struggle.

The splits in Vancouver arose when it was possible and necessary to deal with strategy, with organizing; to go beyond general educational work. As I said, those splits are similar to the disagreements at this conference. But there is a difference — an important difference — between our disagreements with Peggy over what strategy the women's liberation movement should adopt; and our disagreement with the LSA position, which is that the women's liberation movement should have no strategy at all.

# regina women confront dr's

On October 21-23, the Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Saskatchewan Medical Association held their annual convention at the Saskatchewan Hotel in Regina. The Women's Liberation groups of Regina and Saskatoon had written requesting time to present a brief on birth control and abortion to the doctors' meeting.

When they entered the hotel to distribute the brief to the doctors, the women were met by hotel security officers, RCMP and city police who forced them to leave immediately. It seems ridiculous that when the medical profession of Saskatchewan is discussing abortion and birth control they feel they need police protection from the women whom these services will serve.

The next morning the women tried again. This time, a representative of the doctors agreed to allow

the women to hand out the briefs and called a meeting for the women and interested doctors for later that day. But the hotel manager insisted (rudely) that the women leave because "they didn't pay for space" in his hotel.

Police and commissionaires were still on duty when the women returned for the meeting.

The brief, which the women read, began: "No one should make a decision for a woman about how to control her body or when and how she will have children. It is her future, her life, as well as that of her children, that is being decided, and a truly just society must recognize the basic human rights of 50% of the people."

Several requests of the doctors were made:

a) that the women's brief be printed in the Saskatchewan Medical Association's Journal.



Affectionate greetings to "Ralphie Boy"



# PROTEST PARTY

The inconspicuously expensive new home of Ralph T. Cunningham (the drug-store mogul) was the scene Sunday November 15 of a lawn party given to commemorate the entry into the eighth month of the strike of the women at C.H. Hosken, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Cunningham drug chain. Members and friends of Vancouver Women's Caucus were invited especially to enjoy the park-like atmosphere of the Cunningham grounds.

Among the guests, the fashionable wet-look was very much in evidence, and the great skirt length controversy ignored in favor of comfort and convenience, as might be expected of women with sense and independence. Helena Gutteridge, accompanied by her darling little girl, looked smashing in a loden green jacket with pants, while Annie Buller attracted attention in a lovely blue velvet double breasted lounge coat. She happened to mention to this reporter that her stylish gumboots, so very much this year, were an imported venture — from Quebec. Sparkling debutante Emma Goldman chose white, capturing this winter's arctic look, with white fur trim — rare white mink is my guess. Another outfit to catch every eye was that worn by Emily Stowe consisting of a red patent tunic type top with coordinated stove-pipe striped pants, very gay in red white and blue. The four or five gentlemen members of the party circulated among the guests. Their attire, too, was distinguished for style and practicality. Most outstanding, perhaps, although the choice is difficult, was the adapted formal attire chosen by Hawthornthwaite which employed white nylon in a novel hooded wind-breaker effect. Certainly, we of Vancouver need no longer take a back seat to anyone in the tasteful and confident adaptation of the latest style trends for such occasions.

Early arrivals at the affair enjoyed assisting with the completion of the decoration. An evergreen hedge was festooned with colorful signs embossed with such memorable quips as *He who can live in a house like this can afford to pay his workers decent wages and Boycott Cunninghams*. More color and wit were supplied by signs worn by some of the guests.

Music was provided by a tin drum and parts of a coffee maker "a la cymbal," played by members of the VWC symphony. Following a serenade, guests at the party jovially demanded that the host and guest of honor make an appearance. However, Cunningham, who is known to be shy "at such occasions (a result perhaps of the hypocrisy of his appearances in his role as vice-chairman of the United Appeal fund drive?) was away for the afternoon. His place was taken by a member of the merchant's security patrol, a full-time resident at Cunninghams, who graciously informed the guests that they were trespassing. Miss Cunningham (well-known to members of the UBC social set) was also present and joined the party for a few minutes. She was overheard to mention that her father had earlier invited Caucus members for a chat, an invitation that was refused because the Hosken strikers and their union agent were not included (a lamentable slip in etiquette on Cunningham's part, n'est ce pas?).

As the sparkling mood of the party increased, and the tempo of the party quickened, guests circulated around the vicinity, inviting the Cunninghams'

neighbours on S.W. Marine Drive to join the fun. Some declined, expressing interest in the occasion and surprise at the Cunningham labor policies which occasioned the bash. One however, Mr. Thomas, Alexander Kennedy of 2230 S.W. Marine, a name well-known where profit-squeezing capitalists gather, did join the party. The president and general manager of a pacific wood pipe firm was overheard arguing, in a vehement tone entirely out of keeping with the festive activities, that profits were shrinking as workers were earning too much already. (Also overheard was a rather strange statement by Mr. Kennedy to the effect that a man's name is his own private property!)

The entertainment was lavish, highlighted by a performance of a skit, especially commissioned for the occasion, by the VWC Theatre group, Cunningham, affectionately identified as "Ralphie Boy", was depicted in tophat and smoking jacket as part of the United Appeal, cheerfully and charitably extorting money from his underpaid workers to give, with feigned humility striving with natural pride, to the poor, deprived by the economic policies pursued by him and his kind. These recipients of such "charity" were identified as "Hosken orphans". The guests greatly appreciated the gentle irony, greeting Ralphie Boy with the hisses deserved by the villain of the piece. Long applause followed its conclusion.

In addition to your reporter, a large number of news and broadcasting people were pleased to receive invitations to attend. Cunningham was rewarded by considerable coverage in the media, on CKNW, CTV and even in the Vancouver Sun! And the reason for the party was not forgotten by these members of the Fourth Estate. The Sun reporters and editors have at last, perhaps recognized that Cunninghams generosity and lavish entertainment should not be allowed to disappear into the anonymity he so eccentrically seems to seek. Cunningham drug profits, used so generously for such parties, will be recognized and soon returned to the workers and customers who make them possible.

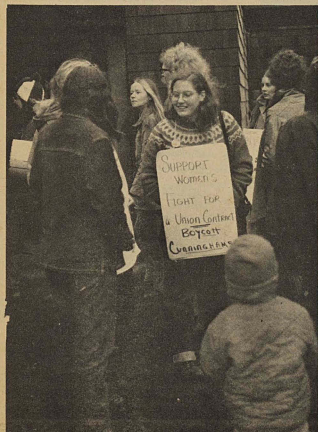
## BOYCOTT Cunninghams

Women's Caucus is attempting to organize a boycott of all Cunninghams stores in support of the Hosken strikers' fight for a union contract. So long as 85% of working women are unorganized, we have no job security, lousy wages, and we're forced to compete with one another to make a living.

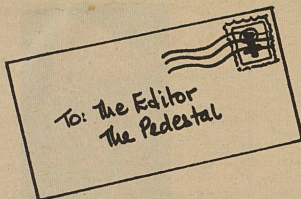
The boycott may be having some effect. Cunninghams profits are down and they've lost a couple of their franchise stores. But Hosken is still operating with scab labor. Teamsters and railway workers are still handling their products. The success of the strike may depend on the boycott. If you can help — leaflet, picket, etc. — call us at 684-0523.



Some people enjoyed the party more than others



The rain was ruining our coiffures, but we didn't get invited in...



### United Appeal

The following letter was sent to the United Appeal on November 3.

Dear Madam:

I would like to bring to your attention the position in which I find myself regards your present campaign.

I am at present engaged (in a supporting role) in a labor dispute between C.H. Hosken Ltd., Van. B.C. and its employees there. C.H. Hosken is a subsidiary of Cunningham Drugs, the head of which is a spokesman for your United Appeal this year; I am referring to Mr. Ralph Cunningham.

The crux of the problem is this: Mr. Cunningham is the prime mover in any meaningful negotiations that might be held between C.H. Hosken (his subsidiary) and the employees there; apparently he sees no reason to intervene in this dispute thereby giving his approval to the way in which C.H. Hosken is handling the dispute (trying to break the several months' old strike, employing scab labor, etc.)

This leaves me to draw one conclusion, that Mr. Cunningham is a hypocrite of the worst kind; on one hand standing up and asking my support in the quest for human rights for all, and on the other standing by and watching whilst his hirelings crush those same human rights of others.

While I realize the United Appeal is not responsible for the morals of its spokesmen at least I have a choice with whom I have to be associated with; therefore I am cancelling my payroll deduction to United Appeal for as long as Mr. Cunningham is connected with same. I shall also through various channels which are open to me, endeavor to bring the facts of this affair to as many of my fellow postal workers as possible, leaving them to judge for themselves.

Yours,

Terence F. Bennett

### about Zaria

Dear editor:

I assume that the picture printed in the last Pedestal of Zaria, Yippie candidate for mayor of Vancouver, was supposed to instill in readers some sort of sympathy, or reaction that a similar picture of a Vietnamese woman would, holding her child and a gun.

The similarities are not there. In fact, the smiling innocent face of Zaria is an insult to the Vietnamese woman who must kill in defence of her child.

Zaria's concern for fun, music and burning money are an insult to all women who fight with guns to protect lives and national rights, or who fight with feet on picket lines to gain more money to feed hungry families.

I am not particularly concerned with what the Yippie movement

involves itself in, but I am concerned when the Pedestal suggests amused support for their cynical disregard of the real and very serious problems of working people.

If Women's Caucus wishes to address itself to the coming municipal election, they should do so with a view of influencing and representing the working women of Vancouver.

Sincerely,  
Anna Elphinstone

from Edmonton

Sisters:

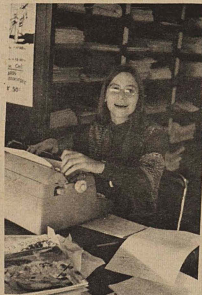
The Edmonton women's liberation has expanded to include two addresses and phone numbers.

We would also like to tell you how good we thought the last issue of the Pedestal was - the one with the Sojourner Truth quotation and the article by the woman hack. The whole thing was much more geared to be of interest to all kinds of women everywhere, rather than to political heavies in Vancouver. We really liked it.

In sisterhood,  
Virginia Holmes

### about Leila

As Leila Khelad has expressed it, the women in any people's movement have just as big a role to play as the men. I think there are examples in history to illustrate this. Leila Khelad must be a shining symbol to many people in the middle east and elsewhere. Why the British government let her go I do not know; but I should imagine that the oppressed people in the middle east and elsewhere do not



### this issue

Merrily put together by Nikki Ross, Mary Borsky, Pat Hoffer, Carol Phillips, Jean Rands, Anne Roberts, Barbara Todd, Pat Uhl, Helen Potrebienko, Mary Matheson, Marge Hellihaugh, Dodie Wepler, Maggie Bonston, Charlotte Bedard, Andrea Lebowitz, Cathy Walker, Doria

need to know the motives of the British government.

As Adele Williams of FRAP (Front d'Action Politique, Montreal) said: "The poor people have no faith in elections" (or the present elected, or otherwise, imperialists of the West, Arab nations or Israel). Have the imperialists ever allowed a genuine people's movement to last long enough for the pioneers' grandchildren to live under its momentum?

Perhaps that is happening now in China; but 800 million people form a strong shield against the rest of the decadent world. I have read that Denmark and Sweden have nearly developed a people's democracy or socialism or whatever. I have also read that the people in those small countries are unhappy in their "Utopia"; that they are drinking and committing suicide like mad. If this is so, perhaps it is not their country's system that makes them unhappy but the huge mass of people, living in misery, that surrounds them.

The study of China and Scandinavia can be very instructive; but what has happened in both areas, large and small, does not prove anything to me. If the common people have to wait on the indulgence of the power blocks, self determination will remain with the people in power. Under those circumstances life is ridiculous. But I have heard that life has some rational meaning to the people in China and amongst various people's liberation struggles. Whatever has happened in the past and can be learned from it, who can say how the people's striving for a decent life will manifest itself in the future?

The few imperialists, with all the material power, cannot positively have control of the situation forever. The more women are able to develop their potential the more they can help the human race.

Sincerely,  
Betty Musenden

PS: ... I wrote it because you said that you did not get any letters about the article on Leila Khelad and because I thought I should tell you that I think your paper is interesting.



### next issue

A full report on the Saskatoon conference - and we have promises of articles from other centres - and we need letters, photos, articles, poetry, etc. from everyone.

Happy New Year!

### better jobs?

I feel the newspaper, "The Pedestal" would do its readers a real service if someone wrote an article on how women can get better paying jobs, where these better paying jobs are available in Vancouver and BC, and also the possibility of women being allowed to become apprentices in certain trades.

I personally am tired of my \$2.10 an hour job, and would love to know if there are other alternatives to my stenographic work.

Yours truly,  
N.V.

## across Canada

FREDERICTON  
Carol Hamilton-Smith  
748 Forest Hill Rd.

MONTREAL  
Women's Centre  
3694 Ste. Famille, 844-4838

OTTAWA  
Shirley Greenberg  
5 Commanche Dr.

TORONTO  
New Feminists  
Box 597, Station A

Women's Liberation  
WHERE ARE YOU?

Leila Khelad Collective  
Peggy Morton  
52 Elgin St. 922-8121

HAMILTON & DISTRICT  
297 Wentworth North

LONDON  
Pat Dewdney  
38 Craig Street

KITCHENER WATERLOO  
WHERE ARE YOU?

THUNDER BAY  
Joan Baril  
12 Lyle St.

WINNIPEG  
Joyce Arnold  
1029 Corydon, Apt. 2.

SUDBURY  
Cynthia Gedye  
16 Ester Rd., Box 43, Site 18

SASKATOON  
517 Lansdowne, 242-5830

REGINA  
2259 Cameron, 525-6252

EDMONTON  
Women's Liberation Office  
Rm. 10-10168-100 St., 429-4463

Sibylline House  
1113-83rd Ave., 432-7685

CALGARY  
WHERE ARE YOU?

LETHBRIDGE  
Lorna & Linda Rasmussen  
722-10th St. South

VANCOUVER  
Women's Caucus (The Pedestal)  
511 Carrall Street, 684-0523

Women's Liberation  
Fanshen House 879-5836

Women's Liberation Alliance  
Mary Trew 685-2755

VICTORIA  
Terry Inglis  
1716 Newton St., Apt. 105

from the arctic

Dear sisters,

We don't get much news at the North Pole, but I've managed to read a copy of The Pedestal and it's made me think a lot about the work I have been doing these many centuries.

I hope you understand that I think the children of the world should receive Christmas presents, but what I want to know is why my husband gets all the credit.

I spend 364 days a year making teddy bears, dolls, baseballs, bicycles and many varieties of games. Besides this, I have to record and file Santa's correspondence and during December, wrap and decorate the packages and make sure each is properly addressed. Sometimes, especially during the winter, I have to feed the reindeer.

As your paper pointed out, I carry a double load. Santa is quite traditional and expects me to do all the cooking, cleaning, ironing, etc. To feed and clothe Santa and all his helpers is a big job.

When my husband took this job, I had to leave my home and give up my ambitions for a career to follow him here. And yet, no one recognizes the work and sacrifices I have made to make your Christmas happy.

Why do the people of Canada and all over the world, decorate their homes with pictures of my husband? Why are children taught that my husband is the one responsible for their presents? Do the children ever think of leaving me milk and cookies on Christmas Eve?

Well, I've had it. Not only do I do all the work and Santa gets all the credit, but I realize now how I've been complicit in making little girls fall into the same trap I'm in. Santa always said little girls want dolls and toy houses and cooking utensils, but I know he just wants to keep us in "our place".

I want everyone to have a Merry Christmas, but not at my expense. I'm flying out with Santa Christmas Eve and I'm getting out in Vancouver. I want to join the movement.

Mrs. S. Claus

# going through changes

Since getting involved with Women's Caucus I've gone through many changes. Women's Caucus made me think and realize so many things. I am no longer mainly concerned just with going out and having a good time - Existing with the idea that you only have one life to live so - "eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow you may DIE". I have started caring and being more aware of what's happening around me. Instead of just thinking of myself, my own individual wants and desires; helping people is what I am now mainly concerned with. It is realizing this that made me confront the fact that I no longer have much in common with some of my life-long friends.

A recent party I attended made me face this fact. The hostess of the party has been a good friend for years. To comprehend the situation a general description of the house where the party was held is necessary. Picture a large modern house similar to the PNE display houses (I call them houses because there's nothing home-ly about them). With plush wall to wall carpeting, fully equipped kitchen, intercom throughout, bar, sauna, swimming pool, fireplaces, elaborate furnishings and color TV of course. The catering service came after a while with every dish you could imagine - turkey, chicken, fish dishes, Chinese food, and all types of salad. All this food took up every available space in the kitchen. Not nearly as many people as expected came - therefore just a very small amount of food was eaten. Most of the people who did come were out for a good time and to display latest fashions. As each new person entered the house everyone cried out about how nice their coat, shoes, hat, or whatever was, and went on and on about it. I was bored and felt very out of place. I sat in a corner all alone and realized that these are the type of people whose capitalistic ideas I am so much against. In the morning all the 'left over' good food - and there was lots of it - was thrown in the garbage. I thought about all the deprived, hungry people and felt so ashamed. I had a meeting to go to at the Women's Caucus office that morning. The sudden completely opposite change of atmosphere and surroundings was almost too much for me to cope with, but I felt so much better and more at home with my friends at Women's Caucus. Before becoming active with Women's Caucus I had never been involved or aware politically. I became active in Women's Caucus because I am concerned with what Women's Caucus is concerned with: Helping people, and caring very much about what's happening to human beings and the world in which we are struggling. I am concerned with making this a better world in which to LIVE.

We must work and struggle together and help each other by exchanging experiences and thoughts and sharing them with the people instead of competing against each other.

Carol



# JOIN US

for meeting dates, see Calendar p. 12

## ABORTION INFORMATION

Joint project with Women's Liberation group to provide information to women needing abortions, and help each other through the therapeutic abortion system. Call the office or D.J. O'Donnell at 879-5856 if you can help.

## WORKING WOMEN

Boycotting Cunninghams stores in support of strikers at Hosken; opposing the use of women as cheap labor by the Post Office (if you are working in the Post Office, please contact us); working to set up women's union; beginning to organize to help each other find jobs - temporary or permanent. Book 254-6673; Jean 298-8430.

## MEDIA PROJECT

Learning to do propaganda for women - mixed media, slide shows, photography, media guerrilla attack - maybe even a movie this spring. Pat Hoffer 731-5412

## PEDESTAL

Writing, layout, proofreading, typesetting - more and more people always needed. Anne 988-0950

## OFFICE

We need volunteers every afternoon to answer letters and phone, and do whatever else needs doing. Drop in even if for an hour or so. Mary 879-6086.

## WOMEN'S THEATRE

To do short plays, guerrilla theatre. No experience required. Writing & producing. Helen 298-8430

## CHILD CARE

Small group needing interested members to organize child care centres. Mich Tenney 876-2677

## CO-ORDINATING Committee

Includes representatives of each workshop; open to everyone. Co-ordinates us, exchanges ideas, plans general meetings.

## EDUCATION

UBC - Mostly doing general education around women's liberation - selling literature, talking in classes, etc. Jane Rule 224-0557

SFU - General education plus the Indignity Centre; bring any complaints about male chauvinism, male supremacy on campus. Guerrilla Theatre etc. Jan Patterson 524-4598

VCC - Cathy Wilander 433-0290  
High Schools - women's liberation groups formed in a couple of schools, trying to break into others. Trudi 939-7713, Robin 987-5048

## GENERAL MEETINGS

Once a month - where we bring it all together, with reports from workshops and discussions of general strategy. Usually the last Thurs. of the month, but the next

one is December 17. The last one (Nov. 26) discussed reports from most workshops, and a report from the national women's liberation conference in Saskatoon. Out of that report, we had some discussion about the relationship of men to Women's Caucus, and decided that although men should be excluded from our own meetings, we should have occasional public meetings to open discussion with men. Specifically, we decided to call a public meeting to deal with women's demands in the work force, and our relationship to working men, since we expect a number of questions to be raised around our actions at the Post Office. The meeting also decided to call a meeting to establish more communication and discussion among those who are speaking in high schools and at various groups about women's liberation, so that we can all learn from individual experiences.

# biggest sale in town

It was cold and raining when the alarm went off. I coked an eye from the bed to the window and remembered with dismay why the alarm had been set. For over a month the Post Office had been advertising job hiring for Christmas help: Mon. Nov. 23rd for women and Wed., Nov. 25th for men.

Since it was pouring rain and I don't really relish the thought of working for \$1.65 an hour I probably would never have gotten out of bed that morning, except for a promise to my sisters in Women's Caucus. I'm new to Vancouver, but it seems that last

noticed out of the corner of my eye a rather poorly dressed, middle-aged Chinese woman who also seemed to be reading it over and over. I was frantically trying to find something to say to her when there was a sudden commotion about fifty feet up the line from us. A young girl had fainted and was carried to the middle of the room and unceremoniously dumped on the floor to recover. Several hundred pairs of eyes were fixed on her as she slowly regained consciousness. As she staggered back to her place in the line, the women around me began



year the women picketed the Post Office at Christmas. Christmas help was hired at \$1.50 an hour for men, \$1.25 for women. This year the rate for sorters was increased from \$1.25 an hour to \$1.65. And yet, the curious institution of separate hiring dates was to be repeated once again, which implied that the channelling of women into the lowest paying jobs would also continue.

A number of women from the Vancouver Women's Liberation did some research on the Post Office and drew up a leaflet in collaboration with Women's Caucus. Women from both groups promised to show up to leaflet and some of us to apply for jobs in the hope of getting inside to agitate for better working conditions during the Christmas holidays.

So despite the rain I found myself walking through the door to the Post Office to join several hundred women of every age and type who were desperate enough to wait three hours in the hope of a few weeks work for minimal pay.

As I walked through the door someone from the Caucus recognized me despite my dress-up costume for job-hunting. She rushed over and to my dismay stuffed a pile of leaflets into my hand and told me to distribute them while I stood in line and "talk it up with the women there." She assured me that most had already been waiting about an hour and were probably getting a little frustrated. So I dutifully walked over to the line. I discovered with my relief that everyone already had the leaflet. In fact they were reading it with apparent interest. Some seemed to think it was an official bit of advice and instruction from the Post Office bureaucracy.

I was overcome with a feeling of awkward embarrassment. I couldn't think of anything to say. Actually I could think of all sorts of things to say but my vocal chords wouldn't cooperate. I tried to hide the telltale bundle of leaflets under my coat and buried my nose in one just like everyone around me. The leaflet described the discriminatory hiring practices of the previous year. It outlined the pay scale for this year: \$1.65 per hour for sorters and \$1.90 per hour for porters and carriers. It pointed out that although the latter jobs stipulated that the worker must be able to carry loads of 35 to 65 pounds, four women have been hired on a full time basis and seem to be fully capable of the work.

As I read the leaflet for the fifth time or so I

muttering about how she had been the third one to collapse from the stuffy heat.

Shortly after some Post Office official came along the line to tell us to take off our coats so there wouldn't be any more of these "fainting incidents". An older and rather talkative woman with a heavy German accent standing in front of me began complaining to her neighbors that maybe this was some sort of endurance contest to determine which women would be able to take standing eight hours a day sorting. At that a young woman in braids and jeans began describing the rotten working conditions in a crowded, cluttered, dark back room where the sorters work shifts around the clock.

At this point about an hour had passed since I had joined the line. I had only moved about a quarter of the way toward the distant desk where applicants were being quizzed by five men from Manpower. Still I hadn't said a word. Meanwhile my more courageous sisters began distributing Pedestals and interviewing the women in the line. When the Pedestal was handed out the women around me began discussing women's liberation in earnest. To my astonishment, all the things I had been thinking I might say were being said without any prodding from me.

"Who says I can't carry a mail bag? If these guys had ever carried a bag of laundry or a box of groceries, they'd know better."

Women's Liberation, well I don't know... well, I know that women do have a reason to complain... I mean look at the hours we work and what do we get for it. I told my husband I should be paid for doing the dishes, the laundry... and he says I should go out and get a job if I want money but all they offer is \$1.65 and I still have to go home to the housework...

"My kids... they see the ads on TV and well I'd really like to be able to give them those things for Christmas, but if I don't get some work... well, it won't be much of a Christmas for them."

"I think women do have a reason to complain but these women's liberationists they're all men haters..."

"No we're not. I mean well uh... well I belong to the women's liberation movement and I don't hate men." And with that I let the cat out of the bag. After that it was easy - just a flood of questions from them all, the Chinese woman, the German, the

hippy... who we are, what we're trying to do, did we actually think we could get people to change that much, etc.

About an hour later, we were all still talking. We were getting closer to the front desk and could finally see why it was taking so long. Women were not allowed to fill out their own forms - rather they had to give answers to men from Manpower who filled out the forms for them. The German woman said, "For God's sake, don't they realize we have to be able to read and write if we're going to sort mail." At that very moment a group of women ahead of us began chanting, "We want forms!" "We want forms!"

As the chanting swelled, a Manpower official came over to our section. "This is ridiculous. Those women are behaving like children. This is entirely unnecessary." He was trying to get us to agree with him, to disown our frustrated sisters ahead of us. The women around me weren't buying it.

"I want a form, too." I heard my funny meek voice say. "So do I" said the girl with the braids. "We want forms." shouted the German woman. Soon we were all shouting at the top of our lungs, "We want forms, now."

We didn't get the forms. But the line suddenly jumped ahead several feet. The Manpower people were roping off twenty to thirty people at a time and then releasing them in bunches to approach the desk. Nervous men behind the desk began asking questions of applicants as fast as they could.

A tall woman from the Women's Liberation began to make a sort of speech. She explained that the forms were extremely simple and that we could easily fill them out ourselves in a few minutes and all go home. She pointed out that several women had brought children who had been forced to wait for three hours. She told women that the Post Office refused to provide even a little space in the cafeteria for a nursery where the children could play or sleep while they waited for their mothers. She pointed out a humble little circle of chairs that women had had to bring all the way from the Caucus office along with a box of toys. The "nursery" had to be set up right in the middle of the Post Office. At this point, an imposing-looking administrator from Manpower tried to shut her up. She merely kept talking louder than he felt dignified doing. She shouted for all to here. "Here's the man responsible for this mess! He's the one who makes the decisions here. He's the one with the power to change the procedures..."

"Wow! that woman sure has guts." muttered the German woman. For the next half hour we talked about why it is that women become so passive and shy after years and years of feminine socialization.

Finally we reached the desk. It was told to produce our social insurance cards from which obviously harried and nervous males took down our names, addresses, and S.I. numbers. Then we had to provide vital statistics: "Age?" "Twenty-seven" "Height?" "Five foot four" "Weight?" "A hundred and twenty." I was beginning to feel like chattel just arrived at the market. In the five minutes it took the guy to write it all down, my brain was burning with the indignity of trying to sell my labor so cheaply and anonymously.

Pat Uhl



"Age?" "Twenty-seven." "Height?" "Five foot four." feel like a chattel just arrived at the market...

# WE are not the P.O.'s 'public'

The Post Office has never been a friend of oppressed people. It is no coincidence that the first bombings in Quebec were directed against this repressive symbol. Women also feel this oppression, having been used for decades as a source of cheap labor. We have been drawn in and out of post office jobs at the convenience of the federal government.

When the clumsy manipulations of powerful corporations and government plunge the country into economic chaos, we are called upon as the stabilizing force. During the depression, when thousands of people were desperate for employment, women were the first to suffer. In 1931 there were no women employed in BC post offices. (There were 455 men.)

Ten years later, when the war industry stimulated economic activity, men were sent off to fight in a war that did not serve their interests and women were suddenly beckoned back into the labor force. The post office was no exception. Almost two thousand women in Canada declared their occupation as "postmistress" or "postal worker" in the 1941 census. This reflected a 90% increase in ten years. (The corresponding increase for men was 30%.)

With the closing of the war economy in 1949, women once again found themselves at the mercy of an economic situation beyond their control. The returning men were given priority in the labor market and women were forced back into their traditional roles of housewives and mothers. In Canada, only 256 women were employed by the post office during these years. In BC the figure was more astounding — there were only 12 women postal workers.

The federal government's attitude towards women reflects the methods used to run our society. Women are used and manipulated as a pool of cheap labor, keeping down the wages of all working people, male and female. Three quarters of the Christmas jobs at the post office this year will go to women and nearly all of the women will work as sorters for \$1.65 an hour. The job categories for male applicants did not include this lower paying job. Men, frustrated by this competition for scarce jobs, often argue that women should stay home. When we begin to demand the right to apply and be hired for the higher paying "male" jobs, we are told that we should keep our place and not deprive desperate breadwinners by glutting the market. Neither men nor women should allow themselves to be fooled by these arguments. The stiffer the competition and antagonism between us, the easier it is for employers to keep down all of our wages. Men should not be duped into being

satisfied with miserable wages and working conditions just because they are slightly better than those of women. Rather they should actively support women's struggles for the right to organize, for higher wages, shorter hours, day care, better working conditions, etc.

The wages, discriminatory hiring practices and working conditions at the post office result from typical business attitudes and practices. It is not surprising then to find that the key bureaucrats in this supposedly nonprofit, public service institution are also key figures in the world of big business.

Eric Kierans who was Postmaster General until September 25, 1970 is a prime example. Formerly the Director of McGill's School of Commerce and Finance, he has held posts as Quebec's Minister of Revenue (1963-65), Minister of Health (1965-66) and President of the Quebec Liberal Federation (1966). His access to these posts was undoubtedly paved by contacts gained during three years service as President of the Montreal and Canadian Stock Exchange, and his membership in the American Economic Association and the American Finance Association.

Since 1968, when Kierans became Postmaster General, the post office has been in continual turmoil. The tough business-like manner displayed by the self-made millionaire was excessively crude for a government organization.

When the militant postal truck drivers of the Lapalme Company, a firm set up by the federal government, began their slow-down on Feb. 3, 1970, Kieran's inflexible stand provided some indication of the government's attitude towards the oppression of French people.

The Lapalme drivers began to stage rotating strikes to protest the post office's decision to split the Lapalme Company's exclusive contract for mail delivery among five companies, thus eliminating the jobs of 450 Lapalme drivers.

The drivers are affiliated to the CNTU — a federation accepting only Quebec unions. In the face of their long history of hard struggles, the federal post office was out to smash the most militant union as an example to other drivers across the country whose contracts were also coming to an end.

Kierans refused to negotiate and the militancy of the Lapalme workers has provided an inspiration to the struggle for Quebec independence which is still being waged today.

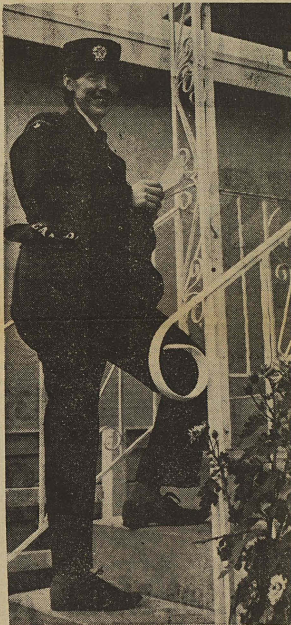
The tough, but clumsy Kierans has since been replaced by a man more sensitive to "public relations" who could smooth out the conflict. Jean Pierre Cote, a French Canadian, was given the job of "restore good personnel relations with postal employees." (Province, Sept. 25) But a pleasant personality and a more relaxed manner will not alter the fact that the post office is exploiting the postal workers.

During the recent contract disputes, it was decided that in spite of union demands, Saturday mail delivery would be suspended in order to save money. Yet, during the rotating strikes, over \$25 million more than the union demands would have cost were lost by the government's refusal to settle the strike.

This society is undergoing an economic crisis. Cutbacks in service and increased unemployment will serve the interests of the businessmen but not the working class who are left jobless so that others can stay rich. If the government were interested in serving the people and fulfilling human needs, the solution to the economic problems would be in terms of

hiring the growing numbers of unemployed in order to provide more efficient service.

The federal government wears two hats. While claiming huge annual deficits, the post office in fact subsidizes mailing of all government material and gives corporations cheap second class mailing privileges. The government's other hat is its insistence that the post office exists to serve the people. But these subsidies indicate which class of people it serves.

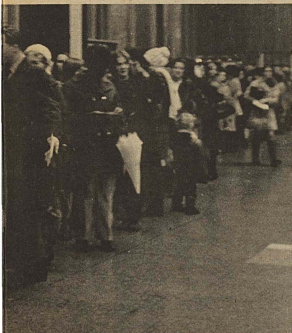


"Who says I can't carry a mail bag? If these guys had ever carried a bag of laundry or a box of groceries, they'd know better."

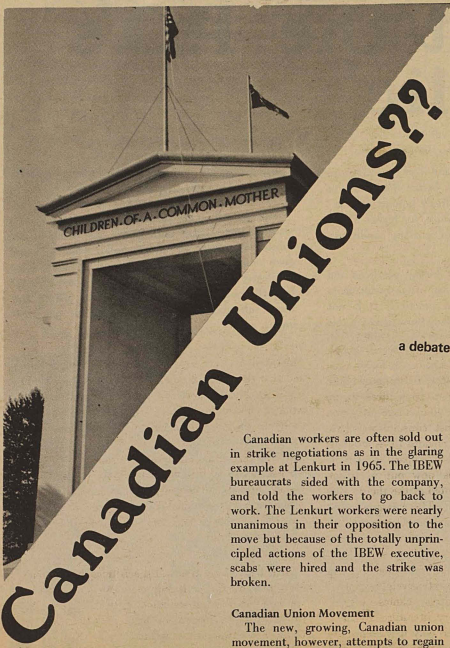
Providing work for the unemployed is only a partial solution. Women with children will be unable to work outside the home unless there is a provision for free, community-controlled child care facilities available on the job.

The attitude and practice of the post office represents one of the repressive aspects of this society. The post office, which is supposed to be a public service, serves only those with money. Unless we organize and fight for higher wages, better working conditions and better service, women will continue to be only poorly-paid servants of this 'public'.

The research and writing of this article was a collective effort of: Dodie Wepler, Marge Hollibaugh, Maxine Schnee and Janis Nairne.



"Weight?" "A hundred and twenty." I was beginning to



a debate

Canadian workers are often sold out in strike negotiations as in the glaring example at Lenkurt in 1965. The IBEW bureaucrats sided with the company, and told the workers to go back to work. The Lenkurt workers were nearly unanimous in their opposition to the move but because of the totally unprincipled actions of the IBEW executive, scabs were hired and the strike was broken.

**Canadian Union Movement**

The new, growing, Canadian union movement, however, attempts to regain the lost spirit of democratic trade unionism, to combat corruption and the dictatorial powers held by senior executive members. They all have open-book policies with statements of finances available to all the membership, and of course, all the dues money stays in this country to be spent as the membership sees fit. The Canadian trade unions are all democratically structured — one has only to compare the constitution of an "International" with that of a Canadian union to witness the difference. Decisions are made openly at local membership meetings, not behind the scenes by backroom bureaucrats. Within the plants, shop stewards are elected by the membership, not appointed from above. Grievances are fought hard and usually won, because the companies know the issues are backed by true union membership solidarity. The few paid officials that they have are not allowed to earn a salary and expense account equally more than that of the highest-paid workers in the industry.

There are of course problems within the Canadian trade union movement as there are in any movements including the women's liberation movement, and some of these were brought up in the last article. But the basic fact remains, Canadian unions are democratically structured and deserve the support of Canadian working women. —Cathy

Probably the majority of women who are union members belong to Canadian Unions: Canadian Union of Public Employees, BC Government Employees Union, etc. These unions are generally no more democratic than the international unions that represent women: Retail Wholesale & Dept. Store Union, Office and Technical Employees, etc.

In the Hospital Employees, for instance, shop stewards are appointed, women receive much less than equal pay, a member can be expelled for circulating leaflets in a union election. The International Woodworkers (IWA) on the other hand has elected shop stewards and has won equal pay for equal work.

The Canadian unions that are much more democratic are those that split from international unions because of the undemocratic structure of the international, and because many workers dislike being part of anything run from the U.S. — the symbol of war, racism and repression around the world. But even then, when the Canadian Pulp & Paper Workers was formed in a split from the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulfitte & Papermill Workers, there was a similar split in the U.S. to form the Western Assoc. of Pulp & Paper Workers. American workers also found the lack of democracy intolerable, although they and their "leadership" were the same nationality.

**Where does bureaucracy come from?**

Part of the problem is clearly the structure and constitutions of the existing unions. The fact that the full-time staff members are supposed to represent the workers, and do the bargaining for the workers involved, means that the union leadership tends to get more and more isolated from the day-to-day problems on the job. For women workers, whose union representatives are usually men, it means that their relationship to the union maintains the role of women throughout this society: they leave the decision-making and action to the men.

It is easy for a union leader, even one who begins as a union militant, to substitute the interests of the union structure for those of the workers. In many unions, the full-time staff haven't worked on the job for years (if ever). Even if they are elected, even if they are paid no more than the workers, they often spend more time with management than with the workers they are supposed to represent.

The Working Women's Organizing Committee proposal is based on the idea that working women can and must organize *ourselves*, speak for ourselves, negotiate for ourselves. We are now at the point of drafting a constitution for the union, attempting to avoid the pitfalls of bureaucracy. We are getting into the problem of how to build solidarity among women workers and

link our struggles, while maintaining local autonomy and freedom of action in each job situation — all in a constitution that we want the Labor Relations Board to approve so we can have the minimum protection provided by law!

**structure and goals**

But a democratic constitution isn't enough. Even in the most democratic unions, women tend to be inactive; they are "represented" by men.

Why do women workers vote for men to represent them?

The present structure of the unions seems to make sense because the goals of the unions are so limited. Their objective is not to challenge the existing system, but to gain a better deal for the union's members within the system. Since men are obviously more respected than women, and since the company's negotiators are men, women workers can feel that a man would get them a better contract than a woman could.

The role of unions in defending the wages and working conditions of their members is important. But the needs of workers — particularly women workers — cannot be met within those limits. Problems like day care, which can only be dealt with from an understanding that the oppression of women workers extends beyond the job situation itself, have been ignored by the existing unions. Because their objectives are limited to wages and working conditions, even those few unions that have won equal pay for women have failed to fight for equal job opportunity so that equal pay becomes meaningful.

Most important, the existing unions have failed to organize women. (In BC, 85% of women workers are unorganized.) Their structure prevents them from organizing most women workers. Because they divide employed from unemployed, they are incapable of overcoming the problem that women in the home can be brought into the work force and used against women already working.

The needs of women workers will be met only through our own independent action; through a movement which does not accept the limitations of the existing system. We cannot find a solution in constitutional change, or in exchanging Canadian unions for international unions. The solution is not simply to have women represented by other women. In fact, no organizational form can solve the problem.

The fundamental difference between our union and the existing unions is that our objective is not to be "trade unionists", not just to protect the interests of our members. Our goal is to build a movement of working women which understands that none of us can be free until all women are liberated; and that our liberation will mean the destruction of the system that exploits and oppresses us. —Jean

Since the Women's Caucus strategy conference in June, the Pedestal has carried discussion of the relationship of women workers to the trade union movement. This discussion is particularly important in the context of our intention to launch a women's union, and our current campaign against Cunninghams in solidarity with the Hosken strike. The specific discussion of Canadian (as opposed to international) unions began in the October Pedestal with an article by Cathy Walker and Charlotte Bedard on their experiences working in a plant within the Canadian Electrical Workers union.

**"International Unions"**

Trade unions in Canada can be roughly divided into two categories — "international" unions and Canadian unions. The international unions are, in fact, American unions. Their headquarters and chief executive officers are located in the United States. The union members who must pay union dues see their money flow from the local of the union to the U.S. headquarters. They rarely see this money again. The labor bureaucrats in the States get rich with salaries and expense accounts amounting to far more than that of the highest-paid workers in the particular industry. Canadian members of American unions often receive no pay when on strike.

**REGINA ABORTION BRIEF**

from page 2

b) that the women be allowed to make a presentation to the next meeting of the provincial medical bodies.

c) that the College of Physicians and Surgeons engage in an educational program for its own membership on the questions of birth control and abortion.

d) that individual doctors accept women's right to safe birth control, and practice their profession accordingly.

e) that physicians who are presently sitting on Therapeutic Abortion Boards interpret the law as liberally as possible.

Whether the requests will be granted is still in question, but the convention did pass a resolution asking the federal government to repeal abortion from the Criminal Code. During the meeting, the majority of doctors seemed somewhat sympathetic to the women's point of view. The medical profession may do little more than pass resolutions — but women's liberation will keep pushing.

**vote NDP**

- to make birth control information available to students in the high schools
- encourage a better balance between male & female teachers throughout the school system
- end sexual discrimination in school appointments & in orientation of school curriculum
- give welfare recipients participation in decision-making
- initiate day care centres, half-day nurseries & baby-sitting services

**vancouver civic election-dec. 9**

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# letter from Québec

Dear sisters,

We felt that it would be a good idea for us to write to you, to explain how the situation in Québec is affecting us. We'd like to explain to you how we feel the struggle of the FLQ is connected to ours as women.

The FLQ has been attempting to demonstrate to people the nature of our political system — a system that is built upon the exploitation of people in their labor; and this hits home to us as women: we know how OUR labor is used!

We feel that the Québécoises and Québécois would never have been able to achieve the independence of Québec through the "democratic provincial elections" — the War Measures Act or some variation on it would have been brought in to dissipate the independentist liberation movement long before a "majority" was gained. To begin with, the "democratic process" has proved itself no more than the richest people putting up expensive campaigns in voting areas set up so that, in the last provincial election, even a party receiving 24% of the popular vote got only 7 seats out of 108 in parliament. In addition, movements here in Québec are growing more and more militant as we repeatedly hit barriers protecting the unjust controls that property owners (mostly English) hold over the majority of the people (mostly French). Implementation of the War Measures Act was inevitable.

We are sending out the FLQ manifesto so that you can read the aims of this organization and understand the situation in Québec: the organization is now outlawed. The War Measures Act was not implemented because a kidnapping took place. It was implemented because a great many of us showed support for the aims of the FLQ. Immediately after Cross and then Laporte were taken, radical youth, various labor organizations and a good percentage of the Québec population supported the political analysis of the Manifesto. The FLQ was getting a fair amount of coverage through sympathetic journalists and radio announcers. Marchand tried to panic people by his statements that the FLQ had infiltrated all the vital places of the Province of Québec and all the key posts where decisions are made. He was attempting to "prove" the need for repression before the movement

could gain enough power to obtain victory. The Federal and provincial governments are losing control of the situation here. We are moving toward taking back into our own hands what belongs to us. We are moving toward a society in which property is abolished. And this means to us, sisters, *women* freed from being property of men.

The events of the past month have had some disastrous effects on the situation here. With the wave of horror at Laporte's death came the War Measures Act, and complete news blackout. All descriptions and explanations of the events and of the FLQ are now in the words of those who strictly condone the governmental system that oppresses us as women.

Over 3000 raids have been carried out, most of them in Montréal. Over 400 have been detained for questioning and about 100 are still in jail. People speaking sympathetically in Canada are losing their jobs and/or being watched. Here, it is impossible to attempt any explanations, or to carry literature on the streets, or to have it in your house. It is too dangerous. Very few "terrorist conspirators" have been turned up, sisters. It is obvious to us that this Act was invoked to literally "take apart" the whole liberation movement. Friends now out of prison report that questioning is pointed at the theory that this is a "foreign commie plot". Those in power still refuse to believe that it is simply the people here reacting to their situation. The police are examining every aspect of every movement that is considered dangerous, taking pictures, fingerprinting, keeping leaders locked up, questioning extensively, raiding all of our communications centres, clinics, offices; confiscating all of the machinery, literature, and arms stored up to this point. This is why it is even more important now for literature to be published and spread; this is also why we unfortunately have to send this to you more or less anonymously.

To get down to the most important aspect of this: any government will be as oppressive to us as women as the present one, should male chauvinism be carried over to infect the true nature of socialism, and to continue the exploitation of women. We are not yet strong here, sisters. We are only beginning to develop a strong base, and to change the still male chauvinist movement in Québec. We understand that we cannot possibly win until we are strong as women. The working men in their awakening struggle do not get our unequivocal support so long as they demand sole male access to some jobs, as long as they demand that women work for them in the homes, in their "proper, feminine roles".

We do know that there are sisters in jail, under the War Measures Act. We do know that sisters who have supported the aims of the FLQ have been picked up, and that three have been charged with membership in the FLQ. There is evidence, too, that there are some women involved in the kidnappings, who are therefore obviously in danger of being caught. They need our freedom, our support; verbal and written. And in terms of the Liberation movement in Québec, we will never cease in confronting male chauvinism. We are not sure to what extent members of the FLQ are aware of the oppression of women. We realize that if our struggle is set aside, our efforts are to no avail whatsoever.

It is hard to work, now. Especially as the Women's Movement in Québec is only about one year old. But we won't stop when we come up against the barrier of "illegality". If we do, we will lose. That's the plan of those in power, oppressing us.

In sisterhood,  
NOUS VAINCRONS,  
your sisters

## BEHIND BARS

Penny Simpson, a member of the Executive Council of the Young Socialists/Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes, was arrested only an hour after the imposition of the War Measures Act October 16. After being held incommunicado for 24 hours, she was released. No charges were laid.

Over three hundred people were arrested before dawn — we learned that later. They hauled us into the new Sureté du Québec prison. It was like an assembly line: fingerprinting and photographing on a mass scale. They separated the men and women; that was the last I saw or heard of Art for a week.

All the women were put in a big bare cage for the day. Everyone was put in the criminal files — no one was questioned. If you refused to be fingerprinted they offered to break your fingers for you.

After dark, we women were transferred to Tanguay Prison. The men were kept in Parthenais, a jail so new the heating system wasn't on.

We were kept isolated from the ordinary convicts — in three sections. Each section had separate cells and a common room with tables and chairs, a TV and newspapers. All three sections ate together, so we were able to organize our lives without much interference from the guards.

(The men were kept in separate cells and only allowed out three times a day. The radio was turned off every time the news came on. They were given no



Pauline Julien, released from prison, gives a toast to victory

water for washing for the first three days. Talk about your double standard...)

Morale was fantastic. We organized games, gymnastics, and political discussions. The most popular discussion topic was women's liberation. I don't think the government realized the impact they had on us as women: here we were, completely isolated from our boyfriends, husbands and fathers, and managing very well, thank you. In that sense, jail was a liberating experience.

The most popular song in our section

of the prison was the Internationale. We sang that anthem of the working class movement while doing our exercises. You've never really sung the Internationale until you have sung it in jail, led by Pauline Julien, Québec's greatest chansonniers.

We were an odd collection. Some politically active women; some wives and girlfriends arrested with "their men"; a few big names like Pauline Julien and Michele Saulnier (acquitted in the 1965 Statue of Liberty "bomb plot").

One woman in her forties was arrested because her husband wasn't home and the cops didn't want to return empty handed. She had to leave her children alone, hoping the neighbors would look after them.

But as high as morale was, there was no overcoming the fact that we were being held incommunicado in prison. We didn't know when we would be released, if ever. As far as people outside were concerned, we had simply disappeared: we couldn't see lawyers, friends, anyone. It wasn't until I smuggled a list of names out that people outside were certain who had been picked up.

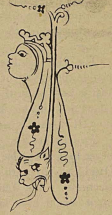
And it was painfully evident that we had been arrested solely because of our ideas, solely to keep us out of circulation. During the whole week, we were questioned for only ten minutes. They weren't even interested in finding out about terrorism or any terrorists we might know.

We've had unemployment and poverty and national oppression in Québec for two hundred years. All they've ever done about it is talk. It takes time, they say. The political process is slow. But when there is a danger that the almighty profits of the almighty corporations might get hurt, they hold a cabinet meeting and abolish democracy with the stroke of a pen.

The government may have hoped to smash the spirit of the Québec left, but they didn't succeed with the women. If anything, we came out more determined than ever. One woman, who had never been in politics, announced that the next time they made her a political prisoner, she was going to deserve it.

She spoke for us all.

# Look What They've Done to Our Story



Literature, like the other arts, is a white male product in our culture. Not only are virtually all the "greats" of our literature men, but also, and more important, the innovators, experimenters and judges of aesthetic value are men. This situation has several consequences for women as artists and as literary subjects.

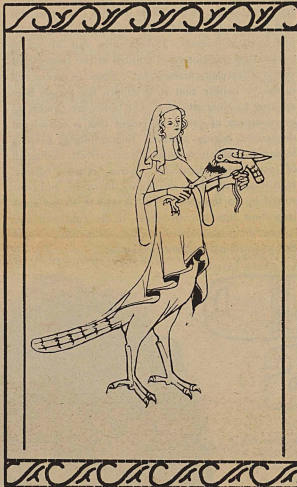
Women artists are subject to the "double whammy" of a male dominated literature. On the one hand, their work must conform to and be judged by the prevailing male standards of excellence in order to be recognized as valuable. On the other hand, the dissemination of their literature — the making public of a literary work whether through the medium of the best-seller list or the classroom — is controlled by the male dominated critical, scholarly and publishing worlds. Thus not even the act of recognition will insure that a woman's work will become well known or known at all. And in fact, there are very few women literary artists, past or contemporary, who are known. This fact is clearly an effect, yet it is turned into a "proof" of the "fact" that women cannot write great literature. Further the few recognized women writers are used to support this "fact" (myth). These exceptions are seen as "unusual" women (i.e. not entirely "normal") who possess talents beyond the capabilities of the vast majority of women. And the final indignity of this tokenism is that writers of the female sex are always referred to as women-writers; that is, as spokeswomen of the "feminine sensibility who cannot cope with problems outside of this narrowly defined area.

Literature written by women is today in the same position as the literature of Blacks of a half decade ago. When demands for Black literature courses were first put forward, the usual response was "But what have they written?" Many white academics were content to think that Baldwin, Wright, Ellison and perhaps LeRoi Jones were the only examples of Black literary artists. This myth has been shattered in the last few years primarily through the work of Black students, teachers and writers, who have insisted on recapturing their cultural heritage. The last few years have seen an explosion in the number of books dealing with the Black experience. (Ironically, Black literature has become big business, and publishers now voraciously capitalize on the new market and pursue the very same authors who had difficulty getting into print a few years ago.) Today it is much easier to see the underlying racism which created the critical opinions about Black literature and which perpetuated these opinions by refusing to investigate and study Black literature. We must expose the parable myths about literature written by women.



The oppression of women in literature does not end with the exclusion of women artists. Women as literary subjects are consciously or unconsciously

manipulated by male writers to support the myths and stereotypes of women and to portray how men think women should think and feel. The same pattern of effects being turned into substantive support and proof of the "innate (i.e. inferior) nature" of women operates in the creation by men of feminine literary types as well as in the refusal to study and investigate literature written by women. Stereotyping serves both to perpetuate male definitions of what women are and to propagandize about how women should act.



Although various literary ages have tended to favor some feminine stereotypes over others, there is a remarkable durability of certain classic types (earth mother, goddess, temptress, etc.). The fact that these types have continued to be viable indicates that the prevailing attitudes of our culture toward women have been and still are male defined or patriarchal. Thus the types of the Middle Ages are still with us in contemporary dress and we can look at one of these classics — Chaucer's Wife of Bath — and see reflected in her one of the prevailing contemporary definitions of women — the female as a shrewish, manipulating wife.

The woman of the Middle Ages was virtually without legal rights and was in fact the slave and property of her husband. "A man may chastise his wife and beat her... for her correction; for she is of his household, and therefore the lord may chastise his own." (Nicholas Byard) "It is a natural human order that the women should serve their husbands... for there is no justice where the greater serves the less." (Corpus Juris Canonica) Not only was the woman's position in the marriage little more than that of a slave but there was virtually no other place for her in the society except in the nursery.

Under such circumstances, it is hardly remarkable that the Wife of Bath reacts as a slave. Married at a very early age to an older man, she takes her revenge on her first husband (and his three successors) through a strategy of withholding sex and of continual badgering until the "mastery" is delivered into her hands (note that relationships are clearly seen as power struggles where one or the other must dominate). But her reactions to her situation are not seen as effects but rather as further demonstration of the unbridled, unreasonable and sensual nature of women (qualities which Chaucer has the Wife "admit" to). The Wife's fifth husband is a young man who does satisfy her in bed and very nearly gets the better of her when he permanently defears her with a blow on the head.

In spite of this remarkable marital history, the Wife is searching out her sixth husband on the Canterbury pilgrimage (does she really have a choice?). And the tale she tells of a Knight and a loathly old hag is a wish projection. Although the tale is often read by critics as the Wife's assertion of the necessity for female domination in marriage, in fact she concedes mastery in exchange for two things: 1) becoming a young attractive sex object again and 2) the love of the wayward young knight distinguished for the fact that he raped a young woman. Operating from self-interest, the knight defers to the old hag the choice of having her young and untrue or old and true. In return for the concession, the old hag promises to be both fair and true as well as being the most obedient wife in the world.

By a deft turn, Chaucer has supported the traditional hierarchy of marriage and has made the liberal argument (quite remarkable for his time) that benevolence attains better results than tyranny, since voluntary obedience is always much more effective than coercion. He further supports the traditional order of marriage by suggesting that the wife must find ultimate love in God. The parallel between the relationship of the soul to God and the wife to the husband was a truism of the Middle Ages.



Although the legal status of women has changed, the stereotype of the shrewish wife survives, since it is still useful in perpetuating

- 1) a definition of the nature of women (unreasonable, emotional, unbridled)
- 2) a rationale for the power structure of marriage (they need a strong, rational man to lead the way)
- 3) a definition of the desires and goals of women (all they need is love, love.)

Students of English literature often begin their studies with Chaucer (The Father of English Literature). And it is important to realize that from the start, students are reading patriarchal literature which supports the myth of the inferiority of women. We must begin to think about "our" literature in these terms.

some  
special  
christmas  
greetings

GIVE  
US  
BREAD  
BUT  
GIVE  
US  
S  
E  
R  
V  
I  
C  
E



To Our Opposition:

To the Playboy reader  
on our list

We send a very  
special gift

Of Christmas cheer

And while we're at it

A year's supply of bunny rabbits.



To Santa:

For a special gift  
They'll long recall  
How 'bout a sub  
To the Pedestal!

To Ralph:



Your drugstores all this oath declare -  
"At Cunninghams we really care."  
The drugs you sell are the legal style,  
All carefully packaged in child-proof vials.  
But when your staff strikes for higher pay  
You tell them to give - the united way!



# something to read

Poverty: Canada's Legacy to Women by Alice James . . . . . 25  
 The Myth of Consumerism by Ellen Willis . . . . . 25  
 Politics in Women's Liberation: Is It Necessary by Anne Roberts . . . . . 10  
 The Housewife by Suzanne Gail . . . . . 25  
 Woman's Work is Never Done by Peggy Morton . . . . . 25  
 Women Teachers and the Educational Process . . . . . 10  
 Women's Liberation Movement: An Introduction . . . . . 15  
 Women in Evolution by Kathleen Gough Aberle . . . . . 35  
 Women: A Socialist Perspective by Jean Rands . . . . . 15  
 The Political Economy of Women's Liberation by Margaret Benston . . . . . 15  
 Women: The Longest Revolution by Juliet Mitchell . . . . . 25  
 Sexual Repression and the Family by Laurel Limpus . . . . . 15  
 Gold Flower's Story by Jack Belden . . . . . 50  
 Bread and Roses by Kathy McAfee and Myrna Wood . . . . . 15  
 McGill Birth Control Handbook . . . . . free  
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**SOME OTHER THINGS YOU MIGHT READ**

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*
- Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*
- Catherine Cleverdon, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in Canada*
- Mary Beard, *Women in History*
- Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*
- Caroline Bird, *Born Female*
- William O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave*
- Women's Liberation: Notes from the Second Year*

**STUDY GROUP STUDY GROUP STUDY GROUP STUDY GROUP**  
 Anyone interested in getting together to organize a study group or groups on Marxism, women's liberation, etc. - phone Carol 298-5977 with suggestions.

## DECEMBER CALENDAR MEETINGS AT 511 CARRALL ST. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED. Ph. 684-0523

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		WORKING Women - 8:00 SFU - 12:30 303 Rotunda	High School - 8:00	Informal Discussion 8:00		Picket & Leaflet Cunningshams 12:00
PEDESTAL - 11:00 - THEATRE - 7:30	Co-ordinating Committee UBC - 7:00 8:00-2449 Bio-Sci	SFU - 12:30 303 Rotunda		Informal Discussion 8:00		Picket & Leaflet Cunningshams 12:00
PEDESTAL - 11:00 SPEAKERS Mtg - 2:00 Theatre - 7:30		Working Women 8:00 SFU - 12:30 303 Rotunda	High School - 8:00	GENERAL MEETING 8:00		Picket & Leaflet Cunningshams 12:00
PEDESTAL - 11:00 - THEATRE - 7:30	Co-ordinating Committee 8:00				MERRY CHRISTMAS!	
27	28	29	30	31	HAPPY NEW YEAR!	JAN. 1.

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