

A WOMEN'S LIBERATION NEWSPAPER



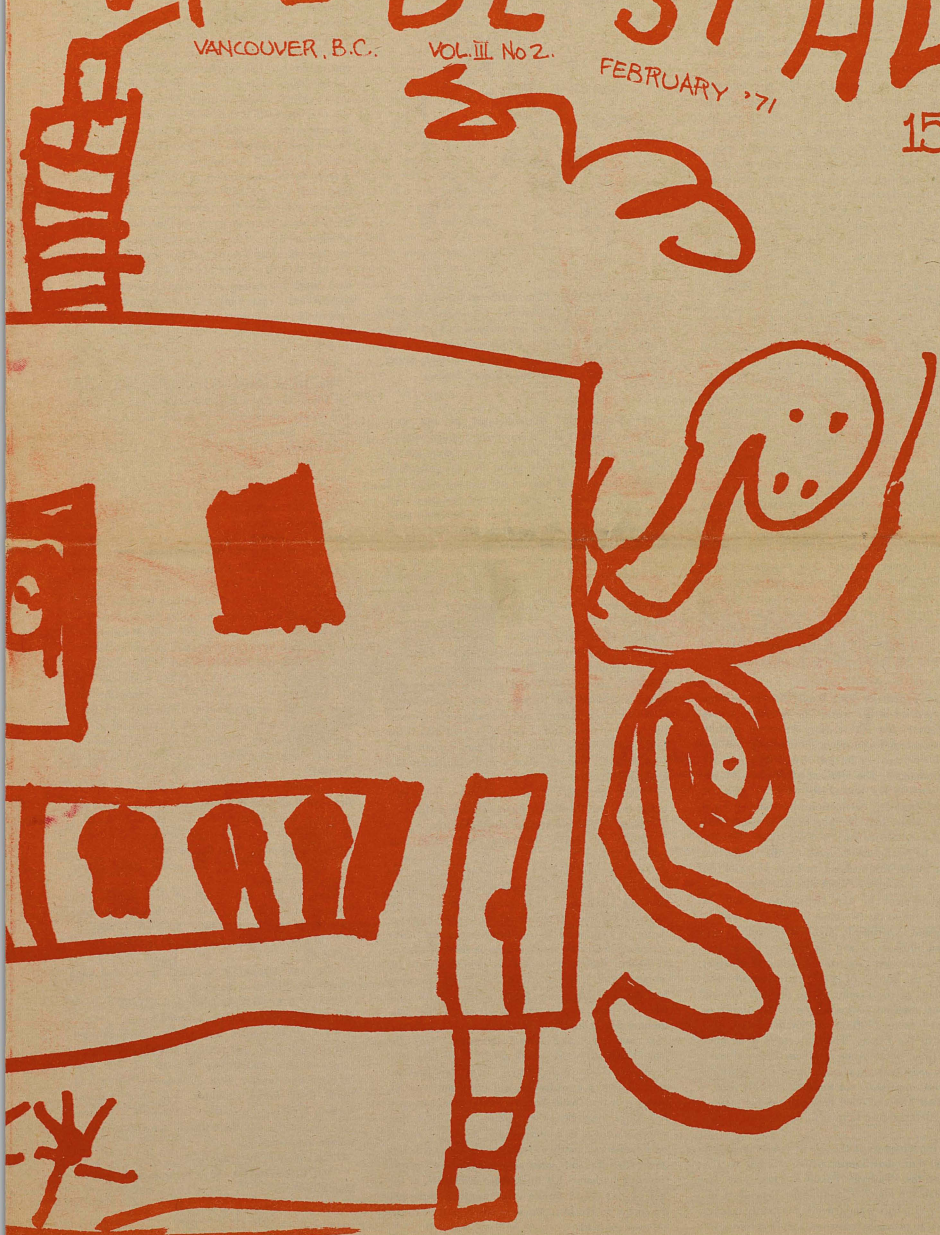
PEDESTAL

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LITTLE FEMINISTS

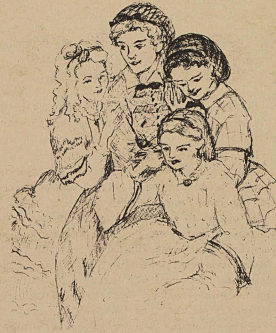


Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy — the names of the Marches are familiar to generations of women who read *Little Women*. Their story has been part of "growing up" for girls since 1868 and our daughters are still reading her. In looking back to see how we learned to be women, one of the more pleasant things to do is to reread what we read as girls. Paging through the books of Louisa May Alcott, I found my main memories are largely correct. I still find the praise and glorification of the nuclear family, the romantic matching of boy and girl, the taming of the tomboyishness of Jo. But on the same pages, like flags to me now, are glimmers of another ideal for women, the ideal of the active, useful, happy, important, independent woman; the woman who is more than a mother and wife, the woman who feels a bond of love and respect for other women, her sisters. Yet because Alcott was limited by the vision of her age, and the demands of the market, the major assumptions of traditional family life, marriage, girlhood and boyhood, etc. prevail. So there is a contradiction between the major themes and the minor messages of *Little Women*, *Little Men*, *Jo's Boys*, *Eight Cousins*, and all the others.

Some of the contradiction derives from Louisa's own life. Since her three March novels are patently autobiographical, and the others drawn from personal memories, it is important to consider how her own experience conformed to and also deviated from the 19th century ideal of womanhood. Louisa, Jo's original, never married and she is worthy of study by 20th century women's historians as typical of half-a-hundred moderate feminists of her century. She was never a leader, but she contributed repeatedly to Lucy Stone's *Woman's Journal*, attended the Woman's Congress at Syracuse in 1875, participated in the women's demonstration-invasion of a Concord patriotic celebration, and voted proudly in Concord local elections. At the same time, her over-riding reform interest was Temperance, and she preaches this cause far more than women's rights in her writing. Nevertheless, because her work is so patently autobiographical, it is worth considering the ways she deviated from society's ideal, as the basis for seeing how these "lapses" worked into the fabric of her novels. It is the effect of these "lapses" after all which make her books still worthy of examination.

Louisa's experience with family life was unique and is expressed in her work. The Alcott girls were among the very few 19th century American children who experienced, for however short a time, life in a collective family based on theories of communitarianism. The idealism of Bronson Alcott, Louisa's father, his refusal to work at what he considered degrading occupations, his transcendental optimism made him so hopelessly atypical that Louisa simply wrote him out of *Little Women*, although he reappears as part of the model for Professor Bhaer, Jo's husband, in *Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*. One of Bronson's most idealistic projects was the establishment of the Conscience Family at Fruitlands, one of the two most famous 19th century New England experiments in collective living. It was ill-planned, ill-financed, and the members ill-assorted, the vegetarian diet was too limited, and most important, the burden of labour caring for all 10 to 12 members of the Family fell to the only woman, Mrs. Alcott (Marree), who because of her numerous tasks was "excused" from the intellectual-spiritual exercises of the Family. The inadequacy of an ideal of collectivism where some members teach and make decisions and others do chores, became too obvious. Mrs. Alcott, apparently for the first and only time in her married life, overruled her husband and insisted that the Alcotts return to their former nuclear family.

Probably the closeness of the Alcott family increased after this time, but Louisa often referred to the Alcotts as the "Pathetic Family." They were far poorer than the Marches, continually dependent on the charity of relatives and friends, constantly moving from place to place. Nevertheless, Louisa never ceases



to praise the virtues of the traditional family life, and the importance of familial ties. Even the Plumfield school set up by Jo and her husband in *Little Men*, while different from a traditional family, is an attempt to provide a single mother and single father for an assorted group of "superfluous" boys.

If (despite the contradictions of her own haphazard family) she championed familial virtues, Louisa's attitudes on marriage show even greater inconsistency. In writing about Jo, she bowed to popular demand and married her off, but noted in a letter, "Publishers are very perverse and won't let authors have their way so my little women must grow up and be married off in a very stupid style." It is obvious from her own failure to marry and from some of her statements that she believed strongly in the importance of the independence of women. But because of the prevailing vision of her age, it was difficult for her to see independence for women in marriage.

Yet she never criticises marriage in her books, and in fact, it receives great praise in *Little Women*. Marmee, dispenser of wisdom for her daughters says "I want my daughters to be beautiful, accomplished, and good; to be admired, loved, and respected; to have a happy youth, to be well and wisely married, and to lead useful, pleasant lives...To be loved and chosen by a good man is the best and sweetest thing which can happen to a woman; and I sincerely hope my girls may know this beautiful experience..."

"Poor girls don't stand any chance, Belle says, unless they put themselves forward," sighed Meg.

"Then we'll be old maids," said Jo stoutly.

"Right Jo; better be happy old maids than unhappy wives..."

Thus in the midst of praise of marriage, the possibility of another life style is presented, and the admiring way in which Louisa writes of the unmarried women in almost all her books, shows her desire to express ideals of women contrary to the prevailing tradition. As Rose says in *Rose in Bloom*, "I believe that it is as much a right and duty for women to do something with their lives as for men; and we are not going to be satisfied with such frivolous parts as you give us." Rose marries, but there is Maud in *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, Molly in *Jack and Jill*, and most important, Nan, the marvelously attractive active girl of *Little Men* who becomes a doctor in *Jo's Boys*, and is "very glad and grateful that my profession will make me a useful, happy spinster." While Jo's late career as an author in *Jo's Boys* may be an exception, it is clear that married women in Louisa's mind as in her world, were limited primarily to home and babies, no matter how carefully she constructed more that merely romantic husbands for them. Late in her life, at the end of *Jo's Boys*, Louisa made another important statement on the importance of single women to the girls at Plumfield.

The rather unexpected introduction of a large number of girl students at Plumfield for the purpose of this chapter suggests one more contradiction between Louisa's ideas about women and the world in which she lived. It also suggests the conflict between her expressed love and admiration for other women, her glorification of the sisterhood of women, and her own attitudes toward herself as a woman.

Jo, like active, independent "tomboys" before and since, faced with the even more severe limitation on activity incumbent upon entering "womanhood", wanted to be a boy. "I don't mind being a guy if I'm comfortable," she says on one occasion. Her passing wish to marry Meg to keep her in the family and the cutting of her hair imply this. Nan, too, another Louisa figure, shows a tremendous desire to show she's as brave, strong, as quick, as any boy, with the constant implication that all girls are not. It is this assumption that betrays how Louisa is limited by her own century's attitudes. The desire to prove that girls can learn as well as boys is admirable, but does perpetuate the assumption of inferiority. Likewise, this desire to be a boy is transposed with Jo, as it often is today, into the desire to have sons. Louisa chose boys as the main group for Plumfield; Jo's own children are boys. This was partly influenced by the fact her older sister Anna had two sons, but also by the fact that boys could realistically be expected to have more interesting adventures, make their own way. When it came time for a chapter on women's rights and value, a group of girls had to be suddenly written into Plumfield.

But Louisa mostly wrote about girls and women, for whom she had a tremendous love and admiration and whom she described as having an inherent, but largely unexplored, capacity for strength and independence. The devotion of women to each other is a theme that appears again and again, most memorably in *Little Women* and in the friendship of Rose and Phoebe in *Eight Cousins* and *Rose in Bloom*. The sanctification of Beth may be irritating, or counter-productive to the creation of strong women images but Beth is an unashamed exaltation of virtues currently defined as "feminine." Thus Beth is kind, considerate, helpful, patient. We may believe that the other side of human nature needs fostering right now in women but admiration for these human qualities in our sisters should never be lost. The beauty and dignity of friendship with all varieties of women is one of the most valuable themes of Alcott's books. "Help one another in part of the religion of our sisterhood," says Polly in *An Old-Fashioned Girl*.

Amidst the expressions of the assumption that girls must still be measured in comparison with boys, there occasionally bursts forth a statement of the independent worth of women. Take this discussion in *An Old-Fashioned Girl* about a sculpted model of Woman:

"...See what a fine forehead, yet the mouth is both firm and tender, as if it could say strong, wise things, as well as teach children and kiss babies. We couldn't decide what to put in the hands as the most appropriate symbol. What do you say?"

"Give her a scepter; she would make a fine queen," answered Fanny.

"No, we have had enough of that; women have been called queens for a long time, but the kingdom given them isn't worth ruling," answered Rebecca...

"Put a man's hand in hers, to help her along then," said Polly...

"No; my woman is to stand alone, and help herself," said Rebecca decidedly.

"She's to be strong-minded, is she?" and Fanny's lips curled as she uttered the misused words.

"Yes, strong-minded, strong-hearted, strong-souled and strong-bodied; that is why I made her larger than the miserable, pinched-up woman of our day. Strength and beauty must go together. Don't you think these broad shoulders can bear burdens without breaking down, these hands work well, these eyes see clearly, and these lips do something besides simper and gossip?"

"Put a child in her arms, Becky..."

"Not that even; for she is to be something more than a nurse..."



indo-chinese conference

Our struggle for liberation is a part of all people's struggle for liberation. We, as women, cannot be free until black people are liberated, until Quebec is independent, until working people control their own labor, until the people of the third world control their own destiny.

Sometimes it all sounds like a lot of words that have no bearing on reality, but the words do express a truth

We are all in it together because large, international corporations make profits from the low wages paid to women on the job. As housewives, we provide free labor in the home — up to 100 hours a week — which leaves our husbands free to compete in the job market. The bosses get two workers for the price of one. The same corporations exploit blacks and Quebecois. The foreign policy of Canada and the United States is decided by these corporations' economic interest in the third world — to control its resources and markets for profit.

We have competed against one another — women against men, blacks against whites, native-born against immigrants — and the bosses have continued to rule. We competed against each other for what little power we could get while the power was in the hands of big business. We must see that freedom for all comes from destroying exploitation, profit, and the domination of the bosses.

Beginning to understand the oneness of our struggles, we are planning a conference for 15 Indo-Chinese women and delegates from the



Canadian and American women's liberation movements.

The Indo-Chinese women, at an international socialist women's conference in Budapest in November, expressed their desire to meet both with their old friends (Voice of Women and Women Strike for Peace) and their new friends (Women's Liberation) at two conferences.

They are now being planned for Vancouver the first week in April. Though many decisions will be made by Canadian and American women at a meeting in Portland Feb. 6 and 7, we have tentatively decided to limit the size of the women's liberation conference to 200. It was thought 80 per cent of the delegates would be American because of their larger population. We all hope to include women who have not been directly involved in women's liberation — Indian women, Chinese women, G.I. wives, women on welfare.

Although all of us who are planning the

conference will not be able to attend, we hope to have an open one-day session with the American women before the conference starts.

There is much work to be done:

—Contacting women in the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, Alaska, Alberta and Saskatchewan. If you can help call: Janet Leon, 738-8991.

—Billings has to be provided for the delegates. Do you have a spare room or large floor for sleeping bags? Call: Ann Marten, 738-4236.

—A primer is being prepared on Canadian history and present for Americans who haven't yet realized we are a separate country. Want to help? Call: Pat Hoffer, 731-5412.

—Programs, literature, films on our common struggles around the world must be planned. Call: Margot Dunn, 732-9338.

—A special issue of the Pedestal in March will concentrate on the conference and International Women's Day to help us learn about our sisters around the world. Call Anne Roberts, 988-0950.

Meetings are held every Sunday at 2:00 in the Women's Caucus office at 511 Carrall Street to discuss, exchange information and plan the conference.



The Vietnamese mother out on patrol is sister to the mother of Raymond Place out to stop the trains.

The Puerto Rican woman, used to test the pill, is sister to the Indian woman, sterilized in order to qualify for welfare.

The Cambodian woman whose children are being bombed is sister to the woman on welfare whose child is being taken away because she fought for her welfare rights.



The people of the world are fighting for freedom to: Let our children grow, not to have to bend them to fit the existing economic structure.

Let our children grow, without molding them to a role structure which serves the economic establishment.

Let our children *be* not tell them they must do.

Let our children help each other, not see who can be the best, the first, the quickest.

Let our children create a better society because they are honest and can see what is wrong.

How can the Quebec political prisoners receive a fair trial when Quebec law bars women from jury duty?

send
international
women's
day
greetings

march 8th

Express solidarity with the political prisoners in Canada and the United States who have been struggling for the liberation of the Quebecois, the liberation of black people and an end to the war in Vietnam.

letters to: Lise Rose, Lise Balcer, Colette Therrien and Francine Balise
Prison des Femmes
Tanguay St.
Montreal

letters to: Michel Chartrand, Pierre Vallieres, Charles Gagnon, Robert Lemieux, Bernard Lortie, Jacques and Paul Rose and Francis Simard
Centre de Prevention
1701 Parthenais, 13th-AG
Montreal

financial support to Quebec political prisoners to:
Friends of Quebec
10 Jean St.
Toronto 5

letters and financial support to: Angela Davis and Richell Magee
National United Committee to Free Angela Davis
3450 Wet 43rd St., Suite 104
Los Angeles, Calif. 90008

letters and financial support to: Erika Huggins and Bobby Seale
Defense Fund
c/o Charles Garry
865 Chapel St., Rm. 222
New Haven, Conn. 06510

letters to: Daniel and Philip Berrigan
Federal Correctional Institute
Danbury, Connecticut

hospital unions

In our work on an article about "Women and Unions", the working women's workshop began to turn up some interesting information on the history of working women in B.C. This article comes out of the discussion, attempting to put our current work in its historical context.

The Hospital Employees Union—a history

Hospital workers first organized for better working conditions in the '30's. At that time their working conditions and wages were far below those of most workers in other industries. They worked over 56 hours a week, sometimes on split shifts (work for 5 hours, off for 4 hours, then back to the hospital for another 5 hours work). Men earned about \$50 a month, women \$30. They were forced to eat at the hospitals because the management would deduct the price of 3 meals a day from their wages, even from their vacation pay *whether they ate there or not.*

In 1936 the women workers at the Vancouver General Hospital formed an organization to bargain for better conditions for themselves. When the male workers at VGH affiliated with the Civic Employees Union in about 1938 the women continued to organize on their own. It wasn't until 1944 that the men split from the CEU and raised about \$800 in order to unite with the women (who had their own fund) on an equal basis to form the Vancouver General Hospital Employees Union. As other hospital workers throughout the province joined them the union became known as the Hospital Employees Union Local 180.

In the hospital industry a struggle for equal pay for equal work and equal job opportunities is developing. At the present time female hospital workers (including nurses) earn about \$150 a month less than male workers for the same kind of jobs. The hospital saves much money by discriminating against their female employees.

At first glance there would seem to be two alternative approaches towards improving the situation for female workers. These are the hospital union and the Human Rights Commission. Both these avenues have been pursued by women hospital workers but very little concrete improvement in their situation has been effected.



By constitutional changes throughout the years the Hospital Employees Union has become less democratic, resulting in committee members (shop stewards, social committee, etc.) at the VGH unit being appointed by the executive. Most of the present executive at VGH have held their positions for 10 years or more, their positions made quite secure by a union constitution which prevents candidates from campaigning on the basis that "the union is not a political organization". Four new members (2 men and 2 women) ran for executive positions recently but were only allowed under the constitution to present their platform to fellow workers by talking to them on the job. The posters announcing the elections were put up only a week before the elections, giving the membership, especially female members, very little chance to read them and make arrangements to go to the meeting (i.e. get baby sitters). Another strike against the new members was that the union does not send ballots out to the members nor does it conduct the voting at the work area. The voting was held at the union office (4 blocks from the hospital) between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and at the meeting for an hour in the evening. This meant that the night shift could not vote unless they waited around from 7:00 a.m. when they got off work or hitch-hiked (because of the bus strike) to the meeting in the evening.

Only about 125 members got out to vote, none of the 4 new members were elected.

The Human Rights Commission—A lesson in Futility

Ten women working in the X-ray department at VGH applied to the Human Rights Commission for equal pay with the men in their department, after a long period of working to convince the union to support their action. They supposedly won their case (after a delay of a year) and received back pay for six months. But before their case was heard the hospital deleted their jobs and put them and the men in a new job classification at a lower rate of pay. When the employees are placed in a lower job category the union contract ensures that they will continue to receive their old rate of pay—so the men still earn more than the women. To get equal pay the women must again apply to the Human Rights Commission—this time using their new job title. This could take another year.

The Human Rights Act is obviously not strong or effective enough to get women equal—in fact it inhibits the struggle. The Commission only meets with a small number of women at one time.

Each woman has to apply to the Human Rights Commission as an individual—she cannot represent the other women doing the same kind of work as she is. It takes several months to get the required information for the hearing and then several more months to actually get the hearing. During these months the company can change the job categories of the people involved. This way the company only has to pay out some back pay if the women win.

A Women's Organization Again

Women hospital workers cannot rely on the law, or even the union, to win equality for us. We need our own organization, or caucus, again.

In such a group we could work within the union, and also outside of it. For instance, the hospital management clearly benefits from the division of workers into "professional" and "non-professional" categories. A women's organization could include nurses and technicians (who are not union members) as well as nurse aides, kitchen staff, etc. By building an organization open to all women hospital workers, we could effectively struggle around the issues that affect us all: equal pay, equal job opportunity, child care, etc. By breaking down the divisions between professional and non-professional, we could begin to challenge the hierarchical structure of the hospital which results in poor patient care as well as poor working conditions.

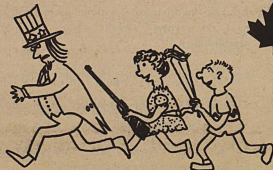


In these early years the women were of course active in the union because they had been leading their own organization. Later however the percentage difference in wages between men and women increased. In 1954 the union signed an agreement giving men a 20% wage increase and women only a 15% increase. The women became less active in the union because their interests were not represented. At present at VGH there is only one woman on the executive although 80% of the workers are women.

MARCH FOR FREE ABORTION
ON DEMAND
SAT. FEB 13

Meet at Vancouver General 1pm.
March to the Courthouse: Rally at 2pm.

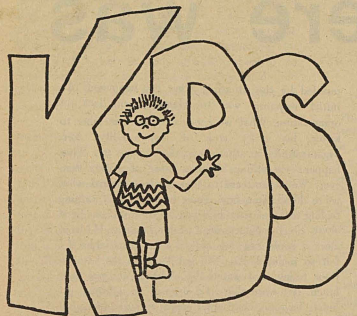
- * every child a wanted child
- * every mother a willing mother



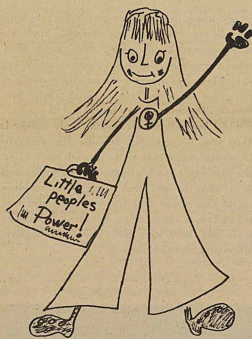
NEW LEAF

1895 Venables St. Vanc., BC
\$2 -- 12 Issues AN INDEPENDENT PAPER FOR AN INDEPENDENT CANADA

Name _____
Address _____



This issue is about by and for children. We've gathered together a number of articles by people who are experimenting with ways of organizing their lives and rearing children. It is not that any of these alternatives provide definite answers, but it is hoped they will initiate discussion.



The Smart Mouse

Once upon a time there was a man. His name was Robin Hood. He had a mouse. The mouse's name was Smorty pants. One day he sold the mouse for a cat the cat's name was Wiskey. But Wiskey was dumb. So he sold the cat for a rabbit. His name was Hoppy but Hoppy didn't like Robin. So he sold the rabbit for a dog the dog's name was toke but toke was the same as the rabbit so he sold the dog but he was getting fed up. So he didn't get any more animals. But he was getting lonely he wanted a mouse

The End

single parent

I have raised my children alone since their infant months. The children's ages now range from 12½ to 14 years.

Although working and bringing up my children at the same time has, and continues to create hassles, I'm sure the problems would have actually increased had I constantly been home.

The economic situation prior to seeking employment was grim. If I remained at home, welfare would allot me approximately \$40 a month. At the same time, alimony payments were inconsistent. Weighing the possible sources available to me, I concluded a job was inevitable.

When I went back to work, I was considered a risk because I was on my own with two children to support. This not only created difficulties for my "hiring" chances, but left me with the problem of two babies without proper day care.

Because the children were so young, day care was

in the home. On one occasion, my oldest child became upset about closed doors. We discovered through neighbors and questioning him that with a previous babysitter, he'd been locked in the bathroom for long periods of time because he was "bad". It took careful handling by myself and a concerned babysitter to assure him that if a door was closed, it wouldn't be locked. Living in my own home, I finished building the suite in the basement. We moved down there and a young couple moved upstairs, looking after the children when I worked. This seemed to work out well because they had a real interest in the children's "well-being".

When my youngest boy went to Cubs and found, apparently to his dismay, that all the leaders in the pack were women, he burst into the house, threw his arms into the air and said: "Women! Women! Women! If I ever see another one, it will be too much!", and then went into great explanation of how

his life was "full of women."

As the boys grew, space was too limited downstairs, so again we packed up our furniture and made the journey up the stairs. Now the children had to be cared for after school. Numerous attempts were tried, but none were sufficient. The best situation for me was to work a midnight shift, giving me a chance to be home when my children were.

This was a great advantage for all of us, because we now had time to develop meaningful relationships. Although we do not have a "T.V. episode" picture of family living, my children can relate some of their problems to me. Too, there is a reasonable amount of room for true expressions, whether it be exploding oneself or simply speaking one's mind. Being only one of the many "single parental models" for my children, I do not claim to have all the answers... but together, we're still trying!

There was

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe she had so many children she didn't know what to do so she gave them some broth without any bread whipped them all soundly and sent them to bed

If I were that old woman I'd know what to do I'd share them with people who liked me and you they'd go to the park and perhaps to the zoo they'd live with me and you and you and Jack and Sue.

We have an alternative, living in groups.

We can always afford to make our broths soups
We can have a big house and can throw out the shoe
For the world's full of people who'll enjoy me and you.

How strong, egotistical, and ferocious a possession is Mother Love. I do not think it is very admirable. It would be infinitely more admirable to be able to love all children.

Isadora Duncan, MY LIFE

In a free society the decision to have a child gives positive affirmation to life. In an "unfree" society, such as capitalism, is a decision not to have children a denial of life? I rather think that my sisters in the movement would hotly deny that their decision not to have children was a denial of life. They would, no doubt, interpret their decision on a very political level.

Their decision is based, they would say, on their awareness of the "burden" of living in a capitalist society. Until one can live without this burden, therefore, we experience life negatively. Since living is a negative state we have a negative attitude toward it which is reinforced by the reality of our daily oppression.

New life is, therefore, a negative. I use "New Life" in this instance to mean our children. Our children are a negative inoutrives — yet we speak of creating positive experiences for them. How, I ask you, if the attitude toward New Life is negative, can you create positives? Easy, so those who already have children say: by spreading the negatives around (i.e., the "burdens") so that everybody gets some, we'll create some "free space" in which to do some positive "relating".

I'm sorry, but by that time it's too late. You've already had an impact on that "New Life". Caring for the child's bodily functions is a drag. You just can't seem to have a positive relationship with that diaper pail and that unwashed floor. The child knows. He/she thinks: "So, when you're taking care of me I am a burden and since most of my early impressions of you are connected with care-taking, I soon get the message. The "Free Space" time when you get together with me to do your positive relating is when I really become confused. You see, keeping my behind clean gives me the "Free Space" to relate to something other than my behind and if you find that a drag, then I'm negative in your eyes — so don't kid me that you can give me 'positive' experiences."

The point, of course, is that one simply can not make an arbitrary dichotomy between diaper-changing and relating; relating is diaper-changing and diaper-changing is relating.

There is a disquieting attitude on the part of many radical women toward children. It is always dangerous to generalize about any particular group but we must come to grips with the reality that many women in the movement are not willing to understand the vast majority of their sisters who want to have and love children. (I am not interested in the predictable denials of those of my sisters who will say: Well, a few are like that, but most of us are not. The reality must be faced.)

To be radical is obviously to be critical of the existing system. Capitalism places tremendous pressures on women to bear children. But it does this within the context of the nuclear family. As radicals we are sensitive to the repressiveness of this social institution and therefore reject it. But critical as we

may be, we are still part of the social system and many of us pay the price of our rejection of its demands (i.e., either by viewing children as onerous burdens or by deciding not to have any at all) by experiencing strong feelings of resentment and/or ambivalence toward children, that is, New Life. While this resentment and ambivalence is understandable and justifiable, too many of us refuse to acknowledge the existence of such feelings within us. This refusal, really a form of self-deception, results in such intellectual contortions as saying, at one and the same time, "Yes, I love children," and "Do you want to be relieved of them?"; or, "I have nothing against children *per se*, but I'm not interested in being a mother and, after all, there are plenty of women who are."—thus setting up a separate class of women who are thought to be fit for this "demeaning" activity because they say they like it. The end result of all this is to devalue life, even to the extent that many women outside the movement feel they are being told to do something more "worthwhile"! What could be more paradoxical than a situation in which fighters for human liberation have negative attitudes toward children? After all I hope my children will be a part of the new society. Women are exploited and oppressed—but not because they want to be mothers or are mothers. Revolutionaries affirm life, counterrevolutionaries deny it. A new society needs new people—children are new people.

PART II

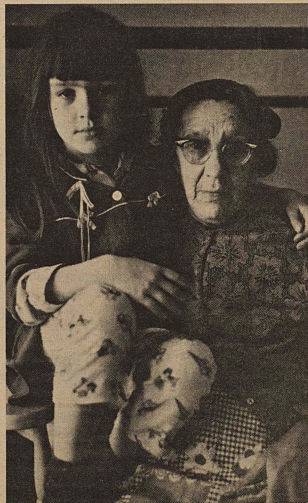
A collective style of living is conducive to the creation of a positive environment only if the children are viewed positively in the life of the collective. A positive environment is taken here to mean one which permits, provides opportunity for, and encourages, growth of the human being; i.e. there is no socialization of competitive and/or heroic individual roles. A collective based on lightening each member's economic problems and sharing the "shit work" involved in caring for children is not, in my opinion, viewing the children positively. It is doomed to failure.

Our women's collective was based on a negative attitude toward children. It would supposedly, create for the adults a positive space in which to relate to them. Our collective talked of shared responsibility, talked of meaningful relationships with the children. The mothers very much wanted to throw off the mother role assigned to them by the existing society. They wanted to share their children; none of this oppressive mother-love for them! But, despite the fact that they now had to be mothers only a third of the normal full-time, the actual care-taking part of mothering seemed to take more time than ever. A constant cry was, "I had more time to spend with my child when I was a full-time mother. What has happened to this special time when I can have this meaningful relationship with my child unburdened by being responsible for changing the diapers, getting lunch, fixing bottles? Why had the normal hassle of daily living suddenly assumed huge proportions? My baby and I never created that much laundry, that much dirt around the house, this much general confusion when we lived alone." The adults are

puzzled by the situation. What has happened? An initial response was to blame it on lack of organization. What we need is for each member to know his exact area of responsibility. Yes, organization is the key, let's try it. What happens—everything becomes more of a drag than ever! We never seem to feel positive toward what we're doing. Somehow, there is always that nagging feeling that one wouldn't have to do this if one lived alone. So, the diapers need washing tonight. If I lived alone I could run out and get a few disposables if I felt so inclined. Ah, I've got to wash the kitchen floor today, and watch the children, and get their lunch. If I were alone, I'd drop in on a friend, get lunch, have my child entertained, and get some adult conversation to boot!

My own first shock, after joining the collective, came on the first day I found myself in the position of "mother-of-the-day". By 9:30 everyone in the house had left, beaming with cheerful "goodbys". What did I hear? The dripping faucet, a crying child, barking dog, and cars going by. What was different about the collective? I felt a distinct bond toward my neighbours who were living the socially accepted nuclear family life-style. What was different about my situation?

I already knew, from experience, that living with other people was better for my children. Since we were a one-parent family, living with others took away what I experienced as the evil part of my power over them. There was always someone else to shout at when things got me down. True, it wasn't a collective, other people were sharing my home, but it worked. Some of the people were very good to the children, why, they even became their friends, and, strangely enough, seemed to be able to do it much more easily than the parents of my children's neighbourhood friends. I had thought that having the children continue to experience close ties with the traditional nuclear family was a good thing, a positive experience for them. Yet, here we see my "boarders" building friendships with them so easily.



an old woman ...

By this time I realized I had become a landlady. But much more important, I had learnt who I could share my children with, my kitchen with, and my bathroom with. I had learnt that my child's friend could tell him something that I had been telling him (365 times a year!) and he would accept it. When he let his friend down it hurt, when he let me down it didn't seem to have the same impact. So, we learned my children and I, that sharing our daily living with others was a very satisfying experience. From there it seemed a logical step to launch ourselves into sharing our lives with other women with children. My four year old's first remark upon entering her school in the company of one of her new mothers was, "Hello teacher, meet one of my new mothers, I have four now." She was excited about her new sisters too, a baby to play with, another little girl to be with. I won't go into the troubles she experienced in this respect, however, since I believe we are all aware of the difficulties an addition to the family involves for those who came before.

But somehow it bothered me how negative the environment had become. How often I heard that word "No". What are you doing with that, Sue; put that down, Ken; leave that alone, Bev. Relating, as experienced by the young people in the house, took place only when things went wrong. And another thing, the constant references to "shit work." And what of this "relating" which had been posed as a priority of the collective? There was plenty of work to relate to, but there seemed to be very little time available to relate to other members. There were meetings to attend, house meetings at the collective, even meetings with friends once in a while—we all seemed so busy. The collective supper always seemed to be a race with the clock, prepared in a rush, plunked on the table, eaten in haste, and overshadowed by the fact that the dishes had to be washed. People seemed to spend a great deal of time looking for things, one day it's here, the next day somewhere else. Nothing went smoothly, the chores connected with daily living seemed magnified a thousandfold. The salt shaker always empty, the sugar bowl empty, the toilet roll gone, and, in contrast, the teapots always full of old leaves, the sinks full of dishes, and the pails full of diapers. We had a duty roster; it should have been easy, but it just didn't work. Solution: change the roster around. If you can't stand laundry, I'll do more laundry and you'll do more of what you like. Why are we all so tired? Why, when you're not mother-of-the-day, do you feel you have to run away—far, far away? Why do I feel so strange when asked if "I would like to be relieved (sic) of my children." Why does no one seem to have any fun with their children? Back to meetings where there is more talk of "meaningful relating."

I suddenly realize that my needs are very basic, "I need people I can live with." This is very basic and I express it in terms of filling the sugar bowl, putting out a fresh toilet roll, leaving the kitchen table clear so that the schoolchildren can be given breakfast in the morning. I express the idea that caring in this basic way about the other person is fundamental to harmonious living together.

Being "relieved" of my children doesn't seem to be very important at this point. Since everything is chaotic it's better for my peace of mind to be there. And, more important, what if one of their other mothers wants to be "relieved" of them and I'm not there.

I rejected the idea of collective care-taking for the children. I accept the "burden" of caring for my children—and that includes the necessary physical labour as well as the constant conscientiousness toward myself and therefore toward others. I am happy to share with others the enjoyment of living with my children.



PART III

In the light of all this the collective can not be seen as a false utopian island in a sea of capitalism, but as a mechanism offering emotional and material support for those struggling to change society. The collective can be a microcosm wherein we can begin to embed the new in the old. While complete liberation is obviously impossible, as long as we are driven under capitalism to operate with competitiveness and selfishness, this is no excuse not to struggle against our individualism, anti-humaneness, and fear of being open and trusting with one another. Fundamental to all this is our attitude and behaviour toward children.

We have laws which protect the rights of all children—which would indicate that society accepts, in principle, responsibility toward all children. We are society. I am not advocating that all women must have children in order to affirm life, merely asking that we, male and female, accept our responsibility to all New Life by striving toward the creation of a better life for all children. This responsibility cannot be avoided by treating it like some distant abstraction but must be shown in real interaction.

Regardless of the real difficulties involved in living in groups, the collective is an alternative which allows one to continue the political struggle and still remain personally in affirmation of life. The collective can accommodate male and female, married and unmarried, those with children and those without. The collective can go far toward meeting a variety of the needs of its members, if their struggle for a socialist society is rooted in the concrete and practical. Too often we embrace socialism in the

abstract only to discover that we can not, will not, and have no time, to attempt to live it to the best of our abilities in our day to day lives. To be an expert in "Marxist Theory" is fine, but no substitute for the real socialism of treating your brothers and sisters with love and respect.

Collective living is a struggle—but for me one with far greater potentiality than that within the traditional nuclear family. It is a worthwhile struggle inasmuch as it provides for my children an opportunity to learn to live with other human beings. Other human beings who, since they choose to live in a collective with children, are presumably willing to share my obligation to maintain an example of living which the children can emulate.

The struggle of maintaining a fitting example for your children to emulate is excellent training for socialism. They can learn only by example and that includes all the values of socialism. As women we must not fear New Life and as socialists in the collective we must respect all the people—both young and old. If I treat your child as less of a human being than my child, my child realizes the significance of this.

Women with children have a special obligation to struggle to change society. By coming together in collectives we gain more strength, emotional and psychological, to devote to the struggle. We put ourselves in a better position to struggle than our sisters and brothers who are tied to the traditional household structure. An added advantage of collective living is that the potential it has to increase our contribution to the movement can only come about if we face, and we struggle to overcome, the negative individualism we all suffer from.

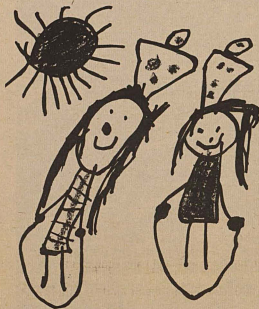
MAN-MADE

Look at all a bunnies. See—bunny rabbits.
Me, looking out the window, seeing nothing—Where
kiddo, I think you're crazy.
See—bunny rabbits.
Oh yeah, there they are, on the window. Millions
of finger marks in the mist, millions of bunny rabbits.

The thing is she's perfect. None of the physical
marks of life, none of the mental programming.

Hey, what's that?
I don't know. That's where you put the latch to
lock the window. See, it's a hole the lock fits into.
It's not called anything.

Whole, seeing the space in between as often as the
things around it. Running across the room and
jumping on a chair to escape some sound I never even
heard. What's that, what's that, to which I can only
answer nothing.

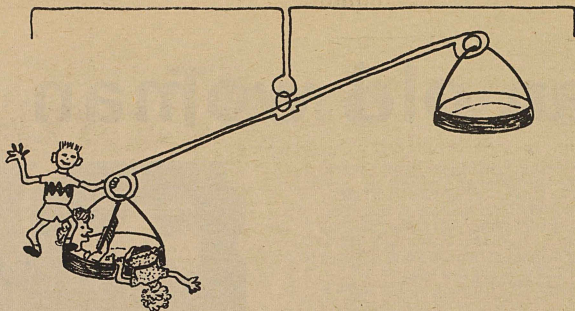


Somewhere in the past I learned about the origins
of marriage. About how women needed help because
they were always having babies and looking after
children. They were so incapacitated they couldn't
even get their own food. So marriage was invented.
This meant that the woman watched the children
while the man provided for them all. But then I read
about the Lapps. About how these women never
nursed their babies. Instead they hung them in the
trees in little pouches, gave them a marrow bone to
suck on, and rode off on the hunt with everybody
else (happily, this is as far as the book goes, leaving
me free to imagine the hunters returning, mothers
carrying the meat, fathers watching the pot, and
nobody knowing which child is whose). And then
there's animals. A mother bear manages to feed
herself and her cubs too with no help at all. In fact if
the male bear did come around she'd probably kill
him.

I remember learning about Victorian England.
Giggling over prudish hags and wifely duties. But men
wrote the history books and no man ever had a baby.
But by Victoria's time this was really a man's world.
Father worked in town while mother stayed home
with the kids, each woman in her own home,
watching over her own children.

So now we've overpopulated our home and
liberation for women has become almost
synonymous with the pill. We speak of our own
liberation in the terms of our male-dominated
society. Independence—in this world of man's
creation, this world which men control.
Freedom—from this lifelong sentence, this man-made
role called motherhood. And so we do what men have
done. It's one of two choices, we say to ourselves.
Have a child and you buy somebody to look after it,
to care for a child they don't care about. Don't have
a child and you never know a child, never know the
miracle of a child, as necessary a lesson of nature as
being born. These are the choices in this world, man's
world.

But I see man's world and I fear our loss.



the haves and the have-nots

ANNE: My mother claims I should write a book
about the kind of life I've experienced. Being my
mother, she perceives my life as exciting and novel -
completely different from most lives. To my friends,
my life has been fairly normal - college, graduate
school, a summer in Europe, living with a man, a
series of jobs, involvement in radical politics. I've just
applied to go on the Venceremos Brigade to Cuba and
I have vague plans to move to San Francisco. And
when I'm worried about economic independence, I
think about making a career in journalism. I've even
tried to do that, but got fired for talking about
women's liberation. Sometimes I think about other
alternatives for my life, but having a family, having
children, has never been a real consideration.

PAT: My life is filled with people. We do dope
together, and laugh a lot; we discuss how to make the
revolution (and laugh a lot); we show films and plan
conferences and spend whole nights skulking around
the city spraying slogans on walls or putting up
clandestine posters. We stay up till three, four, five in
the morning talking and being together - and
somehow the question of how children, my children,
would fit into this, is not a crucial question.

We are trying to write about the question of
children in a positive way, but cannot find the words.
We have to talk about *not* wanting children, or being
without children, or being *childless*. Because we are
women, and most women want and have children, the
alternatives of whether or not to be a mother are not
equally legitimate. Being a mother is acceptable; not
being a mother must be explained.

This is a direct result of our ancestors' relative
inability to prevent conception, and the historical
necessity of large families. For much of human
history, people lived in agrarian societies where many
hands were needed for planting, harvesting, watching
the sheep, weaving and other tasks important for
survival. Today, the pill and other methods of birth
control, have given us the possibility of making the
choice. And in a modern, industrial society, children
are more of an economic burden than an asset.
Though we no longer have biological and economic
pressures to have children, women are still socialized
to see children as their primary means of fulfillment.
We're in the midst of a cultural lag.

The question for us has been: "What do we want
to do - today, tomorrow, next year?" There has
always been a range of alternatives, however limited,
from which to choose: university, travel, job,
marriage, children, political activities, etc. Or just
day-to-day decisions: spending a day in bed reading,
going to a meeting, taking off on the spur of the
moment to Sechel, quitting a job because no one is
economically dependent on us.

Why, for us, has the alternative of having children
not been a priority? How have we escaped some of
the socialization to allow us that choice?

ANNE: During the early 1960's, the mass media
was writing about the sexual revolution on college
campuses - I guess I was part of that. I didn't feel I

had to get married in order to have sexual
relationships; in fact, my ideal was to share my life
with someone I loved, unhampered by legalities.
Relationships were to last as long as love lasted - and I
didn't think love could last a life-time.

At the same time, in the back of my mind, I
thought I would someday settle down and have
children. In the meantime, however, I was determined
not to settle down. I had seen that alternative -
women working as secretaries to put their husbands
through college, high school friends who had chosen
to get married rather than go to college. My evidence
might well have been limited - I didn't know about
day care or collectives - but I couldn't accept
anything to do with the traditional role for women.

Like many other students during the 1960's, I was
alienated from many aspects of the society around
me. I became involved in the equal rights struggle,
protests against the war in Vietnam and the fight for
student participation. By the end of the decade, I
found women's liberation. Through these struggles, I
began to understand why I was alienated from roles
which had been presented as models and I began to
see the necessity of creating a new society which
would allow people, especially, from my point of
view, women, freedom from exploitative, oppressive,
narrow roles. The commitment to bring about radical
changes has become integrated into my total life and
any alternatives which would take me out of the
struggle are impossible to consider.

PAT: For me, it goes back to the way I was
brought up - a stable, long-established family
situation. I suppose I had the notion that it was *the*
way to raise children (because I had turned out so
superbly!) Even when I got married, I did not have
the perception that this would be an "established,
family-type" relationship that would last long enough
to ensure a stable environment for children (and it
didn't).

There were few alternatives in life style available -
the ideas of communal child-rearing were not as
common or well thought-out, and the whole issue of
raising children was essentially irrelevant to us, living
as we were in a college, youth, and childless culture.

In my world, political thought and action,
intellectual work, travel, people to share ideas,
interests and enthusiasms with became my priorities.

The traditional roles of wife and mother weren't
real for me. I've often said: "I don't want to grow
up." If being "mature" means settling down in a rut
(as it seems to have with many of my companions
from high school and college), I don't want to be
mature. If it means having my brain going spongy
from lack of stimulation, it's not for me. If it means
boredom and immobility within four walls, with an
occasional prison break to the supermarket or coffee
at a neighbor's house/prison, there's no way I'm going
to grow up.

And yet I know that this doesn't have to be - that
being with children, having children, can be exciting
and rewarding, can even be fun. So while I have to
this point made a conscious decision not to have
children, I would not take steps to finalize that
decision. It remains open - a possibility that still
exists, an option that I still hold.

The objectification of you as a woman undergoes an intensification and dramatic change as soon as you give birth to your first baby. You have suddenly become MOTHER FIGURE-EARTH GODDESS. You may see all your men friends projecting you into the role of MADONNA-WITH-CHILD, complete with halos, or identifying you with their mothers and a whole mish-mash of emotions and fears that accompany that.

You may watch your old man/husband/whatever packing his bags saying: "This is too heavy; I'm not ready for this. I gotta be free..."

You may notice many of your childless women friends giving you pitying looks, wrinking their noses at the little one and thinking: "Jesus - I'm glad it's not mine..."

This abandonment when you most need emotional support is one of the most brutal and crystal clear indications of your position as mystified creature and is a prime example of the emotional blackmail that increases the ranks of the resistance movement.

The new mother has just been through an incredible change and needs solid support of friends to carry her through adjusting her head to living at home, no longer pear-shaped, with a tiny baby. As well as emotional support, she (or both parents) needs physical assistance with routine work as little babies are very tiring.

Having lived in communes with many other adults, I would like to say that it is potentially the best arrangement in which to raise children: best for parents, other adults, and children alike. I have to admit, dismally, that in most cases I've seen, because of the attitudes of many of the adults concerned, it is one of the worst.

Children need privacy, quiet and a sense of order to cope with the rapid physical, mental, and emotional changes occurring within them. This is difficult to provide in a house with many adults, but it is essential to the child's development as an individual. All too often though, with numerous adult trips and chaos happening around them, they feel lost and confused and their confusion comes out in destructive ways - crying jags, running around making lots of loud noise and destroying things.

Children need to be treated with love, understanding, and respect as growing individuals with decided personalities and temperaments of their own. They need individual attention that is not superficial, and they want to feel pride in their achievements and be acknowledged for them. Even if the communards are tuned in to the kids, you'll inevitably have problems with some of your friends treating them like inconvenient housepets, giving them superficial attention when they're feeling benevolent, or when the child does something irritating. If children are ignored and are greeted with "that's nice, dear" when they show you something they've done that they're proud of, they do things like kicking the baby or peeing in someone's shoe because then they really get noticed.

Well-meaning but careless friends are also good for leaving full ashtrays and coffee cups and knives on the floor for infants to get into or leaving basement doors open for babies to fall down the stairs or front doors open for toddlers to run on the road, etc., etc.

They can also be heard saying: "Isn't that cute - she's eating the Tampax," or complaining about the

communes

destruction or disappearance of something or other of theirs that was left within the child's reach.

This is especially a problem in communes with many adults, each with many friends, so that the house contains at least one visitor every day. It's really a drag for you and your child to have to keep saying: "Don't touch! Don't touch!" and running around picking up dangerous objects left around. They can also mindfuck the kid by saying: "Don't do that or Mummy will give you a good smack," when you don't believe in hitting children, or offering candy rewards when you're a health food freak.

Children need to feel identification with a group of people - the family or collective - especially for the first few years. This can only be achieved if the group is fairly constant and people are not forever splitting for Montreal or San Francisco or wherever every couple of weeks. In that case the child is surrounded by a bunch of strangers and never gets to know any of them.

Children must be allowed to assert themselves and make many decisions for themselves. This is most a problem for the communal child who is not yet talking. Unless everyone in the commune knows the child well enough to understand when he mumbles something, his will is likely to be trampled by well-meaning adults who think they know better.

Since you are so much bigger, louder and have so much power over the child's life, you must be very careful not to lay your trips on him or expect him to necessarily get off on your trips. A sensitive, excitable small child will not benefit from being taken to a loud, long rock concert no matter how much his parents dig it. He experiences things so intensely that he'll likely suffer from sensory overload and scream from fatigue and frustration. The same goes for other adult trips - blowing dope in the kid's face is extremely unfair until he gets old enough to ask for it; himself the same goes for booze, extreme food trips, loud parties with him in the room and taking him places you want to go, but where he's not going to have a good time. For instance, we made the mistake of taking two small ones on the Unemployed March to Victoria last week. It took them (and us) two days to recuperate from being cooped up on crowded buses and ferries for hours at a time and being dragged around from place to place. Next time we'll leave them home and a good time will be guaranteed for all.

I really wanted to write a positive article about children in communes but I think this most sound quite negative. That's because I've had so many bad experiences in this respect that I thought it was really important to point out the common mistakes that are made and the damaging effect they have. But I want to emphasize that it does not have to be that way if

people re-examine their attitudes and reactions. I'm sure there are lots of other communes besides ours who have overcome these initial difficulties and for whom it is beginning to work well.

At its best, the commune in the family or tribe state offers:

FOR THE CHILDREN:

- more friends of all ages and exposure to many people's different trips (it's too bad old people aren't included)

- prevents shyness and super-dependency on one or two people

- lessens the damaging effect of bad mistakes made by the parents or others because there are more people with whom the child has secure relationships.

FOR THE ADULTS:

- gives many their first exposure to children

- a feeling of true family to those who've been floating around transient for a while and are feeling lonely and somewhat alienated

- by sharing the work load, everyone is much freer and less burdened by it

- it underlines the double standard for women; in other words, if only the women look after the kids and wash the diapers, the guys are all full of shit about being communal

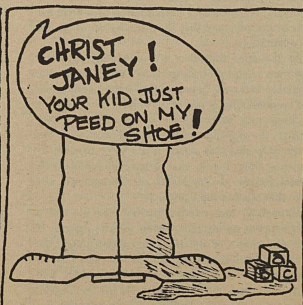
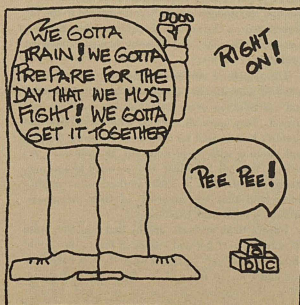
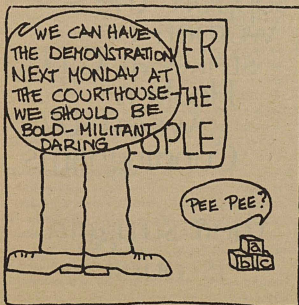
- women can support each other in demanding their rights and equal sharing of responsibilities

- removal of financial pressures from the parents by sharing food, housing costs, and baby equipment

- proper post-natal pampering of mothers with new babies.

FOOTNOTE ON HOW TO MINDFUXX YOUR LITTLE BOY:

The seeds of sex role playing and male chauvinism start early and are planted in subtle ways. Parents may do this without even realizing they are contributing to the perpetuation of this bullshit. The child will want to repeat those actions you acknowledge with your approval, spoken or otherwise, and will try to repress those reactions for which you show disapproval or which you ignore. If you only express pride in your son being big, tough, loud and aggressive, and refuse to acknowledge that he is, also, like all small children, sensitive and gets his feelings hurt easily, you will make him ashamed of his sensitivity and react to hurt feelings by becoming super-obnoxious and bullying. Or he may start to withdraw. Little boys should be exposed to dolls, pretty objects and attractive clothes, just as little girls should be exposed to toy cars, mechanical toys, and blue jeans.



WENDY by HELEN POTREBENKO

Single women who like children not related to them are somewhat suspect in this society. They might kidnap babies or convert tomcatting males into fathers without their prior consent. Because of the heavy burden child-rearing places on the mother, and because looking after children leaves little time for anything but the physical chores involved in caring for children, a woman free of the burden who would volunteer to take on the job must have something wrong with her. (Single men have even more of a problem in this respect.)



Children in capitalist society are property, not people. They are the heirs to whatever goods the parents own and they will either vindicate or besmirch the good name of their ancestors. Thus, it is awkward for the parents to allow a stranger to horn in on, and perhaps tarnish in some way, the product they are turning out. There is also, because of the socialization, tremendous guilt laid on parents, particularly mothers, so that if the child forms an attachment to another adult, it might be an indication that the adults who own him failed in their duty. Thus parents sometimes act as if they were personally threatened by a relationship their child has with an outsider, and they dowhat they cant do disrupt the relationship.

At the same time they are re-claiming property, they are also protecting their child from the inevitable betrayal. Because, unlike the parents, my first responsibility is not to the child; I move away or get busy with other things, so it is as well for the parents to explain to their child early in the relationship that this person is not to be trusted. At the same time, I, too, cannot trust the child to be around for any decent length of time and will not make that relationship a priority.

Ultimately, any relationship between me and a child depends on my relationship with its parents. If they or I move, or the friendship disintegrates, the child friend is lost as well. After all the years I am no longer so keen on making friends with children. You get to love them and then you never see them again. Years later, some total stranger is presented as the

child you once loved and you can only say gee, I knew you when you were so high. Adult friends don't change so quickly nor forget you so completely as babies, who are the worst betrayers unless you share with them at least part of every growing year.

The last child friend I had was Sally who died of leukemia. Before her, there was Wendy.

The woman who was to look after the children while their mother was away liked the boys and the littles girl, but despised Wendy for some irrational reason, the way adults do. The second day when I came to see how they were doing, I found Wendy feverish and with a red welt on her face where she had been slapped that morning. I took her home.

I was at work until 6 each day and thought she would find the silence of the suite oppressive after her own noisy home, but I would find her sitting in my big chair meditating and looking pleased with life.

I thought she should be insecure. Why wasn't she insecure? After she was in bed, I listened for her crying but she went right to sleep and slept soundly all night without even one nightmare. I waited for a waning appetite, but she ate heartily and asked for more. She liked my cooking even, though most often she told me what to make and how to make it.

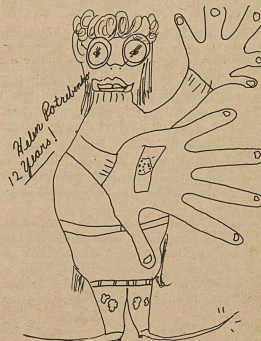
One day she brought her friend Darlene home from school with her. After supper Wendy always told me to rest because I had worked hard and did the dishes. Then they dusted. I lay around reading but then I heard them discussing the fact that the floor wasn't very clean and this seemed like a bit much so I said crossly they were not to wash the floor. They said they wanted to wash the floor (there is something in an inept adult that rouses sympathy in children) so I raged around and asked what was the younger generation coming to and didn't they know I was supposed to be looking after them, not they me. Having thus asserted my authority, I went back to reading and they decided they would wash the floor sometime when I wasn't around. Then they came and stared at me for a while and retired to the big chair to discuss what they had seen, giggling. About every 10 minutes they would come for another close scrutiny and again retire to discuss, giggling.

When Wendy judged she had discovered as much as she could from outward appearances, she asked me for complete details of my childhood as well as all about my present personality. I told her as best I could, saying I wasn't much good for anything and never had been but that I was happy most of the time anyway.

She spent a good deal of time drawing. One day she drew a picture and said that was me but it was one of these stylized pretty girls and I objected that I wasn't pretty at all. I described to her what I did look like and she nodded solemnly and returned to the big chair to redraw the portrait. I said the second drawing was more like me, but Wendy looked somewhat doubtful.

The day their mother was coming home, all the kids had judo lessons, so I picked them up after judo, and we went to drink hot chocolate until the bus arrived. They were all bursting with excitement and couldn't bear to wait for the bus to get there, dancing and shouting with irrepresible joy. But when the bus arrived, they all fell silent and crowded around me, staring awe-stricken at their mother, who couldn't understand that the intensity of their happiness prevented them from expressing it.

I drove them all home and by that time they were all crawling over her and talking as fast as they could about what all had happened while she was gone. The dog and I lay in front of the fire-place, half asleep. Then the mother announced she had brought presents, and they said, wow, presents too!! and said



I must come see. On the kitchen table, they unwrapped first and exclaimed over some tiny castles from Chinatown, and there was some other stuff and then they all gapsed in amazement as the last parcel was unwrapped to reveal a perfect green china frog.

We drank some coffee and I said I was going home. Wendy said, you didn't get a present so this is for you, holding out her hand and I saw that in her palm was the tiny castle she had been given. I told her, it's your present; I can't take it. She said if it was her present she could do whatever she liked with it and what she wanted to do was give it to me, looking at her mother for confirmation and her mother nodded. I was going to refuse but she was offering it to me with such a look of love in her eyes, I saw it was much more than a castle I was getting for nothing.

I haven't seen her in years now. I've moved a lot and become older and less capable of involvement, and now I wouldn't take no castles from no sweaty kids. Probably Wendy is a proper young woman now, broken to fit the mould, and I suppose she no longer goes around terrorizing aging spinsters with the fierce intensity of her love.

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Children's Houses

We have long since recognized the importance of day-care for mothers; we know of its value to children but, nevertheless, it has remained as a pious wish added to the other issues with which we are involved. Why are we so unexcited about organizing for day-care? Why have so many of us attempted to 'do something' about it but few of us have managed to do much at all and, apart from on campus, nothing has come off the ground in Vancouver?

Motherhood

Two years ago Melody Killian wrote an excellent article examining the 'mystique of motherhood' forced on women. She meant by that both the assumption that it is only by giving birth to a child that a woman can be fulfilled and also the false idea that there is only one way to be a good mother and that is to spend all your time with 'your' children for the first six years of their lives. This latter idea is foisted upon us because right now our society wants most women to stay in the home to look after the men, produce children and bring them up to work docilely in this authoritarian, competitive society. The father-dominated family is the best training ground they have. If more female cheap labor was required or it was war-time the value of day care for children would be extolled even if that day-care was of dreadful quality. Day care must be considered for its value to parents and children aside from its function in the economy — the care of children must not be the pawns used to push the mother in or out of the home according to the dictates of the market.

We, who want to strive to be independent, autonomous people with our loves and our friendships based on equality and respect, know that this is only possible if the world of the mother and child is extended far beyond the confines of the family. We need to change the isolated, authoritarian family, where father is boss and economic dependency and neurotic emotional dependency is so common. We must look for alternative ways of living our lives and we can begin to do that by changing the way we are mothers, and this change will be reflected in the relationships throughout the family. The motherhood 'mystique', supported by the anti-female bias of Freudian psychology, is a powerful obstacle as it breeds so much guilt and frustration in mothers, and then awful doubts about any alternatives, even minor ones, flourish.

To examine these alternatives we must think carefully about the ways in which our situation as mothers oppresses us and the child. In much of our literature on the housewife it is implied that it is the children who oppress the mother and that all the work she does around them is oppressive. This is not true. It is not the children who oppress us and much work around their needs is more meaningful than any possible wage-labor job. What oppresses us and the children is the requirement that the mother and father be solely responsible for the children twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for the first six years of their lives and for all except the school hours for many more years. This isolates the mother and child in a small private world which is often so constricted that the emotional, intellectual, social and even the physical needs of both mother and child cannot be met. The damaging effects show in the mental breakdowns of so many housewives and the intense dependency problems of the children. If we attempt to break out of this isolation and spend much time at work or in activities unrelated to the children our guilt leads to much unnecessary anxiety about the children. We have difficulty in concentrating on our other activities and develop overcompensating relationships when we are with the children.

Day Care for All Children

One solution is that of day care for all children. It is certainly an answer for those living in small families but children living in urban communities would also benefit from spending part of the day in a day care centre. We still have to understand that in most urban communities, unlike in rural communities, there is a division between the work world and the communal living world for the adults. Most of the adults have to go out to work and this puts the children into the

care of one adult during the working day, either the same adult or a rotation of adults. The environment in a day care centre could be a much richer experience — there are more children, different adults, a different physical and emotional set-up altogether. If the centre is controlled by the parents, the adults in the commune could be really influential in such a centre.

I must stress that there should be day care provisions for all children whether or not both parents work. This would seem obvious from what I have already written — these centres would not be simply babysitting or custodial centres but exciting, good experiences for children. In addition, women who, it is estimated, work anything up to a 90 hour week in the home when they have children, would certainly benefit from the use of day care. I stress the

I would like to see a Children's House for every few blocks and in every housing development and apartment complex. These Houses would be controlled by the neighborhood parents and financed by the provincial and municipal governments. Each House would include a nursery for the day care of infants, a nursery school and playing facilities (indoor and outdoor) for the two to six year old children, and a centre for school age children to go to when their parents are working and for recreational activities. Ideally this House would be open twenty-four hours a day.

This sounds like a utopian and unachievable pipe-dream. Anyone who has battled the redtape surrounding child care issues will say that it is an impossible goal, where on earth will the money come from and so on. People said the same about universal



point because it has a major influence on the way we must struggle for day care. It is not a question of family life style for some children, 'communal life style' for some other children and then day care for the 'needy'. We should clearly understand that all children and mothers could benefit from day care and it should be available so that they have the choice. Speaking of choice, we must be aware of how certain Welfare authorities have used a combination of day care and retraining programs to force welfare recipients off the welfare rolls and into extremely low paying and exploitative jobs. The fact that day care is available must not be used to manipulate people into that kind of servitude. In addition, the choice can only be real where the day care facilities are excellent — no parents want to put their children into custodial centres.

Children's Houses

One reason why day care has been such an unattractive part of our organizing work is that we have never carefully analyzed what kind of day care we need to liberate both adults and children. We have only a pot-pourri of ideas none of which gives us a vision of what we are aiming at on a longterm basis. We need this vision so that we can integrate organizing for day care with our other organizing work. We will need to explore all aspects of this but meanwhile I will tentatively put forward my views for discussion.

education seventy years ago. If we are determined we can begin to lay the foundations for such day care facilities. To get what we want however, we must know clearly why we want it and what are the pitfalls we must avoid.

a) Community Control

By community control I do not mean anything like the present Big Business control of our hospitals, which are supposedly community controlled, nor do I mean the School Board set-up that we have in Vancouver. The last thing that I would want to see is the present authoritarian school environment extended downward and called Day Care. By community control I mean that it is the parents, adults and children who use the House who determine what should happen there. Since the Houses would be neighborhood ones it would be reasonably easy for all the people involved to get together and the extent of the cooperative system would depend on the particular needs of the people. Some Houses might be staffed entirely by parents on a cooperative basis, others might have paid staff, men as well as women, who would be answerable to the parents. It would also be possible to enable neighborhood people, particularly elderly people, to work and play with the children and this would help break down the barriers between the old and the very young in our society, and the House could become the focus for a greater sense of community in each neighborhood.

continued on page 12

Children's Houses Cont'd.

b) Free

To ensure that the Children's House is available to all who need it the facilities must be free. This means that the federal and provincial governments would have to finance them from taxation. If we believe that children should be the social responsibility of all adults in the society, it follows that all should contribute to their needs according to their ability to do so. Corporations should also bear financial responsibility for the children of the society for as long as their profits are not returned to the people.

c) No Rigid Division by Age

One other aspect of a Children's House is that in such a House there need be no rigid division by age as is found now in most nursery schools and in the school system. Two years olds enjoy enormously being with five year olds, six year olds like being with three year olds and so on. There would be many ways within the House to ensure that the younger children get as much care and attention as is essential, and that the older children would at times be able to get on with activities uninterrupted by the younger ones.

Unacceptable Alternatives

a) Profit Making Day Care Corporations

Such corporations are becoming widespread in New York and I was told that some are beginning to develop in Toronto. These new companies intend to package and sell franchises for day care centres in much the same way others have sold franchises for fried chicken, hamburgers and root beer. This is a quotation taken from the New York Times and used in a more extensive discussion of day care by Vicki Breitbart in *Leviathan*, May 1970. Little else needs to be said. We know what has happened to fried chicken — imagine what could happen to our children where the profit motive reigns supreme!

b) Company Day Care Centres

These are ones provided by the company for which you work. In a socialist society it would be possible and good to have both neighborhood and workplace day care centres, but in our society we should be very careful when we consider company-provided day care. Both in Breitbart's article in *Leviathan* and in an article by Helke Sander in the magazine *Radical America* February 1970, the problems we should consider are discussed. The first major problem is that of ensuring that the parents have control over the centre, and that is practically impossible when the company provides the space and much of the financing. Secondly, this day care service is one more weapon companies would use against employees, either by making day care a right to be earned (a reward for merit) or by keeping the children of militant workers out. This consequence could perhaps be mitigated where the workers have a strong union but few women workers are in that position. Thirdly, if company day care is relied upon to meet our needs what happens to all those women working in small businesses and those working in the home? Companies will only provide day care when they need to attract cheap female labor so the day care provisions would fluctuate with the employment needs of the companies. This fact underlines once more that it is the mother and not the father who is always expected to be responsible for the child even

when she is working. Can you imagine day care being provided down on the docks for the children of longshoremen?

Another important problem is the loss of mobility of the worker. Where alternative day care is difficult to find, women workers cannot easily leave one job where day care is provided for another with no day care provisions. In West Germany large companies have developed many social services including day care in order to attract employees and this has resulted in a loss of mobility for the worker and she has to be more quiescent on the job. If in losing a job you lose your wage, your house and day care for the children, you are a much more vulnerable employee and the company will exploit this.

For children it may seem advantageous to be near the mother at work, but it is not valuable for them to be taken across town on rush-hour buses each day, to be in a centre in the heart of an industrial area with no outside playing space, to be dragged by the mother on shopping errands on the way home and so on. And think of the mother: she has no opportunity to relax and be by herself between work and looking after the child again. At lunchtime she will feel compelled to be with the child, even if she needs that time to relax and be with her workmates.

c) Experts and Day Care Centres

I am also very wary of the centres run by 'experts' in pre-school education. This was reinforced when reading an article by Sarah Spinks in the Fall issue of *This Magazine is About Schools*. She describes a nursery for babies at the Canadian Mothercraft Centre in Ontario in which a kind of stimulus-reward system of learning is promoted. Everything the baby does is turned into a 'learning experience' and a major stress is on early talking ability. Sarah shows that even the way in which the language is taught seems to reflect a view of the world as being a positive, rational, technological society and that chaos, conflict and uncertainty do not exist — the child is taught early to see himself or herself as a cog in the wheel rather than being helped to grapple with the problems of the whole wheel and the uncertainty that this leads to. The best check that there is on the imposition of such values by the 'experts' is the control of the non-expert. I recognize the value of training for Day Care workers but that training should be geared to helping the worker cooperate with the parents and the neighborhood people rather than to the raising of the usual professional barrier that cuts the parents off.

How Do We Organize?

Most working mothers find a relative or else a 'mother substitute' from down the block to look after the children, and there is often no realistic alternative to that arrangement. Mothers do this partly out of distrust of day care centres and also because the centres are often miles away and may be expensive. Many mothers have no knowledge of government subsidies for day care, or even of the existence of government day care centres. The provincial government will not advertise or inform people about their day care provisions, presumably because too many people need them and would want to use them. It is also the women with young children



who are most badly hit by the 'motherhood mystique', the extreme anxiety about exploring alternative ways of child care. Women have been taught to distrust any arrangement for the group care of children: by the constant bombardment of the 'perfect mother' image on TV and in advertising, by their own frequently poor experiences at school, by the traditional linking of day care with orphanages and other institutions, and by the custodial rather than life-enriching qualities of many day care centres. Distrust of collectives is so basic to the rampant individualism of this society that people are only allowed to be together to compete with one another, as in the school system; or to be exploited, as in the work situation. This makes it really hard to envisage a collective of children all helping, teaching and giving to each other. 'It is only by me personally caring for my Tommy that he can possibly win out over the others and be successful' — this seems to be the rationale of many of us mothers.

All of this points to the need for an enormous propaganda campaign directed at the government on the one hand and to the people on the other. This campaign would spell out what our needs are and the ways we want to see them implemented. It would also be directed against the 'motherhood mystique' to free women from their guilt and anxiety about day care and enable them to feel strong and determined enough to demand that excellent day care facilities over which they have control should be theirs by right. At the same time or maybe a little later, we should attempt to set up a neighborhood Children's House — at least one and hopefully more.

We must remember that the people to whom day care is most immediately important are the most overworked and oppressed of women. Where can women who both care for young children and hold down a job possibly find the time and energy to organize for it? We have stressed the need to organize around our own immediate oppression but we should not define this so narrowly that women whose children are older and women who have no children feel excluded from such organizing — their help is indispensable. The freeing of women from this particular aspect of our oppression is both basic to our liberation and to children's liberation also. In the small group that we have now we have discussed going to several areas in Vancouver and to every house in two or three blocks in each area. We would ask people what their needs are as far as day care is concerned and what arrangements they now make for their pre-school children. We hope to then use this information as a basis for our propaganda campaign. It may also give us indications as to where we might most fruitfully start planning the setting up of a neighborhood Children's House. We are a small group and are only in the initial stages of planning this and we would welcome anyone's help and hopefully the contribution of ideas and criticisms. If you can help us please call Isobel at 732-7059.



SIMONE



prisoners being held under the War Measures Act and whose trials are now in process.

The meeting was sponsored by the Vancouver Women's Caucus and was one of a series of meetings held that week at SFU, UBC and the Fishermen's Hall during a Quebec Conference initiated by the Free Quebec/Free Canada Committee.

While Simone did not elaborate on the women's liberation movement in Quebec she certainly in her own way gave us the feeling that she was obtaining her liberation through extreme difficulties. The daughter and grand-daughter of Quebec judges, she has lived an interesting and active life being married to the politically active Michel Chartrand but as she said, "I do not live in the shadow of Michel - I am myself." She is a free lance journalist and works for the CBC. She is the mother of seven children and two grand-children and has tried to bring up her children to be frank and honest and to think for themselves.

She also feels that we should not be so quick to put labels on people but to listen to each other.

On the trials of the political prisoners, Chartrand said, "It will be most difficult if not impossible to obtain fair trials as all the judges in provincial and federal courts receive their positions through political patronage." Lawyers are reluctant to take the cases of the arrested through fear of reprisals from the big law firms which could mean the loss of their jobs. Hence the difficulties of the Defense Committee are not only financial but in essence political.

Simone pointed out that the movement for an independent Canada and the Quebec separatist movement "had much in common in that they both spring from the same cause; - outside economic and political domination. We have common enemies."

The meeting ended on a symbolic note when Liz Briemberg, representing Women's Caucus, presented Simone with a ceramic vase "made from the soil of BC," a candle for "the small light which shines here in support of the Quebec struggle" and some red roses to symbolize "the love of the women's liberation movement for strong women everywhere." Much moved, Simone told us later that she will remember those gifts much longer than she will remember the speeches just knowing that we far away in BC care about our Quebec sisters.

The capacity crowd which heard Simone Chartrand speak on January 20th at Inner City Hall became much more aware of the problems and difficulties which the Quebecois are facing, now that the Public Order Act is in full swing. The effect of the War Measures Act has been felt in the arrests of leading activists who spoke out against the repression and economic deprivation of the Quebec workers. The majority of those arrested were not FLQ members but leaders of people's movements and outspoken members of the community.

Simone Chartrand, whose husband, Michel, is a leading trade unionist in Montreal, was speaking in defense of her husband and the other political



Front Center-Strasman—Magnum
Quebec separatists on the march

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY		
	U.B.C. 2449 8:10-SCI 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		WORKING WOMEN 8:30	6-9 ABORTION COUNSELLING 8:30	INFORMAL DISCUSSION 8:30		PORTLAND CONFERENCE SAT & SUN.		
PEDESTAL 11:30 7	U.B.C. 2449 8:10-SCI 8	9	10	11	12	13		
INDOCHINA CONF MEETINGS 2:30	CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE 8:30	WORKING WOMEN 8:30	6-9 ABORTION COUNSELLING 8:30	INFORMAL DISCUSSION 8:30				
PEDESTAL 11:30 14	U.B.C. 2449 8:10-SCI 15	16	17	18	19	20		
INDOCHINA CONF MEETINGS 2:30		WORKING WOMEN 8:30	6-9 ABORTION COUNSELLING 8:30	INFORMAL DISCUSSION 8:30				
PEDESTAL 11:30 21	U.B.C. 2449 8:10-SCI 22	23	24	25	26	27		
INDOCHINA MEETING 2:30	CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE 8:30	WORKING WOMEN 8:30	6-9 ABORTION COUNSELLING 8:30	GENERAL MEETING 8:30				
PEDESTAL LAYOUT: PEAK 2:30								
INDOCHINA MEETING 2:30								

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from Quebec

As Quebecois, we decided that we had to do something about the fear which seemed to be paralyzing the population. We refused to accept the version handed down by Trudeau and Marchand that those who agreed with some of the aims of the (P.A.) should face sentence as violators of the new "War Measures Act". We set out to show that we were not afraid and the best place to prove it was in the streets of Montreal.

We supported the MDPPO (Mouvement pour la Defense des Prisonniers Politiques du Quebec - Movement for the Defense of Quebec Political Prisoners) when it called for a gathering of sympathizers at the **L'Arche Prison** on Christmas Day to demonstrate our solidarity. The Quebecois were able to shout **VIVE LE QUEBEC LIBRE** in the streets and all could see and hear them.

Prisoners on the 8th floor waved white cloths and gave the clenched fist salute. Around the other side of the prison, bits of paper came fluttering down as other prisoners signalled their recognition of the thousand demonstrators.

The news commentators who described the gay crowd with their red, white and green tunics symbolizing the 1837 Patriots, ringing bells and singing songs, expressed surprise that there was no sombre touch. It was the first breakthrough in Quebec morale since the October events. Obviously the media failed to understand that when people face any threat to their freedom, to be able to organize such a show of resistance is reason for such enthusiasm.

This feeling was also carried into the following week - New Year's Day - when people again met outside a prison, this time Tanguay Prison where the

remaining four women prisoners were still being held without bail. Again the streets filled with men, women and children from all over. Again we showed our solidarity with the women prisoners, who sang and cheered from their windows in reply. The press acknowledged: "... that the women were obviously buoyed by the experience."

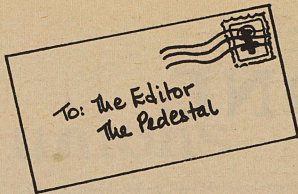
We carried our "symbolic rose" in one hand and our bells in the other. We joined forces to prove that we would not forget Lise Rose during her

imprisonment, nor those who were sharing the hunger fast with her in protest against the particular treatment accorded to political prisoners. At Parthenais, Lise Rose had been brutally stripped and beaten.

Pierre Trudeau can't scare us with his threats of "more sophisticated police methods" against urban guerrillas. We have seen how our Vietnamese sisters continue to resist the most brutal military attacks. We now witness international support growing for Angela Davis who continues to give leadership from her prison cell. We Quebecois embrace their examples!

The demonstration at Tanguay Prison on New Year's Day 1971 leads the way for future actions.

Le Comite Tanguay
3637 rue Ste. Famille
Montreal 130, Quebec.



from Italy

Dear sisters:

I am very sorry that I didn't answer you before, but I have not been in Rome for a long enough period. I would like to pay my subscription for the **Pedestal** and I send you the money inside the letter. I send you a short analysis about women's situation in Italy, as you asked me, and I hope it will be useful. Please have a look at it from the point of view of my English! Thank you for all the material you sent me.

Friendly,
Mariello

A women's mass movement doesn't exist at all in Italy, neither exists a revolutionary movement born from students' groups or new-left groups.

Nevertheless, of course, a need of a women's liberation movement is very strongly felt, and clearly developing among militant groups of high-school and university girls. These girls have realized during the last four years of students' mass struggles, their position of inferiority and oppression. Apart from few exceptions, women never had any chance of political leadership, and, above all, any chance of meditating and discussing their conditions.

A passive acceptance of their auxiliary role was accepted among the militant women, with no exceptions, and only now we start to wake up and refuse it.

Every militant refused to look at her oppression stating that the only true and real opposition was the working class exploitation and that nothing else was important.

But there are many objective reasons why we need a women's liberation organization.

Women in factories (i.e. FIAT) receive lower wages and live in worse conditions; they are used (because of their traditional submissiveness) as a means of division within the working class.

Because Italian capitalism is less

advanced than American capitalism, the housewife's work is very heavy and not automatized in lower classes. Moreover, the ideological myth of the "fulfilled housewife" is still very strongly felt from the male psychology.

Another important thing is the Church influence. Only think that just a month ago we obtained the right to divorce after long struggles; propaganda about contraceptives is still banned; until one year ago, the woman's adultery was punishable with three years of jail. Sexual repression was and still is incredibly strong.

Thus: which are the reasons that provoke these first and superficial changes? Not, of course, the women's liberation movement which does not exist, but the parliamentary action of a few members of institutional leftist parties: the radical party (do not confuse the Italian meaning of radical with the American one: they are a small anti-catholic leftist group), the socialist and the communist party. But they have no links at all with the women of the working class and the high school and university girls, as organized mass movements.

The only existing group which somehow is linked with larger groups of women is the U.D.I. (Italian Women's Union), which is organized by the Communist Party.

This group is extremely ambiguous, reflecting in all its actions the fundamental ambiguity of the Communist Party. They publish a weekly magazine, in which they show Vietnamese women fighting as well as recipes for the Sunday cake and fashionable dresses. This kind of life-cliche has no substantial differences with the one of the bourgeois woman.

That is the reason why we think that we must absolutely not consider the UDI the group around which the revolutionary movement can organize itself, but, on the contrary, we must create a completely new Women's Liberation organization, even if we must continue to discuss with the most open-minded who now are working within the UDI.

across Canada

MARITIMES

Pat Beresford,
6124 Pepperell, Halifax

Carol Hamilton-Smith
748 Forest Hill Rd., Fredericton
QUEBEC

Le Comite Tanguay
3637 rue Ste. Famille, Montreal

Women's Centre (844-4838)
3964 Ste. Famille, Montreal

ONTARIO

Shirley Greenberg, Ottawa
5 Commance Dr., Ottawa

Janet Rogers
c/o ANES, Kingston

Ellen Hunter, (745-7442)
774 George St., Peterborough

Women's Liberation
373 Huron St., Toronto

New Feminists
Box 597, St. A., Toronto

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MANITOBA

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Women's Liberation (252-6252)
2259 Cameron, Regina

ALBERTA

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Jo Ann Dundas
215-23rd Ave. N.E., Calgary 64

Sybillette House (432-7685)
11113-83rd Ave, Edmonton

Women's Liberation (429-4463)
Rm. 10-10168-100th St., Edmonton

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Women's Caucus (The Pedestal)
511 Carrall, 684-0523, Van. 4

Van. Women's Liberation
Familton House 878-8386

Women's Alliance (Van.)
Mary Trev 685-2755

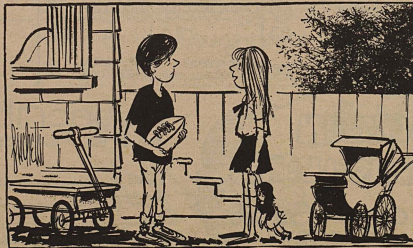
Terry Inglis (384-5894)
1278 Centre Rd., No. 4, Victoria

this issue

Mostly by the children! Staff included: Elizabeth Briemberg, Pat Hoffer, Hanna Briemberg, Anne Roberts, Bouk Elitzgna, Kathy Gallagher, Barbara Todd, Jean Rancs, Susan, Cindy and Shelly Schnee, Helen Patrebenko, Pat Feldhammer, Nikki Ross, Beverley Montagnon, Jani, Pat Uhl-Howard, Alison, Jean McLaren.

next issue

We'll be discovering our sisters and brothers around the world and their struggle for liberation. Solidarity on International Women's Day, March 8th.



"Let's play house - I'll be the wife and you be the male chauvinist pig..."

from Vancouver

Mesdames:

I am one of many women who have found it necessary (until a better scheme for child maintenance is effected) to sue the father of my five children for child maintenance and alimony in order to keep a young family together and to stay at home myself to care for them.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I have sent to the Minister of Internal Revenue protesting what I consider to be unfair taxation regarding this alimony and maintenance.

Would you be kind enough to read the enclosed copy of this letter and the judgement?

Is there any way you can help me pursue this further?

I hope to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,
D.J.B.

The Honorable Herbert E. Gray
Minister of Internal Revenue
Ottawa

Sir:
I am writing regarding a judgement brought down against me by the Income Tax Appeal Board concerning taxation which I consider grossly unjust.

This is a rough outline of my case:

In 1965, when I remarried, my former husband and father of my five children owed me over \$200,000 in back alimony and maintenance payments. In order to clear the slate I entered into a legal agreement with him to settle the debt for \$8,000 to be paid in four instalments. When I was taxed \$880 on a \$4,000 payment under this agreement for 1966 my lawyer advised me to open under protest and to appeal to the Income Tax Dept., as this was money paid on an agreement, no longer alimony, and therefore not taxable. I lost; the Dept. considered this alimony and maintenance. I then appealed to the Income Tax Appeal Board. I submitted that if (as they had done) they considered this taxable alimony and maintenance payments, it should not be assessed as taxable income for one year because the Court had ordered this to be paid over seven years. I should not be penalized because my children's father neglected to pay as ordered by the Courts, and later neglected to pay on time on the Agreement as written. I had to borrow money to maintain my children over a period of seven years. The \$8,000 was used by me to repay part of this loan. I still owe \$286.04 income tax on payments for 1967 and 1968 and I expect I have already incurred a fine.

I was astonished to discover that a

large number of women in the same situation as myself had been taxed in the same manner on lump sum alimony and child maintenance payments. These cases provided the precedent for the judgement against me and so this injustice is perpetuated. I have further access to the Courts but have been advised by my lawyer not to pursue this as the case in Income Tax Law and the precedents are too strong against me, and also, I cannot afford further legal costs. However, I am not prepared to pay this without further attempts to right what I consider to be discrimination on the part of the Department of Internal Revenue against women.

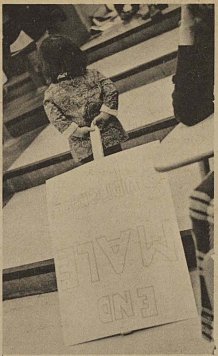
I maintain that this taxation should be pro-rated over the years this money was due as per Court order. The delinquent parent not only evades responsibility but also gets an income tax deduction for an overdue lump sum payment in the years he chooses to pay. Had this taxation been pro-rated over the seven years the money was due I would have had to pay very little tax, rather than over \$1,000 which I have been assessed.

It angers me that there were so many precedents in Income Tax Law which forced many women to pay exorbitant tax on late alimony and child maintenance. These represent only those who could afford to appeal.

I enclose a copy of the judgement in order to show the absurdity of the way in which words can be interpreted to suit the purpose of the Tax Department.

I intend to bring this matter in to open to the attention of a number of organizations and demand a change in the Income Tax in this regard.

Yours very truly,
D.J.B.



JOIN US

ting, layout, proofreading, typesetting. ANNE 988-0950

OFFICE
Everyone can help in the office - answering mail & phone, mailings, etc. Call BARB 738-2073.

EDUCATION
UBC - Mostly general education around women's liberation - JANE RULE 224-0557
SFU - JANU 524-4598
VCC - Cathy Wilander 433-0290

High Schools - The workshop protested Jan. 29 against the Miss Teen Age Canada contest. Groups have been formed in a couple of schools: Call TRUDI 939-7713, ROBIN 987-5048.

WORKING WOMEN
In January, the workshop's discussions centred on Women and Unions - past, present & future. We wrote a long article for the *Oubyssey* (UBC

student paper) and now we're talking about using that material for a booklet and adding more, particularly more on the Women's Union.

On Jan. 29, we held the meeting to initiate a discussion with men workers on the relationship between women's liberation and the working class struggle as a whole. There were 60 or so people there, about half men, half women.

Don't forget to BOYCOTT CUNNINGHAM, and bring new ideas for the campaign to the workshop. The women at Hosken have been on strike for 9 months now.

If you can JOIN THE WORKSHOP call BOUK 254-6673 or JEAN 298-8430 or come to a meeting (any Tues. 8:00, Sil Carrall).

CHILD CARE
A small group, needing members. Now planning to go to several areas of Vancouver to ask people about

their day care needs. This info will be used for a propaganda campaign, and in considering the possibility of setting up Children's Houses (see p. 11&12). If you can help, call ISOBEL 732-7059.

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

COORDINATING COMMITTEE
Includes representatives from each workshop; open to everyone. Coordinates us, exchanges ideas, plans general meetings.

GENERAL MEETINGS
The January meeting heard workshop reports, and discussed the fact that Lionel Tiger, sexist author of the male chauvinist *Men in Groups*, will

speak at UBC Mon. Feb. 8 at 7:00. Women's Caucus members should come and be prepared!

The main discussion at the meeting was on the importance of helping women new to the group to understand the nature of women's liberation and how it relates to their own oppression. The meeting agreed that at least one small group (later more) should be started, for the benefit of old and new members, to discuss in personal terms the impact of the realization of women's oppression. Such a small group would have to have a fairly consistent membership in order to create the confidence for necessary self-examination and analysis.

Thus periodically new groups would start as a sufficient number of women showed interest. Anyone interested in beginning the first of these small groups should contact Anne Roberts 988-0950.

You're their mother

My first words as I came from under the ether after I had my son were, "I think I made a mistake." Unfortunately, since then, and one more child later, I've had very little reason to change my mind. This is not to say that children cannot be lovable. It's not them, it's all the foolishness that goes on in the name of them. From the beginning, motherhood took on the complexion of a farce...

So I should have been forewarned when I finally locked out my charming, but philandering and non-supporting Peter Pan of a husband. I was working... when I turned the bolt. But if I didn't get sick, one of the children would... I finally came up with a really simple solution. I would put the children in one of the city's day-care centres.

I called the Day Care Council to find out where the nearest school was. The woman on the other end of the line wanted to know why I needed a nursery. I told her that I had to work. She seemed insulted. "What do you mean, you have to work? In New York City there's no such thing as a mother having to work. You can go on welfare!"

I hung in there for a while longer, but, besides being sporadic, I have to admit that I wasn't working with total dedication. So I got fired. For a short while I depended upon Peter Pan, but the next time the rent was due, there I was sitting in the welfare office...

I had as an investigator a man extremely gung-ho about filling out forms... The investigator, in the interest of nice up-to-date records, paid a visit to Peter Pan. During the time I was married to the man I never could analyze his rationale so I won't try in retrospect. Whatever his reasoning, he decided to say that he didn't see why his family was on welfare since he was able to care for it.

The first I knew of his new capacity for caring was when I got a letter from the welfare department saying that I was no longer eligible. I was not too happy. I asked Peter Pan for money. He said that he didn't have any at the moment but he was sure he could borrow a

couple of dollars for me if I really needed it. I ran to the welfare office and screamed that I didn't care what my husband had said, he wasn't giving me any money and if he was, let him show the receipts to prove it. It doesn't work like that. If he said yes and I said no, even if he couldn't substantiate his claim, the burden of the proof was on me. The only thing that I could do at this point was take him to court.

The Support Court does not offer the most cheerful surroundings in which to while away a morning, especially if you are sitting there most nonchalantly ignoring your husband on the opposite bench... fighting a strong desire to hit him over the head... Nor is the urge to mayhem alleviated when a woman steps out of her office and says, "How do you do? I am your probation officer." Apparently trying to collect money from a recalcitrant husband is a really antisocial act entitling you to parole without benefit of trial.

We went into her office, where, while I sat on my hands, swallowed my spume, counted to ten, and in general saw red, they dickered over what he could afford to pay. No one asked me what I needed to live on. After a while they turned to me and said that my spouse felt that he could, with great difficulty, eke out fifteen dollars a week. I suppose it was then that I began to nut out. "What the hell," I wanted to know, "am I supposed to do with fifteen dollars a week? Move into the Waldorf?" The Probation officer interjected with the idea that I did not seem to have the proper attitude. "What attitude am I supposed to have?" I screamed. "I didn't mess up his life by running around telling people I could support him. Well, I can't take care of two children on fifteen dollars a week. Let him do it. He can have them right now." That really brought the probation officer to her feet. "You can't desert your children. That's against the law."

"How can I be deserting them? I'm giving them to their father."
"But you can't do that? You're their mother..."

