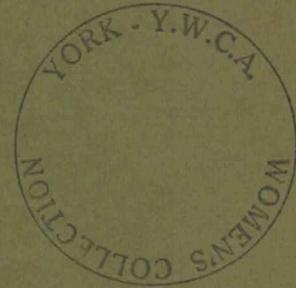


Y. W. C. A.
RESOURCE CENTRE

PRIORITIES

Vol. II No. 12

December, 1974



"There was a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform, the image I came to call the feminine mystique."

-Betty Friedan
from the Feminine Mystique

A Publication of the
N. D. P. Women's Committee

Priorities *****

Priorities is published monthly by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights of the B.C. New Democratic Party. Its intent is to provide a means of communication and discussion for NDP women in order to further the interests of the women's movement and of democratic socialism.

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MOVING? Be sure to send us your change of address; each month the post office returns copies.

"The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The N.D.P. actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of women's liberation and commits an N.D.P. government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."

(From the B.C. NDP policy on Women's Rights)

PRIORITIES has been typed and laid out entirely by volunteer labour and is printed in a union shop.

All unsigned articles are the collective responsibility of the Editorial Committee.



EDITORIAL



It was almost December and, being women, it fell to us to worry about fattening the goose and filling the stockings. It was also the editorial meeting to decide the supplement for this issue, which marks a full two years of monthly publication. What would be appropriate to mark this 24th issue of Priorities -- and in such a busy month, what would time allow us to produce?

Being, in a very small way, writers in the women's movement, our thoughts turned to that wider world of writers -- women who, unlike ourselves, do not write in fits and snatches after working and during children's naps, hoping that each issue will somehow come out and somehow not bomb. Recounting what we had read and were reading, we were struck by the proliferation of women writers, especially since the rise of the women's movement.

This issue is about some of these women and some of their writings. It is not comprehensive in any way; it is not even particularly orderly. By and large we have avoided non-fiction -- the anthologies of writing from the women's movement (several of which are excellent), the new works of feminist-socialist theoreticians, and the many writings that seek to define the condition of women. We have not touched on these, not because they are not important but because they are too important to do justice to in one necessarily short supplement.

Instead we took the easy -- and, to us, pleasurable -- way out. We concentrated on writing about the writers that for one reason or another impressed each of us. Melodie Corrigall thought that the Canadian writer Margaret Laurence deserved some space and concentrated her efforts there. Cynthia Flood felt likewise about Jane Austen and even got carried away a bit, as her lengthy article shows. Sharon Yandle, writing the definitive review on all short stories ever written, recognized belatedly that she is an interminably slow reader who doesn't really know how to write reviews and settled for a look at Doris Lessing. Shelly Dillon engaged in the masochistic effort of reviewing a few of the women's magazines -- not a soul-enriching experience for her but a valuable article for the rest of us. Ann Thomson settled down with Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, bringing to light the early glimmerings of the women's movement

So there you have it, our December pot-pourri. We hope it will reach you before you've exchanged your Christmas silk nightie with matching pot-holder for something else. Perhaps these books could be the something else you're looking for. They were for us.

Happy New Year!

BREAST CANCER

The following letter and press release was received, and we would like to encourage our readers to write letters, as suggested, regarding this important issue.

Dear Sisters:

Because of the urgent necessity for Government action concerning the detection of breast cancer, I have been lobbying the Minister of Health to implement a mass screening programme in British Columbia.

Despite the recent Vancouver Province editorial concerning the apparent refusal on the part of the Health Minister to implement a screening programme, I thought it important that you know that the Minister is looking on the request very sympathetically, and I am fully confident that he will move quickly quite soon.

For your information, I have enclosed a photo-copy of a Press Release (which was not carried up by the news media) that I issued on the 22nd of November. Also enclosed is a copy of a letter from Dr. Scott Dunbar concerning breast cancer screening in British Columbia.

In order to implement a mass screening programme as quickly as possible, it is urgent that people throughout British Columbia voice their requests for such a programme to the Minister of Health and to the Premier.

It would be helpful if a copy of your correspondence is sent to me.

Sincerely,
Colin Gabelmann, MLA
North Vancouver-Seymour

to all our readers —

best wishes for the holidays,
& may **1975** be a year of
victories for women!

the PRIORITIES staff

SCREENING PROJECT

PRESS RELEASE

BREAST CANCER SCREENING

THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF METHODS FOR DETECTING BREAST CANCER. MEDICAL ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT ONE OUT OF FIFTEEN WOMEN IN BRITISH COLUMBIA WILL DEVELOP BREAST CANCER SOMETIME IN HER LIFE. THIS IS AN ALARMING SITUATION, BUT IT APPEARS AS IF METHODS EXIST WHICH CAN DETECT BREAST CANCER PRIOR TO THE NEED FOR RADICAL SURGERY.

TWO TECHNIQUES EXIST WHICH SHOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO BRITISH COLUMBIA ON A MASS BASIS. THE FIRST IS MAMMOGRAPHY WHICH CAN DETECT CANCEROUS TISSUES AT AN EARLY STAGE. THE SECOND IS THERMOGRAPHY WHICH IS A NON-HARMFUL PROCEDURE WHICH DETECTS INCREASES IN TEMPERATURE THAT INDICATE THE BEGINNING STAGE OF CANCER.

MAMMOGRAPHY HAS CERTAIN MEDICAL RISKS, AND BOTH TECHNIQUES ARE NOT 100% ACCURATE. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, FROM STUDIES IN NEW YORK, THAT WITH A MASS SCREENING PROGRAMME USING BOTH TECHNIQUES TOGETHER WITH MANUAL EXAMINATION, THAT THE INCIDENCE OF BREAST CANCER CAN BE REDUCED DRASTICALLY.

THE PROCESS WORKS WELL ON WOMEN OVER AGE 45, AND IN MY VIEW SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN BRITISH COLUMBIA BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I KNOW THE MINISTER OF HEALTH WILL SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THIS REQUEST, AND AM CONFIDENT THAT HE WILL INTRODUCE A PROGRAMME IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

WOMEN'S PRESS CONFERENCE SASKATOON, SASK. December 27-29 News exchange among women

A WOMEN'S PRESS CONFERENCE IS TO BE HELD IN SASKATOON, DECEMBER 27-29th, 1974 FOR THE PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHING A NEWS EXCHANGE AMONG WOMEN'S NEWSLETTERS AND PAPERS IN CANADA; THE ORGANIZERS OF THE CONFERENCE THINK A COHESIVE WOMEN'S PRESS WOULD STRENGTHEN AND FURTHER WOMEN'S STRUGGLES BY KEEPING US ALL INFORMED. Interested women can call Sarah Berger at Country Reels 774-0045.

LETTERS

Hello Priorities:

Please note the above name and address change. As ever Priorities is great, I depend on it.

I have just sent off letters to various Canadian magazines (Maclean's, Canadian Forum, Last Post, Canadian Dimension, This Magazine) urging them to have a special edition tribute to International Women's Year, with the following suggestion: "All the articles be written by women. Men have constant access to the media to express their views on women's liberation and anything else. Women can speak for themselves and we are! In B.C. we have a province wide union (B.C.F.W.), women's groups' newsletters from all over, and two good monthly magazines, Priorities and Pedestal. Writers from either of these could represent B.C. feminism. There is an excellent periodical published in Edmonton, Branching Out; they could provide accurate Alberta input. And I'm sure the other provinces have their equivalents. I sincerely hope that your magazine will find such a tribute to the women's movement in Canada and International Women's Year as necessary. And that you will use the voices of women who are actively working toward achieving equality rather than the voices of onlookers. Who knows, they may contact you.

The idea has occurred to me that an excellent project for next year might be the publication of a book on B.C. feminism--herstories

(individuals and groups), ideology, politics, poems, drawings, etc. I may be living in Vancouver for a while and could act as one editor, but this would have to be a joint effort. I'm asking Nicki to mention it to the B.C.F.W. What do you think? Is it worth it? Could it raise funds for other efforts?

I've heard about the Ottawa conference regarding the Secretary of State's plans for International Women's Year. Regional conferences for women who aren't already involved in the movement. Bah! What such women would travel 300 miles to a conference which she does not yet see as vital? What can we do? Boycott? It's disgusting.

Shirley Miller,
Courtenay, B.C.

Editor's note: Canadian Dimension did reply to Shirley's letter; they will be putting out an issue on the women's movement in January 75.

dr morgental- er

Dear Priorities:

As a long time member of the NDP, an activist in the pro-repeal of the abortion law movement and an activist in the defense of Dr. Morgentaler, I think your magazine is excellent, particularly the last issue.

As a psychotherapist, I believe women need above all to recognize their oppression; where it comes from, how it operates and how to combat it. I think your approach, where feminism

and socialism are inseperable if we are to achieve true liberation, is absolutely correct.

Therefore I have two requests: yesterday I met Dr. Morgentaler in Ottawa and though he had seen a copy of your last issue he does not have his own copy or a subscription to your magazine. Since we are good friends I promised I would subscribe for him beginning with your October issue.

Since I would like other women and men to read what you have to say, I would like a subscription for my office waiting room also beginning with your latest issue.

Keep up the excellent work
In struggle,

Gustavd Tolentino, M.D.
Toronto, Ontario.

SHELL?? well ■■■

Dear Priorities:

Read the Credit Card experience from Margaret Fern, Saskatchewan, very good! My experience, I would like to share it with you. Our Shell Credit cards had to be renewed. I wrote and asked for a renewal for myself with the name Joan on my card, and one for my husband. I mailed it and a few weeks later the cards arrived. Both were made out to Mr...I gave my husband his, and said to him, my card goes back because I'm not Mr.J. I am MRS Joan! He agreed with me, he recognized females should have their own rights also.

I sent the card back with a letter. I was just in the right mood for

that, and I asked them why am I a male? I am a female and I don't want to walk under my husband's shadow. What if something happened to my husband? And I'm alone, then am I not recognized as a person because I am female? I told them not to worry I female can pay my credit, and can stand on my own. In our garage I'm me, and my husband is himself. I like to go up to the gas pump with my own card, I'm the one who is filling my car, not Mr.J. I also wrote that I'm not a female libber yet!! But let me be me!

A few weeks later I received my personal Shell Credit card. No answer to my questions, the card gave me the answer, I smiled and said good for you Joan. Thanks to the Shell company and my asking for it of course.

At the moment I am waiting for another new credit card from a department store, here's hoping it will be made out to me, if not I shall have to go over this again.

My best wishes to you all!!
I enjoy your paper, enclosed is a small donation again.

Joan de Glopper,
Harrison Hot Springs, B.C.

**Make IWY the year for
abortion law repeal**

Dear Priorities:

As always I look forward to each month's issue and, in fact, started getting quite anxious when the last issue was a bit late. I thought the Morgentaler supplement outstanding. We should all press on with Sharon's and Hilda's ideas at the B.C.F.W. Convention that International Women's Year should highlight removal of

abortion laws from the criminal code.

Joyce Meissenheimer,
North Vancouver Seymour.

IMPRESSED

Dear Friends:

We have been impressed greatly with your magazine Priorities and would like to acquire a bundle of your next issue, say 10 copies, for sale at our bookstore.

Yours fraternally,
Dale Ritch,
Forward Books, Toronto, Ontario.

NOT IMPRESSED

Dear Priorities:

Please cancel my subscription to Priorities. I find the pornographic content unsuitable for my home.

Isabella Johnson,
Nelson, B.C.

uppity women unite!!

Dear Sisters:

As an old radical and an "annoying uppity woman" for too many years to mention I have so much enjoyed Priorities and been so excited to see your development.

If some one could once again start leaving me ten copies at Vanguard

books we could get these valuable ideas to ten more women an issue.

With our good wishes and appreciation,
Ruth Bullock,
Vancouver.

manitoba meeting

Dear Priorities:

The Manitoba New Democratic Party will be holding its annual convention on February 15, 16 and 17. At the Convention, our Status of Women Committee would be pleased to sell subscriptions to Priorities, if you wish. During the past year we have started our own newsletter but it is mainly confined to information about our committee's activities and we would like Manitoba women to be able to take advantage of your magazine's generally very good articles and analyses of issues from a socialist perspective. We would greatly appreciate your providing us with subscription forms and complimentary copies for this purpose.

By the way, I noticed an interesting error on page 34 of your last September issue. Probably by now, many others have already pointed this out, but anyway; the female not the male labour force, increased by 64.3% over the decade 62-72, and the male, not the female, labour force increased by only 23.2% over the same period. It's interesting because sometimes I suspect that in our efforts to prove how serious inequalities are, we sometimes find ourselves--at least I sometimes find myself--greeting new evidence of inequality on discrimination with a wierd kind of

pleasure or satisfaction--which can lead to unintentional errors or distortions of the facts. In this case, the accurate statistics do not in themselves point to inequality. However, they do provide part of the explanation for women's increasing consciousness of their secondary status in society.

Yours sincerely,

Joy Cooper, Co-chairperson,
Manitoba NDP Status of Women
Committee, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

b.c.f.w.

Dear Priorities:

In last month's Letters column, Claire Culhane asked some questions about my article on the B.C. Federation of Women Founding Convention, and I would like to answer them.

On the character of the proposal for a Women's Parliament: A detailed written proposal was circulated at the convention, and it was to this that I referred in my article. This proposal essentially projected the closest possible imitation of parliamentary forms, including having premier, speaker, cabinet ministers, etc., holding it in the legislative buildings "with all due pomp and ceremony," having women military aides selected from the cadets and RCMP, and presenting and debating bills in exact legislative form. What was proposed in short was not a parody but an imitation; there's an important difference.

As I saw it, the BCFW convention rejected this proposal for 2 reasons. First, such a Parliament would severely restrict the numbers of women who could be involved, and many women felt that it was of prime importance to muster large numbers in Victoria to press demands of the women's movement on the government. (That was the aim of the Victoria Action resolution which the convention finally did adopt.) Second, a majority felt that little purpose would be served by expending energy and time in carefully duplicating an institution which has been singularly unresponsive to the needs of women.

The fact remains of course that the institution of Parliament is important in the existing political scheme of things, if for no other reason than that it is a public arena in which issues of concern to all the oppressed--and our oppressors--are debated and acted on in a highly visible way. It therefore seems to me quite legitimate to make demands upon the institution as vigorously and often as possible. To do so doesn't seem to me to be inconsistent with choosing not to imitate the institution.

I also think that parodying or mocking-up Parliament, in the way which I gather Claire favours, could be an effective and dramatic action; but that was not the proposal made to the convention.

I hope that other readers who have views on this question will share them with Priorities.

Cynthia Flood
VANCOUVER-CENTRE

OTHER LETTERS & REPORTS



The following letter was sent to Otto Lang by the Courtenay NDP Club.

Dear Mr. Lang:

I have been authorized on behalf of the Courtenay NDP Club to write to you regarding our concern over your action on two subjects.

First, the proposed change of the law which will eliminate the use of a woman's personal background in rape cases unless this information has been proven necessary. We cannot underestimate the urgency of this change. The present use of the law in rape cases victimizes women from the moment they lay charges. It is no wonder that so many rapes go unreported. Either course is an outrage to human rights. The law must be changed.

Second, your behaviour towards abortion counselling clinics. These clinics or offices have been found not guilty of charges of illegality.

That you would take it upon yourself to personally harass public services indicates the extent to which your actions and reactions regarding the abortion issue are not judicious. Mr. Trudeau and yourself must realize that your position of power cannot be used for arenas of personal prejudice. 1975 is International Women's Year. If your government does not improve it's attitude and actions on the abortion issue, you will look internationally foolish.

Yours truly,

Shirley Miller,
NDP Courtenay Club.

LOWER ISLAND NDP WOMEN

During July and August our group did not meet. We decided in the spring to do this because of the changes that occur during the summer months (i.e. children home from school, holidays, etc.). In September at our meeting we decided to change our name from "Victoria" to "Lower Island" because we have members living in Saanich and Esquimalt ridings as well as Victoria.

Since September we have been meeting regularly. Iris Reamsbottom, chairperson and Marnie Darnel, Secretary-treasurer, carried on in their positions to an extended six months. Since we began in the fall, 1973, our secretaries have written our minutes into a newsletter which goes out by mail to our members and others interested.

This has proven to be very effective. At first we changed our executive every three months. It has been successful in that it lightens the load of women on the executive and gives opportunity for more to gain the experience. The drawback was that it took about three months to get into the swing of it and then it was over. Now we are into six month periods. Beginning in December our new executive is: chairperson, Denise White, 1322 Broad St., Victoria; secretary-treasurer, Joan Elieson, 141 Howe St Victoria; and correspondence-secretary, Leni Hoover, 3125 Glasgow Ave., Victoria.

Three of our members attended the B.C.F.W. founding convention. We have sent in a donation for a group membership. Some members also attended the Women's Festival held at UVic in November. It was put on by the Status of Women Action Group and the University of Victoria Action Group.

Graham Lea with assistant Wayne Harding addressed our November business meeting. He came to announce the formation of a Task Force. We spent two hours in discussion. The point that stands out most in my mind was that the study is limited to women and engineering. The B.C. government has not received any applications from women for engineering jobs. Engineers comprise 1800 of the 6000 employees. We felt emphasis should also be put on all Department of Highway jobs, clerical and mechanical. The best part of the evening was the discussion of the women's movement in general--Graham Lea's openness. We discussed and argued many things--our senses of the history, the fear of many socialist men that women committed to the women's movement want more than equality with men, the holding of power and the reluctance to give it

up, fears and misunderstandings in general. It was a great beginning. Hooray for Graham Lea!

Merry Christmas to all our sisters. with great hope for 1975. It really would be something if we could get some legislation passed that would make IWY a year to remember.

Leni Hoover,
Lower Island Socialist NDP
Women's Caucus.

how to get ELECTED

On Saturday, November 23, a workshop, entitled "How to Get Elected" and sponsored by the North Shore Women's Centre and Women's Programs Capilano College, was held at the college. The purpose of the day was to examine the current position of women in politics, to discuss some of the philosophical issues surrounding women's entry into the political arena, and to learn something about the pragmatics of getting elected at the various levels of government.

Melodie Corrigall started the day off by presenting some depressing statistics on the number of women in politics. She estimated that if we continue to increase our level of representation in government at the same rate as we have done for the last fifty years it will take us 120 years to achieve 50% representation in the Federal

government.

Rosemary Brown spoke next on what women have to offer to politics. Though not monolithic as a group, she felt that women bring more compassion and a different point of view to politics; the emphasis in a male parliament is on material and property, not on concerns with people. Among the obstacles she identified to women getting elected, were getting the nomination in a winnable riding, lack of money, insufficient organizational back-up in a campaign, the lack of other women in politics, and the complete lack of daycare facilities for female politicians.

The rest of the morning was spent in workshops which examined different concepts of power, the conflict between loyalty to feminism and loyalty to a political party, and the levels of government where change may best be achieved for women.

In the afternoon we had a varied and stimulating panel presentation: Josephine Mallek, Ann Blakey, Joan Wallace, Hilda Thomas and Verna Barrett all shared their individual political experiences. Joan Wallace expressed the view that women are afraid of politics, adding that women would never achieve equality until they overcome that fear. Although women are coming forth increasingly as candidates unless other women get out and work for them, they are not going to win, she said. Hilda Thomas pointed out that women who come to women's conferences and meetings are not actively supporting women candidates, as is necessary. Everyone applauded when she emphasized the importance of women bringing different values and goals to the political process.

The rest of the afternoon was spent looking at what is involved in obtain-

ing office at 1) the federal-provincial level, 2) the municipal level, and 3) the Community Resource Board level. A fourth workshop explored how women can get started in politics. Most people found these workshops fairly informative; however, some people expressed discomfort with sharing campaign strategies with people from other parties and with non-feminists. This definitely was a problem with a workshop of this kind. Perhaps in this way it was not totally realistic.

Overall, the day appeared to be a success for the participants. Of course, one day was insufficient for examining in depth all the issues that were raised, but it was a happy beginning. Hopefully, we will be able to hold future similar workshops, possibly with a slightly different focus.

For those unable to attend the workshop, we have a video-tape of the speeches and the panel discussion. In addition, a booklet, summarizing the day, is being prepared and will be available in the new year.

Cathy Stewart,
Capilano College,
2055 Purcell Wav,
North Vancouver.

Want to Work?

If you would like to work on Priorities next month, join us at 1881 East Hastings, Vancouver on January 17th at 7:00 p.m., or Saturday the 18th and Sunday the 19th at 10:00 or any time that day. We particularly need typists, but anyone out there who is able to read this has the ability to do some job here. JOIN US!!

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT

Since the passage of our resolution at the 1974 convention there has been a marked change in the attitudes of people within the party who do not understand the women's movement.

Before we were successful in putting through the resolution, we were considered little more than a nuisance. People tended to humour us, to make a point of stating that they agreed with most of what we were asking for but that we should realize that change overnight.

I, and I am certain others, have noticed a change in that paternalistic, condescending attitude. People are now openly hostile to women in the movement. They have begun to take the movement seriously and they feel threatened by it and by the people who are working within it.

At the sametime, I have noticed that the women in the women's committee are tired, and are still attempting to get out of the doldrums which overtook them after the initial elation of having passed the resolution had worn off, and we began to ask just what difference that resolution would make to the provincial governments attitude.

Couple that feeling with the growing cynicism of women who want real change and are offered instead International Women's Year. Some of us are finding it hard to deal with these frustrations.

However, one person at least is doing a difficult, exceptionally well. For the past few months Shelly Dillon, has been the NDP Women's Organizer and while the rest of us have been feeling low and consoling each other, she has been going out to many parts of the province and talking to people about women, the problems they face, and the kinds of solutions we see for those problems. Given the hostility and anger which I mentioned previously, this is not an easy task.

I saw Shelly in action recently in Kamloops and I feel she is very strong. Even though some people were openly hostile, she stayed cool and very patiently and rationally dealt with that hostility. I feel good about the kind of job Shelly is doing and I realize now just how important it is for all of us to confront those who are hostile in a very forthright and open manner. This is the challenge we must take up in the coming year. Our resolution has brought the issue into the open, along with a myriad of feelings (hostility, anger, fear, insecurity). We must train ourselves to take the time to explain things to people even though we know that often they don't want to know how we feel.

Above all we must remember that our struggle will be a long one and will have many ups and downs. We have to learn to take them in our stride and continually push for change. To paraphrase James Baldwin, 'freedom cannot be given, it must be taken, and people are as free as they want to be'. Our freedom from oppression is not going to be granted us by Royal decree. We have to take it...and keep on taking it until it is seen to be our right.

---Terri Ash, Chairwoman

TWENTY-FOUR POTATOES

Priorities - conceived of at a women's caucus meeting at the 1972 NDP Convention by women from far areas of B.C. who were euphoric that the Ministry of Women's Rights resolution passed and unwilling to leave it at that.

Priorities - now two years old - two years in existence and although the subscription rate has never actually covered the cost of a sub, somehow we go on, continuing on donations from our readers and hours of long, hard, volunteer labour.

Those of us who have been on the Editorial Board - and that means doing everything from writing to addressing - have enjoyed our work and renew our energy through your support - be it a letter, a word, or a donation.

We should all be proud that with nothing but a list of 80 names from a caucus meeting and the dream of a newsletter to communicate where we were and where we were going we got it off the ground. Our purpose from the beginning was to provide a forum for the discussion of feminism and socialism. To enable those women, particularly those who are geographically isolated from other sisters struggling through similar problems and to similar goals, to participate in the discussion and the debate.

Happily we have had some success in this line. In B.C. alone we have subscribers in over 93 cities and towns. We also have subscribers in all ten provinces, the Yukon and NWT. In Ontario we have readers in over 18 cities and towns. Saskatchewan is second with seven locations represented, followed by Quebec and

Alberta. We also have readers in seven American States, and talk about going International - we actually have readers (well, one in each) in Iran, Germany, and The Netherlands.

After this build-up maybe you expect me to blow up and float away? Not so.

Catch 22 - and please note that I am now the "keeper of the books." Although we have subscribers all over, we don't have enough. A lot of effort is put into the newsletter and it's only worth it if we do the follow up work of getting it out and about. We urge you to help us by selling subs or individual copies of Priorities in your area. Secondly, we'd love to hear from you. A letter or an article telling us what it's like where you're at. Come on Lachine, Quebec, Perdue, Saskatchewan, Vanderhoof, B.C. Be a pal. Take a minute. Drop us a line. And lastly, if you can spare a donation now or anytime, we appreciate it. We sell subs at \$3.00 a year but it really costs about \$4.90 to send 12 issues out. We try to keep the sub rates low so those with little money will be able to subscribe. However for those of us who can manage it, a donation or a contribution to the sustaining fund through post dated cheques is welcomed.

Don't forget tho' that it's not your money we need the most, but your support. In this as in the other pursuits of feminists "it's only the beginning;" with your help, dear reader, we can make the last two years look like small potatoes.

- Melodie Corrigall
The Keeper of the Books.

B C F W : highlights of the Abbotsford meeting Dec. 7-8

The Victoria Conference-demonstration-festival, tentatively scheduled for April 5, 6, 7, is beginning to take shape. Start considering how you can participate in the festival; plan to come. New policy will be debated at convention, but it is important that resolutions be received early. Subscribe to the B.C. F.W. newsletter c/o Linda Hancock, 1240 Doran Rd., North Vancouver, for further details or contact Mary Barretto, 2210 W. 12th, Vancouver; B.C.F.W. Action Organizer.

ABORTION PETITION

The struggle of the women's movement to radically change Canada's abortion laws cannot be relaxed. Opposition to our demands is mounting and must be counter-acted. A poll is presently being distributed in Comox-Alberni by Hugh Anderson, M.P. and possibly other constituencies as well. The poll asks several questions on abortion. However as the wording has an anti-abortion bias and as the results will likely be used to further Otto Lang's anti-abortion attacks, it cannot be ignored. Consequently the federation is organizing a pro-abortion petition and letter writing campaign. (see page 32 for petition.) Please participate. Cut out the petition, send copies to friends, write letters. We must show the government our determination is not wanning.

I. W. Y.

Several groups have requested the support of the federation in their appeal for I.W.Y. funding. This is something we feel we cannot do. While the federation very strongly believes in the right of groups to use government funding, we cannot support some and exclude others. If we were to support all, it would be meaningless.

MEMBERSHIP

Would you like to join the federation but are somewhat confused as to how? Groups and individuals are welcome. Joining can be accomplished by sending a donation and letter of support to Jay Stewart, B.C.F.W. membership Organizer, c/o Box 116, Heriot Bay, B.C. To be strong, we need your support. If you belong to a group, encourage it to join. If your group joins, you do not need to join as an individual. If it doesn't join, or you don't belong to a group, join as an individual.

Although it was a long, hard working weekend, Saturday evening was spent relaxing with the women of the Fraser Valley who provided us with warm billets and good food. It was a fine evening, Thank-you.

The next meeting of the B.C.F.W. will be held January 18, 19, in Victoria. Space providing, any interested member may attend.

in the beginning...

We correctly think of the women's movement as only beginning. Yes, it is in its formative stages, with no clear-cut victories yet won in Canada. Still, the movement has gained tremendously in the past few years. It has developed a program, produced many organizations, and held many conferences, study programs, sit-ins, demonstrations, and other actions.

But the acceleration of the movement in the 1970's had its antecedents, literary and organizational, and it is some of the earlier writings (and their outcomes) that this article is about.

The opening cannonade was fired by Simone de Beauvoir, whose Second Sex was published in France -- can you believe it -- 25 years ago.

Consider: she undertook this work single-handedly, a lone voice out to rouse the world to the plight of women in a period when global war and nuclear holocaust were its pre-occupations. It is an encyclopedic work, written in academic language, crammed with footnoted and detail. Yet every page seethes with rage. Her style, which is at once lurid and scholarly, in which stories of intimate mortification are indexed and cross-referenced, almost succeeds in compensating for the absence of a women's movement at the time. Rather than an individual crusader, de Beauvoir sounds like the trumpeter of an army.

The Second Sex bears the imprint of the writer's existentialism. It is like a panorama, depicting the incalculable energy of Womankind in

MS. CAUCUS, WE BOYS HAVE BEEN NOTICING A BIG CHANGE IN THE GIRLS LATELY. THEY'VE BEEN ACTING LIKE BOYS!

WELL, DEAR, I'M NOT SURE YOU BOYS ARE BEING QUITE FAIR..



A GREAT LADY, SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR, ONCE SAID THAT THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE -- HUMAN BEINGS AND WOMEN. BUT WHEN WOMEN START ACTING LIKE HUMAN BEINGS, THEY ARE ACCUSED OF TRYING TO BE LIKE MEN.



1 the above cartoon is reprinted from Ramparts

2 continued ---

SIMONE DE
BEAUVOIR'S
GOT YOUR
NUMBER,
SLIM.



full pursuit of life -- but forcibly arrested at various existential moments short of fulfillment. Woe and pathos, wailing and pain are the outcomes she describes so truly, and as remedy de Beauvoir sounded the call "Towards Liberation: The Independent Woman".

In 1949 she described the need but offered no strategy for its attainment. But when women began to mount campaigns against oppression, de Beauvoir came out of her study and gave active support. In particular, she has involved herself in the fight for legal abortion. Her own name headed a long list of prominent women who admitted having had abortions and challenged the French government to arrest them for their "crime". When Marie-Claire Chevalier, a 16-year-old woman, was put on trial for having an abortion in 1972, de Beauvoir was active in the defense campaign which won Chevalier's acquittal. Frenchwomen won a partial victory in early December, 1974, when the old law was revised and abortion up to 10 weeks was made legal.

In de Beauvoir's words:

"There is no way of directly compelling woman to bring forth: all that can be done is to put her in a situation where maternity is for her the sole outcome -- the law or the mores enjoin marriage, birth control and abortion are prohibited, divorce is forbidden."

-- The Second Sex

Here she describes very succinctly the mechanisms by which women are relegated into the ghetto of the family and out of direct participation or influence in the affairs of the world, and she names the oppressors -- the law or the mores, the State and the Church.

The Second Sex was rapidly translated and published around the world. In North America it appeared in 1953, within a month it had gone into its 3rd printing. Nonetheless, except for an increase in fiction and poetry by and about women, it can be said in general that the message gestated in women's minds for 10 years. Then, in 1963, Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique met with instant and overwhelming success. Across North America, women of all classes and ages had been deluged with the advertising shmuck Friedan talked about, and we were fed up. We understood Friedan's attack upon

"the image of the modern American woman as she is written about in women's magazines, studied and analyzed in classrooms and clinics, praised and damned in a ceaseless barrage of words ever since the end of World War II."

We agreed when she said:

"There was a strange discrepen-

cy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform, the image that I came to call the the feminine mystique."

-- The Feminine Mystique.

Friedan wrote in the style of a best seller about the vacuousness of the "housewifery" which, despite appliances and gadgetry, "expands to fill the time available" when it is the only role available to women." She waxed hot about the identity crisis facing women who were increasingly college-educated and living in suburbia ("the comfortable concentration camp") but were forced to live vicariously through husband and children. The identity of a maker of endless peanut putter sandwiches, she said, does not suffice. Nor do diversions such as adultery, having another baby, bowling with the children in tow, nor do dead-end part-time jobs.

By 1967 Friedan's persistent quest for a fuller life led her to found an important organization of the women's liberation movement. The National Organization of Women (NOW) held its first major conference in 1967 in Washington, D.C. and adopted its Bill of Rights. Most of the 8 points remain in the basic program around which the women's movement has grown. In summary, they are: an end to discrimination against women in education and employment, including equal pay and maternity rights; the demand for Child Day Care Centres; the right of Women to control their reproductive lives; and the demand for the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Reaction soon followed on these developments. In 1968, the Vatican issued Humanae Vitae, the encyclical

that raised denunciation of birth control and abortion to the level of dogma. It was widely distributed, and some readers may wish to examine this aspect of the literature related to the women's movement. It lauds the sanctity of the family and chastises women to remember our "place". The Catholic Church has been forced into major concessions to keep hold on its faithful in recent years -- it has abandoned Latin in the mass, relaxed the rules governing clergy and nuns, jettisoned some of its saints -- but it has remained inflexibly opposed to the demands of women's liberation.

It was also in 1968 that a last-ditch "theoretical" effort was launched against women by the shrink industry. Erik Erikson, of Harvard and other universities, included a chapter called "Womanhood and the Inner Space" in his book Identity, Youth and Crisis. All sorts of scientific claims are made about the author's observations of young people at solitary play, concluding with such rot as:

"Youth women often ask whether they can 'have an identity' before they know whom they will marry and for whom they will make a home....I think that much of a young woman's identity is already defined in her kind of attractiveness and in the selective nature of her search for the man (or men) by which she wishes to be sought."

-- Identity, Youth and Crisis

In the same year, Pierre Trudeau turned a pretty and meaningless phrase when he announced that "The State has no business in the bedrooms of the Nation". He coupled it with an amendment to the criminal code that leaves the body of the law intact, but which makes provisions for a very limited num-

ber of legal abortions. The anti-abortion sections of the Criminal Code are a horrendous experience to to read.

The struggle against the false dictum Biology is Destiny, and the search for women's identity -- themes paramount in the works of de-Beauviour and Friedan -- became the basis of groups and group actions in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Sisterhood Is Powerful, edited by Robin Morgan (1970) lists five pages of groups active around the issues of abortion and of women's studies and consciousness raising, at the time of its publication.

Since then, the recognition that women's liberation will both be won without building a movement has made gains. This task is inseparable from that of developing effective strategy and tactics. For a movement that has many, quite different demands, the problems of movement-building has so far been approached in two ways. There are umbrella groups, which tend to attempt to raise any and all questions relating to women as need arises. Examples are the Status of Women groups in Canada, and NOW in the U.S.; or, on a provincial level, the NDP Women's Committee and the B.C. Federation of Women. Secondly, there are single-issue groups, such as the Morgenthaler Defense Committee, fighting for the right to abortion, and the Child Care Federation.

A continuous investigation of strategy and tactics -- both active and literary -- is underway among these groups. For further reading in this area, subscribe to Priorities.

-- Ann Thomson

what NOT to read

Reading through 5 or 6 women's magazines to produce an article I was going to title "Magazines in Transition" has turned into a kind of self-imposed psychological torture. When asked to write a review of currently popular magazines, I falsely assumed that the women's movement had made a significant (if minor) impact on the content of magazines. Having just dabbled in the latest issues of Chatelaine, Redbook, Ms., and Homemakers, I have come to the conclusion that I was definitely wrong. There has been some change in the subject matter of some of the articles, certainly because of the women's movement...but to say that these changes are in any way connected to the goals or ideas of the movement would be like stretching a rubber band until it broke.

I am tempted to simply say that women's magazines are bad for your health, and leave it at that. But that would leave my anger pent up, so I will try to explain why I now feel the way I do about them.

REDBOOK and HOMEMAKERS

If I were to rate the magazines according to whether they were better or worse than I expected, Redbook & Homemaker's would come out the best. I expected them to be oriented around the role of wife and mother, and they were. In addition, however, they had a surprising number of articles related to women and work (or career). Generally they tended to be support-

ive of the idea that women should be able to work when and if they want to. The significant thing about them however, is their extremely defensive nature towards the woman who chooses to stay home, and most of them stressed the fulfillment as wife and mother as an integral part of any fulfillment to be gained by working. Homemaker's printed one good article: an expose of the way doctor's treat unhappy women through the use of tranquilizing drugs. Red-book takes the prize for having the highest percentage of non-offensive advertising due to the amount of food advertisements (and I like food). Note: that non-offensive here does not mean that they were free of sexist material, but rather that there was only a slight amount compared to other types.

For the most part, these two magazines contain boring articles on child rearing (like toilet training habits and how to deal with them according to a "well respected", male, doctor) or decorating, or food, or fashion, or ...very popular... 'how to' (meaning how to be less bored at home by making a million semi-useful articles for your house, your friends house, or your relatives house). The idea of being super wife and mother is vividly alive and well. (do not see Homemaker's November issue featuring "Judith Major, Toronto Happy Homemaker").

CHATELAINÉ

Chatelaine was a disappointment to me because I have seen a few good articles over the past months, and thus expected that the trend of the magazine might be changing for the better. I found, however, that the trend is very much the same as Red-book, except for a couple of articles which stand out like a fe-

male in a boardroom. The November issue included a strong and revealing conclusion to a series on women in the work force, a short article on women in Canadian politics which had a few useful facts, but virtually no analysis, and a somewhat romantic article about Nellie McClung which spoke more of her relations with her family than of her struggles. Other articles revolved around the same old theme of women as wives and mothers. One article, "How a Working Mother Liberated Herself", is a detailed article on how to make the best of doing two jobs ... what before the women's movement would have been an article on how to reduce housework, is now an article on how to reduce housework because you're working and would be going crazy if you didn't. The article may be useful to some women (those whose husbands and families will tolerate the detailed plans), but without a complementary article about why women have to do two jobs in order to expand their roles, and some kind of analysis about the system we live, work, and mother in, it seems quite narrow. None of this type of research or even speculation is apparent in Chatelaine.

MS.

Ms. Magazine might have been one that we could look to for this kind of reasoning, but don't hold your breath. More and more, Ms. is becoming a magazine of "women worship". Lots of articles, news clips, and the like on individual women. A woman priest here, a writer there (never mind that she writes for the Dick Van Dyke show which I have never seen lauded by women's liberationists), a woman who has a statue made in her honour, and on and on. One would expect that these tributes would be made in some kind of con-

text: like what kind of discrimination did they encounter on their way up, how do they view their success in terms of the women's movement, how has their struggle to make it affected the way they do their job, or their views on the women's movement. But none of this is evident. Many of them say they couldn't have done it without the fact that the women's movement exists....but this is said more in the way of a thank you to a distant friend, than a shared cry of exhilaration for a battle won by a movement of people.

One lengthy article detailed the lives of 6 women in India. I thought there may have been hope for that article, and expected to read short detailed accounts of their daily lives and then what it all meant. Instead I read short clips about each woman, and found I was at the end of the article! The author virtually ignores the most obvious and interesting facts...like the 6 women are from different and very strictly defined classes in India, and that fact may account for the fact that we go from one woman who lives in one room with her entire family to another whose is awakened a 9:00 every morning by a servant bearing a cup of hot coffee to begin her on her day of important business work. Given that none of this was discussed by the author, I am at a loss to know what I was supposed to have learned from this article.

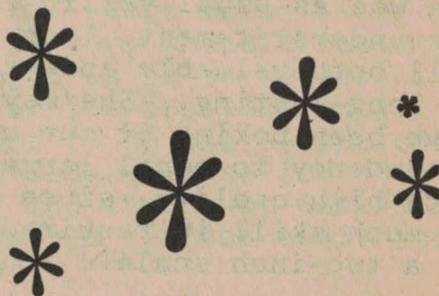
There was no indication through the entire issue of Ms. (and others I have read) that the women's movement presents any kind of a threat to the system we live in. The trend seems only a desire to open up areas to women which have been closed... and only those areas which are related to a capitalist system are discussed. This seems a very nar-

row framework for any feminist magazine, and therefore I found Ms. to be the most offensive of all those which I reviewed. The others were at least true to what they say they are.

The link between Ms. and the capitalist world, if anyone doubts it, is evident in their advertising. Long skinny women abound, either smoking a liberating cigarette, or wearing a provocatively liberating gown, or soaking in some gently liberating bath oil. Despite the attempt Ms. once made to explain their necessity to have this advertising -- that they had to do it to make it (which raises a major question for women...how far will we go to gain 'equality'?), the offensiveness is still clear, and I wonder why they don't advertise soy sauce and TV dinners like Redbook, instead.

All in all, the picture regarding magazines for women, is very bleak. Even though you might find a few usefull articles here and there, the effect of wading through the other pages to find them is quite disastrous even for those of us who think we're tough. I found myself dreaming of colour co-ordinated wardrobes, wondering whether it is better to use Pampers or Baby Scott, etc. That frightened me...I think I will stick to Priorities, and let it be.

-- Shelly Dillon



Rereading JANE AUSTEN

For feminists who are fiction-reading addicts, one of the most interesting fringe benefits of involvement in the women's movement is the delight of rereading novels written by women of past eras and seeing them with new eyes. Obviously the books themselves have not changed, but we have. We bring to our reading now a passionate interest in what these artists have to say about the situation of women, what kinds of women they write about, the problems they face and how they are resolved. Also, because we now know how women artists have been misjudged and misinterpreted by patriarchal culture, we are concerned to know whether these writers were in fact saying and doing things which have gone unnoticed or have been falsely viewed.

JANEITES & ANTI-JANEISM

For some sexist reason, it is customary in some literary circles to refer to admirers of Jane Austen as "Janeites". (Dickens fans are not called Charlesians, nor Mailer lovers Normanites.) As a devoted Janeite, I was for many years bothered by what I took to be a self-deprecating remark Austen made about her art. She spoke of "the little bit (two inches wide) of Ivory on which I work...." More recently I have come to think that she was as usual veiling irony in understatement. Ivory is after all both valuable and extremely long-lasting. She may also have been poking at our culture's tendency to equal large size with high quality, since obviously much skill is required to work on a two-inch scale. In

fact, the concluding words of the quotation I cited (which are less frequently reprinted) are, "... with so fine a Brush." So much for self-deprecation.

Others have been openly critical. Charlotte Bronte said coolly, "She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well." Virginia Woolf said that she chose to "write of the trivialities of day-to-day existence". A nephew who published some of her letters posthumously wrote that there was "in them no notice of politics or public events; scarcely any discussions on literature, or other subjects of general interest. They may be said to resemble the nest which some little bird builds of the materials nearest at hand..." This tone of regret at Austen's limitations is echoed by the critic Mark Schorer in his introduction to the Dell paperback edition of her novels. He compares her to George Eliot, "whose novels are impressively colored by historical events; in the the novels of Jane Austen, who

* * * * *

read more!

pride & prejudice

emma lady susan

sense & sensibility

mansfield park

the watsons

lived through the Napoleonic wars and a great intellectual and economic shift in consciousness and status, one hardly hears even rumours of them."

Even though all these putdowns co-exist with praise -- in some cases very high praise -- from their authors, they reflect what I think is the popular image of Jane Austen: a lightweight, a writer in miniature as it were, a creator of gently satiric and unrealistic romances. These aspects are certainly present in her work, but I don't think they constitute its essence or account for its high quality. I think the element which is central to Austen's art is her realism, both social and psychological; her refusal to paint pretty pictures or to accept society's hypocritical assessment of itself. She describes a class society in which social distinctions are of vast importance and which women in a variety of ways face great difficulties. Her unflinching realism can readily be seen by examining her treatment of women characters. They experience conflicts and problems rooted firmly in the actual conditions of women's lives in a capitalist society; and although the early 19th century lies 150 years behind us, the essential characteristics of the social and economic structure have not changed greatly, so that women of today can learn from her novels not only about life for women then, but about life for women now.

The central problem which confronts all of Austen's heroines is the need to find a husband. This is not because she had romantic and idealistic notions about perfect love, etc.; Austen was not a 19th century Harlequin Romancer, and in fact she repudiated the melodrama-

tic Gothic novels popular in her day. It was simply that, for women of the social class of which she wrote, no other bearable alternatives to a career as a married woman existed at that time. Daughters of clergymen, country squires, minor gentry -- not until much later in the 19th century would educational and career opportunities of even the most fringe or minor sort emerge for them. The choice was marriage or a (often) bitter life of dependency upon some married relative.

Persuasion

All Janeites have a favourite Jane-work; mine is Persuasion, and I want to look at it in a bit more detail now. The heroine, Anne, is the second of three daughters of a snobbish gentleman who lives beyond his means. Because at 27 Anne is unmarried, her entire family regards her as a failure, a hindrance, without value except as she may be able to assist in household matters or help with the children of her young sister. Cruelly, the reason for her failure lies in her fidelity to what she sees as the rightful authority of her elders. As a young girl she had fallen in love with a man considered unsuitable, and had broken the engagement because of the opposition of family and friends. She had in fact been persuaded to meet the standards of others, and not to consider her own deepest wants and needs. (Sound familiar?) The plot revolves around the reappearance -- after 7 years or so -- of the rejected suitor, whose circumstances have changed so as to render him a most attractive prospect in all eyes. It occurs to no one -- including for a considerable period both Anne herself and the newly-desirable Capt. Wentworth -- that their former rela-

tionship may be capable of reviving. Wentworth at first shares the common assesment of Anne as a has-been and she has so thoroughly denied herself in the interests of others that she can scarcely see herself as capable of attracting affection. In the end things sort themselves out -- and I cannot resist adding that the scenes in which the former lovers are reunited in a new relationship are simply superb in terms of psychological subtlety, excitement, with, and sheer emotional power. However, a great many twists and turns of plot are necessary before this happens.

Anne's younger sister Mary is married to a solid young type named Musgrove; she has two children, and her life centres on them and family in general. Mary is shown as at once enormously proud of having married first of the 3 sisters, although she's the youngest, and as discontented with her lot. The children harass her and she alternates between spoiling and slapping them; she is constantly afraid of being left out of events, and nags after her husband to include her in his activities; she suffers from vague and nameless complaints which vanish the instant an outing is planned, but surface again at the slightest fatigue or inconvenience; she insists on being accorded all the deference due a married woman and yet openly envies the "freedom" of her sisters. The constant ups and downs of interfamily relations, the chipping and nagging between wife and husband, the petty household matters which loom so large in Mary's narrow view -- all these are shown without a trace of romanticism, without even much sympathy really: Austen seems simply to be saying, "This is the way it is."

Austen's portrait of Mrs. Smith, an

old school acquaintance of Anne's whom she encounters in Bath, offers another picture of the difficulties facing women in that era. She had been happily married to a man of means, but financial difficulties had developed and, when her husband died suddenly, she found herself not only very poor but faced with many legal and financial affairs to cope with. It is obvious from Austen's account, that Mrs. Smith by lack of education and training, was quite unable to deal with these matters, apart from her ill-health. "...she could do nothing herself, equally disabled from personal exertion by her state of bodily weakness, and from employing others by her want of money. She had no natural connections to assist her even with their counsel, and she could not afford to purchase the assistance of the law." Mrs. Smith is shown as eking out a miserable living by the kinds of activities that women still resort to -- making knickknacks and pin-cushions and selling them to kind friends and acquaintances. Further, of course, she is on the receiving end of the most total contempt from those of the class into which she was born and from which she has fallen. Anne's father says of her, "A widow Mrs. Smith; and who was her husband? One of the five thousand Mr. Smiths whose names are to be met with everywhere. And what is her attraction? That she is old and sickly. Upon my word, Miss Anne Elliot, you have the most extraordinary taste! Everything that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms, foul air, disgusting associations, are inviting to you.."

A COMMON FATE

I have found, on rereading the

novel, that Louisa Musgrove, Anne's sister-in-law, is one of the most interesting characters, although her role is not really a major one. There is nothing particularly unusual about her, and perhaps that is the point; Austen is perhaps saying, by telling us what happens to Louisa that this is what the average young woman does and how she behaves. At one point in the book, a number of the young people take a journey to the seaside village of Lyme. (It's a tribute to Austen's creative powers that her description of this simple outing assumes enormous importance in the readers mind -- I am riveted to the pages every time I read it.) While they are walking by the sea, Louisa has a bad fall; she is unconscious for some time. Arrangements are made for her to stay on in Lyme for a time in the home of a couple named Harville, to recover. A young man named Capt. Benwick is also staying in the house. He is the subject of exquisite Austen satire, for he is a Romantic with a capital R, much given to reading Byron and effusions on the nature of love, grief, eternal fidelity, etc. (It is worth noting that the one reference to Lord Byron in all of Austen's extant writing is this remark in a letter: "I have read Corsair and mended my petticoat and have nothing else to do.") So there are grieving Benwick (whose fiance died the previous summer) and ailing Louisa in the same house. We know Louisa to be a lively, active, outdoorsy kind of woman. Austen says of her (and her sister) that they "had brought from a school at Exeter all the usual stock of accomplishments, and were now, like thousands of other young ladies, living to be fashionable, happy, and merry." Yet, within the shortest space of time, Louisa and the grief-struck Capt. Harville are engaged. Anne reflects..."they

would soon grow more alike. He would gain cheerfulness, and she would learn to be an enthusiast for Scott and Lord Byron; nay, that was probably learnt already; of course they had fallen in love over poetry. The idea of Louisa Musgrove turned into a person of literary taste and sentimental reflection was amusing, but she had no doubt of its being so." The compulsion to marry, and the requirement that the woman adapt herself to the man, have done their work again as Austen shows it.

THE HEROINE HERSELF

What of Anne herself? She is an odd heroine in some ways and quite unlike any in Austen's other novels. She does not have Emma's assertiveness and initiative, or Elizabeth's wit and sparkle, or Marianne's passionate intensity; nor does she have Fanny's whining moralism or Elinor's starchy rectitude. She is a woman of great capacity for emotion, and an almost equal capacity for concealing it. Her grief at the original loss of Capt. Wentworth was fully shared with no one; her criticisms of the social-climbing antics of her father and older sister are either kept to herself or expressed in most guarded terms to close friends: she does not speak her disapproval of her sister's treatment of her children, but quietly does what she thinks best for them when they are in her charge, and suffers Mary's slights and taunts in silence. It is as if she feels that, because she has failed in courtship, she must never declare or assert herself unless something happens which makes her feel a compelling moral necessity to do so. It is not that she actually has a low opinion of herself; quite the contrary, she rec-

ognizes her superiority in terms of intelligence and moral standards to many of her family and associates. It is as if all her good qualities simply do not exist -- as if she almost does not exist; she has to be brought into real social being by acquiring a husband, and then and then only will all her excellences be recognized and permitted to reveal themselves publicly.

Much of what the reader learns about Anne during the course of the novel comes via her own reflections on herself and her own analyses of her actions, feelings, etc. She is, I think, the most introspective of Austen's heroines and is most painstakingly honest in ferreting out her real emotions and -- if moral judgement so dictates -- in squashing them mercilessly. Here she is on catching an unexpected glimpse of Capt. Wentworth: "Her start was perceptible only to herself; but she instantly felt that she was the greatest simpleton in the world, the most unaccountable and absurd! For a few minutes she saw nothing before her: it was all confusion. She was lost, and .. scolded back her senses.." This constant battle between what one feels and what one is supposed to feel is still painfully familiar to us, caught between socially-defined roles and our own desires; it is the essential conflict of Persuasion, and the fact that the story ends happily does not reduce the weight of the years of suffering and denial which Anne has had to endure as a result of social pressure. She is quite conscious of what has been done to her; that she was young, and impressionable, and torn between love and duty, and persuaded **by** those she respected and loved that the best thing she could do

for herself was give up what she most wanted. Yet she does not hate, or even really resent, she is not bitter. And painful though it may be to think of it, I believe that is quite realistic. Only the explosive force of the women's movement of recent years has caused women to admit to ourselves the amount of injustice we have willingly endured and even welcomed; how could such an admission be expected of such a woman as Anne, living a century and a half ago?

supersensitivity

Another aspect of Anne's character which demonstrates the accuracy with which Austen saw and depicted women is the heroine's extreme sensitivity to atmosphere, to nuances of expression and action, to the thousand small gestures and doings which embody relations between people. We know that we as women are trained to develop sensitivity in order to perform our familial roles of buffer-state between husband and children, of offering understanding and sympathy to the men in our lives, of being aware of others' needs almost before they are themselves. There is no male character in Persuasion who possesses these sensitivities in any degree, although figures like Admiral Croft and Mr. Musgrove and Capt. Harville are presented as affectionate and kindly men. Even Capt. Wentworth seems rather a clumsy ox in comparison to Anne. The only male counterpart is really a reverse image: the devious and corrupt Mr. Elliot (a relative of Anne's father) is also highly skilled at interpreting other people and in sensing their reactions to him and to each other, but he uses his abilities to manipulate and dupe those about him for his own personal gain.

JANE AUSTEN AS REALIST

Even after saying all this, I feel I must say in so many words that Persuasion is a terrific story, lest anyone should think its only value lies in characterizations of various women. Every time I read it, I follow the ups and downs and setbacks, and advances of Anne's love-affair with total fascination. Nor do I think that such a theme is trivial or superficial. The Napoleonic wars it may not be, but for a great many people life is not all Napoleonic war, it is -- at least at certain important periods of life -- whether and whom you marry, and if the marriage is a happy one. To say so is not to say that that's the way it should be, just that that's the way it is.

The fact that Austen deals in the doings of daily life, among not particularly unusual or brilliant people, in commonplace communities and settings, and manages to make her subject matter deeply interesting, delightfully funny, and sharply ironic, is nothing for us to be defensive about. She writes as a woman of life as it is experienced by women, and from that fact alone we can easily deduce where a lot of the Austen-putdown syndrome comes from.

To say that Austen was not a feminist in any sense that the 20th century women's movement would recognize is to beg the question. From what we know of Austen (which is not nearly enough -- many of her papers were burned after her death) she was not a rebel in any sense, except -- a major except -- that she was a writer; and some people think that her being so had something to do with her not marrying.

In this connection, it is interesting to consider the comments of the Marxist literary critic Georg Lukács on Balzac. He points out that although the French novelist was avowedly pro-aristocratic and a royalist, he nevertheless described the life and suffering of the peasantry of his time with such passionate sympathy that his conscious political convictions were quite swept aside. Lukács states: "A great realist..if the intrinsic artistic developments of situations and characters he has created comes into conflict with his most cherished prejudices or even his most sacred convictions, will, without an instant's hesitation, set aside these...and describe what he really sees, not what he would like to see." He describes this "ruthlessness towards their own subject matter" as the hallmark of the great writer. I think these comments apply to Austen's work. Consciously, she was as far as I know critical of many superficial aspects of her society, but no more than that; nevertheless, the novels she wrote are accurate mirrors of a certain segment of British society of the time, and have implications which go further than superficial criticism, because Jane Austen was faithful to her vision of reality.

Lukács writes further, "character-created by the great realists, once conceived in the vision of their creator, live an independent life of their own; their comings and goings, their development, their destiny is dictated by the inner dialectic of their social and individual existence." I think Austen's work meets that criterion.

Cynthia Flood
VANCOUVER CENTRE

looking at LESSING

The first thing of Doris Lessing's that I ever read was a book that left me reeling. It was also a book that became so tiresome after a time that I never did finish it. This was The Golden Notebook, a very thick, thoroughly undisciplined novel that was rich, complex and threatened to go on forever -- and for all I know it did. What seemed interminable about it was the venture into madness, out again, in again. What sent me reeling, however, was the fact that here for the first time in my life I had found a novel that expressed all those little things that are a part of me and my life, and I guess a part of a lot of women and their lives.

It's been several years since I read that book but the things that remain in my mind have little to do with character, plot, the writer's ability and all the other things that people who know how to write book reviews usually talk about. I remember one scene where the central character wakes in the morning and before she is even conscious of being conscious at all finds herself responding to the first rustles of her baby in the next room, her mind already organized into organizing; indeed, before she is really awake she knows what she is going to do about the feeding, the dressing, getting ready for work. Like the rest of us, her work day has begun upon her first emergence from sleep; layers of planning, fitting in, making do, are already underway before she's out of bed. I remember in another scene sharing with this woman the heavy, draggy feeling that we both

recognize as an approaching period (the recognition makes us both a little depressed), and also the good feeling of soaking a plant in a sink full of water, watching the bubbles from a saturated pot and the dryness go away, the drops of water on the leaves. (Why does soaking that plant pot and all, make Doris Lessing and I feel so damned good?)

All this is only by way of introduction to the things I've read since then. After The Golden Notebook, which I couldn't finish, Lessing and I left each other alone for a while. Friends waxed enthusiastically about her Children of Violence series -- five (six?) novels in some kind of sequence that I have never read because it costs \$12 for the paperback set, because despite hints THIS BIG not even my very own husband has thought to buy it for me, the fink, & because (just between you and me) The Golden Notebook scared me away. Still, I always had it somewhere in my head that Doris Lessing has things to say to people like me who have children and in between times have periods and who find somewhere among patching torn jeans and staggering down Safeway aisles and working for a political party that will surely produce some returns in the Long Run, that there is real joy in sinking a plant in water to the brim and chasing the dryness away.

So I turned to Lessing's short stories, of which there are many. So far I have read five books of them: A Man and Two Women, the Habit of Loving, Five, Winter in July, and Black Madonna, and these stories, some fifty-odd in all, are what I want to write about.

BRILLIANT WRITER

Doris Lessing is a brilliant writer. In her short stories I can find no fault with her. The form itself is a good one for her because (generalizing from The Golden Notebook) I think she tends to be undisciplined and needs the restrictions inherent in short stories. Whatever the reason, what she produces in these five volumes is tight, incisive, usually devastating.

Lessing's stories normally have one of two settings and usually deal with two or three types of people. (I am sorry to use that word 'types' because Lessing herself would never use it; all her characters are above all highly individual, even in the sameness of their lives). The setting is usually Africa, and usually the white world of Africa. Her people are ordinary, often poor, and the lives that are drawn in her books tend to be those of the farmers and lower middle class, who labouring on an economic base of free or cheap blacks over whom they have unquestioned rights, somehow move through their own existences in a tedious struggle to survive. Sometimes (not often) her stories are about black Africa -- miraculously so, since she writes with incredible knowledge and understanding; how can she know so much? Other times her people are English, usually women. They live in London and they too, survive.

Above all, Lessing writes about people and more particularly, the relations between people, and her ability to do so leaves me gasping. Reading her stories you begin to regret they are only short stories because you get to know her people and everything about them and, like a child, find yourself looking for ways to avoid reading further in case you finish too soon and lose them for-

ever. She is so perceptive; she understands so much. And perhaps that is the key to her writing. Regardless of what her people are or do, however much the reader may praise or condemn them, Lessing invariably does not. And so they stand as they are, the kind of people they are, neither condemned nor praised but simply understood -- which, in a way, is condemning.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

One thing I have learned from these short stories is to regard Lessing as truly a writer of women's liberation, although many reviewers of her books do not find her so. They do not understand why the women's movement should embrace Lessing when she herself has not written from involvement in our movement, when her main characters are often men, and when the portrayal of women is not often pretty. I think myself that identifying these things, all of which are true, misses the point. Lessing does not necessarily write complementary things about women. Often her female characters are bitter, repressed, nagging and sometimes just plain nasty. What makes us respond to Lessing is the fact that in her stories, women exist. They are there, have lives, think thoughts, act and react. Even when a story is centrally about a man, Lessing never relegates his wife to entering and leaving on cue to bring tea or have sex or perform any of the other shadowy functions that most writers use to provide props for the hero. If life on an African maize farm is described, Lessing always, if subtly, gets it across that the farmwoman's life is a life too, that it is different from the man's, and this is how and why and what happens because of that. Also, it is evident that to write about women -- to accept the fact that

women exist -- does not demand that women be Good and men Bad. Lessing writes about women the way we are and usually in the course of it communicates why we are that way. This is how it should be for despite what we may hope and plan and fight for, and what we believe we will someday be allowed to be, no good for women comes from not knowing what we are now or from denying our reality, warts and all. The stereotypes of women have, after all, some truth to them, even the most distasteful ones. Our dependencies and fears are unavoidably part of all of us now, and to deny our present reality serves nothing but to postpone the realization of our future. In this sense Lessing is indeed a writer of our movement because she tells us what we are, and sometimes why. It is not her responsibility to tell us what we may become, and how. That problem falls to the rest of us.

But perhaps I am selling Lessing short. I do know that there are times when the people and relationships she deals with are carved out (and often carved up) with brilliant insight. Four stories in particular stand out in my mind and these I recommend to you highly. Two are from The Habit of Loving: "Getting Off The Altitude" deals with depressing accuracy with a woman aging through a loveless, violent marriage, step by degrading step. "The Eye of God in Paradise", a somewhat innocent story of two English tourists in post-war Germany, does a job on fascism that I have never seen equalled. Then, from A Man and Two Women, there is "One Off The Short List", a mildly-stated account of a man on the make that is so utterly devastating it has left male friends of mine shaking with disbelief over Lessing's quiet,

systematic dismemberment of the male ego-cum-fantasy.

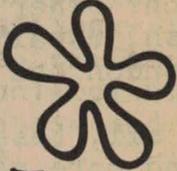
"To Room 19", also from A Man And Two Women, deserves a separate paragraph -- really a separate review -- but even as I write that I know there is little I can say. This rather lengthy story tells in Lessing's usual understated style about the happy mother of four who quietly and relentlessly shuts out the life she has built over a dozen years with all its picking up, waiting on and planning for in desperate exchange for a life of just sitting in room 19 in a cheap hotel where she is never on call, is nothing and nobody -- and especially not Mother.

I will say no more, and this is yet one more thing about Lessing: once she has written a story there is nothing left to say, except: Read it. Read them all.

- Sharon Yandle

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A COMPARISON OF ANGELS

Swamp Angel Ethel Wilson. New Canadian Library N29 McClellan & Stewart, \$1.95.

Stone Angel Margaret Laurence. New Canadian Library N59 McClellan & Stewart, \$2.75.

When I volunteered to write an article on Swamp Angel and Stone Angel for Priorities I did so because these novels had impressed me on my initial reading four years ago. I soon realized that in both cases it was one particular scene that stood out vividly in my memory. Both scenes are of escape - one successful, one not so.

Maggie, the heroine of Swamp Angel, escapes from her second husband at the beginning of the book in a scene so common-place and so controlled that it is chilling. This initial scene is only the beginning of the struggle. Maggie, who soon feels "as free as if she had just been born", discovers that she "has to make her way on her own power." She finds that living, like swimming, "is done alone." Fortunately for Maggie she has not only the courage to escape but the insight to see that this physical separation from one who has so brutalized and restricted her is only the beginning of her rebirth. She refers to her marriage as "her slavery" she learns on escaping how to be free.

In the Stone Angel the heroine Hagar is not so fortunate. She has the necessary courage. Although she is over ninety, "treated like a cash crop" by her son and daughter-in-law, doomed to a dreary old age home, she makes a valiant escape. Hardly able to walk alone, suffering from memory loss and moments of confusion she

nevertheless makes it by bus to an old cannery outside of town on her own. But what a terrifying result, for although she has moments of stunning lucidity she is unable to control her ancient body and often her mind wanders. She knows at moments that she has no future - she is spent but refuses to succumb without a fight.

Like Maggie, Hagar in her younger years had also escaped from her husband. At that time she had felt that "to move to a new place, that's the greatest excitement. For a while you believe you carry nothing with you - all is cancelled from before, or cauterized, and you begin again and nothing will go wrong this time." Unfortunately in life things do go wrong and in her second escape Hagar falls prey to the inevitable wrong - old age.

As a housewife one of the problems and the most serious Maggie faces in her plans to escape is economic dependence. For a year before she leaves she earns money secretly by making flies for a tackle shop. Hagar's most serious problem is age - senility - this is unforgivable in our society and there is no cure for it.

The titles of the novels symbolize the kinds of death the women are escaping from. The swamp angel is a gun but symbolized "years of life gone away." At the end of the novel Maggie throws the gun in the Lake. She has managed to escape this spiritual death - this wasting of life. The stone angel is a gravestone - it sits above the town where Hagar grew up and overshadows her final story. Physical death can never be escaped for long.

In looking at these two escapes it is interesting to refer to Margaret Atwood who contends that the central theme for Canadian literature is "survival: hanging on, staying alive." In her book Survival Atwood summarizes the Stone Angel as a "story of an old woman who hangs on grimly to life and dies at the end." To the end Hagar faces her future with wit, albeit sporadic, and for one of her age and of her era she shows an heroic defiance. Maggie certainly rises above the role she is cast in by society as a middle-aged wife. She shows an imagination and courage in choosing and learning to live her own way in her preferred environment.

In both novels the heroine is, by choice, alone. Maggie left her husband; Hagar earlier left husband, and now her children. These women do not suffer for lack nor quest after lovers or children. They are questing after life -- and they struggle against economics, age, and social convention. Both are, in their own way, too determined to accept the common. Unwilling to play the role of old lady in old age home with doting children, wife washing dishes in kitchen.

Laurence and Wilson succeed in effectively dramatizing the restrictive roles thrust on these two women. The scene mentioned earlier as most memorable in Swamp Angel is the last supper Maggie serves and eats with her husband. During this ritual meal, obviously a tedious repetition of all former meals, the two things Maggie's husband noted about her is that she purchased a roast that was too large and that she has on her tweed suit -- both are considered by him as expensive and irresponsible luxuries. After Maggie has escaped out the back door on the pretext of washing up her husband goes into the kitchen

and sums up the situation immediately: "She was not there. My, God, she's left the dishes, she must be dead." That was the tedium and the death Maggie fled from.

As Maggie is defined sexually as wife (cook and dishwasher), Hagar is defined as old. She is condemned to a body that will not function, a room with no lock and hence no privacy, and a role as half wit. Her son and daughter-in-law whisper about her, humour her, ignore her wishes and suffer her presence.

In referring to these two flights as escapes I am not conveying the positive features of the actions -- for as much as they are escapes from restrictive, suffocating roles they are quests for life and for a meaning in life. Maggie particularly understands this and as soon as she gets a distance from town she begins to look toward her future. She chooses to work as a cook in a country lodge and having made that choice she carries it through with courage.

Hagar made the mistake when she left her husband of putting only miles between them and spent her time in waiting not building. In her 2nd escape she is too decrepit to do anything but wait -- this time for death.

Perhaps the reason that these two scenes of escape -- Maggie during the last supper with her husband, and Hagar huddled in an old canner -- are so evocative is that they are so honest, so true to the type of situation we all face. The loneliness and terror in the decision to live and the loneliness and the terror of seeing death approach. No science fiction

can be more chilling than the inevitable experience of choosing life or or facing death. Society prepares us for neither.

Hopefully, art, by portraying these moments helps us see them as common challenges -- to be shared and overcome collectively.

- Melodie Corrigan
VANCOUVER-BURRARD

FREE, FROM YOUR FRIEND- LY NEIGHBORHOOD GOV'T;

The following publications may be obtained free by writing Information Canada, 800 Granville Street, Vancouver, B.C.

WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE. 1973 Edition. This publication is issued annually by the Women's Bureau of the Canada Department of Labour. It presents data on the labour force collected by various government agencies and some private agencies. This year's edition includes data on women and men in various professions, including medicine and other health-related professions, nursing, social work and teaching. It also contains data on the labour force from 1931 to the present, and projections on women in the labour force to 1980.

WOMEN'S BUREAU 1973. This is the latest in an annual series, which contains five papers delivered during the year by the Director of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labour. Topics include "Social Workers and the Status of Women," "Organized Labour and the Working Woman," and "Equality in Pensions for Women."

THE LAW RELATING TO WORKING WOMEN, December 1973. This is the second edition of the Women's Bureau publication, setting out international instruments and Canadian legislation relating to the status of women in employment; and it contains amendments incorporated in the law up to the end of December 1973.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN CANADA. 1973. This is the first report on the actions of the federal government following up on the recommendations of the Royal Commission Report on the Status of Women in Canada. Women's Bureau publication.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA: MANDATE FOR CHANGE. Office of Equal Opportunities for Women, Public Service of Canada, 1973. This booklet outlines the events leading to changes of attitude on the part of the federal government concerning working women, and the special efforts underway to equalize opportunities for the more than 68,000 women in the Public Service of Canada.

* * * * *

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Q: How do you fold a fitted sheet?

A: Arrange the sheet lengthwise and inside out. Place hands inside the two upper corners and bring corners together. Turn left corner right side out over right corner, fitting them together smoothly. Repeat with two lower corners of sheet, then bring these up to fit smoothly inside upper corners. Finish folding the sheet as normal.

(from Nov. 74 Chatelaine)



WHY NOT



A British Columbia Federation of Women Petition.

The United Nations designated 1975 as International Women's Year and called upon all governments to implement Women's Rights legislation. The B.C.F.W. therefore demands that our Federal Government remove abortion from the Criminal Code, in keeping with the spirit of the U.N. Resolution.

The B.C.F.W. affirms the right of any woman to obtain a legal and medically safe abortion as a matter of individual choice, and that the beliefs of others should not interfere with this right.

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