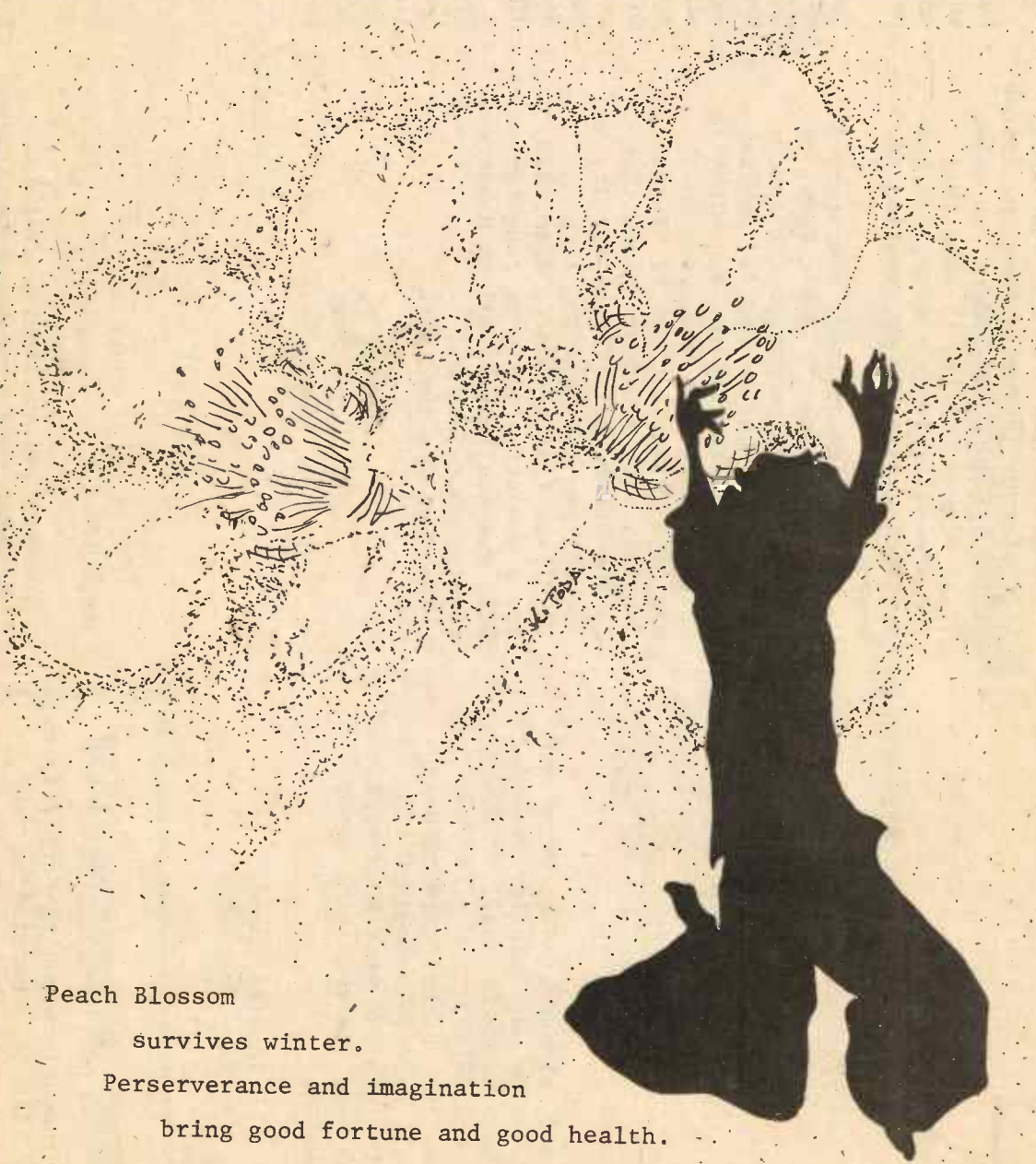


# Northern Woman Journal

90¢

Jan. - Feb. 1981

Vol. 6, No. 4



Peach Blossom

survives winter.

Perserverance and imagination

bring good fortune and good health.



# your VOICE

Gentlepeople:

Enclosed, please find a cheque for \$15 to cover my subscription fees to the Northern Woman Journal. I'm sorry about the delay.

I enjoy the Journal tremendously, and you all deserve a bouquet of flowers for all the very good work.

Please keep the remaining money as a donation.

In sisterhood,  
Mary Fedorchuk

Dear Editors:

Congratulations on the continuing life of your journal. Keep the issues coming. Wish I was closer, to help. It is a good feeling to know that you are still in existence, and communicating valuable information to women.

Please find enclosed the story I wrote this summer. I don't know, of course, if you can spare the space for fiction, but as you did publish a story of mine before, you might be interested in this one, perhaps by way of a change. It is, of course, donated. It is wandering out there in the ether, but if you like it, you are welcome to it...

Please find enclosed, also, \$10 for a subscription to my daughter. Will eventually have all my daughters reading your journal.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,  
Joyce Dunn  
Chase, B. C.

Dear Sisters:

Thank you, Northern Woman Journal. Because of you, I will be more solvent in my older years. This might sound like an exaggeration, but real on.

In the last edition of the Journal you published information about divorced people being able to share C.P.P. of their former spouses. Well here I am, a supposedly well-informed woman who knew absolutely nothing about this two-year-old law. Off I went to Health and Welfare, Pension Division, as directed by the Journal and saw a field officer. Now, all I have to do is fill out a form, gather some documentation and send it in. It's as easy as pie.

I might sound humorous and light about the subject, but it certainly helps ease worries about the future to realize that I will be compensated (slightly) for doing all that home management. Thank you again, Northern Woman Journal.

Sincerely yours,  
Sandra Steinhouse

Dear N.W.J.:

I have recently moved to Fort Frances, and would like to subscribe to your journal. I am a group leader with Katimavik, and I think it would be great to share a northern women's journal with my women participants.

It's also possible that we could, from time to time, submit poems and/or news from our group if you like.

I subscribed to Upstream while I was living in Ottawa, but unfortunately, it closed down this past winter. Of the back issues I've seen of the Northern Woman Journal, I'm really pleased with your publication.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Shelle Rose,  
Fort Frances, Ont.

Dear N.W.J.:

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$10, which covers my due subscription and a donation to the Journal.

I know Gert is wondering where the voice of Red Lake is--tell her to hang on! It takes time to persuade some people that their thoughts, articulated in the written word, are worth reading.

Meanwhile, I pass my journals around to as many women as I can, and the response is very positive. Keep up the excellent work--it's being read, and it's reaching women!

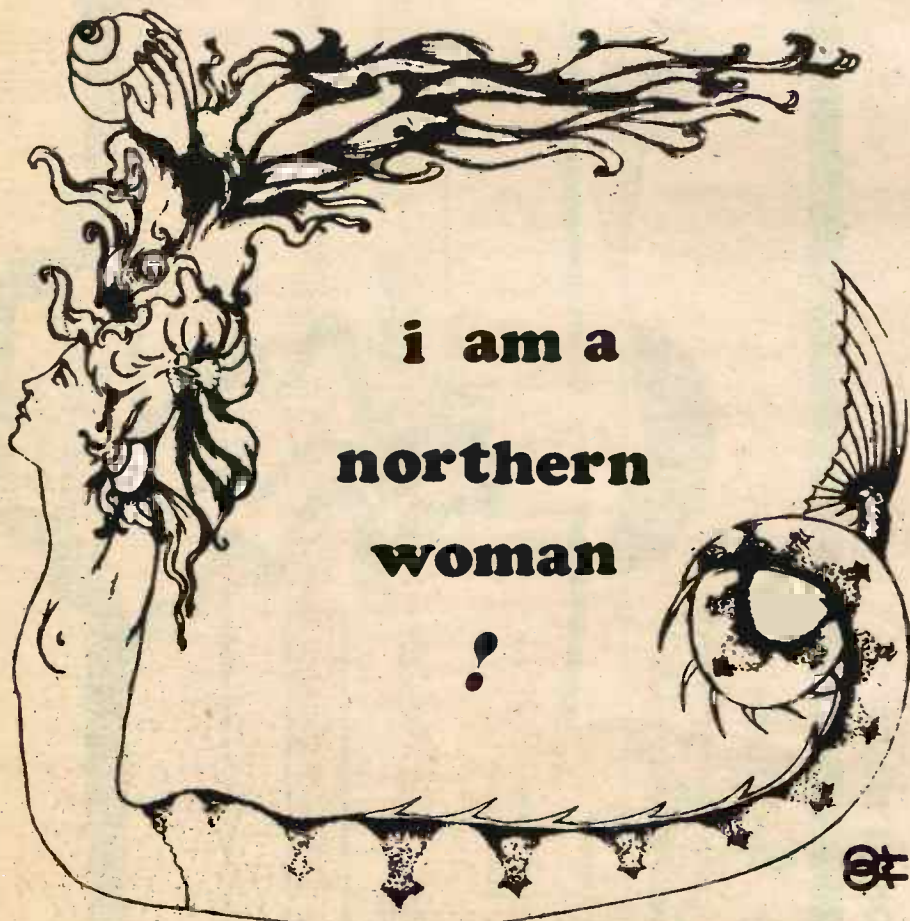
Sincerely,  
Audrey Anderson  
Red Lake, Ont.

Dear N.W.J.:

I am interested in subscribing to your journal. I have heard some very good reports about it, and have also heard that you need publicity in the smaller, northern communities. Enclosed, please find a cheque for \$4.50, which I understand will cover a one-year period. If possible, I would like to receive the past two back-issues.

Wishing you success in bringing northern women's issues to print.

Sincerely,  
Wendy Sippell  
Sioux Lookout, Ont.



## buttons i've got mine... have you got yours?

Be proud of your past,  
Be proud of your present,  
Order your buttons today.  
For \$1.00 each, wear the colours of  
"BREAD and ROSES" and proclaim your  
independence.

Please add 50¢ for postage and handling, or pick up your buttons at  
Women's Centre, 316B Bay St, Thunder  
Bay, Ont.

Buttons available at the end of  
February.

SUPPORT the NORTHERN WOMAN JOURNAL,  
Support yourself,

Wear our button.



# TOXIC SHOCK SYNDROME

## BUTTONS

Toxic Shock Syndrome is a form of blood poisoning, caused by toxins produced by the bacterium, *Staphylococcus aureus*. The symptoms are: high fever, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. There may also be blurred vision, disorientation, peeling of skin on the palms and on the soles, and a sunburn-type of rash. These can be swiftly followed by a severe drop in blood pressure, and a state of shock.

Although Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) sounds like the latest of a series of nightmarish elements in our brave new world, neither the disease itself, nor the agent responsible, are newcomers. *Staph. aureus* is a common bacterium found in skin eruptions and boils, under finger-nails, in the mouth and nose, in the region between the anus and genitalia.

Blood poisoning is caused by the invasion of the blood stream by the organism. Entry is usually made through an opening in the skin - either by way of a cut or injury, or through a lesion.

The treatment for *Staphylococcus* blood poisoning is the administration of antibiotics.

Blood poisoning is not that uncommon; but when the source is an external entry point, such as a cut or other injury, we are more aware of, or on guard for, symptoms which warn us of infection.

In Toxic Shock Syndrome associated with the vagina, however, the entry is unseen. Not only that, but because of fewer nerve endings and less sensation in the vaginal area, the symptoms that would attract our attention (such as redness, swelling, itching) if they occurred on surface skin, go unnoticed. The symptoms given are therefore those that happen when the infection is further developed, and has already entered the blood stream (high temperature, vomiting,

diarrhea, etc.) This accounts for the apparent suddenness and severity of the symptoms.

Injuries to the vaginal lining can be similar to some of those found on external skin, such as minor cuts and blemishes. Contact with materials that a person is sensitive to can cause irritation and rash. Minor abrasions can be caused by intercourse. All of these events might go unnoticed because they are unseen, and because of lack of certain sensations in the vaginal area.

Menstruation and the use of tampons have been associated with TSS as a result of statistical research begun in 1975, which showed that of the cases studied in the United States, almost 95% of TSS victims were menstruating women using tampons. (Of the 14 victims studied in Canada, all were using tampons.) Since 1975, 40 fatalities have occurred in the United States.

The specific relationship between TSS and tampon use is still uncertain, but there are several factors that are likely to be involved. The conditions in the vagina during menstruation provide an ideal breeding environment for bacteria trapped inside for lengthy periods of time; blood is a rich nutrient, and the surroundings are warm and moist. Next, the composition of the tampon itself must be considered. Initially, tampons were made of cotton, or cotton with rayon fibres. Now, tampon manufacturers include other synthetic materials to increase absorbency. Some include deodorants as well.

These new tampons can be harmful in two ways. First, with greater absorbency, there might be a tendency to leave tampons in for a greater period of time. It has also been suggested that super absorbency might

actually dry the vaginal lining, making it more vulnerable to injury. Secondly, the use of synthetic materials, and further chemical ingredients, as deodorants, increases the possibility of rashes and lesions resulting from sensitivity or allergy.

Tampon manufacturers have never been required by law to divulge contents of tampons. As a matter of fact patent rights have ensured protection against release of such information. And no disclosures are being made, despite repeated requests, and protests, by numerous individuals and concerned women's organizations. Trying to select tampons made only of natural materials, as a safeguard, becomes next to impossible under these circumstances.

The only government action so far, in Canada, has been the requirement that containers of tampons contain an insert giving information about TSS, and must have the following label: "Because of the believed association of Toxic Shock Syndrome with the use of menstrual tampons, Health and Welfare Canada and (name of manufacturer), advise you to read the enclosed information thoroughly before using tampons."

The use of tampons has become a vital feature in the lives of many women. Those of us who are reluctant to return to the inconvenience of using napkins find ourselves in a terrible quandry. We must make a crucial decision based on very little reassurance or assistance by the agencies who are supposedly acting on behalf of our health and welfare.

The small consolation left to us is that our random chance of contracting TSS is low. Some women will choose not to risk this chance, and stop using tampons altogether.

## defusing the terror



### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Be alert to any unusual symptoms occurring during menstrual period. If any TSS symptoms are felt, remove tampon. Call doctor immediately.
2. Change tampon frequently during the day, and use napkins at night.
3. In-so-far as possible, use tampons composed of natural materials. Avoid super-absorbing tampons, and tampons with deodorants.

4. Write to government officials insisting on disclosure of ingredients of tampons:

Dr. A.B. Morison  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Health and Welfare  
Ottawa, Ontario

Monique Begin  
Minister of Health & Welfare  
Ottawa, Ontario

Resources: *Bulletin, Women's Information and Referral Centre, Montreal, December, 1980.*

*Healthsharing, Toronto, Winter 1980*

K. Andrews  
Written in consultation with Dr.  
Kathleen Magwood, M.D.



# The Missinaibi River Trip

By MARY MORGAN

## A Womyn's Whitewater Journey

Lake Superior. The beginning. Red sun setting over smooth, misty, blue-grey waters. Slate hills ending on the distant, glowing horizon. Waves wooing the shoreline. The zig-zag path of a loon reflected in bronze. Such an immense calmness greeted us, this first day, and made the headaches and last minute rushing all worthwhile.

After months of dreaming and planning and weeks of preparation, it was hard to believe that May had arrived. The Wild River Womyn finally put in at the mouth of the Michipicoten River on Lake Superior for our 25-day canoe adventure to James Bay.

In August, 1979, Siana Goodwin and myself had begun to discuss a Missinaibi River paddling expedition. During the fall and winter, I was living and working at the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School (COBWS), and I was in an optimal position to coordinate the trip.

Originally the trip was open to all COBWS staff members who had expressed an interest, but by March, 1980, only five womyn responded with the required \$75 deposit.

What a motley crew we were: Juliet Westgate, a belly dancer who had been living with gypsies in Spain; Vicki Joyce, who was teaching at a college in Saskatchewan; Teresa Legowski, who had been working on construction in Alberta; Siana, who was studying to become a Rolpher (a type of massage therapy) in Boulder, Colorado; Amanda Harris, who was bartending in Ely, Minnesota; and of course, myself.

Due to our association with the Outward Bound school, all of us were well-acquainted friends, and had a variety of personal reasons for joining the trip: a need for space, a time for private reflection, to once again enjoy a wilderness environment, to have fun, and, when we realized that all the participants were female, to experience an all womyn's canoe expedition.

The equipment - canoes, canoe packs, PFD's - were all loaned from COBWS. The food (vegetarian except for the fish eaten along the way) was purchased from the school at \$3-a-day per person.

Additionally, all of us attended a three-day whitewater skills workshop during staff training at the school site (Homeplace). We received expert instruction in whitewater canoe strokes, maneuvering, reading rapids and rescue techniques. The knowledge and expertise we developed from the workshop was a major factor in making our trip a success.

The support from our brothers and sisters at Homeplace was tremendous. They were as excited as we were, and all of us were soaring with anticipation.

The Missinaibi River was chosen primarily for its whitewater. Yet, the river also offered a rich history to explore. In the 1700's, it was a major fur-trading route from James Bay to Lake Superior. The waterway served as an excellent means of trading with the predominantly Cree Indian population. No doubt, the Missinaibi was extensively used by the Indians before the migration of the whites.



The word Missinaibi means "pictured waters" in Cree. As you enter Missinaibi Lake, the source of the river, one finds an abundance of ancient Indian pictographs on cliffs and rock faces. To receive their mythical impact, these rock paintings should be viewed as reflections in the water. We were fortunate to pass by the shimmering "pictured waters" on a calm day.

A daily routine was soon established once under way, although the times of awakening varied considerably from one morning to the next. The first womyn to rise would begin breakfast on our small, compact stove or over a fire, depending upon the presence of a fire ban in the area and upon the speed with which we wanted to leave.

We had planned that every other day would be a granola breakfast, which enabled us to make distance and avoid bugs. Usually on these mornings, we munched in our canoes as we floated downstream. During our last days on the river, when making miles was important, we made hot coffee in the canoe by boiling water with our stove on the bottom of the canoe in the stern end. What a way to "rough it" in the bush with a floating breakfast!

En route, we passed through three towns: Missinabie, Mattice and our destination, Moosonee.

We planned a food drop-off at Missinabie, 60 miles from our put-in point. Since we had to paddle upstream for these first five days of the trip, the less food we carried, the less time and energy we consumed. The most strenuous part was the first six miles, which took us a day to complete. Since the current was extremely strong, we tracked a lot of the way. The paddling eased when we came to a dam-lake system.

From Missinabie to Mattice, it took us 9 days, of which we paddled 6 days. What a thrill (full of butterfly stomachs) to run the first set of rapids on

the river. The difficulty of the whitewater varied, but our portages were few, the majority avoiding magnificent waterfalls. Greenhill Rapids portage was the worst - one mile of mud, knee-deep ponds and slick, steep hills. A boisterous spirit and sharing our heaving loads made the 'grunt' bearable despite the rain.

Our relaxed pace was maintained from Mattice to Moosonee, again paddling for six out of the total nine days time. Even though this stretch lacked the intensity of the whitewater we had previously experienced, the area was more of a wilderness, as we did not meet any fishermen or local people.

A landmark we paid silent tribute to, Thunder House Falls, was situated on this part of the journey. The thundering water, with its whirlpools, awesome hydraulics and Conjuring Rock (a rock formation amidst the boiling turmoil of the water) absorbed our complete attention, and we seemed to become one with the water.

To bypass Hell's Gate, a series of falls and rapids through a narrow canyon, we did our longest portage of three miles. Again, our relaxed pace and sharing our loads helped develop a stronger sense of solidarity among us. We completed the final stretch of whitewater, Long Rapids, on a high note, only to enter the lowlands of Hudson's Bay. Here the river had widened to 3/4 of a mile, the land immediately becoming flat, beautifully stark and vast.

Being with an all womyn's expedition certainly had a magical effect on us and on the people we met along the way. Our spirits, energy and harmony within ourselves and with nature was very contagious. We had some powerfully positive exchanges with a variety of people.

To all of us, music holds a special importance. And so, on the trail our voices were often raised in song, praise and gratefulness. Once during an electrical storm we were forced off the water. We quickly pulled the canoes to shore and crashed into the forest for shelter from the lightning. Under the green, dripping canopy of spruce and birch, someone suggested, "We need a song", and we began to sing... "Sometimes it takes a rainy day, just to let you know, everything is gonna be alright...". Our arms embracing, we continued to sing 'The Changer and the Changed' by Chris Williamson, "...Flowing like a river, the changer and the changed..." In spite of the rain and the inconvenience, we were joyful. We had decided to have fun on our trip, and through music we were learning to flow with, rather than fight, the elements.

The times we did attempt to conquer the wind and rain, we faced the consequences. Since we were behind in our schedule to pick up our food, we decided to push ahead for a 20-mile day. That morning the winds were strong and gusty, the sky stormy grey, the rain biting cold. If we stopped, we would feel the cold, so we contin-

CONTINUED page 5 ...



"You must be wondering why I'm here!" she said, cupping her cold hands around the coffee mug.

"Well, since you came on foot, I gather you're not selling vacuum cleaners" Joan said with a shy smile.

"Ah, well no" Diana chuckled, placing one slim leg over the other, displaying small, high-heeled leather boots. "I'll come right to the point. I represent the Women's Movement and I'm going from door to door, canvassing for membership." There was a small pause. Once more the large eyes settled on Joan.

"Oh..." was all that Joan could muster, her mind immediately assaulted with visions of marching women, burning bras and booted amazons. "Well, I don't know too much about it." She moved uncomfortably in her chair.

"That's why I'm here" the girl-woman said with a smile which enveloped Joan with its warmth and sincerity.

"I don't know what kind of a recruit I would make, really" Joan said uneasily, more to break the silence than anything. This followed by a small silence, these words of hers sounding inadequate, futile.

"The only passport required is to be a woman" she said, with a hint of steel in a voice which belied that look of the perennial teenager.

the decisions? Who plans your life?" Diana leaned back in her chair and sat back, waiting for a reaction from Joan. None came, Joan's long black hair hiding her face as she stared into her cup.

"Perhaps I should introduce myself" Diana extended her hand, which Joan took hesitantly.

"My name is Diana, what's yours?"

A sudden feeling of warmth and joy went through Joan, a small brush-fire burning dead wood in a forest. She returned the hand-shake and said with a surprised smile: "Joan".

"I don't mean to be so abrasive Joan, but really, this talk of burning bras had got us all up to here" she placed the back of her hand under her chin. "I won't bore you with politics; my speciality" she giggled at this point, "is to meet women on a person-to-person basis and recruit them for their qualities, to become part of our movement."

"You still haven't told me what would be required" Joan reiterated.

"Nothing at this point. Just to attend the meetings and form the sisterhood."

Joan winced at this. She was not a group person and avoided, like the plague: meetings, associations, women's committees, her spare time filled with the quiet occupations she snatched at in between the hectic activities she shared with Mark.

then the rush back to..."

"I don't have any children" Joan cut in, slinging this remark at Diana who had suddenly become her opponent. Don't bludgeon me with the work of involvement with children, she thought the bitterness surfacing dangerously, her throat tightening, her eyes suddenly polished from tears she had not shed for years.

"You still work Joan". Black eyes, suddenly unfathomable looked into Joan's: "You keep the house clean, you cook the meals, you create a home." "For two people" was the bitter, whispered reply.

There was a long silence, the black gleaming hair once again hiding Joan's face as she toyed with her empty cup.

"Want to talk about it?" Diana's voice calm, authoritative.

"What is there to talk about Diana? Calling her by name established a modicum of assertiveness, goaded, as was intended, into the beginning of what was to be a search into self-realization, a re-evaluation. Joan turned her head away. Staring into the bleak November day, she added: "I lost my little girl seven years ago. She was ...three". She swallowed hard, the tears now a mild mist clouding her eyes. Damn this woman, she didn't want to talk about it. Go away! Take your strengths, ambitions, self-assertiveness with you and let me be: to clean my house; play my piano; wait



"What would I be required to do?" Joan asked with some temerity: "I'm hardly the type."

"What type?" these words directed at her, as if shot from a gun.

The Socratic approach, a question with a question, Joan thought with dismay. What am I doing here defending myself? She squirmed in her seat: "Well, ah, I don't really consider myself a Women's Lib you know."

"Why not?"

Again, this bullet approach, the volley delivered from this fragile-looking woman who, up till now, had exuded an innocence, an artlessness that was obviously, deceiving. A booted amazon, no less.

"Well...I don't want to go around burning my bra and carrying posters" this last remark flung out in defensive derision.

The reaction was startling. Leaning both elbows on the kitchen table, Diana looked deep into Joan's eyes and said: "Fuck the bra-burners, fuck the poster-carriers, we just want to be regarded as persons."

Well, this did come as a bit of a shock. Joan turned her head away slightly, as if to ward off the impact of this verbal attack.

"Think about it. Have you been a thinking individual all these years? Do you feel you are on a par with men; with the man in your life? Who makes

"Tell me a bit about your lifestyle Joan" Diana said. She leaned back in her chair, reaching into her shirt pocket for a packet of cigarettes. "Do you smoke?" she asked offering the package with a cigarette sticking out, Joan shook her head. "Mind if I do?"

"No, not at all" Joan got up and got her an ash-tray.

"Well, I don't work, if that's what you mean" A hint of annoyance in Joan's voice, quickly picked up by Diana.

"You don't work?" She looked around at the immaculate house, the gleaming windows: "Being a housewife isn't work then?"

"Oh that!" Joan laughed. "That's not work. It isn't considered work anyway" she retorted. A small resentment hung in the air, an echo perhaps of Mark's?

"No, we don't work" Diana intoned, her slender hands moving in that distinct way, the bright nail polish reminiscent of gleaming foliage in a summer breeze, "We just start our day like self-winding mechanical dolls, the perpetual motion of our hands and feet the generators which operate the domestic marathon of: cleaning up, washing clothes, vacuuming and, eye on the clock, we do our stint in the car-pool for Brownies, Scouts, skating lessons, hockey practices -- and

for Mark to make the decisions for me; to escape in pools of quiet solitude when I am alone, the music and the poetry forming the escape to the terror of nothingness which haunts me.

Reaching over, Diana took both Joan's hands in hers, hanging on firmly as the young woman tried to pull away. "There's obviously lots to talk about Joan, and that's what we're here for: the sisterhood, to help each other, encourage one another to recognise the isolation of women and do something about it."

"How did she die?" Diana asked after a slight pause.

Joan's distress was replaced by anger; anger which, like a true forest fire now swept through the quick and the dead of her being, forcing from her harsh words which belied her genteel upbringing: "How dare you?" she cried, extricating her hands from the small warm ones, her own clammy and cold. "How dare you come into my house and stick your fingers into my mind, my soul?"

She got up and, breathing hard, commanded in a hushed voice: "Please leave. I know you mean well, but please go now" and turning away, she rushed into the spacious living-room and stood by the big picture-windows, the grey November day lending a subdued gleam to the modern Danish furniture.

CONT'D NEXT ISSUE

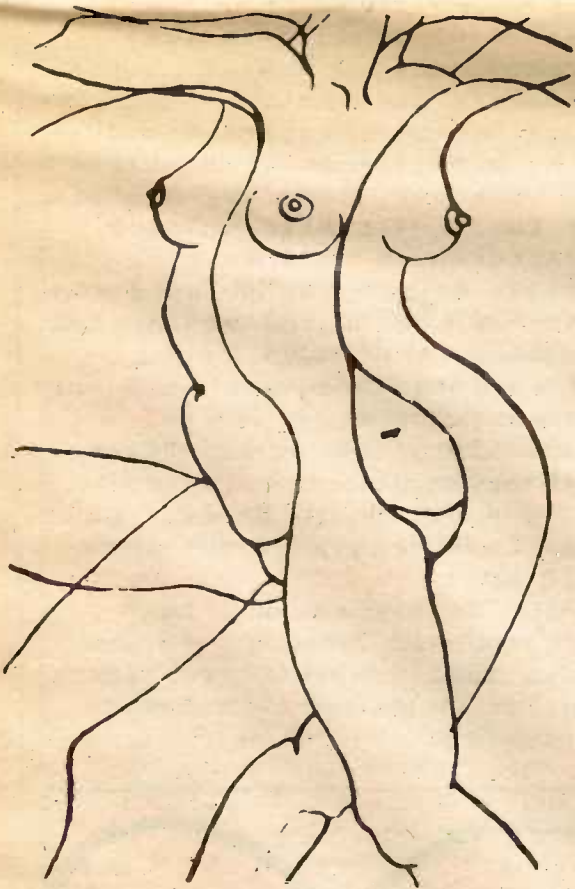


RIVER TRIP continued from page 4

ued paddling for four hours, staying close together and hugging the shoreline. At one point Juliet called us together because Teresa, who was her bowperson, had begun to nod off. This is one of the initial symptoms of hypothermia. We paddled to land and discovered that the rest of us had varying degrees of hypothermia as well - uncontrollable shivering, mental sluggishness, muscle uncoordination. We decided to make camp; quickly put up a tent; removed Teresa's wet clothes and zipped her up in a sleeping bag; started a fire and made hot drinks. As our warmth returned, the rain stopped, the sun emerged and we realized the lesson we had learned.

As a symbol of our thankfulness, we celebrated with a Kinnikinnik ceremony. Kinnikinnik is a sacred mixture of tobacco, herbs and plants (such as cedar or sweetgrass) used ritualistically by the North American Indians. Standing around the fire and rubbing a pinch of the tobacco in our palms, we offered the Kinnikinnik to the spirit closest to our hearts. Each taking our turn, thanking the rain for quenching the thirsty forest, the sun for giving us warmth, the spirit of compassion, joy and friendship...we dropped our offerings into the fire. After a moment of silent meditation we chanted:

"Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song.  
Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song.  
I will never forget you, I will never forsake you.  
I will never forget you, I will never forsake you."



Music was the medium through which we were the imported talent at the local hotel. Vicki managed to borrow a guitar and we sang old favourites with the locals and visiting fishermen. Towards the end of the night, everyone was harmonizing and dancing with linked arms. The hotel owner, Alex Debris, sold out of beer. As we left, the men serenaded us with "Good Night, Ladies"

Alex was very generous to us. He stored our 100 pounds of food, gave us tent space in his backyard and

replaced a lost lifejacket for us. Once again, sensing and moving with the natural flow provided us with our needs and added a night-on-the-town in the middle of our expedition.

In Mattice (a small French community between Cochrane and Hearst), we experienced a powerful exchange with three Roman Catholic Sisters. Vicki had met them in town and they opened their home to us. We did our laundry, had showers (after 15 days on the trail) and they prepared a marvelous meal for us. That evening we shared fun songs, as well as those on themes of social justice and spirituality. Juliet entertained all of us with a belly dance, to the delight of the runs. They pointed out that we were strong, self-made womyn; yet they too held strong feelings on equality, existing injustices in our society and communal living. Music, once again, eradicated our barriers, united us, and enabled us to overcome our differences and focus on our similarities.

It seemed that we six were always playing. Juliet taught us a few belly-dancing routines which were quite amusing to see performed. Vicki shared the Scottish Gay Gordon with us and Siana attempted to show us some swing dancing steps. We danced when the bugs went to bed, to keep warm and for the sheer joy of it!

We experienced extreme weather conditions, from snow to blistering hot weather. It snowed on and off for two days, but the river blessed us with a trapper's cabin which included a functioning wood stove. We set up home and celebrated Christmas - complete with chocolate cake, popcorn, taco pie, and rum toddies. As the snow continued to fall, the Spirit of Christmas settled upon us and we read the Nativity Story and sang Christmas carols. Just three days before, we had been paddling along naked, our bodies bronzed by the hot sun; jumping into the refreshing river to cool off; truly looking like Amazons.

The river taught us many things. For myself I re-experienced the harmony of life among human beings and the rhythms of the earth. Before we disembarked at Moosonee, we offered Kinnikinnik to the river for the blessings she bestowed upon us and the spirit that we shared.

#### POST PARTUM COUNSELLING SERVICES

The Post Partum Counselling Services needs volunteers.

Are you a mother? Did you feel unable to cope after the birth/adoption of your child? Did you feel sad, lonely or depressed? Are you willing to share your experiences with other mothers presently in the same situation?

We are a self-help group which provides depressed mothers with one-to-one telephone contact with volunteer mothers and weekly group meetings led by an experienced volunteer.

If you can help, please contact us at POST PARTUM COUNSELLING SERVICES 344-6029 or 767-5849.

# Recommended Reading

## NON-FICTION

- Abortion in Canada - Eleanor Wright Peirine \*
- Amazon Odyssey - Ti-Grace Atkinson \*
- Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings - edited by Miriam Schneir
- The Gnostic Gospels - Elaine Pagels \*
- About Men - Phyllis Chesler \*
- The Lace Ghetto - Maxine Nunes & Deanna White \*
- More Than A Labour Of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home - Meg Luxton \*

## FICTION

- Life Before Man - Margaret Atwood \*
- Chiclet Gomez - Dorothy O'Connell \*
- Dance of the Happy Shades - Alice Munro

\* AVAILABLE FROM Northern Women's Centre Library

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## too late for '81

OTTAWA -- COMMENT ON BILL C-54

Amendments to the Income Tax Act will allow the deduction, for tax purposes, of wages paid to a woman who works for her husband in an unincorporated family business. As well, she will now be able to contribute to and participate in the Canada Pension Plan in her own right.

Approximately one half of a million people will benefit from these amendments.

These changes will be retroactive to January 1, 1980.

Unfortunately our government did not get their "act" together in time for most applicants to file by the deadline January 31, 1980.

Further details of the amendment can be obtained from the department of National Revenue.

## WEAR IT!



# UPDATE

by Joan Baril

## BRITISH WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE

In London, England, women threw paint-filled eggs at a movie screen showing a pornography film. In Leeds, 500 women marched through the streets after the murder of university student Jacqueline Hill, the Yorkshire Ripper's 13th victim. In Coventry, someone painted "Women Against Violence Against Women" on the base of the statue of Lady Godiva.

British women are forming groups to protest violence against women. The impetus was the climate of fear engendered by the Ripper killings, but the groups are also speaking out on rape, battering and a recent wave of American films which has reached Britain and which feature the killing and torturing of women. Among these are violence-porn films (or "sick-flicks"), but also condemned are non-porn cinema such as the movie, "He Knows You're Alone."

Earlier in the year, women's groups in Northern Britain reacted angrily to the suggestion by authorities that all women of the North be put under a nine p. m. curfew. The organizations called for a curfew for men instead, on the grounds that a man (or men) was the cause of the violence.

"Women Against Violence Against Women." This slogan has been chosen for the name of the movement at its first conference which was held in Leeds shortly after Hill's slaying. There is no central organization, but in the method characteristic of the feminist movement, small groups are forming all over the country.

One spokeswoman objected to the Ripper being portrayed as some kind of monster. She said that was "distorting reality". Obviously, in a milder form, a lot of men are committing violence against women, just as the Ripper does. It is no good pretending that he is out there on his own."

## SEX TESTS

For the past six months, pregnant women in Switzerland and Germany have been able to tell the sex of the child they are carrying by a cheap and simple chemical test. The procedure will be available in Britain this year. However, a survey has shown that 53 per cent of British women and 61

sex tests - cont'd

per cent of men are against the procedure on the grounds that the test would encourage women to have abortions if they found out that the baby they were carrying was not the sex they wanted.

At present, the test is only valid after the fourth month of pregnancy, ruling out abortions in Britain, which has an upper limit of 20 weeks.

However, tests which can determine the sex of the baby earlier in pregnancy will soon become available to the public in both Europe and North America.

Several questions must be asked by feminists: How valid is the fear that such tests will encourage abortion? Will a significant number of women opt for abortion, or will women continue to accept the sex of the child? I would be interested to hear the comments of our readers.



## EXPIRED BIRTH CONTROL

Six years after the Dalkon Shield has been taken off the U. S. market, the manufacturers, the A. H. Robins Company, has recommended that physicians remove the I.U.D. device from women who still wear them. According to the company, recent findings show that the longer a woman wears the device, the greater are her chances of infection.

In 1976, the A. H. Robins Company was accused by the media of marketing the device, even though they were aware of its dangers.

The Dalkon Shield has been responsible for 17 deaths and countless cases of infection, septic abortion and emergency hysterectomies. The company has paid out over \$57 million in legal claims.

By 1979, adverse publicity made the shields unpopular in the U. S., and stocks were bought up by the U. S. government for use in foreign aid programs. The question to be asked is this: How energetically will Robins contact third-world women and their doctors to advise that the shield be removed?

## FEMINISTS ARRESTED IN RUSSIA

The K.G.B. has intensified its attack on the Soviet feminist movement with a second arrest in recent months.

Arrested in September, and due to go on trial shortly, is theatre producer Natalya Lazareva. The December arrest of Natalya Maltseya of Leningrad was preceded by several months of interrogations of members and supporters of the Leningrad group called the "Maria Club".

Lazareva is charged with "deliberate defamation of the Soviet system" and faces up to three years in a forced labour camp, or five years in Siberian exile. Feminist literature was confiscated during a search of her flat.

The Russian feminist movement became known to the west only in 1979. Centred in Leningrad, it issued the samizdat journal "Woman and Russia". Harassment by the K.G.B. began almost immediately. Groups such as the "Maria Club" have had to operate clandestinely from the beginning.

In 1980, four Soviet feminists were deported. Three of them have thanked Western women's organizations for speaking out on behalf of the fledgling movement. They appeal to all Western democratic organizations to continue to speak out, for they believe the force of public opinion has prevented mass trials. A similar appeal has reached the West from Leningrad writer and member of the Maria Club, Galina Grigoreva, who also faces imminent arrest. She calls on the world feminist movement "to do everything possible to protect us from the tyranny of the authorities."

The Soviet authorities' heavy-handed response to feminism indicates official fears that it could develop a wide following.

THANK YOU

BROADSIDE

A special, loving thanks to our sister at BROADSIDE who sent a complimentary copy of their newspaper to our subscribers during our recent

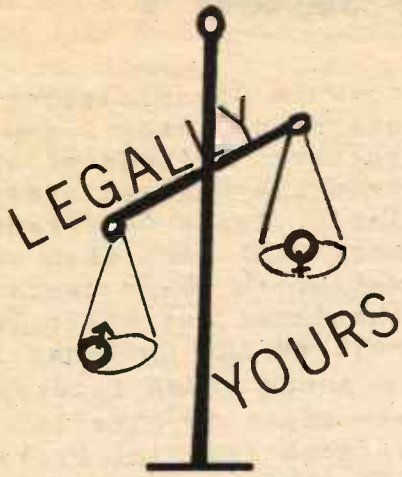
lapse in publication.

TOGETHER

WE ARE

STRONG





*The Northern Woman Journal is starting a legal information column and welcomes questions from our readers. We are providing general information only and if women require further more specific information they may need to consult either a self-counsel book, a legal clinic or a lawyer.*

#### SEPARATION & DIVORCE

**QUESTION:** If I separate from my husband, do I need a separation agreement or a divorce?

**ANSWER:** When a couple separates, the separation is "legal" as soon as it occurs, and no formalities are required. If you have no need of financial assistance from your husband, you can choose to have very little contact with him in the future. However, if there are unresolved conflicts resulting from the marriage then you may need to resolve these in some manner.

There are many ways of resolving the conflicts that arise from a marriage. You can enter into a separation agreement, sue your husband in Family Court or District Court, or commence proceedings for a divorce.

If you have made an application for welfare or mother's allowance (family benefits), then you will probably be required by the Social Service agency to obtain some financial assistance from your husband (or common-law spouse, if there are children involved).

The following is a short summary of the various steps that you can take to resolve the conflicts that arise upon the breaking up of a relationship.

#### SEPARATION AGREEMENT

If you and your husband are communicating well enough to agree, the two of you can choose to draw up a separation agreement. It can set out the various arrangements that you have made, such as who will remain in the house, who will have custody of the children, the amount of financial support that will be paid, visiting rights, who gets the furniture, etc.

However, if you can not agree on any of these issues, then there will not be a separation agreement, because both parties must willingly sign it. A separation agreement is a contract between two people and no one can force you to sign one. However, once you have signed it, the contents can be enforced in the courts.

Therefore, if you and your husband are considering drawing up a separation agreement, you should be sure that it contains the provisions that you want, and that you are satisfied that you have been treated fairly.

It is common practise for either one or both of the couple to hire a lawyer to draft the agreement, although it can be done without the assistance of a lawyer.

The agreement need only be in writing, be dated, be signed by the two parties and witnessed to be legal and enforceable.

You do not need to have a separation agreement in order to obtain a divorce, it is a purely voluntary agreement and you do not need to sign it unless you want to.

#### FAMILY COURT

A woman can make an application to Family Court to resolve some of the problems resulting from the break up of her relationship.

There does not need to be an agreement between herself and her husband because the Judge will make a decision and this decision is enforceable.

The Ontario Family Law Reform Act of 1978 gives a woman the following rights in Family Court:

1. the right to make an application for financial support for herself and her children if they are in need and the husband (or father) has the ability to pay; and
2. the right to ask for an order for possession of their home (either owned or rented) for herself and the children if there is no other suitable available accommodation or if it is in the children's best interest to live there.

A woman's rights exist only as long as the couple are married, and therefore come to an end when a marriage is dissolved by divorce.

However, children have the right to support from either parent until they turn 18, regardless of whether or not their parents were married.

Women who have been living in a common-law relationship for five years and have no children, or have been living with a man for even a few months and a child is born as a result of this relationship have a right to ask for financial support for themselves for one year after the relationship has ended.

In the District of Thunder Bay, Family Court is held in many communities including Thunder Bay, Nipigon, Armstrong, Geraldton, Longlac, Schreiber, Marathon, and Manitowadge.

It is not necessary to hire a lawyer to start an application for custody and support in Family Court unless the matter is very complicated. The forms are simple and the staff at the Family Court will help you fill them out. In Thunder Bay, the Family Court is located at 1805 Arthur Street East.

#### DISTRICT COURT

A woman has been given other rights under the Family Law Reform Act of Ontario which are generally only enforceable in District Court. These rights include:

1. the right to an equal division of the value of the family home; and
2. the right to an equal division of the family assets (all furniture, vehicles, property, bank accounts, etc. which have been used by any member of the family) if it would not be unfair to make such a division.

Since District Court is a higher court, it can also enforce all rights outlined above for Family Court. District Court is located in the City of Thunder Bay and does not travel to the smaller communities.

#### DIVORCE

Divorce in Canada is a federal matter, and the same Divorce Act applies in all the provinces. The grounds for obtaining a divorce have been enlarged in recent years, but the two most frequent ones used are adultery and living separate and apart for three years.

At a divorce hearing, the questions of custody of children, access and support payments can be considered by the Judge, if these matters have not already been resolved by the parties.

Often these matters have already been decided at either the Family or District Court, and then the Judge will confirm the order made.

Divorce petitions are brought in the Supreme Court of Ontario, and a local Judge of this court normally sits in Thunder Bay at the District Court house.

#### CONCLUSION

What have been listed above are the various approaches that a woman can take to resolve issues left dangling when her relationship breaks up. Each individual will have to determine which, if any, most suit her needs.

*-information supplied by Thunder Bay District Native Legal Counselling Services*



# Have Americans Gone Bananas?

by Joan Baril

Margaret is a 45-year-old American college teacher, a Republican supporter and a devout Roman Catholic. She worked for Reagan in the U. S. election, and despises Carter with an almost pathological hate, since it is not based on his performance in office, but on her media-coloured analysis of his personality. "Wishy-washy," she says. "Carter's a bungler. He's stupid." The fact that the president broke his collar-bone skiing or that he collapsed while jogging is proof of his incompetence.

Margaret's views were typical of the many Reagan-ite Americans I met last month while travelling in Europe.

Margaret sweeps away the abortion and the E.R.A. issues with a wave of her hand. "Nobody paid any attention to those things. What difference does E.R.A. make anyway? It was a very, very minor part of the campaign." Unlike Phyllis Schlafly, she does not believe that E.R.A. is a threat. To her, it is a non-issue, yet Margaret considers herself a feminist, but a Catholic feminist. She will support any measures to end abortion, but she did not vote for Reagan on this basis.

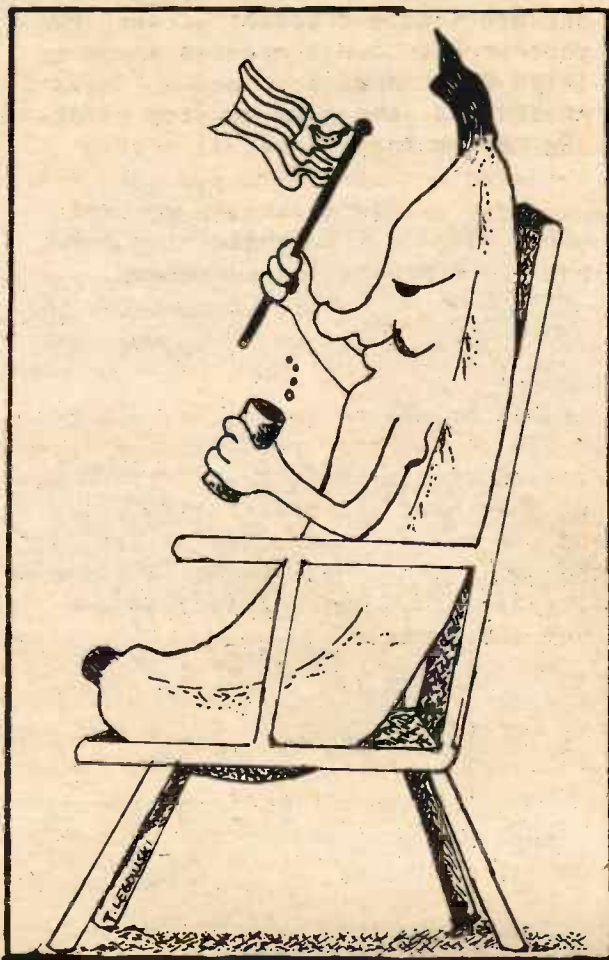
Why did people vote for him? What was the main issue?

"Inflation," she says. I point out that inflation is worldwide, that North America is better off in this regard than Europe. A change in leadership could do little. A Dutch woman who is travelling with us emphatically agrees. In Europe, the signs of runaway inflation are all around us and Margaret has to admit we may be right.

"But," she says, "Reagan can manage better." She hesitates, but only for a second. "Anyway, Reagan is a better American than Carter. Reagan isn't soft on Communism. Reagan will get our hostages back."

The truth is out. Margaret believes in the American Mission of world leadership and standard-bearer in the anti-Communist crusade. She says, "We threw out Carter because he is weak, especially internationally." The American Empire is dying and Margaret feels the humiliation personally.

It turned out that the Dutch woman and I know more about Reagan's policies than the Americans do. Margaret is a union supporter and an advocate of a clean environment, but she knew very little about the Republican connections with anti-labour or anti-environmental groups. She did know that the men Reagan chose for Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Labor had poor records, but she was sure they "wouldn't be so bad once they got into office." My Dutch friend was so amazed by this bit of political naivete that she refused to continue any



further discussions on American politics.

But I couldn't stop questioning Margaret and her friends. I asked about the influence of the T. V. evangelists, the so-called "polyester preachers", right-wing fundamentalists with billion-dollar budgets who ran registration drives for Reagan and compiled blacklists of candidates who were pro-E.R.A., pro-bussing, pro-choice, pro-S.A.L.T. or pro-gun control. Margaret admitted they were a factor but considered their influence minimal.

"I believe in the separation of church, even though I know a lot of them don't," she said.

She did have some knowledge of the recent evangelical campaign to clean up "sinful" T. V. shows. "I think we should have censorship," said Margaret, to my horror. We were not discussing pornography and violence, but sit-coms such as "Three's Company" and "Dallas". It turned out she was in favour of book censorship as well, and, on the topic of guns, declared, "People need them to protect themselves."

Margaret, like many Americans, was able to ignore or minimize the aspects of Reagan's platform she didn't like. Like many "feminists", she believed feminism to be a matter of lifestyle rather than a commitment to women as a whole. For this reason, she was unable to translate her feminism into political commitment.

Reagan was able to win by putting together a lethal coalition of single-interest groups and unite them with the people who were dissatisfied with Carter or with economic conditions. These single-interest groups such as the National Rifle Association (anti-gun control), the Right-

to-Work Organizations (anti-union) and others now have received a stamp of approval from the highest office in the land. Reagan's personal support will give them added weight in their campaigns at the local and state level, well as the national level.

Among these interest groups are Right to Life and the various feminist backlash organizations. The latter have a variety of names, but in their policy are anti-E.R.A, anti-day care, anti-working mothers, and, in some cases, even anti-contraception. They hide their anti-feminism behind pro-family rhetoric. Many of them receive moral and financial support from powerful religious groups. They will press the administration to cut off federal medical funds for abortion for poor people. They will also want to use various measures to encourage women to stay home, and they will expect affirmative action policies to be watered-down or dismantled because these programs, unlike their counterparts in Canada, have really been effective.

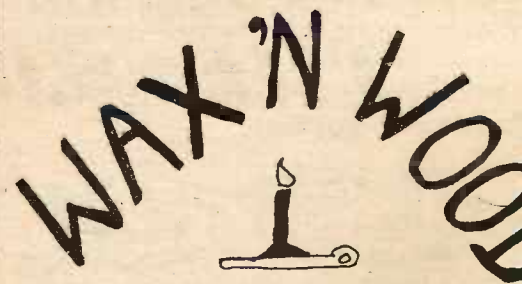
American organizations have a habit of creeping into Canada and we can expect to face the same sort of political campaigns here.

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# AN OPEN LETTER FROM KATHIE

Dear Women:

This is one of those intense, emotional moments when I yearn for that warmth of the northern women. It seems I've spent the last two years in a struggle against oppression, and have discovered that effort being scoffed at by those around me.

Do you remember the line from Desiderata: "Avoid loud and obnoxious people...they are vexations to the spirit"? I have just spent the last two hours with "loud and obnoxious people", and they have managed to suck the energy from me.

It was one of those "friendly" Grey Cup parties of "in-laws"--they had had a few to drink, made a few disgusting sexist jokes, and the men decided to bring out some "girlie" magazines to present as a gift to one of the men present. Everyone thought it was a great joke; consequently, the magazines were flipped through with much vigor and commentary. Some men even had the gall to ask me--upon seeing the look of dismay on my face--what were "wrong" with some of the pictures.

And so, the inevitable question is: What does a strong feminist, sitting in the midst of intoxicated, yet rational "in-laws", do? I could feel the anger build, and wanted to scream at them: WE ARE NOT SEX OBJECTS! WE DO NOT WANT TO BE DISSECTED INTO BREASTS AND ASS! WE ARE PERSONS!

But alas, my mouth was numb as an "in-law" happily stuck a grotesque, nude picture in front of me. I could only mumble, "I have an opinion too" and give him a cold stare.

The question is, "How can we confront--and do it effectively (even if we can't convince these morons of their shortcomings)--how can we confront them, alleviate our pent-up anger, and feel good about it?"

Upon leaving this mess of affairs, a few moments later I blew up in front of a male companion. Oh yes, he agreed, it was "awful", but wasn't I "over-reacting"? This is the inevitable reaction.

*Goddamnit, I was mad, and still am--not just at that particular situation, but at our society that laughs at women being victimized, and then tries to make women feel guilty because we "over-react".*

(Ed. italics)

I was also accused of being "judgmental" and "moralistic". But alas, when men make similar kinds of condemnations, they are being "rational", and are condoned for attacking the root problem and the evils in society. So what if I am being "judgmental"? I am trying to stop violence and oppression. If we all merely shrugged our shoulders and made excuses for people's behaviour, women would still not have the vote, and blacks would still be enslaved.

*Why must I accept everyone? Why must I love my oppressors? I can't.* (Ed. italics)

That brings me to another point: people claim "the oppressors are oppressed themselves". How can this be so? They have the wealth, the power and the tools to liberate us all, but they will not--their world is too comfortable. They are not oppressed--they are content.

We are in the midst of a battle to save our local Planned Parenthood from the terrible onslaught of Campaign Life. Campaign Life has "requested" City Council to withdraw funding from Planned Parenthood, because they are "anti-church, anti-state and anti-family". I use the phrase "request" loosely--the Knights of Columbus, as well as private citizens in Saskatoon, have threatened to withhold taxes, both municipal and federal, if the governments continue funding.

The Campaign Life group has money to pay for a "campaign", while they print information out of context and publish pictures of alleged "abortions". They are free to distribute their information through the mail because they have "paid for it". They are free to make false allegations in city council briefs because they have "contacts" who can get them on the agenda.

Meanwhile, where is the rest of the population that disagrees and wants continued support for Planned Parenthood? The press gives them no time, and they have no funds to help them organize.

Despite this, we are trying and we will be damned if a few boisterous, wealthy, misinformed, misguided individuals will have their way. How can I love these people and be non-judgmental when I must fight so feverish-

*ly to stop their oppressive march?* (Ed. italics)

I cannot even be accused of emotionalism, although I am angry and will occasionally erupt, for I've studied the reasons for the oppression. We feminists have analyzed the social, political, economic and psychological structures of society, and know from our historical analysis who controls these structures. We know that the male obsession with power, wealth and competition is destructive and unhealthy. We want these structures changed. We are not interested in replacing the men in their positions of power. Simply put, we want egalitarianism--equality based on co-operativeness, and that is not "emotional".

The questions for me, as I am sure it is for other women, are: Where do we put our energies so that eventually our ends are met? Do we surround ourselves with those who agree and live in our own constructed, co-operative world, or do we fight this monstrous "system", multi-headed, strong and wealthy? If we choose to fight it, how do we fight it, and from what vantage point? Do we occasionally compromise working within the system, turning its own tools upon itself to gain power to change it, or do we fight from without, attacking and invalidating the system when we can?

I am not sure I know where to place this energy ready to erupt. I am still young--even an infant in the feminist movement--but I am not always content to follow the advice of more well-seasoned feminists. It is,



*"I'm so proud to be a part of a profession that has never discriminated against women!"*

inevitably, a personal choice, and I guess in order to satisfy my own curiosity, I will try both at different times in my life.

As long as there are women like yourselves who are there for support, there will be solice, even if only occasionally.

I can remember hearing other women talk about "the struggle" and wondered what they were talking about. It's all beginning to take form; slowly, I am beginning this journey of struggle. Thank-you for taking my hand.

In sisterhood,  
Kathie

## THE S.O.B. FACTOR

by Gert Beadle

Time Magazine's man of the year coverage of President Elect Ronald Reagan left me with an empty feeling in the pit of my stomach. Whatever he achieves in his tenure I will remember only one thing. His life shows he did not know how to love his children, nor did his father before him know how to love him.

Having recently read Phyllis Chesler's book "About Men", I am prepared to see a new low in human communication. The Father, Son relationship, according to Chesler, a noted psychologist, is at the root of all man's inhumanity. As man lusts and is forever fearful of the God symbol withholding approval, so too does the son lust for the love and approval of his human father.

It is Chesler's contention that within the psyche of the man-child is a deep well of anger at the betrayal of those first expectations that lays the base for aggression and self destruction. The more deeply he loves the more bitterly he hates. Mothers too have suffered in this abdication of father bonding, over-compensating, over-excusing but finding it impossible to fill the void.

When we examine the roles and try to understand how this sorry state of affairs came about, we come smack up against man's own conception of himself as a non-nurturing provider of creature comforts as his total expression of love. Locking mother in the house with the kids was society's way of seeing they weren't deprived of mother love as well, but

is mother love adequate for the confidence-building we hope to see in our young? Is it logical to believe that women, who have been consigned to a subordinate role in family life, whose confidence is invested for her own survival in a dominant person, can project from her status the confidence and approval of other than what her servitude has produced in her.

--cont'd on p. 18



# Abortion — It's

Reprinted from *Broadside*, Vol. 2, No. 4, with permission from the authors:

the Toronto Abortion Committee

## INTRODUCTION

It is our hope that these articles will heighten your awareness of the abortion crisis and make you angry. It is essential that we as feminists do not indulge ourselves in a false sense of security with regard to the abortion issue. *Fact:* physicians, not women, continue to decide whether an abortion shall be performed or not. *Fact:* it is getting harder and harder to obtain an abortion. *Fact:* highly organized right wing forces are working to limit the availability of abortion in Canada.

Despite the myth that abortion is widely available, many of us have to struggle against incredible sexism, discrimination and humiliation (to say nothing of the red tape) for the privilege of terminating an unwanted pregnancy. And our silence condones these struggles. With our silence we turn our backs on those women who need an abortion. As well, our silence endangers the paltry gains we have made toward reproductive freedom for all women.

The women's movement has spent a decade creating itself. We've been swamped with issues — each one as important as the last. We've challenged the very fibre of our social environment, taking on such major institutions as the nuclear family, heterosexuality, militarism, the law. Often we've been frustrated at the pace of change; often we've lost faith after battling each other. We're tired and we face major problems — too little money, organization and clout.

Despite the obstacles and setbacks, however, feminism stands as perhaps the most important social change force of our time. In this climate of change it is especially important for us to continue reminding women's rights advocates that reproductive freedom is the most basic of all human freedoms.

Our goals are clear:

1. We want abortion to be removed from the criminal code;
2. We want access to safe and effective birth control;
3. We want free-standing women's clinics;
4. We want abortion patients to be treated with dignity and respect;
5. We want medical coverage for the abortion procedure and an end to up-front payments for abortion patients;
6. We want reproductive freedom.

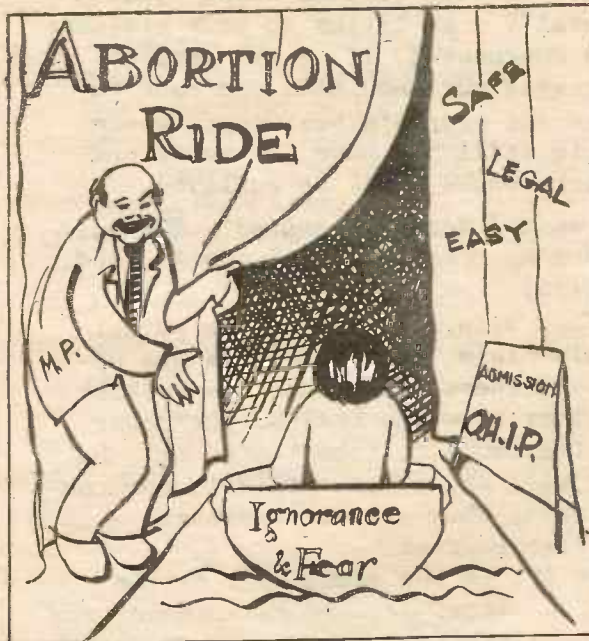
Much of what needs to be done will require organization and commitment to this issue. Not all of us can participate but your awareness and your personal commitment is crucial. We ask that your awareness lead you to act in very personal ways: write letters to the media and to your politicians, keep abortion alive as an issue in your social and professional circles, support organized campaigns, pass the word that the abortion struggle has just begun.

## REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In the past 15 to 20 years there has been a world-wide liberalization of abortion restrictions, including Canada's Omnibus Bill of 1969, owing in part to an international concern over population control, in part to increased urbanization and industrialization, increased participation of women in the workforce, and the relaxation of sexual mores. Of all the factors contributing to abortion and contraceptive reform, what has been noticeable by its absence is a concern for the individual woman's right to control her own fertility.

The ideology of population control and to a large extent the modern "birth control" movement have little interest in women's control of reproduction. Population control seeks a reduction in birth rates, an end that justifies some rather suspect means including testing contraceptives on Third World women, dumping products, forcing sterilization and approving unsafe contraceptives.

The current birth control movement was born out of socialist feminist struggles in the early 1900's to legalize contraception for working class women. In spite of women's involvement, the birth control movement has been co-opted, and to what end?



Although the recent advances in birth control technology and the liberalization of abortion restriction in no way address the real feminist concern of reproductive control, that fact seems to have been obscured for many women who breathed more easily when it became possible to get a legal abortion. Abortion reform has given us some relief from the tyranny of our biology but has offered only an illusion that we are close to achieving control of our bodies. Recent advances have done nothing to alter the status quo: control of reproduction, whether by sterilization or abortion, still rests firmly with medical, legal, political and religious institutions.

The illusion of reproductive choice is beginning to shatter as the sociocultural pendulum swings from a high point of liberalism in the early 70's to what appears to be a dramatic and repressive swing to the right. We are now witnessing a tightening in abortion services and the threat of regressive reproductive health policies.

As our bodies continue to be buffeted by social forces it becomes increasingly clear that our struggle for reproductive rights and indeed for equality itself has just begun. Reproductive freedom is the basic and essential condition for the equality of women. Until we control our own persons, no amount of tokenism, media hype, or social reform should mask the reality that we are not equal partners in this society.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In all societies throughout history abortion has been part of women's experience. Women have always attempted to control their reproductive capacities regardless of societal controls or sanctions. Several factors determine the status of abortion in a particular culture at a given time: the definition of the beginning of life, the perception of ideal population size, and the influence of the medical profession.

Until the late 19th century no society punished abortion in the early stages of pregnancy. The Greek city states and ancient Rome made abortion the basis of a well-ordered population policy. Christianity infused the fetus with a soul but debated for eighteen centuries exactly when the fetus became animated by the soul, thereby making abortion a serious crime. Early Christian theologians defined the beginning of life as 40 days after conception for a male fetus, and 90 days after conception for a female, although no methods of sex determination were specified. By the 13th century abortion was tolerated as a less serious sin up until the time of "quickening," usually the fifth month when a woman could feel the fetus move. It wasn't until the mid-19th century that the Roman Catholic Church tightened up its official stand against abortion. Pope Leo XIII at that time declared life to begin at conception and as a result abortion became defined as murder.

This decision was rationalized in a number of ways. First, a mid-19th century wave of humanitarianism pressed for abortion laws to protect women from infection and death at the hands of male medical professionals. Until antiseptic techniques became prevalent, an abortion in the first three months of pregnancy was 10 to 15 times more dangerous than delivery at full term (today legal abortions are one-eighth as dangerous as childbirth at full term). Second, biologists began to understand conception, and women were therefore able to practice more effective birth control — a good motive for the tightening of abortion laws. This had ramifications for all countries where large families were essential to farming communities. Third, and much more subtle, English puritanism flourished in the 19th century and espoused the idea, still current today, that sex for pleasure was bad, that pregnancy was a punishment for

pleasure, and that fear of pregnancy would reinforce degenerating modern morals. It was in 1873 that a federal law banned from the mails any literature, medical or article to do with contraception or abortion. The 20th century has seen a series of movements directed toward the repeal of the 19th century laws prohibiting abortion.

Access to abortion in any culture is directly related to economic needs and therefore to its perception of an ideal population size. Historically, nomadic peoples have always limited their population by whatever means available, usually abortion or infanticide, yet in pre-industrial agricultural societies large families were an economic asset and abortion more difficult to obtain.

The USSR's official policy on abortion since 1917 has changed according to its population needs. Immediately after the revolution, when economic conditions were generally free abortions were readily available. After severe population losses incurred in World War II, the USSR banned abortion and in 1944 the title "Mother Heroine" was given to women who had raised more than 10 children.

In Germany, before the Nazi takeover, abortion was generally available. But under the Third Reich, existing abortion and contraception facilities were closed down. In 1933 a law was passed eliminating women from the workforce and the punishment for obtaining an abortion was death — obviously a country's economic and political needs, rather than a concern for the rights of the individual woman, that dictate its policy on abortion.

A major influence on access to abortion was the emergence of the male medical profession. Until the development of scientific medicine in the late 18th and 19th centuries a wide range of healers performed medical tasks. The male "witch healer" and midwife played important roles in the community and were often the only general medical practitioners for people who had no doctors and hospitals. As European medicine became firmly established as a scientific discipline, it was increasingly threatened by women healers, and the profession played an active role in the centuries which spanned more than four centuries. By the 19th century male practitioners had also made inroads into the last preserve of female healing — midwifery. The invention of forceps enabled male professionals to claim that a surgical instrument must be used by experts. The job of the midwife — who had been, for most women, the only source of information on childbearing, contraception and abortion — was thus narrowed in scope, downgraded and confined to the women of the poor. Matters of reproduction among the middle and upper classes was transformed from a neighbourly service into a lucrative business and remains so today.

## INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

On a global perspective, the availability of abortion is directly related to religion and the part women play in the economy. It is no surprise that countries which have restrictive access to contraception ensure that women are trapped into the role of breeder whether it affects their health (from multiple pregnancies) or not.

• Early progressive abortion reforms started in 19th century Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In 1946 the term "maternal exhaustion" became part of the criteria for allowing abortions, as part of the physical and emotional health of the women seeking the abortion. But by the mid-1960s Scandinavian countries started exerting tighter control over women were forced to seek abortions in Poland. Eastern bloc countries had fairly progressive "abortion on demand" policies in the mid 1950's but with population upheaval in these countries in the early 1960's tighter controls began to prevent unlimited access to abortion.

• Abortion policy in China is strictly related to population control. When an abortion is performed within 50 days of conception, a woman receives 10 days off work at full pay — more an incentive not to get pregnant again than a benefit to women's rights. At least in China contraceptives are more widely available than other countries. Some male birth control methods are being researched.

• Not only is contraception not available in Ireland and Spain, but in Spain, a recent law was approved which states "all living things have a right to life." Women either have to travel to the country to seek abortions or risk an illegal abortion.

• In Switzerland abortion is very costly and is available usually in private clinics. In some cases a woman is required to see a psychiatrist.

• In the Caribbean, especially in countries which are part of the Commonwealth, abortion is contained in the Criminal Code or Penal Code and the definition of physical and mental health is still a decision largely in the hands of male practitioners. This applies to the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda and the Virgin Islands. On smaller islands such as Antigua or a Central American territory such as El Salvador, abortion is only performed if the woman's physical health is at risk.



# Not Free and Easy

• In the world today it is estimated that there is one induced abortion for every three births, with illegal abortions representing a leading cause of death among women of child-bearing age.

It is a tragic irony that during the 1970s, several countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Britain and Fiji undertook costly studies to see how abortion laws were being applied. In many instances where it was shown that the law gave unequal access to abortion (as in Canada), or that hospital gynecological services should be upgraded (as in Britain), or that the father should have no power to veto an abortion aim (New Zealand) there have been no attempts to act on any of the recommendations.

The woman is not present during the TAC meetings which consider her request for an abortion. If she is refused an abortion by the committee, she has no right to appeal the decision. Hospitals are not prevented by law from setting quotas, and the longer the woman must wait for her abortion, the greater stress it puts on her and her health.

Another stumbling block in this procedure comes from determining who is responsible, legally, for requesting the abortion. Two-thirds of the hospitals with TAC's require consent forms signed by the spouse as well as the woman wishing the abortion. In some cases, even if the woman wishing the abortion is separated, mutual consent is required. This is a hospital policy, not a legal requirement. In September, 1980, the Canadian Medical Association passed a resolution to ask hospitals to stop requiring consent forms for abortions.

Because of the arbitrary procedure in establishing and operating Therapeutic Abortion Committees, abortion is not available to many groups of women. Rural women often have no access to safe abortions within their local communities. In larger centres women from low socio-economic groups are unaware of the complex procedures required to obtain an abortion and if their own doctor is opposed, they are not usually referred to a doctor who is supportive.

## THERAPEUTIC ABORTIONS AND THE LAW

Although an abortion under medically approved conditions is a relatively safe operation it is the most difficult operation to obtain in Canada. It is a mistake to assume that abortions are unconditionally legal in Canada: the federal Criminal Code in 1969 made abortion 'legal' only under certain conditions. In practice the interpretation and

implementation of the law is left up to doctors, hospital administrators and strong lobby groups such as the anti-abortion movement. The important issues of where an abortion can occur, under what conditions a woman may receive an abortion and who shall decide if she meets these conditions are all set out in the law. However, none of these important issues are determined by the woman and are basically decided by strangers. The abortion law allows for the formation of a Therapeutic Abortion Committee (TAC) in 'accredited or approved hospitals.' The law requires that a woman prove the pregnancy will endanger her life or health. These committees are empowered to implement the law by using a legal definition of a woman's 'health' to determine whether or not she can obtain the abortion. The World Health Organization defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of infirmity or disease.' However, each committee can determine what constitutes a danger to a woman's health in a very arbitrary manner.

The TAC consists of three doctors appointed by the board of governors of a hospital. Hospitals with medical staffs of three or fewer physicians are ineligible for establishing these committees: of 1348 civilian hospitals in 1976 in Canada, almost one-quarter were not eligible to establish therapeutic abortion committees. Of those eligible, only one-fifth did in fact establish committees — the law does not insist that hospitals set up committees. Hospitals which have not established TAC's have generally based their decision on religious, moral and/or professional ethical grounds.

Two-fifths of the population live in communities which do not have eligible hospitals. In Ontario, approximately one-third of the hospitals have set up therapeutic abortion committees. But of these, 21 have never approved or performed an abortion, another 81 performed only 136 abortions in one year, and the remaining eight hospitals served the entire province of Ontario.

A fundamental question is why are there not more hospitals providing abortions. In some cases, the answer is pressure exerted on publicly-funded hospitals by anti-"choice" groups. In others it is a lack of interest in women's concerns.

Once a committee is established, there are no guidelines for how often it should meet. In some cases it has never met, in other cases it meets infrequently. Since the physicians are appointed, they are not necessarily sympathetic or supportive to a woman's choice regarding an abortion. These physicians on committees are mostly, if not all, male medical practitioners. Their responsibility for determining if a pregnancy is a threat to a woman's 'life or health' becomes an awesome one. These doctors are being asked to act as advocate, judge and surgeon, using professional, moral and psychological grounds for their judgements.

This can hardly be an atmosphere where doctors are making objective, impartial decisions. They have not created or used any body of legal precedence. Because of this, the law is acted on differently in different provinces and where committee membership changes, various interpretations occur from committee to committee.

The bureaucracy first confronts a woman when she must see a physician to confirm her pregnancy. Only a member of the medical staff at an 'approved or accredited hospital' can apply to the TAC to request an abortion for the woman. If a woman's physician is not a member, she must be referred to one who is. If the TAC decides more information is required, it may adjourn and request such information, thus further prolonging the pregnancy and potentially endangering the health of the woman.

The law as it now exists not only results in long, red tape procedures using vague, ambiguous guidelines, but it endangers the health of the woman by the very nature of its structure. The process takes far too long in providing safe abortions for women seeking them. Many women do not know their legal rights and if a woman's personal physician is opposed to abortions she may never get past the first legal loophole. The bureaucratic nature of establishing the therapeutic abortion committees and administering them results in a process that is unwieldy and puts the total procedure in the hands of the medical profession, lobby groups and hospital administrations, and out of the hands of women.

## WOMEN AND MEDICINE

Traditionally, the doctor-patient relationship has been similar to that of parent and child. The doctor is seen as the god-like, all-knowing, all-powerful expert who dispenses cures; the patient is the grateful, passive recipient of the doctor's knowledge and skill. Feeling ignorant, vulnerable and scared, especially during an illness, many people prefer to give responsibility for maintaining their health or curing their illness to the doctor. And of course, many doctors are only too happy to fill this role.

Most often the doctor-patient relationship consists of a male doctor and female patient. Only 7% of the doctors in the United States are women, less in Canada. In 1977, 26% of the medical students at the University of Toronto and 53% at McMaster University in Hamilton were women, an improvement over the past. But still most doctors in Canada are men.

As of 1978, in the United States, there were fewer than 2000 female obstetrician-gynecologists out of 20,000 and almost no senior female faculty members training the current generation of gynecologists. In Canada, approximately 92% of gynecologists are men.

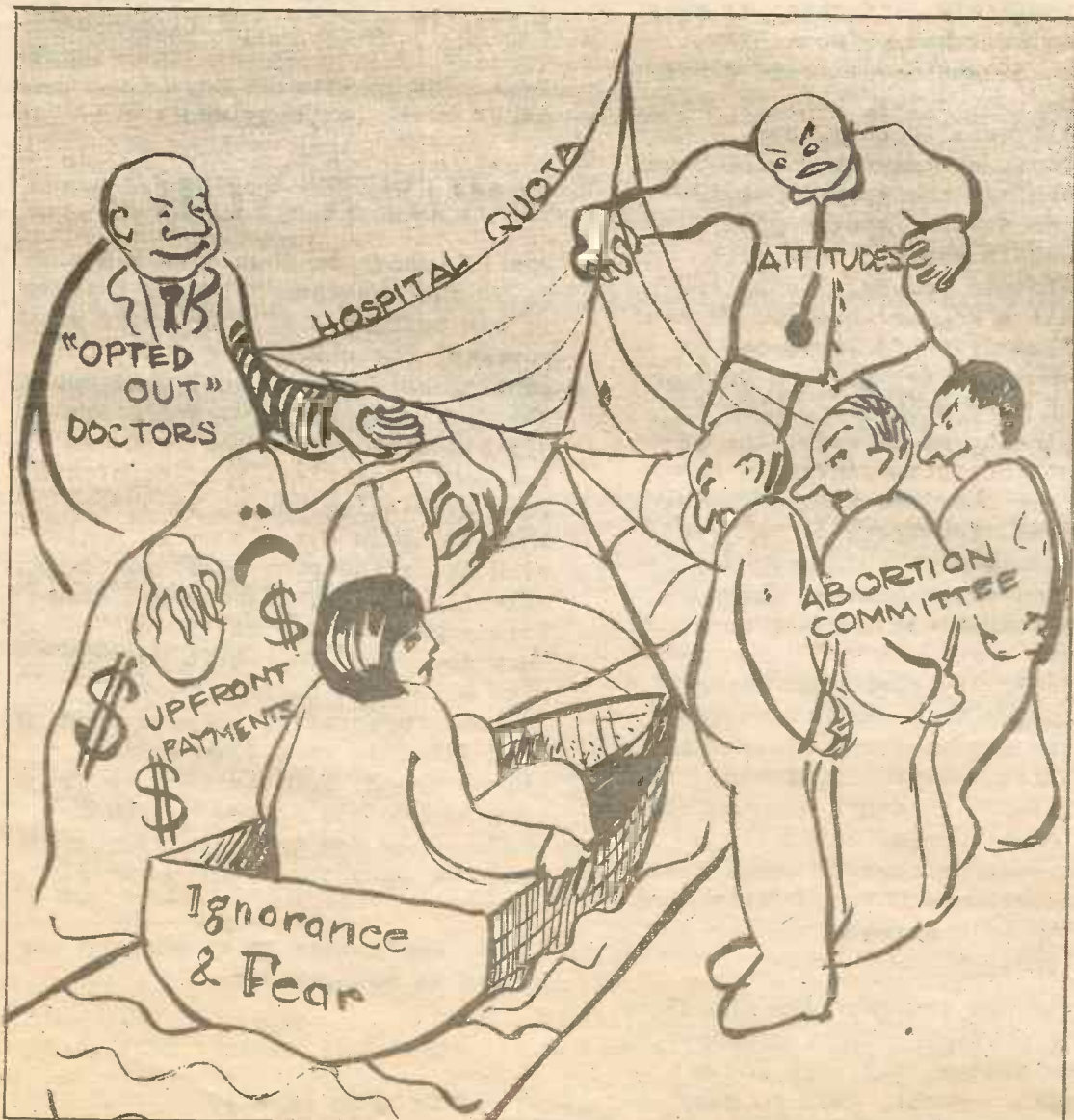
Although men are in the majority as doctors, women are in the majority as patients. According to a study done nationally in the United States, it was found that "women average 25% more visits to the doctor each year than men, we take 50% more prescription drugs than men and we are admitted to hospitals much more frequently than men". Part of the reason we are prime consumers has to do with our relationship to pregnancy and childbirth and the effects these changes have on our bodies.

The image of the woman patient as an emotional, hysterical hypochondriac still exists today in the minds of many doctors. The traditional concept of the weak female suffering from the "sicknesses" of puberty, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause has left its mark on today's medicine. A textbook on obstetrics and gynecology published in 1975 advises that "the traits that compose the core of the female personality are feminine narcissism, masochism and passivity."

CONT'D Page 14

The Toronto Abortion Committee is a sub-committee of the Women's Services Network in Toronto. The committee was formed out of our realization that women's services and the public in general are not aware of the crisis situation surrounding the abortion issue in Toronto. Our objective is to research and provide educational information on the law and existing conditions locally. We hope that by providing the information in these articles we will motivate individual women to speak out, to lobby, and to become more active and less complacent on the abortion issue. The committee members are Marilyn Reinwald, Selma Savage, Shelley Glazer, Deborah Bartlett and Judy Stanleigh.

This was the first of a two-part series on abortion. Next month, the Toronto Abortion Committee will provide information on: Getting an Abortion; the Abortion Situation in Toronto; the Finances of Abortion; the New Right and the Anti-Choice Movement.



M. Bruun-Meyer



# CONVERSING with CHICLET'S AUTHOR

By Rosalyn Taylor Perrett

Dorothy O'Connell, author, was one of the first members of the Ottawa Tenants Council, a group that formed out of necessity 13 years ago when facilities in Public Housing were non-existent. The group pushed for recreation facilities since neither the city nor the province would take responsibility for providing these facilities, each claiming it was the other's jurisdiction. The group got together and made a presentation to City Hall. The press picked it up and the group got 'a bit of what we wanted.'

Since then, the Council has been involved in changing the image of Public Housing, making people realize that Public Housing tenants are normal every-day Canadians. The Council is also trying to change the way the Housing Authority looks at its tenants.

Dorothy O'Connell has always written but a lot of her humorous writing popped out as a reaction to all the depression and misery. She prepared briefs and speeches, a letter to Trudeau that was humorous and informative, with a button that said 'Pierre Trudeau lives in Public Housing.' Trudeau replied and the story was taken to CBC. Soon she was writing Chiclet stories which evolved later into her first book. Here she talks with Rosalyn Taylor Perrett:

R. Both of your books are humorous and entertaining but a person couldn't read Chiclet Gomez or Cock-Eyed Optimists without realizing that humor has been used to illustrate a struggle between the Public Housing tenants and bureaucracy.

D. I don't think it's universally working. At one interview, the interviewer said "Your stories made me so sad." Prepared to be funny, I thought 'How am I going to get out of this one.' I thought this was peculiar. Then, in another interview, the woman said my stories made her so angry, and I thought 'yes, they could; sure, they could.' I later read a review of Cock-Eyed Optimists in 'Books In Canada' and the reviewer said the book was 'vicious.' At first I was surprised, then I got pleased about it.

R. There is a really strong alliance amongst the women in your book. They each had something special that they were good at. Skills that they could give to each other. How much of this bonding results from the fact that public opinion towards them is so negative that all they have is each other?

D. It's partly that but it's partly high-density living. It's extremely difficult to get used to when you're used to a wider personal boundary. Public Housing Tenants have to live close to each other because of the crowding. You know everything about everyone automatically. Walls are thin and you can see right into other people's rooms. You develop a privacy thing where people notice you if you want them to and not if you don't. Also, with

the Tenants Council, we deliberately encourage a loving relationship with each other, focussing on the strengths we have and not the weaknesses. One of the reasons for this was that we had ample illustrations of groups that fall apart from in-fighting. We didn't want our group to grow up like that so we also hug each other a lot. That's very important especially for a single parent. She doesn't get many hugs. When someone is good at something we make damn sure she knows it. We deliberately encourage a closer bond between us.

R. In the first book Chiclet and her friends run into a women's group. These two groups do not connect. How much of this was an outcome of their different economic positions in society?



D. It has to do with what your most important goal is. Their goals were completely different. If they had been switched economically, they would have become each other. You know the saying, 'you are what you eat'; well in this case, 'you are what economics say you are.' One of the things the government is trying to do is disperse poor people again and mix them with middle-income people. It's called the 'Salt & Pepper' theory. If you rub elbows with middle income people, you'll learn to be middle income, but poor people know how to be middle-income already. The reason they act differently is because they have to. Economics forces it on them. You learn to be very blunt when you're poor, you don't have time for euphemisms and politeness because it doesn't get you anywhere.

I should say that many women who belonged to Women's Centres liked the story. I was pleased because after I wrote it, I had qualms. I really don't want to hit out at other women. Basically we are all working towards equal treatment as persons. Unfortunately some groups haven't extended it beyond themselves.

R. In your books you describe the irony of being a single parent and poor. The same system that says "have initiative - work!" puts so many obstacles in the way that initia-

tive can often die in the struggle. Then single-parent women are criticized for sitting around collecting their cheques. How can this vicious cycle be broken?

D. Only politically, having a lot of publicity at times like this when a political election is coming up. People have to go out and say to candidates "Okay buster, what are you going to do about me? I want to hear some talk about me for a change!" Many candidates are not aware, most of them are male, middle income and married. They have no idea how poor people live. Even if they are vaguely sorry for the women, they don't know what they're going through. Women themselves plus other interested people will have to bring it up repeatedly because politicians won't change until the public changes, so the public has to be informed. It is a difficult thing to do if you feel that people will yell and scream and call you a 'leech' on society, to get up and say 'look, I have rights, too!'

R. In the second book, Tillie remarks that poor people have a big foot planted on their backs attached to a voice that keeps saying 'get up, anyone can make it in this society.' The foot will lift up slightly every once in a while in order to prove itself - right! Tillie also says 'I bet if you played this game with rats, they'd all have nervous breakdowns and just sit there shaking. Some of us go that way but not as many as you might expect.' This is a definite shift in tone from the first book.

D. Yes, they've progressed politically. In the first book they did a few political things but it was sporadic. A lot of time was spent trying to make money and improve the quality of their lives. After you've all discussed your common problems, you realize that they are problems, there is a real class thing and the foot is on the back of your neck. The government says they want you to work but they don't

## ORDER NOW

really. There is double talk going on at the government level. Poverty is big business. If there were no poverty, there would be a lot of people out of work - all the people who deal with poverty. There are all kinds of people who feed off the poor. Politically, a lot of the poor are saying "Okay, we accept that, we know our place, we don't mind being the poor, just don't make it so hard, give us a little more comfort, stop HATING us!" Very few women in Public Housing mind being the bottom. They've learned to survive, they've made good friends, they live in good neighborhoods because they've got together to build good neighborhoods. They don't necessarily want up, they just want more release.

R. They don't want to be shifted around as much, either.

cont'd on page 17



Anne - I've heard so much recently on the radio and the TV about changes proposed to our constitution. But it's been a long time since I was in school and I don't really understand what kind of constitution we have now, let alone what these changes will mean!

Beverley - Well, I know about our constitution, so let me answer the first part of your question. It all goes back to 1867 when the British government passed the British North America Act. That's something we all know. And what that Act did was set up the government that was to operate in Canada.

You see, we were still British colonies then, and we had no central government that could enact a constitution for us.

ance was added to the list of federal powers.

Carol - Bev, now you're getting close to the question that I want to ask. What is in the BNA Act anyway?

Beverley - (laughs) It's really sad how few women understand these things. Access to this information is very difficult unless you have kids in high school.

(the whole group nods in agreement)

Beverley continues - What is contained in the BNA Act is two lists of items. One list is of all the items for which the federal government can pass legislation, and the other is the list for the provinces.

Carol - What if something is not mentioned in either list.

I think that the, by the possible implications, incredible changes in our lives that could happen if all federal acts had to treat people equally.

What they did was to define the Act very narrowly and limit its impact right from the start. So now there are very few challenges to federal legislation based on the Canadian Bill of Rights.

The Supreme Court of Canada has decided that the Bill applies to the substance and content of laws but only to procedures.

Anne - Then we need a stronger Bill of Rights and also one that applies to provincial laws!

# WHAT'S IT TO US?

Britain wanted her colonies to have separate governments and to elect their own parliaments and have their own courts, partially so that there would not be a repeat of the American fiasco.

The United States of America had become very angry with paying taxes to Britain when they didn't have anyone representing their interests in the British parliament. That's where the slogan "No taxation without representation" came from.

Anne - Now that's something I do remember from school. That and the Boston Tea Party.

Beverley - Yes, that was also part of the American protest. Well, what the British colonies in America did was to separate from Britain and join together as a Republic and enact for themselves a constitution and a Bill of Rights.

Anne - And Canada has never done that?

Beverley - No, Canada's constitution is still the BNA Act, and if we want any changes to our constitution then we must ask the British Parliament to vote on those changes.

Anne - What part of our government must ask Britain to make changes?

Beverley - Good question Anne, and one that isn't easy to answer. You see, there's nothing about that problem in the BNA Act, but what has always happened in the past is that the federal government and the provincial governments have agreed on changes they want, and the federal government has then made the request for the change to the British government.

Anne - But that's awful, you mean we ask another country to change our constitution for us. Has it ever been changed.

Beverley - Yes it has been, but not very often. You can imagine the difficulties of getting our federal and provincial governments to agree on anything.

The last change that I remember is when unemployment insur-

Beverley - Then, the federal government has the power. And that includes a lot of items that are important to us today - like environmental clean-up that no one had thought about in 1867.

Darlene - Does the BNA Act contain a Bill of Rights?

Beverley - No, it doesn't. Canada never had a Bill of Rights that was written down. There were principles that our government and courts had to follow - principles of natural justice and equality before the law - but no list of rights.

I might add here, that Britain doesn't have a Bill of Rights either, just the same sort of principles.

Eileen - But I remember hearing about a Bill of Rights. It happened when Diefenbaker was in power.

Beverley - Yes, when Diefenbaker was Prime Minister, the Federal Parliament passed an Act called The Canadian Bill of Rights. But that isn't part of our constitution and was not added to the BNA Act.

Anne - Now I'm confused again. How does that work?

Beverley - It's not difficult to understand when you go through it slowly. Let me explain.

The Federal Parliament, in 1960 passed an Act called the Canadian Bill of Rights. That Bill applied only to legislation which the federal government passed, and not to the provinces, because it was a federal act.

It said that everyone was to be treated equally before the law regardless of race, national origin, colour, religion or sex.

Faye - Equally eh, well something is not working properly because it sure hasn't helped women at all.

Why hasn't it helped us, Bev?

Beverley - The answer to that has a lot to do with the fact that our highest court - the Supreme Court of Canada is composed entirely of men.

Beverley - A lot of other people agree too. This is what the Patriation debate has been about, and the talk on the changes to our constitution.

And now it's time for Gale to say something after all, she's the one that went to Ottawa on February 14 to attend the Conference on Women and the Constitution.

Gale - I was hoping you had forgotten all about me, but no such luck. I just hope I can explain things as well as Bev has been!

I want to start off by saying that Beverly and Anne are correct. We do need a stronger Bill of Right, one that will apply to all the laws.

That is what entrenchment is all about. If Canada has its own constitution, and included in it is a Charter of Rights, then none of federal or provincial governments can change those rights without agreeing to amend the constitution.

Carol - Then we should support patriating the constitution and adding a Charter of Rights!

Gale - Not so fast, Carol! I agree that a Charter of Rights would enable women to gain more equality - but only if it is a comprehensive document that doesn't have a lot of loopholes. If the governments and courts can always say that "Yes you women have equal rights, but not in this case - this is an exception!" Well then, that charter of Rights will not help us.

Faye - And does the Charter being proposed by Trudeau contain exceptions and limits on our rights?

Gale - Yes, Fay, it does. It has enough loopholes that women's groups across Canada are not supporting it.

We don't want to end up like the women in the U.S.A. fighting to have an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) added to the constitution. We know how hard it would be to get the provincial and federal governments to agree on anything, especially a constitutional amendment that gave us more rights.

cont'd on page 17



# A Rose By Any Other Name

By JOYCE DUNN

The day was oppressive, the smell of the pulp mill seeping into her kitchen through the open window. As she reached up over the sink to close it she watched the fly outside in the murky air struggling in the spider's web, its wings a whirl of frenzy as it tried to disentangle itself from the finely spun threads. She shuddered imperceptibly. Like the fly, she felt trapped, unable to extricate herself.

The feeling had been recurring more and more recently, choking off logic, her emotions, like the fly's wings, fluttering against the gossamer web of Mark's will.

The spider, big, masterful, governed the web, retreating now and again behind the kitchen curtain, setting its trap, waiting...

"What's the matter with you anyway? I can't figure you out" Mark said, looking at her over his cup of coffee.

The fly, caught, thrashed about and fought the web as it tried to free itself.

"It's all so complicated! All these damned decisions to make. I had my summer all mapped out, planned -- and now, all these changes."

"I don't know what all the fuss is about" her husband retorted in that reasonable, placating voice: "You're always telling me to go ahead and make my own friends; do what I want to do. And now you make a big fuss over this trip up North."

Sensible, he exuded that self-worth which choked off intellegent retort.

"Why do I always have to be involved in your plans?" she cried out, her words, a small eruption of frustration she immediately regretted. She must be reasonable, placating too: "When I do my planning, I don't involve you."

"Look, its just that I want you

with me. When I was teaching Brenda the canoe strokes this afternoon, I wished it was you I was teaching. When I go up North on that wilderness trip I'd like to have you with me." and he added, with that sincere look: "You'd enjoy it."

"You'd enjoy it." Classic comment. The trap which had sent her reeling into archery, skiing, water-skiing, tennis, badminton; her life a whirl of physical activity for the last ten years.

"I'd like to have you with me" trap number two which had, over the years wrenched her away from tasks or hobbies she enjoyed. Nothing spectacular; just simple occupations which gave her joy and a sense of accomplishment, such as music; sitting at the piano playing, however imperfectly, the gently Chopin waltzes she loved; writing indifferent poetry which she stashed in a box and drew out periodically to reconjur breathless moments of beauty glimpsed at in rare, quiet moments.

Canoeing was the latest craze in Mark's life, edged, as usual, with that obsessive competitive spirit which required an intensity she could feel herself being drawn into. She enjoyed their canoe trips into the hinterland, her response one of quiet joy at nature's penetrating silence; the wild flowers; the song of the birds. But, of late, she had fought against joining groups and entering the races; the white-water competitions; going along occasionally, to take photographs of Mark fording rapids; cooking the meals in the camper; driving along the river bank to pick him up at the end of the course.

She had dug in her heels, at times fearfully and "made a stand" as she called it, in these last two memorable

years. Going off on short trips, her head bent into the cold wind of Mark's disapproval which had extended into icy silences on her return home. These forays into another world, a world of being Joan Desmond, a person who talked and laughed and had opinions; opinions which, she found to her amazement, were listened to, often accepted.

She thought of Diana, fighting the fear, the guilt which had plagued her all these years, the two dominating forces which had plunged her into a life-style she was finding more and more distasteful. Diana, with the wispy blonde hair, fluttering hands..

"Hi", Diana's small face pinched with the cold, raw wind, broke into a tight little smile.

"Hi. Won't you come in?" Joan let her in, closing the door against the damp cold of the Autumn day.

"God it's cold out there!" Slight of body, firm buttocks encased in tight jeans, Diana stood smiling in the hallway with that expectant, amused look Joan was to recognize as the look of "Diana the Huntress" as she called her friend later on in their friendship; as she watched her at conferences, lobbying for favours for the movement; lobbying for herself --the Virgin Queen aiming her arrows at politicians, at attractive men, in the wilderness of the social whirl at the end of busy sessions throughout the day.

Large, coal black eyes in the small face looked steadily at Joan, who was suddenly made aware of her faded dressing gown and scuffed slippers.

"Would you like some coffee? I've just made a pot." Joan said with hesitation, for something to say. What did this stranger want anyway?

"Sure, that would be nice" Taking off her ski-jacket, Diana dumped it on the table in the hall and followed Joan into the kitchen.

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## THUNDERCLAP

To Doris Anderson who maintained her integrity in the face of bureaucratic pressure and ministerial oppression.



## THUNDERBOLT

To Lloyd Axworthy who deserves the axe for interfering in our Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Looking at some of the traits commonly ascribed to doctors and patients, we can see how clearly they resemble the traditional characteristics of men and women in our society:

### DOCTOR/MALE

active  
teacher  
scientific  
aggressor  
logical  
financially secure  
power  
thinking  
control  
objective  
rational  
the answer

### PATIENT/FEMALE

passive  
student  
intuitive  
victim  
mystical  
economically vulnerable  
powerlessness  
feeling  
lack of control  
emotional  
hysterical  
the problem

The issue of control is a major factor in many doctor-patient relationships. This is most apparent in matters of women's health -- pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, birth control, menopause -- where predominantly male doctors often make arbitrary decisions regarding women's reproductive lives. A male doctor has written that many of his colleagues have a strong desire to control women and that when it comes specifically to abortion, some of them feel threatened if women can dispose of the proof of male potency -- the fetus -- at will. This attitude is also reflected in how judgmental doctors can become about both the procedure itself and the women seeking abortions.

Some doctors will purposely lie to patients in order to discourage them from seeking an abortion. The woman may be told abortions are illegal or are only available up to

six weeks. A doctor may harass a patient seeking an abortion by calling her at home and trying to dissuade her. He may also refuse to refer the woman to a gynecologist who performs abortions. He may lie to the woman about how pregnant she is and tell her it is too late for her to obtain an abortion.

The practice of demanding up-front payments for abortions is a prime example of the attitudes of some doctors towards women seeking this procedure. The assumption is that a woman seeking a therapeutic abortion is not trustworthy and will just skip out of the hospital after the procedure without paying.

Negative, judgmental attitudes are also held by those doctors who sit on hospital therapeutic abortion committees. This means that many women may not be granted permission for an abortion, particularly in small hospitals. At the very least, the male members of these committees often make very condescending or "humorous" comments about the women who are seeking abortions.

Another difficulty facing the abortion patient is the attitude of many hospital staff. Some nurses will go out of their way to treat an abortion patient with hostility or contempt. Often an abortion patient is placed in a room near the maternity ward or the nursery where newborns are kept.

We must not forget that in Canada, doctors rather than the pregnant woman make the ultimate decision as to whether or not she may have a therapeutic abortion. Until a woman can freely decide to have an abortion and be treated with respect and dignity we do not have control over our own bodies and we do not have full reproductive rights.

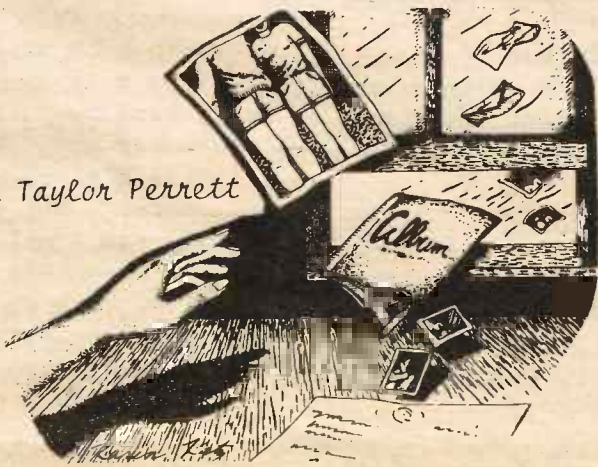


Ripples of a smile  
Coast across your face  
like sun shimmering  
through bare trees  
Skirt undulates in soft folds  
eyes gleam

( forget sadness  
a grounded kite  
trapped in pretense -  
adjust -)

An arranged moment  
frozen  
your sunshine  
framed in a cluttered room  
with a stuffed view  
faces stare  
sullen wisdom  
behind glass.

Rosalyn Taylor Perrett



She forgave her with a smile,  
never mentioned it again,  
still trusted,  
loved,  
and tried to save her  
from mistakes  
that seemed to plague her  
when she stumbled out of arm's length  
returned skinned knees  
eyes red tear-stained  
needing comfort  
to mend the hurt

Viola Goderre



Delitescence

She had railed around the issue  
Thought it completely circled, concise  
Manageable, neatly solidified into something  
More than the sum of its parts.

And when it was, she surmised  
That perhaps it existed only in HER mind.

What remained,  
Those vast stores of unconscious thought that plagued,  
Embalmed in the recesses,  
Failing to function -- denied function.

But all that she thought she'd gleaned,  
Basically remained to be seen.

From the delitescence depths of the think machine  
From the living cells of the living dream:  
What ecstatic revelation, realized  
By this living, dreaming, female being!

Joyce Michalchuk

## Poetry

Upon Returning Home From College

They say I'm a woman  
but I don't know if I should believe them.  
After all, they told me that six years ago and  
I knew they were lying then.  
" Today you are a woman! " they said to me.  
They gave me money and kissed me with the lipsticked  
mouths they wouldn't allow me to have.  
And the next day everything was the same.

Now I'm called a woman in shops  
in restaurants  
while travelling.

The state says I can drink/vote/get married without  
my parents permission.  
I have breasts that are as large as they're going to get.  
I bleed once a month  
I have a lover.

And yet.

how can I be sure they're not still lying?  
Could I wake up tomorrow a girl?

L. L. 1980



Sacred Cows

Dumb animal, bereft of wit and reason  
we smell your droppings everywhere,  
You graze on mountains unmolested  
protected by the sheep who pasture there.  
What Medieval bull was sire  
to all that early crumbling of the mind  
what feeble fingerlings of fear  
create the dusty fabric of your kind.  
where ere we look you stand before a door  
all that voodoo in your crumpled horn  
spreading silly dust to cloud the vision  
from the very moment we were born.

Gert Beadle.



WHAT'S IT TO US from pg. 13

Beverly - What are the problems with the Charter of Rights that Trudeau wants to include in our constitution?

Gale - Firstly, the section on equality rights doesn't even start operating until 3 years after the Charter is passed. We have to wait 3 years to know what rights that charter will give us.

And then we will have to wait a further 3 to 4 years for cases to get to the Supreme Court of Canada, and for those judges to decide how to interpret the equality rights section.

Faye - But that's terrible, that's much too long. We need equality now - just to start catching up to men economically.

(The group nodded their agreement.)

Gale - Yes, and even more important are the words to that section. Although it says that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, it doesn't say that sex will never constitute a reasonable basis for distinctions in law.

Beverly - So the courts get to decide when it is reasonable to discriminate against us, do they?

Gale - Yes, that's the way it seems.

Beverly - And they certainly haven't acted to protect our rights in the past, so I don't want to see them with that power in the future.

Anne - I agree! I want our rights protected all the time, not only when some group of men think that it is reasonable!

(Again the group nodded)

Carol - Are there any other problems with the Charter of Rights.

Gale - One other major problem exists, that Native women aren't protected at all from losing their status when they marry non-native men.

Darlene - Don't tell me that's still an issue! Its so discriminatory that I can't believe the situation hasn't been changed yet.

Gale - But it hasn't. And the Charter of Rights only protects those rights that Native people already have. So it doesn't help Native women because it doesn't promise them equality with Native men.

Eileen - Well, I don't want this Charter of Rights, and I can tell from your faces that the rest of our group doesn't support it either. Now Gale, what can we do to stop it from becoming entrenched in our constitution?

Gale - Right now, Parliament is debating the issue of the Constitution, and Trudeau indicated on Monday, Feb. 16th that he might consider asking asking Britain to patriate the Constitution without entrenching the Charter of Rights. Then once we had our Constitution in Canada, Canadians would get to vote on whether the Charter of Rights should be entrenched.

So if you don't want Trudeau to entrench the Charter, you should write to your M.P. and tell them so.

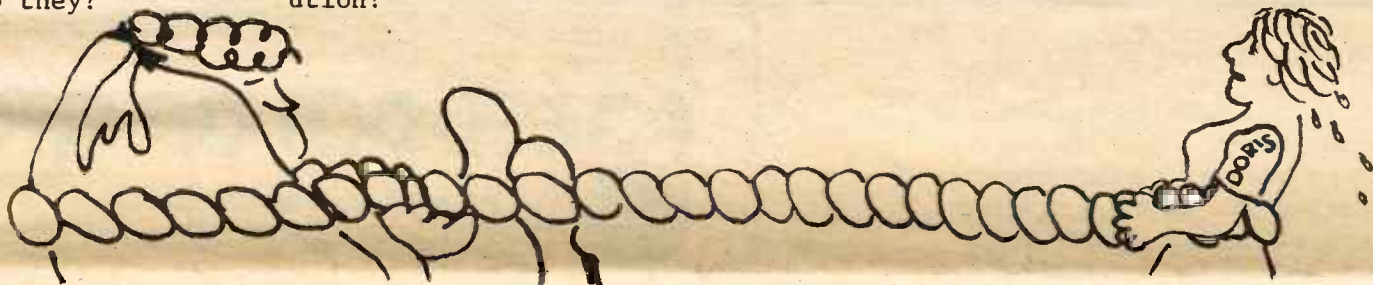
It's a matter of whether or not we are going to be treated equally, and I'd rather have no Charter than a weak one that doesn't help us anyway.

(With that, the group broke up. But on arriving home, all 7 women wrote to their MP's expressing their concerns about entrenching a Charter of Rights which didn't give them unqualified equality.)

*We will soon know if the protests of women will have any impact on the federal Liberals. So keep in touch with the Constitutional debates. They affect all of us!*

By LYNN BEAK

\*\*\*\*\*



CHICLET'S AUTHOR from pg 12

- D. Yes, there isn't any choice in housing when you're poor. They sell the housing from under you and you can't do a damn thing because you don't own the housing. You can be uprooted from a place you've grown familiar with and plunked in the suburbs where there is no shopping, no bus service, you don't have a car and it's difficult. Then you gradually build up these services then the next thing you know, they're moving you again.
- R. So everytime you form an alliance, a network, it's broken and you have to begin somewhere else?
- D. Yes, we think the government felt they made a terrible mistake because Public Housing mixed the new poor and the traditional poor together and together they made a very good group. Very strong because they each had strength to lend each other, so they became quite threatening women. It got to the point where the Globe & Mail reported that the government would have to stop putting these women together because they might get the idea they could do without men.
- R. In both books, Chiclet runs for public office, once for Mayor and once for Prime Minister. Women are seen as just emerging in politics. One woman runs in a losing party, another woman moves further up the political ladder and abandons the same women who put her there. Other women are in jobs that perpetuate

the red tape that prevents women on mothers allowance from working. What is all of this saying about the gains women have supposedly made?

D. We've produced a 'tape' called you've come a long way, baby'. Its about women in the workforce. There haven't been that many gains. A few individuals have profitted by it. Unfortunately many of them think they did it on their own and didn't get any help from other women who went before so they don't owe anything to women who come after. Certainly not all women are like that. There are sterling examples of great women in politics right now. Of course there are only a small percentage of women in politics.

One of the things we feel has put the cause of the 'single parent' behind are the groups of women who demand the right to get out of the house without safeguarding the rights of those who want to stay in the house. To some women, raising children is a real job, their job and their choice and it's degrading to have it put down by other women. If women themselves don't respect that job as a career then men certainly won't. In times of economic stress the women are shoved back in the home so women have shoved back saying "Damn it, if I want to work, its my right to work." There's no question about that but somehow we have to present both sides with equal vigour. Mothering is a very im-

portant job, the whole country, every country is based on the children that they raise. When you think of children just tossed away by society you can appreciate that children of the poor are dismissed with the idea they'll never amount to anything so lets not bother about them. Kids learn early when they've been thrown away and they're bitter. The women are not liable to become violent but their children might. We're going to face violent times if we don't do something about it. Now more than ever since kids are exposed to everything everyone else does.

- R. Because of the media?
- D. Television has been the big educator, we probably have the best-educated poor people in the world. They say that revolution comes from the middle class but that usually meant educated so revolution in this case could come from the poor. In this country there is a bigger gap between the middle class and the poor.
- R. Are you planning to write more Chiclet stories?
- D. I applied for a Canada Council grant. If I get it I'm going to try working on a novel. The reason its iffy is because I have to spend a lot of time at it but I have to have some money coming in, so if I get the grant, it will be a novel. If not there will be more Chiclet stories.



## The natural alternative

# Menstrual sponges gain popularity

By Liz Lesbin  
of the Cardinal Staff

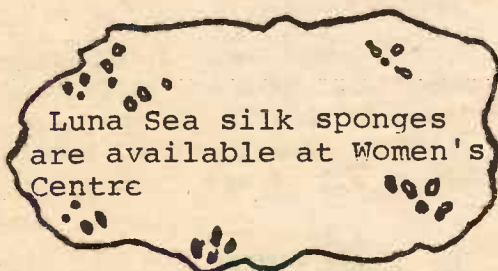
With recent studies linking Toxic Shock Syndrome to tampon use, it is imperative that alternatives be investigated. One such option—the menstrual sponge—has been gaining popularity.

More research is needed before conclusive statements can be made about sponges. However, an increasing number of women are using sponges with no negative side effects. Sponges are cheaper than manufactured products and are bought from small businesses and cooperatives, which reduce big business control over feminine hygiene products and give women more control over what they put into their bodies.

**SPONGES ARE ANIMALS** that grow in the Aegean and Mediterranean seas. They are abundant, and as of now, their use in no way endangers the species.

There are two types of sponges. The first, sea wool, is brown, larger, more absorbent and more difficult to clean than sea silk, a light yellow sponge with small pores which makes it better for the light flow days of a woman's period.

The sponge is moistened with luke-warm water and inserted, like a tampon, into the vagina. It should be changed about as frequently as a tampon by removing the used sponge, rinsing it, and inserting a fresh one. Some women reinsert the same sponge.



Dr. George Benton of the East Madison Clinic recommends alternating two sponges, allowing each to dry before re-use in order to reduce bacterial growth.

Sponges should be about the size of a lemon. They become soft when moistened, so they can be inserted without difficulty. If they are too large, they can be cut to fit properly.

**THE SPONGE SHOULD** be boiled before used to remove germs, salts, and small bits of coral which may still be attached. Melanie Sax, from the Mifflin Community Health Center, advises women not to boil the sponge more than once during each menstrual cycle, as boiling makes the sponge smaller, tougher, less absorbent and more prone to deterioration. Air drying kills most bacteria.

If a woman finds removal difficult, she can attach a piece of dental floss. This should be sewn on securely to prevent tearing the sponge, and should be changed each month.

Soap should not be used to clean the sponge. Washing or soaking in a vinegar and water solution will

remove odors.

If a woman is uncomfortable rinsing out her sponge in a public restroom she can carry a spare or simply squeeze it out and reinsert.

**BETWEEN MENSTRUAL PERIODS,** sponges should be stored in a clean, dry place. Cloth bags are good containers for storage. Sponges should be discarded when they begin to deteriorate and tear easily.

There is some controversy surrounding the use of sponges. Although area clinics report no negative feedback, state epidemiologist Dr. Jeff Davis, a pioneer in research on Toxic Shock Syndrome, reports one case of toxic shock in a woman who was using a sponge.

Sax points out that cases of TSS have also appeared in women who never used tampons, and in men. Because of unknown nature of TSS, she said, use of sponges may or may not be conducive to getting TSS. If TSS is caused by a virulent strain of bacteria, Sax said, anything that can culture bacteria in the vagina can induce bacterial infection. Sponges, like tampons, are a good medium for bacterial growth because they contain

blood.

If TSS is found to be caused by superabsorbent tampons that dry out vaginal walls and allow toxins to enter a woman's system, the sponges are a more viable alternative, she said. They are less absorbent and because they are inserted when wet, are softer than tampons.

**SPONGES HAVE BEEN** used by Hawaiian women for many years. Dr. Benton has not encountered any problems with sponges. "If normal, good hygiene practices are used, they are safe," he said.

Menstrual sponges are available at the WSA pharmacy, Langdon Area Grocery Collective, The Soap Opera (sold as cosmetic sponges), Willy Street co-op, and art stores (sold as potter sponges). They should not be bleached because bleaching leaves a chemical residue harmful to vaginal tissue.

Sponges should not be used by women with vaginal infections, diabetes, or a high susceptibility to bacterial infections.

S.O.B. FACTOR cont'd from p. 9

If love finds its best expression in equality and freedom then the average home is no bastion of democracy. Some men are being forced into a nurturing role and finding to their surprise it was a talent only waiting to be developed; there is nothing in the life of John Lennon so beguiling as his urgent desire to explore his own potential as a completely natural, nurturing, human being and father.

The image of father as critic and provider is a double robber, communication is a learned art that enriches the lives of both participants. It is time for father to come out of the closet as a joyful and willing novice in the dynamics of family life, it is also time for mother to take her place as provider in as far as she is able and it is more than time for children to participate in a family structure that does not offend their sensibilities as persons of sound judgement.

It is time moreover that this male dominant society view the changing of roles and lifestyles as a positive search for personal expression that may lead us out of despair rather than in. Blame is for the feeble minded; when the most powerful man in the most powerful nation shows by his life he has not understood the most primal instinct in human nature, then we must not be surprised to hear a member of his transitional team say of their quest for cabinet members, "We are looking for the S.O.B. factor."

If that is the criteria for a successful man we are in deep trouble. The picture of thousands of tear drenched youngsters singing "All you need is love" is the other side of the coin. Mother-love produced this generation, where were you Dad? Whose side will you be on when the S.O.B.'s take over.

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We firmly believe a woman has the right to present her case before a designated medical committee.

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## WOMEN'S DAY

CELEBRATION Mar.15/81

International Women's Day has been held and celebrated for 40 years in Thunder Bay. This year is no exception. A Special Coffee house featuring women entertainers in the little Finn Hall, March 15, 1981 will be augmented by contributions from the Women's Centre and others to honor this unique celebration. Our grateful recognition to Kam Lab for sharing their talents with us in the interests of community spirit.

WE INVITE THE PUBLIC TO ATTEND AN EVENING OF ENTERTAINMENT AND CELEBRATION.

# Rising

## Selected poems

## by Gert Beadle

- \* *Rising is a continuation of the journey began in Salt & Yeast*
- \* *The poems chart the author's rising awareness and political growth as a woman involved in women's issues*
- \* *Illustrations by Peggy Harper*
- \* *Produced by the Northern Woman Journal. All proceeds dedicated to her survival*



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# Northern Woman Journal

## Editorial:

### Our Heritage

True to her Taurian nature, the paper has stubbornly persisted, bouncing back into publication from innumerable bouts of self-criticism, colic, fractures, diversity diarrhea, and funding influenza. Her health has stabilized for the time being and we, the bright-eyed collective, hope, from past experience, to have learned the proper perscription to ensure the well-being of the Northern Woman.

Since May 1973, her birthmonth, the paper has changed in her intent. Originally conceived as an attempt to keep communications open among those who attended the Northern Women's Conference at Confederation College during the previous month, the Northern Woman's Newsletter served as a "bulletin board of events".

The first subscription list (approximately 200 in number) was, in fact, the list of registered conference women. A donation of one dollar was requested from the readers. With the help of a feminist government employee, the paper was able to get free paper and postage, as no funding was available.

By October of the same year, the collective publishing the paper had grown to ten women and a decision was made to use the publication as a forum for "free and open exchange of the views and opinions" that unified women of Northwestern Ontario in their attempts for political and personal emancipation.

During that first year, the Northern Woman had already begun to display the first signs - teething pains then - that eventually lead her to death's door three times. The major problem, demonstrated by the Journal's turbulent health status, has been the functioning of the collective.

In June 1974, September 1977, and once again September 1979, the collective had not been able to resolve the contradictions of "collective development" and journal "publishing".

For the most part, a lack of balance developed. Women were using the collective for support to offset problems not related to publishing the paper. There was a strong need for the collective to equalize the consciousness of its members through discussion of feminist, socialist issues. Some women felt intimidated by these concepts and could not accept them. Yet the needs of the readership (receiving the newspaper to which they subscribed) were not met, as a result.

These different levels of consciousness also lead to a conflict of opinion on content. How can we not threaten the conservative feminist and yet still be radical? The collective wanted the Journal to reflect feminist opinions with as much original material as possible, but these varied greatly

in scope and perspective. Achievement of consensus took a lot of time and energy.

As well, the various collectives that were born and reborn, did not have an understanding of the group process. Many women experienced the inability to develop bonding and mutual trust. Many did not know how to give and receive constructive criticism, and there was no vehicle to facilitate this type of expression.

A lack of continuity in membership emphasized the problem.

Originating from the background of a patriarchal society, the collective had a tendency to delegate power to one or a few people, and expected strong leadership from her (them). This added a case of acne to an already chicken-poxed situation.

After operating out of members homes, the Northern Woman moved to the newly established Women's Centre located at the YM/YWCA building on Archibald Street in April, 1974. By October of the next year, the Journal moved again to her own, larger space at 316 Bay Street. The collective felt inhibited by the Women's Centre, seeing it as a place for women just beginning to consider feminism. These women would feel intimidated by a radical feminist paper.

(In May 1977, the Women's Centre joined the newspaper at Bay Street.)

Additionally, being so closely related to the Women's Centre, many last-minute decisions fell into the hands of the Centre, with no collective consensus possible.

Time pressure manifested itself in other forms, too. The long and tedious process of developing the collective; equalizing its members' awareness; accomodating consciousness raising; all these contributed to burning the midnight oil before the printing deadline. And we all know what lack of sleep can do for one's health.

Volunteers had other commitments also, and could not spend all their time nursing the newspaper.

In the past, government funding was seen as heaven-sent. Paid staff were viewed as the necessary blood transfusion that alleviated the sparcity of volunteer donor time. The Northern Woman has received government assistance on four occasions: in October 1973, \$1,200 from the Ministry of Community and Social Services; in April 1974, \$10,000 granted to the Women's Centre from the Secretary of State's Women's Program, shared with the newspaper collective and helped fund the purchase of a Gestetner machine; in January 1977, L.I.P. paid salary and expenses for two workers for six months; in October 1978, Canada Works paid for one salaried worker plus materials and supplies.

Unfortunately, accomodating a combination of volunteers and paid staff followed with too much responsibility being placed in the hands of the salaried women. The volunteers saw no need for their services now that someone was being paid to do the work.

Furthermore, the old problem of legiance arose: accepting government money in one hand, and being a thorn in the government's posterior in the other hand. This, no doubt, is the dilemma for countless community agencies and organizations attempting to stay alive and well.

The present collective is hopeful for the continuing livelihood of the Northern Woman. We shall continue, the past tradition, our editorial policies: encouraging feminist awareness seeking articles of particular relevance to Northwestern Ontario women, portraying women in a positive light and promoting the development of feminist analysis in writing.

Throughout our herstory, the recurring maladies of the collective have been twofold: not enough women were involved, and, there never seemed to be anytime to spend on the collective (as opposed to the production of the paper).

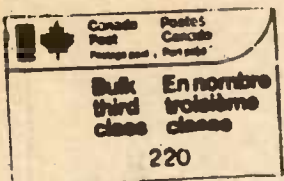
From June to December, 1980, the collective regained its stamina. Many advertisements for midwives to assist in the rebirth of the paper were sent out. The born-again collectivist worked on issues of the family, sexuality; was urged to read feminist books; and basically got to know herself and the other members.

Based on this, and our former experiential knowledge, we have attempted to introduce some positive developments. We are not accepting any government support (for the time being) and are promoting financial independence.

We are sure that feminist publications in the journalistic never-never land have experienced similar illnesses, if not the same epidemics. Hopefully we will be able to share their experiences and remedies for the encouragement of sisterhood in better health.







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