

Northern Woman Journal

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EDITORIAL

Homophobia speaks the same language as racism, sexism and classism. The language of fear. Fear which feeds on myths, ignorance and blatant lies. As women try to educate "the world" about feminism we often skim over or try to hide the contributions and concerns of lesbians. When we do that we are allowing the world in general and women in particular to ignore the driving forces of lesbian and gay energy behind so many of our social movements - feminist activism, AIDS activism and peace activism. This issue of the NORTHERN WOMAN may bring some light to this issue of homophobia. We are starting small and safe with our feminist readers. Please carry it on.

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Rhona Luber Cantor, Proprietor

Dear Northern Woman Journal,

Congratulations on your 17th anniversary. A friend from Thunder Bay sent me the anniversary copy. I was surprised as I thought that you had disappeared. I've really enjoyed every issue that I've read as the articles and poems are all by women speaking from the heart. I just wish that I still lived in Thunder Bay to be a part of the collective. I moved to Southern Ontario after finishing high school.

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$50.00. This is for a 2 year subscription as well as a donation.

Keep up the good work. You are important to women such as myself who live in large cities but feel isolated from other feminists.

Stephanie Holbik

*I rise each morning like a warrior
rubbing and soaking and pounding
this dead body into life
I brush my dentures and assault
box in my living room thusly
All right you bastards what have you
done with my world while I was asleep
invariably it has an answer there is
no end to mans ability to defecate on the air
that he allows a sister to report
his nonsense we may call progress
but we know whose crap it really is.
This morning the subject is morality
good fellows all killing in his name eternally
let the congregation rise for george
or bear the sting of the wimping unbeliever
They who know what is best for the slow
of wit, the uninformed and mentally lazy
will soon close the bag on all dissent
We are now under surveillance by a
fatuous ferret of conception politics
an egg sucking weasel with a loaded brownie
invading the hen house of pro-choice
making off with our idea of human rights
These little voices from the father connection
is at the root of his presumed divinity
in his infinitesimal contribution of sperm
to world affairs and moral superiority
That some of our more regressive hens
support this silly illusion is a sure sign
that the days of kissing the old rod
lingers still in our consciousness
but this too shall pass.*

Gert Beadle
March 8, 1991

Poetry

Understudy

Mom teaches us
to iron shirts well.
This is how
she prepares us for the future
And to fold towels,
that's important too.
Love, careers, travel,
they're lost discussions,
a way to waste time
while she teaches us
to bake bread.

Rodene Zimmer

Construction Site

Enter at your own risk.
Watch for lewd men
tossing loud, indecent offers.
If one lands your way,
do not smile
but keep walking
like you heard nothing
but hammers blows.

Rodene Zimmer

ONE IN FOUR

by Nancy Lyons

I'm "one in four", or is it really one in three or one in two ... do we really know? When I finally acknowledged that I am a survivor of child sexual abuse I began the process of understanding the after effects of the abuse. Until recently I convinced myself that the abuse did not have any affect on my life. I did not want to acknowledge what happened to me as a child, nor did I want to believe there were any repercussions. For me to accept that it had affected my life I would first have to acknowledge that it had happened. This fact tormented me, haunted me and confused me all my memorable life. The denial and shame kept me quiet, until the abuse after effects influenced my life to the extent that the old survival techniques stopped working.

It was then that I sought counselling, and with the support, knowledge and understanding of my therapist, coupled with the support of my partner, the healing process began. With this, I found the strength to begin to understand the after effects of the abuse.

My personal story is not very different from many, many other survivors' stories. The abuser's name changes, so does the age when it began, location of abuse, degree of abuse,

situation, etc. What remains constant is that as survivors we spent a good part of our lives simply surviving, not only the abuse, but the horrific after effects.

I was born the youngest of five children and raised in a middle upper class family on the East Coast. Though I do have many fond memories of my childhood and young adult life, I remained very frightened deep inside. So frightened that I could not show my fear to anyone.

From as far back as I can remember I have had a difficult time trusting people. I always wanted just one friend who would devote her time, and commit herself to the friendship. However I was never able to trust anyone enough to tell them of this shameful secret until I was 25 years old. The silence was finally broken. And gradually I have continued to echo my story beyond all shameful boundaries.

For all those wasted years I was shamed silent by my brother, 9 years my senior. His perversion began when I was 4 years old. It progressed like wild weeds in a garden robbing my rich innocence on its way. Then in a dream I discovered a way to break free. By this time I was 12 years old, though I wanted desperately to be 20 years old. I thought that if I were older he would stop. So I

began acting older. I started smoking, drinking and pretended I had a steady boyfriend. These soon became my weapons to fight the war of abuse against my body and mind. With this ammunition I found the strength and courage to stand up for myself, just enough to get it stopped. I was 13 years old.

In recent years I have put most of the pieces of my life back together, which now just requires a little fine tuning. I have laid down my weapons. The war for me is over. In my life I now strive for peace with my self, knowing I'm trying to be the best that I can be. My thoughts remain with

so many women, the women who, at no fault of their own, remain silent. We need to join hands and stand together, for together we can pull each other up to our feet and use support as our backbone. I feel like I will always need some support, but as the healing process progresses I find new strength and I'm able to stand a little longer on my own.



WOMEN + SOLIDARITY = POWER

Recently the Global Awareness Project sponsored the visit to Thunder Bay of Blanca Coto of Instituto de Investigacion, Capacitacion y Desarrollo de la Mujer of El Salvador and Miriam Avalos of the Centre for Cooperation with El Salvador (Ottawa). The following remarks were made by Blanca Coto at a public meeting.

I am very happy to know that there are people here organizing events that will clarify what real independence means to Latin America, to El Salvador. I work for the Women's Institute for Research, Training and Development, and I am in charge of projects. The Women's Institute is a non-governmental organization... when I say non-governmental I want to make it clear that we are not having any funding from the government of El Salvador.

We are a women's organization, a women's institute, we are not a mass organization. We are an institute that supports women's mass organizations.

We are thirteen women and we are all working for fundamental goals - to make women conscious of their own role in society as a human being, a social being. We see the women's movement not as an isolated struggle, but as a struggle that comes together with men for changes of the whole society.

We have five different areas of work: training; research; communication; projects; and the legal area. In training we organize workshops, seminars, educational events, and to organize all these events we use the method of popular education. In communication we publish documents, pamphlets, so that this area becomes a supportive area for training. In the area of research we organize the analysis of social conditions. We have two projects that benefit children. One Children's Development Centre in San Salvador and one in the rural area of Chantanago. This rural centre is in a re-populated area..

people who went out of El Salvador as refugees, who left the country because of the war, and who now are coming back. This is a heavily populated area and a conflicted area.

The two children's centres that we have don't just provide child care, they also provide other assistance such as psychological and medical assistance, as well as retraining for school. But the main objective of the centre in the urban area is to provide a service to those women who are already involved in the women's organizations so that this will allow them to be participants. There are families that are in great need of these services because they already are participating in the popular organizations.

Another project is Women's Place... a house where women can meet. We are very proud that the celebration of International Women's Day happened in this house this

year. We are very satisfied that that happened because it means we really are accomplishing our objectives for the opening of this house.

Another project that we started is the Centre for Assistance to Salvadorean women. We have three different types of assistance: legal assistance; psychological; and emergency aid for women who are victims of violence. This is an integrated approach because in El Salvador, in Central America, we cannot talk about just providing legal assistance to women. Our approach is an approach that considers the reality of El Salvador. When a woman is captured, just for participating, for standing for her rights, they don't just need the legal assistance, they may also need psychological treatment. When a woman is captured they go through rape, torture, and a lot of human rights abuses. So we have taken this approach consciously.. of providing these three services to the same woman. As well, in cases of domestic violence we take the same approach. When a woman comes to our centre because of domestic violence she may be coming to get a divorce, but we know that before we start talking to the lawyer, we have to make sure that she knows what she wants for herself.

So this is basically what our institute is involved in, but to understand the context in which women's situation takes place we can look at violence to understand.

In El Salvador we classify violence against women in three different forms: government/institutional violence; social violence and domestic violence. We see social violence as that which comes from educational patterns, from advertisements through television that uses women as sexual objects, also within the curriculum of the educational system... from religion that promotes women's subordination, violence which comes from the law (for example article 182 of the civilian law authorizes the husband to prevent his wife from going to work if he provides the income for the family). The other violence that we find is the violence that happens within the home.. either physical violence or psychological violence. Government violence, institutional violence is that coming from the government through the security forces, and that happens to both men and women, to those men and women who are struggling for a better society, for their rights.

This violence happens because people are already organized. Just to give you some

that the present ruling party is one of the extreme right. On March 6, a woman who is one of the members of the opposition parties, was shot twice in the face. As a result she lost her left eye and her face was disfigured. At the time this was happening she was making her political campaign, and those responsible were activists of the ruling party. This happened even while we had international observers from the Organization of American States. After the activist from the ruling party did this to the woman the vehicle of the armed forces came to the place where this happened and also dropped two tear gas bombs. When observers from O.A.S. came to the site of these events they witnessed the results of the bombs. Within this framework we cannot talk about democratic elections. We have to mention (a very important thing) that Canadian politicians have already recognized that these were not legitimate elections. It was a fraud. This happening on March 6 was not an isolated incident.. starting in January we've had 15 people.. 8 women and 7 men .. killed, and 25 children were left orphaned. Even the Catholic Church recognized that it was the responsibility of the first infantry brigade (a governmental army). The response of the government was that they were going to put a demand against the Catholic church for defamation.. for telling this. The n.g.o. human rights organization in El Salvador also took the same stand and accused the first infantry brigade with this action with the peasants.. so they had to recognize that was statistics... in 1990 we have 50 women between the ages of 18-28 as political prisoners, and 32 more women over 28 years of age. One specific case that I would like to denounce publicly as an example of government violence.. last March 10 we have elections for members of the legislative assembly and for the mayors of different cities. We have two opposition parties participating in these elections. I have to mention the case. But this situation gives us the courage to continue our struggle for democracy. I must point out that as a women's institute we already have two members of the institute that were assassinated. The president and founder of our institute was captured and assassinated in 1989, the same time as the jesuit priests were killed. In the same year the woman in charge of communication was captured, tortured and assassinated. All of these acts of violence against women have given us the courage to continue and it serves as a motivation to us to continue our work.



GABRIELA

We hope that the negotia process that is taking p between the FLMN (the a opposition) and the govern will continue to build tow peace in the country. Wi the legislative assembly we have representatives of opposition parties. Th another place where opposi parties and popu organizations can pressure government and the FLMN to agreements towards pe Because we believe that wa not the way to reach peace

But, unfortunately, war been necessary in order to these negotiations taking p now. Women are 51% of population. So we as women now the ones that have mos the responsibilities in society since we have been alone.. when our husbands, partners, have gone away join the guerillas, they lost their jobs... they just gone far away from u So we have to solve problems of education, li conditions, household... the things related to family we are the ones tak care of that now. And beca we are 51% of the poulation have the responsibility participate. We have to the responsibility and conscious of the needs of country.

We cannot separate women children. We have opportunity to prove what are saying when we organ the children's peace camp year. We have fifty child from different sectors... marginalized communiti children that live on streets, children coming the repopulated areas, child from the conflicted areas the country. We have t themes.. your place and whom you live (we can no lo talk about family); childr rights; and peace. And it very painful to see children have alre internalized war. When asked them to draw where live, they were all ma

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PROCESS TO NOWHERE?

by Josie Wallenius

The women's centre in Thunder Bay was the only place in town to place a continual anti-war statement on their premises, prior to, and after, the U.S. strike on Iraq.

The 24 hours preceding the U.S. strike, groups of people protested outside the revenue buildings of Thunder Bay, calling attention to our complicity in the war machine by our payment of taxes towards the Canadian weapons manufacture of the high tech weaponry that was going to be tested.

Going to be tested on Third World people once again.

The day before the strike we had a lot of positive honks on horns, a lot of smiling faces from car windows. The day after the strike, the day when Pres. Bush's policy of "supporting the troops to suppress domestic opposition" had begun, the mood swung.

Another woman and myself, alone with the banners outside the tax buildings, had one particular insult flung at us from a passing car with a couple of youths in it.

"SLUTS", they shouted.

We, as white women, had been identified doubly as "the other".

It is because of this that I find this story strangely and disturbingly appropriate for the Northern Woman Journal Issue about homophobia.

I wrote it because I needed to for my sanity. I wrote it because I believe fear of "the irrational other" is deeper in our society than even white supremacy. I wrote it because Patriarchal capitalism keeps on going because they, the white Patriarchs, have socially conditioned the white Western population to not UNDERSTAND Imperialism, to not FEEL Imperialism, i.e. they have effectively cut off the head of the West from the bodies of the South and East, so while the wars in our name are being waged to genocidal proportions against the Third World, we "still carry on as usual."

Remember the "Handmaid's Tale." Remember how Atwood describes our roles as breeders, which is the focus of her book, i.e. white women.

Do you remember how she briefly describes the "other places" (Third World) as almost dead places.

If we are going to stop this process already in motion, one has I would think, to understand the process. From my research, Iraq was set up as long ago as two years for this Western Imperial strike. The domestic control and command is at present of course the pacification of the west with propaganda. After I wrote this story I "just happened" onto a book about magic. It said that the pineal gland, known as the third eye, still functions in lizards. It is the seat of knowledge.



So maybe its not so much our bodies are severed from our heads, but we need to get our third eye open.

I dunno. But I FEEL its time to throw some spanners in the works, and not hide behind rocks, pretending what is going on is not going on.

James Petras is coming to our town to explain the NEW WORLD ORDER and Linda was doing the poster. Today I went round to her house to collect it.

Linda has pneumonia, but she certainly looks better than she did yesterday when I had taken the graphics of Brian and George around. Probably using scissors round their faces had made her feel better. They do say the body is connected to the head, don't they?...

I had a good laugh when I saw how Linda had set up the faces around the NWO then sat down to read a poem I had written on the way driving to town. I usually have a pad and pencil around for when things get too much.

"I am walking around dead people
with their bodies severed from their laughing heads.
They wear T-shirts saying they won't join in unless
They can dance,
While I'm wondering whether you fox-trot or tango,
When you blow up a bridge."

I hear a silence. I hear Linda not being impressed at all, and wait. "What are you on about. You love dancing, I love dancing, what do you MEAN?"

"Well, I've had some funny things happen this last 24 hours, and I feel like spitting."

"So spit, but explain the process."

Casting my mind back 24 hours, I began.

"I was talking to Gillian yesterday, and I told her that I thought I was going to go mad because everything was carrying on as usual. People keep shuddering, but they just won't stop. I think we have to blow up a bridge or two to make people stop."

Gillian put her hand over mine. "Josie, you know we have to wait. We have to wait until people are ready. If you try by yourself you might blow yourself up, and what good would that do anybody. We'd miss you."

Now when Gillian said this I had a terrible desire to giggle. I know Gillian meant it sincerely, but then Gillian's body is attached to her head. For the rest, I could just see all the laughing heads breathe a great sigh of relief that they wouldn't have to cross the road any more when they saw me coming.

Then I left Gillian to see another woman to tell her about James Petras, and this woman told me that her close friend had been upset about that bomb going off in London, England. I asked this woman if her friend's upsetness has been because the bomb had not got John Major, and she got annoyed with me. She told me that any fool could see why SHE was upset. It was because her friend was upset about it going off in London, England.

So I told her I was really sorry for her sake that her friend was still a laughing

head, in fact I was sorry for us all, as I knew her myself and had thought her body was attached.

Then I went to see another woman who I thought was attached up. She said they were moving from the apartment to a small house with a garden, so I said, "I have just heard they are deathsquadding women herbalists in the Philippines."

This woman said, "Why?" and I nearly fell over as I was sure she had understood. I'd been explaining for the last 3 years to this woman and it had made not one wit. Still a laughing head.

So I was pretty depressed and I drove home, stopping on the way back at the Thunder Bay Memorial Society to pick up the forms to ensure that if my old man and I kicked the bucket, no corporate funeral home was going to have a rip-off at our dead expense.

After we had dinner my old man and I sat down at the kitchen table to fill in the forms. If you want some down time with your companion, fill in your memorial forms.

I wrote in my name and address and so forth, ticked off the box marked cremation, then came to the memorial bit.

I pondered awhile.

I decided to put my friend Allen's name down as someone to say a few words about me. Allen has his body so much attached to his head he can't get a letter to ed. in the paper any more.

Also he can sing a good song.

Then came the bit about where you want your ashes scattered, and I did not have to think too hard about that. I wrote, "Pigeon River Bridge, Pigeon River, Lake Superior." It was like writing somebody's address.

Then I looked at my old man's form and I noticed he wanted his ashes scattered at the same address, so I smiled. I knew why he had written the same address. Not for more down time together, but because we had done something good together at that bridge. We had been with an AIM (American Indian Movement) action that had closed the bridge for 3 hours at the OKA time. We had stopped the "business as usual" till the fire hoses came.

Then I looked at his form again, and saw he had left the memorial part blank, and the form looked kind of clean in its blankness. I always know what my old man means by his silences, so I wasn't about to comment on this one.

We went to bed.

The next day, and that is today as I tell this, I got up and had coffee then went to get the mail. After skimming over the crap, I sat down with a pearl. A letter from a friend. She works in Peru. I saw the

words on the first page. The women in the village had been terrified with the news coverage of the bombing of Iraq. In this village they have military helicopters flying overhead as a matter of course, just like at OKA, but the women wanted to know if they were going to be the next to be bombed.

So my friend got out a map of the world and showed them Iraq and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Then she showed them the U.K. and North America and South America. Then they could see where the bombs were dropping and where they were not dropping.

Then my friend wrote that the women have to line up for cooking oil since the Gulf War, and that sometimes they can't get it at all. She said one of the women had said there is no difference in dying from hunger than bombs, and what by the way does GULF mean?

Then my friend added something of her own. She said that I had been right a few years ago when I had said that the head of the first world had been severed from the body of the third.

It's on the map.

So it was this letter that got me trying to write the poem, but I guess I'm going to have to work at it if I really want the laughing heads to understand.

I paused, and walked to the window to watch the birds. I felt glad upon gladness that I had friends like Linda and Gillian and Allen, or mad I would certainly be.

Another thought struck me, and I turned again to Linda. "I've decided to have a blank space on my memorial form."

"Why?"

"Because it will be just more business as usual. Just another meeting to organize. You can just see it. People staggering in carrying the I.V. poles, when they should have down time with the companions, or be staying home watching birds..."

Linda began to laugh.

"O.K. What do you want we stand on the bridge and remember back to OKA. Remember if it hadn't been for AIM we would never had held the bridge up. I would like you to chuck my ashes over the bridge onto the ice, and I hope it not too windy as they will probably fly back in your face and I want you to say as you throw them over, "Revolution death, and here goes the ash of a woman who was too fucking frightened to blow up the bridge."

I paused and reflected all the conditioning still working like a worn old computer disc in my brain. "No don't add the last bit. It might guilt people out to something they are not ready to do, and we must not do that must we?"

So then Linda, with her body attached to her head ever, really laughed. "Josi you're really mad. When you scatter your ashes over the bridge it will be while the bridge is being blown up."

As Linda said this I felt something happening to me. It was rising up through the floor and through my body. It was really surging through. I felt myself suspended in air over the Pigeon River border bridge looking at all the steel and concrete flying out over the ice, and watching this group of women, not even bothering to run.

They were lying in the snow and they were laughing and they all had their bodies attached to their heads.



NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Dear Friends,

We are writing to you seeking your support on an issue of profound importance and urgency. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians who happen to be lesbians or gay men are too often victims of discrimination, harassment and violence. We are asking for your support in seeking equality, not special rights but equal rights, by writing to Justice Minister Kim Campbell, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and your own Member of Parliament, urging them to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in Canada are not seeking special rights - only the right to be treated with the same equality, dignity and respect as all other Canadians. Five years ago a special all party Parliamentary committee urged the federal government to take this action. Until the federal law is changed it remains legal to fire a person from his or her job, deny them housing or access to services, solely because of the fact that they happen to be a lesbian or a gay man. Over four years later we are still waiting for our government to keep their promise.

Even if you have already written to any of us or to the government in the past, please do so again now. This is an issue of fundamental justice that is of concern not just to the community of lesbians and gay men, but to all Canadians. Please speak out. Your voice, our voices raised together for equality and justice, will make a difference.

Sincerely yours,

Dawn Black, MP
New Westminster-Burnaby

Svend J Robinson, MP
Burnaby-Kinross

Dear Friends,

I am writing to ask you to take the time to add your voice to mine and that of Svend and all of my fellow New Democrat caucus colleagues in urging the government to keep its March 1986 promise to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientations. As federal leader of the New Democratic Party I am proud of our record of support for full equality for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in Canada. And as the Member of Parliament for the Yukon Territory I'm also particularly pleased that the New Democratic government has amended our human rights legislation to prohibit such discrimination

HUMAN RIGHTS

Q: Why should gays and lesbians be given special legal protection?

A: They shouldn't. Inclusion of sexual orientation in the Canada Human Rights Act would not provide special protection for gay men, lesbians or bisexuals. Such an amendment would simply prohibit discrimination against homosexuals so that they will enjoy the same civil rights as other Canadians.

Q: But don't lesbians and gay men already have the same civil rights as other persons?

A: No. There is significant evidence of discrimination against lesbians, bisexuals and gay men in such areas as services, employment and housing. The law does not now provide any remedy to persons who are, for example, fired or denied services because of their sexual orientation.

Q: Wouldn't the amendment lead to the recruitment of young people by gays and lesbians?

A: There is no evidence that gay men, bisexuals or lesbians "recruit" young people. Sexual orientation is generally believed to be established at infancy. The efforts of the gay and lesbian community have been directed to meeting the need for social and emotional support of persons who are lesbian or gay and who therefore face widespread discrimination in Canada.

Q: But isn't homosexuality immoral?

A: In a pluralistic society such as ours, it is inappropriate to allow the specific claims of any particular religious text to dictate the moral standards of the community.

Q: But people who choose to be lesbian or gay shouldn't get legal protection.

A: If you are heterosexual, when did you "choose" that orientation and how easy would it be for you to "choose" to

and recently became the first government in Canada to extend benefits in the public sector to same sex partners.

Justice Minister Kim Campbell will soon introduce a package of amendments to the Canadian Human Rights. It is essential that you send in letters. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms promises equality to all Canadians. This is an issue of fundamental justice that is of concern not just to the community of lesbians and

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

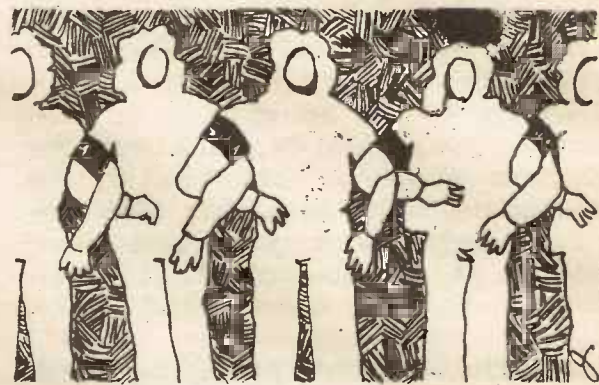
change it? Most experts agree that the role played by personal choice in sexual orientation is marginal. In any event, religion is also protected in the Canadian Human Rights Act and in large measure a product of choice, so the argument is worthy of little weight.

EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

* A lesbian in a supervisory position was told by her boss that her lesbianism should be kept hidden so that it could not be used against her.

* A woman who ran a convenience store in a small Canadian town, and who had received several awards of merit from her employer, had her contract terminated when her employer learned that she was a lesbian.

* Many lesbian activists develop many skills during volunteer activities within and for the lesbian community which they are unable to state on resumes for fear of being denied employment.



gay men but to all Canadians. It is time that the federal government made this promise a reality for those who happen to be lesbians, gay men or bisexuals. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely yours,

Audrey McLaughlin, MP
Leader of the New Democratic Party

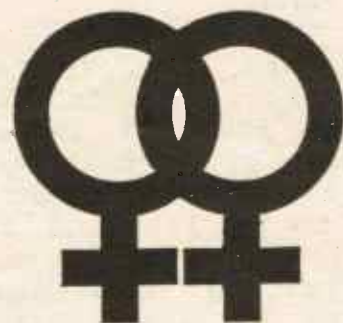
IT'S SIMPLY LOVE

The following is excerpted from an address on lesbian and gay awareness presented by Nancy Gildner and Lynn Beak at a March 1991 service of the Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship, Thunder Bay.

"We affirm the dignity and worth of every human being."

"I sin if I submit to the indignities that are hurled at me. I am a guardian of the divine dignity and it is my duty to defend it."

- Zulu Chief Albert Luthuli
Nobel Peace Prize Winner (1960)



NG: One of the newest elements on the landscape here at the Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship (LUF) is a flourishing study group which is working through the Unitarian Universalist (UU) "Welcoming Congregation" program. ... Today we'd like to cast some light on this program and ask ... What is the Welcoming Congregation Program? Why did it come into being? And why is it important to us here at LUF?

I think most of us here are fondly familiar with the beautiful set of affirmations which currently serve to convey the essence of our shared and ever-evolving faith. We affirm without hesitation "the inherent worth and dignity of every person." From this, affirming "justice, equity and compassion in human relationships" seems to follow effortlessly. It may come as a surprise, then, to learn that within this lovingly and laudably constructed atmosphere there is a significant group of Unitarians, continent-wide, who have expressed the pain of feeling unaffirmed, unwelcomed and unsupported by their Unitarian communities. I am referring to lesbians, gay men, and their families and friends who have begun to point out inconsistencies between Unitarian Universalist (UU) principles and the facts of their own lived experience. They are asking the entire fellowship of UU adherents to examine their roles, whether through acts of commission or omission, in creating an environment where gays and lesbians still do not feel safe enough to live openly and wholly.

The Welcoming Congregation program was developed to respond to the deeply-felt need for congregations to become genuinely and knowledgeably inclusive. The aim of this voluntary program is to provide a forum wherein congregations can begin to explore issues such as inclusivity, homophobia, the nature of sexual orientations, and the anatomy of oppression, replacing myths with facts, stereotypes with human profiles, obliviousness with awareness, and inertia with resolve and action....

Since the Welcoming Congregation program's aim is to generate solutions, perhaps we

should spend a little time examining the problem.... Here's an objective fact to get us started: We are all sexually-oriented beings. Those who locate themselves in the heterosexual majority often do not recognize that they are "oriented" at all, or that there is any other way to be than heterosexual. In fact, though, studies conducted since the middle of this century have shown that human sexuality is arranged along a fluid continuum so that individuals may identify themselves as exclusively heterosexual; to varying degrees able to be attracted to people of either gender (bisexual); or, as is the case with approximately 10% of the population, exclusively homosexual. Most gay people report their sense that they have always been same-sex oriented, that they no more chose this orientation than a heterosexual person chooses to be straight. Psychology researchers confirm this testimony, pointing out that sexual orientation, while perhaps not recognized or acknowledged by any individual for several years, is probably set in the pre-school years, by the age of three or four.... Sexual orientation is analogous to eye colour, or right or left handedness, in that it is a natural, constitutive and value-neutral fact of a person's life.

Extrapolating from our statistic that one person in ten is same-sex oriented, it is clear that in North America today, there are about 25 million gay or lesbian people, or approximately one gay or lesbian child in every five families. Same sex orientation knows no boundaries, so that every geographic, ethnic, socio-economic, religious, age and labour/professional group has its vital component of gay people. The chances are that every one of us knows, or loves, or works with a lesbian or gay person, whether or not we realize it.... Lesbians and gays are in fact thoroughly woven into every square centimetre of our society....

Though the Welcoming Congregation workshops will offer psychological, sociological, historical and anecdotal information in abundance, we will

also have opportunities to think back on our own experiences, to become aware of deeply embedded organizing principles in our lives, and to examine ideas which never seemed to allow us to be as open, loving and well-integrated as we wanted to be.

For instance, we might reconsider the sacred cow of "normalcy". Should we accept that "the majority" defines what is "normal". If we do, then clearly homosexuality is abnormal and all manner of homophobic oppression enters the realm of the rational and the justifiable....

However, if this model seems flawed, will we work to be a genuinely pluralistic society, where many norms exist depending on different but equally valid contexts?... How prepared are we to don the mantle of the other and walk, however briefly, inside their skin, inside their soul, inside their very particular circumstances?

How shall we answer the question about what is "normal" regarding sexual orientation? We could go the objective route, and listen to the research views of numerous international medical organizations, such as the American Psychiatric Association, which have long since removed homosexuality from their official listings of mental illnesses. (They point out, however, that treatment indicated for those suffering from **homophobia**, which Audre Lorde defines as "the fear of one's own sex and therefore hatred of those feelings in others.")

That's where the professionals stand. But it is important that we listen to the voices of gay and lesbian people on this issue of "normalcy". Better, let's imagine for a moment that we are gay or lesbian. From this vantage point it is clear that the ultimate abnormality is to try to force oneself to live a lie, to bury one's relationships and condition oneself in the world as if one were heterosexual. If we are lesbian or gay, "normalcy" being affectionally oriented towards people of our own gender --- it is here that we find the truth that makes us who

But to have found this precious truth and yet to live in a society which demeans and negates, in every conceivable way, all that is normal and balanced for one; which requires that one become complicit in one's own silencing in order to remain acceptable; which through institutional law, from the playground to Parliament, reinforces and validates only heterosexual couplings and family groupings; ... this, in the words of feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye, is "crazy-making". Is it any wonder, in light of this, that gay teenagers are three times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight classmates? The true wonder is that the vast majority of gay people, in spite of spending their lives battling insidious and overt discrimination, manage to be so well-adjusted.

their perversion. We can participate in a good laugh at their expense, though sometimes we feel a little guilty about it.

When we arrive at acceptance, we have decided to live and let live. We don't approve of their lifestyles, and certainly would not be happy if one of our own children were to come out as lesbian or gay, but we're willing to welcome gay and lesbian people to our church, provided not too many show up. After all, we don't want to be seen as "the gay church". It's OK by us if gays and lesbians hold positions of responsibility such as ministers or teachers, but they should not ask for "special privileges" such as civil rights or open acknowledgement.

At the supportive stage, we may still have some internal

we, as members of this society, have been given since birth. There are two kinds of misinformation. There's information that's absolutely incorrect, and that speaks from a clear prejudice. There's also information that is exaggerated and is out of context and that allows prejudice to grow.

An example of the second kind will help. If an alien came to this world, particularly in November (which is Ontario's wife assault prevention month), and looked at heterosexual relationships, it would say, "My god, all they do is commit wife assault!" because that is what the media reports. That's all you hear about. Now, because we live in a heterosexual community, we all have personal experience that allows us to mitigate that information and say "well, yes, it's true, in some relationships there is family violence, but that's not the whole picture."

But when we don't have that personal experience of what the lives of gay and lesbian people are like, we do not know how to mitigate misinformation, that piece of information that is out of context in the media.

One of the things that has concerned me for a long time is about how we as a society gain information. We have become very dependant on external sources of information. We don't trust our personal experiences.

If we meet somebody from a group about whom we have a prejudiced view, and the person does not match our expectations, we can respond in one of two ways. "This person is an exception and all that I have heard is true", or "This person is the reality and I have to base my beliefs on my personal experiences and not on what I'm hearing outside." We are trained in our schools and by the media not to trust our personal experiences, not to think from the inside out, not to say: "This is my experience, therefore this is true." We think: "Well, this is what's happened to me, it must be an exception, because it's not what everyone else is saying, it's not what everyone else is doing." That is something that we have lost, and have to regain: looking at prejudice is one area in which I think we can start to regain the ability to validate our own personal experiences, to draw our conclusions and build our truths from our own personal knowledge and experiences.

The Committee members have been looking at the information that we get. Generally, there is not much information about lesbian women in the media and therefore in some ways there is less stereotyping and more openness. For gay men, there has been much more information in the media, much more stereotyping, and therefore less room for openness.

continued on next page..

Imagine a world in which your life appears only as a negative. Imagine that whenever you hear your life mentioned it is with a laugh or a sneer, in a whisper or an apologetic tone of voice. Imagine that you have lived with the person you love for years and have never heard - in school, on television, in popular films, in your family, in your religious community - your life and circumstances addressed, affirmed, or positively reflected back to you.

Imagine having to become bilingual in the language of families, because loving whom you love is seen as not legitimate love or life, like everyone else's. Imagine having to scour the language of your birth to create a language you can use with self-respect, because most of your culture denies -- and you are not certain, either -- that you have a right to the language. The language ascribes all the values, living skills, terms of affection, and descriptions of intimacy as belonging to someone else. Imagine having to call your life partner, your lover and husband, your helpmeet and mate, the passionate companion of your days with whom you fight and negotiate and make plans and create a life -- imagine having to introduce this person as "my friend".

-excerpted from the article "Names" by Rev. Barbara Pescan which appears in "The Welcoming Congregation"

The Welcoming Congregation resource book identifies stages by which we will be able to track our progress as we come to understand the nature of sexual and affectional orientations. Not everyone goes through all the stages, or spends the same amount of time at any stage, but generally speaking, the flow is from repugnancy and pity, through tolerance, acceptance and support, with the final arrival at affirmation.

Which of these stages rings personal bells for us? Are we at the repugnancy stage? If so, we are intensely uncomfortable with the notion of homosexuality. We see gays and lesbians as sick, perverted and immoral, people who are out to molest our children, people who attract our hostility and anti-gay slurs and who bring gay-bashing on themselves.

Perhaps we feel pity. As abnormal, maladjusted people, gays and lesbians are assured of sad, difficult, debased lives. They need our help.

If we are tolerant, we admit that, whether we like it or not, lesbians and gays exist and always have. We know a few of "them" and put up with them as long as they do not flaunt

qualms left over from earlier stages, but we know that gays and lesbians deserve the same rights, dignity and respect as everyone else, and we're prepared to put our money where our mouth is, using inclusive language, refusing to participate in anti-gay jokes, and lending our support to measures to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, wherever it occurs. We are taking steps to work through whatever blind spots still cause us difficulty.

When we reach affirmation, we embrace and rejoice in the unique gifts that lesbian and gay people bring to our community. We celebrate the relationships and families of our lesbian and gay friends, support and are supported by them, respect and are respected by them, love and are loved by them. ...



LB: I want to talk about the work of the Welcoming Congregation Committee since our start in October, 1990. We have been educating ourselves, trying to correct the misinformation that

As the Committee proceeds, we are looking at the information that we have received. We are trying to develop from that base, and go from knowledge to awareness. At that stage we go from a cerebral understanding to a spiritual one, and that is when affirmation occurs. And affirmation and empathy are integral to each other.

Confidentiality has been a critical issue for the Committee since the beginning. We need to provide safety within our Committee for those individuals who share information with us about their sexual orientation. There is jeopardy! Men and women still lose jobs, lose friends and lose family members by disclosing their sexual orientation, so we cannot require anyone to say anything more about their own sexual orientation than they choose.

Life is still too risky, protection much too inadequate, and support from us, still developing, for us to be in a position to do more than support people where they are, anywhere on the continuum from complete secrecy to complete openness.

We are learning not to challenge people to say more about themselves than they wish, to respect that they understand their situation better than we do. We must allow them to let us know where they are in their striving for openness and affirmation. We believe that it is very important to expand this principle to the community at large within the Unitarian Fellowship.

Because we have an open building, there will never be complete secrecy here. Anyone can walk in from the street. However, within this community, it's very important to recognize that when people share information with us about their sexual orientation, or about other issues that are personal, that they are doing so within a religious community of which they are a member and from which they are hoping for understanding and affirmation. We must not gossip!

People are much more willing to have their religious community know things about them than, for example, people at work. After all, this is where we come to share life's passages, this is where we come to talk about those things which are giving us great joy and great pain, and if we can not talk about them here, why are we here and where can we talk about them? That is one of the really critical issues for gay and lesbian people in a religious community is to be able to share the sense of community that everyone else here can share.

One other lesson that the Committee has learned is that homophobia is an "invisible" source of discrimination. You can march in a civil rights parade and never worry about anyone thinking that you are black. Similarly, men can talk

about women's rights and they don't change their sex. You do not have to take on the mantle of the oppressed person. However, because homophobia is so prevalent, and because your sexual orientation is an invisible quality, people can be taken for homosexuals if they speak out.

Fear of homosexual identification has been a traditional method of behaviour control. I'm sure we've all experienced it, often during the vulnerable teen-aged years. "Don't do that. Someone will think you're a". I will let you fill in your own expression, but we've all heard it. It's a way of keeping men acting in roles that are considered appropriate for men. It's a way of keeping women acting in roles that are considered appropriate for women. It's a way of lessening each of our options, this fear of being seen as a homosexual. So not only is there an incredibly important reason to support gay and lesbian rights, in and of itself, but also because in liberating them, we liberate ourselves, we liberate everyone.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members of the Welcoming Congregation Committee for the growth that they are going through and continue to go through, and to celebrate the work that they are doing.



NG: Where do we in the LUF stand on the scale of welcoming and inclusivity? I would imagine that we have in this Fellowship a full spectrum of people, all the way from those for whom this whole subject is so deeply disturbing as to stir up feelings of revulsion, through people who feel reasonably neutral and just wish the whole issue would go away, to people who want to actively grow in their understanding and have not known how to embark on a project of awareness-raising. Many of us know that our upbringing saddled us with a lot of homophobic baggage, and we want to be rid of it. Or we know that our children are being fed a steady diet of homophobia in the schoolyard, and we want to learn tools to deal with it.

I suspect that the Welcoming Congregation program has something to offer all of us, no matter where we locate ourselves. People who are plagued by fear and anger can look for those burdensome emotions to dissipate in the face of solid new information on sexual orientations, the roots of homophobia, and lots of other why's and wherefore's. Those who wonder why this should be an issue for us at LUF may be intrigued and appalled to learn that oppression impacts on the lives of people in all our circles in the most fundamental ways. Recognizing how brutally gays and lesbians have been excluded from other religious

communities, we may see that there are pro-active steps we can take to translate our principles into tangible welcome. Finally, for those who have desired help, or affirmation or company on an otherwise very solitary journey, the Welcoming Congregation program offers a nurturing environment where we can take risks safely. As we read and discuss together, empathize together, we will recognize fellow travellers who have been this way before, who, finding themselves on her ground, report that their view is great.

What might the future hold?...We would hope that as the level of awareness in the Fellowship grows, we will demonstrate a commitment to the use of inclusive language, sensitivity to lesbian and gay issues, to a refusal to participate in conversations so-called humour which demean gay or lesbian people, to recognize the committed relationships of lesbian and gay people and to affirm displays of affection and caring wherever we find them, regardless of sexual orientation. Perhaps this Fellowship will decide to dialogue with members of the gay and lesbian community, both within our Fellowship and beyond, to learn what needs are most urgent and how we might help fill them. We might suggest forming a support group such as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) or a youth group for young gays and lesbians struggling to develop self-respect in their terribly one-sided, heterosexual high school environments.

There are so many benefits to be reaped in the process of becoming a Welcoming Congregation. Beyond all the altruistic considerations, we will be able to revel in our own ever-increasing self-knowledge, and in the sense that we have tackled what has historically been one of the most difficult frontiers in order to breathe life and spirit into our Unitarian Universalist Affirmations. We will know that we have taken significant steps towards becoming healing agents rather than through our silence, and our compounding the problems faced by lesbians and gay men. We will be enriched when the gay and lesbian people amongst us feel the way cleared for them to make their own special contributions as whole, uncensored people, to bring their partners and families, to celebrate their unions, to grieve the loss of their loved ones. We will continue to vitalize and nurture this spiritual home of ours when we "celebrate the lives of all people and their ways of expressing their love for each other."1

1. From the "Welcoming Congregation" section of the Common Vision Planning Committee Report, 1989.



Ontario Women's
Directorate
Direction générale
de la condition
féminine de l'Ontario



GRANTS

The following northern organizations have received community grants funding.

Northwestern Ontario Women's Health Information Network

\$4,990.00 - to hold a workshop and develop a resource package to accompany a theatrical presentation for teachers and students focusing on sex-role stereotyping, positive body image and eating disorders.

Equay-Wuk (Sioux Lookout)

\$24,000.00 - to conduct five regional workshops regarding the issue of Family Violence.

Wequedong Lodge of Thunder Bay

\$7,905.00 - to translate and distribute the family violence video "New Beginnings".

Begetikong Anishinabe-Queck (Heron Bay)

\$6,000.00 - to hold a two day community conference to increase awareness of the violence issue.

Little Red Reading Society

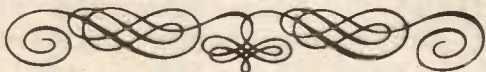
\$5,000.00 - to hold a lecture series by native women to encourage participants to acquire a post secondary education.

Dryden Native Women's Resource Centre

\$8,000.00 - to conduct a needs assessment of native women.

Family Services Thunder Bay

\$10,000.00 - to sponsor Magnus Theatre's community outreach to high school students in Thunder Bay and several communities in the north with MIRROR GAME a play addressing violence in relationships.



CONGRATULATIONS

to **FAYE PETERSON** **TRANSITION HOUSE**

on receiving funding to build a new, larger and much needed shelter for women who experience male violence in their relationships.

RESOURCE CENTRE

Exciting things are happening in OWD's Northern Office Resource Centre. We are in the process of re-cataloguing all materials using ON-LINE CATALOGUE, a user friendly computer program.

When the cataloguing is completed, you will be able to search by title, author or subject. In time (and all this will take time) we hope to have bibliographies available in print form.

New acquired materials are:

With the Power of Each Breath

A disabled women's Anthology
Susan E. Browne, Debsa Connors, Nanci Stern

In Our Own Words

Northern Saskatchewan Metis
Women speak out

Social Movements/Social Change

The Politics and Practice of
Organizing

When Battered Women Kill

Angela Brown

Reports on Wife Assault

Ontario Medical Association
Committee on Wife Assault

Reclaiming Our Lives

Hope for Adult Survivor of
Incest
Carol Postan and Karen Lison

When You're Ready

A women's healing from
childhood physical and sexual
abuse by her mother
Kathy Evert

VIDEOS

Talking Sense - Video aimed at parents, teachers and other adults working with teens.

Talking Sex - Video aimed at teens (13-14) (14-15) and (16 and older).

These videos are available in French and English; produced by Ontario Women's Directorate.



WIFE ASSAULT/SEXUAL ASSAULT INITIATIVES 1991.....

May 8, 1991 - New funding of \$20.3 million to fight violence against women and to support women who have been assaulted was announced by Anne Swarbrick, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues.

Ontario Women's Directorate will again offer grants for public education projects on the issues of wife assault and sexual assault.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH is JUNE and WIFE ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH is NOVEMBER

Information packages will be sent in the near future to community groups working with and offering services to women who have experienced male violence.



COMING EVENTS

A series of workshops of interest to women will highlight a conference presented by the **Steering Committee for Women with Disabilities**. The workshop are:

Health Management Options,
Violence Against Women with Disabilities,
Self Image and Self Esteem-
Sexuality,
Parenting with a Disability and
Health, My Care and the
Medical Profession.

Conference begins with registration Friday evening May 24, workshops on Saturday May 25 and the plenary on Sunday May 26.

Call Susan Ward, co-ordinator at 345-6157 for more information.



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The following are excerpts from a brief to the Select Committee on Ontario in Confederation, presented by Leni Untinen, on behalf of the Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council.

Canada enters the 1990's at the crossroads of Confederation and Provincial Sovereignty. To the citizens of Ontario these are threatening, confusing and emotional times. It is interesting to imagine that 50 years from now, circumstances, information and decisions which seem so complicated today, may be captured on a page or two in history. A frightening prospect is how the perception of this decades history will be recorded. Will the chapter read, "in the eleventh hour 'the dice were rolled', behind closed doors? After 124 years of Confederation, leaders of the country and provinces were unable to negotiate outstanding Constitutional accord issues, before a 'deadline' agreed upon late one night in the kitchen of the government centre at Meech Lake. And so the nation of Canada began a process to dismantle."

Will historians write that Canadians were unable to respond to its Aboriginal peoples wants? or was it their needs? or was it their legal rights? Will it be recorded that Quebec made stringent demands because of their "unique qualities" or because of their arrogance or because of a fear of assimilation based on Canada's record of assimilating the Aboriginal people? Will history refer to broken promises and treaties? Will historians have access to information on legislation, contracts and conventions that we, as decision makers, should be considering today but are unaware of?

In 1882 Ernest Renan wrote: "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle... A nation is a great solidarity, created by the sentiment of the sacrifices which have been made and of those which one is disposed to make in the future. It presupposes a past; but it resumes itself in the present by a tangible fact: the consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue life in common."

By this definition, Canada may have lost the opportunity to make the decision to continue as a nation. Many citizens have lost the desire to continue life in common.

The tragedy of this situation is that we will have lost by default. Not that we, as a society tried and could not, but because we have forfeited our chance. We too often have allowed our elected representatives all authority and all responsibility. And those to whom we have given power have tried to "protect" us from dealing with decisions by seeking to impose solidarity not understanding. The ability to make appropriate decisions lies in an understanding of past history, the present circumstance and future direction. An understanding that many Canadians don't possess. Each of us has opinions and emotional sentiments. What many of us lack is the understanding that the actions of various sectors of Canadian and Ontarian society are rooted in history. We lack clarity of what are demands and what are the inherent rights of sectors of our society. We lack the concept that there could be nations within the nation just as there are families within a family. Ontario has the technology to inform and educate citizens on the diversity of our people, the legislation and treaties which influence our multi-cultural, bi-lingual practices and programs. The province must convey to the people the information required to make educated and just decisions. Ontario must have the will and determination to assist the people of the first Nations of our province in achieving satisfactory negotiations of their agenda for self-government, land claims and quality of life issues.

OUR IDENTITY

Symbols of our identity: the vision of Via Rail on steel tracks, connecting people from sea to sea; the Canadian beaver; the prairie wheat fields; the abundant timber forests, and the monarchy, have either changed or diminished in symbolizing the face of a developing Canada. All people, individually or collectively require an identity, to know who we are and where we came from; to build on, to change reflecting changing times; cherishing valued old traditions and creating new ones as we grow. The grief experienced with the fading of some of Canada's symbols is not in the loss but in the void. As Canadians, as Ontarians, we need to establish positive new symbols. Bridging our diversity, from our country's east/west extremities, from our province's north/south borders.

We need to embrace the concept of existing independently/together; sharing our raw materials and technology; enjoying urban and rural lifestyles; respecting the colour and traditions of our multi-cultural backgrounds, the sounds of our bilingual languages, being proud of a profile of men and women working side by side, valued equally. Our symbols should not be imposed on each other, but welcomed and protected by each of us, uniting our commonness, celebrating our differences, blending through growth not revolution.

THE MEECH LAKE LEGACY

Canadian politics have been traditionally based on a patriarchal model with a rigid, lineal decision making process. This process focuses on "power over" rather than the "power to" and decision making from the top down. The Meech Lake Accord process followed this model. The process has been proven wrong and further, may prove to be devastating for Canada as a nation. The inclusion of Quebec in the Constitution did not have to place women's rights in jeopardy; ignore Canada's aboriginal peoples' concerns or relegate Canadians living in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories to a second-class non-participatory position. Voices calling for amendments to protect the rights of all people were wrongly labeled "anti-Quebec", amounting to emotional blackmail. Public consultation and hearing could have and should have been taken seriously. Native and Women's organizations have continued to be silenced through cuts to their organizational or publication or broadcasting budgets. The legacy of the Meech Lake Accord is enforced silence, and a country polarized by protectionism.

Ontario must demonstrate leadership in utilizing the skills and expertise of the people of the province by developing a model of true consultation on issues affecting their lives. The province must convey to the people, the information required to make educated and just decisions. Our province must exhibit its social conscience as the basis of the framework of our development.

WAR

This very moment, as we stand looking towards the future, a world war rages between countries seeking and retaliating to "power over".

This very moment war rages in homes across the province, one in 8 women are physically battered by their partners in a domestic relationship. This very moment war rages in our communities, one in 4 females and one in 8 males is sexually assaulted before they are eighteen. This very moment war rages on Ontario's children. Hundreds of thousands will be physically and emotionally abused and/or be forced to live in poverty. This very moment many Ontarians fear war with our Francophone and Aboriginal sisters and brothers.

Ontario has tremendous natural and human resources. We have the capabilities to empower our people. We can share the "power to" rather than inflict "power over". There is no future in "power over".

Bay alone, welfare payments are up 53%, the caseload up 47%. Municipal Councils and administrators search for ways to cut community based support programs to cover mandatory income benefits. Outshopping has become a new Canadian word. Manufacturers and retailers press for additional concessions, in their attempts to compete. Canadian and Ontario companies attempt to negotiate salary and benefit freezes or reductions. Health and safety standards may be threatened in the name of production. Ontario companies or branch plants have closed or moved to southern locations resulting in job losses and Canadians now pay a Goods and Services Tax not imposed on exported goods. In answer to our questions about the possible plus side of the free

Ontario's economic goals must include a broader base definition of economic development and must incorporate long-range planning into industrial growth, job creation and quality of life considerations.

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY

Looking at the economy from everyone's perspective is essential to develop the potential of Ontario. Economic development must be looked at in a total sense:

"This includes reasonable industrial expansion, job creation, and economic growth along with quality of life considerations; adequate and affordable housing, recreation and cultural facilities, traditional as well as alternative educational systems, health care facilities and a full range of support services. Other necessary considerations include accessible 24-hour child care and convenient public transportation." (Women in Decision Making 1982)

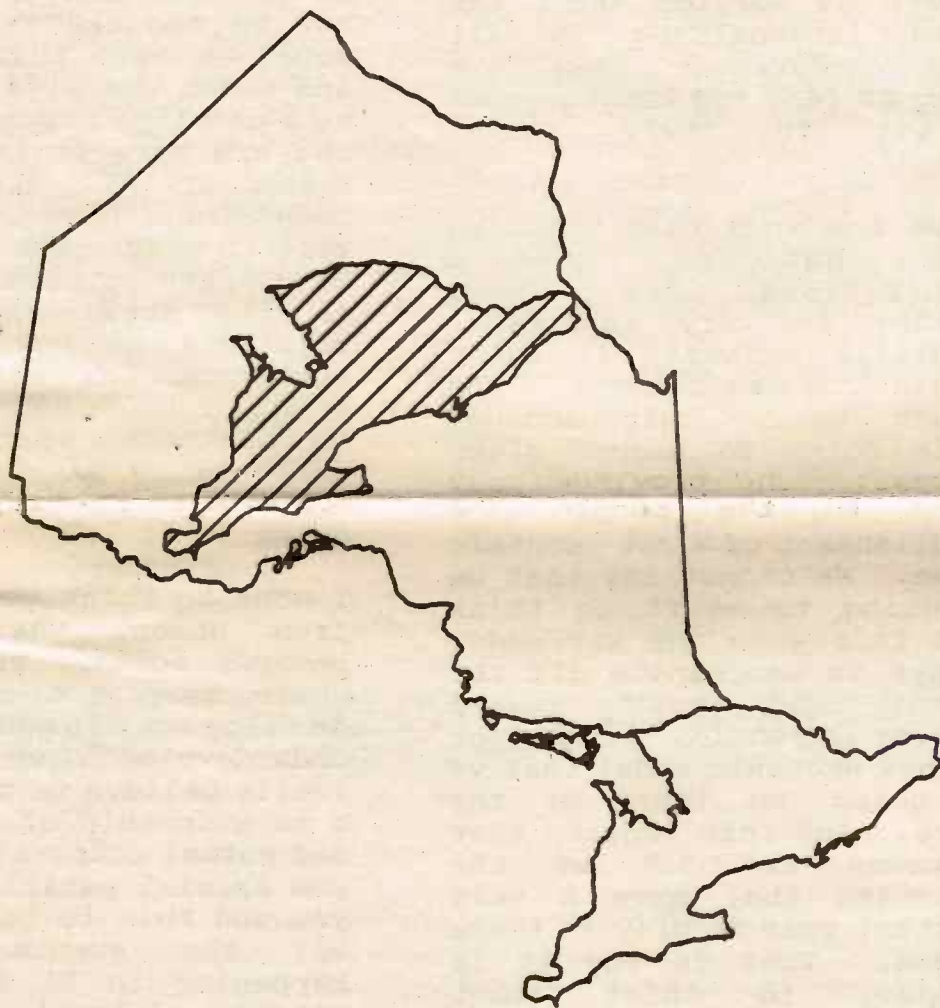
Economic development has traditionally been regarded as an issue concerning the business and political sectors. Women and their concerns have

generally been excluded from the planning and implementation process. Development schemes must not perpetuate the assumption that women exist only as dependents of men.

(... Various reports) project that while the labour force is growing at only half the rate it was during the 1970's women's participation will increase and account for half of the workforce within 10 years.

While we could interpret this to mean good news for women, we must look at further related statistics. From the Ontario Women's Directorate Databank 1990 we know that women earn an average of 64.8% of male earnings. The 1988 Statistics Canada female earnings for full-time, full-year employment was \$23,260. Of women with at least one child under age 6 60.6% participate in the labour force and face costs of up to \$6000. per year, per child for licensed child care. Further we know that the average family income for single parent employed female headed families was \$19,740. The face of the labour force and the economic of Ontario is changing.

In addition to paid employment (a recent study demonstrated that 69% of respondents spend more than 20 hours per week on household tasks. Add to this the hours of volunteer activities that women



FREE TRADE

Despite many concerns from across the country, the Federal Government entered into the Canada/U.S. Free Trade agreement. "Its intent was to improve the economics of both countries, to strive for full employment and improved living standards, and to strengthen both countries in the international market-place; with both countries' ability to take measures to safeguard public welfare fully preserved." The agreement appears to be falling short of its goals. Ontario unemployment statistics continue to creep higher. Canadians have seen major changes to its unemployment insurance programs. In Thunder

trade agreement we are encouraged to see all recent financial concessions and crises as unrelated. In the meantime without a verdict on the original agreement the Canadian government approaches a Canada/U.S. agreement with Mexico. Uninformed and concerned, Ontario citizens fear these further negotiations. Ontario owes its citizens a honest score card on the positive and negative results of free trade and its relationship to other financial situations. The Ontario government must not support further free trade agreements without an adequate sharing of information, facts and opinions, through a consultation process and with direction from an educated society.

contribute to their community and we have a true picture of the double work load women continue to carry.

The shift in male and female work force participation rates, the disparity in earnings and subsequent disparity in taxable incomes and the fact that more women will become primary income earners, has serious financial and systemic implications for women themselves; for both traditional and non-traditional families; for the community and for the Province of Ontario.

What is needed before future decisions are made is a more realistic perspective of women's role in today's society. Women must be an integral part of planning the future.

In working to advance the status of women, we have learned to share knowledge, skills, expertise and resources. Progress is achieved through empowerment and the collective "power to". By embracing the Feminist perspective, Ontario could model a process that will serve the future of the province, the country and the people well.

The spirit of the women of Northwestern Ontario is captured in the following lines.

"Across the vastness of Northwestern Ontario lies an invisible chain. Never still, the live movements of northern women stir the linkage. The echo of the chain vibrates through its length and rings out across the country. Threats cause the chain to pull taut and call on its collective strength. Hurt moves the chain to circle and protect. Energy flows along the chain to the weariest link. With achievement and celebration the chain shines. Should the chain knot, caring hands work tirelessly to insure the chain is restored. The links of the chain are woven through the patchwork of women's lives. Representing their work; their history; their vision. Each of us holds tight, drawing on, strengthening, giving the chain life."

It is our wish to extend this spirit to the people of Ontario and Canada.



continued from pg 14

drawings of houses with airplanes flying on top of the house, and with white flags on top of the roof. Those children coming from the streets don't even have drawings of parking lots or parks or things like that.. they just draw streets and streets. And when we asked them to draw what they had as a concept of peace, children coming from the repopulated areas and the conflictive areas were drawing trees, corn fields, green stuff, and the children from the marginalized areas were drawing soccer fields. We can see that they see peace as the minimum of living conditions, of subsistence level. So they gave us the elements to design our strategies to work with children.

We were so worried about the hatred internalized in all these children. They are having to face the consequences of war in their social conception.

We see the work that the five major national women's organizations are doing together is very important. Especially because all these women's organizations are already taking into account what's going to happen after the war ends. We are already thinking about the establishment of a new economic system. We cannot say that we are going to start to think about this when the war ends. We have to coordinate all the efforts and work toward building a social basis for this new economic model that we are going to have in the future. And this implies that if women are 51% of the population they have a very important role to play in these changes. That is why it is necessary to think about projects that will increase the development of women, and projects that will benefit children, and it's very important that together with all the popular movements we put all our efforts together.



Guatemala-NACLA

Together with other women's organizations, our institute is part of the national effort toward peace, through the permanent committee on national debate. We are thinking about what to do after the war, but at the same time thinking about how we can end this war. As women we have this challenge. And women who live in Canada, as a developed country... women who are here tonight but also women of all the developed countries... have a historical role to play. But not in terms of charity or paternalism, but in the framework of better relations between north and south in the aim of world development. Because we have to think about what kind of new world order is coming so how are the third world countries going to be left?

I want to thank the solidarity from women, the solidarity between women.. regardless of where they are coming from, developed countries or underdeveloped countries. I really believe we can establish a relationship of self-respect and mutual cooperation. I have one special petition to all of you and this is to be alert to all the events that are happening in El Salvador and all Central American countries. Usually you get information about what is happening on the national scene but not what is happening with women. I think we are important also and we want the right to have that space.



READING

A PLACE TO START

There are many "good" books and a few periodicals about lesbianism and homophobia, some recent and some classics. The following is a list of books available or "orderable" at the Northern Woman's Bookstore.

BOOKS

Different Daughters, edited by Louise Rafkin

Finding the Lesbians, edited by Julia Penelope and S. Valentine

Lesbian Passion, by Joann Loulan

A Restricted Country, by Joan Nestle

This Bridge Called My Back, edited by Gloria Andulzua and Cherie Moraga

Woman Plus Woman, by Delores Klaich

Another Mother Tongue, by Judy Grahn

Still Sane, by Persimmon Blackridge and Sheila Gilhooly

Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism, by Suzanne Pharr

Lesbian Crossroads, by Ruth Baetz

Sister Outsider, by Audre Lorde

The Original Coming Out Stories, edited by Julia Penelope and Susan Wolfe

Lesbian/Woman, by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyons

The Lesbian Path, by Margaret Cruikshank

Stepping Out of Line, Hughes et al

Memory Board, by Jane Rule

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PERIODICALS

Rites (monthly)

Sinister Wisdom (quarterly)

Common Lives/Lesbian Lives (quarterly)

♀♀♀♀♀♀♀♀♀♀
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If you know other books that should be added to this recommended reading list please let us know and we will print them next issue, along with a list of great lesbian fiction.

Keep
on
top of
your
reading



Canadian Women and AIDS: Beyond the Statistics

Canadian Women and AIDS is one of the very few anthologies about women and AIDS. It contains over 40 articles, 11 by women with HIV/AIDS, and is organized in five thematic sections:

- An Introduction to the Issues of HIV/AIDS;
- Women with HIV/AIDS Share their Stories;
- Women and AIDS: Who's Vulnerable (young women and adolescents, Haitian & other Black women, lesbians, women using IV-drugs, prostitutes & women in prison);
- Educating Ourselves, Educating Each Other; and
- Organizing our Communities: Women Helping Women.

Read an overview of women and AIDS in Canada and another article placing women and AIDS in a worldwide context. See through the eyes of an epidemiologist studying the evolution of AIDS, then through the eyes of an ordinary woman suddenly diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, then through the eyes of a nurse in an AIDS clinic or a volunteer in a community organization or a social worker in a hospital as she attempts to support, to explain, to educate and to destigmatize the illness.

325 pages, ISBN 0-9691410-8-4
\$15.95 + \$1 postage & handling + 7% GST
Les Editions Communiqu'Elles
3585 St-Urbain, Montréal, Québec, Canada H2X 2N6
Tel: (514) 844-1761; fax: (514) 842-1067

UPDATE

ABORTION IS LEGAL IN CANADA*

Who would have believed it? Maybe the Senate isn't irrelevant after all.

Because it was the Senate that - by a vote of 43-43 - defeated Bill C43. (Senate rules demand that a tie vote be declared lost.) Bill C43, which would have recriminalized abortion was vigorously opposed by the pro-choice movement. The Bill was also strongly criticized by the medical profession - many doctors declared they would refuse to perform abortion procedures if the Bill became law. In fact, a number of doctors had stopped doing abortions in anticipation that the law would be enacted. Some anti-choice activists had also opposed the Bill as being too moderate. So not all the 43 Senators who voted against the Bill are pro-choice.

But make no mistake about this - it was pro-choice advocates who celebrated that night.

A celebration was quickly organized in Thunder Bay, taking advantage of the visit to our community of Ontario's Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Anne Swarbrick. Swarbrick and her colleague Evelyn Gigantes had made representation to the Senate Committee studying the Bill, putting forward the strong Ontario position that abortion is a health issue not a criminal matter, and that women

have the right to access to safe abortions.

Following the Senate decision Swarbrick stated "this represents a major victory for women", and stated that the government will work to ensure improved access to abortion for Ontario women. The Ontario government has made a commitment to speeding up the licensing of freestanding clinics; extending the Northern Health Travel Grants to cover northern women seeking abortions in southern Ontario; and consulting with women's groups, providers and community groups to find new ways of improving access.

It is this question of access that requires continued advocacy by the pro-choice movement, as access is very uneven with some provinces and most rural areas providing little or no access. Pressure must be exerted on the federal government to use the Canada Health Act ensure every province provides access.

Kit Holmwood, president of CARAL states "the fight for access has always been provincial and regional in nature and it will continue in that manner. As long as a single province or region refuses to provide access to safe, legal abortion we will be unable to rest."

W.I.T.T. NETWORK PROJECT

The Women in Trades and Technology Network Project is pleased to announce that funding has been received to undertake community development work leading up to the creation of a network of women working in trades and technology in our area.

The objectives of the project are:

- 1) to identify women who are working in these non-traditional occupations;
- 2) to conduct a survey of these women and identify their needs and concerns related to their occupations;
- 3) to lay the foundation for a formal network of women in trades and technological occupations by bringing women together to meet, discuss and learn.

The project will culminate in a forum, planned for September 1991 and address issues that are identified by the women in the survey.

Women who presently work in trades or technology, those who have left the field for various reasons or any woman studying or preparing for a job in trades or technology are invited to become a part of this project. Call Martha Gingerich at 345-0233 or 767-5286.

LEARN MASSAGE BY VIDEO

With all the instructional videos coming available from larger centres, it is not surprising that a remarkable one arises from Thunder Bay - by a woman.

72 minutes in length, this video combines a deep and real human caring with a wealth of professional expertise to take you step-by-step through the proper delivery of a body massage.

This is no amateur item but a top-quality, professionally filmed and personated product. The practitioner/instructor in the video, Sita Holland, is a committed feminist as well as a Registered Massage Therapist trained at the Sutherland-Chan school of Massage - one of five accredited Massotherapy schools in Canada. At one time an Ontario school teacher, Sita left the school system in search of a more positive way to promote human caring and whole health. She found it in massage but claims "the best part is spreading it - especially among my sisters who know that we must nurture one another". One of Sita's specialities at school was infant massage and that "will be the subject of another video in the future."

The director/producer with a wealth of multi-media training and experience is Jim Farrell who designed the camera work for close-up clarity and keen definition. Printed titles and skilled narration make this a valuable learning tool.

The woman recipient in the video is Skeets, a survivor of many life challenges, who attests to the deep relaxation produced by massage by falling asleep. You can hear her snoring through some stages of the treatment!

Pick up your copy of Learn Massage (\$39.95) plus the accompanying "Guide" notes at the Northern Woman's Bookstore.

FEMINIST FILMS have arrived in Thunder Bay! Since January, the National Film Board and the Thunder Bay Art Gallery have presented these excellent Canadian films by women and for everyone. Perhaps the highlight so far has been Sandra's Garden, a film about incest survival. This Canadian premiere was largely attended and featured discussion with director Bonnie Dickey and Sandra after the film. Thunder Bay audiences have been educated and entertained. The series continues through June and will hopefully continue next film season.

WHAT
PART OF
NO
DON'T YOU
UNDERSTAND

W.H.I.N.

The Northwestern Ontario Women's Health Information Network is looking for committed individuals to join our dynamic working Board of Directors. Do you have an interest in women's health? If you are concerned about the issues relating to our upcoming projects on Women and Body Image and Eating Disorders (a play to tour the high schools of N.W.O.) or Pre and Post Natal Services for pregnant women, we would value your input. Be in the forefront of action on women's health issues in N.W.O.... call Jane at 345-1410; or in Kenora area call 468-6357.

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