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Northern

WOMAN

Journal

POETRY



enclosed...

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Thunder Bay, Ontario

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POPULATION, RESOURCES and EQUITY: GOING BEYOND NUMBERS

This article, a follow-up to last issue's article on the Cairo Conference on Reproduction and Development. It was originally printed in Peace and Environment News (November 1994) and is reprinted with permission of the author, Karen Seabrooke.

My first exposure to the "population question" was a story related by a Canadian colleague who visited Bangladesh in 1984. In a rural area of the country, she witnessed a woman being tied down to a table for a tubal ligation. The woman had been given an anaesthetic, but the operation began before the drug had time to take effect. She screamed in pain and the doctor slapped her face to calm her, and told her she was fortunate to be getting this operation free of charge. When the operation was over, the woman was given a new sari and 100 Taka (\$5.00) in exchange for her fertility.

This woman, and many women I have met since then in the Third World, are "targets" of government population control programs, part of the monthly quota assigned to family planning workers anxious to get their salaries on time. The money, the sari, and the promises of a better life are "incentives" offered to women to accept contraception or sterilization.

During the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in September 1994, there was a parallel event called the NGO Forum, where non-governmental organizations held workshops and discussions on issues of population and development. Two such discussions focused on crimes against women in the area of population control.

Women from India, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Tibet, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Kenya testified about their experiences with population control programs. They told stories of coercion, abuse, and oppression, not very different in nature from the Bangladeshi woman's experience in 1984.



Although there was a lot of talk in Cairo about abortion, reproductive health and women's rights, the dominant voices in the debate - the Vatican and the United States - overshadow and obscured some of the critical perspectives and alternatives that came from women, including those who testified about the impact of population control on their basic rights and freedoms.

Women from both South and North attempted to transform the "pro-choice and anti-choice" focus of the debate into discussions that recognized the social, economic and cultural conditions of women's lives which shape their reproductive choices and decisions. The main Cairo discourse, however, reduced women's rights and well-being to issues of reproduction and abortion.

The Program of Action adopted in Cairo calls for an investment of \$17 billion in population and family planning programs. Ironically, this call for resources comes during a period of massive reduction of basic health and social services throughout the Third World. UNICEF estimates that, since the mid-1980s, health and education spending declined by 50 percent and 25 percent respectively in the world's thirty-seven poorest countries.

The fact that this catastrophe was not debated in Cairo is deeply disturbing, because an emphasis on population control and family planning often diverts attention and resources away from fundamental human development priorities. Population programs do little to improve the overall context of women's lives or to expand women's real choices.

While genuine family planning can assist women and men in making reproductive decisions, without improvements in health and social services and in overall status of women, the benefits of birth control will be limited. Women who truly benefit from family planning programs are those women who have been assisted to escape the material conditions of extreme poverty, social oppression and dependence.

All indications are that most of the resources mobilized in Cairo will be invested in the provision of contraceptives and fertility control, not in programs that strengthen women's economic and social roles.

There were other important issues missing from the Cairo agenda. The conference was supposed to be about global issues, but it did not address production and consumption in the North, global expenditures on weapons, or the environmental consequences of Northern lifestyles (let alone growing poverty in industrialized countries). It failed to consider that population growth in the Third World is commonly viewed as an assault on the global ecosystem - while the Pentagon's military production program creates a ton of toxic waste every minute. The fact that such issues were not on the Cairo agenda speaks to the interests that drive the population debate.

My perceptions of population program will always be shaped by the experiences of women from Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Brazil and, increasingly, industrialized countries like Canada. My biggest fear is that the resources generated by the Cairo conference will end up reinforcing existing population control approaches, lead to more abuses of women's human rights, and divert attention away from the root causes of underdevelopment.

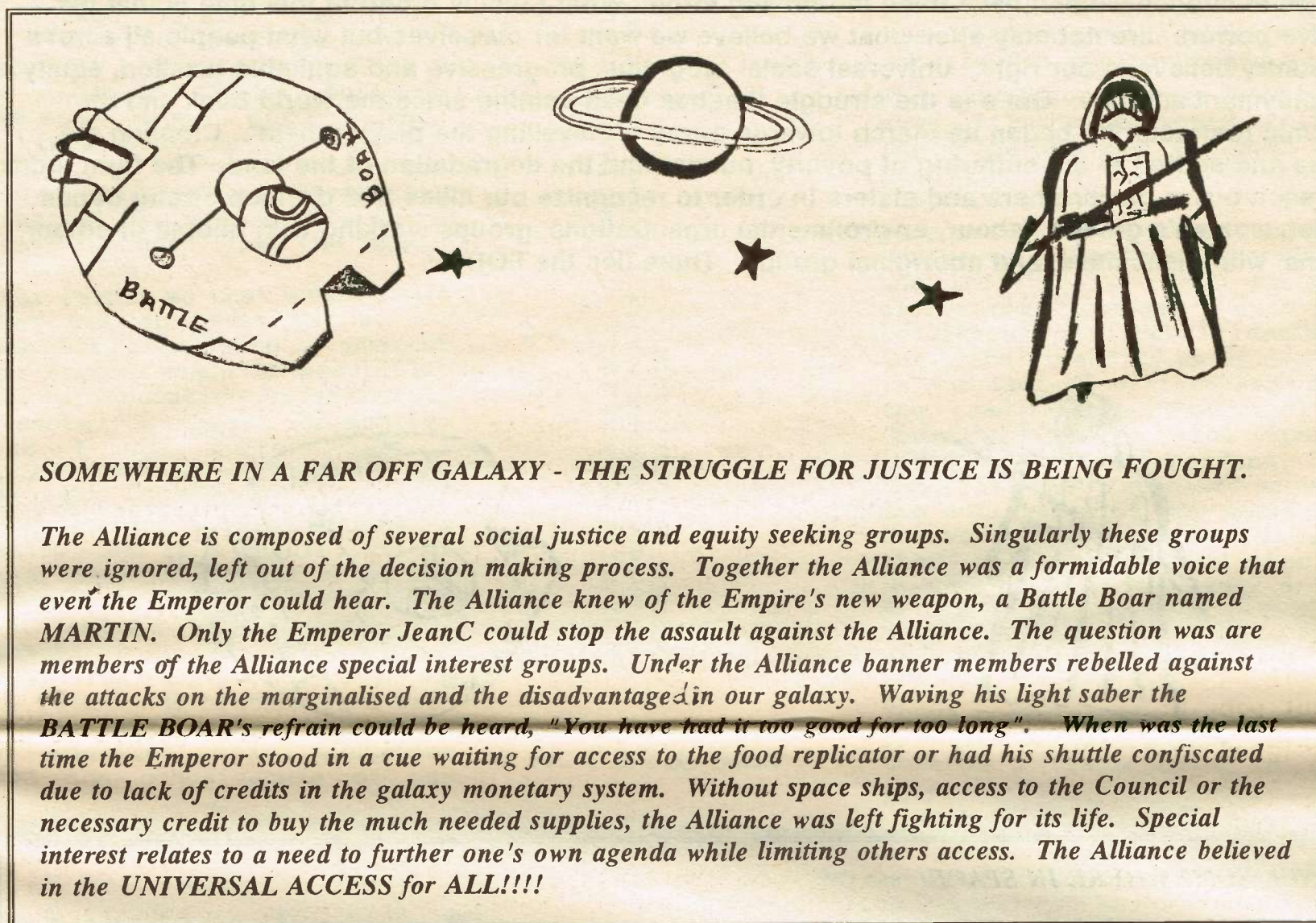
The Cairo conference is being trumpeted as a success for the US-led effort to enshrine women's rights, choice, and voluntarism as central principles in population programs. The fact that these principles are debated is positive. But until women are no longer treated as "objects" of government population control programs, until they are rightly seen as subjects of their own history, women's rights will not be met and justice will not be achieved.

Karen Seabrooke works for Inter Pares, an international social justice organization based in Ottawa.



MAY THE FORCE BE WITH US

~ WOMEN ~



SOMEWHERE IN A FAR OFF GALAXY - THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE IS BEING FOUGHT.

The Alliance is composed of several social justice and equity seeking groups. Singularly these groups were ignored, left out of the decision making process. Together the Alliance was a formidable voice that even the Emperor could hear. The Alliance knew of the Empire's new weapon, a Battle Boar named MARTIN. Only the Emperor JeanC could stop the assault against the Alliance. The question was are members of the Alliance special interest groups. Under the Alliance banner members rebelled against the attacks on the marginalised and the disadvantaged in our galaxy. Waving his light saber the BATTLE BOAR's refrain could be heard, "You have had it too good for too long". When was the last time the Emperor stood in a cue waiting for access to the food replicator or had his shuttle confiscated due to lack of credits in the galaxy monetary system. Without space ships, access to the Council or the necessary credit to buy the much needed supplies, the Alliance was left fighting for its life. Special interest relates to a need to further one's own agenda while limiting others access. The Alliance believed in the UNIVERSAL ACCESS for ALL!!!!

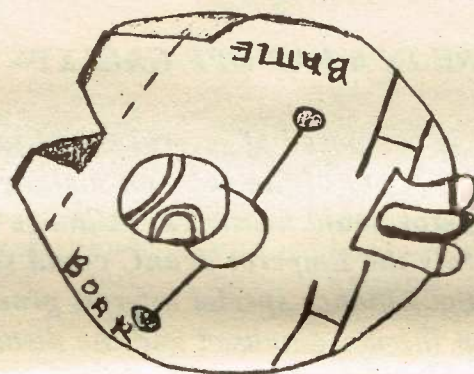
THUNDER BAY - NOVEMBER 1994

Special interest focuses on the few at the detriment of the many. When one works towards justice for the community as a whole one cannot be seen as a special interest. Inclusiveness and universality tolerates no special status but rather insists on principals that can only benefit the whole rather than the few. Coalitions today represent a wide spectrum of activities. Whether involved with single issues such as animal rights or wide sweeping concerns as human rights and environmental issues coalitions provide the forum for debate. Together groups support one another in terms of awareness building, outreach and community development. Decision making by concensus and the feminist process meets along the continuum of decision making and action. Such is our approach as women with a belief in social change. As long as one group, one person is being oppressed by anyone our work is not done.

The nineties have shed some light on the backlash against women as discussed in Naomi Wolf's book of the same name. How ♀ are portrayed in the media impacts directly on our treatment in the workplace, the academic environment and the social realm. Sexual orientation and the right of gays and lesbians to access the same benefits and treatment under the constitution and the laws of the land continues to be minimised. In this act, we suffer loss of our humanity and understanding of community as a holistic and living entity. Politicians like Skoke, a Nova Scotia MP who has spoken against gays and lesbians, have the support of the popular right which permits her to slander and make inflammatory, derogatory remarks about this community. These words are as dangerous as any action taken against individuals whether in marches of the Nazi - party or the bashing of innocent men and women by skin heads. Hatred and ignorance feed off each other and inevitably lead to escalated violence and bigotry.

Our rights as a community are being eroded by a concept that states that people, individuals are not equipped to determine the "best" approach to development. Social or economic development is left to faceless, powerful and centralized bodies who know little to nothing of you or your community. This is far from being new information yet our resistance to identify our common cause has limited our efforts, cut short our resources and has left us facing the GIANT alone.

The space parody reminds me of our time and place along the continuum. "First they came for..." was a poem that brought us face to face with our vulnerability and powerlessness in the hands of an unjust system. RESIST is now and has always been the cry of the people. We are but one person, how can we bring about change, contribute to positive social change and move our political system away from the fight? Women know this path. Women have traditionally been the invisible, unrecognized and unnamed catalysts for change. From getting the vote to fighting for meal programs in the schools and the right to choose women have been the driving force. What I feel is different this time is that the negative powers are not only after what we believe we want for ourselves but what people all across the country believe is our right, universal social programs, progressive and equitable taxation, equity in employment and pay. Our's is the struggle that has been coming since the world bank and the economic restructuring began its march towards a way of "levelling the playing field". Creating the ghettos and adding to the suffering of poverty, hunger and the degradation of the land. The fight today is to reach out to our brothers and sisters in order to recognize our allies and develop strong bonds between women's groups, labour, environmental organizations, groups working with people of colour, persons' with disabilities, and aboriginal groups. There lies the FORCE.



BACK SOMEWHERE IN SPACE

Co-opting our language and using our own words against us brought legitimacy to the EMPIRE's words. The BATTLE BOAR had to be stopped. Only the Alliance could bring together the necessary support to the all people. The FORCE was with them. Attributes of the Alliance and the Empire defined clearly who and what their mandates were:

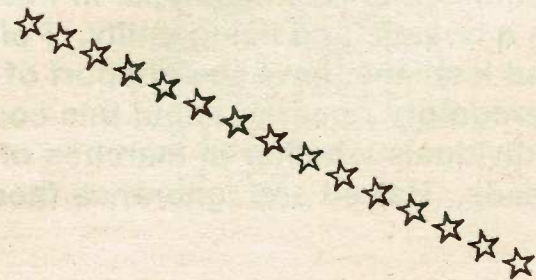
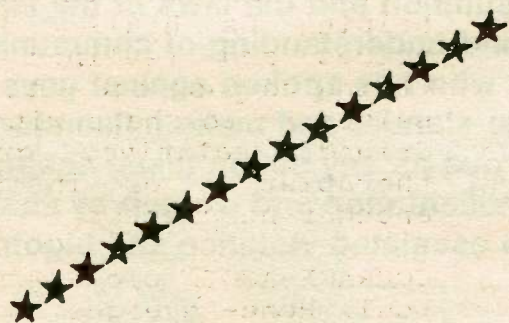
EMPIRE

*Dictatorial
Autocratic
Meeting rooms dictated rank*

ALLIANCE

*Democratic
Decisions were made using consensus
Coalition partners were equals*

The Alliance understands the need for diversity and discussion. Only through many different perspectives can we develop a purposeful and rounded approach to problem solving. While the Empire feels threatened with being challenged the Alliance welcomes the opportunity for self-examination and query. SPACE IS BIG and so is our place in it. The FORCE be with us ♀♀♀♀♀



THUNDER BAY NOVEMBER 1994

How do we as women with limited time, resources, energies and multi diverse interests get involved?

- ♀ Invite women to a kitchen table discussion. You won't know of what until you get there.
- ♀ Identify the organization/groups within your community doing "good works" according to justice and equity and support their endeavours.
- ♀ Get to know the positions of your federal, provincial and municipal representatives. On our behalf they are making decisions that impact directly on our everyday lives.
- ♀ Question, Query and Call. One phone call can mean the difference between having an event like a demonstrated or political discussion covered by the media and women's voices being heard..
- ♀ JOIN - Become an active member of your community. Whether from your home or office or sitting at an meeting your input is valuable, your experience invaluable.



Jocelyn J. Paquette

Presently, Vice President, (Francophone) with NAC Jocelyn is also an executive member of the Comité des femmes francophones du nord-ouest de l'Ontario and the Northwestern Ontario Women's Decade Council. Jocelyn's work includes ♀'s economic development, violence against ♀ and believes ♀'s oral history holds a truth that centuries held in trust.

Update

Human Rights Commission Upholds Women-Only Defence Course:

The Ontario Human Rights Commission recently refused to reconsider its dismissal of a sex discrimination complaint against WEN-DO. In 1988, Michael Celik claimed that, by refusing him admission to a women's only self defence course, WEN-DO discriminated against him as a man.

The Commission's decision marks the end of WEN-DO's 6 year legal battle to safeguard women's right to learn to protect themselves in a secure environment.

The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) has been sponsoring WEN-DO's case since 1988. In April 1991, the Commission dismissed Mr. Celik's complaint as "trivial, frivolous and vexatious." In its decision, the Commission acknowledged that WEN-DO's program is "specifically designed to teach women how to protect themselves against sexual violence by men. As such, it does not appear that the training would be of

particular benefit to the male complainant."

We are especially thrilled at the far-reaching implications of this case for women's organizations. We know that there are many organizations which, like WEN-DO, are deeply committed to women's rights, equality and safety and, as a result, restrict membership and/or services to women. The Commission's decision clearly recognizes our right to operate in this way and that this right does not infringe on the Ontario Human Rights Code.

WHEN WOMEN KILL

The National Film Board have released a new video, When Women Kill; a powerful documentary about battered women who, after years of violence, kill their abusers. There are three women featured who lead us through the stories of the abuse they endured, abuse that led them to that moment when they stood to defend their lives.

Against an historical background sketched by Ann Jones, the film examines the court's treatment of the "murderess," from the traditional defence of insanity

to the contemporary defence of the Battered Woman Syndrome, and challenges social and legal institutions to confront the systemic and widespread violence that men inflict daily on the homefront. For sales and rental information please call 1-800-267-7710.

COURAGE

Announcing Courage - a newsletter by female incest survivors

There are two main goals of COURAGE: to be a part of the process of helping to break down the walls of silence and denial; and to provide support, healing ideas, education and an exchange of information on incest.

Writing and/or artwork can be part of our healing. There is no right or wrong way for our writing or artwork to be in helping us heal. Our own voices and feelings may be trying to push out - to our own selves, - to share with a safe friend, relative, group or therapist - or in this or another newsletter.

COURAGE-ASOI c/o YWCA, 1355
boul. Rene-Levesque O.
Montreal, Quebec H3G
1T3 CANADA

P O E T R Y

by

Khadija Black

ubengi

don't comb your hair so natural,
you'll look like a man

don't wear so much beads
you'll look like a ubengi

and don't wear so much red
your skin is too black

now that your thirty
thinking back on all those
"don'ts" like dead ends, nerves
and cells in your body
you liked the colour red

now all the damage has been done
botched surgery on your self-esteem
besides, she's your mother

but the colour red is still bad
blood in your mouth
and when next to your skin

those "don'ts" have come back
our passing them down
to your children like bad heirlooms

don't wear so much gold
it makes you look cheap

why don't you take those
dreads out of your hair
you'll never get a job

and don't always sound so political
men don't want to hear that

now that your old you wonder
why your daughter doesn't
come around to visit you more

now that you have all this time
you begin to wonder
what was a ubengi?
and was it a bad thing?

all the white men
walking so confident

straight down
the middle isles

some in groups
making talk

their legs set
slightly apart

arms in pockets
or crossed on chests

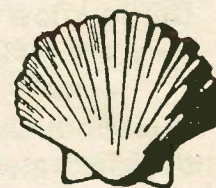
the women
clustered together

with possessive
arms around their
necks and waists

being pushed
slightly forward
or led just behind

all not afraid to have
their conversations
overheard

or look you straight
in the eye



this woman

this woman kneels
by the river
washing clothes white
on stone

washing away the sorrows
before going home

the life of this woman
is in the fields

her hands brown
with dried blood
and poor earth

back bent always over
but always under
the hot sun

in the distance the church
white against an azure sky
the voices of her people
gather to sing the tears away

late at night she meets
the man she jumped broom with
seeing his daughter for the first time
he's glad he came the long way

the life of this woman
is the life of most women
still as the earth beneath her feet

slow as the cycles all around her
the flow of her menstruum



raspberries

-for Denise

making our way
cautiously through thorns
the patches lined along
the sides

Denise,
with her mouth full
cheeks smeared
deep red

hands cupped,
and olive tanned
in the sun

the back of her legs
disappearing further
into the bush

we discuss the sweet ones
and how they would be good

with cream

fountain

little girl with black hair
cut short above the ears

sipping at the fountain

her back from above
gray and glistening

already dead

this is the position
he holds her in

late at night

bending over
her nakedness

a fountain

SUPERIOR WOMEN'S

COFFEEHOUSE

Saturday, February 18, 1995.

at 8:00p.m.

at the Unitarian House
129 S. Algoma

\$3.00 at the door
(or more if you can)

Year Poetry

by

Debb Hurlock

HOW CAN I EXPLAIN (When I know the world is not listening)

I find a tortured love
a shattered lull
when I visit spaces tucked away
in high corners of buildings
rooms that house the raw satiable creativity
of all my sisters
who cry through their art
to be free in the world
to live by the honesty that is alive
within their painting
within their print
within their clay
here their souls can roam and bask
in the beauty of being a woman,
the feminine being
celebrated for all it truly is.

In this world of structure,
a twisted political reality
women hide their expression
but in this suppression there is a freedom
women are naked without being vulnerable
they are no longer departmental
but are a universal goddess.

Yet slowly,
I see the empowerment of my sisters' spirit
being sucked dry by the very beings
who they have given life to,
while my being
the woman who I truly am
wages a war with my socialized self
battling for a calm
to live within the light without fear
without wanting to turn and run beyond.....

how can I explain
when I know the world is not listening.



MY MOTHER: Reader and Writer

My mother
cannot read
cannot write.

My mother can read life
better than any words, lines, sentences
that I could compose

my mother
can write the unspoken mysteries of humankind
the suffering of love
the passion of hate

my mother reads the unwritten passages of life
reading with soul
knowing the ways, just by knowing
and proudly believing in her beliefs

she is the courage I can only have on paper
she is the strong voice I can only speak through my pen
I
have always had my language
to help me discover
to help me understand
to help me heal,
my mother
has created a language of her own
and I am a reader of her work.

My mother:
reader and writer.

Join us for a

another WOMEN'S DANCE

on *Saturday, January 28, 1995.*

from 9:00pm to 1:00am

at the Multicultural Centre

17 N. Court St

\$5.00 at the door

(All proceeds to the Northern Woman Journal)

P O E T R Y

I WRITE POETRY AT HOME

where I don't have to keep
my hair up, my legs together,
my clothes on. Home,

where my fridge cajoles, my phone
jangles and my typewriter hiccupps
while I shove stubborn similes,

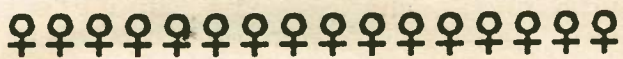
pound perfect personification
into bone-white bond. Home,
where I can bend, fold, spindle

and/or manipulate metonymy, add
audacious alliteration
and onomatopoeia

when I want. Home, where I lie,
cheat, kill, risk rhyme
and repetition, muddle

metaphor and meter - parenthesize
the landscape when I write poetry
at home.

K.V. Skene



Last Train

She felt a shudder
under her feet
when, at sunrise, the train came for her
at seventy five -

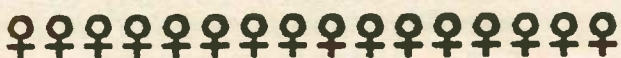
As a girl, at funerals, she held on to her hat,
suppliant to the wind which swallowed
the priest's words; and the tombstones rose elliptic,
transitory grails, she saw
swarming out of the ground, and
wouldn't understand.

Before her own last voyage, she again
paced the glowing vineyards of youth.

Old offender! Had she not acknowledged
volatility from champagne?
Learned goodbyes?
Releasement?

She's foolish forever!
And consumed by fires still
like a stubborn star drinking darkness.
She tries to forget. Her eyes glittering
from an ancient faith, a fugitive horizon
that toasts the present, receding in disbelief,
as the last train tunnels near.

Liliane Welch



poetry that tells the truth,
shares what is possible
and expands our view of
the world

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POETRY by

Joyce Michalchuk



GOODBYE

Pulling myself from the winter doldrums
of a good relationship gone bad
I wait and watch the sad, sad trickle
Of tears running rivulets through the melting, sullied snow
I run through them, kicking as I go
Thinking, what IS it I don't know
That makes me feel so...

Such is the state of affairs when a lover leaves
Such is the state of the heart when lost love is grieved.

Sometimes I feel like there are empty spaces inside
That people fill up with their respectful comments of me
Proof that I exist, and have some value in someone's periphery
In this empty place where I be
where people I hardly know
talk to people who hardly know me...

Such is the state of affairs when a lover leaves
Such is the state of the heart when lost love is grieved.

I walk briskly to burn off some new-found energy
after hearing a voice that says she loves me
Belonging to someone I hardly know
Someone who hardly knows me
Save for the public presentation
of some semi-powerful persona
A woman for all seasons.

A woman with the right reasons
A woman

A
L
O
N
E...

Such is the state of affairs when a lover leaves
Such is the state of the heart when lost love is grieved

Enough

is

ENOUGH.

In the Fall

In the fall
fruit flies swarm in the dance of death
as winter advances to take their breath
Trees bend, leaves scatter
wind switches branches o'er rivers pallor
In approaching winters gloom
your shadow haunts
Yet, I am alone in an empty room

Rebecca A. Banks

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CALL FOR SINGERS

A multicultural community choir will be formed in Thunder Bay by the Global Awareness Project in the new year. The intention of this project is to raise awareness of cultural issues, to share with and learn from each other, and to inspire our communities with our songs from the heart. The choir will be directed and facilitated by local singer/musician, Kim Erickson. The repertoire chosen will be contributed to the group by the individual members, and sung in their language of origin. Singers with instrumental or dance experience would be an added asset to the choir.

The choir will begin its rehearsals once a week in February, with the aim of doing some performances in May or June, both locally and in the region. Interested singers are asked to contact the Global Awareness Project 345-0914 or FAX # 345-0372 to indicate their interest. A preliminary information meeting will be held at the G.A.P. office, 285 Bay St., on Tuesday, January 10th at 7:30 p.m. Auditions may be required.

Tribal Identity and Feminism:

The woman who sits across from me is a grandmother, mother, community organizer, leader and activist. She is relaxed in her cotton shirt and jeans speaking passionately about the many things that she has learned on her life's journey.

My friend is a remarkable person. She is an Ojibway woman who was among the first to organize the women in our communities during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Like other women in our communities her life's work represents both the struggles and triumphs of our recent history as Aboriginal women living in Canada. On this wintry November night I have asked her to share her views about "feminism" with me. I am curious about the way in which we will either agree or disagree about the effects of "feminism" in our lives.

When we commence our discussion it is clear that we agree on essential distinctions about what I call our "tribal" identity and how this is often in direct contrast with our understanding of euro-centric definitions of "feminism." Having made this initial distinction my friend and I proceed in a way that clearly separates our experience as tribal women from euro-centric "feminist" thought.

We are quick to establish the context of our discussion. We agree that we are primarily interested in preserving a cultural perspective rooted in a tribal identity that is distinct from euro-centric definitions of the feminine. As Aboriginal or tribal women we believe that we possess an identity that is different from that of women who come from a European cultural tradition. My friend agrees with me that our experience as tribal women means that the ways in which we have defined ourselves historically, politically and culturally are based on a spiritual understanding of the feminine.

We agree that it is our responsibility as tribal women to achieve balance between the feminine and the masculine in human experience. We have been taught that there must be balance between men and women. Respect and recognition of one another's power is the imperative to this balance. We have been taught that we must allow for the expression of the feminine and the masculine within ourselves and in our relationships with others. As tribal women we believe that our source of power is integral to our identity and that we have numerous responsibilities that flow from this power.

We recognize that our perspective is rooted in the spiritual beliefs and values of indigenous or tribal Peoples throughout the world where the feminine is both respected and celebrated.

The evolving identity of Aboriginal Women

I have chosen not to understand feminism. I have other priorities.

- Marlene



The earth which has been defined for us in the feminine reveals this spiritual understanding. We have been taught that the earth is our mother, and that our continuing obligation as human beings is to show respect to the earth because she ultimately provides for all living things. Just like the earth, it is our understanding that the place of all tribal women is integral and central to human survival and balance, contributing to the whole of all living things.

In spite of our initial clarifications about tribal identity we realize that the task of defining what we mean when we refer to "feminism" presents a challenge for us. How do we define "feminism" from our tribal perspective? In considering the experience of women who do not share our tribal identity or cultural perspective I am reluctant to define or characterize their world view from the outside. I realize that I do not quite know how to define this term "feminism" in a way that it will satisfy the needs of others.

In all of my discussions with Aboriginal women we grappled with this question: How do we define "feminism" when we are not sure whether or not we are a part of the experience of "feminism"? How do we talk about the ways in which "feminism" impacts on our lives if we are not really sure of its relevance in our lives?

With respect to the definition of "feminism" my friend and I decide that this is very much a personal decision. Like other women we conclude that we rely on the personal, the subjective interpretation of how we may or may not be influenced by "feminism." Like many other women we define our experience or understanding of "feminism" in a myriad of ways. Our individual and collective exposure to feminist thought and literature varies. Some of us will agree that we subscribe to "feminist" thinking, while others declare it has no impact whatsoever.

In writing about the intersection between my tribal identity and "feminism" I can only describe this experience in a personal way. When women tell me that they are "feminist" and that they subscribe to "feminist" values and principles I have empathy for their struggles. I know their desire for recognition and respect.

In participating in this cross-cultural discourse I must write with personal responsibility and show respect for the euro-centric female tradition and the considered definitions of the feminine that flow from that experience. I will try not to offend women who do not share my tribal perspective. In spite of my good intentions however, I fear that I will offend other women but still I must attempt to write this article. Like other forms of cross-cultural discourse I believe that we have important things to say to one another.

My friend Marlene confesses that she has not studied or read much about feminist theory or feminist literature. Her exposure to modern day "feminism" and "feminists" she explains has been through her encounters with feminist advocates among Canadian women's political organizations.

As an advocate of Aboriginal women Marlene has attended numerous political meetings with the leadership of various Canadian women's groups. It is through this work that she has become aware of the feminist agenda among Canadian women. In assessing her experience with these women's groups Marlene concludes that "we are indeed well ahead of modern day "feminism" (as Aboriginal women)."

Marlene's view is that as Aboriginal women we have always had "our own feminism." She describes our power as traditionally exercised equal to and in balance with masculine power. She believes that "our power is interconnected with the masculine...that one doesn't go without the other."

Reflecting on the loss of our traditional role in decision-making as Aboriginal women within our own communities Marlene believes that " (although) we were always intrinsically involved in decision-making...the respect, the role that we played has been desecrated by white man's thinking."

Concerns about the erosion of the power traditionally exercised by Aboriginal women was echoed by Patti who said that "because of patriarchy...our men are told to keep us down."

"We're communities and we're families, we're not separate from them" declares Patti. She is concerned that feminist thinking is individualistic and that it affects the collective interests of the group.

In identifying her concerns Patti says that because hierarchy is a fundamental aspect of euro-centric thinking the social stratification is such that Aboriginal women are at the bottom. She argues that if Aboriginal women take up the euro-centric "feminist" agenda the end result is that Aboriginal women will participate in a hierarchical structure. Patti's conclusion is that Aboriginal women's acquiescence to this "feminist" agenda will only reinforce the power of non-Aboriginal women, and not advance the interests of the Aboriginal community as a whole.

Patti's commitment is clear when she says "I won't walk with the feminists, I will listen to them... I'll support them...but I won't stand with them...I will stand with our people."

"Women just wanted a better life, to participate in decision-making, to be able to vote, to be able to get jobs...being able to get jobs with better pay. (Women) were not being valued for the work that they did...to me that's what "feminism" is about...wanting to be valued and to be respected."

In our communities we are so oppressed that we oppress each other now...

- Patti

What are we on this earth for? I have had a lot of time to think about this, particularly in the last year, and it's not to make money, or to have standing in the community...we're here to create for the future, and that means having children, raising families, strong, good families.

- Marlene

I have had Grand Chiefs yell at me and call me a man-hater.

- Bernadette

Bernadette's understanding of "feminism" was shared by many of the Aboriginal women I spoke with. Like Bernadette they felt that the economic and political gains by European women in mainstream Canadian society could be attributed directly to feminism. The recognition of this however, was distinguished by the conclusion that the experience of Aboriginal women in Canada is fundamentally different from that of European women.

"Aboriginal women's groups really don't work with feminist groups because of our different culture and values...we still want the same things in some areas, but we also want some very different things...and we have a different way of doing this," is Bernadette's explanation of the separate agenda of Aboriginal women.

To illustrate this point Bernadette says "non-Native women's groups do not understand all the issues that we have, yes, they experience unemployment, shortage of housing and abuse, but not to the same extent that we do as Aboriginal women...that has come out in a lot of research and surveys that have been done. In comparison to non-Native women we make substantially less money than they do income-wise, we're more apt to be abused than they are, our children are more apt to be abused than their children." She attributes these significant differences in Aboriginal women's experience to history and present-day socioeconomic conditions.

The issues of race and class that often arise in the context of organizing for social change were identified several times by various Aboriginal women. Although most of the time these differences were referred to as "cultural" it was clear that they also converged on social and economic grounds.

The criticism of "feminism" by the Aboriginal women that I spoke to is that the women's movement is exclusionary, that it is framed within a narrow paradigm, primarily a "white" women's perspective.

In my view the "feminist" movement in Canada is exclusionary and that means Aboriginal women are not participating in this form of social change. However, I would also add that Aboriginal women, in addition to being kept out of the feminist movement have decided not to participate in this process. The reasons for this are numerous but the most profound are related to our tribal identity.

The arguments for maintaining our efforts separate from the mainstream Canadian feminist movement originate in our tribal identity. Our spiritual beliefs are paramount to euro-centric traditions of the feminine.

The Northern Woman Journal collective sincerely apologizes for the incorrect spelling of the name of Mary Meawasige in the 15.4 issue.

In my heart, I am a tribal woman first, an Eeou (human being) whose tribe over time has become known as Cree.

I grew up surrounded by strong, self-reliant and assertive women. My mother was the strongest influence in my life. The daughter of a Cree mother, and a Russian and Cree father, my mother, whose name was Lillian grew up with a strong sense of herself.

As a child I remember going to work with my mother at the library where she worked. My brother and I would sit quietly in the children's section reading books while our mother worked outside our home, making a specific contribution to the community. When I grew older I learned that the cedar building where we spent much of our childhood had in fact been built from the ground up by volunteers in our community (mostly women), along with the financial assistance offered by supportive groups like the women teacher's union.

My mother taught me that women could say what was on their minds. I remember her organizing a protest with her friends when the provincial Minister of Education travelled to our remote northern community. Although I was quite young I understood that my mother and her friends were protesting the fact that our community was without a high school and as a result, all of us (their children) would be forced to relocate to the south and live among strangers. I never did attend high school in my own community and had to go away for my education. My mother, father and brother came with me. Terms were everything and my mother insisted that education included the cohesiveness of our family.

All children are gifts...we've lost that in our own ways, as women we have a responsibility to take care of all children...this falls within our philosophy.

- Marlene

My aunt Daisy has told me that in our hunting and trapping communities the women and men worked together in a mutual interdependence that required respect.

She said that when the men would go away to hunt the women remained behind at the camp to take care of everything. While the men were gone the women maintained the camp in good order by chopping wood, changing the boughs, snaring rabbits, hunting birds and taking care of the children and the elders. Daisy told me that when the men came home the women helped the men with their harvest and prepared the food. The return of the men to the camp was celebrated with gratitude to the spirits for our continued survival.

When decisions were made by the community the men would confer with the women and that although the men announced the decisions, they were reached collectively.

Responsibilities to the collective interests of the community supercede the individual. This fundamental difference between euro-centric traditions of liberal ideology and our tribal identity manifests itself in our lack of willingness to adopt the methodology of mainstream Canadian feminism. The emphasis on individual independence that underlies the "feminist" movement is the antithesis of our world view. However, this is not to say that there are no commonalities. The struggles of white women are known to us. We empathize with their disempowerment. We recognize their desire for freedom from oppression.

These convergences are profound and provide a context for us to work towards a transcending of our own experiences.

By: S. Brenda Small

An Invitation to Pregnant Women

from the

Laurentian University

Midwifery Education Programme

The Ontario Midwifery Education Programme has a distance education site in Thunder Bay. We require all of our students to follow pregnant women through pregnancy, birth and the postpartum weeks, to learn about these experiences from the woman's point of view, to observe and to provide support in labour.

Are you interested in having a student midwife:

- visit you three times prenatally
- be present to provide support at your labour and birth
- visit three times postnatally

If so, please leave a message at this number:

622-4833

Thank you!

We appreciate your participation!

Women who had student midwives present at their births last year reported that they enjoyed their company and support. If you have questions about the Ontario Midwifery Education Programme in northern Ontario, please call Holliday Tyson, Director of the Midwifery Education Programme at Laurentian University at (705) 675-1151, Ext. 3951.

ONTARIO MIDWIFERY CONSUMER NETWORK (formerly known as the Midwifery Task Force of Ontario)

The Thunder Bay chapter consists of consumers, midwifery students and others who support midwifery. Anyone interested is welcome to attend bi-monthly meetings. Annual dues of \$30.00 support OMCN in their work of public education and consumer support. We believe midwifery is a valuable service to women and should be an available choice to pregnant women who are screened as low risk.

MIDWIFERY IN ONTARIO

As of Jan. 1994, the practice of midwifery was legalized by the province through the College of Midwives of Ontario. Each midwife has been qualified individually through standardized provincial exams. The services are now funded by the Ministry of Health. In Ontario there are less than 70 registered midwives. This number will grow as we see graduates from Laurentian, Ryerson and McMaster universities begin their practice two years from now. Thunder Bay is fortunate to have the Laurentian midwifery program located here for 1994-1997. The students enrolled here will become increasingly active and visible in our community.

MIDWIFERY IN THUNDER BAY

Our current practising registered midwife is Barbara Kemeny. She is now accepting clients into her practice. You can leave a message for her at 344-6754.

Now you have the option of choosing a doctor or a midwife as your primary care giver. A midwife provides care for you and your baby during pregnancy, the birth and for 6 weeks after the birth. Your prenatal appointments last an average of 45 minutes. A midwife makes several home visits. You will enjoy a close relationship with her. The midwife's holistic approach shows care and concern for all areas of your life which could affect your pregnancy.

The family, as defined by the mother, may also be involved in you pregnancy, birth and after the baby is born. The midwife is on call for your labour and stays with you for the entire labour. There will be a second attendant (a nurse) working with the midwife during your birth.

You will have the choice of birth place: home, birthing centre or hospital. What is right for one mother may not be a comfortable environment for another.

You will be well informed about your options and expectations so that you may participate in your care. The midwifery philosophy reflects a belief in the woman's own abilities and strengths to nurture her unborn baby, to birth and to mother. The midwife will help you build your confidence and trust to accomplish these tasks by her gentleness, teaching, listening skills and a genuine caring attitude!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To have any questions answered or to obtain information regarding our chapter meetings call Michele 473-4996. Talk over midwifery with a friend!

WOMEN BEWARE - BE AWARE

by Margaret Phillips

What kind of Canada do we want in the next decade, the next century? BE AWARE that Canadians are being asked this question **right now**. And no, the reference is not to the threat of Quebec separation. Rather, it refers to the federal social policy reform (the Axworthy "green" paper) that Canadians are being "consulted" about at this moment. For it is the conclusions of the social policy reform that will shape the future of our country.

It is really a question of national unity and of national identity. Our Canadian social policy, spending policy has shaped our national cohesiveness and our collective pride in Canada. The destruction of our social programs is the most serious threat to the Canadian nation.

BE AWARE, it is the destruction of our social programs that is being discussed. The social policy "reform" is not about **improving** our social security. The "reforms" suggested are driven by the Finance Minister's deficit reduction goal: Decrease the deficit by slashing social spending. What the politicians and mainstream media fail to acknowledge is that it is **NOT** social spending that has **created** the deficit. What women and other social justice advocates must keep loud and clear in the ongoing debate is that social spending must not be sacrificed to resolve a fiscal problem that social spending did not create.

In fact slashing social spending will have little effect on deficit reduction. The more probable hidden agenda behind the social program cuts is the "harmonization" required by the Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

The perception that social spending is "out of control" and must be "reined in" has been effectively orchestrated by politicians and the business lobby and, in the main, adopted by the media. This is, in part, due to a highly visible public discourse on social spending (with particular emphasis on "negative" stories), while the public is largely excluded from fiscal discussions.

It is seriously problematic that Axworthy's green paper is restricted to Unemployment Insurance, Post-Secondary Education and Welfare. The review does not deal with old age pensions, health care, and social spending for First Nations, which will be dealt with in individual reviews. The separation of these issues is, of course, politically motivated - it is more palatable to bash the young poor than the elderly poor. But to exclude an analysis of the impact of social spending cuts on the health of our population is dreadful (lack of) planning.

Most problematic is the exclusion of tax reform from these discussions. There are options to slashing social programs and Canadians should be informed of all options.

In a joint statement by the Child Poverty Action Group, Citizens for Public Justice and the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (titled PAYING FOR CANADA: Perspectives on Public Finance and National Programs) options are put forward including:

*Redesigning taxes. "A comprehensive review of all forms of taxation and tax expenditures should be immediately undertaken. Tax expenditures such as retirement savings exemptions, protected family trusts, and business corporate tax exemptions are perhaps more of a drain on public finances at a time of deficit crisis than social spending. In these cases, significant public revenues are "spent" on those who least need public support. . . . Tax deferrals and exemptions should also be reviewed. For example, the amount of federal taxes deferred by corporations due to fast write-offs for capital investment totalled about \$3 billion in 1972. By the early 1990s, corporations had deferred almost \$40 billion in federal taxes -- roughly equivalent to the nation's debt servicing charges."

* Re-regulate capital internationally. "Canada could assume a leadership role in the international community by calling for the introduction of a 1% transaction tax to be imposed on all currency trading in order to discourage short-term speculation, reduce exchange rate volatility and generate revenue."

* Refinance the debt. "Canadian taxpayers spend 25 cents of every tax dollar to service the \$41 billion federal debt. An increasing portion of that money ... leaves the country Reviewing these expenditures is at least as important as reviewing expenditures of social programs. A variety of mechanisms could be weighed, from renegotiating the yields from bonds, to introducing interest rate controls, to relying more heavily on long term, strictly domestic instruments such as Canada Savings Bonds. Canadian banks and other large bond-holders could be required to take marginally lower returns as part of the belt-tightening exercise that the government has required of the unemployed and working poor for the past three years."

The most important factor in addressing our country's fiscal problems is the creation of jobs - secure, adequately paid jobs. The federal government has targets for deficit reduction - why does it not have targets for job creation. The most important goal of the government should be full employment.

There are options here as well, for example the redistribution of employment: shorter work week, flexible work schedules for parents; policies to encourage employers to limit overtime. Secondly, the government should invest in public services - child care, community-based health care, etc., provide needed services and generate jobs.

Green Paper Impact on Women

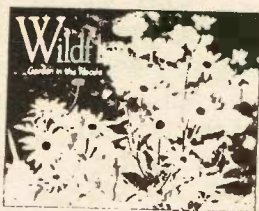
It should be pointed out that the impact of the "reforms" are not gender-neutral but will have the most serious effect on women, and will continue to erode women's financial security.



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Since 17 years after my marital separataion, people still ask why I don't go back to him. I wrote this letter of explanation.

The reasons why I never slept with my ex-husband once we were separated, and never seriously considered returning to him, except out of a sense of religious commitment:

I thought he was a bully, manipulative, dishonest, mean and petty, ignorant and uneducated, probably incapable of original thought, lousy in bed, stupid, having no particular talents, sexist, abusive, exploitative, selfish and self-centered, totally untrustworthy, and potentially dangerous (several times he threatened to have me killed). He had no morals and no manners. He was coarse and crude, had a poor comprehension of English, new ideas and logical conclusions, and could not follow or make rational arguments. He was physically



violent, punitive and vindictive and verbally abusive. Also, rigid and unstable. He could not handle money, was a poor judge of character and would not listen to good advice. He was a barely involved parent who felt parenting was "not his job" while we were married. When we separated, the visiting rights we at first agreed on (four hours per week) allowed him to spend more time with my son than he had been doing throughout my son's life up to that point.

To his credit, my ex-husband worked at his job nearly every day that he was supposed to, and he brought home the paycheque. I married him for financial support, and never really expected anything more. I knew before I married him that he would make a poor husband and father. However, being too young I did not

realize the significance of this fact. When he started pressuring me to work, I started looking for work. However, when he refused to give me money to pay for food in order to force me to leave, I had to leave or starve, or break the law to get food. I found I had no legal recourse. Support for a dependant wife is largely left to the goodwill of the husband. And I realized that such goodwill did not exist. I was a baby sparrow in his hands waiting for him to snap my neck, but if I could just survive long enough on my own, I might someday learn to fly.

Signed,
A Divorced Woman



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