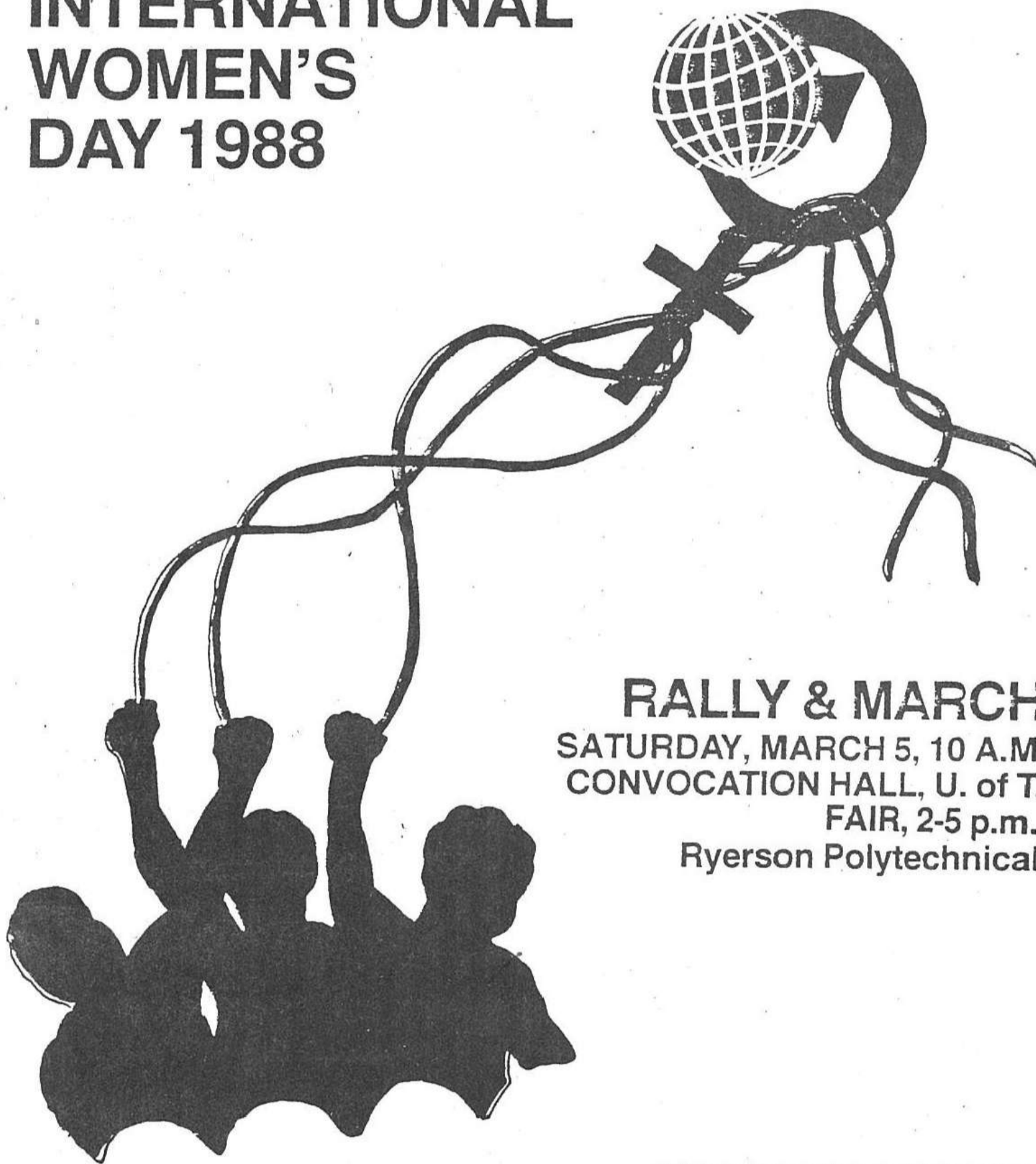


Rebel Girls' Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE 75¢

Socialist-Feminist News and Views from the International Women's Day Committee

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 1988



RALLY & MARCH
SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 10 A.M.
CONVOCAION HALL, U. of T.
FAIR, 2-5 p.m.
Ryerson Polytechnical

**WOMEN UNITE
TO FIGHT RACISM, SEXISM
& ECONOMIC INEQUALITY**

Rebel Girls' Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

Socialist-Feminist News and Views from the International Women's Day Committee

ABORTION RIGHTS WON THROUGH WOMEN'S STRUGGLE

by Carolyn Egan

The Supreme Court decision is a tremendous victory for women! The court ruled that the criminal code fundamentally denied equal access to abortion, and therefore denied women's right to control our bodies and our lives. What the chief justice referred to as "state interference with bodily integrity" is no longer legal.

Our fight for reproductive freedom is far from over, but in the long struggle for women's liberation, this decision may be the most significant state recognition of women's basic rights since we won the right to vote. As socialist-feminists we know the limitations of individual legal rights in a bourgeois democracy, but at the same time we proudly claim this victory. It shows all those struggling for change that we have the power to stand up to the state and win! The overturning of the federal abortion law is the result of long years of struggle by pro-choice activists and feminists, with strong support from unions, lesbian and gay

organizations, immigrant groups and the broader community.

IWDC was one of the founding members of the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics, and has always played a leadership role. Throughout the past five and a half years IWDC activists, along with other socialist-feminists, have brought a class perspective to the abortion rights struggle. OCAC has said from the start that there was access to abortion, but that it was very privileged access. It has been the working class woman, the rural woman, the immigrant woman, and the woman of colour, and others without money and resources, who had been denied abortions. This campaign was placed firmly within the broader struggle for reproductive freedom and women's liberation. We have stated clearly that for all women to have real choices in our lives, we must also have universal childcare, decent jobs, paid parental leave, employment equity, the right to live freely and openly as lesbians, safe and effective birth control with services



The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics organizes for full access to free abortion

and information in our own languages and communities, and an end to forced or coerced sterilization, which primarily affects Native, Black and disabled women.

We know that legal rights are not enough to ensure working class women the right to abortion. We have to make sure that the facilities are in place so that every woman has full access to free abortion in her community.

In Ontario the Minister of Health has stated that approval of abortions by therapeutic abortion committees is no longer required.

The province must immediately provide full funding for the Scott and Morgentaler clinics which have become symbols of women's resistance across the country. It must move quickly to increase funding and resources so that existing facilities can meet the demands upon them, and initiate a new network of clinics providing abortion, mid-wifery, birth control, sexuality counsel-

ling, and other reproductive services. The federal government must be stopped from bringing back a restrictive law.

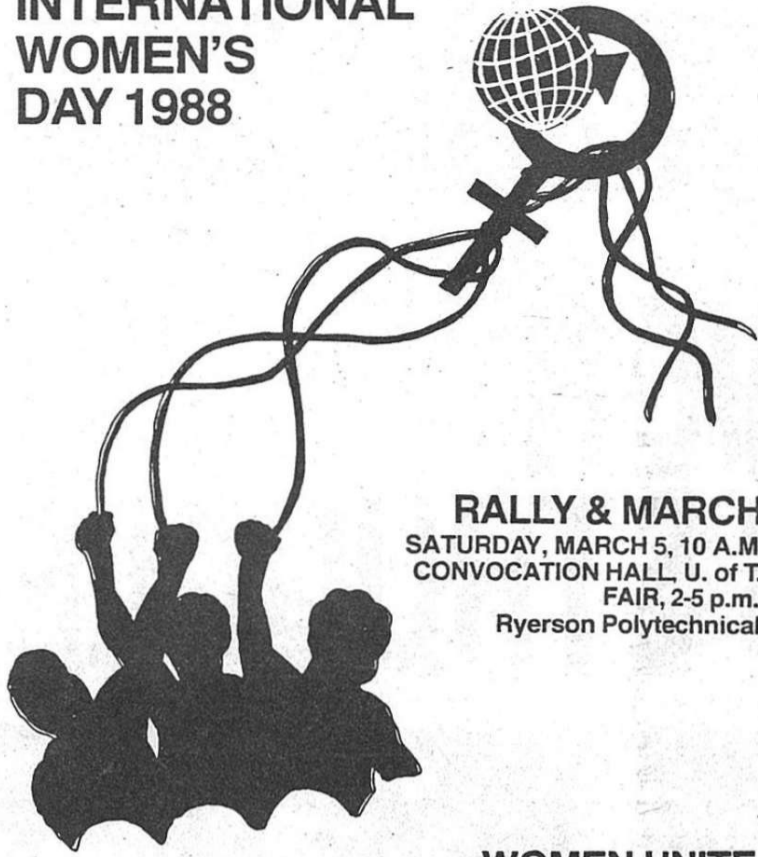
OCAC will continue to work with pro-choice organizations across Canada and Quebec. We must never again have a situation in which a woman from Prince Edward Island must leave her province to obtain an abortion, in which a low income woman is denied an abortion because she cannot pay for it, or in which a Black woman is coerced by a therapeutic abortion committee before her abortion is approved. A strong fight back has already begun in British Columbia against Vander Zalm's repressive restrictions led by the BC Coalition for Abortion Clinics. We have shown that change takes place through the strength of a movement. We must continue collective mass action across the country to win both this struggle and the longer term goal of women's liberation through a socialist society.



The labour movement has been a consistent ally.

International Women's Day 1988

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The March 8th coalition is organizing a rally, march and fair for International Women's Day, Saturday March 5th. The rally is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. at Convocation Hall at the University of Toronto. The March is going through downtown Toronto and ending at Jorgenson

Hall, Ryerson. The theme is "Women Unite to Fight Racism, Sexism and Economic Inequality" with the specific issues of "No to Free Trade", "Employment Equity", "Lesbian Rights", "Sexual Freedom", and "Solidarity Against Imperialism".

No to Free Trade Yes to Full Employment

by Carolyn Egan and
Shelly Gordon

It is important for socialist feminists, as well as trade unions, immigrant women's groups and other organizations of the disadvantaged, to oppose Canada's proposed free trade deal with the United States. It is not, as some say, a debate between sectors of the ruling class in Canada and the U.S.A., a debate that makes no difference to the working class.

It is a trade deal that will have a severe and adverse social and economic impact on working people and disadvantaged groups. As Marjorie Cohen said in "Women and Free Trade" in a previous issue of this newsletter, greater economic integration between Canada and the U.S.A. in the current Reagan/Mulroney political framework will lead to lower wages, encourage "right to work" forces and wipe out local industries in which visible minority, immigrant and women workers are concentrated (garment and small auto parts). It may also result in the dismantling of public social and health programs.

How do socialist feminists oppose free trade? Do we join in the nationalist rhetoric that implies that Canadian capitalists and the Canadian state are more humane than their American counterparts? Are medicare and unemployment insurance a result of "Canadian culture"? Or are they gains in workers' rights, health care and social services that have been won by trade unions and social movements on the picket lines and through our demands and actions?

Our argument against free trade has to be in the interests of women, people of colour and workers.

Free trade is a part of the big economic picture and we have to oppose it that way.

Free trade is the response of most North American capitalists to an economic problem. Part of the reorganization of the world economy following the 1973 recession, it is one of a package of economic measures introduced by neo-conservative governments led by Thatcher, Reagan, Mulroney and others. It goes hand-in-hand with privatization of social services, erosion of trade union rights and wages falling behind inflation.

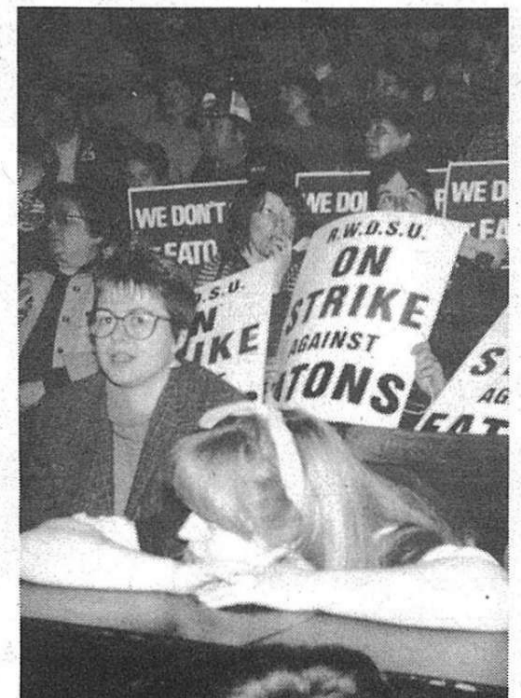
Most Canadian businesses believe that their interests are strengthened and their profit potential increased by freer competition. They will have access to bigger markets, be able to transfer investments to "right-to-work" areas (eight U.S. states have no minimum wage and some have 8% unionization), and be able to shift work away from struck plants. It is usually the most disadvantaged sectors of the labour market, women and people of colour, who get hit the worst when jobs disappear or move.

The notion of the "level playing field" of free trade will put pressure on the Canadian government to lower the cost of labour and social programs for Canadian businesses (that is, "cut back").

Some Canadian businesses oppose free trade as it threatens their profits, not because they worry about Canadian culture and Canadian social programs. Magna International, Quaker Oats and the Toronto Star do not have the same agenda as we do.

We have to speak up, making sure that an independent anti-capitalist position is heard in the debate on free trade. We must ad-

vance our vision of a new society, against the amorphous "Canadian culture" we hear defended in free-trade rallies. Every working class, farmers', women's, Native, and immigrant organization in Quebec and English Canada is discussing and taking a position on free trade. It is a big opportunity for socialists. We have to be there, talking about building a society based on realizing human potential and meeting human needs, not profit; a socialist society which is anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-heterosexist.



Communication Workers Organize Bell

by Sheryl Boswell

The campaign launched by the Communications and Electrical Workers of Canada to sign up 17,000 Bell Canada clerical workers in Ontario and Quebec is one of the largest unionization drives ever embarked on in Canada. Launched in mid-September, the organizing drive has until March 14 to sign up fifty per cent plus one of the clerical workers. If successful, it will have an important and significant effect on the labour movement. The unionization of Bell clerical workers would be an important development for clerical workers, especially in the private sector.

ical workers, especially in the private sector.

About ninety per cent of the 17,000 clerical workers are female. A sizeable percentage are women of colour and immigrant women. They are currently represented by the CTEA, the Canadian Telephone Employees Association, a company union which was formed in the forties and still hasn't been able to provide for the basic rights and protection of its membership.

In 1985, the CWC initiated a drive to sign up the clerical workers, but only a minority (3,000) supported the move to unionize. The

organizing drive had to be postponed until there was more support.

The Communication Workers of Canada was founded in 1972 with a membership of 4,000. In 1984, Electrical workers in Ontario and Quebec left their American International and merged with the CWC, creating the Communications and Electrical Workers of Canada. During the last ten years, the CWC has made an important contribution to the labour movement. The CWC was the first union in the private sector to negotiate for paid maternity leave (The Postal workers led the way in the public sector). Their negotiations for pay equity have resulted in 48 women in clerical and operator jobs being transferred to craft jobs. As part of the Canadian Labour Congress, the CWC has been very active in the area of women's rights and issues.

The membership of the CWC now totals 40,000.

Since 1976, over 20,000 Bell Canada employees have left company unions to join the CWC. In 1976, the CWC organized the craft unit in Bell, a predominantly male section. In 1979, 15,000 telephone operators, the majority women, were signed up. Following that successful unionization drive, the operators went out on a strike in 1980 and they won.

Four CWC staff are working full-time on the latest campaign, with a lot of support from other CWC members as well as from the community. You can help by joining CWC staff and volunteers in the phone drive to encourage people to sign a card and support the CWC. Drivers are also needed to get people signed up. Call the CWC office on Cecil Street for more information.

the distance between us



Sandra Gregson

International Lesbians and Gays of Colour Conference

INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAYS OF COLOUR CONFERENCE
JULY 29 - AUGUST 1, 1988

Lesbians and Gays of Colour-Toronto is planning Canada's first international conference for lesbians and gays of colour. This will be the 5th conference of its kind. Three previous conferences have been held in New York, Chicago, and most recently, in Los Angeles.

Lesbians and Gays of Colour-Toronto is a group of individuals and organizations. Some of us attended a previous conference and because of what we experienced and learnt, are excited about having the next one in Toronto. We hope that lesbians and gays of colour in Canada will take advantage of the event by participating. We want to create an atmosphere in which some of what we will think about more are pertinent issues which are linked to our lives. Workshops will deal with coalition po-

litics, AIDS, interracial hostilities - us, the media, the state, fundraising, making links, lesbian, gays and laws.

GRASS ROOTS is the conference's theme. It will be held July 29th to August 1st 1988. During that weekend, there will be a series of workshops, films, entertainment, speakers, lots of time for informal discussion, meeting, and a dance. We are expecting lesbians and gays from the Philippines, New Zealand, England, and U.S.A.

Contact us at:
(416) 535-1712, ask for Michele.

Write to:
ILGCC, P.O. Box 6597
Station "A"
Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X4
Send us your name and address so that we can send you other information.
Conference space will be limited so let us know as soon as possible about your interest in attending.

Nicaraguan Feminist Speaks

by Nancy Farmer

Sofia Montenegro, a Nicaraguan Feminist, journalist and senior editor of *Barriada* will be speaking in Toronto March 4th, as part of the International Women's Day Celebrations.

Sofia who has been a member of the FSLN since 1977, worked as a messenger and ran safehouses, before the triumph.

Sofia who speaks perfect English, will be an inspiration to all of us. She also will give us some straight talk on the women's movement in Nicaragua and an update on the peace process.

Sofia's tour is being organized by a group of Toronto feminists and solidarity

activists. We will be fundraising to cover the expenses of bringing Sofia to Toronto. As well, Tools For Peace, Toronto is organizing a two week tour for Sofia around the province. She will be visiting places such as Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Peterborough. This will give us the opportunity to do some excellent educational work with people who live outside the metro area.

Please join us:

Friday, March 4th, 7 p.m.
Harbord Collegiate
Auditorium (3 blks. west of Bathurst)
A \$4.00 donation will be requested.



What is to be done

by Jennifer Stephen

We have all asked at least once: "What should we do about the NDP?" While many socialist feminists view social democracy with varying degrees of skepticism, the NDP is seen as a legitimate place for political work. What remains unclear, however, is how closely we should work with the NDP.



Some socialist feminists regard the party of home-grown social democracy as too entangled in mainstream electoralism. To work in this arena seems a travesty. Others acknowledge the importance of a limited relationship with the NDP, at least around specific issues. Still others reject the party like a love relationship turned sour, the memory of which brings shudders, although not necessarily any sleepless nights.

Left activism in the NDP has shifted between two strategies: an organized opposition within; and, critical support - primarily from the outside.

The Campaign for an Activist Party proposed to carry out an agenda of internal change, building on the shards of an organized left opposition within the NDP. CAP represented two distinct strategies within the Ontario NDP: a rather beleaguered effort to reform democratic socialism through an infusion of a coalition politics; and a strategy to consolidate the strength of the organized left and left-feminist fraction in the NDP.

The attempt to organize both the left and left-feminists into CAP was unsuccessful. The left caucus in the party continues its efforts to integrate a feminist and an anti-racist politics into its programme.

None of these questions was resolved during the short life of CAP. It is still important to know that they were raised. They suggest a central question: will a social democratic programme invariably fail on the question of the fundamental, structural change which is posed by a mass action strategy? The NDP does not share the strategy of mass action with the social movements it might view as its base.

The party's operation does not accommodate coalition politics. Individual members of CAP found this out when they faced strong pressures against speaking out at the last Ontario NDP Convention. There is no or-

eously attempting to shift the political priorities of the NDP toward feminist demands.

The campaign has developed in reaction to the patriotic economic nationalism of the larger anti-Free Trade campaign. The Women Against Free Trade Campaign intends to present alternatives to free trade on the one hand, and economic nationalism on the other. More specifically, the campaign will focus on the negative impact of free trade on women, women's employment, and the erosion (privatization) of social service and health programmes.

We are drawn to the Campaign by its politics and the high-profile participa-



THE EXHAUSTING STRUGGLE FOR SLEEP



The strategy of internal reform through the integration of a coalition politics raised an entirely different set of strategic questions. To what extent can an alliance be forged between social movements and an electoral party like the NDP? Is such an alliance even desirable for a social movement which is organized around a coalition politics? Can the NDP be made accountable to the social movement in such an alliance? Can the autonomy of social movements be maintained, or will the independent agenda of that movement inevitably be co-opted: a) for electoral purposes, and/or b) within the legislative arena where compromise is paramount?

ganized room for the oppositions' voice. While this may be construed as ever greater reason to support the efforts of reform-from-within campaigns like CAP, it also demonstrates the limits imposed on such reform strategies.

The latest attempt to increase the social and political relevance of the NDP on feminist issues is the Women Against Free Trade Campaign. It appears to combine both strategies of organized opposition and critical support. Unlike CAP, this campaign is geared specifically toward raising feminist support for the NDP. Left-feminists from the party are working in coalition with groups outside the NDP, while simultan-

tion of left-feminist (New Democrat) allies. What will happen as the federal election draws near? The Ontario NDP, guided by electoral concerns rather than policy, is reluctant to organize around the free trade issue for fear that all electoral gain will fall to the Liberals. The federal party maintains an economic nationalist position. If it is not in their electoral interests to campaign on free trade, the Women Against Free Trade campaign will find no support there. The political importance of the issue to women will not be the decisive factor.

Will the Women Against Free Trade campaign have to modify its demands in order

Recent attempts have been made to bridge the gap between the party and social movements. Two such efforts require particular attention: the Campaign for an Activist Party (CAP), and the proposed Women Against Free Trade Campaign.

e with the NDP?

to get NDP support during an election period? When does modification become compromise?

Electoral support is one way that a coalition with the NDP can defuse a social movement. Another is in the legislative arena where demands put forward by popular democratic organizations are transformed in legislative language and reform.

For example, concessions made around the pay equity bill resulted in a piece of legislation that significantly altered the original demands of the Equal Pay Coalition.

We are seeing the same process in the implementation of the Powell Report recommendations concerning increased access to abortion in Ontario.

The NDP does have the best policy, electoral and legislative programmes for "women's issues". Social democracy can readily accommodate the reforms demanded by liberal feminists. The NDP is built on the labour movement and has historically allied with popular democratic grassroots organizations to strengthen its popular and electoral base. Its structure is more democratic than that of the Conservatives or Liberals.

We must not forget, however, that the name of the game for the NDP is winning elections. Its goal is to capture the swing vote and hold it at election time. This is when we test its accountability to the social movements that support it. When Howard Pawley's Manitoba government attacked the only free-standing abortion clinic in the province, we were reminded of the difference between electoral opportunism and political alliance. We could not have asked for a clearer example of the gulf between our agenda and that of social democracy.

We can see the same kind of performance from the Ontario NDP on several key issues: abortion and reproductive rights, racism and employment equity among them. The Ontario NDP won kudos from lesbians and gays for running a gay man in Toronto in the last election. They also won some new electoral support. They haven't done anything since, inside the party or publicly, to advance lesbian and gay rights.

Excellent policies dealing with a wide range of issues remain just that: policies which get reprinted every two years in time for regular conventions. On the

hustings the NDP is talking about universal auto insurance and protecting tourists from rip-off travel agencies (making the world safe for tourism). It seems that the NDP only moves on our demands when they are under strong popular pressure and they can see electoral gains. These priorities are entirely consistent with the view of the NDP as a mainstream political machine.

As the federal NDP moves into second place we can expect a renewed period of courting and wooing. Critical support for the NDP should depend, as always, on

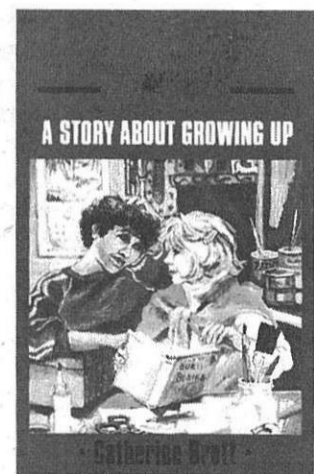
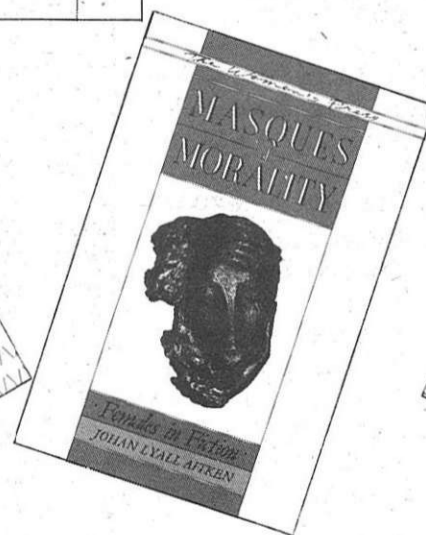
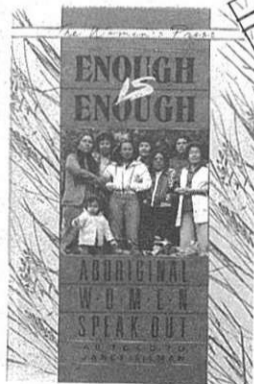
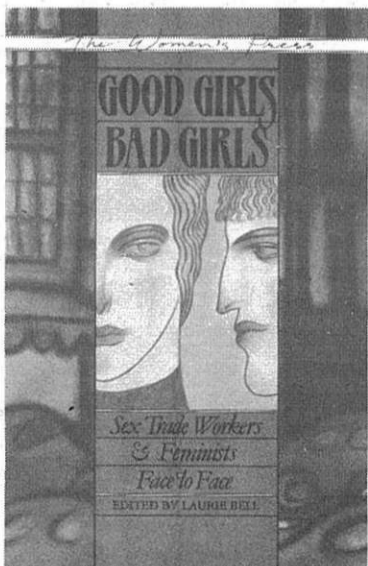
its response to our key demands.

We must continue to work with activists inside the party, while ensuring that our issues are not transformed or modified to make them more acceptable to the leadership of the party.

This does not mean that we are out to satisfy the electoral aspirations of the NDP. The party will not give us unconditional or unilateral support. The party wants votes for electoral gain but without accountability. That is why we must not confuse critical support on key issues with blanket support for the NDP.



The Women's Press



Shopping with Sindee and Sandy

by Sindee and Sandy

"Style" wrote Alfred Hitchcock, "is self-plagiarism."

There are women I know who simply cannot shop - whose forays into clothing stores are a time of anxiety, terror and the overwhelming compulsion to buy anything that looks halfway decent. Their driving need is to get the hell out of the store and head for the nearest bar.

Are you someone who can't buy anything? You have a job interview or your brother's wedding is fast approaching and every time you head out to shop - the clothes all look the same - colours all merge together and you can't remember where you saw it or what colour it was.

The problems inherent in buying clothes are not simple. If I wear a dress do I shave my legs? -- If the dress is sleeveless do I shave my underarms? One would think that after twenty years of the women's movement these dilemmas would no longer be relevant - but honest to God folks I have had discussions about the problems of body hair regularly in the last few years.

I must stop here and confess that I have a lot of ambivalent feelings about this column. This seems so non-serious that I can barely stand it. But like it or not, how we look and how we feel about ourselves and our appearance is important to all of us. While we can talk endlessly about the struggle for more choices in our lives, most of us would probably like to eliminate a lot of the choices when it comes to shopping.

I like to shop - surprise, surprise - and so, I'm told, does Sindee. While Sindee is a frequenter of church bazaars, with the most amazing luck, I've recently started dropping into Holt Renfrew. Sometimes I enter from the basement shopping mall - an attempt at anonymity. In Holt Renfrew there are no bright lights, no loud music and no sales people overwhelming you with unwanted attention. I don't often buy anything, but the store exudes calm and quiet and allows me to indulge in one of my favourite pastimes - feeling silk shirts, stroking cashmere and fine wool sweaters, and Holt's has a wonderful chocolate counter on the first floor. Fortified by the calm I'm ready to hit Bloor Street again.

My advice to those of you daunted by the task of acquiring new clothing - go with



a friend who at the very least doesn't hate shopping. Make it an event - plan your route - wear comfortable clothes - start early before the crowds (sounds a bit like organizing for a demonstration) - hit the stores and plan a quiet lunch as a treat or drop by the top of the Park Plaza - a balm for any anxious soul.

Actually the clue to successful shopping is realizing that you have a style of your own - your own look. And you actually know what you want and don't want. Most importantly you shouldn't take any of this too seriously.

Happy shopping.

"Those SHOES!
I must have
Those SHOES!"

Confessions of a CRAZED SHOPPER

The charge card whispered "USE ME!"
The money pleaded "SPEND ME!"
And everywhere she went, the
merchandise pleaded "BUY ME!"

SEE ONE WOMAN'S INNOCENT
BROWSING TURN INTO A FULL-FLEDGED,
BLOODTHIRSTY SHOPPING FRENZY
BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES!

SHE CHARGED
WAY OVER HER CREDIT LIMIT -
BUT NOTHING COULD STOP HER!
(EXCEPT MAYBE THE BILL THAT WOULD
ARRIVE IN THE MAIL A FEW WEEKS LATER!)

IN EYE-CATCHING
GRAB-O-VISION

\$ CASH ONLY - NO CHECKS OR CREDIT CARDS
WE KNOW YOUR KIND

NO ONE WILL BE SEATED DURING THE CLIMACTIC BARGAIN SALE SCENE!

Women and Solidarity with Southern Africa

by Sheryl Boswell

A national workshop is being planned for June 1988 to discuss:

- 1) the need to mobilize Canadian women in solidarity with the liberation struggles within Southern Africa;
- 2) the need to build awareness of the role of women in the South Africa and Namibia liberation struggles and in the Front Line states; and
- 3) the need to build on what we bring as women to solidarity work.

Those involved in the planning and design of the workshop have a commitment to ensure a participatory process before, during and after the workshop. Therefore, we would like participation to be as representative as possible. Registration is limited to seventy-five participants. Two committees, planning and administration, have been formed and will meet Saturday, February 13th and then every second Saturday thereafter in a central Toronto location.

If you are interested in being involved in the administration or planning of the workshop or would like some information, please call Sheryl at 537-8640.

FREE ALL SOUTH AFRICAN AND NAMIBIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

NO BAD WOMEN; JUST BAD LAWS

by Debi Brock

In 1984, new legislation was introduced to criminalize communication for the purpose of prostitution (Bill C-49), and as a result, prostitutes who work the streets have endured intense police harassment. Many have gone to jail as a result of the Bill. Over the past year, police have begun to crack down on escort services as well.

Prostitutes are now under further attack by the state through the inclusion of the offences of keeping a common bawdy house and living on the avails of prostitution in a new Bill designed to take the profit out of crime. Through Bill C-61, anyone who is charged with either of these offences would have all of her/his assets seized, from bank accounts right down to personal possessions. This means that prostitutes who work out of their own homes could lose everything, simply for trying to work independently, off of the streets. Should their lovers be charged with living on the avails of prostitution (according to the law, anyone who lives with a prostitute must be a pimp), her/his assets could also be seized.

Should this Bill pass into law, life will be made even more difficult for those prostitutes who simply want to stay off of the streets,

and determine who they choose to live with and/or financially support. Should this Bill pass into law, more prostitutes who currently work from their own homes will choose to take their chances on the street (where arrest is inevitable), rather than risk losing everything that they own.

While prostitution per se is not illegal, there is no place from which they can work without committing a criminal offence. These women and men need to earn a living like everyone else. Yet it is clear that the harassment of prostitutes is intensifying. Prostitution legislation, which is based upon a conservative moral code, denies prostitutes the right to dignity which all workers should have, regardless of occupation. We must join prostitutes' rights activists in condemning Bill C-61 and fighting for the decriminalization of all prostitution related legislation.

**TOOLS
FOR PEACE
OUTILS DE PAIX**



Tools For Peace Toronto was able to purchase a trunkload of rubber boots for Nicaraguan women, with funds partly raised through the benefit - "Let's Give Reagan The Boot Party."



REBEL GIRLS' RAG

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

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We are a socialist-feminist group which operates on the principle that mass action is our most effective instrument of change. We believe that the oppression of women touches every aspect of our lives and that the liberation of women will require fundamental changes in the structure of society.

We hold bi-weekly meetings where our policy and overall direction are determined. Smaller committees work on specific events or issues or in different constituencies.

We welcome new members. For more information phone Nancy at 531-6608.

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Shelly Gordon 247-7181.)

This issue put together by:
Sheryl Boswell, Debi Brock,
Carolyn Egan, Nancy Farmer,
Sandy Fox, Mary Gellatly,
Shelly Gordon, N. de Plume,
Jennifer Stevens.

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Press for the use of their
facilities.

Signed articles do not neces-
sarily reflect the views of
the International Women's Day
Committee, but those of the
author.



Country singer

Rebel Girl Patsy Cline

Photo: N. Farmer

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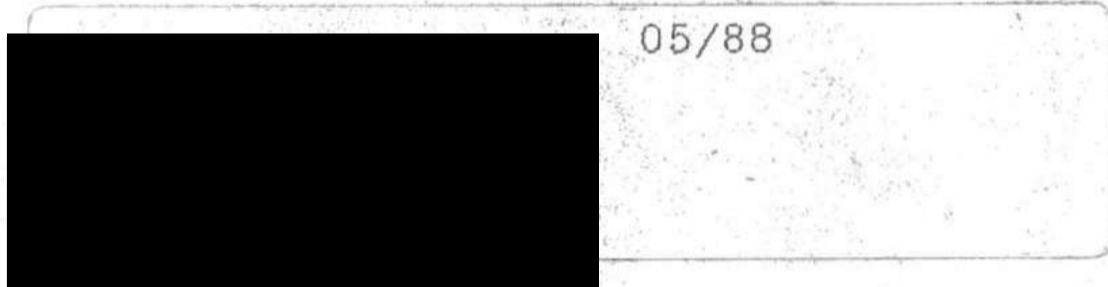
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International Women's Day Committee, P.O. Box 70, Station F, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2L4

International Women's Day Committee
P.O. Box 70, Station F
Toronto, Ontario
M4Y 2L4



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NATIVE WOMEN
PARTICIPATE IN
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY
MARCH, 1987

