

Rebel Girls' Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

Vol. 4, No. 1

September/October, '989

75¢

News & Views from Toronto Socialist Feminist Action



by: Nancy Farmer

400,000 Celebrate the 10th Anniversary in Nicaragua.

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Choice on the Line

by Carolyn Egan

Chantal Daigle has become a symbol of women's resistance across Canada and Québec. She has shown that women will defy any attempts by the courts, the legislature or the anti-choice forces to deny us our reproductive freedom. Toronto Socialist Feminist Action strongly supports her decision to seek an abortion in defiance of the Québec Court of Appeal's ruling, and demands that no charges be laid.

Tens of thousands of women and men demonstrated in solidarity with her, expressing outrage that the courts were forcing a woman to continue a pregnancy or go to jail. This shocking manifestation of state interference in a woman's life galvanized tremendous support for the abortion rights movement, but at the same time it showed the strength of the forces against us. The situation faced by Chantal Daigle also brought home to many what is concretely at stake in this struggle -- the fundamental right to reproductive control. We must continue to mobilize support against the imposition of a new criminal law, as well as for the broadening of access, or we will be facing the situation where the majority of women will be denied this democratic right.

As a result of one woman's tremendous courage in the face of state repression, and because of the strong support that was organized in the streets, the pro-choice movement was able to beat back this attack. But the battle is far from over. There is a tremendous amount to be won or lost in the next few months. The federal government has promised to bring in new legislation in

the fall, and it is only strong, cross-country mobilizations that can stop it. The Canadian Abortions Rights Action League (CARAL) has put out the call for a bi-national day of action for abortion rights on October 14th. Rallies, marches and other events are being scheduled in every province. The broad pro-choice sentiment that has been built over recent years must be brought into the streets in a massive show of support for a woman's right to choose. We have the power to make it politically impossible for parliament to enact restrictive legislation if we use our collective strength.

The anti-choice represents a small minority, but it is well funded and well organized, and it will be doing all it can to force the federal government to restrict access. Their goal is to ban all abortions, sending working class, immigrant, rural women and women of colour back to the coat hanger and the lysol douche. It is unlikely that the government would go this far, but any restriction at all will make it harder for women to exercise their fundamental right to control their bodies, and it is always the poor and the working class who are most at risk. If any woman is denied access to abortion then we must continue to fight. We can accept no compromise on this question. We have spoken in past issues of Rebel Girls' Rag of why gestational age is a red herring and should not be a concern, that it implies that women are so irresponsible that they can not make the right decision regarding a pregnancy without criminal regulation. Women are not criminals and there is no need for a criminal law on abortion.

We are demanding that the federal government take up its responsibility in

this area and make a clear policy directive:

- stating that the foetus is not a person under Canadian law;
- stating that women have the legal right to abortion in this country; and,
- implementing the Canada Health Act to ensure that every province provides full access to free abortion as an essential health service to every woman who requires it.

This position has been taken up by the NDP federal caucus, by labour organizations, by student groups and many others. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has launched a campaign to mobilize its six hundred member organizations in support of the mobilization. This is a very important step toward the broadening of the networks actively involved in building support. The Metro Toronto Labour Council and the Ontario

Federation of Students are both committing themselves to organize their constituencies. But even though the support is growing for our position, we have a huge task ahead of us to continue to build a strong bi-national campaign against recriminalization and for full access to free abortion.

We have seen the results of anti-choice activity in the U.S. with the recent Supreme Court decision which stopped just short of overturning Roe vs. Wade and has allowed each state to individually cut back access to abortion services. It gives a harrowing glimpse of what could happen here if we don't mobilize to win, a mobilization which requires the efforts of everyone who supports women's equality. Get involved with your local pro-choice organization and help to build October 14th! In Toronto, contact the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics at (416) 969-8463.



Photo: Linda Gardner

The Tax Man Cometh

by Carolyn Egan

The Tory government has just revealed one of the biggest rip-offs of the working class and poor -- the Goods and Services Sales Tax which will come into effect in 1991. Almost all consumer goods and services will be subject to a 9 percent tax. It is a regressive tax which will affect all income levels equally, and will raise an estimated \$26 billion yearly. Life will get harder. Inflation will rise and jobs will be lost. The gap between rich and poor will continue to increase. The working class, which includes the majority of women, native people, visible minorities and people with disabilities will be very hard hit. If the federal government is able to impose this without a fight back, the conservative agenda will go forward. Our standard of living will continue to fall, our rights and services will continue to be cut back.

In the spring, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women launched a campaign with the Pro-Canada Network and the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Workers. It was called "Get the Budget Back on Track", but it was organized with very little lead time. Because of this, it was primarily a media event and was not able to mobilize thousands across the country. A new campaign should begin with the involvement of every sector that is affected. It should emphasize the organizing of a grass roots revolt with broad participation. Involvement should be built at the base. It is only this type of active and militant resistance across the country that can stop the sales tax, and fight the entire Tory agenda, which includes the dismantling of Via Rail, daycare and social cuts, and the recriminalization of abortion which was left out of the earlier campaign.



by Nicole Hollander



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 Debi at 588-7430.

This issue was put together by:
Laurie Bell, Debi Brock, Julia B., Bonnie, Karen Chapelle, Carolyn Egan, Nancy Farmer, Mary Gellatly, Shelly Gordon, Miriam Jones, Susan Kazarak, Gillian Morton, Cindy Ripley, Jennifer Stephen, Cynthia Wright.

Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the Toronto Socialist Feminist Action, but those of the author.



Editorial

It's not the final conflict.....yet!

by Carolyn Egan

Socialism is dying! This is what the pundits are saying. In the Soviet Union, the Supreme Soviet has been forced to negotiate with the miners that have been on strike throughout the country demanding higher wages, better working conditions and more control over workplaces. "Market socialism" is giving a freer reign to private capital. Chinese students and workers have been shot down in Tienanmen Square while demanding greater democracy!

But is this socialism? We think not, certainly not the socialism envisioned by Marx or Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg or Clara Zetkin. Not the socialism that we are working for, which by its nature involves the self-emancipation of, and democratic control by the working class and oppressed peoples -- a socialism that will lay the basis for the eradication of class oppression, racism, sexism and heterosexism. The dictatorship of the proletariat means the transference of power from the bourgeoisie to the producers, the transformation of exploitative relations. It is not the dictatorship of a bureaucracy controlling the workplace, and society as a whole, for its own ends through state coercion.

If we look at the situation in China do we see a workers' government democratically controlled and acting in

the interest of the majority of people, accessible to women and national minorities? No; what we see is a repressive state apparatus controlled by a party interested in maintaining its own power. State ownership does not by itself translate into socialism. There are over 120 million unemployed in China, and, according to analysts, there is an increasing gap between the rich and the poor. We witnessed a protest movement of millions, sparked by courageous students, demanding an end to corruption and greater democratic control by the masses of people. Hundreds of thousands of workers joined the protests, adding their weight to the demand for change. There was a strike at the Beijing Capitol Steel Works which employs over 200,000 workers. The Beijing Independent Workers Union, a new organization, stated, "We must be the shock troops of the democratic movement".

This popular movement which had spread throughout the country was viciously repressed and did not develop into a revolution. It was smashed before it could move from the streets into the workplaces where the takeover of factories, the withdrawal of labour power could have brought the strength necessary to raise the movement to another level. As Siu Chong, a student at Quong Zhou Teachers College told journalists, "There must be a total strike, no more

hunger strikes, they are useless. Only if the workers themselves stop the steel production and the power stations and the railways can we bring these people down. There are not enough soldiers in all of China to keep the vital industries running. The workers have the power, let the workers have their say. It is the only way."

The students and workers are not fighting for return to privately owned capital. For three weeks in Tienanmen Square, they repeatedly sang the socialist anthem, the International, and were demanding a truly socialist democracy with real equality and freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the right to assemble.

We hope that important lessons have been learned from the popular uprising, and that the movement for change will be able to survive the heavy repression that is now taking place. We must continue to support the Chinese students and workers who are in resistance and take the opportunity to explain to people what our vision of socialism is, and how it is not exemplified by the actions of the Chinese state. We must also demand that the Canadian government give permanent status to those Chinese students who request it, and fund them to continue their education.

Acting Up on Bay

by B. Lee

On July 13 AIDS Action Now (AAN) organized a protest against Bristol-Myers at its Canadian headquarters in Toronto. This huge US international pharmaceutical company has refused to release DDI, a promising anti-viral drug. Following an earlier press conference a hundred activists picketed outside and handed out leaflets to passersby. At the same time seven members of AIDS Action Now

sat in at the corporation's offices. They were removed and charged with trespassing, an interesting irony given that anti-choice vigilantes blockading clinics are let go at once and never charged.

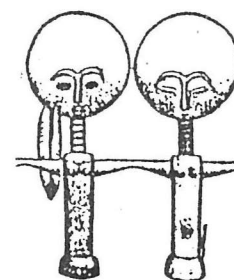
The company's response was to promise to release the drug in September after initial clinical trials. While this shows the effect of AAN pressure, it is unlikely that the complex regulatory process will be completed by then and it is unclear what the criteria will be for

PLWAs to get the drug.

PLWAs don't have the time to wait for corporate interests and government regulators. The concept of 'catastrophic rights' means that people facing life-threatening conditions must have the right to whatever treatment they need, even if all research and approvals have not been completed. PLWAs must have the right to weigh the risks and benefits of possible treatments for themselves. DDI must be released at once, free of charge to all who need it. To keep the pressure on, AAN is continuing to call for the boycott of Bristol-Myers products, which include Javex, Nice & Easy, Ms Clairol and Herbal Essence Shampoo. The AAN activists will be using the 'defense of necessity' at their fall trial. Stay tuned for support actions.



Photo: Linda Gardner



AIDS Activists Upstage Conference

by B. Lee & L. Gardner

Activists from AIDS Action Now, ACT UP New York, and Réaction SIDA seized the stage at the opening of the Fifth International Conference on AIDS in Montreal. In place of staid ceremonials, hundreds chanted and danced in anger and resistance. In place of hypocritical politicians and bureaucrats congratulating themselves on their compassion, AIDS Action Now's Tim McCaskell 'officially' declared the conference open on behalf of people living with AIDS (PLWAs) and an ACT UP member read our manifesto of demands on all governments for action.

Seizing the opening ceremonies was just the start of an incredible week. Every night activists met in a storefront action centre to evaluate the day's action and plan the next's. Throughout the week we confronted top officials from New York City, Quebec and a visibly nervous Prime Minister Mulroney, making his first public pronouncement on AIDS eight years into the epidemic. Noon hour or post-conference demonstrations were held on anonymous HIV testing, a key battle here in Ontario; the invisibility of lesbians and the scapegoating of prostitutes; and international issues. Every morning we handed out literally thousands of leaflets about these actions and issues. We also distributed thousands of copies of *le Manifeste de Montreal*, a hard-hitting joint project of AAN! and ACT UP New York which laid out our indictments of governments and our demands for action.

The conference itself was massive, with some 11,000 delegates and certain information overload for those able to fit in a few of the hundreds of sessions. We heard of many examples of innovative community-based preventive and care initiatives, the best of which arose out of gay and other communities most directly affected by the epidemic. And everywhere these initiatives were being constrained by official moralism and bureaucratic timidity. It was strikingly clear that most scientists simply didn't want to know about the social and ethical issues being raised or the concerns of PLWAs. But they would never be able to ignore our voices again as activists, prostitutes and PLWAs intervened in session after session. One of the more disgusting spectacles was the accompanying trade show of international drug companies priming themselves to make billions from the epidemic while callously letting people die now. One of the best moments was sex trade workers sweeping in from our demo to offer their safe sex services, at a bargain price no less, in this international emporium.

A number of key conclusions can be drawn from the activist presence at the Montreal conference. The first is the need to seize the occasion. This was the preeminent international conference on AIDS and activists worked to use its visibility and importance for our political purposes. We put pressure on governments and the medical establishment to respond to our agenda and ensured that our indictments of official inaction and incompetence pervaded media coverage.

The success in Montreal underlines the importance of cultural politics -- of finding ways of defining issues our way in the public mind and the media. Taking the opening stage and our daily actions meant that we either framed media interpretations or at least were always a part of virtually all reports -- in the most basic sense our activism and the needs of PLWAs became the story of the conference. We were able to upstage the machinations of state officials and pronouncements of experts. The politics of imagery was vital here -- our slogans, buttons, t-shirts, placards and stickers were everywhere. Dozens of activists standing and turning their backs on the Prime Minister made it very clear what was thought of his past actions and hypocritical presence. Similarly, activists holding up their watches while officials droned on,

Another lesson from Montreal is obvious to experienced activists, but was exhilarating none the less -- the need to always push our actions as far as we can. While in our heart of hearts we may have hoped to seize the stage, we had only begun with a demonstration and die-in to greet the Prime Minister and secreting a few banners in the plenary room for the right moment. But as our circling picket in the square outside the conference centre grew and grew, some broke off the circle to go right through startled security into the conference building, up the escalators, into the huge plenary room and up onto the stage. We had the momentum and we just kept right on going.

Finally, there was tremendous energy and insight to be had from sharing political ideas, styles and tactics. AIDS activist groups, like AIDS Action

ford to lose this fight. But neither can the lesbian and gay liberation, reproductive rights, women's and other progressive movements. To lose the fight for a humane, community-based, and sex and gay-positive public response to AIDS will inevitably strengthen the forces of reaction, the same forces that work to ban abortion and reinforce women's oppression. To win here -- to force the necessary resources and supportive policies and programs from a reluctant state -- will be a victory for us all. Aside from compassion and solidarity with the communities most directly affected by the epidemic, organizing around AIDS makes critical strategic sense. As socialist feminists we look to the points where people are resisting their oppression and organizing collectively; we look to the places where a radical politics can expose the contradictions of the existing structure of power and help to galvanize mass action; and we look to the issues where our political work can really make a difference to people's immediate conditions and future prospects. Just as on abortion we can ask every progressive person where they stand and what they are doing to advance women's rights to control their bodies, so too will we all be asked -- what did we do in the AIDS crisis?

RESOURCES

AIDS Action Now can be contacted at Box 325, 253 College St, Toronto, M5T 1R5, 591-8489.

Rites magazine provides excellent coverage of AIDS politics. Future issues of *Rebel Girl's Rag* will have articles on the fight to allow HIV testing to be anonymous, pressure on corporations and the state to release promising drugs, and building alliances among the diverse communities affected by AIDS. The following material is very useful:

Douglas Crimp, ed, *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT press, 1988)

Cindy Patton, *Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS* (Boston: South End, 1985)

The September 1987 and May 1988 issues of *Radical America* have many interesting articles



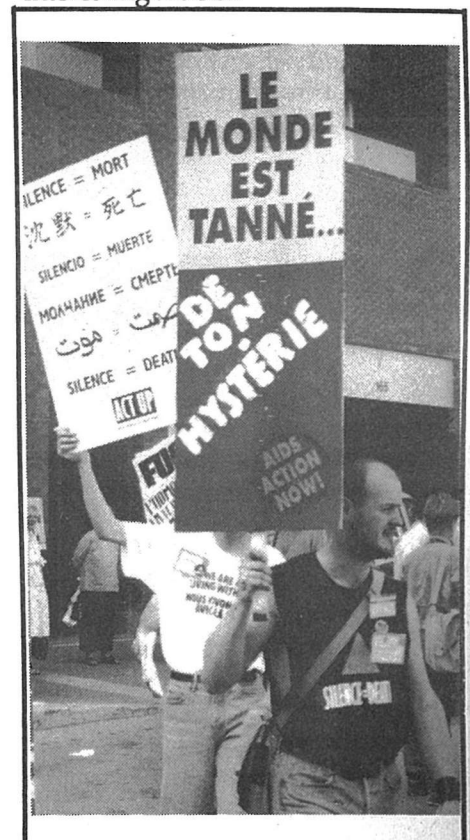
AIDS activists take over opening ceremonies and start conference on behalf of PLWAs.

graphically made the point that PLWAs don't have the time to wait for the politicians. Toronto videomakers John Greyson and Colin Campbell's documentation of the conference activism opened up a report back meeting at the 519 Church St community centre to great enthusiasm.

Such cultural activities and questions are an integral part of our political strategy. But they are never simple. For example, one night we had an interesting discussion of 'how much' to shout down official speakers. We agreed that it depended on the goals of our intervention. If the goal was to influence people in the audience and through the media then it was enough to strongly interject clear concise demands in a way that our defiance and criticism became the story. But we would let the speaker go on to be quoted for us to attack later. This also sidesteps some peoples' concern and media ideology over freedom of speech. Other times the goal may be to prevent or disrupt a particularly objectionable event. ACT UP recently forced Mayor Koch from the stage when he tried to unveil a plaque in the Village commemorating the 20th anniversary of Stonewall. They wouldn't allow a person with such a scandalous record of neglect on AIDS to degrade the struggle for gay liberation.

Now in Toronto, have developed some of the most creative and effective tactics of radical direct action. Like pro-choice activists, AIDS groups have learned to never let an attack go unchallenged. For example, Act Up closed the Brooklyn Bridge in rush hour the day after the NYC Commissioner of Health attacked anonymous testing and threatened contact tracing at the conference. Of course, they have 400 people to their weekly meetings. We learned that ACT UP seldom organize rallies with speakers, preferring more dramatic demonstrations and zap actions directed at specific agencies or policies. While we have all recognized the danger of boring people with long speechmaking, we use the speakers to demonstrate the broad range of support for our particular issue. They try to do this by having representatives of different groups available to talk to the media, through their banners and placards and by handing out explanatory leaflets at their actions.

AIDS, like abortion, is one of the watershed issues of our time. It directly pits those fighting for sexual freedom against the conservative right and the state. It directly pits thousands of men and women fighting for their lives against these same reactionary forces that would let people die to preserve their own narrow moralism. In the most direct sense, PLWAs cannot af-



Shut Down, Shut Out -- More than Free Trade: Tory Attacks on Labour

Jennifer Stephen

According to the Canadian Labour of Congress, over 33,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared in the past year. In Metro Toronto and the surrounding Golden Horseshoe, plant closure has followed plant closure: Goodyear, Firestone, Canadian General Electric, Massey Ferguson, Rowntree and Inglis Whirlpool. These plant shutdowns are among the better known, affecting massive numbers of working people. But we must add to this list the numbers of jobs lost to 'rationalization' and corporate 'restructuring': Carling O'Keefe & Molson's, Via Rail, Dover Elevator and McDonnell Douglas. In the Carling O'Keefe - Molson merger, more than 1,000 jobs are slotted to disappear.

While the Free Trade Agreement is clearly part of the picture, we are also witnessing the broadest and most direct impact of the Conservative corporate agenda: an attack on labour and on the social wage. A higher-waged, skilled, secure union job is seen as a threat to corporate profits. In a so-called 'market-driven' economy, as the current ideological line goes, high profits mean efficiency. It is much easier to replace expensive workers than it is to replace expensive equipment.

We are told on a daily basis that unemployment rates in Metro Toronto are lower than ever: what this obscures is that UI figures only include people who are 'actively' looking for work. It also obscures the high numbers of people whose livelihood depends on unemployment insurance and welfare. The job-creation statistics also disguise another trend of which free trade is a part: deindustrialization, or the localized shift of economic activity from the manufacturing sector to the service sector. This is exactly what we are beginning to see in Toronto: low-paying service jobs are replacing higher-paying manufacturing jobs. At the local level, Toronto is becoming a centre for producer and personal services. Jobs in these industries are mainly low-waged

and non-union. For every manufacturing plant closure, the effects are felt all the way down the line.

On the other side, workers confronted by a plant closure are faced with the need to either take another, possibly lower wage job, or retrain. Here, the language of 'adjustment' to free trade, and of 'relocation' into other jobs hides a much greater struggle for access to training programmes, UIC, and language skills training. Immigrant, women and older workers are bearing the heaviest impact of plant closures and the recent restructuring of UIC, and the privatization of job-training programmes.

Plant Closure: Whirlpool Inglis

After the last federal election, Inglis Whirlpool announced that it was scrapping its Toronto plant in the industrial district at Shaw and King. In November 1989, the plant (which has been operational since the 1800's) is to join its neighbour, Massey Ferguson on the scrap heap. All pre-election announcements - that the plant was to

begin production of a new line, that the jobs were safe, that free trade had nothing to do with the company's strategic planning - all of the rhetoric vanished in the devastating announcement that 590 unionized workers' jobs were gone, permanently. The average age of an Inglis worker is 47, and the average length of service at the plant is 17 years. Many have worked there all of their working lives; for some this means 40 years. Others went to Inglis after Massey, Goodyear, GE and Firestone shut down. For some, the entire income of the family will be wiped out, since there are many husband and wife teams at the plant.

The workers at Inglis are highly-skilled, making an average wage of \$12-13 per hour. The plant is organized into two locals of the United Steel Workers of America, Local 2900 (plant and maintenance) and Local 4487 (office and technical), with another 66 non-union staff. In 1983, after a 5 week strike at the plant, Whirlpool increased its controlling interest in Inglis, buying approximately 72% of Inglis shares. In 1984, 250 jobs were lost when production of the dryer line was shifted out of the plant. In 1986, workers went out on strike again, this time for 6 months. The issue was job security, pensions and the fight to retain the shorter work week. Most of the strike demands were won, although everyone also knew that the writing was on the wall. Inglis was not investing any money in the plant or the machinery. The machinery which was brought into the plant was cast off from plants in the US. There was no preventive maintenance. Equipment was breaking down, and any new repair was mostly cosmetic. In the meantime, the Massey Ferguson plant across the street was being torn down, and Inglis Whirlpool blithely promised that it would introduce a new line of production (based on a new washer design) in

Canada. As Bev Brown, vice president of USWA Loc. 2900 observed, everyone assumed that the plant might relocate, although people were sure it would stay within the Golden Horseshoe. Then came the blow: in February '89, the company said it was moving to a non-union plant in Clyde, Ohio.

While Whirlpool Inglis was scoring major profits from its Toronto plant and reinvesting nothing into the plant itself, the company has been investing heavily in the Clyde, Ohio facility. The Ohio plant has a longer production run, capable of producing 8-9,000 units per day, compared to 1200 units at the Shaw Street plant. Wages at the Ohio plant will remain comparable for now, to ensure that workers don't bring in a union. Overall, this reflects the broader industry trend of union-busting, as well as the consolidation of capital, and the flight to 'union-free' zones in either the US or Mexico, a move which is affecting workers in Canada and the US.

In the aftermath of the Inglis plant closure, workers are faced with (re)training and/or taking a drastic cut in pay. The already existing high levels of stress at the prospect of the shutdown are exacerbated by the struggle to stay afloat in the maze of demoralizing government bureaucracy, a maze which is apparently designed to facilitate 'worker adjustment' to 'job retraining and relocation'.

The Political Fight:

The Labour Council of Metro Toronto and York Region has organized the ad hoc Full Employment Committee to deal with plant closures like Inglis, and the impact of these closures on working people. The key to the committee's success is to involve unemployed workers and union locals in coalition with other social movements in taking on the political fight against unemployment and plant closures. One successful political action was the May 16 trip to Ottawa, involving 200 workers who were either unemployed or threatened, like the Rowntree workers who were then on strike for a close-out agreement.

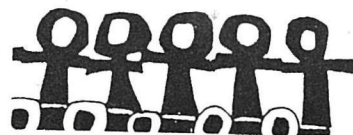
The fight against plant closures cannot be separated from the issues surrounding UIC and job retraining. The recent gutting of the Unemployment Insurance Act illustrates the intent of the Conservative administration to privatize unemployment 'insurance' and worker training. The shift to employer-based training virtually guarantees business access to a ready supply of cheaper labour, with skills suited only to the immediate job at hand in that particular company. The Labour Council and the trade union movement are completely opposed to the privatization of job (re)training. Private sector programmes deny the principle of public education and community-based training programmes, while undercutting the union's role in membership training. Job-specific training is invariably geared toward non-transferrable skills, concentrated in low waged jobs.



Photo: Nancy Farmer



Photo: Nancy Farmer



Workers who are most directly affected by plant closure, and who therefore need job training are women, older workers and immigrant workers. Inglis workers, for example, are faced with the need to improve English language skills first, in order to qualify for training. Lack of childcare and other services, few training alternatives, especially in transferrable skill areas and access to ESL programmes are the real story behind the Tories non-existent labour 'adjustment' policy.

Changes in UIC have also had a devastating impact on immigrant, women and older workers. Workers are penalized for leaving low paying jobs. By increasing the waiting period up to 12 weeks from 2 weeks, many workers are being forced to stay in industries which pay poor wages and benefits. In a period of so-called full employment in Toronto, many people have to work 2 jobs. Regionally differential rates and periods of eligibility not only attack the principle of universality of access, but represent a real assault on the living and the social wage. This is, of course, consistent with the current Tory agenda to drive down labour costs on the one hand, and the social wage on the other.

Free trade is part of the broader trend in global economic restructuring and deindustrialization among advanced capitalist economies. At the local level, Toronto's share in goods producing has declined while the service sector has expanded. So-called corporate rationalization means plant closures and the shift to 'off-shore' production in countries like Sri Lanka, the Phillipines, and Malaysia. In Toronto, this also has meant an increase in the rate and duration of unemployment. The Tory government only began to talk about 'adjustment' in response to the fight against free trade; however, the attack UIC and other social programmes gives the larger picture. It is no secret that business interests are

applauding the current disillusionment with the Keynesian approach, and are

cheering the Conservative move to dismantle the underpinnings of the welfare state, the integration of social and economic policy. In response, socialist feminists must join with the trade union movement in working to generate working class solidarity in the coming period to launch an effective fight against this attack on working class interests and workers' jobs.

The demands of the trade union movement are clear: they include accessible union and community based training which concentrates on enabling workers to gain the necessary English language skills and job skills which are transferrable into higher paying industries; contract language requiring advance notice of plant closures, in sufficient time to relocate and retrain workers into comparable jobs at a comparable wage; secured pensions with the option of early retirement. In addition, the Labour Council is calling for a firm long range economic plan for Metro Toronto which includes saving and retaining the manufacturing base and manufacturing jobs in the city. The political fight back will focus on "The Human Cost of Free Trade". The Labour Council, through the ad hoc Full Employment Committee, is mobilizing support leading up to two events: the People's Forum on the Human Cost of Free Trade on Sunday, October 1 at 1 p.m. at Toronto City Hall Council Chambers, followed by a 1 p.m. demonstration on October 22 outside Toronto City Hall. In the meantime, join the Brewery Workers Local 304 boycott of Molson's and Carling O'Keefe products: that's right -- no more Molson's Ex!

This article was based on interviews with Bev Brown, USWA Loc.2900, and Brenda Wall, Metro Labour Education and Skills Training Centre (a special project of the Labour Council of Metro Toronto and York Region).



Photo: Nancy Farmer

All in the Family

by Teresa Healy

Restructuring seems to be going on everywhere, in the state, in the factories, and in the Canadian, as well as the international political economy. What does this mean for workers? In part, it means that companies close plants and move production to countries where labour can be exploited at rates as low as 50 cents an hour. As Canadian workers are reminded of this possibility, the fear of losing their jobs is magnified by the fear of losing the entire company, for good. Workers in Canada are being exploited by the same process as our Mexican counterparts but the exploitation has a different context.

Production in the auto industry, for example, is a highly internationalized and divided process. Yet capitalists must ensure that the process is integrated at the assembly plant. To resolve this dilemma, in the context of a highly competitive international economy, the organisation of production is being changed. In a growing number of factories the "team concept" has emerged as one of the ways to acquire workers' participation in meeting the demands of international competition.

In a rural township south of Barrie, Ontario, the Honda Motor Company began production at a new auto assembly plant in 1986. Small subsidiary parts factories accompanied the assembly plant and at present there are approximately 2,000 unorganized workers producing for Honda in the immediate area. Half of the workers at the largest plant and fifteen per cent of the workers at the assembly plant are women.

The stories told by these women illustrate that hierarchies do not disappear with the introduction of the "team concept." "Associates" is a pseudonym for those who still remain workers. In the "team" only certain players can determine the speed of the line, the

hours of work and the rates of pay. The work is divided according to a marked gender division. Most of the women in the assembly plant work in the office where the highest rate of pay is equivalent to the starting wage rate of the workers on the assembly line. In the parts plant the starting wage rates are much lower than the assembly plant and fully fifty per cent of these workers are women.

There is another aspect to this exploitation. It appears that the material and ideological reality of "the family" has been useful in ensuring workers' participation in Honda's unorganized North American factories. Workers are invited to become part of the "Honda family" in the application process. As in a farm family, management asserts, everyone works together until the job is done and each person has the responsibility to solve problems individually. In the Honda family, it is said, there is no need for a "third party" to solve problems. "Open communication" replaces any need for workers to be represented by a union. And, we presume, all live happily ever after.

This logic resonates with other aspects of the capitalist bid to gain concessions and weaken union power. By suggesting that the new labour process can be consensual rather than confrontational, Honda mystifies the relations of power that exist in the factory. As feminists have analyzed the power relations underlying different family forms, so must the questions raised by this analysis be at the forefront when capitalists take such an active interest in the institution. To leave Honda with the image of the family that is untouched by hierarchical power relations is to abandon a very rich tradition of insights into the construction of hegemony. If trade unionists do not address the issue of gender in the "team concept", the political battle to organize is made enormously more difficult.

Teresa Healy lives in Tottenham, Ontario in the shadow of the Honda plant. She is monitoring its impact on local workers.

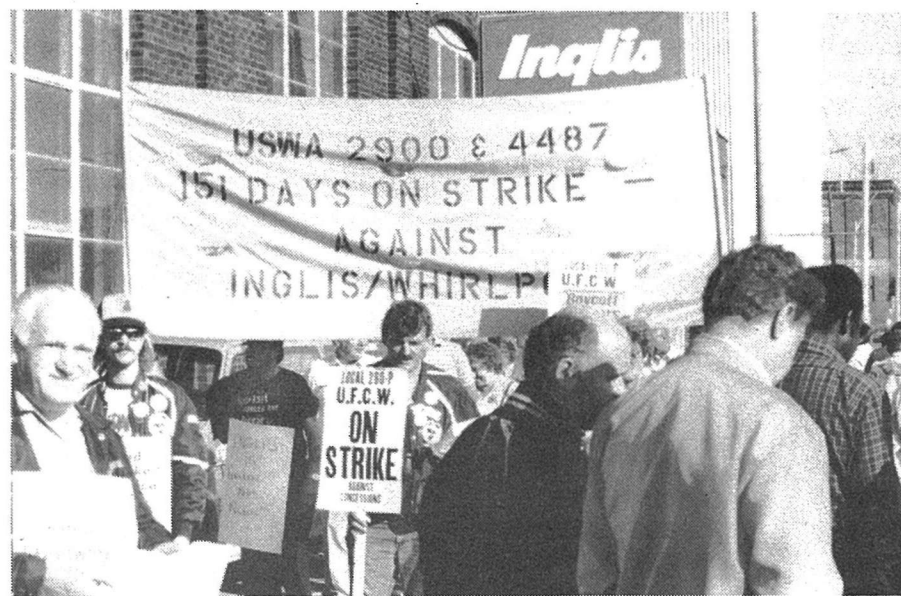
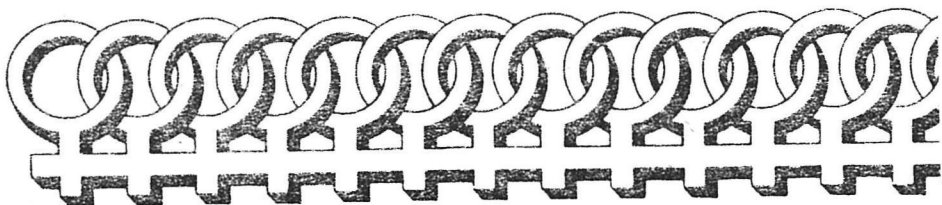


Photo: Nancy Farmer

Gainers workers join USWA, Local 2900 and Local 4487 on Inglis picket line during the summer of 1986.



Diary of a Brigadista

by Nancy Farmer

On June 20th, 26 members of the Jon Fyles 10th Anniversary Construction Brigade went to Nicaragua to build a daycare centre. The brigade, organized by Canadian Action For Nicaragua, raised \$8,000 (US) to purchase the construction materials, furniture and supplies. Many Rebel Girls Rag readers helped raise this substantial amount of money - thank you! Also, approximately 20 boxes of tools and medical supplies were collected, which we left behind when our work was completed.

We spent about 3 weeks at UPE Santa Josephina, a coffee farm nestled high in the mountains, 7 kilometres south of Matagalpa. Although we worked hard on this labour intensive project (we did everything by hand), we only succeeded in completing the foundation and concrete floor. We left a Nicaraguan brigade of workers who were going to finish the project.

Our final two days in the country were spent in Managua where we joined in the 10th Anniversary celebrations. Thousands of internationalists, including over 50 from Toronto joined 400,000 Nicaraguans on that historic day. The anniversary had the momentum of a festival -- as far as the eye could see, people young and old had come out to celebrate. Red and black banners and flags covered the plaza. People swayed to the music, sang, responded with slogans and cheered wildly when Daniel Ortega spoke.

Ortega's speech highlighted the upcoming election, his willingness to negotiate with the US and his commitment to the goals of the revolution.

Nicaragua depends heavily on solidarity work. These brigades assist both the work in Nicaragua and individuals to continue solidarity work when they return home. I recommend going on a brigade to Nicaragua to anyone with a sense of adventure, a commitment to the work and the patience to contend with minor hardships. This was my third trip to Nicaragua and second brigade. I have lifted extracts from my diary to describe my experiences while in the country.

Sunday, June 25:

We arrived at the UPE, after an hour long extremely bumpy ride in the back of a pickup truck. The dirt road seemed to wind upwards forever, but the scenery became increasingly breathtaking. Once at the UPE we were greeted by the children, who were glad to see us. They insisted on helping us to carry all our gear into our new home.

Although I have been on brigades before, I wasn't quite prepared for our accommodations. It is a barn, complete with dirt floor and chickens running in and out, and pigs living next door. It is very dark and musty as there were no windows, and no electricity as the generator is broken. About four feet off the ground there are wooden planks just long enough to stretch out our sleeping bags. Well we moved in. We drove nails into the walls, hung plastic bags, that became our dressers, the rafters became our close closets and for the next three

weeks we'll sleep shoulder to shoulder with our fellow brigadistas.

Tuesday, June 27:

It's our second day on the worksite. It's fortunate that we have a brigade of Nicaraguans working with us or we wouldn't have known where to start. This seems like a good way to complete these projects - we raise the money at home and then come down to assist with the work.

The Nicaraguans are doing more of the skilled work with us playing the role of the goffer - we carry cement blocks, mix concrete, dig holes and assemble the iron reinforcements.

After the workday is over there's not much daylight left. It becomes very precious. It is the only time we have to wash ourselves and our clothes, read or



write. The good intention I had of studying Spanish in my spare time has quickly evaporated.

Sunday, July 2:

It's 7:30 am and we've been up since 6 as usual. We are heading for a rally in the city to celebrate Matagalpa's liberation from Somoza's forces, 10 years ago.

In addition to the construction brigade, there's another Nicaraguan brigade of trade union volunteers from Managua who have committed a year to work in the mountains. Their tasks are two fold: they work with the campesinos to increase production; and, as political missionaries their job is to explain the Sandinista program to the campesinos.

Yesterday, several of us went into town with Lionel and Alphonso, two members from this brigade, to make banners for the rally. These two guys and the other members of this brigade are obviously leaders, politically conscious and careful about machismo.

On hands and knees we slowly etched out the words in red and black "Ombre con ombre, manos con manos, Nicaraguense y Canadiense, somos hermanos" (shoulder to shoulder, hand to hand, Nicaraguans and Canadians, we are brothers). They had wanted us to paint in the letters with rags, but we insisted on buying some paint brushes at the local hardware store.

After making the banner we had to walk home as there was no transportation (often a problem). I loved the 2 1/2 hour walk up the mountain on such a clear fresh day - but not everyone was so enthusiastic.

Wednesday, July 5:

We've reached the halfway point of our time on the UPE - and we're still working on the foundation. Laying the concrete blocks was only a small part of the work. Our progress has considerably slowed down. Work that we would hardly think about back home

has become painstakingly time consuming. Instead of using a spot welder, because there isn't one, we've been forced to construct the iron reinforcement post by wiring sections of steel together by hand. Nails must be

Yesterday we found "swimming hole" up the mountain. It was actually a man made reservoir - just big enough to swim in. Considering there were no showers and we'd been bathing by dumping buckets of water over ourselves this is a real treat.

Thursday, July 6:

The menu has been very repetitive, rice and beans three times day. Sometimes we have been able to augment it with sweet bread. When we buy anything we buy enough for everyone who eats with us. However, it appears that other people on the UPE are also buying these extras so it doesn't make us feel as bad (past brigades have had long debates on whether it is politically correct to purchase "extras"). In some ways it appears that they are eating better than us, as we've seen the odd chicken killed and some fresh vegetables.

I realize that the Nicaraguan economy is completely shattered, as a result of six long years of war and the US imposed trade embargo. Nicaraguans are facing a 25,000% rate of inflation, and the cordoba has once again been devalued (the rate is now 25,000 to 1 US dollar). Amazingly, I can't see the immediate effects.

Nicaraguans must be suffering - however I can honestly say I can't see much change in the standard of living compared to my last visit, two and half years ago. In fact there seems to be more commodities available to buy - but not much buying.

There has been some hostility toward us. Many of our belongings have been stolen. We can't leave any of our clothes out at night. In fact one night the whole line went missing. While it is disheartening, it's understandable. Compared to their extreme poverty, our apparent wealth must seem overwhelming.

Saturday, July 8:

Last night we met with the teacher, Francisco, who is also a member of the Nicaraguan trade union brigade. There's about 25 children in the class, ages 6-8 and he's teaching them to read and write. In the evening, when there's electricity he teaches adult literacy.



Nicaraguan Youngsters show a brigadista their reading and writing skills.

Photo: Nancy Farmer

Photo: Nancy Farmer

Education is an ongoing problem. Many parents still don't recognize the need to send their children to school and it's not mandatory. Many children are still needed to help with the family income. At the UPE they are attempting to get the kids to the grade four level. After that, at least in the rural areas, there is no formal structure for them to complete their education. No yellow school buses to pick them up and take them into town. But it is an improvement. Before the revolution there would have been no free education for these kids.

Monday, July 10:

The women on the UPE appear to work mostly in the fields. The women were entitled to maternity leave with pay, for a few months before and after birth.

There is a building that is being used as a daycare until ours is completed. Some days it holds 25 kids, from infants to preschoolers. The kids were fed, given milk once a day and there were some basic supplies such as diapers, bottles, cribs and a few broken toys. When completed, ours will be such an improvement, with windows, a floor, separate rooms and running water.

Juanita is the woman that we came to know best. She cooked for the construction brigade and ourselves. Although surprisingly, she couldn't read and write, politically she was very conscious and obviously supported the government. She said of her brother who had left his wife and four kids "he's a revolutionary but on this question he's very backward."

Through conversations with Marcia, one of the directors of the UPE, and with women in Matagalpa it has become apparent that there were big changes going on within Amnlae. Although just as committed to women's issues in regard to education, employment and health there were major discussions concerning abortion. Apparently Amnlae is no longer pushing for legalized abortion, opting instead for a program of education and birth control. It was obvious that there

was a lot of discussion going on among the women in the country and there certainly was no consensus on this new position.

We also met with women at a "Medecasa" a lumber mill that began hiring women three years ago. The manager seemed patronizing. He commented that the hiring of women had begun as a pilot project, "but we'd discovered that women could lift the lumber just as well as men". The women were great. Out of 400 employees, 66 were women and most were employed as helpers. The women were very clear that although hiring women was a step forward, there were many more steps yet to be taken. They told us that they needed more technical training, more women in non-traditional work, a daycare that conformed to their schedules, better transportation, sex education and family planning.

Wednesday, July 12:

I'm operating at about quarter energy these last few days. It's been rainy and muddy a lot lately. It's been hard to keep going.

Sometimes it's hard relating with the other members on the brigade. Everyone has such different ways of doing things, of negotiating. Coming from a feminist community I'm used to working more collectively, talking about problems before there's anger and working it out. But without support how do you begin this type of process?

But today it's sunny and my good spirits have been revived. I'm sitting on a hill overlooking the UPE. It was taken over by the State 2 1/2 years ago. Since then they've built about 20 new houses, and after the daycare is finished three more are to be constructed.

The big breakthrough came today - we started pouring the floor. However we're disappointed in our progress on the daycare. We've worked hard but headway has been stymied by a lack of technical assistance, such as a dump truck or cement mixer.

Thursday, July 13:

This evening, we cooked dinner for the entire UPE, about 200 members. Assisted by Juanita, we went into town in the morning and purchased 20 chickens, 100 bananas and 100 pounds of vegetables. The chickens and vegetables were chopped up and dumped into two huge pots, and left to simmer over the fire. We added various spices that we had collected from other brigade members and two hours later our feast was served. It took at least an hour for everyone to pass through the line. People came with bowls, plates, sand pails or tortillas to collect their dinner.

We also had a "Pinata" for the children. I feel mixed about it though - not because I was the one in the centre spinning the children around making an easy target to get bopped on the head with the stick - because of the violent manner in which it's played. Most of the girls were almost too terrified to take a turn. And when the candies began to fall, the boys just pushed their way through. It's amazing no one gets hurt. But I guess it's all part of the culture - just as young boys walk around with machetes half their size, at a very young age. Anyways, we tried to organize that the final drop of goodies was just for the girls, but that didn't last long.

Saturday, July 15:

We pulled out of the UPE yesterday. It was an emotional farewell. In the morning we said goodbye to our partners on the construction site over and over again. It was obvious that they had enjoyed working with us and had appreciated the help we'd been.

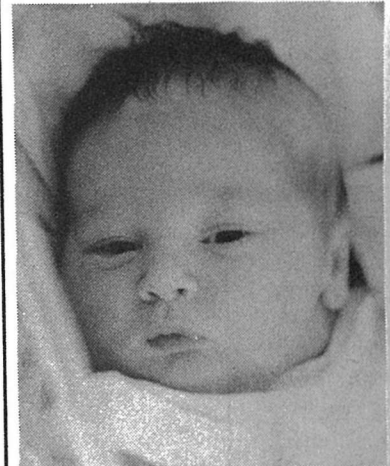
We did leave behind a foundation strong enough to hold a ten story building and a floor good enough to dance upon. UPE Santa Josephina would soon have a brand new daycare for the children.

Naturally, it had to pour rain as we drove down the mountain for the final time.

REBEL MOMS AND TOTS

The Rebel Girls are pleased to announce the formation of our children's auxiliary with the arrival of Red Diaper Babies:

PATRICK GORDON ROONEY



8 lbs., 8 oz.

Congratulations to Shelley Gordon and partner Frank Rooney

and

DANIEL VALVERDE
(to appear in the next issue)

born, July 23, 1989

5 lbs., 8 oz.

Congratulations to Mariana Valverde and co-parent Uli Menze-Fricke



RU 486: A Hard Pill to Swallow?

by B. Lee

There is a new French pill that claims to be a non-surgical technique for terminating unwanted pregnancies. In extensive trials in France and several other countries RU 486 has been effective in 85% of cases - 95% when combined with the hormone prostaglandin. The pill is taken before the end of the 7th week and causes what is in effect a particularly heavy period. Many women do experience cramps and heavy bleeding, but other side effects appear limited.

We are right to be sceptical of any new wonder drug. We know all too well the sorry history of the international drug industry in relation to DES, Depo Provera, the contraceptive pill and IUDs. There must be sound research to demonstrate the safety and effectiveness of RU 486. This must go beyond the abstract statistical reification and

randomized control tests of conventional epidemiology and testing on '3rd world women'.

But if it could approach the manufacturer's claims, RU 486 has the real potential to enhance women's control of their reproduction. Whether or not this potential can be realized is, of course, not a technical question at all. Like all of the other reproductive technologies, the impact of this pill will depend on who controls it and in whose interests it is implemented.

There has been some wishful thinking that the new drug will mean the end of the long debate around abortion. But the struggle for freedom of choice is not about the particular technique to terminate pregnancy, it is essentially about the control of women's reproduction, sexuality and overall autonomy. This means that the availability of RU 486 will be opposed by the same forces that stand in the way of reproductive autonomy in so many other areas: a

medical establishment that will seek to institutionalize control of RU 486; state social and health policies and programs that serve to reinforce women's subordination and a regulatory framework that tends to delay or prohibit medical developments that conflict with conservative or familial political agendas; a pharmaceutical industry concerned with profits, markets and liability, not women's autonomy; and the anti-choice and the right for whom the new pill is simply another form of 'baby-killing'. Anti-choice pressure caused the French manufacturer to withdraw the pill from production and this was only overturned when the French government ruled that such a prohibition was not in the public interest. American corporations which dominate the North American market face not only threats of boycott and other pressure from the anti-choice, but the moralistic opposition of the US government.

What happens to RU 486 depends on the balance of all these contending forces, not least of which is how we in the reproductive rights movement assess the significance of RU 486 and where we prioritize it within our many struggles.

However we take up this issue, the terms of debate will be very important. This debate may begin from considerable public hostility: a January 1989 Gallup poll found that 55% of Canadians opposed the legalization of a pill that would induce abortion. Attitudes on abortion and reproduction tend to reflect and condense broader concerns and tensions around sexuality and women's overall position in family and society. One of the most unfortunate facets of the prevailing ideology of abortion is a certain punitiveness - a feeling that abortion must not become 'too easy' to obtain. Some within the reproductive rights movement may want to sidestep these debates - posing

continued on page 8

If we conclude that RU 486 can be beneficial, we must develop a clear and comprehensive program within which the potential of RU 486 can be realized. First of all, the pill would have to be fully and equally accessible to all women. and be available without charge under public health insurance schemes. There would also have to be full information and counselling on all its risks and benefits in all the languages that women need. RU 486 should be seen as one of a spectrum of reproductive choices and services, all of which are vital to women.

For all of these reasons, the best place to offer the new pill would be out of community birth control and

reproductive health care clinics, where all the needed support and attention are readily available. And this illustrates again the importance of our longer term goal of women's reproductive health centres offering the full range of reproductive care: from safe and effective contraception to abortion, from birthing and midwifery to well-woman and well-baby care, and from sexuality counselling to reproductive technology developed according to women's needs and priorities.

One of the preeminent strengths of socialist feminism is the capacity to see particular struggles in a broader context. So our fight to win access to RU 486 in ways that enhance women's con-

trol over their fertility must also directly take on the dominant ideologies of abortion and reproduction, set the demand for this pill in the context of a comprehensive program for securing the conditions necessary for reproductive self-determination (and this means universal daycare, employment equity, affordable housing, etc as well as fertility control), and offer a clear vision of the long-term goals of reproductive freedom.

the new pill as contraceptive technology, not abortion, and stressing that it can be provided in the privacy of one's home, thus avoiding the public nature of abortion clinics and other facilities.

EVENTS

3rd Annual OCAC Garage Sale

September 9, 1989 -- 9 am to 5 pm

Trinity St. Paul Centre, 427 Bloor St. W. (just W. of Spadina)

Phone OCAC for info: 969-8463

Don't Loose the Right to Choose: Your Body is a Battleground

October 14, 1989 -- 12 Noon

Queen's Park

Phone OCAC for info: 969-8463

Sweet Honey in the Rock -- Benefit Concert for Sister Vision Press

Saturday October 28, 1989 -- 8 pm

Convocation Hall --- Phone 533-2184 for info.

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