

Rebel Girls' Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

Vol. 4, No. 3

March/April, 1990

75¢

News & Views from Toronto Socialist Feminist Action



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Cole Harbour -- Still Fighting Back

Toronto activist joins anniversary rally in Nova Scotia

by Laurie Bell

In January, 1989 there was a series of violent confrontations between white and Black students at Cole Harbour High School in Preston, Nova Scotia. The RCMP conducted an investigation that resulted in charges against eight white youth and ten Black youth. Charges against the white youth were subsequently dropped or dismissed but criminal proceedings against a number of Black youth continue. Five Black youth have now filed a lawsuit against the government charging unfair treatment under the law enforcement and justice system in Nova Scotia.

The police investigation gave preferential treatment to white suspects and eyewitnesses, interviewed far greater numbers of whites for their description of events, and pressed charges against a greater number of Black students based on the accounts of the incidents provided by white students and observers. The police ignored the mounting racist provocation which existed in the school setting, where Black students were being continually assaulted with racist slurs and attacks, they ignored the fact that Black students were vastly outnumbered by white students not only in the school population but during the altercations that occurred, and they ignored the accounts provided by the few Black youth they bothered to question before laying charges.

In Preston, Nova Scotia, the small Black community

which has lived there for hundreds of years is expected to take the unrelenting barrage of racism lying down. The necessity of Black youth to defend themselves against racist attacks may have conveniently eluded the police but it has propelled the Black community into increased organizing and activism. Black leader Evangeline Cain-Grant has noted that while the grandparents and parents of Preston Black students have often suffered in silence, these youth are fighting back. As part of their continued effort to fight back against a legacy of exploitation, the current atmosphere of violent attacks, especially against Black youth, and the police and government practices of discriminatory treatment and prosecution, the Parent Student Association of Preston held a public forum marking the first anniversary of the Cole Harbour attacks. Leading Toronto Black activist Sherona Hall, member of the Black Action Defense Committee, the Justice for Michael Wade Lawson Committee, and the Women's Coalition Against Police and Racist Violence, was invited to address the meeting.

She offered the following observations in an interview following her return from Preston, Nova Scotia.

SH: I think the system just overlooked Preston, forgot it was even there. Without Cole Harbour no one would have heard about Preston. I had never heard a word about it before and I have been active in Canadian Black politics for twenty years. I

knew about the Maroons who went to Halifax [from Jamaica] but I didn't know about the actual place they went to or what happened to them there....

The most moving moment of the evening was the story told by a woman from Pictou County. Her children were being harassed by sixteen year old white youth and she finally got them removed from the bus. The white residents then organized against the removal of the youth from the school bus and they were placed back on the bus. Obviously a white lobby is going to be much stronger than a Black lobby. Her children continued to be terrorized to the point where she had to rely on friends and family to transport the children back and forth to school.



They were also burning crosses on her lawn at night and taunting her with racial slurs. And so she was contemplating moving out of the area. Racism is on the rise in that area as it is throughout North America. This woman is very fearful because she is alone

and isolated as a Black woman with a family. When a white community starts to organize on that level against a lone Black woman she is almost totally defenceless against them. She came to the meeting in Preston where there is at least a community of Black people, even though it is a small minority in the Halifax area.

The Preston community is very interesting because of its long history as a Black community. There is an interesting history of the Blacks who converged there. The Maroons, who refused to work as slaves in Jamaica and were told they were being sent back to Africa, Loyalists, who fought in the U.S. Civil War and were awarded freedom papers and people from the Underground Railroad all ended up in Nova Scotia.

RGR: The history of the Black community in Nova Scotia is almost a miracle of survival, isn't it?

SH: It is quite a miracle, to think that people could survive under such harsh conditions. It is amazing that these people survived. And it continues to this day. There are people living in the 1990's without running water, without sewer systems, without heat. When I went to Preston I thought, "I might as well be in a rural and remote Jamaican community."

People in Preston are fighting back, but from a position of weakness. They are literally cut off from the rest of the Black community in Canada. This is why it was so important for me to go to the event marking the anniversary of Cole Har-



bour. There is 80% unemployment in Preston and it mostly women who have jobs. Most of the men are at home wasting away. This strategy is very familiar because the young people who strive to become educated are then forced to move elsewhere just to survive. It is a strategy to uproot the community, to dismantle it. They don't have money for legal fees, they don't have money to organize, even to put out flyers. I was deeply distressed that they would have called on me to go to Preston and I was almost not able to go because of lack of money. I realized when I got there how important it was for me to be there. Just for them to know that they had that link was important. They knew that word of what was happening there was getting out to the rest of the country, that they are not isolated. When you think that \$600.00 could have prevented that from happening. People in the struggle need to have money to do the political work.

RGR: The Marshall Inquiry recently released its recommendations to the Nova Scotia Attorney General concerning the racist treatment of Native People under the justice system. Does this have any impact for the Black community in Nova Scotia?

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A Forum of Women's Resistance

Vol. 4, No. 3

March/ April, 1990

Published by:

Toronto Socialist Feminist Action

P.O. Box 70, Station F

Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2L4

Date of issue: Feb. 27, 1990

Published five times a year in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Second class mail registration number 7769.

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. Sheryl Boswell, Karen Chapelle, Carolyn Egan, Nancy Farmer, Mary Cellatly, Shelly Gordon, Miriam Jones, Susan Kasaruk, Gillian Morton, Sharmani Peries, Cindy Ripley, Jennifer Stephen, Beth Waldon.

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

Editorial -- IWD '90 FIGHT THE ATTACKS NO TURNING BACK!

This past year has been one of struggle for most of us in Canada and Quebec. Under the banner, "Fight the Attacks, No Turning Back", women and men will take to the streets on Saturday March 3, 1990 to fight back against the Tory economic and social agenda and sexist and racist violence.

In the face of global restructuring of capital, the government is laying the burden of the economic crisis on the backs of the poor and the working class which includes the majority of women, Native peoples, immigrants, people of colour and those with disabilities. The Tories have imposed the Goods and Services Tax (GST), dismantled VIA Rail and unemployment insurance, cutback childcare, health and education, as well as other social services. They

have implemented immigration and refugee policies and practices which are clearly designed to have a discriminatory effect.

This past year has also witnessed many examples of racist police violence. The police shooting of Sophia Cook and killings of Michael Wade Lawson, Lester Donaldson, Buddy Evans, Albert Johnson, Anthony Griffin, JJ Harper are mere examples of the racist violence and harassment faced by Black, Native people and other people of colour communities every day. This violence is a symptom of the systemic racism which is an integral part of the political and economic structures of this society.

The Tories are once more trying to criminalize abortion and further restrict our

right to choose. It was the strength of the movement, organizing in our communities, workplaces and in the streets that forced the state to overturn the old abortion law. It will take this same effort to ensure that abortion is not recriminalized. If this law is passed, a physically and mentally helath woman will not be able to get an abortion.

The mass slaying of 14 women in Montreal represents the legitimation of violence against women in our society -- a society which is permeated by systemic sexism. Tensions in society around the feminist movement and its demands were exposed in both the killings and subsequent response to the slayings.

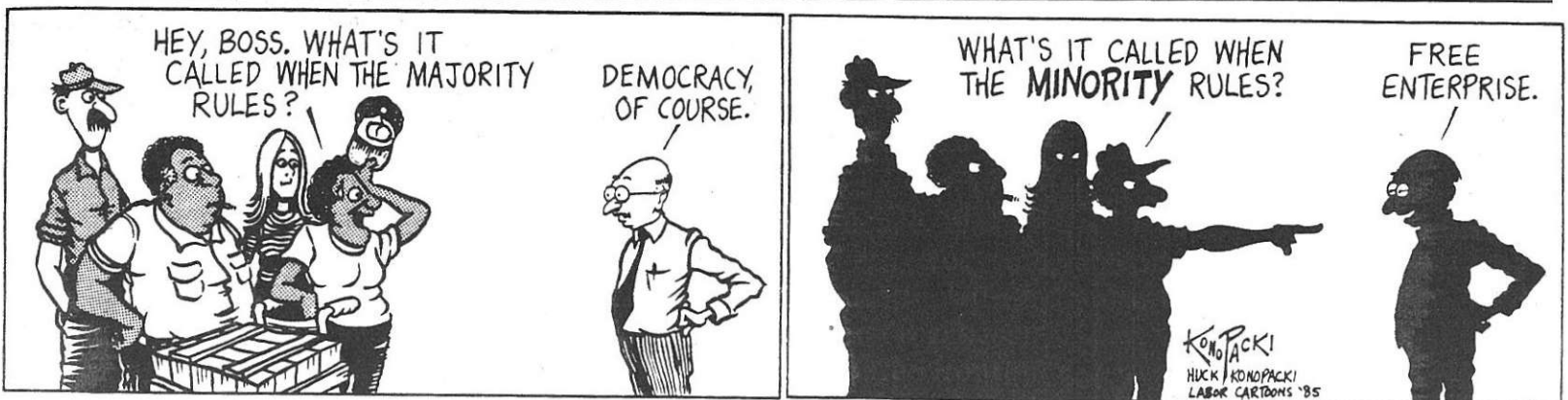
While there are many issues of importance in our

lives, the March 8th Coalition, which organizes IWD activities in Toronto, chose four main demands to highlight this year.

- No to racism and police violence
- No to the GST and social cut-backs
- No new abortion law
- No to violence against women

Racist police violence, attacks on reproductive freedom, economic attacks and violence against women all have an immediacy that can not be ignored. These issues are interconnected and part of an overall attack on the working class, women, people of colour, Native people and those with disabilities. By integrating these issues and building a broad-based day of action on IWD, we can 'fight the attacks'.

Come out March 3, 1990!



The FMLN Offensive

By Carolyn Egan

In recent months the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front launched a major offensive against the right-wing Arena government in El Salvador. Coordinated attacks were made against military targets in San Salvador and other centres. The International Airport, President Cristiani's home, and the headquarters of the First Infantry Brigade, the notorious "death squads", were all targets. The military campaign had popular support in working class neigh-

bourhoods. Barricades were built in the streets by local residents to resist government counter-attacks. The army in retaliation began indiscriminate strafing and bombing of densely populated neighbourhoods, and destroyed large parts of the National University.

The objective of the offensive was to force the Cristiani government into negotiations with the FMLN. The incredible repression within the country, the thousands of "disappeared", and the role of American imperialism in

supporting the reactionary regime and isolating the FMLN, have created a situation which makes it extremely difficult for the working class, peasants, students and other progressive forces to overthrow the existing government.

On October 30, 1989 a large bomb destroyed the office of Co-Madres, the mothers of the disappeared, which has been playing a very public role in the resistance within San Salvador. On October 31st, another more powerful explosion devastated the headquarters of Fenestras,

one of the largest trade union federations. Ten women and men died as a result and thirty five were injured. Women are taking an active role in the guerilla war for national liberation, in working class struggles and in the community through organizations such as Co-Madres. The government strategy before the FMLN offensive was to "destroy the core of civilian opposition to prevent them from expanding and creating a broad front" according to sources within El Salvador. The bombings were a clear indication of its

seriousness. But the bombings, instead of demobilizing people, brought the entire labour movement, women's movement and grassroots organizations into the streets in an angry protest at the funerals of those who had died. The FMLN responded by its military offensive. Unfortunately the balance of forces at that time, as well as the international situation, did not allow for a victory. The poor and working class residents of San Salvador could not maintain their support of the military

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campaign, but it became very clear that Arena was not in control of the country and that the FMLN could attack at will anywhere in the capitol.

Recently there has been an unfortunate international development which could have serious ramifications for the future of the liberation struggle in El Salvador. Five Central American presidents including Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua signed an agreement on December 12, 1989 calling on the FMLN to "immediately and effectively cease hostilities" and "publicly renounce all types

of violent actions." They went on to urge immediate steps "toward the demobilization of the FMLN." It also recognized the Cristiani government. In San Salvador the FMLN immediately condemned the agreement, and called for international support "to immediately mobilize in defense of the Salvadoran people." The FMLN feels that "this declaration unconditionally supports the principal violator of human rights of the region...it runs contrary to the trend of the international community and to the outcries of all democratic and social forces and churches of El Sal-

vador."

Defence Minister Humberto Ortego of Nicaragua defended the signing of the accord in Barricada in a two part interview on December 20th and 21st. He was asked the following question:

Q. What is your reaction to the point made by some that the Sandanista Front sacrificed its solidarity with the FMLN in exchange for an agreement on the departure of the contras?

A. There can be different points of view on concrete questions between armed revolutionary movements and the Sandanista govern-

ment. We cannot be expected to behave in the same way as a guerilla movement that has no state commitments. The fact that there are disagreements should be no cause for alarm. Our policy of solidarity with peoples that fight for their freedom and independence will never be in question. But that solidarity must be expressed within the norms of coexistence with other governments.

It is unfortunate that Nicaragua has taken such a position in relation to the FMLN. International solidarity is critical to the

success of anti-imperialist struggles. Particularly in light of the recent US invasion of Panama it is crucial that all progressive forces continue to defend the liberation struggle in El Salvador, the right of the FMLN to armed struggle and, of course, support an anti-interventionist policy toward Nicaragua. ■



No Easy Walk to Freedom

by Sheryl Boswell

"The political prisoner is the most abused victim of an order that nurses a callous contempt for human suffering. But he is also the beleaguered revolutionary, fighting on his own battleground" said Ruth First, murdered in Mozambique by a parcel bomb, sent from South African agents.

After twenty-seven years in prison one of the most well-known political prisoners in the world, was released. On Sunday, February 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela walked free from Victor Verster prison in Cape Town, South Africa. Mandela's life is a clear testimony that the struggle for freedom and democracy is not easy. True to his Xhosa name, Rolihlala--"stirring

up trouble", Nelson Mandela has most certainly stirred up trouble.

In 1962, Mandela and seven other members of the African National Congress were charged with plotting to overthrow the state. For twenty years, Mandela spent most of his time in isolation at Robben Island. Despite the harshness of the prison, the morale of the inmates remained high. Those imprisoned at Robben Island--leaders and activists of the ANC and Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, as well as members of other popular organizations in South Africa and Namibia, were all united on the island--united in their determination to dismantle apartheid and create a free, non-racial, democratic

South Africa and Namibia.

During the trial in 1964, Mandela read a statement outlining the principles and practices of the ANC: "Their (ANC) struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by their own suffering and their experience. It is a struggle for the right to live. During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against Black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

The expectations placed on Mandela are enormous. His presence, personal strength, oratory skills and vision of a free South Africa will be the rallying force, hopefully uniting the popular movements in South Africa to work together for change. Fatima Meer wrote of the ANC Youth League formed in 1944 by Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisula, Nelson Mandela and others, "the Youth League took control of the



ANC and radicalized it." Whether the founders of the Youth League can keep up with the impatient, militant and radicalized youth of today will be the challenge that the ANC will be faced with.

The cosmetic changes, reforms which continue to maintain the apartheid system, have been occurring at an ever-quickening pace, leading the mainstream media to conclude that de Klerk is a "radical reformer" and that he is genuinely interested in dismantling apartheid. Yet, these reforms are not a result of the benevolence of de Klerk, nor as we have seen recently, a result of a change of heart in the white community.

Changes have come about as a result of the escalation of oppressive and repressive practices in South Africa and the grow-

ing demand for real change. Nelson Mandela's release is a victory--a victory that testifies to the strength of the people and of the power and influence of mass mobilization, locally in South Africa and internationally.

As stated in the January edition of "Sechaba", a publication of the ANC, "de Klerk is bruised, but not injured--Apartheid must go!"

**AMANDLA NGWAETHU!
POWER TO THE PEOPLE!**

International Women's Day
South Africa

In recognition of the role of women in the struggle for change in South Africa, we would like to conclude with the words to "You Have Struck a Rock":

Wathint' Abafazi
You have touched the women
Wathint' Inbokado
You have struck a rock
Uzokufa
And you will be crushed!



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN --

Breaking Free

by Gillian Morton

The Ontario Native Women's Association recently released its Report on Aboriginal Family Violence, a report written exclusively from an Aboriginal* Women's perspective. The report defines family violence quite broadly as "any violence occurring between two or more people of the same family, including physical, sexual, and mental/emotional violence". This report, the first of its kind in Ontario, finds that eight out of ten Aboriginal women and four out of ten children have been abused or assaulted. The husband is identified as the abuser by 84% of the women.

These figures are data provided by the responses of 104 Metis, Status, and non-Status Indian women (living on reserves, in urban centres, rural settings, or isolated communities) to a questionnaire; other information gathering techniques used by the researchers include consultation by telephone and personal interviews; attendance at relevant conferences and meetings; a review of reports, bibliographies, and existing services; and interviews with community care and health professionals. Given the small quantity of data upon which the report is based, the writers note that "the data are especially valuable as indicators confirming or confounding anecdotal evidence rather than empirical proofs". The report seeks to identify the gaps in existing services and to provide a "blue print for change" in its Proposal for Action.

One of the report's most striking features (largely overlooked by the mainstream press coverage) is its integration of the issue of family violence into a consideration of the social, political, and economic conditions of Aboriginal peoples. Outlining the connections between violence and the wider struggles for self-determination and self-government the report criticizes "regulation by a faceless bureaucracy" and recounts how violence within the family is a "reaction against an entire system of domination, lack of respect, and bureaucratic control." For instance, the enforced separation of children from their parents in the residential schools, the ostracization of women from families and communities for marriage to a non-Status person, and the terrible removal of children for adoption, the report argues, have created a sense of confusion and led to a loss of traditional values. Racist government interference is compounded by the racism of the non-Aboriginal population. Thus the report makes clear that family violence is not simply a male-female problem.

The report states emphatically that solutions must be developed and administered by the Aboriginal communities themselves; the Ontario government's criminalization strategy, for example, is not culturally appropriate for Aboriginal society. The report states that until such time as an Aboriginal justice system which fully involves community leaders and Elders

is in place, it is necessary to involve Canadian law enforcers in order to protect women and children despite the outrageous treatment of Aboriginal people by the Canadian criminal justice system (as the report points out, 10% of the overall prison population in Canada, and in some provinces more than 32%, are Aboriginal people who make up only 2% of the overall population of Canada). Not only are traditional Aboriginal concepts of crime and punishment profoundly different from Anglo-European ones, but the notion of family is as well. The report explains that the idea of extended family is central to First Nations, despite more than a century of the administration of the Indian Act which has sought to impose a foreign way of government, one which focuses on individualism and on dividing and assimilating families. As a result of the importance of the extended family, the batterer is not viewed as "responsible to find his own help", and the report demands that when

charges are laid against the batterer, counselling and treatment in a culturally sensitive manner must be mandatory so the individual can be healed. Family violence is seen "holistically" as a community problem which requires healing of all members of the family: the goal is to restore and strengthen the family. The amount of family violence is abhorred and regretted but the writers state that "we also do not believe the abuser should be sacrificed; family violence is learned behaviour and we believe it can be unlearned."

The state of services outlined by the report are appallingly inadequate. There are no shelters in the remote north, which has the largest percentage of Aboriginal people in Ontario. There are only seven emergency shelters which are designed specifically to service Aboriginal women who have been victims of family violence, and four Aboriginally run shelters in Ontario. Women who need to utilize these services must often make long trips across the province, at great

expense and inconvenience. Non-Aboriginal services are often culturally insensitive, an insensitivity exacerbated by the fact that service providers do not speak Aboriginal languages. There are no services in place directed exclusively at Aboriginal men who batter.

The report recommends "holistic solutions" which would represent Aboriginal cultural values, be community based, and be compatible with self-determination: "We need to develop Aboriginal responses to family violence which are culturally appropriate for us, which are designed by us, and which are implemented and valued by us...complete solutions to the Aboriginal family violence situation will only be possible alongside new political or constitutional arrangements for self-government." Specifically the report recommended a Proposal for Action which includes the ensured equality of access in the provision of services; a network of twelve "Healing Lodges"; an Aboriginal treatment programme for



*The writer explain that the term 'Aboriginal' is used because "it is the constitutionally recognized and academically defined term; it refers to Metis and First Nations the way European denote those who live in Europe whether French, German, Yugoslavian etc. Ideally, the terminology used should be the name of our Nations, ie., Mohawk, Objibwa, Cree, etc." Aboriginal is used to encompass Metis, Status Indians, and non-Status Indians.

PUTTING PIECES TOGETHER

Report: A Report

male batterers; the provision of culturally appropriate services for children (who are to be kept united with a parent or relative in the setting from which they come); expansion of existing services to combat the abuse of alcohol, drugs, and solvents, and the integration of these services with services for batterers and assaulted women; a community response team in every community, whether on or off reserve; an immediate education programme for and by Aboriginal people; a call for the province to support the creation of an Aboriginal justice system, fully involving Elders and community leaders; and the development of matrimonial property standards for women living on reserves to enable an abused woman to gain interim possession of the matrimonial home.

These recommendations and the Report itself are an important beginning to a discussion within Aboriginal communities; the Ontario Native Women's Association has put forward the Proposal for Action "in order to foster discussion with other Aboriginal organizations, such as bands and tribal councils, so that jointly we can reach final solutions to the high levels of Aboriginal family violence... Holistic solutions to Aboriginal family violence will only be possible with the full consultation, discussion, and collective involvement of all Aboriginal organizations in the province of Ontario."

Many Native women working in Toronto question whether the publishing of the report, complete with

recommendations and a Proposal for Action, is the most effective way to initiate a discussion with their organizations. Many organizations did not receive a complete copy of the report and were dependent on the mainstream media's coverage of the report for information. I spoke with women at the Native Child and Family Services of Toronto and the Native

Canadian Centre (I also contacted the Native Women's Resource Centre who had just received a copy of the report did not yet have a response, although they had heard that many women were angered by the report). Women had had the opportunity to read the report and expressed a number of concerns. Although they agree that family violence is a major issue, they do not think it is as widespread as the report suggests and argue that a survey of one hundred and four women cannot be representative of the Native population. All were very disturbed by the mainstream media's sensationalization of the issue and the reinforcement of "the same old tired stereotypes". The report also minimized North-South, and on-reserve, off-reserve differences, portraying economic deprivation, the experience of family violence and its rate of occurrence, and other social issues as pretty much the same in all Native communities. Trish Roman, from the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto (other women I talked to preferred to remain anonymous), thought that the demographics of the area of study, ie. Thunder

Bay where the Ontario Native Women's Association is based, is the top factor in the findings, and questions the report's assumptions in claiming to represent Ontario. Small towns, cities, suburbs, rural areas, etc., she says, produce different experiences for Native peoples. She also is concerned that once such a report is published and released to the press, without any prior community consultation, dialogue is cut off within Native communities and whatever is printed becomes truth (unless another study is completed to rebut the findings). She has sent out her own questionnaire in the Native Canadian Centre's news magazine and is awaiting readers' responses. In her own experience, Trish Roman has met plenty of Native women who have not suffered violence, poverty, abuse, and unemployment, and suggests that the data fails to account for these experiences. The report implies that almost all Native men are guilty of violence and that most Native women are victims; it does not reflect the gentleness and respect that exist in many families, she says.

Organizations in Toronto and Ontario are beginning to respond to the report's findings; a broad based discussion (with input from urban and rural, North and South) about family violence and the report's Proposal for Action may be the result. Despite the shortcomings of the report, its examination of the social and economic context of family violence, and more importantly its emphasis on self-determination, set a promising context for this discussion.



Breaking Silence

by Sharmini Peries

In India the newspaper ad read: "A young male engineer, 25 years, seeks an educated young bride to marry and live in Canada." One week later, Rani was married. Four days later, she was beaten unconscious and left locked in a bedroom of her new in-laws' Delhi home. Sixteen months later in Toronto, Rani, frail from severe and repeated beatings, suffered yet another attack from her husband, but this time he did not stop with her—he beat their infant son. That day, with the help of a cab driver, Rani and her son finally escaped.

The South Asians Women's Group (SAWG) is currently conducting a study, funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate, on domestic violence against South Asian women in Ontario. South Asian women, immigrants from India, Sri Lanka,

Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other neighboring countries, bring with them as new Canadians the burdens of an oppressive, patriarchal social order. On top of the patriarchy of their traditional cultures, they are afflicted by forms of patriarchy specific to Canada, as well as a radical cultural dislocation that most concretely takes the form of racism directed towards them, and an inability to effectively reach out in a new language.

The study, conducted by this author, has experienced many difficulties. One has been the absolute denial by some of the community members that such a problem exists. A common reaction is "We don't abuse our women, we worship them." This strategy of denial itself could serve to refocus the problem, arguing for the interconnectedness of abuse/worship as part of

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Riot on Richmond Street: Police Run Amok

by B. Lee

A spirited pro-choice rally and march on February 10th was disrupted by anti-choice provocateurs and over-reacting police. The day began with a rally at City Hall where over 500 people heard speakers from Planned Parenthood, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Aids Action Now, labour and the Women's Coalition Against Police and Racist Violence condemn the proposed abortion law. However, about 20 anti-choice vigilantes, many of them familiar faces from 'Operation Rescues', invaded the City Hall rally and obnoxiously disrupted speakers.

Between 800 and 1,000 then marched to Tory party Headquarters to demand that the Bill be withdrawn. The anti-choice then tried to infiltrate our march. When we got to Tory HQ they unveiled a large anti-choice banner on the balcony above the front door.

A pro-choice supporter climbed up on the balcony and removed the banner, to the cheers of our crowd. A number of police then charged into the march attempting to grab the pro-choice woman. This

grand scheme, but neither did this anti-choice provocation and police violence take place in isolation. Their individual idiocy and collective panic on February 10th takes place within a broader climate. Part of this is certainly homophobia - some police were yelling "fucking dykes" as they attacked us. The police also feel threatened by the Women's Coalition Against Police and Racist Violence; they knew that many coalition members were on the march and that OCAC is a part of the coalition. And, of course, we know that some police officers are openly involved in anti-choice groups and hate pro-choice activists.

The police violence is not only an attack on OCAC but a threat to all progressive groups that organize mass actions. The following Friday hundreds of people came out in a threatening thunderstorm to demand that the charges be dropped and that such police harassment of the choice movement be stopped. (The anti-choice hotline claimed that they had ordered up a tornado from you know who, but this divine provocation did not work.)

Both the police line on the demo (they called it one of

caused a great deal of confusion and the cops began striking out with their clubs at pro-choice supporters.

In contrast, the police response to the anti-choice is instructive. Although the anti-choice had no permit they were allowed to try to force their way into the march. The cops never moved against the person on the balcony with the banner, but instead charged into the dense crowd to arrest the pro-choice woman who removed it. More generally, we have seen several years of 'Operation Rescue' attacks on clinics in which the police virtually never lay charges against the anti-choice who attempt to blockade legal medical facilities; push, shove and scream at women who want to enter the clinics; and assault clinic supporters and escorts (in each of the last several 'Rescues' pro-choice supporters have had to go to hospital or doctors for injuries inflicted by the 'pro-life' fanatics). If the police take the vigilantes away they are traditionally released at once without charges. Yet the cops arrest two pro-choice supporters at a peaceful demonstration.

We will not credit the police with a sophisticated



the most violent they had seen) and the federal government strategy on getting its abortion Bill passed, is to portray abortion as an issue involving two irreconcilable extremes. We need to re-emphasize that the great majority of the Canadian population are pro-choice (polls consistently find 70-75% are pro-choice, with about 10% opposed to abortion), that our demonstrations are peaceful, and that the only 'extremists' are the small minority of anti-choice hooligans who want to impose their own moralism on all by force.

We cannot forget the main task facing our movement now. That is to defeat the federal law - a law that will force women to lie, turn them into criminals and deny many women access to safe and free abortion services and counselling. Opposition to the federal law is among the main themes of International Women's Day here in Toronto and in other cities. Pro-choice supporters need to join their sisters again this year on March 3 and send a clear message to Ottawa that there must be no new abortion law.

Activist groups across the country are also planning a series of coordinated

actions on May 12. This will be the 20th anniversary of the Abortion Caravan when women went from community to community from Vancouver to Ottawa to protest the unfair and inequitable access to abortion under the 1969 criminal legislation. Twenty years later and the government is still trying to criminalize women's control of their bodies and still refusing to devote the resources to ensure that every woman - regardless of where she lives, what language she speaks, her colour or how much money she has - has access to abortion in her own community. 20 years is too long to wait. By building the strongest possible protest on May 12 and the broadest movement in support of women's freedom of choice, we can defeat this legislation. ■



DO THE RIGHT THING
SUPPORT SAFE, LEGAL, FUNDED
BIRTH CONTROL & ABORTION

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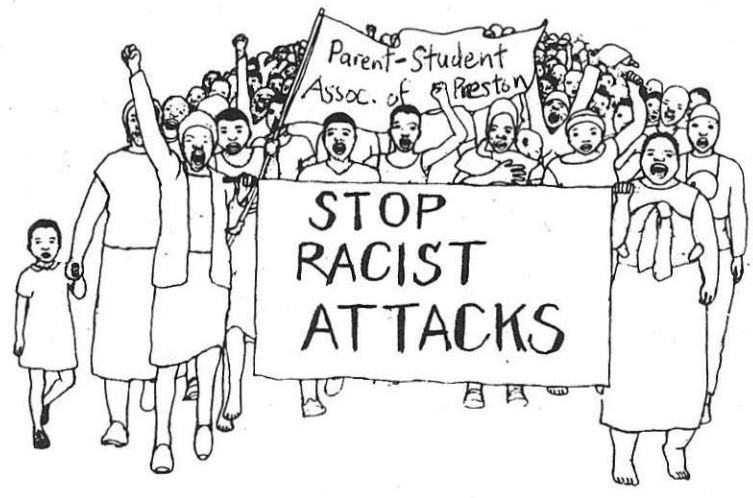
SH: Up until now there has been an almost total denial that the Black people even exist, have a history. Preston is no different than a reserve, you see the similarities in the way Native people and Black people have been treated. The Donald Marshall inquiry brought to the forefront what has been happening to Native people and in effect what has been happening to Black people in that province, but all the commissions, inquiries, and admissions of the wrongs that have been done don't change anything. We want to see solutions, we want to see some things happening. An apology to the people of Preston for centuries of wrongs is simply not enough.

RGR: Do you expect to see more violence?
SH: There is going to be a lot of violence in this decade, I'm sorry to say. You want to be optimistic that it won't happen but understanding the system as I do, understanding the history of what has gone on in North America as I do, understanding racism and racists as I do, I really believe the crunch is coming. When you see police attacking white people who are defending an abortion clinic, it is a sign that the system is getting more repressive. As it does, Native people and Black people will get the brunt of it. White Canadians who dare to identify with people of colour, identify with causes, fight injustice on many levels, they will also feel the pinch.

RGR: Who is standing in solidarity with the Black community in Preston?
SH: There were a number of white people at the meeting but I think they were mostly from the Board of Education. I didn't see any particular organized solidarity by white people.
RGR: Was the feminist community represented?
SH: There were feminists present but no organized presence by the feminist community. The Preston clinic, it is a sign that the community is endeavouring to reach out to other communities, understanding that some white people who extend their support will not be genuine, but will use it as a way to infiltrate the community and cause friction and division. Because of the history of this kind of in-

filtration they must be cautious about letting people into their community. But there is lots of work that could be done in the white community. That's where the racism is and also the resources to fight racism. ■

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the same problem. Be that as it may, Toronto social workers report that the influx of South Asian women to the shelters has been steadily increasing at the same rate as immigration of South Asians to Canada. The mainstream service agencies are simply unequipped to handle the complexity of cultural, specifically linguistic and religious, differences that are present in these new cases.

To begin a cross-cultural analysis of violence against women, we must recognize

that the subordination of women takes different forms in South Asian cultures. As in Western culture, South Asian women have been and are traditionally placed at the bottom of a hierarchical family power structure. Within the South Asian family, the eldest male holds the ultimate power. Women within the household unit are subject to his decisions. This subordination is sustained and perpetuated through economic relations in which all domestic labour is clearly differentiated from the public or social realm:



Rani, for example, could not identify Canadian money. Subordination is also sustained and perpetuated through religious practices such as arranged marriages and Sati, in which the secondary status of women is simply taken for granted. When this secondary status in the specific domestic economies is considered within a larger context of State practices which discriminate economically against all women, the problems faced by newly immigrated women become magnified.

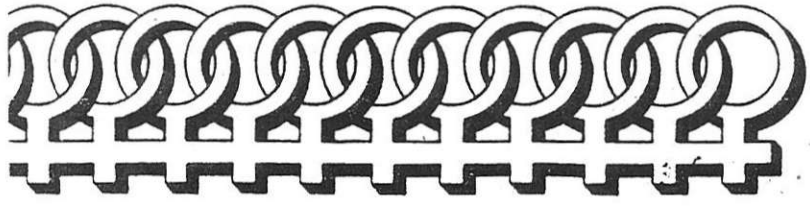
In this domestic economy, reproduction and motherhood are women's primary responsibility. In many cases, women are even unable to get access to birth control until they have had a few children and they get permission from their ex-

tended families. This duty to raise children is consistently advocated by the family, the husband and the community. The pressures often exerted on a South Asian woman by her community are difficult for a Western reader to understand. Maintaining the status quo is the price a woman must pay if she wishes to remain within the community. When Rani went to her Mosque for aid and support, she was told to return home, to pray, and to ask her husband for forgiveness—it was the duty of the family that took precedence over any minor problem like repeated beatings. When she 'failed' to keep the family unit together, she was ignored by both clergy and community. This threat of ostracism from the community places tremendous pressure on the woman to remain silent in the face of violence against her. But even remaining silent is sometimes not enough. A woman is often victimized by the community for things that are completely beyond her control. If she is unable to reproduce or if she is widowed, she is often assigned the blame.

With this acceptance comes assumptions about a woman's body that can easily lead to the acceptance of violence. While women everywhere are victims of this internalization process, the pressures on newly immigrated South Asian women to Canada, make them particularly susceptible to this, perhaps the most terrible, of silencing mechanisms.

Rani was successful in breaking her silence, and after spending two years acquiring training in language and various other social skills, she is free from the vicious circle of violence that she found herself trapped in for two years. She is now working in Toronto and living with her son in their own home. Her former husband has since gone back to India and successfully advertised for a new bride, his third. checks on a woman's behaviour, but also part of an on-going process of reification wherein women become considered, and consider themselves, the property of their men. This internalized process may be located in a woman's acceptance of the male identification of their bodies.

These cultural practices presumably they are back serve not only as external in Toronto. ■



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