

cayenne

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a socialist feminist bulletin

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cay.enne (ki-en'), n. [<native Braz. kynnha], 1. a very hot red pepper used widely in India, China and the Caribbean; 2. a female spice; 3. a long-lasting irritant; 4. hot stuff.

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COVER GRAPHIC: Bill Stapleton, ink drawing, with permission.
CAYENNE BANNER: dian marino

EDITORIAL

This year in Toronto the theme for International Women's Day is No! to Racism, from Toronto to South Africa. We at Cayenne welcome this development and believe women are getting together around the world to fight for freedom and justice. This is one of the reasons that we continue to bring you Cayenne--it is one more source of news about women and liberation struggles from around the world.

As socialists we see class struggle as essential to the fight for women's freedom from racism and sexism; after all, capitalism may not be their originator, but it is surely the principal current beneficiary. As feminists we believe that class struggle can only be conducted with the integration of women and of people of colour, in other words, of the entire class.

Developments in South Africa are demonstrating what unity can do. It is no coincidence that in the past decade South African women of all colours have increased their activism and rebellion against the state. The Federation of South African Women has been revived with many of its original leaders of thirty years ago, and newer groups such as the United Women's Organization are springing up in response to today's urgent needs. More than ever the different races in South Africa are uniting to overthrow the crumbling regime.

This year more native women and women of colour have participated in the March 8 Coalition than ever before. And their presence has been much more than a token one; on the contrary, they have provided crucial leadership which has helped the organization of IWD take a qualitative leap forward. Even though working together hasn't been easy and rumours of tensions circulate,



the group is still together at this writing, which in Toronto is quite an accomplishment.

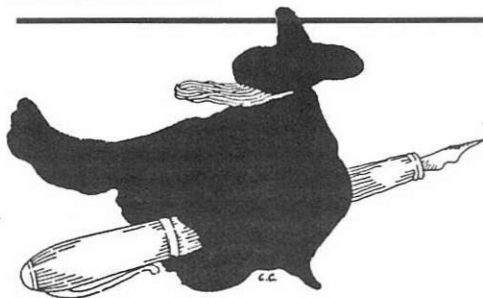
Happy marching!

Who We Are....

We are socialist feminists who are committed to producing a publication of socialist feminist news, analysis and debate. We encourage Cayenne readers and supporters to contribute to this process.

The editorial/production team for this issue included Lynda Yanz, Judi Stevenson, Christina Mills, Marie Lorenzo and Bev Crossman. Special thanks to Amy Gottlieb, Susan Prentice and Jenny MacIntyre.

LETTERS



To the Editors:

The issues raised in Marie Lorenzo's article, "Wallflower Collective Ends" (December 1985, No. 5) warrant further debate. Marie, reporting on the split of the Wallflower Order Dance Collective, notes that discontent with the collective organizational process figures as the primary cause of factionalization. This conclusion echoes what seems to me to be a trend among liberationists of many persuasions to re-evaluate how they organize for action, play and work.

After reading the article I'm left with a lot of questions: what is a collective? How does a group effect collectivity? Is a division of labour always destructive to collective organization? Can a collective incorporate particular expertise and talent without creating hierarchy? Does the differentiation of roles lead to extraordinary influence?

It seems to me that the dilemmas inherent in these questions have not been sufficiently discussed--both in this article and "in general." Does anyone (or group) have experience with a collective organization that they would share? If you do, I would enjoy talking with you and agree to describe our discussions in this or a similar bulletin.

Gerald Hunt
428 Dundas Street East
Toronto, Ontario M5A 2A8
416-964-7577

Dear Cayenne:

The Midwives Collective of Toronto (MCT) would like to thank Judi Stevenson for her article (on the fight to legalize midwifery in Ontario, issue #4). As Judi rightly points out, midwifery can be seen as part of the feminist reproductive rights issue, but it can also be perceived in terms antithetical to feminist thinking. So it is crucial to the future of midwifery that it be embraced as a feminist issue, and that feminist input shape midwifery. The link between the MCT and OCAC already exists, and we hope it will be one of many alliances between feminists and the midwifery movement. Thanks to Cayenne for showing an interest.

The Midwives Collective of Ontario

Dear Cayenne collective;

Congratulations on your first year of Cayenne. I don't know how you all fit it into your busy lives, but I hope you can keep it up.

I think it has improved over the year and culminated in the December issue, which was terrific - a nice balance of national and international and a great collection of cartoons and graphics.

I took it to Montreal over the holidays and showed it to a few people who really liked it too. So in the interest of attracting contributions to the content from other parts of the country, I will make a donation in the form of subscriptions to some of my activist women friends outside Toronto (list attached). Enclosed is \$50.00 for my renewal and 4 other subs.

In sisterhood and solidarity,

Gini Dickie

YUKON RIGHTS BILL DEAD -- FOR NOW

Jan Langford
Whitehorse

In late December Justice Minister Roger Kimmerly announced that the Yukon government was letting its controversial Human Rights Act die on the Legislature's order paper. However, Kimmerly has suggested that a new Act will be introduced in the spring; he has promised to include two of the most contentious issues in the Act--equal pay for work of equal value and protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or preference.

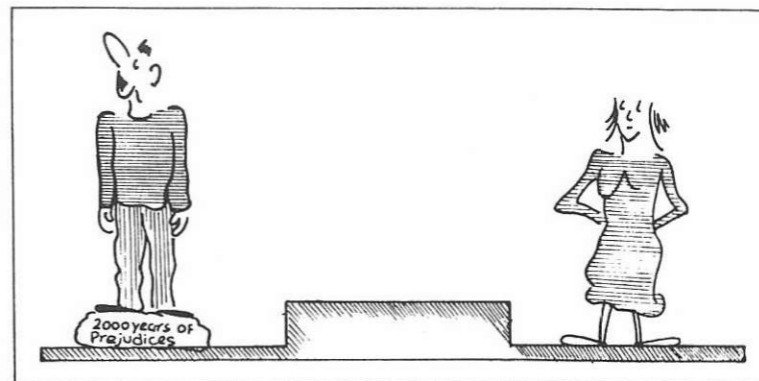
The Human Rights Act was introduced in October by the minority NDP government, elected to power last May. The bill contained 12 prohibited grounds of discrimination, a clause on affirmative action and equal pay for work of equal value, and would have created a Yukon Human Rights Commission. Currently the Yukon has no Human Rights Act but does have a Fair Practices Act, which is limited in scope and has no enforcement provisions.

The decision to scrap the Act came after a disastrous series of public

meetings, held to gather response to the proposed bill. Public input was generally misinformed or uninformed, and highly emotional. The flames of misunderstanding were fanned by the partisan politicking of the Conservatives, who saw fit to tell Yukoners that a swastika should be affixed to the cover of the bill.

Initial public reaction to the bill centred on the inclusion of sexual orientation/preference as a prohibited grounds of discrimination. Letters to the editors of the local papers were filled with arguments for and against gay rights. Old homophobic myths were trotted out by certain members of the Christian community, countered by individuals having heterosexual privilege as protection, and the debate raged for almost two months.

To a large extent, the death of the bill was predetermined by the lack of educational work done by the government prior to its introduction, the process of soliciting public input on the bill and the haste of this process. The Committee itself was not well prepared for the hearings, having debated only 9 pages of the 36-page Act in 9 hours, and so failed to provide needed clarification. Nor did the



government issue a green paper or any other educational material on human rights prior to the release of the bill. Only now that the bill is dead has it set aside some money for this purpose.

The partisan soapbox politics of some members of the Select Committee also aided in the failure of the bill to gain wide public support. PC members seized every opportunity to bash the bill and the NDP government. The meetings were clearly stacked and emotions ran high.

Support for the bill was presented to the Select Committee by various

individuals and community groups, representing labour, women, Native people and special needs societies. However, much broader public support for human rights is needed if we are to have any rights legislation in the Yukon. An Ad Hoc Committee on Human Rights has been formed and is currently looking at ways to do educational work on the issue.

You can still urge the Yukon government to introduce good human rights legislation by writing Roger Kimmerly, Minister of Justice, Yukon Legislative Assembly, Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2G6.

★



LABOUR

Women Threatened by Free Trade

Kerry McCuaig
Toronto

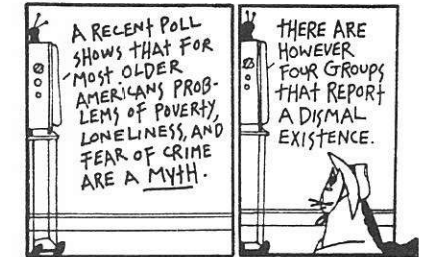
Nearly 20 years of government restraint policies, high unemployment and declining living standards have left the country ready for a quick fix. The solution being put forward is free trade--"the leap of faith"--which its authors acknowledge will cause temporary pain as the price for increased employment and security down the road.

In reality free trade is an accelerated continuation of Canadian capitalist policy, now more boldly revealed by the Mulroney government. Through its last spring budget and recently released report of the Macdonald Commission the government has made it clear that regardless of the consequences, the needs of the marketplace are to come first.

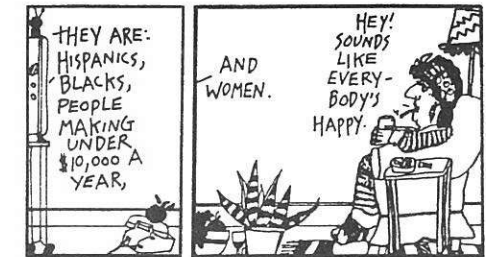
Free trade is being taken up as a women's issue by some groups in the women's movement, and with good reason. Women's demand for equality doesn't fit into this economic strategy. In fact the economic and social changes it would bring are likely to not only retard women's rate of progress, but actually leave us in a worse position.

The Macdonald Report talks about retraining workers in industry--the sector likely to be hardest hit--for what they see as the winner industries: urban transit and forestry. Unfortunately, neither are labour intensive sectors nor are they traditional employers of women.

In a critique of the Report for the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), York economist Marjorie Cohen points out that the likelihood of workers displaced by free



Nicole Hollander



trade finding more highly skilled and better paying jobs is very slim.

"Female workers in these industries tend to be older than the average female worker; they are much more likely to be immigrants and therefore less likely to speak English or French; they are more likely to be married; and they have considerably lower levels of education than the average female worker in Canada. They are also much more likely to be living in Quebec. More than 65% of all the female manufacturing workers in Quebec are employed in the six industries which will be most adversely affected by free trade."

In his report, Macdonald also spells out how relocation allowances could aid displaced workers to resettle in areas where there are jobs. However if past government policies are any indication, women workers are rarely the beneficiaries of such programs.



Married women find it difficult to move for the simple reason that the majority of families live where the higher paid male member is able to find work. So nearly half of all women working in industry are facing permanent unemployment. Also affected would be U.S. subsidiaries, 34% of our manufacturing sector. These plants were not located here to compete with their parents. Unhampered by tariffs and guaranteed access to the Canadian market there could be a movement of industry to the Sun Belt--the U.S. "right to work" states, where trade unions and labor legislation are non-existent.

The U.S. has already made it clear that they also have an interest in our service sector, where over 80% of women workers are employed. As Cohen points out, the U.S. economy has grown increasingly service oriented. The development of new technology,

particularly in communications, has made the export of services possible. In 1980 the U.S. exported \$60 billion worth. In the past these services have been protected through preferential treatment for domestic firms, restrictions on foreign banks and insurance companies and limits on foreign transportation and communication. These protections would disappear in a free trade agreement.

In its proposal to offer up the Canadian service sector, Macdonald argues that this may make the U.S. more willing to open up their markets to our manufacturing goods. He neglects to mention that Canada won't have a manufacturing sector. Even if the most hopeful scenario came to pass and additional manufacturing jobs were created, they would certainly not offset the loss of service jobs.

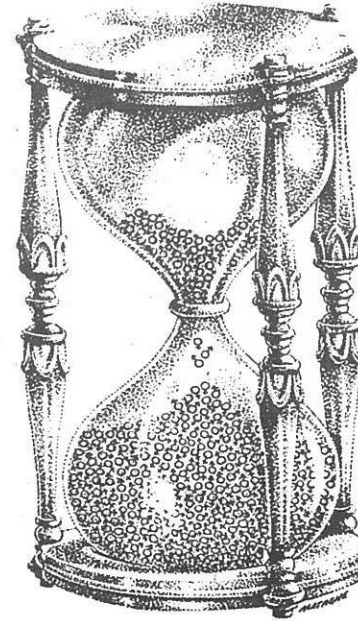
Perhaps the most hollow of all Tory promises concerning free trade is their reassurance that Canadian social programs would remain intact. This runs in the face of a rash of statements emanating from Washington.

U.S. protectionist sentiments have not been concerned about tariffs. Instead, complaints have focussed on Canadian industries having a competitive edge over their U.S. counterparts because of "governmental interference."

The fact that Canadians working in the fishing industry receive unemployment insurance during the off season has been cited as "unfair competition"; marketing boards regulating agricultural production have been termed unfair and our forestry products have come under attack since the majority of our woods are crown owned, giving Canadian products a competitive edge over those originating from privately held U.S. forests. Import quotas, Canadian content

regulations and government grants to industry have also been targets. Despite their limitations these have been the policies Canada has traditionally employed to encourage job creation or to counter regional disparity.

But in an environment where the market rules, any social policy requiring a commitment from corporations would have to be uniformly applied or left open to charges of unfair competition. Pressure would be exerted for a common taxation policy, and while this may bring lower personal taxes in the short term, it would also mean reduced health, education and welfare services. Macdonald is most vehement in his opposition to equal pay, unemployment insurance, minimum wage laws and universal pensions and family allowances, accusing them of being impediments on a free market. He is promoting what he refers to as a "flexible and adaptive labour market."



It is worth noting that the Mulroney government isn't waiting for a formalized agreement before embarking on this path.

The Inquiry on Unemployment Insurance now touring the country starts from the premise that UI is a disincentive to work and that by reducing benefits and making entry requirements more stringent, people will be more predisposed to accepting marginal employment or moving to where work is available--your "flexible and adaptive labour market."

Using spurious studies it tries to show that "workforce participation rates, especially those of youth and women, decrease with the generosity of unemployment insurance payments." It goes on to blame women for increased unemployment, drawing a parallel between women's increased participation rate in the labour force and rising unemployment.

Condemnation of free trade is growing. The women's movement has led the call for a new "vision" of a society where full employment, equality and security prevail. In NAC's submission to the Inquiry on Unemployment Insurance the demand was raised for increased government intervention in the economy to revitalize the manufacturing sector, that action be taken to limit the power of the transnationals, and that Canada extricate itself from the arms race.

NAC has also taken the initiative of calling together women's, labour, cultural, church and social service groups in a campaign against free trade. In Toronto, Organized Working Women is sponsoring a conference, "Building an Economy for Equality, March 15 and 16, which will examine and popularize labour's economic alternative to the current corporate/government strategy.

At its November convention, the Ontario Federation of Labor embarked on a wide educational campaign and is holding hearings in cities around the province, urging the development of local anti-free trade coalitions to culminate in a mass protest at the legislature on April 26.

The United Autoworkers kicked off its campaign February 3 with plans to meet in centers around the country, to lobby all levels of government and to flood the Prime Minister's office with "No Free Trade" postcards.

While Canadian integration into the U.S. economy did not begin with the election of the Mulroney government, free trade does represent a significant move in that direction. The issue has galvanized public opinion as have few others. Its defeat could open up new doors in the struggle for progressive change. What remains to be seen is how effective progressives can be in using this opportunity to help lay the groundwork for ongoing action in the fight for a people's economic alternative. ★

Organized Working Women
Annual Conference

BUILDING AN ECONOMY FOR EQUALITY

The Macdonald Report/International
Competition/Technological
Change/The Federal Budget/Arms
Spending

SPEAKERS

Marjorie Cohen Patrick Clancy
Jeff Rose

MARCH 15 & 16 RYERSON POLYTECH
534-7504/977-1975 JORGENSEN HALL

Not Just Any Midwifery Will Do

Eleanor Barrington
Toronto

Ontario Minister of Health, Murray Elston recently raised the expectations of thousands of parents by announcing his government's intention to introduce midwifery care into our health care system. But those who have struggled to see midwifery recognized barely had time to cheer before the victory was tempered. The second part of Mr. Elston's announcement was the composition of a task force charged to weigh options and avenues toward legislation: two lawyers, one doctor and one nurse.

Each of the individuals appointed is widely respected and beyond reproach. Three of the four are women. But the absence of a parent/midwifery consumer is regrettable, and the lack of a practising midwife very worrisome.

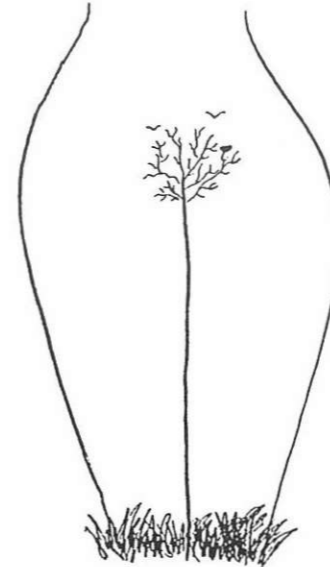


In a culture where midwifery has been misunderstood and maligned for decades, who but parents and midwives have the experience to fashion the appropriate midwifery system for Ontario? The objectives in introducing a midwifery system must be to improve safety and increase consumer satisfaction with maternity care. Will the nurse and doctor in the task force be able to set aside the vested interests and biases of their respective professions in order to keep those objectives primary? Will they be able to look clearly at options that

represent real change from the status quo?

Those parents, practising and non-practising midwives, and other health professionals who have been involved in the Midwifery Task Force of Ontario (founded in 1983 to promote the recognition of midwifery), know that we need real change.

Mr. Elston introduced his midwifery proposal in the midst of the extra-billing controversy with the medical profession. He was careful to laud doctors and nurses for the quality of our current maternity system. International statistics are not so kind. Our infant mortality rate is higher than comparable countries where midwifery services are widely available. Our caesarean section statistics are three or four times too great. Public disillusion with medical maternity care is creating an environment of distrust and controversy on obstetrical wards across the province.



Rebecca Blackwell

The Midwifery Task Force of Ontario (not to be confused with the newly announced government task force, so unfortunately named!) wants change, but not just any change. Midwifery, but not just any midwifery. The MTF has examined many other systems for their ability to meet parents' needs. It advocates that midwives be primary caregivers within the health care team, with direct-entry professional training. In several states where a "nurse-midwifery only" system has been instituted, vital principles of midwifery, like continuous personalized care and respect for parents' choices in childbirth, have been corrupted by medical pressure from above.

The internationally respected philosophy and practice of midwifery is often at odds with current medical practices. Since nurses are subordinate to doctors, it is difficult for nurse-midwives to uphold their non-interventive principles in the face of medical pressure. Thus the MTF seeks the autonomous status midwives enjoy in many countries. The International Confederation of Midwives supports this position.

The nurse member of the government's task force must be aware of her profession's bias in favour of nurse-midwifery. This option would enlarge the nursing power base, increase its stature, and expand its professional schools.

The physician on the task force is no doubt aware that the medical governing bodies would prefer nurse-midwifery or no midwifery at all. Independent midwives chosen by parents would break the medical monopoly. Doctors would be required to consult with midwives as colleagues. Therein lies a possible conflict of interest for any doctor weighing options for our midwifery system.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario also has a stated

bias against home birth, one of the choices in childbirth that parents demand and midwives offer. Who on Mr. Elston's taskforce will defend that important option?

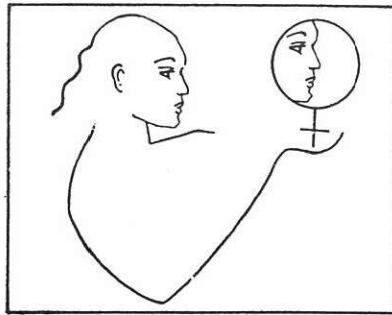
It is not difficult to imagine why the consumer and the practising midwife are absent from this task force. Government does not generally accord much stature to mere mothers. It would not wish to associate itself with the midwives who have been operating "outside the system."

In the absence of these two vital viewpoints on the task force, each nurse, doctor (and lawyer) must regularly check herself for professional bias by assuming those two conspicuously empty chairs. They must

Struggling for Maternity Protection

The death of Cipriana Valdez, fired by the Ministry of Labour in her eighth month of pregnancy, has set off a storm of protest among Venezuelan women. Their action has led to Congress's including job security for pregnant women in its proposed reforms of the labour laws.

Legislation almost half a century old theoretically protects pregnant women from being fired, but women who wish to seek recourse under the law must apply to the Ministry of Labour, which in this case was the employer.



be more than fair. Then, when Mr. Elston introduces his midwifery legislation a year from now, Ontario parents may be able to celebrate an unqualified victory: the recognition of a midwifery system that maximizes safety and consumer satisfaction. An increased possibility of choice and control for birthing women. A real change in our maternity care system.

Eleanor Barrington is a Toronto freelance writer and author of Midwifery is Catching (NC Press, Toronto: 1985). She is also a mother, who gave birth with the assistance of midwives in 1984. ★

When Ms. Valdez died from complications of her pregnancy, apparently aggravated by her sudden dismissal, women's groups immediately organized the Cipriana Valdez Committee. They began circulating a petition concerning job security to present to the Congress, and demanded the establishment of a special office to oversee the implementation of laws prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women. During their campaign they publicized the fact that between 10 and 20 pregnant women are fired every day, many of them sole support mothers.

It is felt that the Congress's unanimous approval of the inclusion of the maternity clause in the labour reform bill was due to the massive public outcry resulting from the women's organizing efforts after Cipriana Valdez's death.

Mujer/ilet, January 86, no. 54, translated by Christina Mills ★

Reproductive Choice: An International Issue

Christina Mills

Because so many activists in the Canadian women's movement are involved in the crucial battle for freestanding clinics in recent years, the issue of reproductive choice is most often discussed in terms of the right to choose to abort an unwanted pregnancy. Meanwhile we go on learning and broadening our understanding of what reproductive choice means in its fullest sense. Women involved in solidarity with national liberation movements and in anti-racist work here in North America have helped pro-choice activists expand our understanding of the ways in which control of reproduction relates to exploitation in all its manifestations.

Women have been punished for using contraception, not to mention abortion, not only because of the Biblical injunction to "go forth and multiply," but because freedom from childbearing and all it implies is also at least a part of freedom to act independently in the world outside the home.

At the same time, women of particular classes, races and countries have been forbidden to reproduce, because an increase in their people's numbers would threaten the established order. History gives us dozens of examples, from forced sterilization of Native, Black, and Latino women in the U.S., to the mandatory shots of Depo-

Provera (a long-acting contraceptive banned in the U.S. because it is believed to cause cancer) South African women must have recorded in their passbooks in order to keep their jobs.

Agencies such as the International Planned Parenthood Foundation (IPPF), the U.N. Family Planning Agency (UNFPA), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) have been under attack for the past two decades for their roles in international population control programmes which have involved the use of dangerous and untested substances and devices used without the recipients' full knowledge or consent. A case in point is AID's collusion in the dumping of surplus Dalkon Shields and Depo-Provera on Third World populations.

It is interesting that Depo-Provera is about to be marketed in Canada, although it is still considered unsafe in the U.S. And a representative of the company which makes the Copper 7 is offering a "special" on them now that they have been taken off the U.S. market. What does that say about how Canada is seen by the U.S.?

Recently the imperialist goals of the U.S. population control policies have come into conflict with the morality of the New Right, which has lobbied to remove support for any family planning agency which includes abortion services. This has been adopted as policy by the Reagan administration and has already been implemented in regard to the IPPF. While feminists still condemn these agencies' ideology and methods, it is clear that cutting their funding will inevitably lead to an increase in the maternal death rate. Women in the areas affected will no longer have access to the means to regulate their



ADRIENNE SCOTT

own reproduction, and so will be vulnerable to the dangers of unplanned, closely-spaced pregnancies and illegal abortions.

Pro-choice activists in the U.S. have long organized around the twin goals of ending forced sterilization and ensuring abortion rights. Now the connection between the two issues is felt more acutely as feminists try to counter the New Right's attack on international family planning while maintaining their valid criticisms of the agencies under fire. ★

The Canadian Coalition on Depo Provera is inviting interested groups to help fight the federal governments plans to lift restrictions on this controversial and dangerous contraceptive. For information write 58 Arthur Street, Ottawa, K1R 7B9, or DES Action Canada, Box 233, Snowdon, Montreal, H2W 2N1.

Canada's Abortion Law on Trial

Christina Mills

The women of Canada are turning the tables and putting the laws governing abortion on trial.

Hundreds of women in eight cities are part of a coalition (coordinated by the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League and the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics) to organize a series of tribunals across Canada at which the defendant will be the entire body of law governing abortion in this country.

At the first such tribunal, held in Vancouver in January, four hundred people were rivetted by the testimony of 15 witnesses, including older women who suffered the consequences of illegal abortions, well known women in the community, and a doctor who spoke about the pressures on him as a physician doing hospital abortions. The tribunal was a smashing success and a strong indictment of the unjust character of the current legislation concerning abortion.

Pro-choice activists realized when the Winnipeg clinic closed just how isolated the different struggles were provincially, and felt that the clinic would have been defended much more

effectively if there had existed a bi-national (French and English) movement to attack the federal law as such. In May 1985 activists from across Canada met to discuss ways to improve communications and coordinate efforts. Out of that meeting came the idea for the tribunals. The aim is to go beyond the tribunals to the building of a broad movement similar to that which existed before 1969 with the Abortion Caravan.

Tribunals are being organized in Edmonton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon (not confirmed at this writing), Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax. They will culminate with a national tribunal in Ottawa in May, attended by international guests and representatives from the local coalitions. All the tribunals are being videotaped.

Pro-choice women are angry at the fact that Henry Morgentaler's lawyer, Morris Manning, has taken up anti-labour and anti-women causes (consistent with his civil libertarian approach). OCAC, a feminist organization which receives much of its support from the labour sectors, has stated that if it were up to them they would fire Manning. Unfortunately OCAC has no power to

decide on Morgentaler's choice of a defence lawyer. cayenne urges readers to support OCAC's position and write Morgentaler and CARAL urging them to reconsider Manning's usefulness to them in light of the character of the broad base of the choice movement.

From the Toronto Morgentaler Clinic comes the good news that Nikki Colodny has started performing abortions there. A co-founder of Doctors for Choice, Nikki is a socialist feminist and a long-time activist in the women's movement who has been a member of OCAC during the last year.

The bad news is that the movement in Toronto is in danger of being demobilized by the case being tied up in the courts, and perhaps by a false sense of security because the clinic is still functioning after more than a year. The clinic seems safe. But it is only safe because of the breadth of support it gets from the pro-choice movement. We must not be complacent and let that support fall away. On the contrary, we have to multiply it. The fight has been a real drain on our energies, both individually and collectively, but it is more important than ever to continue to struggle. ★



Uruguayan Women Oppose Silent Scream

Women's groups in Uruguay are protesting the showing of the anti-choice film, Silent Scream, in primary and secondary schools, as well as in churches. Why, they ask, do parents who want to protect their children from violent or sexually explicit scenes in movies not object to the showing of a film full of lies and distortions? The film is already having negative effects on the mental health of the children and adolescents subjected to it.

They cite the case of a fourteen-year-old girl who refuses to speak to or touch her mother because she had an abortion in her youth, and of a seventeen-year-old who cries and vomits constantly because she has been

convinced that the abortion she had was murder. Uruguayan women are demanding that the film showings be accompanied by showings of the rebuttal films, and that the children be shown the other face of violence: malnourished and abandoned children begging in the streets, women dead of backstreet abortions. They want to give their children facts and not propoganda, allowing them to form their own opinions; twelve years of dictatorship have taught them to cherish a critical spirit and defend it against such manipulation.

Mujer/ilet, February 86, No. 55,
translated by Christina Mills ★

Action for Day Care!



Sue Colley
Toronto

Yet another federal committee will study child care in Canada in 1986. A parliamentary task force was appointed by Minister of Health and Welfare Jake Epp, and charged to report in one year. The Task Force has the mandate to examine and report on the future of child care in Canada in the context of the changing needs of the Canadian family. It will examine:

- the requirements of children for care;
- the role of the federal government in child care;
- alternatives for future action by the federal government.

In the meantime, the report of the three-quarter million dollar Task Force appointed by the previous Liberal government to do a similar job, has not yet been released. It is expected in March.

Public hearings in Ontario for the Conservative's Task Force will be held between May 5 and 16, although precise dates and places are not yet set. Groups and individuals who want to address the Task Force must apply by telephone or in writing before March 15. Written briefs may be sent to the Task Force until June.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Day Care, the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association along with many

women's groups, trade unions and social planning organizations have been calling upon the federal government to provide funds for a comprehensive, universally-accessible, high quality, non-profit child care system in Canada for many years. Despite the fact that task forces appear to spend public money without taking any action, it is clear that we must once again use these hearings to express our message to the government.

The hearings will be our last opportunity for many years to say again that:

- licensed child care services are inaccessible to most Canadian children.
- the majority of Canadian parents with young children work to earn a living and support their families, and require child care to do so.
- most working parents cannot afford day care fees, which are now between \$4,000 and \$8,000 a year per child.
- quality child care services depend on well-trained staff who should receive salaries and benefits commensurate with the value of their work and educational qualifications.
- an equitable employment strategy for women must include access to affordable, high-quality child care.
- federal initiatives are needed now to implement a directly-funded child care system and to introduce a system of parental leave.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

1. Make copies of this article and distribute them.
2. Contact your local CDCAA representative (Jane Bertrand, 416-667-3273 or Julie Mathien 416-979-2393), your local Day Care Coalition or the Ontario Coalition for Better Day Care (416-766-4691) to find out when the Task Force is coming to your area.
3. Ask for a hearing before the Task Force. You don't need to prepare a formal presentation. Just a brief personal statement about your own child care experiences would be very effective. Remember that the deadline for requesting a hearing is March 15th.
4. Find out what activities are planned

- for the Task Force's visit to your area. If none are planned, plan some.
5. Ask for a meeting with your MP for you and your group to discuss day care.
6. Attend the Task Force hearings.

IMPORTANT ADDRESSES:

Parliamentary Task Force on Child Care, 151 Sparks Street, Suite 308, Ottawa K1N 1C3. (tel: 613-995-8633).

Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, 323 Chapel Street, Ottawa K1N 7Z2. (tel: 613-594-31996).

Ontario Coalition for Better Day Care, Suite 700, 1260 Bay Street, Toronto M5R 2B5. (tel: 416-766-4691). ★

The March Of Men



WOMEN PRISONERS ABUSED

Christina Mills

The problems of women political prisoners in the Philippines have become so acute that a women's group in Davao City has set up a special Women Detainees Program to work to improve their living conditions, help get them legal aid, and safeguard their civil and human rights. Rape is commonplace and women usually keep quiet about it so as not to hurt their chances of release. Women who have dared complain to higher authorities have been threatened, and one woman who dared bring charges against her rapist on her release has been told by the military that she will be shot on sight; meanwhile the rapist has mysteriously "escaped" custody and disappeared.

Most detainees are victims of zoning operations, in which the military sweep through poor communities just to see what they are able to find. The most common accusations are subversion and conspiracy to commit rebellion. Many do not have official charges against them, but may stay in



detention from a month to a year without being officially charged.

While women outside the prisons are organizing in solidarity with women detainees, the prisoners themselves are busy working to help themselves on the inside. They have some income-generating projects, such as handicrafts, which provide funds for supplementary food, medicines, household maintenance, etc. They have built their own beds from this money. There are common funds for emergency purposes and for detainees who get released, to help them get back on their feet.

They also carry out protest actions against abuses and prison conditions. They find that they have more leverage when they launch united efforts, the most usual form of which is the hunger strike. An abusive guard was removed from the detention center when he became the object of one such strike. A hunger strike usually lasts for three days, with the detainees subsisting on water and occasionally biscuits.

During these periods the women are at the frontline. The guards are less likely to hurt them. Heated clashes between male detainees and the guards are averted with the more vocal presence of the women at the frontline.

The detainees are trying to make their life in detention as productive as possible, but they need more support, moral as well as material. There is an urgent need for legal aid to follow up release work and charges of sexual abuse. Strong lobbying is needed for the protection of their rights as detainees and for reforms in the conditions inside the prisons. Their families also need support; many detainees are sole breadwinners and in some cases their income from handicrafts is the only source of food for their families.

If you would like to write to a political prisoner or send support, please write to Women Detainees Program, Alyansa sa Makinasudnong Kababaihan (AMK), Rm. 201, Gabaton Bldg., Quirino Ave., Davao City, Philippines.

The following is from a report given in Nairobi by GABRIELA, a women's coalition.



The sexual abuse of women by the military is believed to be rooted in the patriarchal orientation of Philippine society which fosters the chauvinistic attitude of regarding women as sex objects. Women in militarized areas are the most vulnerable to this attitude. Hemmed into military controlled zones, which they cannot leave at will, many women fall prey to various forms of abuse. Only a few, however, bother to report their ordeal to the authorities. Such confessions of sexual abuse are psychologically unappealing to Filipino women, especially those in the countryside who grew up in the religious, cultural and social tenets of virginity before marriage and monogamous sex after marriage. To break either, wilfully or through no fault of her own, brands a woman as socially undesirable, an outcast in her community.

Moreover, the few victims who have dared to brave social scorn to seek justice seemed only to have exposed themselves needlessly. Only in rare cases do their complaints reach the courts. In some cases, the victim is asked to settle out of court, especially if the military man accused offers to marry her.

The practice of asking the victims to marry their torturers stems out of the feudal attitude of regarding women as homebound, as caretakers of children. When a woman is sexually abused, she sees herself as unfit for this model role, an unclean woman who is now not worthy of a man's love.

Thus the idea behind the offer of marriage is to "save" the woman's life.

...in most cases, the threat of rape is enough to make a woman detainee succumb...they would even gladly choose death rather than be subjected to sexual indignities from which they

believe their self-esteem will never recover.

The irony of militarization is that while it touts law enforcement as its main reason for being, it has created a condition of lawlessness that tacitly allows the commission of notorious crimes during military operations. Military areas, in fact, have become "free fire" zones where soldiers abuse women at will. Given their superior weapons and positions of authority,

military men think that they are above the law, and rape is their prerogative or "fringe benefit".

...in a fascist regime, these are not only valuable tools for keeping military men happy but also tactics for terrorizing women from joining anti-establishment movements. Fascist regimes, therefore, not only breed sexual violence against women, they also need such violence to perpetuate themselves. *

ORGANIZING AGAINST VIOLENCE IN PERU

It is not always the case that "women's issues" take a backseat in the heat of class struggle in the Third World. In Peru the women's movement is mounting a campaign against violence against women which is involving both rural and

urban women. It appears to arouse a particularly strong response among indigenous women. Part of the campaign involved setting up "mailboxes" in poor neighbourhoods for women to deposit their testimonies about rape and other abuse. In November there was a daylong protest in Lima which included street theatre, murals, photo exhibits, and displays of newspaper clippings attesting to the various manifestations of male violence. As well, information tables provide advice about what to do in the event of rape or assault.

One of the founders of a battered women's shelter, Rosa Duenas, a working class indigenous woman, avowed feminist, and member of the United Left, has recently been elected to Lima's Municipal Council. She intends to keep women's concerns high on the agenda with two groundbreaking projects: a city-wide gathering of women, both feminist and non-feminist, and a permanent municipal women's centre with counselling, crisis and legal services, as well as cultural and social activities.

Mujer/ilet, January 86, no. 54.
translated by Christina Mills *



WOMEN AND 'A NEW CHILE'

"Without the incorporation of women there will never be a democracy," acknowledged leaders of the political opposition in a Conference organized by the Institute for a New Chile.

The conference was the fifth Summer School organized by the Institute since 1978 in Mendoza, the Argentine city closest to Santiago. From January 8 to 16 six hundred Chileans, mainly from inside the country, met in courses, workshops, cultural and recreational activities.

Feminists presented courses on reproductive rights and state politics, women's organizations and strategies for survival, and women in social and political movements. A round table on women, politics and parties with members of the Feminist Movement, the Movement of Pobladoras (women in squatters' settlements), and the Women's Movement for Socialism focussed

on the need for the entire Chilean women's movement to work together on a common platform in order to have more influence on the political parties.

In the second part of the conference the political organizers held a workshop entitled, "The Society We Want." Despite the fact that 35% of conference participants were women, and a large proportion were young people, neither constituency was invited to participate in the workshop. In response to this reinforcement of their invisibility, women painted under the banner, "The Society We Want," the words, "will have neither women nor youth!"

This development, entirely predictable in view of the history of the left, motivated women to organize their own workshop entitled, "Women and the Society We Want." In it they invited participants, and especially

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\$18/1 year; \$34/2 years; \$48/3 years

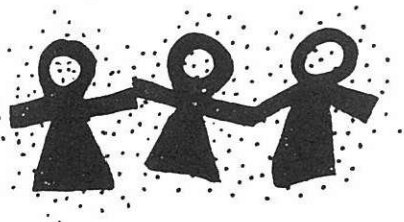
3585 RUE ST-URBAIN, MONTREAL, P.Q. H2X 2N6
(514) 844-1761

political leaders, to answer three questions: What does your party think of the social movements women are involved in? How are women integrated in the life of your party? What concrete steps does your party propose to ensure the incorporation of women in the society to come with the future democracy?

Some responded by talking about the high calibre of women militants in their parties; others defined feminism as a product exported from North America; others argued that the fundamental task was to overthrow the dictatorship; others acknowledged their own ignorance as political leaders of the problems of women and the situation of women militants in their parties.

The result of the discussion was the recognition on the part of the leaders of the need for political parties to seek new ways of relating to social movements, and of the fact that there will be no democracy unless political parties incorporate women and their specific demands in their platforms.

*Mujer/ilet, February 86, No. 55,
translated and condensed by
Christina Mills* *



RACISM & THE U OF T LAW SCHOOL

Julie Noble
Toronto

On January 21 the South African ambassador to Canada debated apartheid with a University of Toronto law professor. The invitations to Ambassador Babb, and his appearance at the law school, were surrounded by controversy.

The first invitation extended by the U. of T. International Law Society was withdrawn shortly before his first scheduled visit. Pressure from the faculty and student body of the University led the Society to decide against playing host to the ambassador of an openly racist regime with a shoddy human rights record.

In reaction to this move a group of law students formed a club, the so-called "Lawyers for Fundamental Freedoms," in order to re-invite Babb. He promptly accepted.

The "Lawyers for Fundamental Freedoms" claimed that they were inviting Babb, not because they supported apartheid, but because they felt the principle of freedom of speech had been violated when the initial invitation was revoked. The more extreme among them argued that no one had the right to take away their right to witness an afternoon's entertainment, no matter who was participating.

Those who objected to the invitation pointed out that Babb's freedom of speech was not violated, since he is free to speak where and when he wants to in Canada, and does so. He has no pre-existing "right" to come to our law school and debate; no one does.



There can be no debate about apartheid. Government sponsored racism and oppression is wrong and inhuman. We needn't attend debates to establish that.

What we need to do is work on behalf of the oppressed in South Africa, and show our disapproval of that regime, through divesting Canada of South African investments, and yes, by boycotting and demonstrating against South African diplomats in our own country.

When the South African ambassador came on January 31 there were many well-organized and moving demonstrations against his government. When he left, the "Lawyers for Fundamental Freedoms" and their supporters felt satisfied that justice had been done: Babb had been given a chance to speak. For those who thought the issue of the day was free speech, that was the end of it. Their simple, contained dispute had been fought and won and liberal middle-class standards had prevailed. The furthest thing from their minds the following Monday was the state of oppression in South Africa.

The danger in couching an issue such as this in terms of "freedom of speech" is that it gives the illusion that the problem is small and manageable and that the solution is always the same, namely, to let the person voice their opinion.

I cherish civil liberties, but I also think that it is important for us to realize we need not continue to re-invent the wheel as far as morality is concerned. Sexism is wrong. Racism is wrong, and apartheid is one of its incarnations. Some things are just not up for debate. *

antidote for burnout

Don't work tomorrow
When you cough, when your throat burns,
stomach hurts, chest feels tight, legs ache...

Don't work
Read Meridel Le Sueur's short story
"Biography of My Daughter" and remember
activism can kill as easily as capitalism
though the death is not as sour,
Remember a serious illness
can divert your effort for years,
Remember it takes a long life
to finish this job you've chosen,
and don't work tomorrow.

When you can't sleep at night, cry
unexpectedly over a lover, friend, parents,
your dog who died
or for no reason you know...

Don't work tomorrow
any repetitive motion
don't

Pick one of these instead:
sleep
think however you like
walk
plan food
dream
make love
eat

Do it with someone you love
Do it with yourself
Only pick one
Take this remedy until all symptoms disappear

Trust the heart
which brought you here
(your heart will bring you back)
and
don't work tomorrow.

--Arlenne Lauby
1-5-86



INTERVIEW:

JOAN NESTLE

Amy Gottlieb
Toronto

I met Joan Nestle last November at a conference on pornography and prostitution at which she presented her thoughts on the relationship between lesbians and prostitutes.

I had first read her work in the Sex Issue of Heresies, published in 1981. Her article "Butch-Fem Relationships: Sexual Courage in the 1950's" was a ground-breaking article. In it she argued that butch-fem relationships were "an erotic partnership, serving both as a conspicuous flag of rebellion and an intimate exploration of women's sexuality. They were filled with a deeply lesbian language of stance, dress, and gesture."

As one of the founding members of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City, she continues to document the diversity of women's lives in the past and the present.

This interview, originally done for Rites Magazine, has been excerpted for *cayenne*.

I interviewed Joan in her home, The Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City, in December, 1985.

Enjoy!

A.G.: The article you wrote on butch/fem relationships in the Sex Issue of Heresies was very important to me. Reading it and hearing a presentation of the Buffalo Women's History Project, were the most important things to me in re-assessing my assumptions about butch/fem relationships. I thought they were of the past and a mimic of heterosexuality, and that lesbians in the new wave of feminism, including



myself did not take butch/fem roles. Were you aware when you wrote that article how much of a step you were taking and how unorthodox it was?

J.N.: I wrote it because I had to for myself. I had welcomed feminism in the '70s with desperately open arms, because I had felt dirty for many years. I had felt deviant and freakish. The part of me that needed reconciliation was the part that questioned what being a woman meant, given the history I had lived.

So when feminism came with its analysis and it hooked up with all the other political analyses I had done, I was ready to jettison everything to be part of this new sisterhood. It was both emotional need and intellectual recognition of something that made sense.

So I went through the early '70s and participated in founding some of the early lesbian feminist groups

here. Then I started noticing that there were whole populations of women who had given me strength to survive, women that I had loved in the late '50s and '60s that I did not see anyplace in this new world. I learned that I had to keep my mouth shut about certain things because it didn't fit into the required "passport" to enter this world and stay in it. I learned that class played a role, but wasn't to be talked about; and certain sexual practices were taboo.

I saw that I was still leading a double life. In the old days it was a double life in the sense that I would work in offices and I would call my woman lover "he" over the phone. Now I was living another double life in feminism. I had butch/fem sex relationships, did all kinds of things like using dildoes, and going to butch/fem bars, that never played a role in the politics I was helping to create.

I knew that something was missing

in the world I saw around me; understandings were missing. Just as feminism had given me things, I was also losing something. That article churned around in me for a very long time. I hadn't written anything that had been published before. This was a watershed article.

When I first submitted the article it was rejected. The woman said that butch/fem was a replica of heterosexuality, that I was romanticizing it, and that the article couldn't be published the way it was. I wasn't going to send it back but a straight woman friend of mine really pushed me into not giving up so easily. The most important results of the article are women writing to me, saying that it released them from shame and helped them understand other lovers, and gave them a sense of history.

A.G.: How did you begin to look into and think about the relationship between lesbians and prostitutes?

J.N.: It started with the same impetus--my feeling that something is missing. In the 50s, when I came out, prostitutes were part of our circles. They were our lovers and our friends, were arrested at the same time, rode in the same vice squad wagon, and ran from the same police.

I've also come to terms with the fact that my mother worked as a prostitute at times when she couldn't make the rent money. And a deeper thing, that has to do with the recent, pornography/anti-pornography battle--it was clear to me that we needed something else in our analysis. I thought that what was missing was the voice of "working women" themselves and a sense of their own history. And I think one of my primary goals in doing history work is to create interaction between the past and the present.

I feel such a kinship with lesbians and hookers, dykes and whores. I just had to explore why that made sense to me. It seemed to me that it would lead to a different place.

I had an affair with a 'working woman' and many of the lovers of women in the bar were 'working women'. There were lots of different bars, but the one I went to was a haven for sexually different women. Transvestite women, prostitutes and lesbians were all there together.

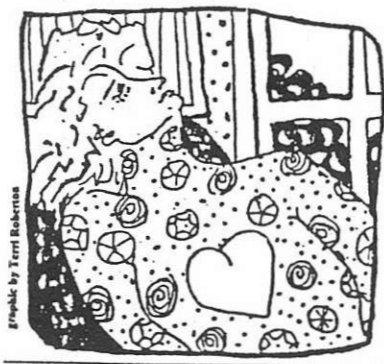
I think the constant theme in everything that I am doing is enriching not endangering feminism. I have been accused of being patriarchal and reactionary. But I just see this work as a way of giving something to a movement that gave me life. And I think all these other voices are as life-giving.

A.G.: At the conference in Toronto you mentioned that you had sex with women for money. Could you talk about that a bit.

J.N.: Along with the absolutely necessary, courageous and vital work women are doing with rape crisis centres and battered women's shelters, there are other groups of women who are doing parallel important things. These are the women who have set up sexually free spaces, who allow women to explore who we are sexually, in as much territory as we can create in a male-controlled world.

I have taken money for sex with women, which was my own act. I don't in any way compare that to street women, because I did it under safety and under controlled circumstances, and I was exploring what it all meant.

I think in a way it was a re-connecting with my mother. My mother was a very sexually free woman, and sometimes took money when she was



desperate. But she loved sex and she loved men. She loved fucking and cock-sucking and she made no bones about it. But there were prices that were paid; at times I wanted just a regular mother. (I never knew my father, it was just her and I.)

So part of it was that I was trying to explore myself. It was a sexuality I felt comfortable with. It's carrying on my own heritage, grows out of my life and therefore it's not for everyone to do.

I'll just give you a little anecdote, how it worked with this one woman that I did it with once. I went wearing my regular clothes, my community clothes, and had carried my outfit--my black slip and heels and black stockings. She welcomed me into her apartment. As long as I was sitting there in my regular clothes I felt incredibly uncomfortable. The minute I changed into my working clothes it was perfectly fine. I was at ease and it felt very natural. It was a very moving exchange, and things that I'd heard working women talk about I experienced for myself. For instance, after the sexual act the woman basically wanted to talk and cry and be held.

A.G.: You describe yourself as a socialist. What does that mean to you?

J.N.: I'm a socialist like I'm lot of other things, not through education, but by growing up the daughter of a working woman and watching my mother's life as a bookkeeper. She was a socialist, in her own way. I always heard about the bosses and I saw the inequality of economic power and what it did to women's lives, my mother's life.

I got the best education of my life when I went to Queen's College. Not in the classrooms but through a group of people I met, many of whom turned out to be gay, who were also the daughters and sons of Communist Party members of the 1930's. Their parents had helped to create the labour movement in this country.

I didn't even know what a folk song was until I met these people. They took me to hear Pete Seeger and Odetta and I learned where to put all the anger I felt about my mother's life.

Your question reminds me of something that Jonathan Katz once said. You have to come out on so many different levels all the time: you come out as a socialist, you come out as a Jew, you come out as a fem, and you come out as someone who does public sex.

The Lesbian Herstory Archives for me is an embodiment of my socialist vision. There is nothing here that is owned, it's community property; the space we live in is totally shared; I tithe my salary. It's a lived thing.

A.G.: When you were in Toronto you talked about a demonstration that had taken place in New York around AIDS. These are very contradictory times that we are living. On the one hand we have all these raging debates going on in

the women's movement, and on the other a real move to the right in every political sphere. On top of that is an explosion of discussion around sex and the reality of AIDS. How do you unravel that maze?

J.N.: I think AIDS is being misrepresented as a sexually punishing, sexually defined disease. It is a terribly dangerous time, raising the questions of how one keeps sexual freedom, sexual joy, and sexual resistance alive in a time of profound sexual terror of dying through the act. You mix that with the right, who use both the actuality of AIDS and the metaphor of AIDS for state sexual repression, the likes of which we probably haven't seen in our lifetime. Add the feminist debate about how to protect the lives of women in relation to sexual freedom. I just know that we have to hold the line, however we each perceive it.



It is a time for great love and for anger. What moved me so about that demonstration was that it took me back all those years to the anger that used to be in the streets, just seeing the anger of ravaged faces and the men weeping in leather. I mean all those stereotypes we had--all you have to do is look in the faces of these men and you can't hold them anymore. In some sense it is a very important time, because we'll have to let go of things.

A.G.: What was the demonstration about?

J.N.: Well it grew out of this new organization called the Lesbian and Gay Men's Anti-Defamation League. The New York Post had the most horrendous coverage of the closing of the public sex bars.

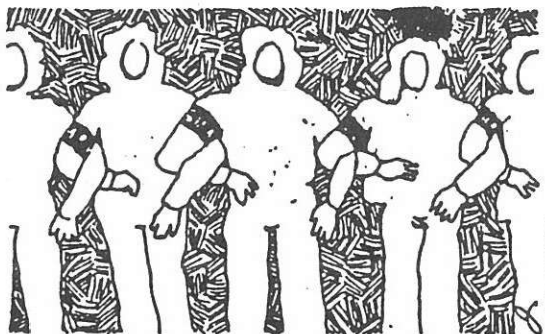
I remember reading it. All I could think about was the sorrow I was feeling. Because I remember coming out in the '50s, coming out to the onslaught of--you're freaks, queers, emotionally crippled, you don't have families, you're desperate, lonely--all that stuff. When you're young you feel so many things anyway. I thought it would never be that way again, and then I picked up the Post. And I was reading exactly that language, "desperate, driven people, with their pants around their ankles, familyless."

It happened to be a group of old-time leaders from the Gay Activist Alliance days that got together and had a meeting. There must have been 500 angry lesbians and gay men there.

Out of that came a demonstration at city hall. Our city government was having hearings on the closings and we were in the streets. A gay man with

AIDS, who was scheduled to testify before the hearing, was in the crowd with us. As he started up the stairs to City Hall the police arrested him and led him away in handcuffs.

We became a mob, in the best sense of the word. We just started screaming. "Let him out or we're coming in."



Jeanne Taylor

It was that spirit! I think I'm disappointed in how we've allowed these closings. And I include myself too--even though I've protested, I wasn't sitting in front of the door, like I would have been before. No matter how we feel about what went on inside we shouldn't have let the closings happen without hundreds of people outside. These are sexual territories we've won and we're losing them again through an alliance of our shame and their power, our shame and their hatred. That combination creates historical legacies that our young people will have to fight against for years and years.

A.G.: What has been the response of lesbians and lesbian organizations to AIDS?

J.N.: There are lesbians involved in all the different organizations as

individuals. But I haven't seen any public statements by lesbians.

One of the things that lesbians have to come to terms with is this slightly hypocritical stance about gay men. We say--well, they are not our brothers; they live a different life. And then we yell homophobia. If we look at the whole history of homophobia it's often gay men who have been on the front lines of bashing, of federal statutes. We can't have it both ways. They are either our brothers in oppression or we have a different oppression.

A.G.: Let's wrap up by talking about the Lesbian Herstory Archives, your baby.

J.N.: In 1972 a group of us formed a new organization (we're always forming new organizations), the Gay Academic Union. I had gone to a city university as a gay person and I teach in the city university as a gay person. This group was to help lesbian and gay, both teachers and students, in the city university. We also started a consciousness-raising group.

Out of that came a sense that we were creating so many published materials and things, but that they could be taken away from us very easily. The presses could die as quickly as they'd been born. So we decided to form a group that would take as its goal the preservation of the markings of lesbian life. It was called the Lesbian Herstory Archives.

There are three of us in it now and thousands of women pass through it. For me it's a way of eternally saying thank you to women I have loved, to women who have dared one of the strongest forces in the world with the least amount of resources, just their own bodies and their need to touch.



Illustration by Felix Hoffman/CPF

It embodies all my principles about a people's history belonging to people. The fact that it will never be housed in a patriarchal institution, but always within the community; that it will never be bartered or sold; that it gives comfort as well as information; that it gives models of courage as well as studies of torment. Mostly that it's a living place, of pictures and words, fabrics and posters and songs. And that it all helps to create a peoplehood. That is something I felt very deeply in my pre-feminist days--that we were a people in a restricted, controlled territory. And the archives is a statement about refusal of restriction. The most exciting thing now is that they're everywhere; there are lesbian archives all over the world. *

INTERVIEW:

SHEILA ROWBOTHAM

Linda Briskin

Sheila Rowbotham, socialist feminist activist and co-author of Beyond the Fragments (among her many written contributions), was in Toronto last August to give the keynote address at the Issues for the Next Generation conference. I had the chance to speak to her for an all too brief hour--not about the women's movement in England as I had hoped, for she declined to "be a spokesperson for British feminism", but about the work of the Greater London Council.

The Council, which is the municipal government of the London area, was won politically by the left in the 1981 local elections. Since that time it has enraged the Thatcher government with its progressive policies, many in response to women's needs. Along with other progressive local Councils, it is currently being dismembered by the Thatchersword, and the future of its achievements is very much in doubt. [EDITOR'S NOTE: see the following article by Sue Colley for more background on the GLC, and an update on its fate.]

Its brief existence poses interesting questions about the potential for the left to use the organs of municipal government, if and where they can be won.

SR: I work in the Greater London Council which is the local governing body in London. It is run by left Labour [Party] members--the group around Ken Livingston. It is left wing in an unusual way for Britain because it relates to new [social] movements as well as to class issues.

I work with the industry and employment group of the GLC which has grown from forty to 200. It has taken up all sorts of different areas, for example, home work. [We] write and develop policy in consultation with home workers. When we have the policy it is then possible to fund home worker groups or groups of women who are working with home workers. [We are trying to] make sure that the people who have the least get back more, so that home workers and cleaners are getting resources rather than employers.

In London the manufacturing industry has been devastated so that people in the more traditional labour movement have been forced to accept alliances with other groups. In fact, the people who have been most active in campaigning against [public spending] cuts and for the continuation of local government services have often been public service workers in the national health service and in the schools, many of whom are very low paid women and black people. Cleaners and women in the lower grades of those sort of public services represent a new element in mass demonstrations.

LB: On the question of alliances, what about the alliance between the unions and the GLC?

SR: On the whole, the unions support the left local authorities like the GLC, and have been active in all the demonstrations. But there are problems because it often seems that the official structures don't really represent the masses of the white collar workers or the low paid catering workers and cleaners.



When I first went to GLC, one of the first arguments that I landed in, my first day actually, was with a man who thought that our industrial strategy should give priority to the people who are already organized in London. His experience was in the official structures of trade unions and he felt that the real strength was with the men who were in the printing industry and in those well organized jobs. Ever since then, (that was two and half years ago), many of those places have been literally razed to the ground. Printing and engineering industries

have been moved to country towns where women have taken up the operations, or to Wales where there is very high unemployment.

And this restructuring has really affected traditional union organization. [So] I really argued with him. I quoted this old guy that I am friendly with in America who organized in the 1920's. When they tried to organize Ford's in Detroit people told him that it was easier to overthrow the Czar than to organize a union there. Now people assume that you can organize [only industrial workers like these]. And each time a new group is organized you realize that the notion of who can be organized is very much a social and historical construct. It's not immutable.

LB: What are some of the other changes introduced by the GLC?

SR: The GLC established the first Women's Committee to exist in local government. As a result of this and [other] women exerting pressure, local councils all over Britain started to form Women's Committees.

Equally important is the policy that ethnic, minority and women's issues aren't ghettoized but rather integrated into the general politics. We have been able to do that more fully in the GLC than in other places because the organized presence of black people and women is stronger in London than in somewhere like Sheffield which is also a left wing council.

LB: What has been the biggest problem facing the GLC?

SR: There are massive internal problems about how you actually reform the system of administration.

This is a really important realization for socialists. Most of us have experience in small groups or trying to organize small collectives democratically, working in community politics or in small women's groups. We have had little experience with a massive bureaucratic structure which is responsible for handling things like waste disposal or buying school books cheaply.

The problem we face is how you actually democratize the process. You can't do it by decree and it's no good landing in as a load of political appointees and telling people what they ought to think. That's been a bit the problem with the equal opportunity policies. It takes a lot of time for people to really feel the need to be equal because their whole experience has been how to lift themselves one little grade above somebody else. It's not a solidarity situation at all.

LB: What about the GLC's relationship to the women's movement? What currents of the women's movement are working with the GLC, and how amiable and workable is that relationship?

SR: The Women's Committee has absolutely every strand represented, as a result of which they have had



many difficulties. But they have managed to keep going with a lot of women supporting them. Having resources and public access to a lot of people, they have been able to take up wider issues, say of transport which they relate to women's needs such as the dangers of travelling at night or the difficulties of disabled women in terms of transport design.

The Women's Committee has [also] taken up the concerns of women who care for sick people or the elderly but who get no resources at all.

LB: It sounds like the GLC is giving a central place to issues that affect the majority of women in a daily way.

SR: Especially childcare. Four thousand child care places have been provided by the Women's Committee. The GLC doesn't have power to set up state nurseries but it does have the power to fund voluntary organizations, so the Women's Committee has funded all kinds of child care projects that will collapse when the GLC is abolished.

LB: So it is really the case that the GLC is being abolished by the Thatcher government?

SR: The central government has indeed decided to abolish the Greater London Council and various other local authorities which it doesn't like, on the grounds that they are supposedly spending too much.

LB: Is there any chance that this can be prevented?

SR: There has been a very successful protest campaign getting 74% of Londoners to say that they want to

keep the GLC. There have also been very large demonstrations, mobilizing people who didn't used to demonstrate--working class parents, the fire brigades, the cleaners in schools. These have all failed.

What did look as though it might be a bit successful was a rebellion by some Liberals and Conservatives [in the House of Commons] who may not have liked the policies of the GLC but who were committed to the principle of having the right to vote for your own city government. This had some effect on the House of Lords who delayed the legislation, but it has now been passed.

LB: Can the GLC maintain some of its organization even in the face of this legislation?

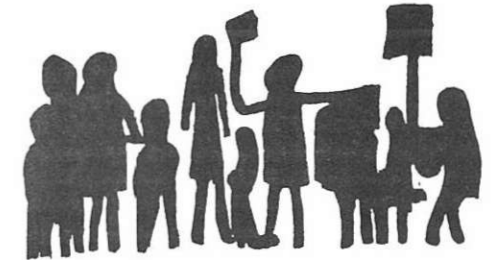
SR: The next few months will be taken up with thinking about how to carry on. One area where we might be able to continue some of the work is through the unions. The other possibility is through the Labour Party. Neil Kinnock [leader of the Labour Party] said that he looks forward to implementing some of the proposals that were included in the industrial strategy of the GLC.

But the Labour Party [alone], even with the best of intentions, isn't going to do it. The Labour Party is not committed to the idea of people organizing from below or to the idea of combining parliamentary struggle with movements from below. I think that the Labour Party's tradition has been much more Fabian, having a little group of cronies who write manifestoes. That is absolutely anathema to our experience in the women's movement, where we develop ideas in a very organic way.

The state of the Left is quite grim because everyone is attacking

each other, internally fighting. At this time it is terribly important that we don't, because it looks as though Thatcher's power is beginning to crack. She is coming to be seen as a tyrant. Ironically the defeat of the miners' strike turned popular opinion against her. ★

Although the interview came to an abrupt end as we ran out of time, it raises some interesting questions for socialist feminist practice: does our vision of change include practical ideas about how to provide and organize services? What is the possibility for socialist feminist reform through municipal government?



THE FATE OF THE G.L.C.

Sue Colley
Toronto

Next month the Greater London Council (GLC), along with five other metropolitan councils in Britain will be abolished.

The GLC was set up by a Conservative administration in 1965 to be a "strategic planning authority" to identify and meet economic, industrial and social needs in London. It was also made responsible for cross-London services such as the police, fire brigade, traffic and transport, housing, waste, and the funding of arts

and sports. Its power to affect daily life in London was enormous.

Under the recent leadership of left-leaning councillors such as Ken Livingston and Valerie Wise, the GLC began to play an aggressive rates-equalization role, redistributing wealth across London from the rich boroughs to the poor. Services in the poor boroughs were improved and made more accountable. Committees, boards and planning agencies were set up to ensure that the needs of women, the disabled and ethnic minorities received priority attention. For example:

- The Women's Committee was set up to give London women more influence over services they needed and policies which affected them. Regular consultation occurred in meetings with women throughout London, and women were encouraged and assisted to participate in working groups and committees: babysitting and dependents' allowances were available.

- The Greater London Enterprise Board was set up to support new companies and cooperatives. A hundred and ten million pounds was spent on saving or creating jobs in 1984. Funds went only to enterprises that agreed to pay union wages and stick to codes on equal opportunities for women and minority groups.

- The Greater London Training Board was set up to develop meaningful and realistic training programs oriented to women and ethnic minorities.

- Hundreds of voluntary groups were given grants to develop local projects and services. For example, funds were given to 121 child care projects, to the Women's Alcoholic Recovery project, to Lambeth Toys, a project of Blacks and Asians to develop anti-racist toys, to Letterbox Library, a group focussing on the development of non-sexist, non-racist books, to

Matrix, a women's architectural collective, and so on.

On the basis of what the GLC was accomplishing it is not hard to see why the Thatcher government became so intent on abolishing it. The government argued that the GLC was an expensive and unnecessary level of government. But no research or study was ever carried out to confirm this assertion. Thatcher could simply not afford to have a powerful elected body counteracting her government's much vaunted moves to cut back on public services and on all forms of public spending, with a particularly heavy hand on public sector wage levels.

The GLC campaigned vigorously to save itself, but faced with such an obstinate challenger as Thatcher, it really didn't stand a chance.

Its demise has left thousands of voluntary groups scrambling for funds. They are doubly jeopardized by the abolition of the GLC. First, they lose their direct (GLC) funding, and second they are expected to turn to local borough councils for alternate support. The problem is that most of the poor London boroughs are "rate-capped". This means that central government limits their spending, and the tax rate they are able to set to raise their own operating funds. If they violate these limits they face extreme penalties and the loss of their grants.

The voluntary groups are not going to get a warm hearing from local councils which are already fighting to protect the services they traditionally pay for and deliver. The hard reality is that the funds are gone, and most voluntary projects in London are doomed to be cast aside. The visionary, revolutionary London of the GLC is soon to become a fleeting memory--at least until the next time the left can gain control of municipal government. ★



This issue, rather than focus on a single country, WISCA (Women In Solidarity with Central America) has chosen to offer items about three different countries in the region which suggest some of the differences and similarities between the different struggles and the situations of women in them.

The Hearts of the Women of El Salvador

Just before Christmas a few members of WISCA were privileged to meet with a member of the Executive of the El Salvadoran Women's Association (AMES). During a very informal meeting Rebecca gave us an account of what life is like for women in the areas under the control of the FMLN, and how AMES functions there. (Because AMES is clandestine outside of the zones of control, we did not discuss their work methods elsewhere in the country)

She spoke at length about the problem of physical abuse and about how AMES and the people in the zones of control deal with it. While acknowledging that the extreme stresses of life in wartime contribute to men's taking out their frustrations on women they make it clear that the behaviour is nonetheless unacceptable. Members of AMES work with women as individuals and in groups to raise their

consciousness of their own worth and encourage them to stand up for themselves and refuse to tolerate beatings. At the same time the local community councils (which form the civil administration in the zones of control) work with the men to develop an understanding of how their actions and attitudes relate to the oppressive system they are trying to fight. The combination of education and peer pressure has proven quite effective in reducing the incidence of domestic violence, once considered a matter of course in El Salvador.

Rebecca also referred to the situation of women in the revolutionary armed forces. AMES is working with women in the guerrilla forces to increase awareness of how traditional patriarchal attitudes still influence the way things are done. One example of such holdovers is the fact that women's underwear and sanitary supplies are not items in the FMLN's budget. It simply escaped the attention of whomever drew up the budget that women are an important part of the fighting forces and have specific needs. Along with educational work about such issues, AMES also responds by collecting and fundraising for things that the "male" budget overlooks.

AMES' main goals are to increase the levels of participation by women in the struggle and to raise consciousness of women's issues as such. It has been increasingly successful on both counts, and it is indicative of the strength and ingenuity of the organization that last year they were able to hold a national congress in Chalatenango. Despite the scorched earth campaign undertaken by the Salvadoran army just before the congress began, women from all over El Salvador risked travelling to the zones of control for five days of discussion which would guide the national policies of the organization

for the next two years. They addressed such topics as the effects of the economic crisis on women and the ideology of domination women face in the educational system, the family structure, and the media.

A Cheyenne proverb states that a nation is never defeated until the hearts of its women are on the ground. The hearts of the women of El Salvador are clearly far from being on the ground. ★

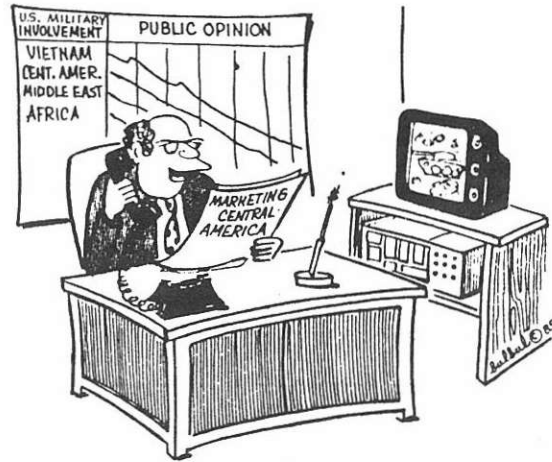
Native Autonomy in Nicaragua

Diane Meredith and
Christina Mills

The question of native autonomy in Nicaragua came to Toronto last summer with the visit of Mirna Cunningham (a native Miskito and the woman in charge of affairs of state in North Zelaya) and well-known American Indian Movement activist, Roxanne Dunbar.

Cunningham described the resettlement of the native peoples to Rio Coco as a significant beginning to the full recognition of the peoples' right to self-determination. The resettlement project and the proposal for constitutionally-guaranteed autonomy signify a remarkable change in the '400 years of isolation' marking the history of the peoples of the Atlantic Coast. They further indicate that both the Native peoples and the Sandinista government are committed to dialogue and cooperative action.

Cunningham's and Dunbar's presence among us reminded us of the struggles of our own native peoples for their rights. Unlike much of the analysis which remains in the realm of print in North America, Nicaragua's commitment to the recognition of the historical right of each nation to land, natural resources, self-government and education has manifested itself in



WE'VE SCHEDULED WAR MOVIES, PATRIOTIC FANFARE AT FOOTBALL GAMES, MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE CARTOONS FOR KIDS AND UPBEAT MARINE RECRUITMENT COMMERCIALS.

concrete terms. Already, the process of bilingual education has begun on the Atlantic Coast, and a ninety-member commission consisting of representatives from each of the six nations has been struck to consult with all the peoples in the region about their needs.

A recent visit by a delegation of the American Friends Service Committee verified that the process is well under way. The five-person delegation spent a month in Nicaragua to investigate the situation of the Miskito people and establish native-to-native communication. They also visited Miskito, Sumo, and Ramah people in Costa Rica and Honduras, with a particular interest in learning about the situation of women in these settings.

The delegation came away optimistic about the prospects for native autonomy on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and for understanding between the government and the indigenous minorities. The Sandinista leadership has approved a proposal for

constitutionally-guaranteed autonomy for discussion at the grassroots level throughout the country, as is often done for new legislation in revolutionary Nicaragua. Roxanne Dunbar, who helped draft the proposal, says it is "more than we ever asked for at Wounded Knee."*

Angela Russell, a Crow woman in the delegation, was impressed by the strength, determination and resilience of the Miskito women in Nicaragua. She noted that there are apparently no women fighting for Misura, the armed native group allied with the contras. This is in telling contrast to the massive participation of women in the struggle against Somoza and in the defence of the Sandinista revolution.

Another native member of the delegation stressed that the greatest obstacle to a resolution to the difficult situation in the region is the U.S.-backed war against the Nicaraguan government. The U.S. State Department has misrepresented the situation in order to manipulate North American (especially Native) opinion against the Nicaraguan revolution.

As Roxanne Dunbar pointed out, too often North Americans use the cost of programmes to justify the denial of the rights of our native peoples. Despite the war and diminishing resources the Nicaraguan government is committed to changing history and guaranteeing the rights of her native peoples. The Nicaraguans have provided us with a profound example of justice.

*Between February and May 1973 a few hundred native people from sixty-four different tribes held off a siege by federal paramilitary forces and vigilantes in support of the Oglala Sioux's demands that the U.S. government honour its 1868 Treaty with them. ★

"She Says She Wants to Be Free"

Maria Lupe was one of the first women to join the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) in Guatemala in the early 1970s. Her testimony in the EGP magazine *Companeros* (Solidarity Publications, San Francisco) describes the slow process of bringing the peasant people into the popular revolutionary war. Here we present the part of her testimony relating specifically to her experience as a woman in that process.

Courses were given for the organized people, for men and women separately. A companera gave us a lecture, and we talked about discrimination against women, about why we couldn't mix with the men because they didn't trust us. Besides knowing the discrimination of the rich, we knew what discrimination by our husbands was like. They say that one should stay in the house, that you can't do this or that. Many times, the women were not conscious of all that--they thought it was natural.

The first thing that we tried to change was the practice of wife-beating. It was very hard to change this. While the women talked among each other, the companeros explained to the men that women were not slaves, and that they shouldn't beat them. Wife-beating stopped eventually, and now it isn't done anymore. It was also necessary to struggle with the men to let women do political work. Sometimes



from Manushi

you had to go out at night, for example, and the men didn't want to let their *companeras* go. Later the men understood; it had been because they didn't have any confidence. With my husband there were never any problems with this really.

Other things are harder. For example, among the (ladino)* peasant people, one gets married as early as fifteen--but the choice is free. Among the indigenous people it is different. When my daughter was twelve years old, a group of indigenous people came to me to buy my daughter. They were EGP supporters also. We told them that we were not accustomed to this, that if the girl wanted to, okay, but if not, then no. They accused us of being discriminatory because they were Indians. We talked about this with some *companeros* from the organization, and they talked with the Indians later. But you can't change customs just like that. Finally, the boy bought another girl, an Indian girl. They were still angry with us. Later the boy went up to the mountains. Our two families were EGP supporters, and we were friends, but it's not easy to change these things. For the indigenous woman it is harder; she has lived such a hard life, and sometimes when the *companeros* come, she runs to hide at first. And because they might not speak her language they can't talk with them.

I was one of the first women to go up to the mountains because the army

was chasing me, coming to get me. I left my girls with another *companera*, but she couldn't care for them well. To get the girls out I had to go back into town, where the army knew me and went after me. We did it like a military operation, and I went with the girls and everything up to the mountains. We lived in a camp there for months. Sometimes I stayed alone there with the girls, and the only other things we saw there were monkeys...

In the camps they were already doing everything: training, studying, going to other villages to talk with the people, getting provisions. If only the men went into a village to buy, the people didn't trust them. If the women also went they saw that we also participated, and carried arms just like the men did. We gave lectures to the people about simple things, about how the organization was growing--just the same way the corn multiplies. We talked to the women, and the men talked to the men.

We continued fighting against discrimination. When the *companeros* went to a house they always helped in the kitchen. Many of the women were surprised by this, but bit by bit it was explained that men and women could do everything. I helped in the fields, in the planting. I explained to people that before I couldn't do those jobs, but that because it was necessary I had learned. I said that they should understand that women can also work in



the fields. Whenever we went somewhere we helped with everything.

In the camps there were *companeros* from everywhere--from the mountains and from the jungle. At that time there were few women--only four of us--but now there are many more. They never used to let me participate in armed propaganda or military operations because I had to go to town legally with the girls. The other *companeras* participated. I liked the physical training we got, although some men said that women couldn't endure it as well as men. Sometimes it's true, but sometimes it's not...

We organized the childcare for the five girls among all the *companeros*. The littlest girl was three years old, and the oldest was twelve at the time. The oldest ones already knew about carrying weapons, already helped and participated in the meetings. They went to training with their wooden guns. This is what they played with. All the girls learned to read there...

Many say that you shouldn't talk in front of children. But children learn what you explain to them; they can understand. We told our children that they shouldn't talk loudly because of the army. Even the youngest can be taught to be disciplined. We explained to them that this struggle belonged to all the poor people, that other children weren't with their parents either, and that after the victory we were going to be together. We told them that we were poor and that we couldn't buy what we wanted. They understood; one day the six-year-old came to me to warn me that there was an agent from the government that none of us had seen and that he had gone to the house of a *companera* to kill her.

In town, the children carry food and information and keep the organization secret. After they turn twelve they can go up to the mountains...

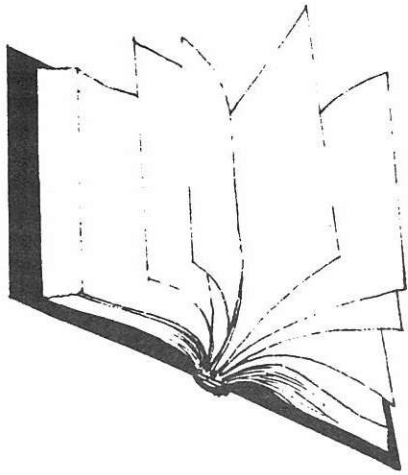
I have a one-year-old grandson now, and my daughter and her *companero* are up in the mountains. Her *companero* saw him eight months after he was born. I have three children who have gone up: they are sixteen, twenty and twenty-two years old. I have another daughter who is twelve. Now she wants to go up. She says she wants to be free and have what she needs to defend herself. ★

* Of mixed Spanish and Native descent.



"I like your approach ... now let's see your departure."

cayenne receives many women's newsletters and magazines from around the world. The brief international items in each issue are Christina Mills's excerpts (and sometimes translations) of articles thought to be of particular interest to our readers. After the May issue, however, Chris will be leaving us to move to Ottawa. If any of our readers would be interested in helping with some of the sifting and selection of international materials, please contact us as soon as possible. It is a fascinating way to keep informed about what women are doing around the world, and would be a great help to this dedicated but tiny collective!



Women Brave in the Face of Danger

Margaret Randall

The Crossing Press: 1985

Judi Stevenson

To review a book of photographs using mere words is almost a contradiction in terms. Margaret Randall's most recent book is subtitled, Photographs of and Writings by Latina and North American Women, but inevitably the photographs dominate, draw one's eye away from the text, excite the emotions and the imagination with an ease and immediacy that words seldom achieve.

There is perhaps a universal tension in the attempt to combine words with pictures, a tension which can be both creative and troubling. Randall's creativity is evident in Women Brave, and the difficulty she has had in getting this combination in harmony surfaces in her reflections on her work. In June of 1985 she wrote in her diary of the visit of a friend, another photographer, who was critical of the "literary" quality of Randall's images, a quality which she herself says has

placed the photographs in previous books in a merely supportive relation to the text. Randall's friend challenged her to stop writing for a while, in order to focus her entire self in the pictures.

...(we spoke of the importance)... of forcing all the tension into the task at hand. To photograph. To make pictures. To let the tension build up and then expend it all in that act. Which would necessitate not writing for a while. She said 30 days. And she said it again and again...Use all the passion in the photography just make images, go out and do it, and keep doing it...

Another photographer friend wrote critically:

...I imagine that the photos in your new book were created to make conscious mind statements, to illustrate previously thought out ideas or emotions. But most of them do not stand on their own...If you want them to...then they must say something strong. One's eyes must move with the different parts of the photo. One's emotions must be stimulated...

These two friendly critics suggest that the images are sacrificed to the text, in their very production as well as in the book itself. But for me, the images seem always to come first. The text at first commands no attention at all in the presence of the photographs. Then it takes on new importance as an elaboration of the teasing, telling, questioning, puzzling, confronting photographs. They are not always text-book perfect technically, but this is one of her

challenges to the viewer: look beyond slick surfaces!

Women Brave in the Face of Danger attempts to give us a mirror of ourselves as women radically other than the one held up for us by the mainstream media. Randall wants us to see ourselves brave in the face of danger, the daily insidious dangers of living female in a male-dominated society--equally though differently true in the U.S. and in Central America. (A minor nationalist quibble I have is her use of "North American" in her subtitle when she means "American" only: there is only one Canadian image in her book.) I was initially surprised at her use of the



word "danger". It seems more true of Central American women than of ourselves. But then that too is one of Randall's purposes: to draw attention to what we share with women on the frontlines of class and imperialist struggles. Those struggles may appear to be more dramatic than our own. And yet look...

A nine-year-old girl washes laundry, laughingly, while her brother free of responsibility, plays in the water gushing from the hydrant.

A New York high-rise dweller with her arms full of one baby watches anxiously while her older child climbs to precarious heights on a set of metal bars.

A costumed American Indian woman looks beyond the borders of the photograph, as if in touch with another time for her ceremonial dance.

Three generations of one family's women in a Nicaraguan/Honduran border town wait unsmilingly for something worse to happen to them than what has gone before.

A truck-stop cook brings eggs toward a scrubbed-bright frying pan, just as she did yesterday, and will do tomorrow and the next day.

The message of commonality is both true and not true. I feel enormously separated from the rifle-toting sixteen-year-old who fights for the continued freedom of Nicaragua, and equally from the cherry cannery workers in the Yakima Valley of Washington State. Yet the effect of combining all the images (and text) into a single book is to contradict my feelings of separation with the strength of the bonds invoked by other images: the beautiful arcing embrace of a child by Sister Frech in Nicaragua, the waiting shoes on the beach in Cuba, the clash of reality with fantasy of a middle-aged Japanese American woman beside a

bedecked bridal shop mannequin. The images overlap and connect, until I know that I am capable of living all those other lives too.

Poetry, prose, and interview excerpts appear on the page facing each photograph. Randall says in her introduction that there is no direct connection between them, "...only those links, sometimes ancient, sometimes self-evident or intuited, which they sought from one another..." She does herself an injustice here, for the juxtapositions are often touching and enhancing, and they come from her.

Beside the sixteen-year-old Sandinista with the rifle appears a quotation from Gladys Baez, a Nicaraguan revolutionary leader:

I was the only woman in the guerrilla column. There were those who expected me to leave. Many of the comrades still weren't used to having a woman in the column. Sometimes they'd joke around, and ask why I hadn't stayed where I belonged, in the city. Or they'd tell me I was slowing the guerrilla down...But I reminded myself that I had come to stay, and they had no right to intimidate me...

Suddenly the alien image of the woman and the gun is transformed into something completely familiar, the experience of crashing a traditionally male sanctum, something I have in common with her despite her gun and army fatigues.

The book is full of such transcendent moments. I recommend it. And don't just look at the pictures!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Margaret Randall: "Undesirable"!

Judi Stevenson

The right wing administration in the United States has fixed upon a new victim--Margaret Randall, writer and photographer (see Reviews, this issue), Marxist and feminist. An American who gave up her citizenship in 1967 when living and trying to work in Mexico, Randall has recently come home to Albuquerque. In 1984 she applied for permanent resident status. The INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) turned her down. There is a deportation hearing scheduled for March.

The written decision, handed down this past October, states baldly its intention to limit her right to stay in America (her birthplace), because of her politically active past:

"She has failed to show that she is clearly and beyond a reasonable doubt entitled to the benefits for which she has applied. Her activities for the past 20 years speak for themselves. Her writings go far beyond mere dissent, disagreement with or criticism of the United States or its policies..."

Added one official, "We're concerned about her connection with revolutionaries."

Randall has spent 25 years involved in, as well as recording, the struggles of Latin American people to free themselves from various repressive regimes and from the encircling oppression of American "influence," and to create alternative social and political systems. In the 1960s she joined her voice with others in Mexico who were protesting that government's authoritarian control of its people.

Harrassed to the point of fear for her children, she fled to Cuba in 1968. For 10 years she lived with and wrote about the women of Cuba. In 1978 the U.N. invited her to travel and write about women's issues, and in 1979 the new government of Nicaragua asked her to produce a book about the women of that country. She was there three years.

The officials of the INS find that all pretty objectionable. They are even more alarmed by her unselfconscious words of enthusiasm for forms of life and government other than those of American "democracy." In Spirit of the People (1975) she calls the U.S. "the most powerful enemy humankind has yet known".

Believing that, she yet has trusted in the ambivalent and contradictory American attitudes to freedom of speech to protect her from censure. It's a trust worth assuming, at least for strategic purposes, for the ideology of freedom can often be

used to expose and fight the realities of the American state.

Randall's work and ideas are in danger of being expunged from the public stage, and we are all reminded that liberal democracies unglove their iron fists at unpredictable times and places. But Randall is threatened individually as well as symbolically. A New York based public interest law group, The Centre for Constitutional Rights, has filed a law suit on her behalf. They are eager to challenge the McCarthy-era law which permits Randall to be found "undesirable". Writers like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison have added their weight to the protest.



Money for Randall's defence is being raised by a Vancouver committee. Please make cheques payable to the Margaret Randall CLDC (Canadian Legal Defence Committee), and send to 2504 York Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V6K 1E3. ★

My American Cousin

a film by Sandy Wilson

Judi Stevenson and
Christina Mills

We saw this film together in order to collaborate on a review, but our reactions to it were so different that we decided to offer our separate impressions rather than a formal review.

JS: Sandy Wilson is a lucky woman. It is not given to all of us to exorcize the painful memories of growing up female by painting them across the wide screen of the cinema and hiring a set of actors to replay them with satisfying touches of irony, anger or pathos. As if that were not enough, Wilson is being hailed as a hero of the Canadian film world for doing so! The combination of revenge and success must make a very honeyed cup, but frankly, its not that good a film.

My American Cousin tells the story of a few unforgettable days in the life of young Sandy Wilcox, a bored and cheeky twelve-year-old girl. She chafes with impatience in the hot sun of the slow Kamloops summer till the magic moment she turns thirteen, and the excitement of TEEN AGE transforms her life. "Nothing," she tells her diary in capital letters, "ever happens around here". But of course it's not true. With the dead-of-night arrival of her hunky, overheated, California cousin in his hunky, overheated Biarritz convertible (a Cadillac, for the uninitiated, candy-apple red of course), things start happening.



What follows reaches for the mythic in Canadian female pre-adolescence circa 1959: from pedalphushers and crinolines to the mixture of love and competition with other girls. Most often it fails, giving us only the cliches: a mother who uses her imagination only in the safe confines of the local theatre group, a "dorky" bespectacled girlfriend who is suddenly kissable when she takes off her glasses, the teen dance under perfect moon lighting.

I feel well qualified to judge the successes and failures of this movie: I too was 12 in the summer of 1959. And like Sandy I lived in small town British Columbia, in my case close enough to the American border to get an even more

relentless message about Canada than she did--"BORing". I remember almost too well the music, the drag of time, the intensity of every emotion, the vividness of every desire. And that in the end is the point of seeing this movie--not the movie itself, which is more competent than inspired--but to take the long trip back to that time, to compare and remember, and maybe to exorcize a few of our own ghosts.

One of my ghosts was certainly in the cast: a five-foot-two-eyes-of-blue blonde, whose nose turned up and whose pony tail twitched in just the right way--local teen-queen Shirley. In my life her name was Hazel, and she had the attention of every interesting boy in our school, despite my clearly superior personality. It seemed a punishment for letting my mind develop, an error in judgment for which I did not forgive my mother for many years. Her powder-puff perfection (unattainable for me no matter how many issues of Seventeen magazine I

studied) was an unending source of gall in my world, and her careless rejection of her own perfectly good brain turned me as much as anything I know of into an unconscious feminist, just waiting to hear the theory articulated.

I didn't realize that it still hurt until the film's Shirley summoned my old nemesis out of the recesses of my memory. I could feel to my chagrin that some part of me still envies her. We are all wounded by the power of the message that we as women must look "right" to be o.k., and the film is particularly good at reminding me how it was done. I burned with rage at the moment near the end when the American cousin/god turns to Sandy, and to reward her for being smart and daring and loyal, says grudgingly, "O.k., you're not ugly." Such a tiny crumb of praise, but Sandy's face glows with pleasure. Mine would have too.



CM: My American Cousin shimmers with the special light reserved for happy memories. Even the nighttime scenes are bright, illumined by the actors themselves.

The light seems to reflect Sandy's essential innocence as she approaches puberty. Everyone around her is well-meaning, and nice. "Nothing ever happens," Sandy complains. And it's true--in her sunlit world there seems to be no rape, no violence, no danger, no dirt, none of the murky underside of life.

She may have learned something about reproduction in the farmyard and classroom, but any city kid knows more about what sex is really about. I walked out of the theatre both envious and resentful of her innocence, because what I experienced at a comparable time in my life was so different from what I had seen on the screen.

Oh, there were the same contradictions in mood and behaviour, the painful and delicious anticipation of an unknown future, the yearning for something I could not even imagine. As a twelve-year-old running the slummier streets of a small Ontario city I saw the whole process with the menace of night, not the promise of day. The littered schoolyards and grubby laundromats I hung out in clash painfully with the bright mountain vistas Sandy takes for granted (and scornfully dismisses).

Unlike her, I was always only too aware of the threat inherent in sexuality, of the danger I faced by merely being female. I longed so strongly for it not to be so that I tried to create my own light, a facsimile of innocence.

I convinced myself that a kiss was proof of real affection. When

two older boys I met one night squabbled over me, I thought they were fighting over who was going to be my boyfriend. It was years before I acknowledged what the fight was really about--which epitomizes for me my peculiar urban version of innocence: I actually thought they liked me.

To be fair, the film does hint at something a bit sleazier than a kiss in the moonlight. In one scene Sandy's cousin pretends to take off his jeans while swimming and sends a pubescent quartet screaming and giggling toward the beach. They gasp with relief when he emerges from the water decently clothed. While I laughed with the rest of the audience at the girls' consternation, my stomach churned in terror at the implied threat.

Everything in this community seems just too good to be true: Butch desists with barely a murmur when Shirley says he's gone far enough; Sandy's dad is oblivious to the blandishments of a neighbour who latches on to him at a dance in his wife's absence; even the fight scene is as clean as Butch's white shirt.

I feel almost like criticizing the film for not being another movie entirely, just as it would be to knock it for not being more overtly feminist. It's like criticizing an orange for not being an apple. There's another film, probably many films, to be made about the ways in which women come of age. I guess I wanted the apple too, worms and all. *

ALL Lies...

