International Women's Day Committee newsletter

March 1984

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

PAT SCHULZ

Pat Schulz, a founding member and former coordinator of Action Day Care, died on December 12, 1983 at the age of 49 after a long struggle with cancer.

Born in East York, the daughter of a Dutch-Canadian postman, Pat was a teacher by profession and completed her MA in Social History during the last years of her life. During the course of her professional career she taught elementary grades as well as The Early Childhood Education course at Centennial College.

In what was to be her last major endeavour, Pat was hired by the Ontario Public Servants Employees Union (OPSEU) to set up a day care centre in Hamilton. The Union was on strike against Mini-Skools and wanted to provide an alternative service so that parents and children would not have to cross the OPSEU picket line. Sue Colley, writing in Mudpie says of the school which the workers, with Pat's help, turned into a day care centre, "I am always really sorry she never got to see it. They transformed it. It's now called Paradise Corner, and it's gorgeous. It's a worker coop and it's full to capacity; all the workers have good jobs and much higher pay. I'm sure she'd be very proud of it. It's a living symbol of her work."

A Pat Schulz Trust Fund was set-up to further the development of a Neighbourhood Resource Centre which will be named in her honour. The Neighbourhood Resource Centre (Hub Model) will make a variety of programme types accessible to many children. Donations to the Pat Schulz Trust Fund may be sent to Action Day Care, 345 Adelaide St. West, Suite 600, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1R5.

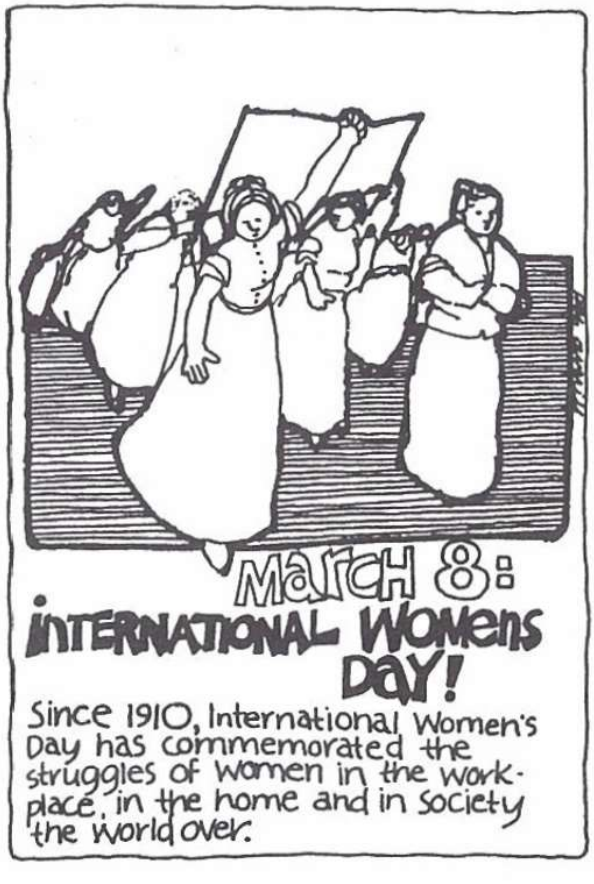
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The organization and enlightenment of working women, the struggle to attain their economic and political equal rights is not only desirable for the socialist movement. It is and will become more and more a life-and-deal question for it . . .

--Clara Zetkin, The Question of Women Workers and Women at the Present Time.

On March 8, 1857, women clothing workers in New York City took to the streets by the thousands to protest inhuman working conditions, the twelve-hour day, and starvation wages. Although they were violently repressed by police, they continued to organize in 1870 and 1908 when the slogan "Bread and Roses" became the symbol of women's rights not just to physical survival, but to all that which makes existence truly life. Their courage in the face of police violence led Clara Zetkin, a leader of the German Communist Party, to propose to the Second International in 1910 that March 8 be International Women's Day, a day for women all over the world to commemorate the long history of women's struggles for our rights, and to bring to public attention our current issues and demands.

With such a beginning, it is not surprising that in early days, organizing for International Women's Day concentrated on the needs and rights of women *as workers*. In recent years, the international women's movement has taken up the day and broadened its focus to include any and all issues that affect women in our many roles and areas of activity.



Today women are faced with struggle on all fronts. Our right to choose how to express our sexuality and our right to choose when and whether to bear children are under attack. Our physical safety is jeopardized by the prevalence of violent pornography which teaches men that brutalizing women and children is just a turn-on like any other. Our right to earn a decent living is imperilled by cutbacks, wage freezes, and layoffs and we are refused the guarantee of equal pay for work of equal value. Modern technology threatens to leave even more of us unemployed. And over us all hangs the spectre of nuclear annihilation, looming ever larger while the Right rallies its forces on behalf of a "winnable" nuclear war.

In the context of these threats against our choices, our economic and physical survival, women of Toronto are gathering at Convocation Hall on March 10 to celebrate another International Women's Day. We gather to celebrate our victories, to salute the courageous women who have gone before us, and to pledge our determination to continue the struggle. Rise up!

Chilean Women Fight Back

THE following is a loose translation of an article in a newsletter published in Peru by a support group of the Chilean CODEPU (Comite de Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo--Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the People), an umbrella organization for human rights groups in Chile.

Today, after many years of suffering, silence and fear, Chilean women are participating in both popular organizations and women's organizations. The effect of the 1973 coup was brutal: many women were arrested, tortured, exiled, or killed. Others suffered the pain of losing their companeros or children. The result was fear, rage, and for many, a decision to "not get mixed up in politics".

In their daily lives, Chilean women also experience other effects of the policies of the Junta: the standard of living in both the city and countryside has steadily deteriorated because of the imposition of supply side economic policies. More than anyone, women have had to deal with the problems of lack of health services, housing and education, malnutrition, and unemployment, besides that of sexism actively promoted by the present government. Many have had to join the Minimum Employment Program, doing manual labour or make-work, often prevented from eating througout the day and unable to take medical leave for fear of losing their miserable wage. They are unable to get birth control information or materials from clinics; some women who believed themselves to be protected by an IUD have found themselves pregnant, only to learn that the devices had been removed without their knowledge. There is no protection of their right to work; a pregnant woman can be summarily dismissed without legal recourse. Finally, arrests and torture continue to this day; women have been tortured in front of their children for greater "effectiveness".

Fabiola Letelier, executive secretary of the organization, is a fearless and relentless opponent of the military regime, publically denouncing every occasion when it tramples on the rights and dignity of the Chilean people. She is the sister of Orlando Letelier, the former Chilean Ambassador to the U.S. who was assassinated in the centre of Washinton by agents of the Chilean secret police.

Ms. Letelier will be in Canada to attend the conference on Human Rights in Latin America in Montreal on March 16, 17, and 18; a visit to Toronto to speak at a public meeting is being planned, but a date has not yet been fixed. Those interested may get further information by contacting Liliana at 588-1629.

All of this has served to fire the determination to struggle and organize. No strangers to organization, Chilean women have come out of a period of darkness to continue their struggle and demand their rights. The first instances of organizing where we saw women specifically taking the leadership were the soup kitchens, mounted to ensure adequate nutrition for neighbourhood children. Mothers' centres were also originally popular organizations, providing a place where woment could share their concerns as mothers and often heads of families, and attempt to find common solutions. Unfortunately, in 1978-79, these centres were co-opted by the government, thereby losing their communal character and becoming tools of the junta to promote individualism and consumerism. Under the auspices of the National Secretariat for Women, they not only lack any representation of the mass of Chilean women, but actively promote the idea that the role of women is to take care of home and family. This encourages women to stay at home, disconnected from what is happening in their community and their country.

But Chilean women have refused to be isolated from political reality. Since 1975 there have been several instances of women playing a new and fundamental role in the popular movement, constituting a leading movement within it.

- In 1975, ANECAP (Association of Domestic Workers) celebrated March 8, International Women's Day, for the first time since the coup.
- In 1978, the Women's Section of CNS (National Coordinating Body of Chilean labour unions) held a large public meeting for March 8.
- Between 1979 and 1981, the Women's Section of the CNS held three nation-wide meetings of Chilean women.
- In 1980, CODEM was formed (Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights), an organization of shanty-town women created to defend rights which the government refuses to recognize.

The majority of these women's organizations have a platform based on the problems of women in the contexts in which they live and work. They see their struggle as being for the rights of women, but in the context of a social, economic, and political change which affects everyone. Chilean women are also active in organizations which are not specifically women's, showing a contantly increasing level of consciousness and fearlessness. The Organization of Relatives of Disappeared Prisoners is made up almost entirely of women: they were the first to go out into the streets, carrying out peaceful demonstrations, hunger strikes, silent marches, and even chaining themselves to the fences around the (now closed) Congress to call attention to their demands.

There is no way to stop Chilean women now. Throughout the country they are demanding their rights and those of their people. On this March 8th we can expect to see them on the streets in greater numbers than ever before, in the forefront of the inexorable tide which is the people's will to freedom and justice.

Women in El Salvador: Organizing and Advancing

News about women in El Salvador was brought to Toronto recently by Ester Ramirez, a member of AMES, the Women's Association of El Salvador. Ester is on a cross-Canada tour and spoke at OISE auditorium on Saturday, February 25, and at the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples on Sunday, February 26.

Ester spoke in detail about conditions in El Salvador and about the traditional double burden of women who have to work both inside and outside the home: "Our women have a very hard place in Salvadorean society because there is not only exploitation from the regime, but from machismo.

"Seventy-five percent of our families are without a permanent father. The unemployment means that men don't have the money to set up a home, and the machismo means that they believe they have the right to be with many women and have many children and not be responsible for them. It is the same in all Latin America. Women have to bring up children alone."

In spite of this, women have always been involved in the struggle for democracy and more human living conditions in El Salvador.

Ester was a high school teacher in a progressive Catholic school in El Salvador. She and her family all worked closely with Archbishop Oscar Romero. Her brother and his family escaped two assassination attempts.

"After Archbishop Romero's assassination we were defenceless in the face of the repression . . . So a month after giving birth to my youngest child, we slipped out of the country. . . And I joined AMES when we arrived in Nicaragua. We have been working extensively with Salvadorean refugees in Nicaragua and in the educational process of Salvadorean women there.

Ester explained that a considerable part of El Salvador is now under the control of the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front). AMES, which began in 1978, is active in these areas and has been able to educate and politicize women in ways which are more difficult to achieve in the rest of the country. In addition to their involvement in the guerrilla army, women also work in health care, literacy, production, and cultural work.

Elections have been held in these areas to elect local governments, called *poder popular*, or people's power. If a woman's husband is trying to prevent her from being involved politically, he is visited and talked to by a representative from the *poder popular* and AMES.

One of the greatest needs which Salvadorean have is adequate child care. Ester is appealing to Canadians to help provide child care in the areas under FMLN control as well as in Nicaragua, Mexico, and Costa Rica, for the many El Salvadorean orphans and refugees. Details of this project are available and contributions may be sent to: AMES Support Group, c/o 299 Queen Street West, Suite 406, Toronto, Ontario, M5V 1Z9. Telephone: 591-6437.

Gini Dickie

Dowry Deaths in India

Over the last few years feminists in India have identified rape and "dowry deaths" as the two major and most obvious manifestations of the oppression of women. In Delhi, the increase in the incidence of bride burning has assumed such alarming proportions that newspapers daily carry stories of 2 to 3 deaths of women allegedly "burnt while cooking food" or "heating water for tea."

Since the passage of the Dowry Act in 1961, the practice of dowry-- the giving and taking of dowry in consideration of marriage--has been forbidden. However, despite some government efforts to publicize the Act, dowry has continued in India as a practice for formalizing marriage. Originally a phenomenon of the rich and middle classes, in the last few years the practice has spread to poor and working-class families.

For the working classes, the system of bride-price (where the father was paid money or goods to compensate for the loss of the daughter's labour) has been replaced with dowry in emulation of the dominant culture and the ideology of the upper classes. Although dowry has never been part of Muslim culture, today many Muslim women remain unmarried because they are too poor to pay dowry. And many working class women now have to save their already low wages for dowry.

According to the Anti-dowry Cell set up by the Police Commissioner of Delhi, 690 women died of burns in 1983 (in Delhi alone). 270 were between 18-25 years, of which 23 were alleged "dowry burnings" (committed by the husband and/or members of his family because they were unsatisfied with the amount of dowry the woman's family was able to pay). Many women also commit suicide by burning themselves because they are no longer able to endure harassment by the husband's family for more dowry.

One of the major problems concerning dowry deaths is that the State has never penalized the parties involved. The Dahej Virodhi Chetna Manch (Anti-Dowry Coalition) has been demanding amendments to the Dowry Bill pending in Parliament, to make dowry a recognizable, criminal offense.

This struggle has focussed on the death of Sudha Goel. On May 27, 1983, the Additional Sessions Judge, Sh. S. M. Aggarwal of Delhi sentenced to death the husband, brother-in-law, and mother-in-law of Sudha Goel. On appeal to High Court, all three were acquitted. Anticipating protests from women's organizations, the judge's explanation was that dowry deaths will only end when women are economically independent. Furthermore, two women's organizations are being charged with contempt of court. The case is now at the Supreme Court of India.

Saheli, a women's organization in Delhi, is soliciting international support for their demands of the Indian government. Individuals and women's organizations are encouraged to write or send telegrams to:

- Chief Justice of India - Justice Chandrachud, Supreme Court, New Delhi, India
- The Prime Minister - Mrs. Indira Gandhi, 1 Safdarjany Road, New Delhi, India

demanding that the parties involved in dowry deaths be prosecuted and that the government implement the changes demanded by the women's organizations.

Please send copies to: Saheli, 10 Nizamuddin East, New Delhi - 110013.

-- Prabha Khosla

IWD Forums

As part of a week-long celebration of International Women's Day, the March 8th Coalition sponsored two public forums on key issues in the women's movement: Pornography and Women's Perspective on War & Imperialism. Both forums were held at Trinity United Church.

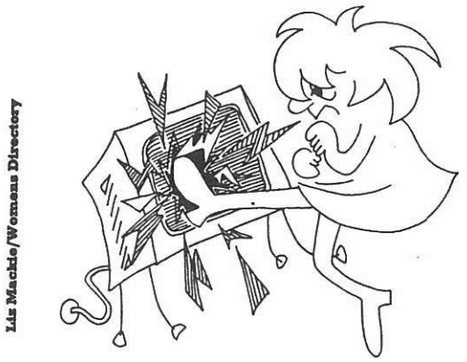
Pornography

The public forum on pornography was an excellent discussion for feminists, as well as for people new to the issue. It consisted of presentations by four women from different areas of the struggle against pornography, followed by questions and discussion.

Maude Barlow, who is currently working as advisor to the Prime Minister on women's issues, and who was in the Coalition Against Media Pornography, argued strongly against the charge that feminists are in an "uneasy alliance" with the pro-censorship right-wing. She spoke against the recent Symposium on Media Violence that was held at O.I.S.E. for its often anti-feminist perspectives, and for its male professional slant. She made links between the worst of pornography and the daily, subtle degradation of women everywhere in our society. Basically her recommendations were to urge women to take more control over these manifestations: pressuring the schools where all our children are being formed, demanding access to information about the porn industry, and lobbying to change and institute laws (such as those for hate literature now in effect) to control for sexism and violence against women in all the multi-media. This latter would be better than focussing on censorship. She also urged women to take control over their own individual lives, too, fighting pornography in their homes and neighbourhoods, etc.

Varda Burstyn, a socialist feminist writer, argued from that perspective, situating pornography in the context of expanding capitalism and its changing needs for women and the family. She pointed out how fragile our position is in these times, when already the interest the state has recently taken in the issue of pornography has been a distortion of what we want as socialist feminists. She predicted there will be a move to the right in Canada in the upcoming future. At the same time, the mass media is getting larger and more sensationalistic. It is interesting that the Fraser Committee that is presently touring the country has made a link between pornography and prostitution, giving us an idea of what the focus of the investigation might be. Other signs also tell us, she argued, that all our efforts to get what we want from the state may be turned against us, as the state invests more and more power in the police and the courts, instead of funding social services, self-help organizations, and outlets for the creation of alternative images to pornography. It is in this latter direction that she argued feminists should be pushing the government.

Mariana Valverde, a member of I.W.D.C. who is currently working on a book on sex and power, gave an unusual and poignant talk on developing erotic relations that would replace the oppressive ones we were all raised with. She thought we should all stop being so afraid to explore aggressive/passive eroticism for fear that we'll be oppressive, since, she argued, it is that play between alternating power and vulnerability among equals that provides us with intimacy and mutual recognition in a sexual relationship. In particular, she stressed the need for a new concept of lesbian sexuality, getting away from the stereotype of cuddly, symmetrical, sweatless, routine "politically correct" sex, since it is to lesbians that many will turn for erotic, woman-centered, and non-oppressive conceptions of sexuality. This was one of the best discussions of an alternative erotic concept that I have yet heard. It was unfortunate that it ended up being something the audience couldn't focus on due to the anxiety and pain about pornography that the other presentations generated.



Liz Mackie/Womens Directory

Much of that pain came from the presentation by Deb Parent of the Rape Crisis Centre, who used a long, impassioned quote from Andrea Dworkin, full of grief and rage over the long, diverse history of the destruction of women's bodies and spirits. Then Deb argued for a stronger, more united response from the Toronto women's movement, that would also serve to support each of us through our despair. Though in many ways her outrage at the male psyche was mobilizing, it could also be paralyzing, as was pointed out by Deirdre Gallagher from the audience, especially with regard to the amount of change possible from men. It also, I thought, took violence against women out of a social context; for example, the violence many men and women have suffered as a result of racism, or as a result of class struggle, as well as the question of who reaps the greatest benefit, makes violence against women as women a much more complex issue than a simple sex war of men against women. Deb had some useful suggestions for strategy and action, though, arguing for the linking of women's services in the city, arguing strongly for focus and step-by-step goals, arguing most passionately for finding where our unity lies in the women's movement and acting on it.

Overall it was a very thoughtful, provocative forum of views. As usual, there was not enough time to really get a discussion going, but no doubt, many of us went home mulling many things over in our minds. To what extent can we each give up something for the sake of unity? What are the limitations of the system, and what are the other choices if not to work within it? Is it possible in these times to move forward instead of simply trying to keep from being pushed back? Is the benefit of getting rid of pornography worth the risk of repression of feminist and sexual liberties? We in I.W.D.C. have been discussing the issue of pornography on and off for some time now, and would be very interested in continuing the discussion with other socialist feminists (perhaps through the I.W.D.C. newsletter?) in the hope of arriving at some more concrete analysis and strategies. The forum organized the this year's March 8 Coalition was a valuable addition to that discussion.

-- Marie Lorenzo

War and Peace

All three presentations at this forum were quite interesting and informative; however, taken as a whole, the forum was something of a disappointment because it failed to generate much debate, and therefore missed meeting one of the main objectives of the Coalition in organizing it.

In planning the forums this year, we built on the lessons we learned last year. Then, we had conceived of the three public forums as outreach events, to raise issues and make the connections between the different themes and demands of IWD for people new to its ideas. In practice, however, things happened in another way. The forums on abortion and labour attracted, for the most part, people already active in or supportive of those struggles who sat through speeches explaining what they already knew. The forum on peace and anti-imperialism generated much controversy, almost by accident. It had been planned to make the links between militarism and imperialism, a theoretical joining not yet common enough. The controversy that arose focused on a more basic issue: are these, in themselves, feminist struggles? Should feminists give a blanket support to Third World liberation struggles, regardless of the role or condi-

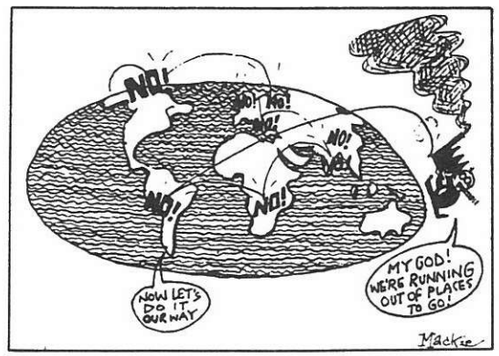
tion of women in those movements? Or should we pick and choose, evaluating the program of the struggle against some criteria for feminist content? Criticisms of that approach pointed out that it was ethnocentric to use first-world feminist priorities to evaluate other struggles. Women from different trends in the women's movement responded to this challenge in a variety of ways, and the discussions that followed gave many of us a lot of food for thought.

This year, we decided to scrap the idea of forums as outreach alone. Instead, we would organize forums around key issues of debate within the women's movement, in an attempt to generate the kind of thoughtful discussion we need to move the movement forward. We chose topics relating to important areas of work for feminists these days, and in particular, areas where feminists are currently in the process of developing strategy. War and imperialism (or peace and anti-imperialism) were chosen because we wanted to create a space to continue the discussions that were only begun last year.

Unfortunately, the forum that took place this week seemed to have gone off track. For the most part, the presentations were the kind of stirring speeches that work well at rallies: denouncing imperialism, pledging solidarity, and applauding the integral role of women in liberation struggles. But for people who wanted a discussion, such an approach was disappointing. It's entirely appropriate for the IWD rally, when we want to get everyone fired up and ready to take to the streets. We need to be able to do that, but we also need to be able to organize thoughtful political discussions for ourselves. On this issue, we need to talk about how the women's movement can and should take up anti-imperialist demands. This means more than lip-service support. As some women pointed out last year, there are contradictions between the politics of liberation struggles and certain definitions of feminism. Discussing anti-imperialism from a feminist perspective also means discussing (and changing?) feminism. To date, we have not yet had an opportunity to begin this discussion other than through letters in Broadside.

Both Mariaelba Siliezar from the Association of El Salvadorean Women and Marta Ocampo from the Coalition Against the Marcos Dictatorship made good speeches. However, I think they could have challenged the audience more. It's letting us off too easily if we can just cheer a rousing speech, and then go home. If we are to build a women's movement committed to anti-imperialist struggles we need to grapple with difficult issues, and develop strategies for doing education, outreach, and support.

Wendy Wright from Toronto Disarmament Network spoke about what feminists are trying to do in the peace movement, both in terms of outreach to women who aren't feminists and in terms of the movement itself: working to make it a movement for social justice as well as peace, making the connections between imperialism, militarism, and patriarchy. She also spoke about what it's like being a woman in the peace movement, the kinds of work women tend to do (local organizing) and what feminists are trying to do to raise women's issues and get women into leadership positions.



Joanna Vogelzang

The inertia apparent in the discussion period afterwards was telling evidence that the evening had bypassed the topics that could trigger the debates we need to have.

For me, one of the high points of the evening came at the very beginning, when many of us were introduced to a wonderful singer for the first time. Her name is Faith Nolan, and she will be performing at the Trojan Horse Cafe on April 6th.

— Liza McCoy

RECOMMENDED READING:

"Zionism in the Women's Movement--Anti-Imperialist Politics Derailed," a 12-page discussion paper from the Alliance Against Women's Oppression, a U.S. organization.

AAWO describe themselves as "a national multi-racial organization of women committed to reforging the U.S. women's movement on a revolutionary, anti-capitalist and anti-racist basis. AAWO is actively involved in reproductive rights organizing, focusing on the defense of abortion rights. AAWO also publishes quarterly discussion papers on issues facing the women's movement and organizes an annual celebration of International Women's Day. AAWO's work is dedicated to the full liberation of women in all spheres of social life."

This discussion paper is well-written, informative, thorough, and provocative--an important contribution to an essential debate. It begins with a critique of "fence-sitting" among feminists and states that instead, feminists must consider the situation in the Middle East and develop a position on it. It examines the error and consequences of equating anti-zionism with anti-semitism, and concludes with some answers to the question, are zionist feminism and anti-imperialism compatible?

Available from: AAWO, The Women's Bldg., 3543 18th Street, San Francisco, California 94110 USA for $1.00 + 50¢ (US) postage.

Following up on IWD . . .

After the first Coalition meeting and the debate on the IWDC and Action Daycare proposals it was clear that many women, no matter which proposal they voted for, were interested in pursuing the ideas raised by the Action Day Care proposal. Clearly the time had come to take stock once again of where we are going as a movement and how the March 8 Coalition and International Women's Day fit into a strategy for building the strength and capacity of our movement. So the coalition set up a "follow-up" committee to think about how to carry forward the process and thinking begun at the first meeting. The committee has come up with a proposal to test the viability of an on-going coalition in the women's movement.

The proposal includes four different components: the setting up of a minimal coalition structure which would organize discussions and debates on key issues in the women's movement, play a role in integrating new women into the women's movement by setting up small action/study groups; and develop a short-term action plan that would be a tool for increasing our media profile and involving new women. The proposed Action Plan is a "Bill of Rights Campaign."

The current proposal is being printed in Broadside this month. The committee's plan is to use the next couple of months to actively solicit responses, ideas, criticisms and further suggestions from as many different groups and constituencies as possible. Then in the beginning of June there will be a public meeting to collectively debate the proposal and the issues it raises and to decide on next steps. If you are interested in talking to someone about the proposal or would like to join the committee please call Wiesia at 977-6698.

Choice on Trial -- Still...

The trial of Drs. Morgantaler, Scott and Smoling, stemming from the police raid on the Toronto abortion clinic, was interrupted in its first day, November 21. A motion was put forward by lawyer Morris Manning asking to have the charges dropped because they violated the Charter of Rights. Associate Chief Justice William Parker agreed to hear the motion, and the constitutional challenge began.

The court listened to excellent testimony from a series of witnesses, including counsellors, doctors, researchers and clinic staff from free-standing abortion clinics in the US and Quebec. The testimony presented clearly showed that the present abortion law denies women full access to abortion, and therefore women's rights under the charter are being violated. Manning's marathon summation of the testimony lasted for weeks, and was an incredibly thorough legal denunciation of the present law.

What was particularly forceful in the evidence presented were the stories of women who had been lied to and humiliated by doctors, and of the limited access caused by the law itself and compounded by hospital cutbacks, quotas and the committee system. It was also made quite clear that it was working class, poor, immigrant and minority women who were most affected by the inequities of the law.

Although the case is in the courts, it is through education and broad-based political action that women will win this battle. The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics is keeping quite active during this period furthering its fund-raising and outreach efforts. Money for the defense is urgently needed. OCAC sponsored the dance starting off the activities celebrating International Women's Day, with the proceeds going to the Pro-Choice Defense Fund. We held a very successful membership drive ($10 for membership), we will be selling coupon books to support our political work, and planning further fundraising events.

We have been doing quite a number of speaking engagement in schools and colleges, are trying to reach out to a broader spectrum of women's groups, and are developing new ways of building on our base in the trade union movement.

Anyone interested in a membership or in joining our activities please contact us at 532-8193 or write to us at OCAC, Box 935, Station Q, Toronto. We will also accept donations to the Pro-Choice Defense Fund.

-- Carolyn Egan

Peace Petition Caravan Campaign

The testing of the cruise is not, media rumours to the contrary, demoralizing the peace movement. Instead, the peace movement across Canada, in a coalition with labour, is launching its most ambitious campaign to date: The Peace Petition Caravan Campaign. The Toronto campaign will be officially launched at a press conference on March 15, but a lot of planning and many meetings have already taken place.

The Campaign originated several months ago, but there were initial problems that prevented grassroots peace groups from getting to work on it; the CLC had provided money but had few grassroots resources to offer, and some of the people heading up the committee were there more for their reputation than because of their hard work. In any case, a nation-wide peace movement conference was held in Winnipeg in early February, and peace activists present took on the campaign as the major joint project for 1984.

The Toronto campaign got off to a very good start in January, primarily because of the coalition-building efforts of the Toronto Disarmament Network, the UAW, and the Metro Labour Council. The initial meeting of the Toronto coalition was held on January 21 and drew about 150 people, most of them ready and willing to get to work.

As the campaign unfolds it is likely that most of the feminists involved will be women who were already involved in the peace movement or in labour. But there's lots of room for women's groups or individual feminists to get involved. The tasks will involve organizing a massive door-to-door canvass of all the Metro ridings--to begin on April 1--and putting on public events such as rallies, educationals, etc. There are already firm plans for an anti-cruise demo on April 28; and there are less firm plans for a summer peace rally on the island. In the fall, the petitions will be transported to Ottawa in relays from both coasts, and each town will have an event as the caravan passes through.

The basis of unity of the campaign is simply the three points of the petition itself: 1) no testing of the cruise 2) Canada as a nuclear-weapons free zone (i.e. no production, research or transportation of nuclear weapons or their components); and 3) divert funds from the arms race to fund human needs.

Labour activists agree that the way in which the labour movement has collaborated as an equal partner with the peace movement in this campaign (especially in the Toronto meetings) is unprecedented, and is a hopeful sign for future coalitions. As a socialist-feminist, I am finding it extremely interesting to be involved in this kind of ground-breaking coalition; and the lessons we have learned in organizing coalitions around women's issues are very useful now. I would encourage feminists to find out more about this important campaign, to involve your local union or women's group in it, and to discuss how we can work together with the peace movement and with labour to consolidate this alliance. There will be leaflets and other information available at International Women's Day.

And if you are interested in hearing more about the peace movement's strategies, there is a forum being sponsored by the Toronto Socialist Forum on Saturday March 24, at 1 p.m. in Trinity-St. Paul's (427 Bloor Street, West). The speakers include Sam Gindin from the UAW, Bob Penner from the Toronto Disarmament Network and myself. We will be discussing both the Campaign and also the politics of the coalition that has fromed around it.

To contact the Peace Petition Caravan Campaign office, call 535-8005. The next general meeting is Tuesday March 20 at 7:30 at 60 Lowther (Friends' Meeting House).

--- Mariana Valverde

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Talking about Socialist-Feminism

SOCIALISM 1984 is the title of a series of workshops for socialists taking place from February through May in Toronto. The series was initiated by over 150 people who attended a meeting on November 12 to discuss possibilities for collaboration among socialists in Toronto and Ontario.

There had been a lot of interest in the women's movement prior to the first forum on Socialist Feminism, so it wasn't surprising to see the Trinity-St. Paul's gym overflowing on February 11 with over 200 people, the majority of whome were women from most sectors of the women's movement and left. Organizers described the event as "an attempt at redefining socialism from the vantage point of socialist feminism and the general challenge feminists and the women's movement have posed to traditional left politics and practice." Quite a tall order. The idea wasn't so much that we'd end up with answers but that it was important to begin an organized dialogue among socialists--women and men--about what difference feminist politics and practice makes to our vision of socialism, to how we work in political movement and to what we see as political priorities. Because the focus was on getting us to talk to one another, rather than deciding on the correct political line, the afternoon was organized so that we'd spend most of our time in small workshops, kicked off by a panel of three speakers: Bob Gardner, Carolyn Egan and Joanne Kates.

As participants we were warned not to see the speakers as experts. They were activists (just like the rest of us) who had bravely agreed to put themselves on the line and kick off our discussion by reflecting on "their efforts to build a socialist feminist practice." Looking around the room, and knowing some of the differences among us, one did have to admire their courage.

Bob Gardner from OCAC started things off with a general theoretical overview about the relationship of women's oppression to capitalism, which ended with his stressing the absolute centrality of women's issues to the struggle against capitalism and for socialism. I was disappointed he hadn't begun where he left off. What we needed to hear from Bob were his reflections on his particular political experience. Why does he make anti-sexist work a political and personal priority? What role can/should men play in relation to the women's movement and in challenging men on "women's issues"? And what, if any, is the relationship of anti-sexist work to socialist organizing and priorities? The reason it was so important to have a man on the panel was precisely to begin to address some of these issues publicly.

Carolyn Egan talked about socialist feminism in terms of the development of IWDC's practice, and more recently of her experience in the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics. While cautioning that there is no political consensus among socialist feminists she stressed that socialist feminism does offer a much broader conception of politics than traditional left models often permit. Socialist feminists are committed to actively building alliances between different political movements through a coalition and mass action strategy as well as extending the notion of politics both in terms of the relationship between political and personal life, and of process and methods of work within groups and movements.

Her overview was very important for many participants, particularly for those whose political experiences were based outside the socialist feminist current of the women's movement. And perhaps because it was so important an introduction to socialist feminism it seemed to fall short in terms of taking stock of the difficulties socialist feminist organizations--including IWDC--are facing as we try to grapple with how to move forward in these very difficult times. Our experience is obviously very different from that of other (larger, national) left organizations, but nonetheless precisely because we have different strengths and limitations it will be important to examine the constraints and problems groups like ours have and continue to face.

Joanne Kates talked about "process" or how we do politics, focussing on the dynamics between socialist women and men.

She granted that lots has changed since we first started battling men for the right to speak and to be acknowledged as leaders. But even given these changes, according to Kates, there is much to be done and dangers afoot. She warned that if serious attention is not given to working through some of the political (and personal) interactions set up between feminists and "good men" we are likely to be institutionalizing a false basis of unity still too often based on guilt.

There were no doubt many different interpretations and reactions to what Joanne had to say. What I found most refreshing was that she ventured into the whole issue of men and the relation of women and men in a struggle for socialism which surely must involve more than making women's issues of central concern. It must also address the importance of building solid working relationships among women and men on the basis of a clear anti-sexist politics. And we all have to learn how to do that.

This is an issue that has been avoided in both the left and the women's movement. The inability of left organizations to deal with it contributed to a good part of the problems that led to the dissolution of groups like the WCP and In Struggle. In the women's movement it is also a controversial issue, and one that divides socialist feminists. Unfortunately it is something we have to talk about if we are going to address the hows and whys of building a socialist movement.

For me the forum was a limited success. Not the least of the problems was a slight feeling of deja vous about how much we could assume men's committment to women's issues. The ratio of women to men had completely turned around since the November 12 meeting, from 30 to 80% women. While it was great to see so many new women, where the hell were the majority of socialist men that had committed themselves to this series of discussions? One suspects they may be back for the sessions on the Peace and Labour Movements and the NDP.

It is difficult just finding out how to discuss political issues together at these events. The left has such a long and sectarian history of dismissing different points of view and being unwilling to speculate about what is "correct." We tend not to know how to organize good political discussions, although goodness knows we've been doing it for long enough. Organizing political discussion is also complicated by the fact that participants were coming from quite different experiences with different priorities and expectations. Many are still skeptical about a project aimed at bringing socialists together without any clear objective in sight. Many women are not at all clear they want to venture into "mixed" groups again. Most, whether interested or skeptical, have a wait-and-see attitude without wanting to take too much responsibility

or initiative. Some are convinced already that nothing ongoing should/can take shape, but see the discussion of political issues as useful in and of itself.

What did feel positive--to those of us who see this as a useful and potentially important process--is that there seemed to be a commitment from quite a number of people to continue and strengthen the process of collective discussion. People had ideas about how to improve the political discussion, especially in the the final plenary which has tended to be a dreary reporting-back event. And we decided to add two additional sessions, a second session on socialist feminism to reflect again on what, if any, difference a socialist feminist politics makes in addressing the key issues of the left and a general evaluation and planning session focussing on where we go from here.

It's not possible to see where our loose network is heading. It is clear that we have much to learn from each other as we take stock of our past and current political efforts and struggle to make ourselves more effective in different social movements and collectively as socialists.

-- Lynda Yanz.

---------SOCIALISM 1984----------

2ND IN A SERIES OF FORUMS

" THE PEACE MOVEMENT "

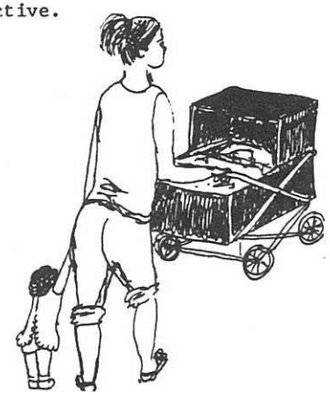
Saturday, March 24, at 1PM

Trinity Church, 427 Bloor St.

$1M Grant for Daycare

Months of grass-roots organizing and ward-by-ward lobbying recently resulted in a significant step toward better funding for daycare. On December 12, Toronto City Council voted 20 to 2 to establish a City of Toronto Daycare Grant. For 1984, Council allocated one million dollars, subject to Budget Review Process, for increasing daycare workers' salaries and/or reducing parents' fees in non-profit daycare centres.

Toronto City Council's initiative is significant for a number of reasons. Council's response to the Metro Coalition's proposal for a direct grant to parents (April 1983) is a clear indication that daycare is gaining high priority on the political agenda. The support of moderate and conservative alderpersons is evidence that the Coalition's well organized lobby was highly effective.



SINGLE PARENTS: DON'T PAY ANY MORE INCOME TAX THAN YOU HAVE TO!
Did you know that in addition to your exemptions for dependent(s) you are eligible for a further break of $3,300 with the "Equivalent to Married" exemption?

Songs of Freedom and Struggle

There has never in history been a revolution that was not in part a cultural revolution . . . Music plays a unique role in liberating the human spirit, providing a vital link to a true revolutionary process . . . Music is not a frill, fluff or or garnish to an event's program. It is a potentially powerful tool for social change
--People's Music Network for Songs of Freedom and Struggle, flyer, 1983.

Throughout history people committeed to social change have turned to music, not only to boost their own morale and renew their energies for continued struggle, but as a way of transmitting their message with more immediacy and, sometimes, more clarity than is often possible with speeches and pamphlets. In the last couple of years a network of activists and performers committed to social change has emerged, beginning with a conference on music for social change held on Grindstone Island two years ago. The network, called, appropriately enough, Music for Social Change, involves people working in all phases of music, from composition and performance to production and promotion. Recently it has turned most of its energy to establishing the New Trojan Horse Cafe as a centre for people's culture--music, from traditional folk to New Wave, poetry, women's music and native traditions (every Tuesday night is Native Expressions night)--both in the cafe's regular programming and in special events and benefits held on the premises by local community groups.

On the weekend of January 27 to 29, several members of the Music for Social Change Network travelled to Boston to participate in a musical weekend held by a similar network in the U.S. Among the Canadian contingent were Bob Bossin of Stringband, David Welch and Howard Kaplan, well-known in Toronto for their work at the Trojan Horse, as well as several members of the Red Berets, a socialist feminist singing group which over the past three years has been performing at rallies, on picket lines, and at community and movement events, particularly International Women's Day. Its repertoire includes traditional labour songs, contemporary women's music by such artists as Holly Near and Kristin Lems, international songs and original material.

The Boston weekend was the first official gathering after the amalgamation of two progressive music networks, Songs for Freedom and Struggle and the People's Music Network. The combined network is called the People's Music Network for Songs of Freedom and Struggle (hereafter called PMN, for obvious reasons). It has a broad membership of people who have been involved in all areas of progressive music for years, both professionally and otherwise; attending the weekend were professional musicians with political commitment--like Pete Seeger, Charlie King, Barbara Dane, Betsy Rose, Cathy Winter--as well as people who are just beginning to express their political concerns through music. The songs covered a wide range of political struggles --the peace movement, international solidarity, labour, the women's movement--and from the beginning there was a decidely international flavour to the weekend.

The outstanding characteristic of the event was that it was *not* dominated by professionals; there was no concert to showcase the "stars." We were there to share people's music--songs which we felt had something to say and give to the struggles we were involved in--some sang their own songs, some songs that they had learned from others and wanted to share. The bulk of the weekend was spent in small workshops (on international cultural organizing, making politics sing , songwriting, performance, a women's songswap, etc.) in which people exchanged experiences, ideas, and of course, songs. On Saturday night there was a marathon "Round Robin" in which 42 names (from about 200 in attendance) were drawn from a hat and asked to perform one song each. The result was almost a non-stop natural high! We never knew what was going to come next, but what was clear after only a short time was that it

was likely to be very good. The audience participated with spontaneous harmonizing, clapping, percussion, whatever was indicated--and what was most striking was that that performers and songs were received with absolute respect, regardless of their degrees of proficiency in composition or performance.

One of the most exciting developments during the weekend was a discussion of the recent creation of the Comite Internacional de la Nueva Cancion (International New Song Committee) to foster the development of people's music and culture internationally. During an extra session at the end of the weekend a working committee was formed to act as a liaison between the PMN and the international body. David Welch of the Music for Social Change Network attended the meeting,so Canada may have representation on the CINC as well. The Comite is currently organizing international new song festivals in Ecuador and Mozambique.

The weekend was a wonderful opportunity to find out about recent developments in people's culture in the U.S., to share some great music--and to sing your heart out! One could not help but come out of it with renewed strength and energy--it was the best possible mid-winter pick-me-up! There will be a summer weekend in northern New York State on June 8, 9 and 10. For more information about it contact Music for Social Change through David Welch at the Trojan Horse Cafe: 461-8367 and 461-8367.

-- Christina Mills and Andrea Knight

COMING SOON TO THE NEW TROJAN HORSE CAFE:

March 9: Sandy Greenberg, a Halifax performer who has appeared at folk festivals across Canada. Co-sponsored by Womynly Way Productions.

March 24: Hunter Davis, a North Carolina based blues and jazz singer - songwriter. Co-sponsored by Womynly Way Productions.

The New Trojan Horse Cafe is located at 179 The Danforth, near the Broadview Subway Station. Doors open at 9:00p.m. For more information, call 461-8367.

Book Reviews

SEX & LOVE:
NEW THOUGHTS ON OLD CONTRADICTIONS
edited by Sue Cartledge & Joanna Ryan
The Women's Press, London, 1983, 237 pp.

Before beginning this article, I must tell you that I tend to be biased towards rigorous analytical discussions of issues. I was therefore disappointed with most of the articles in the first half of this collection, though I found quite a lot of food for thought in the second half. The book is an odd mish-mash of approaches to the subject at hand. That is, there is a combination of what I would call: a) stuffy academic, b) personal chronicles, and c) rigorous and analytical discussion. Having said this much, I'll turn now to assessing some of the articles individually, since I don't have the space here to argue for preferring rigorous and analytical articles.

I found Lucy Bland's article, a historical overview of definitions of female sexuality, very bland indeed, though certainly a salutory collection of facts. She unfortunately draws very few conclusions from the variety of theories of female sexuality, though she ends by saying that today we are "for the first time, decentring heterosexuality from the dominant definition of sex." (p. 29)

Lynne Segal's article, on the other hand, is much more my style. She argues convincingly for rejecting the clinical approach to female sexuality, with its underlying assumptions about the "freedom" of women to enjoy themselves if they only knew how in technical terms. It raises the very real issue of the systematic, structural barriers, i.e., sexism and heterosexism, that limit, define, and control our sexual experience, even when we are feminists and/or lesbians. "What is wrong with our lives is perhaps not so much the lack of orgasms as our perpetual craving for that orgasm that can obliterate the isolation and emptiness we feel in the rest of our lives." (p. 47)

Lucy Goodison chose an interesting subject, an exploration of being "in love," but unfortunately she remains at the explorative stage throughout the article; none of the models to explain "in love" really work, so she ends with a prescription that we try to channel that intense energy of being "in love" into positive, powerful, transformative uses instead of letting it consume our insides. I had hoped for more of an understanding of why what should be a positive experience is so often negative.

I guess it would go without saying that I didn't like the chapter called "Two Personal Experiences"; though, paradoxically, I thought I might like it at first because it consists of two sides of a relationship. But both women are too worried about really putting the other down, and they both go through what seems pretty mechanistic therapy to deal with the problems facing their lives. There is very little analysis, I think, of the problems facing new types of relationships (such as theirs of two non-monogamous lesbians co-parenting the child of one of them) in our present social context. And both chronicles are *too* long!

Angela Hamblin's article, "Is a Feminist Heterosexuality Possible?", is, in my mind, undoubtedly the worst article in the book. It has absolutely nothing new to say, and furthermore, doesn't even answer the question in its title. It is another version of that tired old story about how feminist heterosexuals have to create a *new, feminist* heterosexuality to prove to lesbians that, indeed, being a feminist and heterosexual need not be a contradiction. I had thought we had already gotten over that particular hump.

Thankfully, the next article by Wendy Holloway is much more creative as she looks closely at the power dynamics in male-female relationships, and how these have been changed/undermined by feminist challenges to traditional male-female sexuality. She is not only not defensive but vigorous about her feminist heterosexuality, and rigorously examines some of the problems that have thus far come up. Deborah Gregory, writing on bisexuality, also breaks new ground, arguing articulately and coherently (though for me unconvincingly) for a positive definition and acceptance of bisexual identity.

Two of the best articles in the book are by Sue Cartledge and Elizabeth Wilson. Cartledge takes on the question of feminist ethics in relationships, that tension between duty and desire. When is it all right to hurt another person? What is or would be a feminist morality? These are questions that we all too often avoid discussing publicly. She makes good use of her own personal experiences to illustrate areas that need work. A very thoughtful article . . . Elizabeth Wilson's piece is the only article in this book that is an explicitly socialist analysis of sexuality. She undertakes to challenge our assumptions about the significance and primacy of sexuality, and places it within an ideological context. "It is idealist, a denial of material reality, to believe that sexual freedom is possible so long as the vast majority of women remain economically and socially subordinate to men." (p. 131) Like Lynne Segal, she points out that technical know-how for sexual fulfillment alone will not liberate lesbians sexually either. But she does not delve much into that "material reality," a shame, for it would have strengthened her argument. Instead, her project is clearly an ideological study, and well worth reading for its excellent critique of contemporary feminist idealism about the power of female sexuality.

Other articles I haven't mentioned were from ok to good, so, overall, the collection is an important one, one that we should all get familiar with and discuss. However, I would have used stricter criteria for selection and organization.

-- Marie Lorenzo

A POETRY OF RESISTANCE: Selected Poetry and Prose from Central America *is the publication of the Margaret Randall tour that took place last fall. It was put out through the combined efforts of I.W.D.C., Canadian Action for Nicaragua and the Participatory Research Group. It is a lovely memento of her poetry and testimony readings, including poetry by Haydee Santamaria, Dionne Brand and Tomas Borge, and testimony by Ernesto Cardenal and Dora Maria Tellez. You can order a copy for $4.50 + $1.00 for postage & handling by writing to I.W.D.C. Newsletter, 386 Bloor St. W., Toronto, M5S 1X4. Or you can get one in Toronto from S.C.M. Bookroom or the Women's Bookstore. Discounts are available on bulk orders.*

WE HAVE THE CAPACITY, THE IMAGINATION & THE WILL: Milú Vargas Speaks About Nicaraguan Women *is an English translation of an interview Margaret Randall did last summer with Milú Vargas, head counsel of the Nicaraguan Council of State. Topics discussed include abortion, new legislation affecting women, and changing relations between men and women. This pamphlet was jointly produced by I.W.D.C. and the Participatory Research Group, and is available for $1.50 (includes postage) from the above address.*

Letters to the Editorial Committee

To the Editorial Committee:

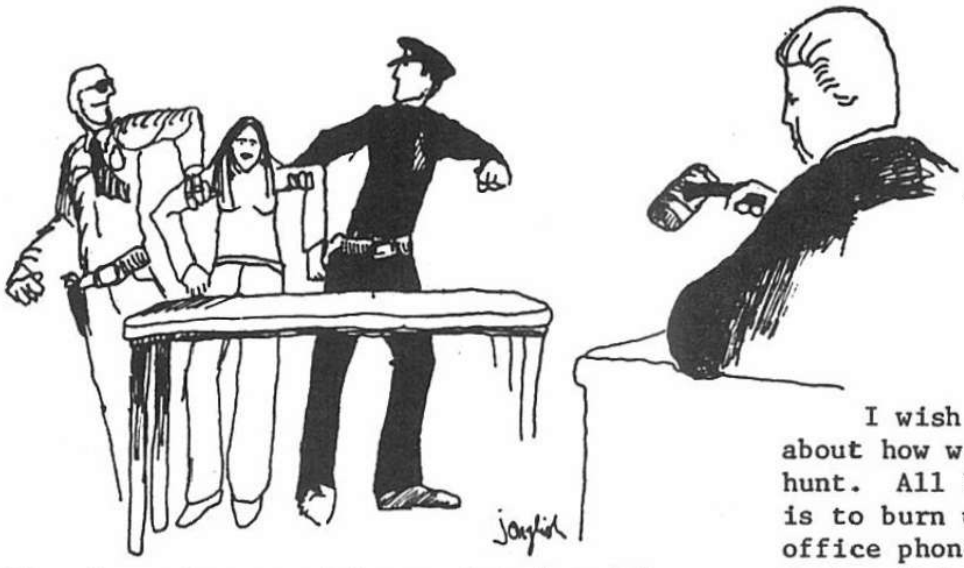
As a feminist I have watched, first with incredulity, then with rage, and now with fear while the police and the Attorney-General's office turn the Grange Commission investigating the Sick Children's Hospital deaths into a full-fledged witch-hunt.

The way in which the police have handled the matter has been from the very beginning characterized by the most blatant sexism. From the outset they have operated on the unwavering assumption that a nurse killed the babies, and that only a nurse could have done so. This arbitrary assumption has coloured both the investigation and the inquiry throughout. Before charging Susan Nelles the police checked nursing records to see which nurses were on the ward at the times of the various deaths. Why did they never check the doctors' whereabouts? This is <u>not</u> just a class assumption (although it is also that)--for neither did they check the whereabouts of other, primarily male, support staff. This consitutes a clear bias against nurses--is it just a coincidence that they are women?

The police picked a nurse to be a scapegoat and were unable to find sufficient evidence to bring her to trial. There is still no strong evidence that any of the deaths were even murders in the first place. Only in one case, Justin Cook's, is there fairly conclusive evidence that what was in his blood was digoxin, and not some naturally occurring <u>digoxin-like</u> substance. Why attribute this to deliberate overdose and not medication error, especially when the rate of medication errors, according to evidence before the Commission, may be as high as 20%? That statistic in itself is alarming, but not surprising in view of the problems caused by cutbacks in funding of hospital services and consequent understaffing. Why has Mr. Justice Grange refused to hear evidence concerning the effects of economic cutbacks on the rate of medication errors? Are the nurses to be scapegoats for what may be the real culprit: Canada's version of Reagonomics in the health care sector?

One might have hoped for the police to admit at least to having been overly hasty in charging Susan Nelles, in view of the absolute absence of a case against her. Instead they are using the Grange Commission as an opportunity for an obscene exercise in self-justification, harassment, and sensationalist manoevering for PR points. The police counsel purposely intimidates witnesses and sensationalizes statements in what can only be an attempt to gain press coverage favourable to the police. To justify the original charge against Nelles, the police want to do two things: keep the finger pointed at least partially at her, and try to show that the nurses entered into a conspiracy of non-cooperation and silence in order to frustrate police efforts to find the "murderer". Hence the attempts to destroy the credibility of the nurses.

Apart from the matter of the motivation and conduct of the police there are problems inherent in the inquiry itself which should be of grave concern to feminists and civil libertarians alike. The commission was established to investigate two issues: i) how, when, and by what means the infants died; and ii) the adequacy of and the conduct of the police investigation leading to the criminal charges against Nelles. Because it is not a criminal court, persons implicated lack the fundamental protections they would be guaranteed in a criminal trial under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. One cannot refuse to testify, and virtually any kind of statement may be admitted, even the most preposterous hearsay or opinions that would be inadmissable in any other tribunal. A person's reputation may be called into question because of unfounded statements reported in the press, statements which would never even be



allowed on the record in a criminal trial. The problem is compounded by the fact that the press routinely reports the most sensational phrases out of context and without the qualifications which accompany them.

A further concern is that the Commissioner is not entitled to make any finding as to civil or criminal liability on the part of any person, according to the mandate of the Commission, and yet he has said that he can name names of individuals who he thinks are implicated (the Ontario Court of Appeal is currently deciding whether he in fact can name names). Is this or is this not a criminal proceeding? Although technically it is not, it seems to me that it is, in effect, and that the repercussions for the nurses are much worse than if they were actually on trial for murder and protected by the Charter of Rights. They are being cross-examined by police counsel, Barry Percival, as if they were on trial. Why were doctors not cross-examined like this? Why were doctors not asked about how they got along together, and about their whereabouts at crucial times?

The Grange Commission is a witch-hunt. It's a non-murder trial in which there is no strong evidence that any murder ever occurred. The bias against nurses is so unassailable that when the police found that no one nurse could possibly have committed all the "murders," they conveniently came up with a two person theory, or rather, a two nurse theory. If it were not so tragic it would be absurd.

I wish I had a great suggestion about how women could fight this witch-hunt. All I can think of right now is to burn up the Attorney-General's office phone lines with our enraged protests, inform ourselves about the latest police tactics, write letters to the editor, to the Human Rights Commission, talk about it to our friends, circulate petitions, picket the Commission ... we all know the standard procedures. But we must do something. It's not just a matter of a few nurses losing their civil rights--this particularly vicious and powerful manifestation of sexism puts us all on trial.

-- name withheld on request

WRITE LETTERS, PLEASE!

The Editorial Committee is interested in reading and printing letters from our readers. Write to us in response to our articles, or write about some issue that concerns you. Or send in questions for discussion.

We look forward to hearing from you...

ABOUT US...

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

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

We welcome new women. For information about meetings, call Mariana at 532-8989.

The IWDC Newsletter Committee consists of Marie Lorenzo, Liza McCoy, Chris Mills, and Lynda Yanz. The views expressed in editorials are those of the committee and should not be taken to be positions of the International Women's Day Committee. The views expressed in signed articles are those of their authors alone.