

International Women's Day Committee newsletter

September 1984

Double Issue



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Write On, Sisters



Dear Newsletter Committee,

In mid-July of this year I resigned as a member of IWDC, and I would appreciate it if the Committee would publish the letter I submitted to the organization in the Newsletter:

Dear IWDC,

This letter will serve as my resignation from IWDC. Making the decision to stop coming to IWDC has not been an easy one for me; I have been a member since 1979, and the group has been the centre of my political activity.

I finally decided to leave IWDC because I do not feel that we are going anywhere. I no longer know why we exist as a political grouping and it seems impossible to get the group to discuss that. I have felt impatient with the group's lack of political discussion for over a year. I had hoped the conference in May would help the group to change, but we haven't really changed; we've just continued to plan and plan when we can talk about the issues facing us.

I no longer believe the group can or will deal with the issues of politics, leadership, purpose, and accountability. For me those are crucial issues for any socialist feminist group and the lack of discussion angers and frustrates me. Such anger and frustration do no good to me or IWDC. If IWDC is to change, it needs women who are optimistic about what is happening with the group. I am not and so have decided to resign from IWDC. I wish I could believe that IWDC would/will change. I still believe in the idea of IWDC, I just can't work in the reality.

Nancy Adamson

IWDC Newsletter Committee -

... thank you for sending the copies of your newsletter. An exchange is a good idea. I enclose our last newsletter on Women and Religion, and will ask the Women's Centre to put you on their exchange mailing list. We publish every month--at least have managed it so far--and choose a theme for each issue; our next is How I Became a Feminist and we have one 'dynamite' contribution. We try to get local stuff--women's personal experiences, or at least that is what I am interested in--as well as stuff on pornography etc...

In sisterhood,

Roberta Buchanan, St. John's Status of Women Council Newsletter, P.O. Box 6072, St. John's, Newfoundland, A1CA1C.

IWDC Newsletter Collective -

Thank you for the copy of your newsletter. I'm very impressed by the work your group is doing. We'd be very pleased to exchange newsletters. You should be receiving our next issue in September.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Boon, Breaking The Silence Collective, c/o School of Social Work, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6.

From the Newsletter Committee

The past year has seen a number of changes in the newsletter. While the change in format with our March issue is perhaps the most obvious, we feel there have been equally important changes in content and direction which many of you will have noticed.

The newsletter committee has worked hard to broaden the scope of the newsletter, both in terms of the kinds of articles solicited and the topics covered. We have wanted to make it less Toronto-centric and more reflective of the larger Canadian women's movement, and also to expand our coverage of women's struggles internationally. We are trying to get more "think" pieces, not just reports or announcements of events. We've tried to make the newsletter begin to serve as a forum for the many issues and debates that are confronting the women's movement in Toronto and elsewhere. While there is still lots of room for improvement (. . . we want more of you contributing, more coverage by native women, women of colour, lesbians, personal politics and cultural issues . . .) we believe that the newsletter has changed qualitatively to the point where we can legitimately begin describing it in slightly more ambitious terms. We've started thinking of it as a "bulletin;" what do you think?

We believe that there is a need for a socialist feminist publication in Canada, one in which women can address the questions which concern us, debate them, explore points of difference, deepen our unity, and generally promote a process of communication and networking. A bulletin in which women from different regions can share the lessons of our different struggles. We'd like to contribute to that process.

BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP

The newsletter is over two years old now and while we have lots of energy, ideas and enthusiasm for producing the kind of sf bulletin we described above, we also want to take the time to stop and evaluate. We'd like to know if you think the changes in the last year have been good ones? Is the direction we're suggesting part of what's needed to strengthen the socialist feminist current? What do you want to see in it? Is it a vehicle you'll want to use to share your ideas and concerns? Or is it just more paper you don't need?

We realize that the task we have undertaken is far from easy, but we hope that what we have achieved so far will convince you that it is worthwhile, and realistic. We are counting on your support and participation.

--The Newsletter Committee:
Marie Lorenzo, Christina
Mills and Lynda Yanz.



IWDC TAKES STOCK

As was mentioned in our last newsletter, IWDC has been going through a process of evaluation and discussion. In May we held our annual conference and the agenda was quite clear. Over the past year we have felt, both as individuals and as a group, the effects of the changing economic and political scene. Collectively we had not taken the necessary time to analyze either the current situation or the way in which we were working, within the group or outside it.

At the conference we wanted to begin this process. We needed to come to terms with our role as a socialist feminist organization, what such a grouping could contribute, and how we should structure ourselves to work most effectively. Our stock-taking was overdue, and we understood that the conference was to be the start of a longer, more integrated process of discussion and analysis.

During the conference, each member spoke of her personal and political history, why she joined a socialist feminist group, and what she would like to see it do. The discussions that this initiated were generally felt to be quite productive. There were proposals put forward dealing with our political direction, and issues related to organization and structure. There were also suggestions of how our discussions should proceed through the summer. Members felt optimistic and encouraged that the conference had established a good direction for us to follow. But it was also quite clear that energy and commitment would be required to come to terms with our situation.

When we began the series of followup meetings, it became apparent that it was not a simple task to get a handle on how best to structure the discussions. We had a few false starts, and it took a couple of meetings before we felt we were finally asking the right questions. We were also hampered



because a lot of women were away through different parts of the summer.

We came to the conclusion that we had to look at some of the basic assumptions, questions, and needs of the group before we could effectively deal with a reworking of our basis of unity (which outlines our political mandate), political priorities, structures or processes.

After some discussion, we decided on a series of questions. They included: What reason is there for a group such as IWDC? How would our individual practices change [if the group did not exist]? What role is there for a socialist feminist group? Now? In the future? What is the political climate in the left, working class, and social movements? What possibilities/limitations does this give to our work in IWDC? On what basis should we continue, and how should we be organized and structured?

We have been proceeding through these questions. Next we will deal with the issues raised in a more specific and concrete manner through the actual structure and practice proposals. The structure proposals were developed out of the conference and deal primarily with internal issues, such as what membership in the group would involve and require, new members and how we integrate them, process, better methods of assessing and evaluating our political actions, developing better collective leadership, and political education. These were based on a shared vision or political assumption of what a socialist feminist group is or can be, which is as follows: "IWDC is working to create a larger socialist feminist organization in Toronto, united around a fairly broad basis of unity which would allow women with a wide range of socialist feminist politics to participate. The organization is committed to:

- being an activist group around key issues and in different movements.
- developing a socialist feminist politic and political practice.
- facilitating the development of the socialist feminist current in the women's movement.
- continuing the development of a collective leadership within the group."

Each of the internal/structural proposals included concrete suggestions we could implement.

The second proposal was developed out of the summer discussions, and was intended to complement the first. It deals with suggestions for practice, both within and outside the group, recognizing the need for thought and discussion. The rationale behind it is as follows: "Today is a pivotal time for the women's movement. We are seeing the rise of liberal feminism, the mainstreaming and co-opting of our issues. We have spoken of the real need for discussion and analysis to better understand the political situation, and take the appropriate actions. In the

past IWDC has been able to initiate action and provide direction. In the last year we have experienced difficulties; the political climate has changed and we have recognized that as a group we have become reactive and have not taken the appropriate time to discuss, evaluate, or analyze our political work or direction."

The following are possible activities that IWDC could involve itself in which could bring a sense of direction and dynamism, as well as providing a contribution to the broader community. These suggestions are not meant to replace or override ideas related to membership, process, or structure, but to complement them.

[The suggestions are that:] 1. In the early fall IWDC initiate a discussion group for socialist feminists. A series of three or four meetings through December could be organized with input and involvement from women outside the group. (Possible topics could include: the women's movement, its political conjuncture and the role of socialist feminists; International Women's Day 1985; electoral politics, NAC, and the rise of liberal feminism; the women's movement and the trade union movement, what are the strategies?) If these were successful there would be the possibility of scheduling further discussions, or of a socialist feminist network developing.

2. IWDC sponsor, perhaps with other organizations, a public meeting to be held in the fall for the women's movement. It would deal with a topic of interest and hopefully provide the opportunity for dialogue on strategic issues. One suggestion has been a dialogue on women in Nicaragua; there are many possibilities.

3. [We present] an organizing suggestion related to International Women's Day which would broaden involvement in the initiating and pre-planning process.

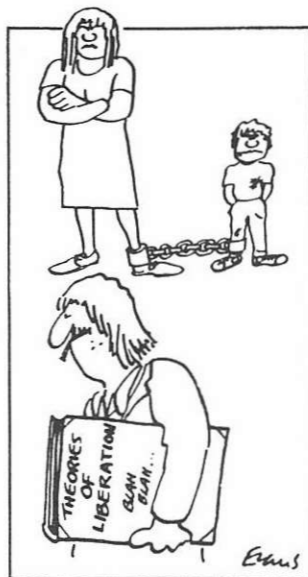
4. [We] make a political priority this fall of specific educational meetings

and an occasional Sunday session to deal with our internal political education. (Possible topics could include: basis of unity statement; our role in International Women's Day; socialist feminism; electoral politics, an evaluation of the Peace Petition Caravan and OCAC's election strategy; NAC, how we respond; IWDC and trade union work)

5. Those of us who maintain our work in the peace, abortion, and anti-imperialist movements constitute ourselves more formally as committees and meet regularly. This would allow access to newer members, enable us to analyze our work in these areas and better plan and bring forward evaluations and discussions.

Any process such as this is time-consuming and sometimes frustrating. Many of us shared this feeling of frustration, particularly at the beginning when we were having a hard time coming to the right questions. It felt like we were spinning our wheels in the same rut. But I believe our direction is clearer now, and there is a sense that we are moving closer to what has to be done. We are a small group, wedded to neither a structure, nor a programme that is inflexible. The possibility of change is there. It will depend very much on the perseverance and commitment of the members, recognizing that all of us cannot make this process our major priority. The changes will take time to be implemented and show their results. But for many of us it is clearly worth the energy and time to continue collectively to develop a socialist feminist organization and politic both within IWDC and without. It is a difficult time for the left and the progressive movements, and we will be sharing the discussions and debates we will be taking part in, which we hope can also be productive for the wider community.

-- Carolyn Egan



FORUMS ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Early in July women from the Marxist Institute invited some socialist feminists together to discuss sponsoring political debates among ourselves. Unfortunately, it was not a large meeting (it is so difficult to organize in the summer). But on the other hand we were able to have a fairly extensive discussion. In the end, three potential forum discussions emerged: a) an analysis of "the family", in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the publication of Engels' Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State; b) what is a socialist feminist strategy? and, c) democracy within the women's movement.

What emerged from the discussion was that a lot of us felt there was not enough political discussion and debate within the women's movement. This concern formed a part of the proposal for a city-wide coalition that came from the Follow-up Committee of the March 8 Coalition, which was subsequently called the Women's Liberation Working Group. Given the present position of the WLWG at the

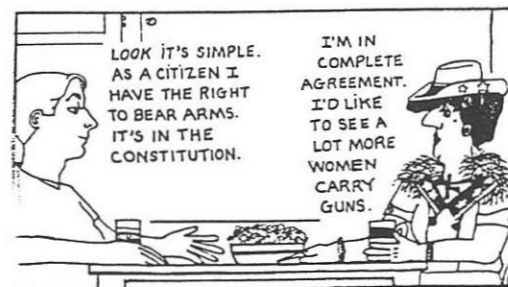
time of the meeting, everyone at the Marxist Institute meeting thought it would be a good idea that the Institute undertake the project of sponsoring these discussion forums.

What was interesting was that when the Marxist Institute women asked the rest of us what the issues of contention are between different socialist women, we found it hard to define the problems--they are often so shrouded in a fear of not wanting to distance or isolate ourselves from other socialist feminists. We have very little experience in the movement at the moment of putting our differences on the table effectively and constructively. For starters, we came up with the three initial ideas that I mentioned above. From then on, we all need to raise other issues that divide us and seek compromise positions, clarification, understanding, and so on. Unity cannot be built on avoiding issues of contention.

A concern that was raised was that these forums not become too academic and therefore lose their usefulness. We all wanted forums to focus on analyses of current situations and strategies to move the women's movement forward, where potentially the discussions can inform our practice.

If you would like to contribute ideas for forums on women's issues, get in touch with Jane Springer at 964-8863 or Barb Cameron at 787-1337.

--Marie Lorenzo



WOMEN IN THE ELECTION: NAC'S LEADERSHIP DEBATE

In many ways it is refreshing to see, both in the United States and Canada, how women's issues have suddenly achieved a high profile due to the fact that there are elections in both countries. As a result of this pressure, many politicians have been forced to take up women's issues, and many women have risen to take important positions within political parties.

Unfortunately, as in so many other struggles within capitalism, though the situation is, at least in part, what many of us have been asking for for so long, we now find our issues being taken up by establishment women and men. They will define the issues on their own terms, and in ways that will legitimate them and consolidate the power of the ruling parties. It is in this light that we have to view the National Action Committee on the Status of Women's leadership debate of August 15.

I was invited to attend the debate as a member of the Immigrant Women's Centre. We were all excited at the possibility of attending a broad grouping of active women that would subject the leaders to questions about our issues. Of course, it was not like that at all. The day before the debate we were informed that we would not be permitted to make any noise in the audience whatsoever--no clapping, cheering, booing or hissing--and no questions. NAC organized a very tightly controlled event.



where they chose the questions and the women who would pose them. A quarter of the 2,000 seats were sold to the Federation of Women Teachers of Ontario in exchange for the use of the hall.

Few of the women attending were prepared to challenge the organization, but some of us did and we clapped and booed anyway. It was illuminating to see how many women looked at us in severe disapproval, and then turned around and clapped lightly and politely for John Turner or Brian Mulroney. The combination of being in a posh hotel among well-heeled women, and the incredible control the TV broadcasting imposed, made us start to feel a little out of place.

However, the questions NAC posed were very good, and clearly reflected a substantial grassroots influence on the organization. It is true that as NAC is gaining in strength, so also we have been able to make some gains within it, particularly at the last convention where several resolutions fought for and passed have moved NAC more to the left. Nonetheless, NAC is still an organization run by many Liberal and Conservative women, and there exists the very real possibility that given the trend to coopt women's issues, NAC will serve the status quo very well.

To get back to the televised debate, naturally, neither Turner nor Mulroney answered any of the questions satisfactorily. As expected, they slid like weasels, slimed like toads, and generally were able to sidestep and distort most of the hard-put questions. Unfortunately, because of the incredible control, none of the panelists were permitted follow-up questions, so the leaders practically got off scott-free. Overall, though undoubtedly an important event, for many of us it was disappointing.

--Marie Lorenzo



WOMEN'S MOVEMENT WORKING GROUP

A small core of women who came out of the June 3 meeting called together by the Women's Liberation Working Group, including some of the original working group, have been meeting over the summer to pursue the idea of a coalition to bring the women's movement in Toronto together. As it stands now, we are calling for another mass meeting on September 10, where people will actually be asked to support the concept and join the coalition.

The proposed function of the coalition as the working group sees it now is not very different from the original proposal presented to the June 3 meeting. In other words, the idea is a broad coalition of women activists and organizations where we could network, develop strategies for making the best use of the media, provide educational forums on questions in the movement, take on united political action, provide a place for women to get involved as an alternative to single-issue organizations, and, possibly take on the organizing of International Women's Day

At the moment it is still a small group; we need all women who support the idea of more unity in the women's movement to come and join our coalition on September 10. At that meeting we will present the proposal in detail and then we hope that women will take the idea back to their organizations, and be ready to come to the next (or should I say first?) coalition meeting ready to take out membership. Many of us from the original working group still believe such a coalition should be formed on the basis of organizational membership, and this is what we will argue for, with the proviso that the coalition work out a way to incorporate individual women who would like to work with the coalition, at a later point in time. We feel the basis for unity will develop when we work on issues together, and that it is only with practice and time that we will find solidarity with other political women.

NAC CONFERENCE: THE PORN DEBATE CONTINUES

In mid-March this year, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) held its annual general meeting at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa. IWDC, as a member group, was invited to send two delegates. We sent three of our members. In all there were 37 resolutions passed on questions ranging from the Constitution of Canada to Central America. We went to the conference with few ideas in advance about exactly what resolutions were going to be debated and consequently, with no overall game plan about how we as a group might want to function within the general meeting. But we soon found resolutions we were itching to alter: those on abortion, peace and pornography. Amending the abortion and peace resolutions turned out to be fairly easy, but we had little success when it came to intervening on the question of pornography. It's important to look at why this was the case.

We were very nervous about the direction that some NAC members--particularly lawyers--wanted to take us with the pornography resolution. Basically, they wanted feminists to lobby the government for a strong anti-pornography section to be inserted into the Criminal Code "prohibiting the manufacture and distribution of pornographic materials." In the original resolution, pornography was defined very broadly to include material which depicted the "submission"/"debasement", etc. of women. We raised two broad questions about the approach, questions which have been suggested by other critics of the pro-censorship positions.

First of all, there are a lot of concerns which can be raised about a strategy which relies very heavily on the state to promote women's liberation. Both in the pornography workshop and during the formal debate around the pornography resolu-

tion, we argued that the gains that women have made have come from major battles with the state, not because the state is some kind of benevolent father-figure who will protect us. But many women who are quite critical of the police, the courts and the state in relation to the struggle against rape and wife-battering are suddenly willing to invest complete confidence in these bodies when it comes to stopping the pornography industry.

A second question is the definition of pornography. Well, you might say, "Porn's porn, right? Why create these hair-splitting definitions?" The original draft of the resolution defined pornography as, among other things, material which depicts the "submission" or "debasement" of women. When the resolution was being debated on the floor, Carolyn Egan from IWDC argued there were problems with this wording. For example, what if the state decides that the depiction of lesbian sexuality constitutes the "debasement" of women. Not only that, she said, but the dynamic of power and "submission" is very different in lesbian vs. heterosexual relationships. Well, we had their attention then. Sex and sexuality had not been discussed at all during the conference, never mind lesbianism.

In the end the pornography resolution which passed at the NAC meeting did not include the words "submission" or "debasement". Pornography is defined as material "which seeks to sexually stimulate the viewer or consumer by the depiction of violence, including, but not limited to, the depiction of coercion or lack of consent of any human being. We knew, even before the debate on the pornography resolution began, that it would be very difficult to turn the direction of the pornography debate around. We didn't expect to pass a very different resolution, but only to raise some questions and issues for discussion. Other women at the convention expressed

similar concerns about a strategy which called for putting shark's teeth into the Criminal Code without having a really wide-ranging discussion about the political implications of this approach for feminists.

So what might be an alternative approach to the question of pornography? If we're not going to rely on the courts and the police, what can be done? First, we need to be clear about what it is we think we're trying to target in attacking pornography. I think what's wrong with the thrust of the NAC resolution is that it's all focussed on pornography as a thing and not on pornography as an industry and as the product of a particular system. Nor was there any discussion of the large numbers of women who work in the porn trade. How are we to understand their experiences? How will enforcing the Criminal Code anti-porn laws affect them? Are we really supposed to believe we can stop the pornography industry while women still earn 60% of what men do, and while women's social and sexual dependence on men is constantly reinforced?

Second, we all know the right-wing is also on an anti-porn offensive. There was no discussion whatsoever at NAC about how we as socialist feminists can distinguish ourselves from them. I think the problem here is that you can't do this without initiating a public discussion of sex and sexuality, something which many feminists are reluctant to do. But as socialist feminists, such as Elizabeth Wilson have argued, the right-wing just wants to censor the sexually explicit; they're not interested in fighting sexism. "Feminists, on the other hand, want to affirm a positive and active image of women as independent sexual beings. We challenge the confinement of sexuality within the family; the conservatives want it firmly kept there." (What Is To Be Done About Violence Against Women? Penguin, 1983).

That's why I think we need to begin to talk, as Mariana Valverde suggested last newsletter (May 1984), about women's erotic needs, and about sexual imagery and representation. Women across Canada--if the NAC conference

is any indication--are extremely angry and frightened about pornography, but does it make good sense to channel this tremendous energy into making changes in the Criminal Code?

It's true that many feminists at NAC argued that we need to supplement legal protection with civil disobedience type actions such as women removing porn magazines from variety stores and so on. In fact, after the porn resolution was passed, some women staged an action in the lobby of the Chateau Laurier hotel. They demanded that the hotel management remove the pornography sold at the United Cigar Store located inside the hotel. The manager weasled out by saying that the Chateau Laurier was part of the CN chain and he had no control in the matter. According to the latest NAC Memo, the women are now "asking that CN require United Cigar Stores to put pornographic magazines behind the counter. A list can then be posted on the cash register and those gentlemen (?) who want to buy them can then ask for them." They don't want CN to "turn women guests into involuntary consumers of pornography." This absurd strategy is just what results when you look at pornography, not as part of a specific system, but as a bad commodity which can be blamed--and hidden. It's the same kind of thinking which attacks prostitution by attacking prostitutes themselves: if we just harass them off the streets, then we can miss the most visible aspects of the sale of women's bodies without having to deal with some deeper sets of questions.

In the past couple of years, a socialist feminist analysis of pornography has arisen alongside the radical feminist critiques. In Britain, this has been created by women such as Elizabeth Wilson, author of What is to be Done About Violence Against Women? In Canada, we have the contributions of Varda Burstyn, Mariana Valverde and others. But so far socialist feminists have not had much impact when it comes to the formation of feminist strategy around pornography, and the NAC conference was a very good example of this. Women voted for strengthening of

legal protection with little sense of the other options before us.

On the way back from the conference, I had a conversation with a socialist feminist who does favour the legal approach. She argued that the law in our society can play an educative role, and this should be an important wing of the work we do around pornography. She also questioned whether the Ontario Censor Board is quite the oppressive institution that most socialist feminists make it out to be. It's clear that there is no single socialist feminist perspective on these issues. As socialist

ANGELA DAVIS IN TORONTO FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Every year the Committee for March 8, a coalition initiated by the Congress of Canadian Women (distinct from the March 8 Coalition), holds an event to celebrate International Women's Day. As 1985 is the end of the United Nations Decade for Women, we intend to have a speaker who can summarize the decade--the struggles and achievements of women around our slogan Peace, Equality and Unity (with women around the world). The Congress of Canadian Women has succeeded in contacting Angela Davis, and she has accepted our invitation to speak in Toronto on Friday, March 8, 1985.

The National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression, of which Davis is Chairperson, is organizing the tour and has asked that the Committee be prepared to pay her round trip airfare from San Francisco, and an honorarium of \$3,000.00, which goes to support the work of the Alliance. These costs require that the committee begin fundraising immediately.

We have had two planning meetings already and there is a lot of enthusiasm and support for the idea. Already some ideas are being flushed out for fundraising possibilities. It was decided that the program will consist of

feminists we need to debate both with each other and with non-socialist feminists. And we need to do this before the right-wing monopolizes the political space for the discussion of pornography and sexuality.

--Cindy Wright

For a copy of the pornography resolution (or any of the 37 resolutions passed at the 1984 Annual General Meeting) write to the National Action Committee, 40 St. Clair Avenue East, #306, Toronto M4T 1M9. See also the porn supplement in the Summer 1984 issue of FUSE magazine for important perspectives on the porn debate.

a public address to be held in Convocation Hall or an equivalent location on the evening of March 8. Ideas for outreach and publicity are still being developed. But we still need many more people and organizations to help with this challenging task. We invite you and/or your organization to join the Committee for March 8 and come or send a representative to our next general meeting, which is September 27, 6 p.m., at 58 Cecil Street.

If you can't spare the time to get involved, but would like to contribute anyway, we would greatly welcome any financial donations. Make your cheque out to Committee for March 8, and mail to P.O. Box 545, Adelaide Street Station, Toronto, Ontario.

IWD 1985 is drawing near. Last year many women wanted to try something different, and didn't want to just repeat the same activities without more thought and discussion about what we want IWD to accomplish for us, and how it fits into our different visions of building a strong movement. What do you think we should be doing? What have been the strengths and shortcomings of our efforts in the past? How do we advance from here? We'd like to publish different views and ideas next issue . . .

Native Women

YOUNG CASE COMBINES NATIVE, BATTERING ISSUES

Support for women's groups across the continent is being sought for Frances Young, a Native American woman who has been charged with first degree murder in the shooting death of her white boyfriend. Tom Kershner, an alcoholic, had frequently beaten and abused Young and her teenaged son, prompting Young to seek aid from the battered women's shelter in Louisville, Kentucky.

On November 2, 1983, Kershner, who had been drinking for several hours, slapped and kicked Young and then left the house, threatening to beat her and her son on his return. According to one account, Young picked up one of Kershner's rifles when he returned, intending to frighten him away; the gun went off accidentally and Kershner was fatally wounded. Young called the police, who arrested her and transported Kershner to hospital, where he died after surgery.

Police promised Young they would take her to the hospital to see Kershner if she agreed to make a statement immediately after the incident. She learned that he had died only when she was informed by the police that she was being charged with first degree murder.

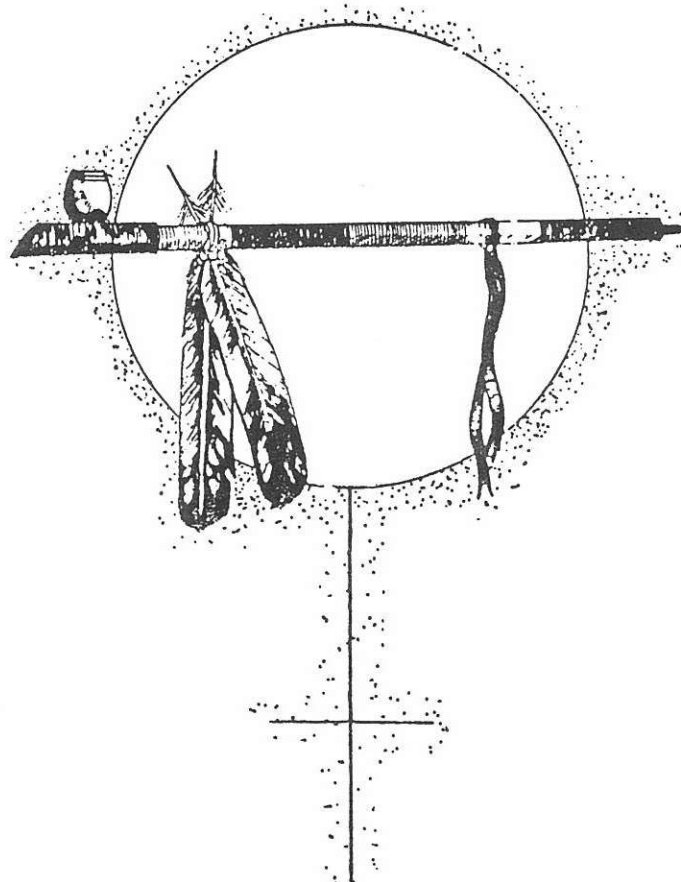
This was only the first of a series of irregularities in Young's treatment by the authorities. She was barely conscious for her first several weeks in prison, being heavily drugged with major tranquilizers, and she has been unable to obtain needed medical attention. The jail in which she is being held is currently the object of a class action suit because of its inhumane conditions, particularly the near-total lack of medical services.

The defense will seek an outright acquittal on the grounds of self-defense; the numerous witnesses to

Kershner's abusive behaviour include his own sister, who was the first person to visit Young in prison, and who volunteered to testify on her behalf.

At this point the IWDC newsletter does not have current information about the status of the trial, but whatever that may be, there are bound to be significant legal costs. Contributions and letters of support may be sent to the Frances Young Defense Committee, P.O. Box 1464, Louisville, Kentucky 40201.

-- adapted from an article by Rachael Kamel in the American Friends' Service Committee Women's Newsletter, Vol. 5, Numbers 1 and 2, 1984.



Lenore Keeshig-Tobias is the editor of Sweetgrass magazine. This poem was originally published in a special North American Indian Women's issue of Sinister Wisdom, 1983.

(a found poem)

CHAPTER 149

An Act Respecting Indians

Section 11. Subject to section 12, a person is entitled to be registered, if that that person (c) is a male who who is a direct descendent in the male line of a male male person described in in paragraph (a) or (b);

Section 11. Subject to section 12, a person is entitled to to be registered, if that that person (f) is the wife or or widow of a person who is registered by virtue of paragraph paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e);

Section 12 (1) (b)
The following persons are not not allowed to be registered registered namely, (b) a woman who married married a person who is not an Indian, Indian, unless that woman is subsequently subsequently the wife or widow of a person person described in section 11.

AN ACT RESPECTING INDIANS

CHAPTER 149

(subsequently and without reservation)

Fathers brothers uncles chiefs warriors politicians Where are the Women

"out there" you point "somewhere"

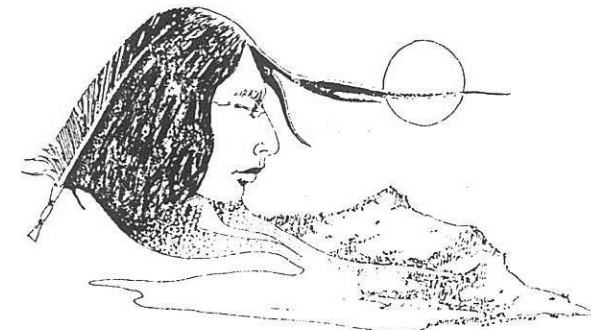
we reach out into the mist to women you refuse to see to strength you refuse to give

and will not give to emotion you cannot feel to the other half of our beginnings

we have ourselves and our daughters and you my fathers have sons and sons and sons

and section 12 (1) (b) in the Act Respecting Indians

Lenore Keeshig-Tobias



Talking to Socialist Feminists

This is the second of a two-part interview with socialist feminist activist Sandy Steinecker.

LY: IWDC continued as an on-going and independent group after the first March 8 Coalition in 1978. You were very involved and then in 1980 you left the group? Why?

SS: It was after my son Ryan was born; of course he was one reason for pulling back. But it was more than that.

I remember talking to a friend about our experiences in IWDC. We were both feeling really frustrated that we couldn't move forward; we felt on this treadmill, always working with where the newest women were. I don't mean that in a disparaging way, even a little. But what always happened is that they came in with a certain kind of experience and a certain kind of knowledge and that's where we always had to deal, over and over again. We couldn't seem to use what we had learned over the years and give that to them. In fact there was a real taboo against it. There was a taboo against having experience or using experience.

There was an article published--the Tyranny of Structurelessness that I remember really hit home to me at that time. I started to think that the concept of leaderlessness or structurelessness was part of what was going wrong.

In fact, neither IWDC nor the coalitions we initiated were leaderless or structureless. Instead, we created informal structures which were worse, and harder for new women to get into because they weren't formal or acknowledged. The result was a fairly complicated series of cliques and hierarchies that were never acknowledged because you weren't supposed to have them. And so to try and penetrate that was almost impossible because it wasn't there; it

was like the emperor having no clothes--you couldn't get at it. I remember thinking that the organization was screwy, that this doesn't work for new women and on the other hand looking at it from what I needed as an individual it was completely frustrating because I never got to build on what I knew. I never got to feel like I was learning more. We were stuck in this rut.

What we had in IWDC was like turning on a tape recorder; it just kept repeating itself over and over again. It felt like you couldn't move, you couldn't learn anything, that you were doomed to stay on the same conveyor belt over and over again. And it was really hard because any time you said something, somebody turned around and using one word or another called you an elitist and thought you were trying to grab leadership or that you wanted to ignore new women, that you didn't care about integrating them.

You'd stand up and say something you knew from your experience, and somebody would cut you down, saying that the words were too "heavy." You were supposed to pare your ideas down; new people would get alienated if we talked about anything too theoretical, or "above their heads," quote/unquote. Saying quote/unquote is interesting. What if we could say something is above some people's heads and not have that read as an insult but rather that they haven't had the experience or learned the same things that one strata of the group has learned.

By the same token, obviously new women have something to teach us and they are totally vital . . . you can't build a movement without learning how to integrate new women. But what I find fascinating is that we haven't done a very good job of integrating new women. Even though IWDC is small group, it is still fairly hard to become part of the group.

And at the same time as not being able to integrate new women effectively we have also created a diffusion among experienced feminists because we don't give them any place to grow either. So we somehow--all of us--are doomed to this middle ground that we have to get out of.

LY: That dynamic puts real limitations on the group's effectiveness and ability to grow.

SS: Exactly. It's one of the reasons many socialist feminists have passed through IWDC but haven't continued.

I would like somebody to say, you know what, maybe the women's movement does need some leaders. Even better, to admit that the women's movement has leaders. Because it does. There is no question. I have a list of people and if somebody came into town and said to me who are the key women in Toronto I would know who to tell them to call. Maybe not around specific issues, because I've lost touch with that, but generally speaking there are quite clearly women who provide different kinds of leadership in Toronto.

I don't mean that I don't want to work with new women. I do. But I want a place--in the most general sense--a space to be with people that I don't have to be afraid of saying anything that is going to alienate you. That I don't have to be afraid of saying, "this may sound elitist but . . . and you will know that I am not elitist and I can just say it. And maybe you'll turn around and challenge me, but you won't wander off and feel hurt. You'll struggle with me over issues. In IWDC I felt I always had to pull back on who I was. I had to worry about how I said what I said, and I had to not say some things I felt because it wouldn't be proper. It seemed impossible to really discuss and debate issues.

LY: Obviously lots has changed in IWDC since you left, but what's interesting is that the two issues you keep referring to still plague us--how to effectively

involve women who are new to the women's movement in our work and discussions? and how to be able to draw collectively on the experience and analysis of different activists in the group to move forward politically and organizationally.

SS: When four or five of us left in 1980 we felt we wanted to spend some time talking about those and other questions, and we couldn't find a way to do that in IWDC. You couldn't ever stop the machinery long enough to sit down and really think. Like, what have we learned here? And after ten or fifteen years of involvement in the women's movement, what do we know? Where did we screw up? Where do we need to go from here? What things have worked?

I remember discussing single issue organizing and trying to figure out how that fits in. It seemed to be draining women off at that time, but it also seemed to be the only thing that was working. We didn't understand why that was happening and what to do with it? I still think it is an important issue.

LY: Let's put aside for the time being what IWDC is or is not. Is there a need in Toronto for a socialist feminist organization?

SS: Yes, a tremendous need, for a socialist feminist group with a high visibility, that recruits people, that recruits people around ideas, that has a clear plan for how to integrate and involve women, and that focusses on action but does spend time developing theory and trying to integrate it into practice. We need to make building a huge organization with a real active membership a goal in itself.

Perhaps we need to get really specific around a document or constitution where we say, this is our analysis of the role of the patriarchy, the role of capitalism, and this is how we believe the system will be overthrown and this is what we believe our role

could be in the overthrow of that system. Then you go out and say o.k., everyone who believes in this can send in their \$2 and belong to the socialist feminist Toronto group.

One of the things I did like about traditional left organizations is that you put in so much money, you put in so much time, and you had certain responsibilities for membership. You weren't just joining as a token gesture. You were making a commitment to something and were working to build a group of people who are committed to working together over a long period of time.

I think we are losing our leverage as socialist feminists. I can list women who are socialist feminists, who are committed, strong and good organizers, but as a current we are not using their/our resources the way we could. Most of us are working individually in different groups. We are feeling isolated and not being as politically effective as we could be. I can't sit up in my third floor room at my desk and come up with the ideas that are needed to move us forward. No woman can do that by herself but many of us have something to contribute to the process. We need that contact in order to grow as a movement. And we need that contact in order to survive as individuals. Too many women I know have committed suicide in the last five years.

LY: How do we go from where we are now to the kind of organization you've been talking about? Is IWDC a tool for beginning that process?

SS: I hope that kind of a direction can come from IWDC. IWDC is the logical organization to begin discussions of how to build a popular socialist feminist organization. It would have to mean a real commitment to tackling many of the questions that we always seemed to avoid, at least when I was around.



BUILDING A NETWORK OF SOCIALISTS

The last and evaluation meeting of the Socialism 1984 series was held at the end of June. The fourteen or so people who came out decided that although the different forums had had many shortcomings, many of us were still interested in and willing to put energy into facilitating discussions among socialists about the different kinds of activities we are involved in currently and our visions of longer-term socialist strategy.

So we decided to: do it again . . . but differently. We were able to arrive at a consensus on general objectives and a way to organize ourselves:

- We want to contribute to the development of a feminist socialist movement and perspective;
- We want to consolidate the network of socialists that began to emerge through the series of forums;
- The activities we will undertake remain to be defined but in general they will be of a varied and flexible format, designed to foster discussion, debate, exchange of experience and practical collaboration among socialists in Toronto;

We have named ourselves as an Animation Committee whose function is to animate the activities and events for the Socialist Network. Since the June 29 meeting, the committee has met twice. We'll keep you posted. If you are interested in joining us, or finding out what we are doing, call Pat Daley (363-4404).



TWO WINGS OF THE SAME BIRD: An Interview with Chai Chu Thompson

We talked to Chai Chu Thompson, of the Visible Minority Women's Coalition, about its inception and its aspirations.

Can you tell us how and when the coalition was formed?

The VMWC was started after the Ontario provincial conference on visible minority women in September 1983--that was a conference organized by the Human Rights Commission and attended by 600 visible minority women from all over Ontario. I was invited to go to that conference, but due to a conflict I couldn't attend. However, a month after the conference, women organized a coalition, so again I was invited to attend the first formation meeting. It was very moving to see around 80 women, 80 visible minority women coming together to organize a coalition. Since then we have been meeting regularly once a month.

Were the 80 women all participants in the conference.

The participants and some of the organizers; and since then more people have heard of us, and new members have joined. The organization is still in a very formative stage; the structure is still very loose. We deliberately kept it loose so that when new women join they have an opportunity for input, for change. Besides we felt we are still at a stage where we are learning from each other. I don't think there is any visible minority women's coalition across the country or anywhere else I know of. In a way it is very historical. So we would like to make sure this organization will achieve its aims and objectives.

What are its aims?

The analysis we have done for ourselves is that visible minority women have two aspects of the same oppression, namely, sexism and racism. Historically, organizations have been developed to fight sexism, such as the feminist movement, but this movement is really mostly a middle-class white feminist movement: they don't address the problems of racism. In fact, they may even practice racism, within themselves. And then you can look at the other group of organizations, like the Portuguese, Chinese or Spanish community organizations, for instance; they may fight very militantly against racism, but within the organization the leadership is mostly male dominated, and these organizations are sexist against the women of their own community. Therefore we felt there was no organization existing in the community which addressed the two aspects.

We view these two aspects of the same oppression like two wings of the same bird. You cannot separate them. If organizations like the feminist movement don't address the issue of racism, they are not fighting properly, they are not uniting forces properly, and you could delay women's advancement. The same thing happens with the organizations

fighting racism: if they don't address the problem of sexism, again they are isolating themselves.

As visible minority women, we felt every woman has a story to tell about male chauvinism, and every colored person has a story to tell about racism. We have both of them. We felt it was important to get together, and to support the fight wherever racism or sexism occur: in the workplace, or in schools or other educational institutions, and initially we thought what was important was that all the different groups join this organization. In fact we have a very multi-national group. People come from Chinese origin, East Indian origin, West Indian origin, Black, Korean, Japanese--and we have a lot to learn from each other because the expression of sexism and racism is quite different in different groups, and we should come to some kind of common analysis.

And also we have the situation of native women--their oppression is quite different from that of immigrant women because native women feel they have a basic difference with us because they are the people who originally owned this land; they are aboriginal people, yet they are being discriminated against. So we have to get to know and understand the problems of each group and then we can come to some common analysis to address all of our problems.



How do you define visible minority? What is the significance of the phrase?

Visible minority--there is a problem with this word. We now feel we would like to reject this name because this is a name where in way we are being labelled. It originated from the government. Visible minority refers to the people of color. Visible minority woman means woman of color, including black, yellow and red... People of colour are mostly from Third World countries.

How are you organized?

Well, perhaps I should speak about the steering committee. The SC has two members from each group, from each nationality. For instance there would be two Chinese, two Black, two East Indian, two West Indian, two Filipino. The steering committee is open to two representatives from each group . . .

So the size of the SC depends on how many groups are participating in the organization?

That's right. That was the original idea, so that it would be truly reflective of a coalition of visible minorities. But then as far as general membership, anybody can join. You don't have to belong to an organization, in order to be a member. That has not been completely defined by the practice right now. I mean we haven't developed a constitution yet.

So anybody can join?

Anybody can join. In fact, once we had an interesting discussion where we asked, does anybody mean anybody including white? A large number of the membership felt that at this stage, we are in a process of development and change, and we want to get to know each other first, so white people are welcome to come to the meetings or educational, and to participate--however, they will not be considered for membership at this time. That was the decision we took. We feel

confident that as we develop further, there will be no problem.

Actually, I made the presentation on membership, raising the question: who is included? For instance, what about people from mixed marriages--say half-black and half-white? How do you decide whether they belong to visible minorities or not? But in the discussion it came up that in society people of that origin often are treated as visible minorities. Therefore, they should be entitled to membership.

Do you have community groups as members?

We haven't sorted this out yet. What people will say (at meetings) is that they belong to certain organizations, but so far people just come as individuals. At present we divide them according to nationalities. So, for instance, on the steering committee we want to ensure that we broadly represent the different groups of visible minority people.

What has the coalition worked on so far?

We haven't done anything very high profile, in the sense of publicity or anything like that. We feel we have achieved quite a bit consolidating among ourselves with different groups and sorting out the problems. For instance, we had a workshop by native women and how they felt about being members of this organization--there are contradictions for them, and some of them felt they shouldn't belong. But they realized that we are not the problem for native people, that we recognize it's important to support native women. And the coalition certainly will support native women's struggles and native women's rights.

So we begin to sort out intra-group problems, within different minority groups, by educational programs. Every month we have two hours of workshops just to do educational presentations, at the end of which we come to some common conclusions, and then we continually revise; our aims and objectives gradually develop.

Publicly, we did respond to an article that appeared in the Globe and Mail; actually it was a statement put out by two groups, one of them being NAC. Chaviva Hosek, the President, said she felt that NAC had addressed the problems and paid attention to the problems of visible minority women. She was speaking on behalf of us, and we felt that that's always the problem; they don't really know what they are doing, and they certainly haven't addressed our problems. So we wrote a letter that appeared in the newspaper. Actually the original response is much longer--the newspaper published the beginning and the end. It was our analysis about how we feel-- in fact you can read that to get an idea of what was discussed by the Steering Committee.

It reflects where the organization is at?

Yes. And then, we also participated in a peace conference recently. And we found that the peace issue is analyzed very differently by visible minority women as compared to the white feminist movement.

Which peace conference was it?

It was organized by Voice of Women from York University. We were totally disgusted with that group. They wanted to organize an international conference on women's initiatives to get women on the negotiating table for peace internationally. Well, we have no objection to that, but the only problem we had with that group is that their analysis is so extremist: they would go so far as to say that war is the responsibility of the male. Males are born war-like, and females are born peaceful, according to this biological superiority analysis--and it is a very anti-male type of analysis.

And then they will not distinguish between two types of violence: they lump together the sum total, and are absolutely for a non-violent, pacifist type of a philosophy. They will not distinguish that there is violence of aggression and also violence of

resistance; you know, the national liberation war. The way we view peace and how they view peace is a very different thing: they want to stop nuclear war, sure, the reason they want to stop it is so they can preserve the present status quo, so that the present situation will not be destroyed.

For instance, one woman would say I just bought a new, big house--I don't want it to be destroyed: therefore, we want peace, right? To me, when half of the world is starving, how can you say you want to preserve your big house? That way you'll keep the present imbalance against the Third World countries? For instance, what was the threat to peace originally? The threat to peace is that some people wage wars of aggression, an aggressive war toward other people. So those people, their peace is threatened; then peace can often be defended by waging a war, a national war of liberation. So you have to view a national war of liberation as a means towards peace, but a war of aggression is a threat to peace. And this type of analysis these women could never accept, they want to say: "Oh no! you mustn't be violent." I want to say, you people are total hypocrites, because how can you tell people of Nicaragua, how can you tell people of El Salvador, how can you tell people, say 30 years ago, the Chinese people, not to wage wars of resistance against U.S. imperialism, against the economic, military and political aggression to their country? They have to defend it. They have to violently defend their peace. So to tell those countries that the Canadian government is part of the whole thing, and then tell them they should not fight back is total hypocrisy.

So, of course when we presented this type of analysis it was very unpopular. We lasted a whole day but felt after that there was no point in going on. Only two women of color attended that peace conference, and we presented a very different analysis. After we spoke, some people from the floor agreed with us. But many of them didn't even want us to

use the terminology, "the Third World countries," they said we all live in the same world why should we use "Third World country?" So, one of our members said o.k. if your don't want to use "Third World" how about using "the exploited world"?

What was your experience with the March 8 Coalition this past year?

The March 8 coalition--at that time, you see, we had only formed in October, so we were not quite ready to participate fully, but many visible minority women went to the march. I was not able to go, but according to other people they felt it was a very good march, they enjoyed the speech.

But I heard that the March 8 Coalition has some problem recognizing the rights of Palestinian women and the Palestinian people, and again that's wrong, because you have to support wherever the oppression is, and you have to recognize the racism against the Palestinian people.



Were there any other problems?

Visible minority women often have problems when they work with a white-dominated group. I think the problem is that those feminist movements have very little understanding or sensitivity toward visible minority women. There is an air of visible minorities repeatedly discussing this problem, because it is a problem that always arises when we go to a meeting; it's very hard to make those feminists understand that we have a very important point to make, if not more important, at least equally valid. But often this kind of a position is not recognized or valued as being an important thing. And visible minority women feel they will always be looked down on by the general feminist movement. And often what happens, like at the peace conference I mentioned, when you start talking about representatives to organize, they always say, "we have to get the experienced people, they know what they are doing." We asked for participation from people from Third World countries, from visible minority women, and they would say, "well if we get those people they won't know what they are doing, they don't have any experience..." I say: you women say men oppress you because men tell you that you don't know any better, now you are doing the same thing, you're saying visible minority women don't know any better, this is the same type of arrogance. So we've talked about this type of experience a lot. But I myself don't know anything about what happened in the March 8 Coalition this year because I didn't participate.

So how does the group see the relationship with the white women's movement in future? Does the group see any possible allies within it, in the sense that there are different currents, say with socialist, left-wing women...?

Yes. We see that there is a lot of work to be done for the gap to close between the white women's movement and the women of color movement, a lot of educational work has to be done, on both sides. You

PREVIEW

Feminist Review No. 17: MANY VOICES, ONE CHANT: BLACK FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

The latest edition of Feminist Review, edited by a guest editorial collective of Black Women, promises to be a fitting follow-up to Fireweed's Women of Colour issue. It is a collection of theoretical articles, kicked off with "Challenging Imperial Feminism", a joint effort by two of the four editors, followed by an article on Black lesbian invisibility in Britain; others are on Black women and the economy, Asian women in Britain, and Black women organizing. As well, there is a poetry section, a book review section, and a collection of photographs. This book is a must--just from a quick skim over it (it just came out) it is clear it will be invaluable in understanding and fighting against racism within the women's movement. Though it is set in Britain, the similarities to the situation in Canada are enormous, and, indeed, this collection could represent a continuation of the analysis begun by the Fireweed Women of Colour guest collective and others.

Look for a review of Many Voices, One Chant in a future issue of the newsletter.

know some visible minority women's experience is so negative about white women, that they just want to lump all whites together, and this is certainly strong; and yet there is still a strong desire to work with those groups, we feel we have an obligation to provide educational materials, to go to those meetings and present our ideas, to win their support. And we believe, you know with some hard work and persistent work, progress can be made.

Maybe issue by issue.

Exactly. Exactly. So, a lot of work needs to be done.

There's a responsibility that white women have to educate themselves...

And also vice versa: they should participate in or come to our meetings to present their point of view, because if we have misunderstood them or their point of view, they have an obligation to correct that.

What role will the VMWC play in the future?

In the future, I think the Coalition will take on issues, action-oriented issues. Right now we are preparing ourselves, but I think our goal is action: to support the struggles of people fighting on the issue of racism, sexism; for instance, we recently participated actively fighting racism by supporting the Weyfu case. We got a lot of visible minority women out to support Weyfu. That's not even a "women's issue", it is simply racism. I think in the future we will do more of this sort of thing. And then we also went out to do picket support for the cleaners, at Canadian Place. The organization is still minimal, but I think it will develop. So later on we'll be more action-oriented. I think before action, we need a stage of cooperation and development.

--interview by Marie Lorenzo

LABOUR NOTES LABOUR NOTES LABOUR NOTES LA

We'd like to improve our coverage of labour issues, and perhaps have a regular column. The women we've talked to are too busy . . . so what about you? Is there an issue or struggle you'd like to write about? Would you be interested in editing a regular column? Or what about a rotating column, and being one of a number of activists to commit herself to one or two columns a year?

Labour Struggles

WOMEN STRIKE AGAIN

A six-week strike by 250 cleaners, most of whom are Portuguese women, ended on July 13 with a significant victory for the members of the CCU-affiliated Food and Service Workers of Canada.

The strike was against Olympia and York, owners of First Canadian Place and the Exchange Tower, where most of the cleaners work night shifts for poverty wages (\$5.83 with minimal benefits, until the strike). Olympia and York used threats of mass firings and other such dirty tricks, like withholding paycheques in an attempt to get people to enter the buildings to collect, trying to force the workers to accept the offer of a 30¢/hr. increase over two years. Despite intimidation and the use of scabs (many provided by Canada Manpower in the form of students desperate for work), the workers won 60¢/hr., and the reinstatement of nine cleaners fired when arrested by police protecting strikebreakers trying to cross the picket line.

The strike was notable for the wide range of support it was able to mobilize from many sectors--including women, immigrants, students, and, of course, labour--including non-CCU affiliates. The victory is a tribute to the courage and tenacity of the women and men who struggled through the strike, and a reminder of the importance of unity in fighting corporations' and governments' determination to finance the economic crisis out of the pockets of poor and working people.



VDTs ON STAGE

VDT operators will take to the stage this fall! The VDT Committee of Metro Toronto's Labour Council will produce a play, "The Department," written by New York author Barbara Carson. The play is currently being reworked by the Toronto theatre group Mixed Company.

Carson, together with Allan Booth and Simon Malbogot of Mixed Company, is working on music and lyrics for this humorous depiction of computer-based technology into a bank office. The play will be presented in Toronto September 12-15, 8 p.m. as a workshop production. It will be performed with a professional cast at the Ralph Thornton Centre, 765 Queen St. E. Tickets are available from Mixed Company at 461-2584.

VDT Committee members have in the past sponsored two conferences about work at computer terminals. The VDT Newsletter published by the Committee provides VDT operators with work-related information. The play will be a new approach to this goal: combining the work of the committee with an entertaining cultural activity. The committee hopes that many office workers and unorganized VDT operators will come out to the play.

--Susan Meurer

The VDT newsletter can be obtained by writing the VDT Committee, Metro Toronto Labour Council, Room 407, 15 Gervais Drive, Don Mills.



NEW TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

Those of you interested in resources on micro tech, will want to read two pamphlets that have just been published by Toronto groups.

Micro Futures: Who Pays is an excellent introduction to the world of micro chip technology through the eyes of some of the workers who have to live and work with new tech. Published by the New Technology Working Group, it's available in Toronto at DEC, 427 Bloor Street West. \$3.

Micro Technology and Your Future in Office Work is a comprehensive guide to new technology written for office workers. Write to Renate Krakauer, Humber College, 1669 Eglinton Avenue, West, Toronto.

Trade Unions and the Radicalizing of Socialist Feminism is a series of three articles edited by Cynthia Cockburn and published in the summer 1984 issue of Feminist Review, a British socialist feminist journal, which discuss the experience of women organizing in the British, French and Italian trade union movements.

The first articles deal with the upsurge of feminism in the Italian trade union movement in the 70s and then some of the tensions that have developed within the women's movement in the trade union movement. Then two French women trade unionists tell the story of a stormy episode between feminists in the French Communist Party and the central labour council. The final article discusses feminism and trade unionism in Britain, also since the early 70s.

If you're interested in receiving a xerox of these articles please send \$2 to the newsletter committee and we'll send it to you. And of course, . . . we'd be interested in your comments and comparisons to the situation here.

International/Solidarity

WOMEN IN CENTRAL AMERICA: REFLECTIONS ON A RECENT VISIT

We have a lot to learn from women in Central America--and something to share. It struck me again as I had the chance to re-visit old friends and make new ones in April-May during a 6 week assignment for CUSO. My task was to meet with groups--particularly women's groups or the women's secretariats of popular organizations--to find out what, if any, programs in popular education were going on of direct benefit to women in the region. What follows are a few reflections on the trip--the highlights.

Arriving in Honduras after a two year absence was a shock! U.S. marines everywhere . . . and one walks down the main street of Tegucigalpa, the capital, to the sounds of Hercules C-130's passing overhead carrying supplies to the large U.S. base being constructed as part of the Reagan game plan for the region. One cannot over-emphasize the repressive conditions which exist in Honduras, making trade union organizing, peasant demands and human rights demonstrations all very dangerous. Given these conditions, the popular organizations are few and have to work under difficult conditions and with great courage.

It was therefore very exciting to meet with a woman from a small organization in its early stages of development (with membership from popular organizations and the university) who had organized a very successful Women's Day March--the first in Honduran history. The women protested injustice and violations of the Constitution; asked for immediate approval for a new Family Code; and asked for Peace in the region and good relations with other Central American countries--a slap at the military who have been backing the U.S. policy of support to counter-revolutionary forces operating from

Honduran soil to Nicaragua. In addition to work on a new family code, the women talked of plans to mount a cultural radio program for women and to develop a production project to help women survive who lose their jobs because of their political activities.

In spite of the strain of the "contras" and the economic hardships caused by the mining of the ports, Nicaragua feels like a breath of fresh air after Honduras. I had the opportunity to talk with both AMNLAE, the mass-based Nicaraguan women's organization, and "La Oficina de la Mujer," the women's office in the government which coordinates and motivates the work of various Ministries on women's programs. Both organizations stressed that the U.S. and "contra" intervention both militarily and economically was the over-riding factor determining priorities. The women talked with anger as they recounted the destruction of health clinics, day care centres--not to mention the death and personal losses suffered by people in the northern areas. What amazed us was the extent to which the creativity continued. AMNLAE hopes to mount a school for rural women in the hard hit regions which could teach cooperative management and related topics to the many women who find themselves in leadership positions. Other exciting programs in adult education, agriculture and health care continue--but all are strapped for funds as the economic pressures grow.



Driving over the border into Costa Rica, one sees visible signs of the destruction the war has caused in the past two years. The old crossing has been bombed on the Nicaraguan side--destroying the surrounding village. In Costa Rica there was an air of tension as the news media told of Nicaraguan "aggression" at the border. Many of the reports of damage to the Costa Rican border post we knew to be false and could have been easily checked by journalists. However, the U.S. ambassador on several occasions appeared on T.V. promising American marines to counter Nicaraguan "aggression." Scary stuff! And none of that reached the media here--Costa Rica? Where's that!?

The highlight of the time spent in Costa Rica was the workshop I did with the "Centro Pro Mujer"--a small women's group I was a member of while I lived and worked in the region. The purpose of the workshop was to evaluate past work and define priorities for the future. We began with sociodrama, or small plays, as a way of discussing the problems they saw facing women in Costa Rica and possible solutions to the problems--hoping that the discussion could set the groundwork for situating the work of the Centre. We dealt with cases of the peasant woman, the wife of a factory worker and a single mother/teacher. Some of the problems which emerged as important were very familiar: definition of sexual roles; economic dependence of many women on their husbands; the legal situation; discrimination in the workplace; lack of participation of women in popular organizations such as trade unions; and one which does not emerge as often here--poverty. The economic situation was seen as leading to violence against women, lack of daycare, problems of poor health, housing, water, illiteracy.

Lines of work suggested by the sociodramas included: pressuring trade unions and government; organizing--alternative organizations such as production cooperatives or organizing around basic needs such as water

problems; and education--with an emphasis on consciousness raising among both men and women, given that in the rural areas, men often can forbid their wives to go to meetings!

There are many other organizations in Costa Rica working on women's issues. The Centro Pro Mujer has just completed a listing of these groups should anyone be interested.

Panama was in the midst of elections when we arrived. The place was plastered with banners and no-one wanted to talk about anything else--except the women's groups I was able to contact. The highlight for me in Panama was a meeting of five women, organized by a small women's project called Promocion de la Mujer (promoting Women). All of the women had been working at the grassroots level, largely with poor women in rural areas. They talked about the difficulties and limitations they face within their organizations--the low priority given to work with women. They dreamed a little--about starting their own organization with funding for staff and long-term planning! In the meantime, they were involved in an on-going sharing of common problems and possible solutions--using the group as a source of support, ideas and opportunity for joint work. They had, for example, organized



several workshops for women working with women in Panama, looking at the adaptation of the rich popular education experience in Panama to women's issues.

But I've saved until last the most moving meetings of my trip--those with the Salvadoreans and Guatemalans. At present there are only two Guatemalan organizations--the UNAM, based in Costa Rica, and IXQUIC, which I met in Mexico. The courage of the peasant woman I met who was going back inside to continue working was a clear indication to me that other Guatemalan women's organizations will not be long in the organizing.

I was able to meet with all of the Salvadorean women's organizations together in Mexico--which was a wonderful opportunity in itself. Many are not known in Canada and have emerged from the struggle of Salvadorean women within their own organizations. Each woman spoke movingly of her own history--of lost sons, daughters and husbands--of torture and of exile. We were all very moved--and the sharing established a bond for the discussions about the work ahead. ASMUSA (the Association of Salvadorean Women), CUMS (the Unitary Committee of Salvadorean Women), AMPES (the Association of Progressive Women of El Salvador), AMES (the Association of El Salvadorean Women) and OMSS (the organization of Socialist Women) all agreed on the same priorities for work within the women's movement in other countries in solidarity with their struggle. They are fighting to free political prisoners, for non-intervention in Central America and to gain support for the FDR/FMLN--the opposition movements in El Salvador. There was also agreement on the need to find funding for education programs with women--both within the zones of control inside El Salvador and with refugee women outside the country.

I came back to Canada convinced that we have a lot to learn from the women's movement in Central America and that we also have something to share. There is room for exchange and dialogue around issues of common concern. Women there

were interested in work in Canada related to such issues as violence against women, cooperative daycare, legal questions and many others. Women in Central America, committed to fundamental change, are struggling with some of the same political issues we have to address here as well. But women in all countries also stressed the urgent need for solidarity from the women's movement in Canada in protesting against U.S. intervention in Central America--especially in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Hopefully women in Canada can respond. The recent formation of WISCA--Women in Solidarity with Central America--provides us with a vehicle.

--Bev Burke

WISCA FORMS

During the past few months a small group of women has been meeting to discuss how women in Canada can show our solidarity with our sisters in Central America and express our determined opposition to U.S. intervention in the area. In May, we decided to create a group called Women in Solidarity with Central America (WISCA). Our members are women active in both the women's and solidarity movements who wish to strengthen the links between the two movements and to support women in Central America, while helping build the anti-intervention movement in Toronto and the rest of Canada.

Some of the ways we hope to do this are by:

- educating Canadian women about the situation in Central America, and specifically of women in the region;
- bringing together women working in the women's, peace, and solidarity movements, in trade unions, churches, and community and immigrant groups, around specific actions;
- creating a local network of women working in solidarity with Central America, with a view to establishing a national network, which might in the

future affiliate with an international women's coalition against U.S. intervention; and

- supporting women's projects, programs, and organizations in Central America.

Right now the group is working on collecting resource materials about the situation of women in Central America in order to deepen our own understanding of the issues and to prepare ourselves for educational work over the coming year. We hope to work with other groups on different kinds of campaigns and actions, to sponsor friendship and solidarity tours, and to support the solidarity actions of other groups.

With Reagan's re-election a dreadful probability (if not a certainty) which would be interpreted by him as a mandate for invasion, anti-intervention work acquires an enhanced urgency. WISCA needs: networking contacts, resource materials or bibliographies, money, womanpower, and creative ideas about how we can go about our tasks. If you want to contribute, contact Chris Mills or Lynda Yanz at 532-8584 or 961-8638. Write WISCA at 386 Bloor Street West, Toronto, M5S 1X4.

GLADYZ DIAZ IN TORONTO

(Gladys Díaz is a member of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) in Chile)

On July 24 Gladys Díaz, a Chilean political leader now living in Nicaragua, presented her reflections on women's political and social liberation struggles around the world, and invited her listeners, over 100 Latin American and Canadian women and men, to join in a dialogue about, in her words, "one of the most urgent and critical issues of our time."

Socialists, she said, have too often ignored women's struggles for equality

FRIENDS OF AMES is a Toronto group which is working in support of the El Salvador Women's Association (AMES), as part of a continent-wide network of such groups. It works to support the programs of the Salvadoran organization, particularly the operation of day care centres in controlled areas of the country and for Salvadoran refugee children in Managua. A children's slide show is being prepared as part of the children to children campaign being sponsored in Canada and the U.S.; another slide show will be produced for adults, and the possibilities for twinning day care centres are also being explored.

Friends of AMES also provides information about women political prisoners in El Salvador and organizes campaigns around particular cases, such as that of Claudia Calderon. The group is able to offer a literature table for local events. If your group is planning an event you can arrange to have a Friends of AMES literature table there by calling Axelle (783-5146) or Gini (531-3912) in the evenings or on the weekend; or write to: Friends of AMES, P.O. Box 341, Station Z, Toronto Ontario, M3N 2Z6.

and denied their legitimacy, claiming that the struggle for a socialist revolution must take priority. This is a strategic error, according to Diaz. Winning a socialist revolution and building a socialist society do not by and in themselves secure the full liberation and equality of women. Furthermore, a movement that fails to recognize the full potential of women is unable to mobilize the full resources of the working class in its revolutionary struggles.

Díaz cited "that dark chapter of Chilean history," the mobilization of thousands of women, from the popular sectors as well as from the middle class,

in protests against the government of President of Salvador Allende in its final months, as a demonstration of the danger of ignoring women's concerns and failing to mobilize them in support of their liberation: they can be manipulated as a counter-revolutionary force. She sees an entirely different picture in Chile today, where women are playing leading roles in the resistance and opposition movements against General Pinochet.

The struggle must also go on inside the home and family as well as on the streets, Díaz added. Capitalism and imperialism create big kings--political dictators--and little kings--husbands and fathers and sons.

Women must demand that everyone in the family participate in household tasks. They must demand the right to go out to political meetings. They must overcome their timidity and volunteer for leadership tasks instead of serving their "political" husbands and participating in politics only by making empanadas for the next peña. They learn to do this best, Díaz said, in the company of other women. In women's organizations they are spared the ridicule of the men and their patronizing jokes, and they can practise skills such as speaking out and organizing events, and thus gain confidence in themselves.

Men have to confront their attitudes and be prepared to relinquish the privileges which a macho society confers on them. Confronting disturbing truths about ourselves is an important step in our liberation process. Congratulations to the Frente Femenino for inviting Compañera Díaz to speak to this important issue. The fact that a political leader of Díaz's stature devoted her only public lecture in Toronto to this subject is an important political statement in itself.

--Mary Bird

Editorial Collective's post-script: a little bird told us that after Cra. Díaz`

OPPOSE COURT MARTIALS OF CIVILIANS IN CHILE

As part of an international campaign against the Chilean government's use of military tribunals to try civilians in time of peace, the Chile Ontario Information Centre is calling on the solidarity of Canadians to oppose this continued violation of international law.

In 1980, the dictatorship held a fraudulent plebiscite which approved a constitution legalizing the regime within a judicial framework. In March of this year the Supreme Court ruled that the use of court martials for civilians charged with political crimes in time of peace is "constitutional", thus demonstrating the usefulness of a closed system to a government which has no respect for jurisprudence, much less justice.

At least ten Chilean civilians are now facing court martial. Solidarity organizations around the world are sending lawyers to attend the proceedings in an attempt to provide a minimum safeguard for the prisoners' human rights, and the Chile Ontario Information Centre is raising money to send Barbara Jackman, a Toronto lawyer, in September. Financial support for this important solidarity gesture may be sent to: Chile Ontario Information Centre, P.O. Box 308, Station L, Toronto. Cables and letters of protest should be addressed to Sr. Rafael Retamal, Supreme Court, Plaza Montt Varas, Santiago, Chile and to the Minister of External Affairs in Ottawa (whoever that may be by the time this is published). Other addresses and the names of the prisoners involved are available from the Chile Ontario Information Centre, at the same address.

speech a man raised his hand and, in effect, asked when she was going to talk about politics!

WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CHILE A CALL FOR HELP

The Women's Committee for Solidarity with the People of Chile is a group of Chilean women which has worked for the past several years in the organization of a wide range of fundraising activities designed to morally and materially help the vast number of organizations working within Chile in assisting the dispossessed and the victims of repression. One of these is an ongoing program to support women political prisoners through sponsors who maintain correspondence and provide some financial relief. Most recent is a Scholarship Program which currently provides aid to four school-age children of political prisoners who are in jail, have disappeared, or were assassinated in the early years of the Pinochet regime.

Women constitute approximately one third of some 500 acknowledged political prisoners in Chile today. Most have been tried by court martial and given extremely harsh sentences--up to 25 years--although in most cases their alleged crimes involve the simple exercise of the right to dissent and are almost invariably based on trumped-up charges where no evidence is presented.

Termed "dangerous terrorists" by the regime, political prisoners have been scattered in isolated and overcrowded prisons throughout the length of Chile. Not only have these women been arbitrarily deprived of their freedom, but they also suffer cold, loneliness, isolation, hunger, illness, and degradation at the hands of their captors. Relatives and lawyers are systematically intimidated, and visiting rights frequently suspended without reason. No prisoner is allowed visits by outside physicians, nor is there dental care of any kind. The extreme living conditions of most Chilean political prisoners have been denounced every year since 1973 by the U.N. Human Rights Commission and its Special Rapporteur on Chile. Nevertheless, Chilean authorities have just as systematically dismissed these findings and continue to do nothing

to alleviate the plight of these prisoners of conscience.

The Women's Committee is launching a campaign to find sponsors for women political prisoners in Chile. Each sponsoring group or individual is asked to "adopt" one or more prisoners, which entails providing moral support through correspondence as well as financial help, however modest, to these women, most of whom have unemployed or imprisoned spouses and children to support.

The following case illustrates their plight: Marisol Moyano, a 29-year old primary school teacher, was imprisoned in April 1981. After undergoing torture she was tried by a court martial and sentenced to eleven and a half years, without appeal. The charges: "carrying a false I.D. card" and "attempting against the stability of the government." Despite repeated appeals by her lawyer, her case has not been reviewed in three years, nor is it likely to be in the foreseeable future. It is important to point out that the regime considers the country to be in a State of Internal War, and political prisoners are therefore hostage POW's whom it will not readily release. The judiciary has become a shameful rubber-stamp for the Junta; human rights and writs of Habeas Corpus are routinely dismissed, and jurisdiction over civilians frequently handed over to military courts without a murmur.

Marisol and several hundred other women political prisoners need financial help to buy food, medication, personal hygiene items, clothing and heating fuel, which no prison provides. Your donation will also help defray travel expenses for the few close relatives authorized to visit, some of them crossing thousands of kilometres to reach isolated prisons.

For further information, please call Iris Mason (588-1629) or Mitzi Concha (759-4383). The Committee will provide translation if you wish to write to a prisoner.



SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

The African National Congress, the broad democratic movement and the people of South Africa as a whole will be observing 1984 as the Year of Women. We shall do this to pay tribute to the embattled but struggling womenfolk of our country and to honour their historic achievements, such as the founding of the South African Women's Federation on April 17, 1954. We have thus dedicated the coming year as confirmation of the resolve of the South African National Liberation Movement to see the women of our land play their rightful role in the forefront of the struggle for the destruction of the system of apartheid and the creation of a peaceful, democratic, non-racial South Africa.

--ANC President, Oliver Tambo

In support and solidarity with the women of South Africa and Namibia and in celebration of the Year of Women, representatives from a number of organizations are planning a conference at OISE, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, on November 16 and 17. The objectives of the conference are:

- to generate concrete forms of support in Canada for the struggles of women in South Africa and Namibia;

- to stimulate campaigns around issues affecting women in South Africa and Namibia;

- to promote solidarity amongst women's groups in Canada with women struggling for liberation in South Africa and Namibia;

- to involve special interest groups active in Canada (around for example literacy, education, health) with the liberation movement of the African National Congress and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

Organizations are invited to endorse the conference by writing to the Conference Planning Committee at P.O. Box 1180, Station F, Toronto Ontario M4Y 2T8.

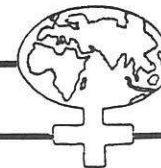
FILL THE BOAT SUPPORT AMNLAE

Coalitions in cities across the country are preparing to fill a boat with material aid for the people of Nicaragua which will sail from Vancouver in December.

Last year IWDC and the newsletter coordinated the collection of materials for AMNLAE, the association of Nicaraguan women. As yet we don't have details from AMNLAE about what they need most urgently, but we assume the list will look similar to last year's: office supplies and office furniture, typewriters, tape recorders, paper, sewing machines and cloth (for sewing cooperatives), kitchen equipment and toys (for daycare centres) and medical equipment.

Do you have access to supplies and equipment are that not being used? Would your group, local or office be willing to make a donation to AMNLAE through the Boat Project? Please contact Women in Solidarity with Central America (WISCA) for more details: 961-8638 or 532-8584.

International Notes



GABRIELA: AN ADVANCE FOR THE FILIPINO WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

On March 10 and 11, 1984, a multi-sectoral convention of Filipino women was held in Manila; 500 women attended the General Assembly Binding Women for Reform, Integrity, Equality, Leadership and Action, or GABRIELA; the acronym was created to honour Maria Josefa Gabriela Silang, who led an army of 2000 rebels against 6000 Spanish in 1763 and was subsequently executed.

The objectives of the gathering, which was the high point of a ten-day celebration of IWD, were fourfold: to participate in the Decade celebration of International Women's Year; to articulate issues affecting the conditions of women in general and of the Filipino woman in particular; to draw the Filipino woman into the mainstream of national life and articulate her perception of her role in the present struggle in Philippine society; and to join forces among women themselves and with the rest of the nation in the struggle for freedom and genuine democracy.

Ten workshops addressed such issues as: the history of women's oppression; national issues; concepts of the women's liberation movement; the problems of tribal minorities; appropriate technology; prostitution and pornography; and legal rights affecting women. Participants resolved to undertake a wide range of activities through GABRIELA as a movement, under the broad categories of research, education, organization and mobilization. The establishment of the GABRIELA coalition is an important step in the process of consolidating the organized strength of Filipino women for political action for their own emancipation and the liberation of the Filipino nation.

--Adapted from the GABRIELA
Assembly Proceedings

MORE ON THE POLYTEX STRIKE

Women workers at Polytext Garments Ltd. in Sri Lanka are still holding on their demands. A meeting with management in the Labour Office in March was fruitless. Management's position was clear and simple: they wanted nothing less than "total surrender" from the women. Police have repeatedly refused permission for the workers to hold solidarity meetings, but at one meeting which did manage to happen, a petition of support signed by 14,000 people was presented. Women's organizations have initiated the sending of letters of protest to the Managing Director of Polytext, and the organization of a Flag Day to publicize the strike and its demands. It was also publicized at May Day rallies and celebrations.

Please write letters or cables of support for the Polytext workers to the Minister of Labour, Labour Secretariat, Colombo 05, Sri Lanka. (Other addresses can be found in the May issue of the newsletter). Financial support is also urgently needed; contributions may be sent to the Industrial Transport and General Workers Union, A/C 894T, Bank of Ceylon, Lake House Branch, Sri Lanka.

--adapted from the Asian Women Workers Newsletter



Reviews

NEW BOOKS NEW BOOKS NEW BOOKS NEW BOOKS
NEW BOOKS NEW BOOKS NEW BOOKS NEW

TALES I TELL MY MOTHER: A COLLECTION OF FEMINIST SHORT STORIES
by Zoe Fairbairns, Sarah Maitland, Valerie Miner, Michelle Roberts and Michelene Wandor. \$16.75 (hardcover)

GREENHAM COMMON: WOMEN AT THE WIRE
Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins, eds.
\$10.50

THE BURNTON WIDOWS--a very amusing lesbian mystery by Vicki McConnell.
Naid Press. \$10.50

YOURS IN STRUGGLE: THREE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES AGAINST RACISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM
Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt and Barbara Smith.

GATHERING GROUND: NEW WRITING & ART BY NORTHWEST WOMEN OF COLOUR
Jo Cochran, J.T. Stewart & Mayumi Tsutakawa. \$9.25

WOMEN AND REVOLUTION IN VIETNAM
Arlene Eisen. \$14.95

DIANE ARBUT: A BIOGRAPHY
Patricia Bosworth. \$24.50 (hardcover)

DARING TO DREAM: UTOPIAN STORIES BY UNITED STATES WOMEN-1836-1919
Carol Farley Kessler. \$12.50



A FEMINIST APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

A professional development workshop for nutritionists is hardly the place one expects to hear feminist analysis, so I was surprised to find that the keynote speaker at the workshop (held at Ryerson on June 30, just prior to the International Congress of Dietetics) was to be Barbara Rogers, British author of The Domestication of Women and 52%: Getting Women's Power into Politics.

The theme of the address was women's work in producing food: the need for an economic approach, "not", she said, "because economics has played a particularly valuable role in explaining the problems of food, still less in the study of how human beings live and work, but simply because of the vice-like grip which this subject has acquired on "development." Rogers described how economists working in development have built their ways of seeing and measuring things in such a way as to ignore or devalue the work of half the population: women. The subsistence economy in Third World countries depends primarily on women's labour and is therefore not considered significant by development planners and policy-makers, whereas in fact it is crucial to the current crisis of food production and distribution. She also dealt with how the imposition of western-based concepts of land tenure (i.e. land is owned by individual men as absolute property; there is no such thing as the right of usufruct--right to produce by virtue of having laboured on the land) has endangered the whole subsistence system.

Rogers then developed a method of quantifying the energy investment and expenditure of women in the process of food production, in an attempt to catch economists by the ear and tell them, "Look, women's lives and health do have value, even in your terms, if you will only pay attention." Since economists have always dealt only with the cash economy and taken the subsistence economy for granted, the latter faces collapse in

many areas, with the resulting scarcity of national food supplies, malnutrition and increased mortality rates, as well as increased dependency on the big food exporters, the most important by far being the U.S. She described a series of steps which would help confront the this crisis in food production, most of them hard political choices to do with land reform, decentralization and policy makers and the necessity for development planners to completely turn around their system of priorities and direct their intervention at "those who are most tied to subsistence and most desperately struggling to keep it going . . . Unless the policy is women and children first, the community as a whole will not benefit, nor will the subsistence economy, and ultimately it is the national economy that will indicate to the high-level planners that, once again, they have a well-meant policy that does not work."

I realize that this article has been a sort of summary and not at all a critical analysis; it's not that I found nothing to disagree with, or that it was crystal-clear to me at all times. But it was so refreshing to hear a feminist analysis of the value of women's work which really did deal in the "concrete" and not the "theretical"--after all, that's supposed to be our strength and it's still mighty hard to come by. I immediately went out and bought her book, The Domestication of Women: Discrimination in Developing Societies, which I think should be required reading for anyone involved in any way with development.

Rogers' more recent book, 52%: Getting Women's Power Into Politics, is about women organizing for political effectiveness in Britain; although the examples she cites are quite specific to the situation in the U.K., she includes rather succinct overviews of many of the issues feminists are discussing, from pornography to electoral politics, as well as practical suggestions about how to make "women's" issues everyone's issues.

-- Christina Mills

WOMEN WHO DO AND WOMEN WHO DON'T JOIN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Edited by Robyn Rowland
Available from the Women's Bookstore

This book promises to be very interesting: the description suggests it will look at why so many women, not only are not feminists, but in fact organize against the women's movement. It aims to achieve this by collecting submissions from a variety of women and using them as the main part of the book. Rowland provides some analysis and background information at the beginning and end of the book. It is an interview/testimonial type of book, except that it was conducted through correspondence, thus the testimonials lack somewhat in spontaneity. Nonetheless, this is by far the most interesting and compelling part of the book. The selection is mainly from Australia, though there is a spattering of entries from England, the United States and Canada; definitely limited to the English-speaking Western world.

There are some interesting facts that could have been drawn from the entries received, yet I was very disappointed to discover very little



substantial analysis by Rowland. Most glaring is a lack of class analysis and an analysis of racism, even though the entries suggest there is a very real issue of race dividing Australian women. The majority of the respondents were middle-class, something which I think should affect one's analysis of their responses. For example, of the only six working-class women who responded, two were anti-feminist, one on the basis of racism within the movement, and the other, an ex-communist, on the basis of having gone back to the R.C. faith and becoming pro-life.

Of the remaining four working-class women who support the movement, three are radical feminists, and two of these are lesbians. They are the only two lesbians in the whole book. Of the eighteen women who are from middle-class backgrounds, eight are anti-feminists. These women are well-off, white women who can afford to stay home to take care of their kids and cater to their husbands. Not surprisingly, they argue for this as the ideal situation for women, they are God-fearing and pro-life. In the light of this, it is hard to stomach Rowland's analysis about women needing to learn to reach each other better. Frankly, I don't care to worry about these anti-feminists. It is not in most women's interests to unite with these women.

Far more interesting is what is contained within the fourteen entries that support the women's movement, and those that do not support it on the basis of racism. Many who supported the movement also had serious reservations. One concern comes from left-wing women and women who were politically active before the so-called "second wave" of the women's movement, who take issue with the preponderance of anti-male/anti-left portrayals of the movement. Another problem that emerges is the gap between "established feminists" and young women or new women coming into the movement.

But clearly the most painful division, and one Rowland does not deal

with at all adequately, is over the issue of racism. Although the two women who spoke most passionately about the racism they experience among white feminists were consequently anti-women's movement, there were others in the movement who also shared their concern. Yet it does not appear to have penetrated through to Rowland. At the beginning of the book she makes the following statement: "The reluctance of minority women to be involved in the movement can originate from: a fear of dividing their own minority community; a lack of knowledge about feminism and its aims; the strong relationship of some minority groups within the church; and, among black women, the conviction that black men have been de-masculinized by white culture and it is they who need liberation." She omits the most relevant concern, and one that she could not have missed in the entries, and that is: the racism experienced by minority women trying to work with white women. Furthermore, it is certainly race-blind to cite a lack of knowledge of "feminism and its aims". Black women have been organizing around their issues for years; who defines "feminism" for Rowland? Insinuations about religious, reactionary influences on minority women hold no more water than saying religious, reactionary influences hold back America women, i.e., it is neither here nor there.

It is in statements such as these that Rowland gives away her bias. She approaches the entire study from a pre-defined "feminism" which holds that all women can unite and work together, a feminism limited to the English-speaking Western world, with the underlying assumption that minority and working class women should leave behind their experience and cross over to join the white women's movement as so defined.

-- Marie Lorenzo



Toronto Bulletin Board

- September 17 Toronto Action for Chile benefit at the Rivoli featuring Faith Nolan, Naked Word and others \$5 in advance, \$6 at the door
- 21 Take Back the Night rally and march, 7 o'clock sharp at 519 Church St. Park. Info. and childcare, call 964-7477
- 22 Take Back the Night celebration dance at the Party Centre; benefit for the Rape Crisis Centre.
- October 19 Vancouver poets, Betsy Warland and Daohne Marlatt, booklaunching at Toronto Women's Bookstore. 7:30 PM, refreshments served
- 20 Reading performance by Warland and Marlatt, A Space, 204 Spadina Ave., 8:00 PM.
- Peace Petition Caravan
Caravan Campaign March
- 21 Workshop with Warland and Marlatt, for 15 women, writers and visual artists; for more information call Ellie Wright at the Women's Bookstore, 922-1417.
- 27 Dale Spender, British feminist, will be speaking at the Faculty Lounge, 140 St. George St., sponsored by the Women's Bookstore and Resources for Feminist Research, Oxford University Press. For info., 922-8744. 8 P.M. Admission: \$3.

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.

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To receive the newsletter, or to send us your suggestions and ideas, write to the IWDC Newsletter Committee, 386 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ont. M5S 1X4.



- November 15 Rainbow-Women: a multi-cultural women's art festival. Harbourfront. (to be confirmed). For more info. contact Marie, 532-8584.
- 16 Angela Davis feature speaker at opening of African National Congress Women's Section Conference in Toronto.
- 16,17,18 ANC Women's Section Conference, OISE, 252 Bloor St. W.