

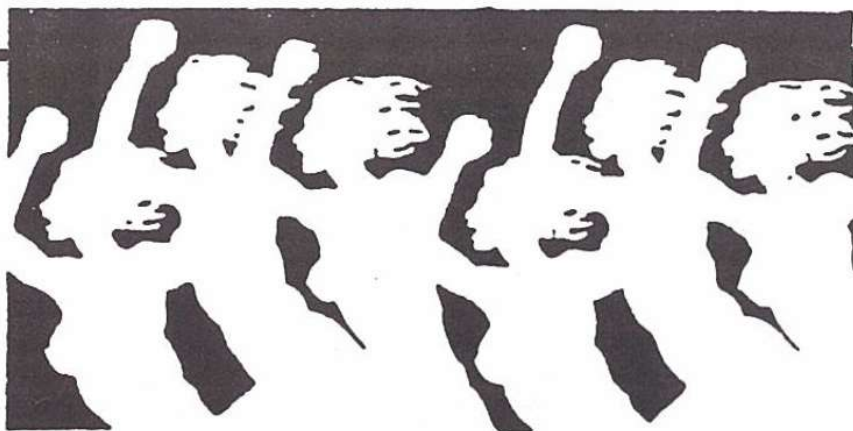
# International/ Women's Day Committee news/letter

FEBRUARY  
1985



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## Editorial

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Since last spring the International Women's Day Committee has been going through an internal process of evaluation and discussion. As a result of these discussions we agreed: that IWDC would continue as an activist group committed to building a socialist-feminist politic and practice; that we are committed to facilitating the development of the socialist-feminist current in the women's movement; that we take special care to broaden skills and collective leadership within the group, with particular emphasis on the integration of newer members.

To implement these objectives we took a number of political and organizational decisions related to our direction and structure. We felt that we had to be quite clear as to what steps should be taken to work toward our goals. As we had learned in the past, a group may come to certain conclusions, but it is a question of how effectively they are acted on. In light of this we made a priority of integrating discussion and analysis into our work in a more regular manner. This has helped us to develop our analysis, and do our work in a more thoughtful, efficient and involving manner. We also felt that we needed to be clearer about our political activities, why we chose them, what resources they require what we hope to achieve, and how they fit into our socialist-feminist perspective. As a group we decided to stop taking a reactive approach and to begin again to take political initiatives. Within this we felt that we wanted to promote political discussion in the broader community, particularly among socialist-feminists.

In terms of our process and structures it was decided that we would do more work as a whole, the newsletter being an example. We are taking care in all areas to involve newer members, consciously developing skills, actively building a more collective leadership, clarifying expectations of membership including accountability, financial support, and political responsibility. The changes in our internal educationals reflect our new approach. We have used the preparation as the

presentations as part of the educative process. Teams of newer and older members work on topics, and have developed new (for us) ways of presenting. For example in one, a number of skits were developed outlining different political situations and how feminists from different currents might respond. The entire group was involved in the final skit taking part in a role-played "strategy meeting." It provided a very concrete and involving way of learning and strategizing for all of us.

Changes always take time to show their results, but as a group we feel that we have turned an important corner. We are beginning to regain our sense of dynamism and purpose. The very process that we have been through, hard as it has been at times, has collectively strengthened us. Through the fall we have been active, but each task or event has been taken up because it fits our objectives, and we had the resources to do it. We have maintained our participation in the abortion and peace movements, feeling that our socialist-feminist perspective is important in both. We had a series of internal educationals, and took the initiative to plan discussions for the socialist-feminist community. We organized a steering committee for the preplanning of the March 8th Coalition, to broaden the participation and relinquish our primary role. We held a public meeting about the British strike and with others organized a meeting with Tony Benn.

We've been actively involved in strike support, and joined with other feminist groups to discuss how best to raise women's issues in the coming provincial election. Because all of our members have taken up responsibilities been able to thoughtfully, and in most instances successfully, carry out our work.

Obviously, more discussion, evaluation and change will take place but, new and old, we feel that progress has been made. The process has been worth the time and energy we have all contributed. We don't have all the answers. We don't feel complacent and self-satisfied. But we feel clearer about our direction and purpose. We would like to thank everyone who has offered us encouragement through this process

## Anti-Intervention Success

by Anne Brunelle

Over 130 activists met in Toronto on December 8 to found the Toronto Anti-Intervention Coalition (TAIC)

The turnout exceeded all expectations. Fifty solidarity, anti-war, church, union and community organizations were represented, and laid the basis for an extensive, multi-faceted campaign against United States as military and economic intervention, and Canadian complicity, in Central America and the Caribbean.

The group representatives and numerous unaffiliated activists present, voted enthusiastically to build a broad, democratic, mass-action oriented coalition.

Despite the fact that it was a Toronto-based conference, participants came from Montreal, Ottawa, Hamilton, Guelph, and other centres across southern Ontario. A representative of the U.S. anti-intervention movement (National Emergency Conference) brought greetings to the gathering.

## Immigrant Women Organize

Women Working with Immigrant Women (WWIW) has decided to take a more significant role in the organizing for International Women's Day. Although the number of immigrant and minority women involved in the organizing has increased over the years, most are activists within their communities. WWIW would like to see women who aren't normally reached be involved. It has formed a committee working in conjunction with the March 8th Coalition, and is planning a cultural-political evening to be held on Wednesday March 6th. This evening, featuring performers from different backgrounds, will be widely publicized through local "ethnic" organizations. This event will help to build for the rally and demo on March 9, as well as further the understanding between women of different communities.

In addition to demanding the U.S. get out of Central America and the Caribbean, the coalition calls for an end to Canadian weapons testing and production for the U.S. military, and the diversion of funds from military spending to the creations of the jobs and social services to meet human needs.

The major action planned by TAIC is a "Week Against Intervention", culminating in a mass demonstration to be held in Toronto on April 20, 1985. The date was chosen to coincide with plans for mass protests across the U.S. A non-exclusive, but representative 30-member Continuations Committee was ratified by the conference and mandated to issue a call to action for April 20 to all anti-intervention groups across English Canada and Quebec.

For further information call: 535 - 8779.



## Women Quiz Parties

On December 12, representatives of 7 women's organizations held a public questioning of the three provincial caucuses on women's issues. Forty groups throughout the province supported the action, and representatives came from as far away as Sudbury. The steering committee included IWDC, NAC, the YWCA, and others. After much discussion it was decided that activists in each area would ask questions on: legalization of abortion clinics, equal pay for work of equal value, mandatory affirmative action, free universal daycare, violence against women and other issues. The media coverage was not as broad as had been hoped, but grouping is continuing to meet and intends to work to make women's issues as major issue in the upcoming provincial election.

## And the Fight Goes On

by Linda Gardner

On Monday December 10, 1984, the Morgentaler Clinic on Harbord Street re-opened after an Ontario jury acquitted Drs. Morgentaler, Scott and Smoling of conspiracy to procure a miscarriage. This verdict was a clear message to the federal and provincial governments that Section 251 of the Criminal Code (the federal abortion law) was unjust and unenforceable. In response, the federal Conservatives have stated that they have no intention of revising the current law, while Ontario Attorney-General Roy McMurtry challenged the jury system itself by launching an appeal of the verdict. Such an appeal is not allowed in either the United States or Great Britain where juries represent a legitimate avenue for citizens to challenge the law. The appeal process has left an ambiguous situation. McMurtry stated that no further charges would be proceeded with until the appeal was resolved. After a week and a half of operation, the clinic was temporarily closed when the police arrested Drs. Morgentaler and Scott again on the same conspiracy charges. The doctors have appeared in court twice now to have the trial date set. They want the trial as soon as possible. However, the Crown is arguing for delay pending the appeal. The clinic opened again on January 7.

### At the Clinic

Since re-opening in December, the clinic phones have been constantly busy with women booking appointments. The majority of women are from the Toronto area. However, many are coming from other Ontario localities as well as other provinces. This speaks to the obvious dilemma women face under the current law: they require abortions but lack adequate access to safe medical procedures.

Police presence at the clinic this time is much more obvious than in 1983. Part of this is because of the many bomb threats the clinic has received and the disruption tactics of the anti-choice pickets. However, they are also there to gather evidence against the clinic, and sit blatantly across the street filming everyone entering and leaving the premises. They are following and stopping women who leave the clinic, asking if they need to go to the hospital and if they will talk to them. This kind of harassment is totally unnecessary. The doctors have admitted over and over again that they are performing

abortions, it is obvious that the police are not doing this out of concern for the women's health. Initially women were being stopped only a couple of blocks from the clinic, now it appears the police are following them all the way home. One patient, who lives almost a 2-hour drive away from the clinic reported back that she had been followed to her home.

There is also an organized anti-choice presence outside the clinic this time. A small number (anywhere from a half dozen to thirty people) are present on a daily basis to picket, chant and harass passersby and women coming to the clinic. They employ a number of techniques: showing pictures of fetuses; playing tapes which detail fetal development; yelling comments such as "baby killers", "execute Morgentaler", "death to Morgentaler" (rather ironic given their self-chosen "pro-life" characterization); and blocking the steps to the clinic. A number have been arrested by the police for trespassing. They have also picketed a safe house where women meet escorts and their spokespeople (who on the one hand maintain there are no abortions occurring at the clinic and yet continue to picket) and say that they are booking phony appointments. None of these tactics have prevented or deterred women from coming to the clinic.



### O.C.A.C. Activity

The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (O.C.A.C.) is active in several different directions. At the political level, we continue to press the provincial government to drop the charges against the doctors, stop police harassment of the clinic and legalize free-standing abortion clinics. To this end, we have enlisted the support of other groups. Thus, major union



organizations have publicly demanded that the Ontario government stop the legal harassment of the doctors. A second thrust of our political pressure is on the federal government to repeal the abortion law. This demand has been taken up by a wide range of other pro-choice organizations. OCAC and the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) have organized national speaking tour by Dr. Morgentaler and choice activists to mobilize support and interest in key cities and to hold strategy discussions with activists there.

A further critical facet of the struggle is financial, meeting the enormous legal expenses entailed by the continuing legal battles. A great deal of money has been raised by the Toronto-based Issue is Choice group of professional and business women for the Pro-Choice Defence Fund. They and CARAL have placed fund appeal ads in major newspapers. Dr. Morgentaler also placed a personal appeal in a Montreal newspaper (not a bad tactic as it became a major new item across the country and thus acted as free publicity for the fund). The response to all of this has been strong and steady - a further indication of the broad support. In addition, many people have been sending donations to OCAC and CARAL and thousands of dollars have been dropped off by people at the clinic.

At a more concrete level, OCAC has initiated an escort service designed to provide support for women who have made the decision to have an abortion by escorting them to and from the clinic. It operates entirely by volunteers and fits squarely within the feminist tradition of self-help. The hundred or so women who participate as escorts have committed themselves to helping patients deal with harassment from picketers and police.

Many pro-choice supporters coming by the clinic when it opened in December expressed the desire to respond to the anti-choice picketing and threats of a police raid in a more public way. In response, OCAC called an emergency meeting for supporters to discuss strategy. This was very successful. It was attended by 80-100 people who criticized OCAC for accepting the inevitability of a raid by planning a post-raid demonstration. A small group followed through with the spirit of the meeting and organized a demonstration at the Attorney-General's office. On one day's

notice over 200 supporters pressured McMurtry not to raid the clinic. Others have been involved in developing a major "Stand Up and be counted" public relations campaign to mobilize public support.

The police, of course, did arrest the doctors, but the clinic remains open. In all of these areas, the intensity and scope of OCAC's work has increased dramatically. At the same time (and luckily for the exhausted old members) the coalition is growing as we enter this critical stage of the struggle. New members with lots of enthusiasm and energy serve to revitalize us. It is a critical test of our political experience to effectively involve everyone and broaden our base of activists. This is particularly important now because the current situation is a real watershed; we face a significant opportunity to advance the choice movement if we can seize it.

#### Changed Political Situation

The jury acquittal and the clinic re-opening have created qualitative changes in the political situation and our prospects. The long drawn out judicial battle had served to demobilize the movement. But this has changed dramatically. The acquittal was definite victory for the women's movement. It generated spontaneous celebration, renewed energy and revitalized commitment. It proved once again that the current law was unenforceable and that clinics were a legitimate alternative. When this verdict was greeted with widespread public applause and editorials in major newspapers called for the law to be changed, it became far easier to gain broader political support. Groups such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and the New Democratic Party now felt able to speak out prominently in support of the legislation of free-standing clinics and the Morgentaler clinic and to press for changes in the law.

The clinic itself has proven to be a major focal point for struggle. It is a symbol of our determination and functions both to demonstrate the desperate need for its services as well as to attract people to the movement. Its re-opening has raised the stakes and put the state in a real quandary. On the one hand, the acquittal shows that the existing law can't be enforced. But at the same time, the

## **Socialist Feminists Discuss**

by Carolyn Egan

IWDC organized two discussions for socialist feminists in the fall, to respond to a long-felt need for informal dialogue. We chose the topics of (1) liberal feminism and the women's movement, and (2) pornography.

Within IWDC, preparation was done in small committees composed of newer and older members. We had discussions as a group on both topics to allow everyone to feel familiar with the material, and to allow input on how best to structure the discussion.

The first one, on liberal feminism, began with a presentation by Linda Gardner outlining the differences between liberal and socialist feminism, and how this shows itself in practice. She also outlined the current political situation in the women's movement, and how our issues are being mainstreamed and coopted. She spoke of the need for socialist feminists to strategize together in order to have greater impact.

Catherine Glen and Andrea Knight then presented a skit which involved everyone. Cards were given out each with the name of a women's organization, each person putting forward what she felt to be that group's perspective. There was mixed reaction but most people enjoyed it, and it succeeded in involving almost everyone in the discussion. We then had a dialogue on the problems we have both in bringing our perspective to the majority of women and in building support for it. Many felt that we should take a larger role in mainstream politics, such as greater visibility in the electoral process and a higher profile in national women's organizations. Others felt we should put more emphasis on outreach to women not yet touched by women's movement.

The second workshop dealt with pornography and began with a presentation by Mariana Valverde. She said that the issues of pornography and violence have become isolated from other women's issues, notable sexual liberation. She spoke of what constitutes pornography, and the need to look at the social relations behind the representations. The need for feminists to begin talking again about sexuality and

eroticism was stressed. In the discussion that followed, it was felt that socialist feminists should take this issue up more significantly.

## **Salvadorean Women**

AMES, the Association of Salvadorean Women, is looking for various types of assistance for its Children to Children Aid Campaign, which will provide material, educational and social aid to Salvadorean children. AMES is looking for organizations which will give their names as sponsors, for financial contributions from individuals or groups, and for organizing assistance especially in initiating and running fundraisers and in distributing informational material. Please write: AMES, C.P. 85, Succ. C, Montreal, H2L 4J7.



## **Wanted: Health Activists**

Longtime union activist Stan Grey contacted IWDC and asked if we could help with an issue that has arisen from the Hamilton Workers' Occupational Safety Centre. Since the centre has opened it has been flooded with requests for a assistance; as well as acting as advocate for individual workers, the centre also wants to organize political pressure on behalf of rank-and-file activists and health and safety committees.

The centre has had many contacts with women faced with reproductive hazards during pregnancy. The centre sees this as concern that is central to the struggle for reproductive rights as well as workers' rights. It is working with local union women's committees, but a request is being made for the involvement of any women with a history in the women's health movement would be familiar with the health care system and the problems of dealing with institutions. Anyone interested in helping, please contact Carolyn Egan, 789-4541.

# Making Women's Pictures

Marusia Bociurkiw

Last summer I witnessed a rather disturbing media event for which years of tv-gazing had left me unprepared: a 1/2 hour tour of the Danforth by Brian and Mila Mulroney. I was there with my partner Ruth to get some footage of the "electoral process" for our video-tape on women's resistance to militarism ("Stronger Than Before"). The drizzling rain and a too-small umbrella made us decide to simply get some long-shots of the crowd, with its counter-demonstrators from the Peace Petition Caravan Campaign, and leave. However, the arrival of the Mulroneys and the confrontations between peace protestors and Conservative supporters succeeded in drawing us into the crowd, camera, deck, cables, umbrella and all.

What was most interesting about this 'media event' was how little of it we saw. The Mulroneys were completely surrounded by a protective armour of cameramen and bodyguards. From within that charmed circle, Brian and Mila mimed accessibility: they smiled, nodded, gestured, and shook a few hands. The cameras recorded what would later - on the news - appear to be a scene of openness and spontaneity. Ruth and I would never have so much as glimpsed Mulroney had our camera not allowed us to push our way into the front of the circle of bodyguards. Mulroney immediately shook hands with someone for the benefit of our camera, and we later used his image in our videotape. We superimposed the voices of women protestors ("Mulroney! Baloney! With women's rights you're phoney!") over his face grinning obsequiously into our camera.

When we are out on a 'shoot', passersby invariably ask us the same questions: what tv station are we working for, and when can they expect to see themselves on the evening news? If we attempt to explain that we are a collective of independent (meaning non-commercial) video producers (Emma Productions), making a documentary which will be shown not on prime-time tv, but community centres, artist-run spaces, and union halls, they are usually bewildered. If we told them that we are not making money

for doing this (and more often than not are putting out our own money!), but are doing it because we want to change the way people look at certain issues, they are aghast.

Our position - economically and socially - is indeed tenuous. The average yearly income for an artist in Canada is \$8,000. Our major source of grant-funding and subsidy - Canada Council - was cut back last month by an unprecedented 25%, while the total federal government expenditure on cultural production remains less than 1%.

Those of us that are politically engaged are working against a monolith - a sophisticated communications system (tv, film, advertising) that assails us with some 9,000 images per day, and works hand in hand with other forms of ideological production to produce a cohesive system of beliefs to which most people subscribe. As feminist media producers, we work in uneasy relation to this monolith, constantly being compared to it, constantly reacting to it, trying to deconstruct, or appropriate, or merely weaken its enormous power.

I am: an artist, a video producer, a socialist-feminist, an activist, a cultural worker, an unemployed person....depending on my environment, I can assume any one of these titles. The job of "artist" does not even exist as far as the Manpower offices are concerned. I think I am listed somewhere as a social worker. As an activist, I find I spend a lot of time explaining to others what I do. Just as the artworld is largely unaccustomed to grassroots political activism, grassroots political groups are largely unaccustomed to (and often made uneasy by) artists.

Feminism has made these gaps a little easier to bridge; as Lucy Lippard has said, "one of the feminist goals is to re-integrate the esthetic self and the social self, and make it possible for both to function without guilt or frustration."

Working in social documentary video, and working collectively with women has helped myself and other feminist artists to foster this integration (though not - yet - without frustration!). Working this way has helped

us to transcend the academic training that encouraged us to ignore the parameters of class division, corporate interest, and government-as-patron within which mainstream art operates. Groups such as Women's Media Alliance here in Toronto, Women In Focus and Amelia Productions in Vancouver, and Video Femmes in Quebec have been precedents and role-models for Emma Productions, a non-profit, collectively organized feminist production company, which I and two other women (Ruth Bishop and Harriet Hume) formed last year. We exist in response to what we feel to be a need for cultural activists and community/labour organizations to work together, to produce educational and oppositional media oriented towards social change. We want, in other words, to get rid of the artist/activist split, to explore where the needs and skills of artist and activist intersect.



Our involvement in feminism and the peace movement resulted in "Stronger Than Before". I was involved in the preparation for civil disobedience at Litton Systems Canada in November 1983. One of the tasks of a c.d. action is that of support: helping the person doing c.d. over the fence; getting her legal help; keeping an eye on the police. Ruth and I agreed to do "video support": videotaping interactions between protestors and police, in case of any police violence, and for possible use in the legal defence. The resulting footage was so interesting that we decide to make a video documentary, one which we hope will broaden the discourse regarding feminism, militarism, and peace, which we felt had become too polarized, too reliant on moralism and essentialism.

It is fairly easy to define how feminism informs or decides the content of a videotape: there is a myriad of issues that would benefit from being given wider visibility and analysis through film or video, from choice, to topics of sexual representation, pornography, and censorship. In beginning to map out a script for our current production, "Making Change" (a tape about the Eaton's union drive and strike), it is clear to us that

the issues regarding organizing the retail sector, which employs most women, and the general issues of women in the workplace, are priorities. A working relationship and methodology that adheres to feminist principles is somewhat more difficult to structure. We know what we don't want: I, for instance, have worked in places like CBC (as a researcher who longed to do production) where the cameramen's territory was clearly demarcated by wall-to-ceiling porn.

Technical machismo is rampant in the film/video world. A woman shouldering a camera is, in that context, a rare and touching sight; technical information is hoarded, or made unnecessarily complicated; video remains a 'non-traditional' occupation. And so, when we go on a shoot, we take turns being on camera or sound, and try to teach one another what we know. Our production crews are women-only (reversing the usual state of things in media production), and we often invite less experienced women on our crews so that they can learn in a supportive atmosphere. We are trying to acknowledge in practise what we know in theory: that if women are oppressed not only through actions, but also through the workings of language and image in our culture, then that language must be learnt and de-coded, and, finally, re-structured. Media skills are essential to facilitating that process.



Where all this gets complicated is in our dealings with the rest of the world. Should we tone down our feminism and/or obliterate it completely when dealing with union management or with government funding

agencies? And are we any less feminist for wanting to earn a living wage, thus limiting the amount of time and energy we can donate - for free - to the women's community? Even within the left there is often a lack of validation for the importance of cultural work, and therefore of the need to support it - not just morally, but financially as well. There are too many instances of video

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## Singing for Strikers

Nancy Farmer

On November 29th, 1984, a benefit concert was held at OISE in support of the striking Metro Library Workers. On October 1st, 400 Library workers, members of CUPE, had walked off the job protesting massive takeaways. After months of fruitless negotiations, the best management was able to serve up was 104 concessions. These concessions would have eroded away the guts of their collective agreement. Several weeks into the strike, a committee was struck, consisting of members from the Ontario Federation of Labour's Women's Committee and the International Women's Day Committee, along with several striking Library Assistants and Librarians to organize the benefit.

The entertainment was provided by Faith Nolan and Friends, the Red Berets, Heather Chetwynd, Arlene Mantle and Union Label. The musicians each performing in their own particular style gave the audience a blend of women's struggles, Central American, and Union songs. The audience reaction was extremely enthusiastic.

Master of Ceremonies Judy D'arcy called on several speakers during the evening to give messages of solidarity or insight on how the strike was won. Sue Genge, the president of CUPE local 1582, detailed the progress made during two months of heavy-duty bargaining. The members clearly emerged the victors. The 104 concessions were not only wiped from the table, leaving the collective agreement intact, but important gains were accomplished. The union was able to negotiate a 5% increase for 1984, adoption leave, improvements for parttime workers, transfers from the VDT's if pregnant or for medical reasons, and a maximum of five hours work a day with 10-minute breaks every hour, on the VDTs. It is important to note what could have happened if management had been allowed to tamper with seniority rights and job posting clauses.

Ken Morton, President of the maintenance workers' local, explained that this was the first time all three locals had struck together. This gave them much better leverage in bargaining. Instead of battling one another, the library board was forced to face the combined strength of all the members.

This was a strike that could've lost! It was organized to win! Deirdre Gallagher, the keynote speaker, drove this point home. Media coverage was excellent. By organizing weekly rallies, complete with bookworms, contracts being chewed to pieces and Toronto's singing sensation, the Pickettes, this was a strike even the Star and the Globe could not ignore. Articles were also written in every left publication in the city such as Our Times, Cayenne, the Clarion and our own newsletter. The members were kept informed through daily newsletters. Many of the members worked on one of the many committees, such as the Demo committee, Fundraising and even a fun and games committee which served to boost morale. As Gallagher pointed out it was a model to follow and had all the elements of success.



It's important that we look back and take note of the breakthroughs this union achieved. They proved to be real leaders setting some valuable precedents. Child care expenses were absorbed by the local for the duration of the strike. A loan of \$100,000 was secured from the Bread and Roses Credit Union, in order to increase strike pay by \$40.00 a week. This was unheard of before in the labour movement. It was obvious to the Library Board that the members were digging in deep preparing for a long fight and it was forced to concede.

It became clear that the Metro Library strike was a test case. The Municipal and Provincial governments, both equally guilty, wanted to see how far back they could push. If they were able to break locals with such a militant reputation others would crumble more easily. One week after this strike was settled, the North York Library workers reached a strike-free amiable agreement that was satisfactory to its members. I heard somewhere that our friends at the Metro Library were going to send this group a bill!

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## Dear Eaton's.....

Felicia Houtman

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

A number of months ago, I decided to purchase a 9 x 12 rug for my livingroom. I had the option to purchase an item such as this from over a hundred stores in Toronto and vicinity. Because of the recent organizing of Eaton's- Scarborough Town Centre store - I made a special point to shop there. I was very pleased with the service received and the quality of the item purchased.

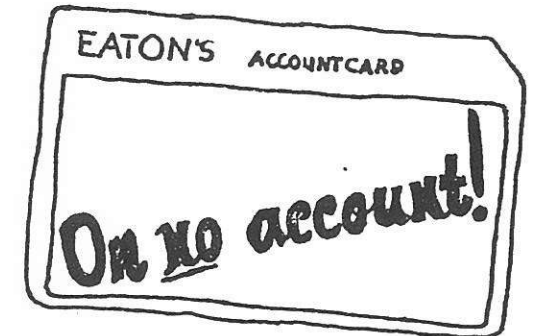
Now, because of the disrespectful and non-appreciative manner in which you treat your employees, many of whom are women and 75% being part time, paying them \$5.50-\$6.00 an hour, giving increases of up to only 4% and at times even reducing wages, I cannot encourage my friends to patronize Eaton's and even allow myself to shop in your stores. I will encourage all perspective customers not to shop at Eaton's.

Eaton's employees don't organize or go on strike lightly! Even with the deplorable wages paid, the issue to many of your employees isn't money! Workers want better job benefits and a seniority clause in their contract. They want to work, yet are forced to go on strike.

I have also been an employee of Eaton's - my first full-time and part-time jobs.

When I worked for Eaton's as a student, I was only allowed to wear navy or black. As I didn't have a wardrobe consisting of these colours I was forced to purchase these items; at \$40.00 a week, this was difficult. Yet I was allowed 5% over the regular employees' discount 15% (normally 10%), as these items were required for work.

Despite my initial dealings with Eaton's, I made the decision, while still in high school, to have a career in retailing. This decision was not made lightly - lengthy discussions with former graduates and my guidance teacher. I graduated from a professional school of retailing in Boston and I am sure you can understand, this was an expensive proposition for my parents and myself.



Upon graduation I started to work at Eaton's. After years of training, studying, assignments, student placements, I was horrified to discover that developing a career in retailing at Eaton's meant working in a tiny, hot, overcrowded office in a warehouse where rats were often seen running around!

With a certificate in Merchandising and Retailing, I felt that I would have the opportunity to utilize my specialized training which I had received but I was not allowed to utilize my newly learnt knowledge. Placed in a traditional female job at \$68.00 a week qualified me to be amongst the working poor in Toronto. After thousands of dollars being spent on my education!

It is a disgrace that Eaton's still treats their employees, many whom have over twenty-five years service, in such a shoddy fashion.

Eaton's, being such a large part of the Canadian fabric, being seen by thousands of people in Canada and throughout the world as Canadian as the Maple Leaf, sets a poor image of Canada to the rest of the world. That a country as rich as Canada and an employer as large and affluent as Eaton's would fail to negotiate a liveable wage and proper working conditions for its well-deserving employees is a disgrace.

Until this is done, I will refuse to shop at Eaton's and will encourage others to do the same.

Eaton's, you are a disgrace to Canada and a very poor corporate citizen.

An Eaton's tradition - "For over 100 years, we, as the employees of the T. Eaton Company have had no respect, no dignity, no security ...no rights"

So begins an information pamphlet from the striking Eaton's workers, members of the Retail Wholesale Department Store Union - out to break that tradition.

Eaton's is an established giant in the Canadian retail industry. It is also a cruel and efficient union buster. Notorious for its bad labour practices, Eaton's dismissed a group of ILGWU members in the '40's, who organized for better wages and it successfully broke the longest and most intensive organizing effort in Canadian labour history - the drive to unionize Eaton's between 1948-1952. In the spring of 1984 the RWDSU was successful in completing the task begun by the previous generation and unionized some 1,500 workers in six locations throughout southwestern Ontario.

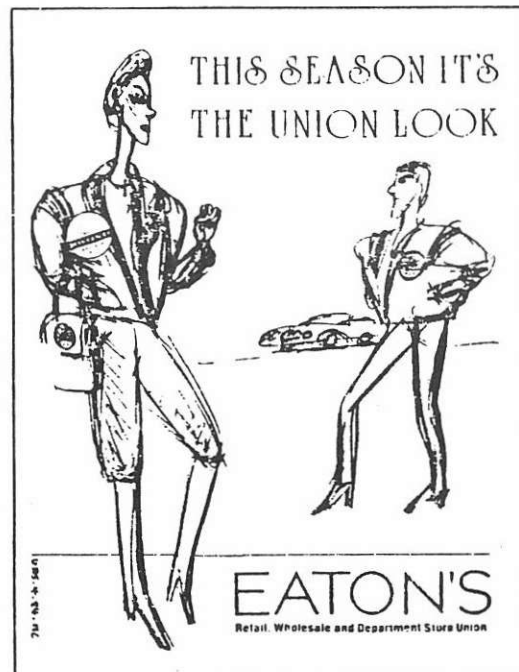
Since that time, efforts to negotiate a first collective agreement have failed. On November 30th the newly organized employees walked out on a legal strike over contract provisions considered standard fare in most collective agreements. The Eaton's company refuses to consider as part of the agreement present rights to bereavement leave, jury duty, statutory holidays, vacations, sick and welfare plans, pension plans, coffee breaks or lunch hours. Talks broke off for the first time in December after an offer from Eaton's was tabled. It contained no schemes of job classifications and no outline of wage scales. On the issue of seniority, considered key to the employees, the company refers instead to "continuous service". It expects to retain its almost total discretion on promotions and lay-offs. Presently, promotions are based on anything from an employee's skill or ability to whether she or he "in the company's discretion reflects the image and customer profile being attracted by the merchandise being sold." One employee was denied a promotion because in the company's discretion, she was 'too fat' to reflect the image they thought appropriate.

The union is proposing a system obliging Eaton's to "give consideration to the seniority of an employee for promotions within the bargaining unit, lay-off and recall from lay-off." A vice president of personnel for Eaton's conceded that some of

## Up From the Bargain Basement

what the union is seeking is standard contract language. Despite this, the union has just finished hearings with the Ontario Labour Relations Board after filing a complaint of bad-faith bargaining and negotiations are at a stand-still for a second time.

Support for the strike has been "overwhelming" and "tremendous" says Geri Sheedy, organizer with the RWDSU. "The strikers are both appreciative of and surprised with the response they've been getting from the labour and women's movement. When we first went out we felt a bit 'green'. We wanted to win for us - we now know the impact of this strike - we're the front runners for the whole Canadian retail industry and especially for Canadian women." (Eighty percent of the striking employees are women.) Eaton's management is also aware of the far reaching implications of this strike. A company lawyer is quoted as saying that "if Eaton's goes, then Simpsons and the Bay will be next..."



### WHAT WE CAN DO:

It is especially crucial that with the Christmas rush over that the support activities are re-generated. Strikers urge people to:

- continue the Boycott called by the CLC.
- leaflet inside and outside stores, talk to shoppers.
- organize shop-ins; occupying salespeople's time and then refusing to purchase goods because of the anti-labour practices.
- organize mess-ins; just before closing

## Shop-In Foils Eaton's

Jill Jones

In early December of 1984 a group of union women were meeting in a hotel in Brampton to discuss different strategies around Affirmative Action. Our hotel happened to be situated in a plaza where one of the striking Eaton's stores was located. During our stay at the hotel we had many chances to meet and talk with strikers, as they had a room in the same hotel. This room was their strike headquarters and a place they used to rest and regroup.

During our talks with the strikers, we all came to an understanding of the enormous battles these workers were facing. This particular store was located in a huge mall with a total of 11 entrances. Since strikers are not allowed to picket on mall property, they were restricted to picket at the entrances to the mall. There were just not enough strikers to picket all the entrances with any show of strength, so they were restricted in trying to picket at the main entrances. They also had to deal with the fact that some of the workers had returned to work, the majority of these workers being male. For all of the strikers, this was their first time on strike and the battle promised to be a long one.

We were a small group of women, here for a short time but we were very touched by the strength these workers were showing against all the odds they had to face. We wanted to

rearrange merchandise from department to department.

-send your Eaton's charge card (cut up) to RWDSU of the OFL and they'll send you a button!

I.W.D.C. is one of the groups sponsoring a benefit for January 25th. We are also a part of a new strike support coalition of women in trade unions and women's groups organizing a mass rally for FEBRUARY 2nd, at the Yonge-Eglinton store. We hope to have hundreds of supporters out and organizers are calling on people to be a part of - A NEW TRADITION AT EATON'S—DIGNITY AND RIGHTS FOR WORKING WOMEN.

by Catherine Glen

do something to show these brave strikers that the union movement was behind them. We had to do something besides helping them at the picket lines. Someone came up with the idea that we should do a "shop-in" at the Eaton's store. Most of us were not familiar with the concept of a shop-in, but when the idea was explained to us we knew this was the strategy of the movement.

On one snowy afternoon in Brampton, a group of about 20 women in four groups marched into the Eaton's store in search of some creative disruption. Our adventure started as soon as we walked in the store. We walked through the sports department picking up various articles to deposit in different departments along the way. That's how the girls department ended up with

sportswear and so on. All through the store, departments were being re-arranged, and we were doing it all free of charge.

Now as people were rearranging the store, other women were doing some serious shopping. Things such as:

- a winter wardrobe from the womenswear department, very neatly packaged.
- a set of wool sweaters that were so nice the buyer ordered the same one in various colours.
- 100.00 worth of small cosmetic items, all packaged individually.
- a man's suit with all the necessary accessories such as matching shirt, tie and socks, and this of course was gift wrapped.

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## Pornography: News From the Front

by Mariana Valverde

Just as the January blahs were threatening to engulf us, a very lively weekend of discussions on pornography, censorship and sexuality shook up Toronto's women's and progressive communities. The newly formed group Feminist Against Censorship brought New York feminist activist and anthropologist Carole Vance to speak at two public meetings, on January 11 and 12, at the same time that the pro-censorship Metro Taskforce on Public on Public Violence Against Women and Children sponsored a two-day conference on pornography.



I did not make it to the Metro Taskforce's conference, but I was told by a participant that although the tenor of the event was pro-censorship and only marginally feminist, there was a significant presence of anti-censorship and/or feminist sentiment, and so the conference did not — as had been expected — draft any resolutions. Susan Cole, a feminist antiporn writer, gave a keynote speech which was apparently well received by the audience of 100 or so; she also tried to get support for a proposed Toronto by-law along the lines of the American antiporn ordinances (more on them later). She said, however, that the right-wing women in the workshop were not at all pleased with her critique of current obscenity legislation. It thus remains to be seen whether the sexually and politically conservative women on the Taskforce will be able to maintain an alliance with women who also have a pro-censorship or pro-regulation position but who are considerably more radical.

The anti-censorship feminists, on the other hand, were extremely pleased with the results of our own weekend of activities. On Friday Jan. 11, an audience of over 300 people turned out to hear Carole Vance read from and discuss the book she has just edited, entitled Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality. This rather hefty volume, published by Routledge Kegan Paul and just released in Canada, contains many of the talks given at the notorious 1982 Barnard conference on sexuality. This conference, which Vance helped to coordinate, was subject to much harassment by both the college's administration and the New York chapter of Women Against Pornography (WAP). According to Vance, the WAP women tried to label the sexual practices of some of the conference speakers (e.g. lesbian s/m) as "patriarchal" and hence as unworthy of discussion. By setting themselves up as the only authority on feminism sexuality, and by interfering with funding, harassing the conference organizers, and other sectarian acts, they effectively cut off the discussion that the organizers were trying to promote, burying the very real issues and differences under a cloud of "moral panic" and moralistic feminism.



The book contains some theoretical studies, some historical pieces about the regulation of women's sexuality, and many poems and personal accounts. Some of the articles fall short of what I would look for in a socialist-feminist analysis, either because they fail to address the strategic

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## Not an Easy Choice

On December 11, the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics and the Women's Press cosponsored a forum on key issues within the choice movement. This discussion was organized in conjunction with the publication of Kathleen McDonnell's book Not an Easy Choice: A Feminist Re-examines Abortion by the Women's Press. The speakers were Kathleen, Theresa Dobko of OCAC and Vicky Wagner of the Toronto Midwives Collective. Margie Wolfe chaired.

Kathleen highlighted the central issues explored in her book. Her re-examination was not concerned with the question of strategy, but rather with the complex problems that she feels are not sufficiently acknowledged by the choice movement. One such issue was women's experience of abortion, especially feelings of guilt and ambivalence. Kathleen wondered whether feminists let women down by our failure to publicly validate these feelings.

She also urged a franker discussion of the question of the fetus, so crucial to anti-choice ideology, arguing that we must develop our own feminist morality in which compulsory pregnancy is seen as the real immorality. The notion of choice has served us well, but we must continue to develop creative ways of showing that women will have no real choices in our lives until the overall structure of social and economic inequality is changed. It was these issues, and others such as the implications of advances in reproductive technology, that Kathleen wanted the choice movement to move forward on.

Vicki Van Wagner spoke about the hesitation of many women to support the choice movement publicly. Not liking the limited choices before them and not seeing the links between their individual situations and that of others, some women can be reluctant to defend others' right to choose. She also wondered how resentment about the experience of—which can be very unpleasant within the existing medical system—could come to be directed at feminists.

However, political activists fighting to win unconditional access to abortion cannot



be expected at the same time to do all of the important support and counselling work. Other women must take on responsibility in these areas.

It is on the crucial issues of control of reproduction that the midwifery and pro-choice movements meet. This linkage is not automatic. Neither abortion nor midwifery is inherently feminist; there are countries in which these practices are widespread but operate under state or medical control. But the key goal of both movements must be to win control over all facets of reproduction for women.

Theresa Dobko wanted to put the issues raised by Kathleen's book in their wider political context. For example, in a society that denies women autonomy, it is not surprising that women can feel guilt when they take a self-actualizing decision. This is compounded by patriarchal values that value women primarily for their child-bearing capacity.

Similarly, there can be ambivalence not only around abortion but around many major life decisions. We must guard against these feelings being defined as clinical entities.

Kathleen's thoughtful criticism could be used to portray the choice movement as unconcerned with women's feelings, contemptuous of any consideration of the fetus as potential life, and narrowly single-issue. While activists do address many of the problems addressed in Not an Easy Choice, the complexity of our views does not often get filtered through the media. Instead, we are portrayed as one extreme of a contentious issue.

Theresa argued that unequal and deteriorating access to abortion is the central problem facing the choice movement.

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# Birthing: the Fight for Control

by Vicki Van Wagner

Although midwifery is a well respected profession throughout the world, midwives in North America have been persecuted since the late 1800's with the medicalization of female reproduction and the development of the "science" of obstetrics and gynecology. In Europe, midwives responded to this by organizing and educating themselves, and survived as part of the health care team. The midwives in North America however, found it impossible to defend their practice against the rise of the male experts. In Canada, midwifery was almost extinct. We are one of only nine countries in the World Health Organization, and the only industrial country, to have no provision for midwives in the health care system.

The safety and benefits of midwifery are all well documented in the medical literature, and yet the renewed interest in midwifery on this continent has not come from within the medical profession. The renaissance of what has been called "the new midwifery" has attracted international interest. The modern re-creation of this ancient profession provides a unique set of possibilities. European midwives work within long established traditions and hierarchies, and most are deeply entrenched in a maternity care system that is impersonal and technological. The formation of groups such as the Association of Radical Midwives in Britain reflect the same kinds of criticisms of childbirth that have arisen here. However, in North America the midwife herself has become the symbol of women helping women, of choice in reproductive care, and of a high quality of care and an appropriate use of medical technology.

Women have begun to realize that they are encouraged to enter the health care system through their reproductive organs, to use physicians more than men do, and to do this when they are well rather than merely when sick. Female biological life events: menarche, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause, had become a male medicine's territory, with consequences for women's sense of self and value. What is the ritual terror of women in almost every culture has been taken over by men.

The home had been the traditional area for female autonomy, and midwifery and women's control of childbirth were lost as birth was moved into the hospital. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg points out that where birth is handled by women, it is often a source of strength and pride.



The new homebirth movement felt that unlike the hospital reforms fought for by many childbirth education groups, they could really give women back their decision-making ability during childbirth. A birth attendant is on the patient's territory and under the lay observation when she attends homebirths. Conventional childbirth education often left women who had experienced obstetrical interference feeling as if they had failed, or that their bodies or minds just didn't work well, because they had a forceps or Caesarean-section delivery. Homebirth advocates pointed out that often these failures were doctor-caused, ie: iatrogenic. Although medicine is supposedly grounded in science, many medical practices have never been systematically examined or validated, especially in obstetrics. Homebirth researchers began to come up with arguments that showed hospital birth might not be so safe after all.

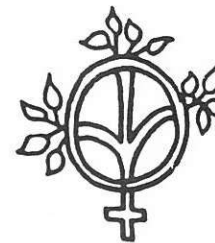
Obstetrics and gynecology have proven a fertile field for profit, for doctors, drug companies and manufacturers of medical technology. The more technology and the more interference the higher the cost and greater the profit. Homebirth and midwifery represent a 'low cost model' of

paraprofessional health care, where specialist attention is not necessary. (although some midwives claim that they are the only specialists in normal birth) Midwives have arisen as protectors of women from obstetrical interference and advocates of their rights to choose where and how to give birth, and to choose who will attend them.

In 1974 midwifery became a key feminist cause. In an arrest scenario very much like the Downer case, three key members of Santa Cruz Birth Centre were arrested and charged with practicing medicine without a licence, after one year of undercover surveillance. Linda Bennet and Donna Walker were arrested at a framed birth they came to attend, while Kate Bowland was arrested at the centre. Their trial was very important in unifying diverse groups of people who saw a common interest in homebirth and midwifery.

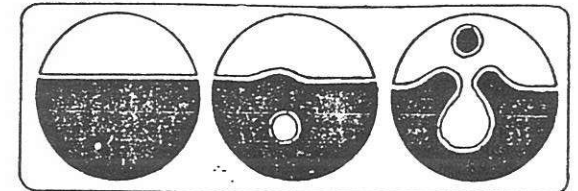
Although public support for midwifery has grown dramatically, and midwives are rarely found negligent, over the ten years since this case countless midwives have been harassed with legal charges. In Nova Scotia, in 1982, three midwives were arrested and charged with criminal negligence. The charges were dropped for lack of evidence, but only thousands of dollars and much personal pain later. Inquests are used to try and sway public opinion against midwifery, although both inquests involving midwives which have been held in Ontario, have recommended the recognition and formal training of midwives. In many states midwives have been harassed with injunctions forcing them to stop their practice.

In 1982, an inquest was held into the death of a baby born in a Kitchener hospital. It harshly scrutinized the role of the midwives who had monitored the mother at home and transported her in excellent condition to the hospital. In an effort to stand behind the midwives involved, the Ontario Association of Midwives, previously functioning as an educational and support



group, began to organize. Another small group of women, trained in other countries as midwives and nurses, had begun to discuss the possibility of recognition for their profession and formed the Ontario Association of Nurse Midwives, in 1974. Since the 1982 inquest there has been a remarkable development in both the politics and the practice of midwifery in Ontario.

As pressure from institutions on those physicians who cooperated with women who wanted the care of midwives, either in hospital or at home, increased, doctors stopped attending and/or backing up home births, and midwives became the only care givers willing to provide women with choices in childbirth.



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Legally, midwives currently practicing in Ontario could be charged with practicing medicine without a licence, or if a problem occurs at a birth, criminal negligence. Under the Medical Act the practice of medicine was defined as including both obstetrics and midwifery. In 1974 the Medical Act was reviewed and replaced by the Health Disciplines Act, which does not mention midwifery under the scope of medical practice. Internationally there is clearly a distinction between the definitions of midwifery practice and medicine.

In Ontario most practicing midwives do not fear this charge. It is unlikely it would be pressed since it would provide an opportunity to make this distinction clear. Charges of negligence or an inquest, however can be used to draw attention to a negative situation and reinforce the stereotype of midwives as inferior care givers. These threats have led the midwifery movement to be ready to defend its practice. The same strategies which are seen as protections for midwives practicing "illegally", are also essential in the work towards legislation which will bring legal recognition.

The first strategy is for the midwives currently practicing to provide a very high



standard of care, and to fully inform clients of their background and experience. If a legal investigation comes, we understand that our individual practice will become representative of midwifery in Canada.

We are also working to maintain our own regulation, standards of practice, complaints and discipline, and education. Basically, we want to regulate and educate ourselves, in accord with international standards, before another group is delegated to do so. It is difficult for us to walk the fine line of legitimizing our practice and structuring it, without being afraid of losing the flexibility which working as outlaws has allowed us. Many midwives are reluctant to do so, but most recognize that some kind of regulation is coming, and that nursing and medicine would only be too happy to control our profession. As well, under the current situation our practice is restricted: we can't give primary care in hospital, and access to our services is limited to those who are informed and able to pay on a fee service basis. In order to both preserve the focus on women's needs that our current practice rests on, and make it more available, we must become part of the health care system, but able to define our own standards. With governing procedures and training programs in place, our vision of midwifery care will be difficult for legislators to ignore. It is also an important legal protection for a midwife to be participating in this kind of professional regulation.

Another strategy has been to consolidate the public support for midwifery and to organize a lobby. The Midwifery Task Force, a group of parents, professionals and health activists, formed to act as a fundraising, public education and lobby group. The MTF acted as a catalyst in the alliance between the practicing and nurse-midwives. It co-sponsored a major conference attended by midwives from all across Canada and the U.S. called "Creating Unity," in November 1984.

Just after the MTF formed, we were invited to participate in the review of the health professions legislation commissioned by the Minister of Health. Both the Ontario Association of Midwives and the Ontario Nurse Midwives Association were approached to make submissions. We realized that to present one unified vision of midwifery care, as a coalition including the OMA, the ONMA and the MTF, would give us the most

powerful voice. We wrote two briefs, recommending the regulation of midwifery under the Health Disciplines Act.

There are many important reasons to continue our struggle to have our profession legally recognized; to protect ourselves from harassment, to make our care more accessible to all women, in all settings, and to ensure that we participate in and direct our own professionalization, rather than be legislated out of existence.

If we can preserve the focus of midwifery on a respect for the birth process, on women's right to choose, on the appropriate use of technology, and achieve formal recognition, midwifery will help change the face of the health care system.

## Name that group!!!

In 1978, some women in Toronto formed a coalition to organize the first International Women's Day. One of the many results of this exciting event was an interest in an annual coalition to plan and organize International Women's Day. This group came to be called the March 8th Coalition. At the same time, some of the women who participated in the coalition formed a group called the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC), which engages in political work throughout the year, and up until this year facilitated the initial organizing around International Women's Day. So began years of confusion among the names -International Women's Day, March 8th Coalition, and IWDC.

Each year the crescendo of confusion occurs as International Women's Day approaches. Without further ado, IWDC is announcing a "Name That Group" contest. Since some of you have participated in IWDC over the years, or have had some relationship to the group we would like your input. All serious and frivolous names will be considered. Since we realize that the most serious contest participants need some motivating force here it is. The winner of the "Name That Group" contest will receive an invitation to a name launching party, and a year's subscription to our newsletter. Enter once. Enter often. Deadline is International Women's Day, 1985. Just to be perfectly clear this contest refers to the name of IWDC only.

## Correct Crime

by Andrea Knight

The idea for this column arose out of two separate, but not unrelated, discoveries. The first was that there are amazingly large numbers of us in the socialist feminist community who are, and have been for many years, unabashed devourers of detective fiction. The second discovery was that this addiction is not confined to the Toronto socialist feminist community, but in fact, extends to similar communities all over the English-speaking world at least, if not to the international left as a whole. And along with this world-wide phenomenon, or in response to it, a new sub-genre of "politically correct" crime fiction has appeared, including a series from Pluto Press in England, and books such as *Murder in the Collective* by Barbara Wilson from Seal Press in the U.S. and even a social history of the crime story, entitled *Delightful Murder*, by no less than Ernest Mandel, "eminent Marxist and crime story buff". In this first column, then, I want to address the issue itself of "correct" crime, looking particularly at Mandel's book, and then in later columns we will review some of the novels themselves.



"In a way, we're a ménage à trois: you, me, and Agatha Christie."

For the most part, the "correct" crime that has been recently published varies from much of the traditional crime fiction in that crime and detection takes place within the progressive community, and therefore the issues that serve as either backdrop or motivating factors are ones of concern to

the socialist and/or feminist community (e.g. solidarity work, lesbian issues, collective politics). With a few exceptions, these new "correct" crime novels work very much like their classic counter-parts, except, of course, that we are the "good guys" for a change and the state is the "bad guy", and that instead of reading upper class intrigue and tough guy detectives we get to read about people like us, that is, people who take an hour going three months ahead in their books to find a time to meet and, having found a time, can't have the meeting because everybody concerned is either a current or an ex-lover.

But, the notion of "correct" crime does not refer to these recent novels set in the progressive community: there are those who find it necessary to justify the reading of mystery novels by reminding us of their radical origins or their links to the working class culture. One example of this is Ken Worpole's *Crime* column in the *New Statesman* (13 July 1984) in which he reminds us of both facts and notes that "crime fiction has clearly come into its own as a potentially respectable and serious form of writing." Yet in the same article Worpole also notes that "for far too long 'high' literature and 'popular' literature have been set up in opposition to each other." I'm not sure that the solution to that is to fall into the trap of trying to argue that detective fiction is "respectable", i.e. "correct". And justifying one's love for mystery novels by finding radical origins or working class connections tends to sound, at best, pompous. Hey, I just like to read mystery novels.

Some of the same dilemma comes through in Ernest Mandel's book *Delightful Murder*. He starts off his preface by saying "let me confess at the outset that I like to read crime stories". However, he does go on to say that he cannot just leave it at that, that he feels the need to explore and explain the enormous popularity of crime fiction, using the "classical dialectical method developed by Hegel and Marx". And then he wonders, "Well, am I no more than a victim of bourgeois ideology being sucked into the vortex along with millions of other

unfortunates, constructing an elaborate rationalization for simple idiosyncratic vice?" I really couldn't say (and neither can he).

The book starts off by describing the early antecedents of the modern detective story, starting with the popular literature about "good bandits", and goes on to recount the transitions from hero to villain back to hero, from the street to the drawing room and back to the streets, from organized crime to organized detection, from organized crime to state crime, and from crime to business back to crime. Interspersed through all of this is the development of detective fiction itself in relation to these changes.

When Mandel is explaining the historical development of crime in connection with the changes in capitalist production and changes in social relations, the book is interesting and insightful. However, the connections to the development of crime fiction has some serious gaps and Mandel often seems to be reaching when he tries to explain the popularity of detective fiction in different periods and among different groups of people. One example of this is when he states that "finally there is nothing so astonishing about the fact that literate people should be obsessed with mystery stories. After all, as Ernst Bloch once pointed out: isn't the whole of bourgeois society operating like a big mystery anyway?" Personally, that occurs to me every time I read a murder mystery.

One of the most serious gaps in the book is Mandel's complete failure to even mention the particular role that women writers have played in the development of detective fiction. He does list women such as Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, Joesphine Tey, Ruth Rendell and others, but never does he mention the fact that there have been so many women who were so important to the genre at the time when women authors were not being given much attention. Nor does he comment on the fact that women as a rule have tended to write quite different mysteries from men as a rule. There are, of course, exceptions, but women have been much more likely to write "whodunits" set in small villages and men have been much more likely to write thrillers and tough guy detective novels. This hardly surprising given the different social experiences of men and women, but this either seems to have

escaped Mandel's notice, or else he does not find it noteworthy. He merely notes that thrillers are not all that different from "whodunits" because the "who" is not really any more important than the "how", "when", "where" and "why". And although he is very thorough in describing the relationships of different forms of crime fiction to changing modes of production and changing social relations, he never comments on the fact that women have had, and continue to have, a very different relation to capitalist production than men.

Finally, Mandel concludes that it is not possible within the existing genre for crime fiction to ever become completely revolutionary because of its reliance on the individual "good" pitted against the individual "evil", and on the necessary solution of maintaining law and order, proving finally that crime (or rebellion) doesn't pay. He is probably "correct" in saying that, that the best we can hope for in "correct crime" is that the basic politics will be at least progressive, that the state is not always the "good guy", and that we see some alternative forms of living and working reflected in popular literature. Still, I was very relieved to read that "people don't read crime novels to improve their intellect or to contemplate the nature of society or the human condition, but simply for relaxation. It is thus perfectly possible for socially critical and even socially revolutionary readers to enjoy detective fiction without altering their views." Whew.

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The wordprocessing of this newsletter was done by the women of Rexdale MicroSkills Community Development Centre. Rexdale MicroSkills is an on-the-job training program for immigrant women in microfilm and automated office procedures.

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impasse of feminists who are unhappy with censorship but see no alternative to curb violent porn, or else because they fall back onto a very American libertarianism which posits that any desire is worthy of expression just because it's a desire. It is unfortunate that, because of the kind of sectarian attacks launched by WAP and similar groups, some feminists have gone to the other extreme and romanticized 'diviant' sexuality, for instance arguing (as Pat Califia had done) that those who are most persecuted or invisible are therefore the true vanguard of sexual liberation. I hope that in the Canadian context, where heated argument has not (yet) degenerated into open warfare, we will be able to avoid both extremes, moralism and sexual vanguardism.

Be that as it may, the book is a very important, though perhaps somewhat belated, contribution to what is the most lively debate in the women's movement today. Its best feature is that it begins to discuss publicly the kinds of sexual questions that lie under the surface of the porn debate. Pleasure and Danger, together with the similar anthology Powers of Desire (Monthly Review, 1983), provide Canadian feminists with a solid body of material, much of it grounded in socialist feminism, with which to learn and discuss.

On Saturday night, over 200 people crammed the Hart House debates room to participate in a discussion about antiporn legislation. Carole Vance gave a thorough and insightful critique of the Minneapolis-type legislation, which tries to avoid the problem of police abuse of censorship laws by making porn subject to civil, not criminal litigation. Her argument was too detailed and complex to be summarized here, but fortunately it is being published as an article in the anthology Women Against Censorship (to be released on February 15 by Douglas and McIntyre). After Vance had proved, with a wealth of evidence, that Minneapolis-type legislation was bound to have repressive and arbitrary effects, Susan Cole was given the floor for a rebuttal. She unfortunately confused the audience by saying that she supported the Minneapolis law but wanted to take out the 'trafficking in pornography' section of it, so that only acts of physical coercion of women directly caused by pornography would be potentially actionable. A feminist

lawyer later said that Cole's proposal was like taking theft out of the robbery section of the Criminal Code—it might make the law less repressive but it begs the whole point.

Cole's presentation was then followed by a spirited discussion, one of the most lively I've seen in feminist circles for a long time. A few women spoke to defend Cole's position, but the majority seemed to be (judging by the repeated applause and laughter) firmly in the anti-censorship camp. Some good comments were made by the women on the difficulties posed by feminist moralism in the sexual sphere (two sex workers spoke eloquently on this point); but unfortunately, there were few political directions for action that would tackle violence against women while also seeking to curtail the repressive power of the state. The Badgley Commission on Sexual Offences Against Children, for instance, has made a number of recommendations that would ostensibly protect children from lecherous adults but that would in fact criminalize almost all sexual activity by adolescents, even sex with other adolescents. And the Fraser Report on Prostitution and Pornography, due to appear any day, will probably also make repressive recommendations on both areas. In the opinion of several of the socialist feminist activists present at the public meeting, we must make more of an attempt not just to criticize antiporn legislation but to suggest positive avenues for people to mobilize their anger and energy. The anti-censorship position is now well established, at least within the feminist and progressive communities: we now need to define some positive strategies.



NOTE: As of February 15, look for Women Against Censorship, and anthology edited by Varda Burstyn and containing articles by Carole Vance, Lisa Steele, Mariana Valverde and Lorna Weir, Sara Diamond, June Callwood, Lynn King and others.



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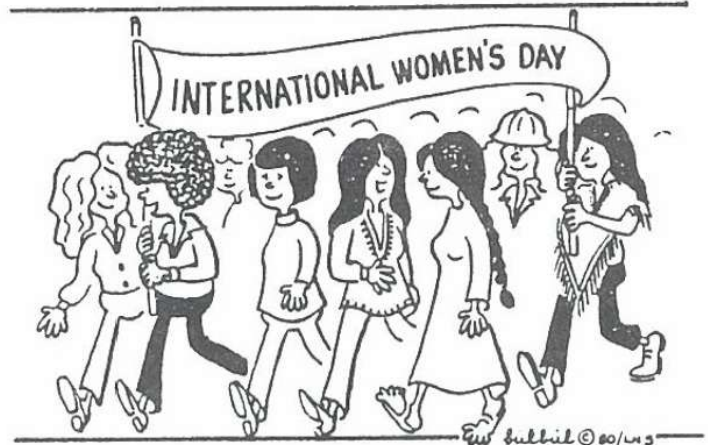
artists being underpaid, or poorly treated, by community groups. Too often, people are surprised when we quote a reasonable fee for a service (which is a fraction of what commercial companies charge), while fees for other kinds of services are often paid without question. There is an obvious need for education within the left of the function, and also the cost (to the government, to artists, to others) of cultural production.

Aesthetic considerations are no less complicated. The strategies of socialist feminism: non-hierarchical structures; equal access to speaking and decision-making; a linking of personal and political, and the importance of consciousness-raising, "have visibly influenced the aesthetics of feminist documentary. For example, what is often disparagingly referred to as "talking heads" (a succession of faces speaking into the camera) is quite characteristic of the kind of work we and other women do". We sometimes get criticized for it, but we want women to speak for themselves, without the intervention of an authoritative voice-over, or the gloss of fast-paced editing. We are emphatically not the NFB. It is a process of re-educating our own and others' way of looking at moving images, and of trying to subvert their seductive power.

There is a great deal of support and enthusiasm for the work we are trying to do, both in the women's and artist's communities. Meanwhile, many socio-economic questions remain unresolved. How will we - and the network of subsidized spaces and equipment access co-ops we are so dependent on - survive after the cutbacks take effect? Will feminist work be the first to be choked by 'arm-length' funding agencies? A friend of mine who has been producing videotapes on feminist issues for the past 10 years was recently refused funding by Canada Council on the basis that 'feminism is passe', her work is "didactic", and that her politics made her a community video producer and not an artist. Will we ever get out from under the poverty line? Will unions and community groups begin to place cultural production on their lists of priorities?

This article is an attempt to encourage more thinking and discussion about culture and media within the feminist community. It is crucial that we include the tools and strategies of cultural production within our struggle, fighting back not only with theory and analysis, but also with words, images, banners, video's, and performances which constantly question the ruling class version of 'reality', and empower people to replace it with their own ideas and visions.

"Stronger Than Before" is available for rental to community groups, and is being distributed by V Tapes and DEC films. "Making change" will be released in May.



cont. from p. 10

The consensus was that the benefit was successful, thanks to fine talent, informative speakers and the feeling of solidarity that came out of the evening. We were able to raise \$1000.00 towards the strike fund. However, there was one major disappointment. To be perfectly blunt, it was poorly attended. I expected more participation from women's groups, solidarity organizations and parties on the left. I realize that there was a lot happening at the time, and we can't be everywhere, and the strike had ended; but the members needed the encouragement for winning this one. Take a moment and think about it. It was a strike for all of us and especially for women. The language won around tech change and consequently the jobs that will be saved is a major breakthrough.

Labour has responded when it has been called upon for support. Examples are the abortion struggle and in speaking out against U.S. aggression in Nicaragua. In this instance labour deserved much more support than it got.



## Clinic, from p. 6

government must worry that allowing the clinic to operate in defiance of the law can erode the legitimacy of the entire legal system. Our immediate task is to build on our heightened momentum to maintain pressure on the state so that its only alternative is to legalize free-standing abortion clinics.

Keeping the clinic open is a vital part of this strategy; the longer it is operating, the greater the pressure on the state. Furthermore, if the current charges result in another acquittal the government will be under intolerable pressure to act. This conjuncture creates a real possibility of winning free-standing clinics. We are in a period of enormous potential for the choice movement. Now is the time for people to get involved, now is the time when your energy and help is most needed and when it can make the critical difference.

This potential extends far beyond the reproductive rights movement. The momentum created by a major victory here could be channelled into the struggle against other areas of women's oppression. We could build on success on abortion to strengthen the fight for lesbian rights, day care, equal pay and an end to male violence. But there is much at stake the other way as well. Abortion has become a major symbol and lynch-pin of anti-feminist and right-wing organizations and is the cutting edge of their broader "pro-family" agenda. If we suffer a set-back in the choice movement, other areas of women's struggles would be weakened. We can't let this happen. We must seize the potential of this moment and win abortion rights for women.

To get involved, call OCAC 532 - 8193

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## Shop-in, from p. 13

- over \$100.00 worth of kitchenware items, all small items and packaged.
- a set of all necessary items for home video entertainment.

We had these items rung through cash registers in different parts of the store simultaneously. When the salesperson asked for the money, we suddenly remembered to ask if this was one of the Eaton's stores that were on strike. When the salesperson said "yes" then we had to decline the goods because as unionists we could not buy from a store that was treating their workers the

way that Eaton's was treating its workers, and as unionists we could not cross the picket line.

This causes a "void" to happen at the cash register, and before another purchase can be made the manager has to come to that cash register and reverse the void. One of our people happened to be close by the manager's office and heard many phone calls come in from various cash registers across the store asking the manager to come and reverse the voids. Needless to say, the manager was quite busy for a few hours.

When we finished with our adventure we went to join the picketers to enforce the lines and tell our story. The strikers' spirits were lifted as we told them of our exploits. Although we spent only a short time with these brave people, we left them and Eaton's in Brampton with a memory of support.

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## Choice, from p. 15

She agreed that we need to develop our feminist morality in which reproductive rights and sexual self-determination are seen to be interdependent. OCAC always tries to press for a view of choice that includes not just the right to abortion but the need for changes such as universal day care to make the choice to have a child a real one.

The three speeches were followed by lively discussion among the over 100 women, men, and several pro-choice babies. A great deal of the discussion did focus on women's experience of abortion, especially the ambivalence and guilt that surround it in contemporary society. Many spoke of the need for women-defined counselling. Several activists responded that we do all we can in this area, e.g. in the escort service (see article on the clinic elsewhere in this issue). It was also stressed that there should be no rigid dichotomy between political strategy on the one hand and philosophical issues on the other.

Finally, the excellent spirit of the meeting must be noted. Contentious issues were freely debated within a common commitment to women's reproductive rights. Much credit goes to the Women's Press for initiating the forum. The Press must also be thanked for donating the proceeds of the evening to OCAC.



## ABOUT US ...

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

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

We welcome new members. For information call Mariana Valverde at 532-8989.

### THROUGH THE GLASS CLEARLY: CANADIAN WOMEN'S EDUCATION, WORK AND SEXUALITY

is a study kit for women's groups, to aid in the examination and understanding of our experience and discovery of ways to create change.

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Christian Movement of Canada  
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