

Lifting the lid off Pandora

Volume Two Number Two

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Tuesday night — I'm going!

As an activist my understanding
of where I fit into the world
tells me that I will always
be on the borderline
of poverty.

Because of this,
I see my work for social change
as one way
to give to my mother,
since other things
that she needs I will never
be able to afford

— Brenda



What can I say about my daughter —
She's got a heart
as big as herself, you know that
And in a lot of ways
she's very understanding, you know that
There's times there's nobody else
I can talk to
And there's other times I'd just as soon kill her!
I love her so much
I miss her very much
Anyway, I hope she gets along good

— Becky

Women determined to define own issues

Amanda Le Rougetel

Walking into Henson College Auditorium on October 22 was like walking into a field of highly charged energy. The room was buzzing with the sound of women's voices. I found a seat and, waiting for the forum to begin, simply drank in the feeling of all those women gathering together to speak out and work for change.

Opening remarks were made by Marilyn Keddy, who outlined the agenda, and by Kathy Coffin, who summarized the events so far. The floor was then turned over to the women of the audience.

Two microphones had been set up, one in each aisle and, needing no further urging, women began to line up to take their turn addressing the crowd.

I was impressed both with the numbers of women who wanted to

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women is a nine year old organization whose members are appointed by the government. This fall, Francene Cosman became the fourth chairperson to resign. She cited "government inaction" as her reason. An ad hoc committee of women's groups met to respond to her resignation and organize a first provincial action meeting for October 22.

speaking and with the passion with which most of them spoke — no disinterested intellectuals here! Instead, with each speaker it became more and more clear just how frustrated and how alienated Nova Scotia women have become with the government's feeble attempt to address issues and concerns so vital to our lives and the lives of our children.

Thirty-three representations were made in all, from groups such as the Canadian Research Institute

for the Advancement of Women (CRIA), Mothers United for Metro Shelter (MUMS), Canadian Black Women's Congress, the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL), the Halifax and Dartmouth Labour Council, as well as a number of women not representing groups.

From the numbers of presentations, you might think that many different views needed to be expressed. On the contrary, it seemed to me that a great similar-

ity of attitude toward the Council came through most of the speeches.

I heard three main points made over and over again. First, the Council does not adequately represent the broad spectrum of women living in Nova Scotia, particularly lower-income and non-white women. Second, the Council ignores the importance of good quality research and undertakes an insufficient amount of this vital information gathering. Third, the Council was criticized for not being forceful enough in its action on behalf of women — the question being, "Just what has the Council done for us recently?"

These points were brought up by different women talking from different perspectives, working in different contexts. The women representing transition houses spoke of the need for more funding and more government support of the work done with battered women and their children.

Naomi Hersom, president of MSVU, spoke of the need for increased quality research to be conducted by the Council. Employment issues were raised by numerous women — among them the reps from Women's Employment Outreach of Halifax, the Canadian - Union of Postal Workers and

Women Unlimited of Sydney, Cape Breton.

The main thread, however, running throughout all the remarks, no matter which issues were being pinpointed, was dissatisfaction with the government and its Council.

It being insufficient, of course to "just" point out the inadequacies of the Council, women made suggestions about how it could be changed and improved to better represent the women of Nova Scotia.

The overwhelming feeling expressed was the need to stop relying on this government structure to do what we could do better ourselves. The call was made to focus our energies on a province-wide coalition of women and women's groups that could and would truly speak for all women, representing us both in word and action.

This call, made by well over half the presentations and endorsed by virtually every speaker, was received with enthusiasm and evident excitement. How we will go about setting up this coalition were not discussed and seemed, frankly, to be quite unimportant at the time.

What was important was the fact that nearly 300 women came together, some driving into Halifax from throughout the province, to speak out against an unrepresentative and inadequate government structure.

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Amanda LeRougetel was involved in the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee until her recent arrival in Halifax. She is now working with CARAL and Pandora.

Next gathering will be February 14

Truro meeting follows through

Joanne Jefferson

On November 22, 60 women met in Truro to follow up on the Oct. 22 public forum.

The ad hoc planning committee hoped that the gathering would accomplish several things: to have women express their expectations for an action committee; to begin looking at the structure such a group might work within; and to come up with some concrete directions.

These objectives were met, partly because the meeting was thoughtfully planned, but mostly

because the women who attended were full of enthusiasm and determination.

Women seemed to feel that an action committee should act as a lobbying group, provide education, solidarity and outreach, have a broad base of support, and take action on specific issues.

There was quite a bit of heated debate about the possible structure, but everyone agreed that the committee needed to be accessible, and regionally-based. There were also suggestions made that the structure should be non-hierarchical, that

the group be representative of as wide a range of women as possible, and that we work toward obtaining no-strings funding.

Women were eager to take the first steps toward making these ideas more concrete, and formed regional committees to develop proposed principles and structures for the next general meeting, February 14, in Truro.

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Joanne Jefferson is a Halifax writer who is involved in Pandora and other feminist activities.

Reporter's, minister's response typical

Mary Morrisey

In looking back at the October 22nd Public Forum I am reminded of the whirlwind of activity that led up to the event. I'd like to tell you about my experiences as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee because I think that on a small scale these experiences mirror the struggles women everywhere suffer in having their voices heard.

Probably, by now, most of us are aware of the fact that the mainstream media relegate "women's issues" to the status of "non-issue", and that coverage of this event was no different. Although much press was given to the Ad Hoc Committee, this was done on the basis of falsely interpreting and reducing our concerns to statements of political patronage and partisan politics.

In fact, the three man political panel of the CBC TV news show, First Edition, went so far as to state that there is no need for a Status of Women Council, nor a women's lobby group. The men suggested that women's concerns have been looked after and that the need for feminist activism is now passé.

This concept, (or trendily coined phrase) of "post-feminism" that is being aired in the media is a concept that needs to be challenged.

What I want to talk to you about however, are the tactics employed by those in power — in the government and in the media — to silence or discredit women's concerns. My personal experiences illustrate these tactics.

In early October, eight members of the Ad Hoc Committee of women's groups met with Brian Young, the minister responsible for the Status of Women in order to, first, inform him of our request for a public consultation with women's groups and, second, to ask that he suspend the appointment of another Advisory Council President

until after the Public Forum planned for Oct. 22.

At the beginning of the meeting Mr. Young made a point of introducing himself to each of us and, in my case, stopped to tell me that my name was familiar to him. We each took turns in speaking, and when I spoke Mr. Young indicated that he knew I "was a researcher".

At the end of the meeting I was stopped by the Minister and his assistant as the other women left the room. He

We are dealing with male power structure

repeated that he knew me and stated that he wanted to recall how he knew me. He also asserted that Alison Brewin was familiar to him and that he knew her too.

His assistant, who had stared at Alison and at me during the meeting, looked me up and down and said "Her hair has changed, but she's the same one . . . I've seen her around the legislature. She worked for the NDP."

At first I was baffled by the Minister's insistence that he knew me. Believe me, we don't travel in the same social circles. When he referred to Alison, who has just recently moved here from Victoria, I knew I was being set up. Alison comes from a high profile NDP family.

The next day, I had my second interview with a Daily News reporter who had responded to our first press release. I had agreed to speak to the reporter following our meeting with Mr. Young. During the interview the reporter asked, "Did the Minister act like a chauvinist?"

When I didn't respond to what I recognized as a leading question he continued in a low-key chatty way... "Well, you know, Mr. (named another minister) was a real chauvinist pig in his discussions with the MUMS." It

seemed clear to me that the reporter was trying to create a story by leading me into making inflammatory remarks about the Minister. The reporter then asked if we were all NDP women and I stated emphatically that we were not a partisan group.

The following day an article entitled "Who's Smarter — Tory or NDP Women?" by the same reporter appeared in the Daily News. The article reduced our concerns to concerns of political patronage and consisted primarily of a personal attack on me by Brian Young, as a partisan member with no right to speak.

Mr. Young's comments were clearly viewed by the Ad Hoc Committee as an attempt to discredit our efforts and silence any attempt at consulting with grass roots women's groups and organizations. The reporter made no mention of any of the discussion I had with him.

Although, it may be argued that the goals of the minister's office and the media are different, in each instance we are dealing with the male power structure. In each instance it is not in their interest to hear women's voices. Perhaps it is not surprising that the tactics were so similar — in the first case entrapment and intimidation; in the second case entrapment and collusion.

I do think it is important for us to understand, on both an intellectual and emotional basis, the tactics employed by those in power.

Such an experience can be individually devastating and we need to respond on two fronts — with individual emotional support, and political action.

I believe we did this in the Public Forum, and the courage, and clear thinking of the women who participated in this event will remain with me for a long time as an example of the strength of this community.

Feminist editor acts in solidarity

Margaret Davis

When the Halifax Daily News published its short list of candidates for editor of Atlantic Insight, Sharon Fraser's name wasn't on it.

Hardly surprising, when you think of it. After all, if you were second guessing the publisher of a slick, mainstream publication, would you pick a leftwing feminist to run it? And not only that, but a leftwing feminist who paid her journalistic dues in the gruelling and distinctly unglamorous world of community newspapers?

My first encounter with Sharon Fraser (and, yes, she is the new editor of Atlantic Insight) was nearly 10 years ago at the annual convention of the Atlantic Community Newspapers Association.

I remember a tiny, animated woman wearing what appeared to be a black tuxedo. As far as I could tell at the time, if she wasn't talking and laughing, she was dancing. Such an obvious extrovert could hardly be a kindred spirit, I reasoned, without bothering to get any closer.

I found out how wrong I was several years later when I joined the staff of the Miramichi Leader and Weekend in northern New Brunswick. Editor Sharon Fraser quickly became a firm friend; it didn't take long to discover the outgoing woman I'd dismissed so lightly was warm, funny and the possessor of strong opinions on everything from feminism to capital punishment — and a sensitive writer along with it.

These days Sharon Fraser is still running counter to the opinions and expectations of others. With her undisciplined mane of curly, greying hair and casual style of dress, Sharon doesn't fit the mold of downtown Halifax, where the cult of CityWomanchic is at best intimidating, at worst, terrifying.

Appearances and radical politics aside, her regional connections as editor of Atlantic Canada's largest magazine are impeccable. Sharon grew up in New Brunswick and after a stint in Montreal, returned to Chatham where she edited the largest community newspaper in the region. Later she worked as public relations director, writer/broadcaster and commentator for the CBC in both New Brunswick and P.E.I.; most recently, she was editor of Atlantic Fisherman, a bi-monthly fisheries newspaper.

Sharon says she will use her experience with community newspapers to reflect Atlantic Canada as a community. "We are rural, small town and village people," she explains. "An awful lot of us are out of work, an awful lot of us are working for wages that are below the poverty line."

The poverty of many Atlantic Canadians (too many of them women) is familiar to Sharon Fraser, despite a solidly middle class upbringing. Several years ago she spent 10 months without an income after unemployment insurance expired.

Looking back, she calls it the most important time of her life. "I had always understood poverty in an intellectual way and never blamed poverty on poor people, but I didn't understand it emotionally. When my U.I. ran out, I can remember saying, 'I have no money, but I don't feel poor, I feel broke.'

"By the end of 10 months I realized that was a pathetic ploy. Now I'm glad I went through it — I can identify with a large proportion of the people of Atlantic Canada. I spent a lot of time with the Anti-Poverty Action Organization in Fredericton, learned a lot and I'm grateful."

She adds, "The people who haven't gone through it are like I was before."

In recent years, Atlantic Insight has faced charges that its pages mirror affluent Halifax at the expense of the rest of the region. It also hasn't escaped notice that women have been underrepresented by Insight.

As just one example, Sharon points to the scarcity of women in Insight's regular "Folks" feature. "I happen to know there are lots of interesting, innovative women in Atlantic Canada."

Those women will be seen more often in Insight and so, Sharon promises, will articles on issues of concern to women. "Being a feminist affects my whole life. As a journalist, I believe there are women's issues."

"Look at housing. It is true that women need and want a place where they feel happy and comfortable — because this is where they nurture themselves, and where many of them work. For men, their real life is outside."

Those of us who know her writing are especially looking forward to finding the distinctive Fraser



Sharon Fraser at work

photo by Lori J. Meserve

voice in her new regular Insight column. Women in P.E.I. already know that voice well.

While living on the Island, Sharon launched a series of columns for women called Another School of Thought.

She describes the columns as "subversive", expressing radical feminist views within the context of rural community journalism.

The idea was to honour women's work and validate women's choices. In subtle (subversive) ways, each week Fraser

helped women recognize the importance of their contributions.

Island women responded with alacrity. "Women are so isolated," Sharon says. "I had so many anonymous phone calls and letters from women who said things like their husbands would be really angry if they knew they were contacting me."

"They all wanted me to know that I wasn't alone in my beliefs. Which is just what I was trying to tell them — I didn't want a woman living in a farmhouse in P.E.I. or

an apartment in Chatham to think she was alone."

She adds "Women's solidarity is very threatening to this society, to the patriarchy. If we could get together, we'd have enormous power."

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Margaret Davis lives in Musquodoboit Harbour. She is eagerly awaiting the February Atlantic Insight, the first that will be published with Sharon Fraser as editor.

Perhaps it's time Christendom reconsidered its use of symbols

Joyce Kennedy

Several Remembrance Days ago, a small paragraph in the Mail Star grabbed my attention. It chronicled the bizarre events of a memorial service at the cenotaph in Montreal.

It seems that after a steady procession of dignitaries — military brass, public servants and gold star mothers — had laid wreaths at the feet of stone soldiers, a single woman dressed in black made her solitary way to the monument to lay her own wreath. Dedicated, she announced, to the silent dead — women and child victims of war-time murder and rape.

That was not the bizarre event, however.

Suddenly, the crowd started to attack the woman. They trampled on and tore up her wreath and then turned their wrath against her, ripping and tearing at her clothes.

Only the belated intervention of the police escort saved her from serious injury.

Sometimes, a vignette like that won't go away. So it was that this beaten woman's image prowled my unconscious mind for many a month before she found her way out.

At the time she reappeared, I was struggling with the theological implications of identifying the third person of the Trinity, i.e. the Holy Spirit, with Mary the Mother of Jesus.

I was asking myself, as a Christian, if God had not actually entered human history in the person of Mary as well as of Jesus, and I was speculating on what western society might have been like had it recognized this twin incarnation by imaging the Holy Spirit as Mary.

For the woman in black, laying her wreath at the monument, reminded me of the Mary recorded in Luke 1:48-49, who proclaims an end to the thrones of the conqueror and an exaltation of the poor and humbled.

Therefore, the woman was attacked precisely because her

action critiques the established "Christian" values which support domination (kings, emperors, popes) and power, which support elaborate "defense" systems that trample on the lives of the poor, particularly defenseless women and children...

And so, I thought, perhaps it is time for christendom to have a good, hard look at its symbols. Perhaps it is time to find a place where all humankind can meet together in peace.

Not at the cenotaphs of the world, nor at the military cemeteries, nor at the tombs of an unknown soldier, to stand at arms, beating drums, marching, and firing cannons. Neither before the cross (crossbow, sword, or rangefinder) which has been the most militaristic of our symbols.

Rather, since we must have a symbol for our Remembrance Day, let us contemplate the Pieta, and, remembering the woman in black, weeping over her dead child, let us beat the drums of our own hearts for real and lasting peace.

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Joyce Kennedy is assistant director of Mount Saint Vincent University's Centre for Continuing Education. This article was first printed in *the Connection*, published by MSVU's public relations office.



Pandora

Pandora is published four times a year by Pandora Publishing Association, a non-profit organization of women in Nova Scotia.

Pandora is a newspaper produced by, for and about women. We actively seek participation on any level from women who do not have access to mainstream media. We welcome submissions — written and photo/graphic. We cannot accept material that is oppressive or intolerant. We are, however, committed to working with women to help them express their experience in a non-oppressive way. We encourage women to tell us when we do not meet our own standards. Not everything submitted can be included and we do reserve the right to edit, especially for length.

Our editorial guidelines continue to evolve. See Issue 1-4 (Summer, 1986) for more details and let us know if you have concerns about material that appears in the paper.

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Those 2 a.m. panic attacks will be held in committee

Betty-Ann Lloyd

They say I'm being replaced by a committee. I can't decide if this is good news or bad.

I told Pandora women I would be leaving for Toronto in July and we needed to start planning. And that's what they planned — a committee.

Certainly there are times in the last 18 months when I've felt like a committee. There's me, the co-ordinating editor of Pandora, being the "rock of gibraltar", the "lone wolf", the "self-hater", "the peacekeeper," the "star", and the "mediator".

Sometimes all in the same meeting.

I've been cast as bad cop to Brenda Bryan's good cop more times than I care to remember. And I've been the recognized teacher and the closet student.

I've learned a lot. I've learned that it's a lot harder to put out 24 pages as a feminist quasi-collective of 15 to 20 women then it is putting out 24 pages virtually on my own.

The pages are a heck of a lot better, the process is, at best, more exhilarating and, at worst, more crazy-making than any individual experience ever could be.

I've also learned more than I ever wanted to know about taking risks within the women's community.

The risk I was quite willing to take — the financial risk — never materialized.

What I didn't anticipate was the risk of making public mistakes without public support. The double jeopardy or doing too little or too much, depending on what side of the fence the reader is on.

I didn't expect to risk losing my identity in the identity of the paper. The shock of realizing that whatever Pandora women decided would be seen as my decision; that whatever I did, personally, would be somehow seen as reflecting Pandora policy.

And, what frightened me most when I first faced it, was the possibility that I would actually risk destroying my dream of women working together, putting out a paper.

My dream is still more or less intact. The music is less lyrical, the images more sharply focussed — but at least it hasn't turned into a nightmare!

Obviously, however, I haven't learned near enough.

Because I figure I would in fact do it all again. I'd do it differently, but I'd do it again. And surely you'd think if I've learned anything, I've learned that nothing — absolutely nothing — can be worth those 2 a.m. panic attacks.

...Did Valerie actually say Betty has given us copy-editing control? Perhaps she said Betty wanted to see any and all changes and it was Colleen who said it would be ok to cut for size.

...Exactly why did Susan leave the meeting tonight? She's decided she hates us. She figures we're patriarchal symbols of heterophobic animism and can't stand coming out to the north end for all these meetings. Maybe she had to pee.

Who was that who called just before class this morning? Did I say I'd phone back? Why?

...I forgot to send out those three new subscriptions. And, speaking of subscriptions, why didn't that one renew? Why didn't this one subscribe in the first place?

...Omigod, we haven't got any lesbian copy this issue. Omigod, we've got too much. What's too much?

Do we have too much straight copy? Not enough labour, no peace — and little contentment?

Can we put the CUPE ad on the page with the childcare workers? Isn't that a rival union? Is it too late to check? Who can we check with who won't be offended if we even ask?

...If we put the 6x8 pensions ad on the page with the Rumours copy, we'll never get another health and welfare ad. On the other hand, didn't we make some decision about maximum political advertising in any one issue, anyways?

...Who's supposed to phone

Kentville and tell them we've got a paper we want printed. And did she?

Oh, I won't miss those panics. I'm sure I'll find something else to occupy my 2 a.m.'s. Like sleep.

What I will miss is the joy of fitting it all on the tiny thumbnail pages three weeks before production. Designing the pages. Deciding what ads have to go on what pages and where stand-alone photos belong.

I'll miss editing the copy, helping women finish their articles and co-authoring those special others. I'll miss the women. Period.

Luckily I'm still allowed to help out for March. And for June, I get to be emergency consultant.

After that, I'll be 2,000 miles away. Mind you, I have a Macintosh 512K, just like Pandora. And Purolator can deliver the disks overnight, Toronto to Halifax....

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Betty-Ann Lloyd was the first, perhaps the last, co-ordinating editor of Pandora. She wishes the committee well.

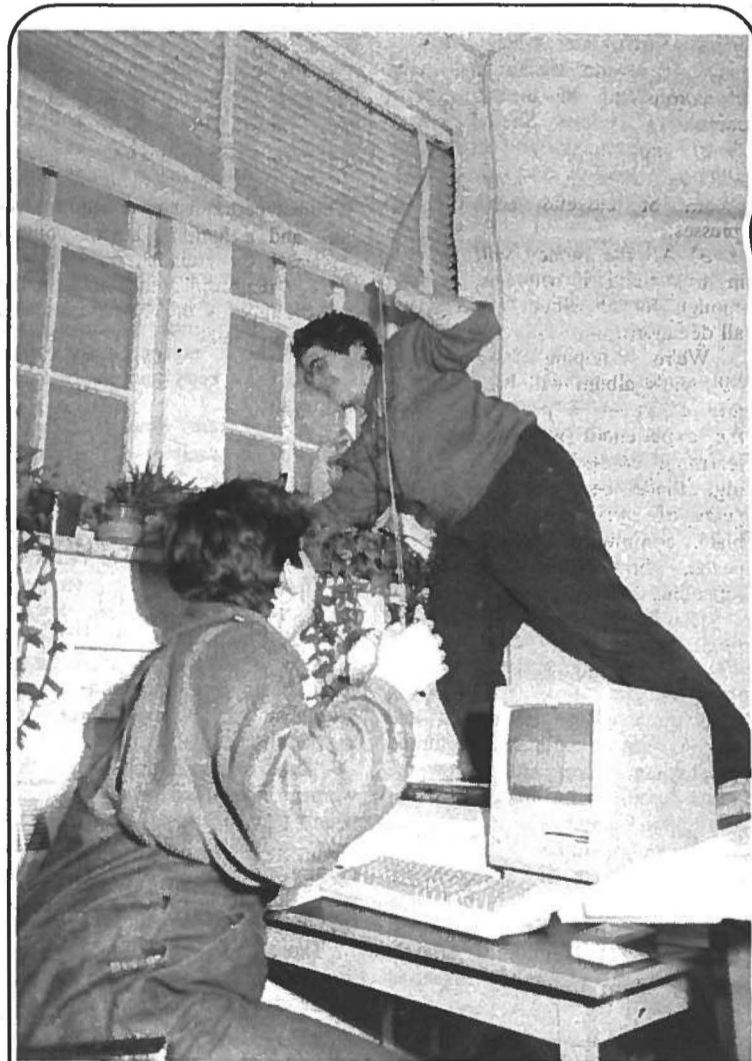


photo by Lori J. Meserve

We can't flee technology

Pandora has entered the world of desktop publishing. This means we can learn how to use technology before it uses us.

Besides, contrary to the impression given by the photo above, it's fun! Jeanne Thibodeau was just trying to get some air into the room so she and Joanne Jefferson could enjoy their page layout even more.

There will be workshops in January for women interested in using the Macintosh 512K for word processing (Microsoft Word) and for doing page layout (Pagemaker). You need to take the first workshop to understand the second. Anyone interested in these workshops should call 455-1287 and get their names on the list.

Letters

Four the Moment planning a record — with our help

Pandora:
We need your help. We're asking for support (translation: money).

After two years of talking, promising and wishing, we've decided to finally try to produce Four the Moment's first album. All we need is \$8,000 — up front!

The banks aren't interested. Two group members are back in school, and one is back on the "U.I. Line". Canada Council doesn't provide grants for record production any more.

So we're asking everyone we know to donate \$25.00 or more (or less) to this effort. In return, we can offer a very sincere "thank you" and a commitment to continue growing, performing and doing benefits and writing songs.

Specifically, we propose to design our album cover to reflect your support and gift to us:

1) For every donation, we'll print your name or the name of your group on the album cover (donations of \$25.00 very welcome);

2) For every donation of \$50.00, we'll also send you an album or cassette hot off the presses;

3) All the money will be held in trust, and if we don't collect enough for an album, we'll return all donations.

We're hoping Four the Moment's album will be a community effort — a project reflecting the experiences we've shared, the learning, conflict, giving and taking, that's been a part of five years of work with people in the black community, in struggles for peace, hope, justice — and reflecting the fun we've had!

Thanks for considering our request,

FOUR THE MOMENT

Make cheques or money orders to: Four the Moment, 2560 Oxford Street, Halifax, N.S., B3L 2T4. Call Jackie at 423-3433 with any questions.

Government and business stand a certain way!

Pandora:
Thank you for including JoAnn Latremouille's interview with me in your last issue. However, in order for the performance piece RIGHT HONOURABLE to be understood in its (documented) context, the caption should have read 'over to the right, a bit more to the right' etc. not 'over to the right, a bit more to the left' etc.

As it stood, the statement criticizing the political stance and relationship between government and business bit the dust (save for the few I changed by hand). Left is

a far cry from right, no matter which side of the fence you're on.

As well, I intended a larger gap between RIGHT and HONOURABLE in order to remove it slightly from the Prime Minister's exclusive title.

If it would be possible to run this photo with these corrections, it would be great. Thanks. I always look forward to each new issue of Pandora.

Cathy Quinn

Pandora note: We are unable to re-run the photo — but thanks for the clarification.

Feminist advice column suggested — send letters!

Pandora:

Thank you for your superb work of the past year. Your endless meetings, long days, and late nights have given us a newspaper we can read with the rarest of reactions — pleasure. No need to grind the back teeth over offensive ads or photographs, no need to groan over the presentation of "women's issues" on special women's pages, and no need to wrestle over the detailed description of Ms. Important's dress, with no mention of her work.

For the future I would enjoy a feminist cartoonist as a regular feature and a feminist advice column answered by socialist, marxist, separatist, confused, etc. feminists in turn. Think of the discussions that could generate!

Adele McSorley

Lesbians invited to Coming Forward support group

Pandora:

I am writing on behalf of the Coming Forward Group, a Lesbian 'Drop-in' Support Group which has newly formed in Halifax.

The CF Group, a result of the Stepping Out of Line Workshops held here in Halifax last April, meets to discuss and lend support to varied lesbian issues ranging from 'Coming-Out', to Lesbian Mothers, to Struggling Lesbian Relationships.

We meet every 2nd week in a safe location (supplied to us free of charge, thanks to the Gay Alliance for Equality [GAE]) and very much welcome and encourage any interested lesbian(s) to attend our meetings.

For more information on when and where we meet, please call: 453-1220, Thursday through Saturday evenings, 8-11 pm, or please write to us at: Coming Forward, P.O. Box 3611, Halifax, N.S. B3J 3K6.

In closing I would like to thank Pandora for giving us this space to inform you of our group, and also GAE, for providing the space needed for us to meet.

A Coming Forward Member

Teenage book about lesbiansim very supportive

Pandora:

One Teenager in Ten is a book that relives the prevailing stories of young people coming of age who are also gay. Here in this book lie the words of what it is like to be young and growing up gay. Yet one need not be a teenager to get something from this book. I'm sure for anyone who reads this collection of true lives, memories will surely find their way into one's mind.

For anyone who is young and just coming to the realization that they are or might be gay, this is the kind of book to read — a testimony of another person's real experiences. Young people need to know that they are not alone, and when trying to face this realization, they need to be able to read something, without feeling intimidated, pushed, or overwhelming fear. They will see compassion, wisdom beyond their years, and a sense of knowing that others actually went down the same route they are just embarking upon.

This is the kind of book that should be readily available to young people, not just in a bookstore, but in the school and public libraries. There should also be a book about the facts of being gay, to answer the many questions young people will inevitably have. It is an affordable little book.

As I read it, I found myself wishing I had a copy during my teen years. I found even now that I could relate to what these young people were saying about their experiences.

I would highly recommend that any young person who is questioning their own sexuality to try to obtain a copy of this book as one of the first to read when they are searching for books.

Name withheld

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Maria Wallis, *Our Times*
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Pandora gets a pat on her collective back

Pandora:

From cover to cover, *Pandora* is great. You don't miss a thing, do you? — from nuances to national and international concerns. Life for Halifax women, as recorded in your calendar, offers so much that I was almost tempted to leave my quiet retreat here and take the next train home.

Almost — on further thought, it's because I'm here that I could read *Pandora* complete as soon as it arrived, feel the wholeness of it, and at last write the letter of appreciation that I was moved to write months ago and didn't.

Sara avMaat's photographs and Dawna Gallagher's marvellous line drawings "Pandora calls her sisters" contribute enormously to this issue.

Thank you for your editorial and for the quality of writing, depth of concern, and sincerity in the articles you have printed. Enclosed is a cheque for five subscriptions.

Muriel Duckworth

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Solstice celebrates connections

Women reclaim rituals

Alexandra Keir

I celebrate myself and nature.

Solstice is about a oneness, a connection with nature, not a higher or other power but a power that I am a part of, that we are part of.

Winter Solstice — Yule — December 20-23, the dates change year to year. In 1986, Solstice is on the 22 of December, the longest night of the year. Now darkness triumphs and yet — gives way and changes to light.

The birth of the sun from the womb of the night brings hope and promise of summer as the Wheel of the Year begins to turn again as the days grow longer.

We lost many things in the 16th and 17th centuries during the burning of the witches, the

healers, the midwives and the herbalists. The deep meaning of festivals and customs were lost when those who remembered them no longer dared to share their knowledge.

The dances and ceremonies had been tied to the land and to the changing cycles of the seasons in a never-ending round of renewal that established the bond between individuals, community as a whole, and the land and its resources.

Now they were lost.

Ancient customs and rituals such as the mistletoe, holly, wreaths, and decorating trees were claimed in the name of Christianity, and the bond with the land as a living thing was destroyed.

Slowly we are reclaiming, rebuilding rituals that are mean-

ingful to us in our present lives. We are nurturing the celebrations that empower and soothe the spirit, that connect us to our roots in nature.

Living rurally helps us return to the tradition of the hunter gatherers as we are not exposed to daily doses of Christmas advertising, sales, and excitement. Using a softwood branch so as not to sacrifice a whole tree, we hang a few special decorations. Eating a wonderful meal of food grown here — thanking the earth — with friends. Hanging our socks on the wall filled with small things — a round red candle for her, healing salts for her — you are treasured, take care of your self.

A trudge through the woods, frozen ground gives way to mud, we squat — holding one hand to the earth and one to a friend grounding, thanking, opening, breathing, a quiet ritual.

We are reclaiming every step, every breath a celebration of joy and respect with nature.

○○○○○○○○

Alexandra Keir lives in Pictou County.



photo by Alex Keir

Lucia celebration affirms darkness

Andrea Lynn

We have been trying to escape the darkness of natural and inner worlds for centuries. And most of our winter solstice celebrations emulate this pursuit of lightness that so often finishes by plundering the earth.

Since ego results in chaos when it is practiced in darkness, our legends and myths have made darkness evil. But it is there that we can find healing, intuiting, accepting, nurturing, sharing, the nondescript, the now.

To live in darkness simply requires another way of being.

We went from sun and fertility rites to the son and the worship of lightness. For some, for many, this celebration is embodied in might as we see it manifested at Christmas: possessions, power, the hollowness

of a future robbed to give us present glory.

My choice is Sankta Lucia, a small winter solstice celebration. Unlike blazing, blaring revelry, this ritual affirms a quiet sureness that darkness is a part of the cycle; it neither endures nor leaves forever.

In fact, in my own celebration of Lucia, darkness herself has been evolving as a sister personage.

My hope is that I, we, can continue to grow in understanding and appreciating this time of the year — the state of little light, of much welcoming darkness.

○○○○○○○○

Andrea Lynn celebrates Sankta Lucia each December in Wolfville.

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The information that follows highlights the major improvements. It's good news!

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Or, if you choose not to start your pension until after age 65 (up to age 70), your monthly benefits will be greater.

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also be divided if your marriage or common-law relationship ends in separation.

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If you receive survivor benefits, they will now continue even if you remarry.

If you remarried and had your survivor benefit discontinued, you can have your benefit reinstated.

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If a person qualifies for disability benefits, the monthly payment will now be significantly increased. For example, the maximum disability pension in 1987 will increase from \$487 to more than \$635 per month.

As well, anyone entering or returning to the work force will have disability coverage after contributing in 2 of the last 3 years in which contributions could have been made. This is reduced from the present minimum of 5 to 10 years.

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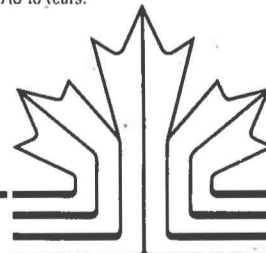
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You may need details to better understand how these and other changes might affect you and your family. For more information about your Canada Pension Plan, contact your local Women's Association, call the toll-free number below or fill out the coupon and mail it to:

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I am my mother's daughter

Brenda R. Bryan

I am writing this article to thank my mother for being who she is. To tell her, in my own way, that I love her and wish in my heart that life could be better for her. Although I'm not able to live close to her and give her daily concrete support, she is very much a part of my life. As a political activist, as someone who promotes women's culture, as a woman who laughs a lot and loves to dance, I am my mother's daughter.

It wasn't that long ago that I was sitting across the table from my mum at home in Cape Breton. As we talked I glanced down at her hands clenching her tea and I flashed back to the memory of her being ashamed of the calluses on her knuckles. She wanted "pretty hands like other women."

To that end she went out and bought callus remover. Within a week her hands were all infected and too sore to use. For a woman whose hands are her livelihood, this is serious business. How would she clean the toilets and scrub the floor and nurture other women's children when her hands were all crippled up.

I see this as a symbol of how my mum is punished for wanting more to her life than the scars from her hard work. But this wanting more doesn't fit into the picture, given her education and her life circumstances. She didn't have, doesn't have, any choices about what her life can give her.

There is a lot of talk about class in my circle of associates. Most of the time I get bored with the discussion because it borders on the edge of academia and the ridiculous — especially when I look at my early life and my parents' life. Our education may

sometimes give us the theory for some kind of class analysis, but it's only the experience of the lack of choices that come from being poor that can make this theory have any meaning.

At 12 years old, Becky left her family of 13 brothers and sisters. As part of a poor fishing community, her family couldn't afford to feed everyone. She was put on a steamer going down the coast of Newfoundland to go to work for another family.

Half way down the coast she was put ashore because she didn't have her passage. There she was alone and without any money. Fortunately, friends of the family in this village took her in. In the next six months she earned her passage by doing laundry.

She was 13 when she arrived in North Sydney to work for a family as a domestic servant. At 17, still working for the same family, she took seriously ill with scarlet fever. Her employers took care of her and, after recovering, she continued to work for them for another 10 years.

This serious illness left my mum's body depleted and with the hard physical work she kept doing, it led to more and more physical problems. It seemed to escalate after my birth and by the time I was five, mum started to spend most of her time in the hospital or recovering from operations.

There were times in my adolescence when it was hard to say who was the child and who was the adult. I was my mother's legs and go-for. Neither my mum nor I are particularly easy-going, so this was a hard time. My brother and I shared the chores and learned how to take care of our-



photo by Sara avMaat

Ernie Bryan, Brenda and Becky in North Sydney

elves. My father spent most of his time at work and taking care of mum in the hospital. The community in North Sydney also looked after us in many incredible ways.

Through all this time mum continued to work as a domestic and as a cleaner whenever she had the strength to stand up — and often when she didn't have the strength even for that. Even though Dad had started working at 10 and was still working at the same place 55 years later, Mum had to keep working just to keep us at the poverty line. There was no medical insurance so every time she got sick, she paid.

For a woman who struggled so much for survival, she has an incredible sense of humour and ability to have fun. It's through mum's stamina and humour that I've been able to get some perspective on how to approach my

own life.

With my political work as a feminist and peace activist, I take the lessons she taught me in Cape Breton and apply them every day in my own effort to survive. I see that we both live within a system that I believe no longer cares for the individual. What's different for me is my education has given me the tools to see how things can change.

I see each woman as being the strong link to this change, even though not all women identify themselves as feminists. In actual fact, many fight for and work towards this change in their own lives. Simply by surviving, my mum has provided a model for all feminists.

My mum sees my work and she has a hard time understanding what it has to do with her life. But for me, it's one way I can pay her back for the mothering

and the example she has given me. As an activist my understanding of where I fit into the world tells me that I will always be on the borderline of poverty. Because of this, I see my work for social change as one way to give to my mother, since other things that she needs I will never be able to afford.

My mum has the traditional values of family and would like me to live closer to her. I do not fit into that scheme of things; I can't go home. The way I can and do support her is by encouraging her to take part in her union, by telling her she's right, her life is hard and it's not fair, by loving her as best I can.

□□□□□□□□

Brenda R. Bryan continues her fight for change — both personal and political — in solidarity with other women.

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Our signs of the times crucial communication

Toni Goree

The signs of the times are many. We must not let their messages go unnoticed. I'm not talking about earthquakes and eclipses. I'm speaking about lapel buttons, street painting, bumper stickers — and how about a little sky writing for all of those who like to do things in a big way.

What impact do signs like these have on our lives?

Most of us have had the satisfaction of having someone read our politically-conscious lapel button and ask its meaning. I am thankful for the many long talks I have had over my "Free Mandela" button.

And, I guess, it's only right that all good things should be passed on ... as was my button.

It happened the evening of the Take Back the Night March. After the march (which, by the way, I thought was a great success), while whooping it up at a tavern, my fellow marcher took the liberty of giving my button to a stranger at our table.

She just reached over, took it off me, and put it on him. It's hard to believe, but I guess he needed it more than I did.

The importance of street painting was brought home to me by nothing short of a revelation. I was enjoying the sunshine and freedom of walking through the Commons thinking prophetic thoughts about what to cook for supper for the next 20 years, when I came across three rough-looking

men trying to decipher a message painted on the cement walkway.

They were sincerely perplexed by its meaning. It said "○○○ WILL FIGHT BACK".

I stopped and explained to them that ○ is the symbol for woman and the message is that when attacked, women must, and will, fight back.

One of the men looked at me and said, "I like women and I don't want to fight them".

I further explained to him that many women are raped, beaten, robbed, and that too many have lost their very lives while walking through the Commons. The root of this message is that we are finished with this abuse.

Women are reclaiming their lives! We demand freedom from assault and pain and heartache. We are taking responsibility for our own lives!

In unison they all looked at the message again and then looked at each other. At that moment I could have sworn that I saw a light go on inside their heads.

I will never forget that day... a little less darkness for women to contend with.

The following story was told to me by my lover. We were enjoying one of our very few lunch times together without kids around. He asked me how I felt a few years ago when I heard that the Klu Klux Klan were moving into Halifax.

I told him of my anger at the system for allowing it, the fear I

felt (and still do feel) for my children, and the frustration over my inability to change the fear and anger.

Then he told me this ... One morning, when he left home and was driving "down the road", there on the side of an old building were the initials KKK in large white letters. He attempted to explain to me the feeling he got in his gut, the one we all know.

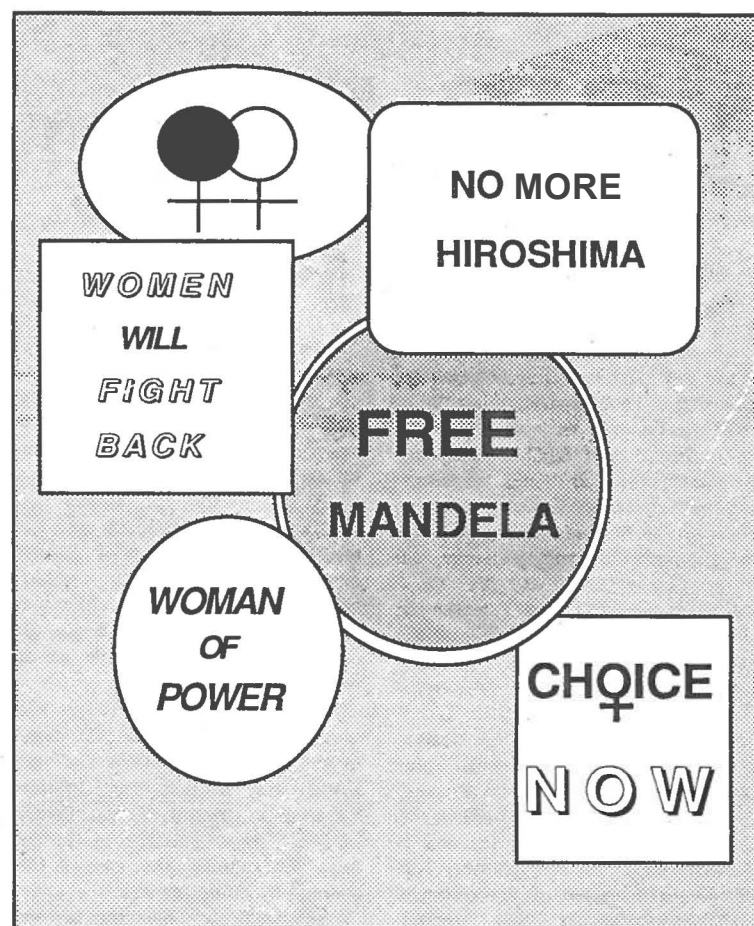
Standing around the building was a crowd of big and small people. The big people were talking intently to one another; the little people were just staring at the letters, instinctively knowing that something very wrong was happening in their relatively safe world.

By noon of that day it was common knowledge that the community had been violated. It makes my stomach turn over to think of the effect this kind of hatred has on our psyche.

I know somewhat the shock those people felt on that day. I had a similar experience. One day last year I was just bopping along on my way to somewhere and the image that jumped off the street scared the hell out of me.

It was the painted outline of a child's body. The outline of her form was in a sprawled and mangled position. It was the morning after the night of the street-painting to commemorate the innocent dead heroes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

For a brief flash I lost my hope in humankind.



Many times even pictures with no words give clear and covert messages. I have always thought of carrying a brown, yellow, and red crayon so that when I see an advertisement with a group of people in it I could colour a few of them a lovely shade of something other than white just so the message that the only people that count are white is refuted.

I rejoice even over bumper stickers like "Jesus loves you". In my book, anyone who claims to love everyone regardless of social status, race, or political position can't be so bad. What do you think he meant when he said in

that last days there will be signs?

So ... c'mon women. Next time someone asks you "what's your sign?" first tell them what uplifting graffiti you last wrote, then show them the neat button you bought from the Coalition Against Apartheid, and, as a last resort, say "a Pisces".

Get out your paint brushes and crayons and let's do it once more with feeling!

○○○○○○○○

Toni Goree is a mother of six and a student. She and her sister have received a grant to start a black women's support group.



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Cheryl Aucoin	Sydney	564-5926
Barbara Levy	Wolfville	542-5589
Mary Morrissey	Halifax	455-6432, 424-2526

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Group provides comfort through sharing

Lori Mahen
Lisa Mahen

"Sometimes, it seems as though a positive self image is a completely unrealistic goal to set for myself, especially in the light of the fact that we live in a society which promotes and celebrates physical perfection."

These days it is not uncommon to hear this kind of remark voiced by women who feel baraged by commercial sponsors pushing wrinkle removers, diet aids and the latest fitness fad. And while some actively seek to alter existing stereotypes, as others attempt to ignore them, too often a woman is manipulated by this profit-oriented market, only to find herself in competition with a carefully crafted product.

But how do women with physical disabilities respond to societal expectations? How do they cope with the stigma of physical "imperfection"?

"Though I'm striving to gain independence through an awareness of who I really am — recognize my abilities — and what I can contribute to society, I realize that I'm still subject to the conditioning of my childhood. After all, a woman traditionally is expected to be dependent, and that dependency is fundamental to her identity."

The reality of the dichotomy at hand is familiar to many women today, exhibited by the shift in domestic and professional roles for contemporary females. Yet, how is this issue complicated by the presence of a physical disability? Surely, the disabled woman's need for self-sufficiency equals that of her "able-bodied" counterpart despite her evident need to depend on others for practical assistance with day to day living.

So is it then possible for a woman in this situation to achieve a sense of independence? How can she create a balance between her internal desires and her external restraints?

There are no easy answers to these questions, a fact which serves to intensify the sense of isolation that a woman with a

physical disability will often experience over her social acceptability. Thus, it comes as no surprise that research reveals loneliness to be a major problem encountered by this population. Documents indicate that physically disabled women generally lack the opportunity to become mainstreamed in their communities and, therefore, are likely to remain separated from other women in comparable situations.

"People see that I'm different. They don't always say it, but I feel it. I mean, something as simple as a narrow check-out or a heavy door can become an obstacle for me . . . a struggle. I guess that I really can't expect others to understand."

Recently, in an attempt to alleviate the isolation factor for this population, a support group for young women with physical disabilities has been established in the metro area. Within the confines of this gathering, a young woman is given the opportunity to share her personal experiences and feelings with others in similar circumstances.

Since the group functions as a volunteer project, it remains unaffiliated with local community organizations which administer to the needs of the disabled. Unlike agencies which are designed to address political or economic concerns, the membership avoids involvement with advocacy-related issues. As a result, the group attempts only to respond to the emotional needs of its members.

During scheduled meetings,

group discussions regularly focus upon the various ways in which a disabled woman may deal with her environment, as well as her social, professional and personal relationships. General topics for deliberation frequently include a member's experiences with family, friends, physicians and her own sexuality. These issues are further complicated by a woman's body image, her sense of dependency and feelings of loneliness.

Consequently, her efforts to cope with personal stress, low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness gain precedence among those needs which require consideration by the group.

"I'm so glad and relieved to know that I'm not the only one who feels this way. Somebody else shares my pain, my frustration, my confusion! It comforts me to hear my doubts and fears echoed in the words of another."

For further information regarding this support group, please contact Lisa Mahen, c/o Pandora, 5533 Black Street, Halifax, B3K 1P7.

□□□□□□□□

Lori and Lisa Mahen are sisters who both have muscular dystrophy. Tired of waiting for professionals to accept the concept of disabled women helping each other, they founded this group.



photo by Sara avMaat

Will Halifax celebrate IWD this year?

Catherine Hughes

Why celebrate International Women's Day every year? Often what happens is women either feel obliged to participate, or refuse to participate not seeing any connection with their lives.

The latest meeting of the IWD planning committee seems to reflect the latter situation. It was aimed at defining what issues were of importance to women and using these issues as a basis for a grant proposal. No one showed up.

In April, after the last evaluation of International Women's Week, 1986, a few women decided to start some regular discussions on certain issues. By meeting in advance we hoped to deal with a range of issues of importance and

at the same time build momentum for International Women's Day activities in March 1987.

The first day-long forum was held on racism in July. Viola Robinson gave a comprehensive talk on Native people and discrimination in Canada. Toni and Terri Goree discussed how racism affects black women's lives.

Toni Goree said, "Racist attitudes seriously affect our (black women's) progress and, in fact, your (white women's) progress." This prompted discussion on how the (white) women's movement excludes black women and ways to change this situation.

Two meetings have since been held, one to get out ideas for activities and to start doing some outreach. Kathy Moggridge from the women's program at the Secretary of State gave us advice about the grant application.

A grant application is obviously an academic point if women are not interested in coming together for an International Women's Day this year. If you think there are issues that could be addressed during IWD, it's time to start thinking about what could be done — and why.

Contact Patchwork, 424-2526, if you have any ideas or enthusiasm you wish to share.

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Amherst	January 12, 1987
Bridgewater	January 15, 1987
Yarmouth	January 19, 1987
Kentville	January 20, 1987
Dartmouth	January 26, 1987
Halifax	January 27, 1987

To facilitate scheduling, notify the Chair of your intent to appear, in writing, by December 10, 1986

Task Force on the Concerns of Women
Francene Cosman, Chair
P.O. Box 732
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2T3

Childcare will be available



Renovations wreck havoc with innocent's pipe dream

Judith Meyrick

In the real estate section of the paper there is a term for describing houses which makes them appear, to the uninitiated, saleable, and even liveable, with only a minimal amount of skill and knowhow. That term is: "handyman's special". This statement is usually preceded by a glowing description of a mansion which bears no relationship to the house in question. And it is this potential dreamhouse that the ad is selling. Capitalizing on your need for housing, your vision, your imagination, and your poverty, these ads are a lure for the unsuspecting, for innocents such as me. Yes, I fell for the "handyman's special".

The year was 1981, a great year for houses, they say. I still remember the thrill of opening the front door for the first time, of standing in the kitchen amidst the filth and squalor, my eyes glazed with vision, the future before me laden with promise and uncracked walls.

It is now 1986. The glaze has vanished, replaced by five years of reality, the scars on my hands bearing witness to the labour of necessity.

I have learned a lot in five years. I was always aware of which end of the hammer to use to hit the nail; but my knowledge did not go much further than that. I can now talk the lingo like an expert, throw around words like "parge" and "skim coating". I can shingle when pushed, shim walls, build a pipe chase or dimple screws. And I also do chimneys.

Along the way I learned things. Like, always multiply by three the estimated time it will take to do a job. Like how the word "finished" becomes deleted from one's vocabulary, and how perfection becomes a relative term. And I developed some theories. Murphy had his law, and I would like to put out for consideration my contingency theory which states: "any task to be undertaken becomes incidental to and contingent upon the completion of another task (or tasks) of varying degrees of difficulty". This theory usually operates in conjunction with Murphy's Law, which simply states that "what can go wrong, will".

My kitchen is a somewhat classic illustration of this theory. I began working on the kitchen first, and much of my learning and grief took place in that room. It was five years ago, so I have had time to calm down, and I find I can talk about it with minimal stress, and only moderate hysteria.

I began my renovations by restoring an old plaster wall to better than original condition. As a carpenter polishes oak, I lovingly inched my way from floor to ceiling, edge to edge, my plaster knife gently smoothing, caressing, my fine sandpaper polishing, honing.

The wall was a work of art, a tribute to my learning, a testament to my dedication. Just as I completed the plastering, a group decision was made to insulate all walls from the inside out. I was quite depressed and it was many weeks before I could take a wrecking bar and smash down that wall.

I think I was so generally put out by that wall that, in a fit of pique, I decide that I would take down all the walls in the house and replace them. That school of thinking lasted about 12 hours, which is roughly how long it takes to take down and clean up a plaster wall.

By that time, however, I had ripped down an interior wall. After five years, I still can't believe I did that. However, the fates were smiling on me. My justification for the destruction soon became apparent. In the wall was a chimney, which, in times gone by, had been used to vent an oil stove. It was now used to vent the burner of the hot water tank.

When the oil stove was removed, the stovepipe was taken out, and wallpaper applied over the hole in the chimney, which certainly accounted for the peculiar gas-type odours in the kitchen.

Note the contingency theory creeping in here. I am now required to be a mason. Not to be daunted by such a trifling task, I purchased a box of mortar, found some bricks, and, following the instructions on the package, bricked up the hole. Sounds easy, eh? Quick, clean, almost fun one could say. Not so!

"Ensure surface is free from dirt, dust, grease and grime. Mix with water, apply between bricks." The instructions, I found out, assume a prior knowledge of bricklaying, preferably a university degree. What the package failed to mention is that you have to make little trowel-loads (there is a special name for this which I had no interest in remembering, and which was not the word I used) and these don't actually adhere to the brick as one would hope and expect, but rather they balance there, hoping that you will relax for an instant and let gravity take over. And have you ever tried to ensure that a hole in a seventy-year-old chimney is free from dust and grease, for heaven's sake!

At this point, suffice it to say that my chimney is now bricked up.

The next stage is the trip to the local building supply, which is not always simple.

Did you know that what everyone in the store refers to as half inch is actually three-eighths inch? Or that three-quarter inch is actually five-eighths inch? I have never understood why this is so, but it is, and once, in a momentary lapse of memory, I erred and ordered three-quarter inch gyproc for my living room.

It weighed twice as much as the normal stuff, and turned out to be flame-retardant. Nearly gave the population of my street a collective hernia getting it up, but I sure feel safe. If there is ever a fire, come on over. I'll be putting money that my living room will be the last to go.

Anyway, off I went. I gave my order, paid the cashier, and drove

around to the lumber yard to collect my supplies. I was feeling a little jaunty as I began to put the roof racks on the car while the salesperson gathered up my order. I worked swiftly, efficiently, and was lounging carelessly against the car fender when he came back, shoulders laden with wood.

He looked at the car, at me, at the roof. A pause, then he said, "Where do you want this, lady?" Any fool could see I want it on the roof, I thought to myself. "On the roof," I said. "Might be a problem," he said, staring at the car. "Those racks're on sideways." Another pause. He looked at me. I looked at him, I smiled ever so slightly, and without comment he helped me move the racks.

To my eternal shame, I was not gracious. Dignity to the wind, I flung the wood atop the car and slunk home to my dismembered kitchen.

I may have given the impression that these events took place on a Saturday afternoon. Well, as much as I would have liked this to be true, it was not so. Three weeks have elapsed, and all I have to show for my toils is the absence of a hole in the chimney.

The next three weeks contained many "firsts" for me. I learned how to put up gyproc. I lost my left thumbnail for the first of many times. I learned that you put up gyproc floor to ceiling, not sideways. And if you do it sideways by mistake, you start from the bottom. And it was during these weeks that I learned that perfection is merely a step above tolerable.

The grand unveiling of a room can be somewhat anti-climatic. Most of your friends have already received a blow-by-blow account of the work as it progressed and probably can quote with a reasonable degree of accuracy how many screws the walls needed, what your wiring is like, and perhaps even where the studs are located in the walls. But friends are supportive, and can always muster another enthusiastic comment as the finer, more obscure features are pointed out to them.

My favourite comment, however, was the one made by a friend who dropped in shortly after things were back to normal. She had been out of town, and had not seen the house since I began renovating. "Nice" she said. "You've painted the walls."

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hysteria.

Fiction, non-fiction interweave in Smyth's subversive story

Joanne Jefferson

At the end of Donna Smyth's new book, *Subversive Elements*, is a biography. In it, she is described as an author, a peace and environmental activist, a performer in street theatre, an Acadia University English professor, and a founder and co-ordinating editor of *Atlantis: a Women's Studies Journal*.

After reading her book, I'd like to add to that list: Donna Smyth

is also an earth-protector.

On a clear September Saturday afternoon, I went to the Red Herring Bookstore to hear Donna read from *Subversive Elements*. The usually empty room next door was filled with women's peace quilt posters, colourful chairs, and people, most of them women.

At the beginning of the reading, Donna seemed nervous, but as she continued to read from the purple book (produced collectively by

Women's Press, Toronto) her voice gained in strength. Donna is a writer whose words are often humorous; she does not, however, take her subject lightly.

Two narratives run through *Subversive Elements*. One tells of Donna's involvement in the fight against uranium mining in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley, and also of her life with goats in Hants County. The other is an absorbing story of a woman's un-

sual relationship and of her memories.

Throughout the book, the two run concurrently. As I read, I became absorbed in Bea's story, the fiction; so absorbed that sometimes I was tempted to skip the non-fiction. Bea's story is a tightly woven narrative about a woman overcoming conventional morals and principles: apart from symbolic ties to the non-fiction, it could stand on its own as a complete novel.

However, the true story of the Nova Scotia environmentalists' battle against mining experts and government officials is also fascinating. During that long struggle, I was living in Wolfville, so I was glad to get Donna's perspective.

At times, the non-fiction sections of the book seem less controlled, but this imbalance is what makes *Subversive Elements* such an unusual and striking mixture. The documentation of the uranium issue incidents, along with Donna's powerful thoughts on our culture's ignorance about its connection to the earth, plus her goat stories, provide counterpoints to the controlled, rhythmical fiction.

This book is appropriately named. The title is a multi-level play on words; it refers to the lives of the fictional characters, to the uranium underground and to the

actions of the people who fought to keep it there, to the style of the book, and to the underlying concerns that motivate much of Donna's work.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* says that to subvert is to "overturn, upset, effect destruction or overthrow of..." During the uranium battle, as in other activities, Donna Smyth was probably accused of being subversive. However she takes a certain pride in that description, and its place in the title of this book is entirely suitable.

If Donna's actions are subversive, so is her writing, in a refreshingly positive way. She has taken the form of the conventional novel, and has combined it with journalism, non-fiction, and personal opinion. The combination makes for a strong book, which I know I will read again. This is a writer's book, an activist's book, and a reader's book.

Subversive Elements, Donna Smyth, Women's Press, 1986, is available at Red Herring Co-op Bookstore and at a Pair of Trindles Bookstore in Halifax.

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Joanne Jefferson is a Halifax writer who's involved in Pandora and other feminist activities.



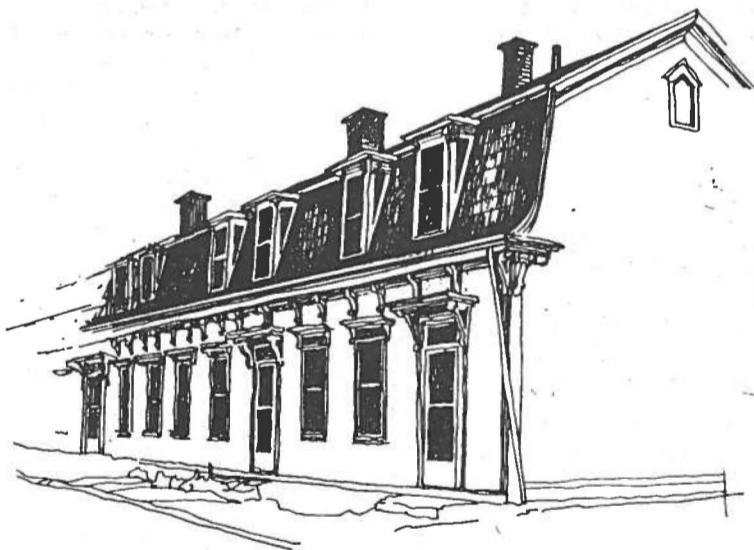
Pride of Home

Judith Meyrick

Pride of Home: The Working Class Housing Tradition in Nova Scotia, 1749-1944 by Joann Latremouille is a book about the development of architecture in the working class homes in Nova Scotia, and of how CMHC, in its efforts to expand the housing stock and provide cheaper housing in Nova Scotia, hastened the demise of traditional and uniquely Nova Scotian housing traditions.

While *Pride of Home* is by a landscape architect, about architecture, it is in fact a history of housing styles, of summer and winter kitchens, of company towns, and of the massive rebuilding of Halifax in the aftermath of the Halifax Explosion.

The text is richly illustrated with drawings by Joan Rentoul and photographs by Kathleen Flanagan. *Pride of Home* will be in bookstores December, 1986.



The "Carpenter Gothic" house (left) was photographed on the South Shore of Nova Scotia by Kathleen Flanagan. Row housing in Pictou, NS (above) as depicted by Joan Rentoul.

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Women's lives in Nicaragua

Betty Watts

The plane circled and came in slowly over Managua while thousands of lights beckoned from the city. Slowly I absorbed the fact that in a few minutes I would see Jennifer, my daughter, who is a CUSO cooperant and Richard Donald, whose mother was travelling with me.

Richard, also a CUSO cooperant, and Jennifer took time to be with us. Their careful timing and intimate knowledge of the country made our trip very personal and special.

There was a constant wet rain or drizzle as we travelled by jeep to Fundadora, a state-run coffee plantation. We stopped on the mountain road to see the spectacular scenery and then walked into a field. Women with bits and pieces of plastic tied around their heads and shoulders went from plant to plant bending over and inserting fertilizer near the roots. Cold, wet, monotonous work.

Further on two medical attendants were happy to show us through a clinic. It's housed in a wooden building with basic facilities. A little girl of about three was brought in by her mother, both lightly dressed and wet. She looked so sick. She was diagnosed, given some medicine and walked out again into the rain — I couldn't bear to think how far.

Another child of about three had been treated for worms and vomiting. Once again mother and child left with medicine to walk some distance. We stood and watched in our warm clothes, boots and ponchos and I was overwhelmed by their enormous needs and my immediate and total sense of inadequacy.

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Many of the daycares in Nicaragua are established near where mothers work and this was no exception. The building was a well built wooden structure, roomy, clean and well planned. There were groups for each age group, good bathroom facilities and a nice kitchen. I was interested to note bright Fisher Price toys, crayons and paints.

Across the road was the very large barn-like building where the initial processing of the

coffee beans takes place. In one area were the tanks and sorting machinery. The next area was a large kitchen with earthen floor and primitive facilities.

The stove in the centre of the kitchen was a large, black, rectangular box. It was stoked with burning wood and the smoke poured into the kitchen. The tortillas were being cooked on the stove's flat top. The long, hard hours spent in this kitchen present a very real health hazard to these women. It's been discovered that the smoke causes a gradual loss of vision and eventual blindness.

Work is being done on the introduction of smokeless stoves that can be made locally. Women will be taught about and encouraged to use these at home and hopefully they'll be introduced into the work place.

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Inability to speak Spanish was, in retrospect, not an unmitigated handicap. Communicating became sharing and knowing without words. Women and children had a real gift for meeting you on this emotional level.

On a solitary five a.m. walk through the beautiful pacific coastal village of Poneloya I had the sense of total immersion in the environment.

A young European woman and I sat for awhile as she painted some of the beauty she was seeing and experiencing on the beach at dawn.

Later, I walked some distance with an elderly woman as she carried a large jug along the road. We were as comfortable together as old friends and parted with a smile and hug — no impediments like words half understood.

At the hotel an extremely thin woman leaned on a verandah rail quietly sobbing. It seemed so natural to stand for awhile with my arm around her shoulders before I

walked on.

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The continuing Contra activity is drastically curtailing any improvement in the daily life of Nicaraguan families. Great strides have been made in education and health care but women still have long days of hard monotonous work.

With few exceptions everywhere we went from the smallest houses to the hotel in

stove on a stand beside a water barrel. felt Campesino women often wash by the side of a stream.

Our state of the art machines need bleaches and boosters and stain sprays and extra power powders and special cycles with hot and cold water. I pessimistically decided that Nicaraguan women will be bending their backs over their sinks for a long time. For me they became a symbol of the terrible drain of him.



Deveric

Poneloya, clothes were washed in cement laundry sinks. In the front yards, backyards or courtyards they sit with a barrel of water nearby or a tap — solid, heavy, unmovable. Surely designed by men for women's work.

They resemble tables, about three by four feet and four inches deep. The bottom is ridged cement and slightly slanted to the drain hole. On the side is a bar of soap — often homemade and a precious commodity.

A plastic bowl is used to dip and wet the clothes, dip and rinse and dip and rinse again and again as clothes are kneaded on the ridges. They are then wrung by hand and hung in or out according to the season.

We saw women without sinks using a

women's energy in everyday drudgery.

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A highlight of our trip was a visit to Dona Carmen in Esteli. Jennifer had lived with Carmen and her family while she attended language school.

When we arrived in Nicaragua, a response to an introduction was "Ah, mothers are revered in Nicaragua!" Meeting Carmen as a person and knowing some of her story gave me a good appreciation of why this is so.

Carmen's welcome was warm and affectionate. Five daughters, a son and five grandchildren were at home that day. We sat and listened as Carmen told Jennifer about how weak she and her daughters sometimes

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Resources for learning

Groups:

Deveric Development Education Resource and Information Centre at 1649 Barrington St., Suite 300, Halifax N.S. B3J 3J1, 902-429-1370. Films, videos, books (for loan), files, programs. Volunteers welcome.

The Latin America Information Group is a voluntary association of individuals who support the struggles of Latin America's poor and oppressed. Contact LAIG through Deveric at 429-1370.

Tools for Peace is a community-based national coalition of church groups, unions, solidarity committees, co-operatives and women's organizations designed to provide Nicaragua with needed material aid. Contact Peggy Mathews at 835-0138.

Radio

The Latin Quarter, a 15 minute program of news, views, culture and commentary on Latin America presented weekly on CKDU by the Latin America Information Group. 97.5 FM Tuesdays at 5:45 or tapes of previous shows at Deveric.

Videos

Manzana por Manzana. Canada, 1984. Producers: Mary Ann Yanulis, Eric Schultz, John Greyson. 35 min., colour. This portrait of the city of

Esteli introduces the vast forces of reconstruction in northern Nicaragua to the viewer.

Women: All One Nation. Canada, 1985. Produced for MATCH by Asterick Productions. 28 min. Through film stills on video, a detailed overview is provided of women's global inequality and makes connections between the concerns of women in industrialized nations and in developing countries.

Slide Tape Show

Basta Ya. U.S. 1983. 25 min. "Enough already" is the slogan of many Central American women as they struggle with poverty, machismo, and the threat of war.

Books

Letters from Nicaragua. A collection of letters from Rebecca Gordon, a lesbian feminist who spent six months in Nicaragua working as a Witness for Peace.

Nicaragua — A New Kind of Revolution. Interviews with 45 people from all walks of life, by Philip Zwerling and Connie Martin.

Nicaragua: What Difference Could a Revolution Make? An analysis of food and farming in the new Nicaragua, by Joseph Collins with Frances Moore Lappe, Nick Allen and Paul Rice.

Books at Deveric

Central American Women Speak for Themselves. This book covers a wide variety of materials regarding the role of women in the chang-

ing societies of Nicaragua.

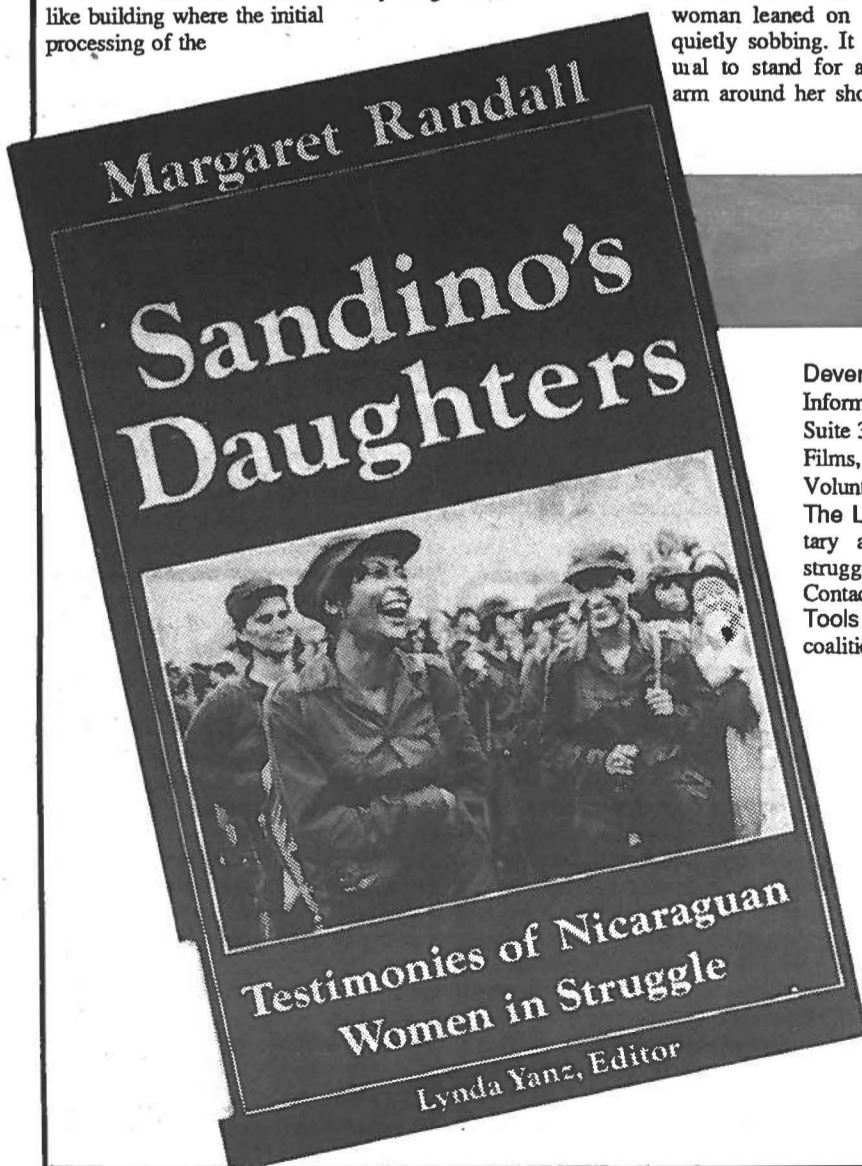
Sweet Ramparts: Women in Nicaragua by Jane Dutton. A detailed overview of all major aspects of women in revolutionary contrast in women's lives affairs before 1979.

La Mujer en las Cooperativas en Nicaragua. MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE describes the role of cooperatives in the new Nicaragua. Margaret Randall, Margaret.

Sandino's Daughter: Nicaraguan Women in Struggle. A collection of testimonies of women who fought and lived through the revolution, which is based on their experiences shortly after the Nicaraguan Women's Movement.

Women: All One Nation. Contains various aspects of Nicaraguan history which have influenced women, as well as their current lives and struggles.

Women in Development: A collection of questions regarding the role of women in the change-



agua

elt because of the food shortages and limited diet. She was especially concerned because her daughter was breast feeding.

Carmen is a member of the Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs which is a group of women who have had sons or daughters killed in the fighting. Carmen's son died fighting in Esteli before Somoza fled and the barrio where she lives is named after him. She is bringing up his son, Jorge.

We accompanied Carmen and Jorge to their community centre, a rich family home in Somoza time.

Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs were coming in to plan their participation in the July 19 celebration.

It was a very moving time to mingle with these women, greeting each other with tears, united by their common bond of having lost a child in the struggle.

Just after we left Nicaragua, three young European volunteers were murdered by the Contra. The young Frenchman's mother had come from France to visit him and arrived in time to attend his funeral in Matagalpa.

This mother and the Nicaraguan women attending that funeral would be so much a part of what the women's peace movement talks about when they describe the strong sense of utility of losing children to war that is shared by women around the world.

I'll always treasure the memories of being with Jennifer and sharing with her the living conditions and the encounters with people who are part of her life and work.

~~~~~

Betty Watts is a community health nurse in Halifax and is a member of the Inter-Church Committee for World Development Education



Deborah Barnot photo

## Revolution first priority

Colleen Edmonds

The revolution of 1979 released women from more than the Somoza dictatorship. It provided the opportunity for food for their families, an education for themselves, jobs outside the home, and health care. Being the poorest of the poor, women benefited disproportionately from these changes.

Women organized and fought for the FSLN (Sandinista Front for the National Liberation) from the late 60's. In 1977, women formed the Association of Nicaraguan Women Confronting the Nation's Problems (AMPRONOC). This

became a strong movement uniting country and city women together in the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship. By the time of the revolution women had become politically active in their neighbourhoods through their

able contribution to the lives of other people. For the peasant women, the brigadistas provided an opportunity for an education, previously only a dream for them. The literacy campaign served as an example of women taking

people with ideas and accomplishments, and to realize their new society can mean equality for women.

Nicaraguans now expect to be part of the political process in their country and women are determined to become fully integrated in this process. The use of political analysis to create a fairer society has demonstrated to women that personal relations are political relations.

AMNLAE has begun to address issues beyond the integration of women in defence and production for the reconstruction of Nicaragua. Women's issues such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, inequality in divorce laws and unequal access for women to training and employment are now being

organization of demonstrations, meetings and petitions for the release of political prisoners, they had joined the students' movement and they were in active combat. After the revolution, women recognized that they had a new goal — to involve women in the work of rebuilding their country.

The women formed a new organization, AMNLAE, the Nicaraguan Women's Association, Luisa Amanda Espinoza. Luisa was killed by the National Guard in April, 1970 at the age of 21; she was the first woman FSLN combatant to die fighting the dictatorship.

Glenda Monterrey, secretary of AMNLAE, describes her as "both brave and humble, dedicated to the struggle and identified with the people. The organization's name honoured her and carried her memory as an example to all women." AMNLAE strives to include women in every aspect of the reconstruction of Nicaragua, and to ensure their equality with men.

Women were vital to the Literacy Campaign. In the cities, women who could read taught their neighbours who could not. In the country, 36,000 teenage city women taught as literacy brigadistas.

The young women experienced the hardships of peasant life, formed friendships with the peasant women, and realized that they were able to make a valu-

charge, making decisions and contributing to society in ways they had never thought possible.

Nicaraguans must defend themselves and their homes against contra attack. Women are members of the voluntary militia and of the local defence councils; they take turns patrolling neighbourhoods at night as part of surveillance against contra attack.

The revolution of 1979 was a social revolution. Machismo tradition places women as the property of men, to serve men in their home and to produce children. Women made themselves a necessary part of the revolution — and in campaigning, organizing and fighting, they gained skills, took responsibilities, and met other people working for social reform.

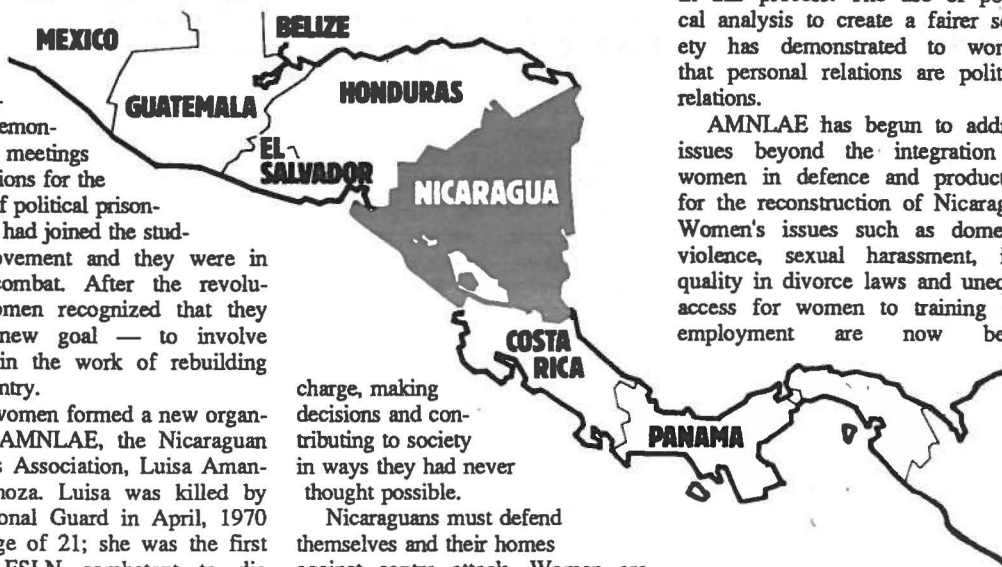
The social, ideological and political changes and the new commitment to provide for the majority, have provided an environment in which change in social relationships is possible. Women are beginning to see themselves as

discussed. Several laws aimed at ensuring women's equality have already been passed. Laws now prohibit the use of women's bodies to sell products, require fathers to help support their children, and provide equal pay for equal work.

The contra war has, however, meant that women's first priority must be the protection of the revolution, their only guarantee of future changes. With the escalation of the contra war, the energy of the women of Nicaragua is increasingly directed towards survival. For Nicaraguan women, the struggle for equality must be just a part of the struggle to survive.

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Colleen Edmonds is a member of the Latin America Information Group and Tools for Peace.



ning

Nicaragua, El Salvador, and

Women in Revolutionary Deighton provides a description of the crucial role of many Nicaraguans, stressing the lives now with the state of

Cooperativas Agropecuarias DINRA: This book (in Spanish) of women in agricultural Nicaragua.

er: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Struggle. A history of the and won the Nicaraguan revolution on interviews with many the 1979 victory.

in: Unlearning the Alphabet contains a number of essays on of Nicaraguan society and influenced the lives of Nicaragua as descriptions of how they as today.

ment: a Resource Guide for Action. This guide answers the role of women in developmental companies, food communications and education.

n in the Third World: Com-

parative Perspectives. Examines the determinants, nature and outcomes of women's education in developing countries, focusing on the undereducation of women in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Church and Women in the Third World. Discusses the relationship between the church and women within the various contexts in developing countries and how it evolved, and the impact the church has had on the status of women in general.

Five Studies on the Situation of Women in Latin America. Much of the documentation contained here describes development projects in Latin America concerned with achieving concrete, specific improvements in the living conditions of women there.

Third World — Second Sex: Women's Struggles and National Liberation; Third World Women Speak Out. The goals and activities of women's organizations from over 20 developing countries are described. In many cases these are linked with national struggles.

Women in Development: a Resource Guide for Organization and Action. This handbook analyzes the central issues of women's participation in development, drawing illustrations from case studies. Recommendations are made for changing and strengthening the roles of women in the development process.

For more information: 429-1370

Privilege silences poor womyn

Darl Wood

Capitalism in the Halifax's Womyn's movement is alive and doing very nicely, thank you. What happens to a womyn who has no money to support her political habits and what has happened to that movement when it is more acceptable to talk of third world oppression than it is to talk about personal privilege and class behaviour here?

Truthfully, I've had it up to here (approximately my eye brows) with class theories without looking at behaviour.

Privileged womyn in the "community" oppress other low income womyn with middle class ideals and behaviour. Example •A womyn I know sat securely in her spacious home with enough room to house three families and was bewildered about why lesbians, blacks, and poor womyn were not coming out to IWD organizing meetings to make sure their particular issues are represented.

•A womyn making over thirty thousand dollars a year, from an upper middle class background, arrogantly told me poverty is "rel-

ative".

Privileged womyn's sense of superiority is bought and paid for by the accumulated bits and pieces of souls of the poor. They have politically correct lines to follow, but there is all too often an unhealthy gap between motivations and actions. On a daily basis, their attitude and behaviour, I find, are oppressive to low income women. The most insidious of these are the "I may have come from a middle class background, but as a womyn I'm oppressed, too," syndrome... or,

the "I made it on my own" myth.

Well, class is not only how much money you do or do not have relative to everyone else.

It is the way you see the rest of the world, how and where you are educated, how you act towards people, and what assumptions you have about life, your experience and your expectations of self and others. The way you think, feel, and act make up your pattern of class behaviour.

Your class is the way you look, how you are able to articulate your thoughts, your clothing, your carriage, your money, your power, your attitudes, the right kinds of employment, your opportunities, and where you are in the male pecking order. It also includes what spirituality group you are welcomed into, what stores or vegetarian restaurants you frequent, as well as who you just hang out with.

Why not be honest and admit it when you are privileged and stop the song and dance. Life takes on a very different outlook when even the necessities of life, food, shelter, and clothing overshadow political effort.

For the poor there are no expectations of, let alone thoughts of, savings for old age, clothing that is not from Frenchies, and for vacations. So for low-income womyn there can be no expectation of the upward mobility or aerobics of the nouveau-yuppie feminist activists.

We've already heard in recent editions of Pandora that there are womyn in this city going hungry to feed their children and womyn who are forced to take real risks to their well-being because they're living the reality of poverty, and the few dollars they have become of primary importance for food and shelter.

Privileged womyn, that is, working womyn with money, middle class and upper class womyn, can afford to put a lot of energy into safe issues that aren't practical actions that involve giving

up personal privilege — issues that don't involve money.

While womyn are freezing to death in abandoned cars and homes and old womyn have nothing to eat but animal food, middle and upper class womyn are talking porn and censorship. Important, yes, but where are the real priorities? Economics has to be a top priority.

When a poor womyn speaks up, you multiply her voice by a thousand because in this society everything works against her to silence her.

You can't expect welfare womyn, black womyn, and lesbians who are in vulnerable positions to turn up at IWD meetings to try to make their causes priorities. Poor womyn are the most heroic womyn I know. They are strong, they are active, and the price for them to speak is 100 times the cost of womyn of privilege.

Why aren't womyn who "have" putting their money where their mouth is?

What I am saying is: share your money, your property, your access to jobs, your skills, your information, especially on health care. When a low income womyn is depressed, sick, or just plain exhausted from the oppression of society, what are her options? Meditation at a \$200 intro fee, aerobics at the YWCA, alternative health care and stress management not covered by government health plans? Or more likely a trip across the harbour to the Nova Scotia Hospital and shock treatments?

Poor womyn don't have the money or time to spend years in self-help groups to get in touch with their feelings. The reality of bread and butter poverty cuts through the shit.

How can poor womyn see feminism being for them when the status quo is being held up by the Womyn's Movement? If the Movement is classist, then it is patriarchal, and as long as womyn refuse to deal with their class behaviour (and I don't mean analysis) then the Movement is not going to be terribly helpful to low income womyn.

We poor womyn have had all the meetings and analyses we can handle. What we need is action, your action to change your behaviour. We need to be out on the streets yelling and screaming and making people uncomfortable — creating disturbances. It is one way to get the concessions we deserve. The MUMS have shown us that.

So what I say to womyn of privilege is: take responsibility for your classism, racism, and heterosexism; make the connections and be aware that your behaviour is oppressive to low income womyn, even in the fact that you have money that they don't have. Remember, your privilege in this society is tenuous at best.

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Darl Wood is a Nova Scotian writer who is working on her second book. Her latest research is on womyn and poverty in the womyn's community. She would like to thank Arlene Mantle and May Ocean for help in writing this article.



Alison Brewin and Zab — the able MCs

photo by Lori Meserve

Patchwork centre stage with Connie

Patchwork is a community-based women's resource centre in Halifax. Many women in the community worked together on a benefit for the centre. On October 19, Connie Kaldor, Doris Mason and Lulu Keating performed at Queen Elizabeth High School.

Patchwork would like to congratulate everyone who was involved with the success of the concert. Although the event was not a huge financial success (\$275), the evening was a pleasure for everyone.

The energy of the performers and the warmth of the audience were empowering. A heartfelt thank you to the committee for a difficult job well done.

Patchwork will be offering lunchtime films every Thursday for six weeks starting January 22. Subjects include young women, image and women in society, older women and native women.

For further information drop by the basement at 1247 Seymour St. or call Patchwork at 424-2526.



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Second in a series on housing shelters

Feminist approach struggles within hierarchical structure

Elizabeth Bosma

While working last spring at Collins House, a shelter for women and their children, I struggled with the contradictions between the role of the "professional" and my beliefs as a feminist.

Contrary to my social work training, I consciously tried to abandon all notions of professionalism. I especially had problems with the cardinal rule: maintain a professional distance; do not identify with the client.

In order to 'maintain a distance' between myself and the women who stayed at Collins House I would have had to deny our shared experiences as women in a sexist society.

Professionalism sets up a hierarchy of power where there is a distinction made between the expert and the client. This sets up an unequal power relationship which can prevent women from seeing and acting on the power that lies within themselves.

In many ways, emergency shelters like Collins, Adsum, and Bryony House challenge these notions of professionalism and are alternatives to the traditionally

themselves feminist, still, compared to other agencies, Bryony House operates from a feminist perspective.

"When a woman comes to Bryony House, the women's account of the battering situation is always considered valid and true. If she went to another agency they would probably say that the relationship is the problem or that the woman is just imaging the problem."

Feminism has influenced the running of Bryony House in other areas. Staff can bring infants to work and are reimbursed for taxi-fares if finishing or beginning work at 12 am. As well, Bryony House staff are all women.

Norma Proffitt says an all-woman staff is important because it's often the first time women who stay at Bryony see women making decisions and doing repairs.

Sister Virginia Turner, past director of Adsum House, (the Association for Women's Residential Facilities), says the women who volunteer at Adsum House support the women who stay at the house.

"The women who work and live at Adsum House share the same heritage by virtue of our gender. We,

decisions. That is, we use consensus decision-making rather than using a more formal way of conducting a meeting, such as Robert's Rules of Order."

Bishop admits it's difficult to balance the need for political action and the need to provide a service when an organization is not financed independently.

"There is always a lot of tension between outside funding agencies and an alternative agency. As money gets tighter, it gets more and more difficult to uphold a commitment to alternative ideals."

Bishop says the challenge facing staff and board members at Collins House has been how to empower women while living in a sexist patriarchal society where working within a hierarchy is the accepted way of doing things.

"Collins House staff does not work as a collective. When I was director of Collins House, the buck very clearly stopped at my desk. This isn't to say I didn't actively consult staff. I tried to ensure that with each person's areas of responsibility I let them go to it."

Norma Proffitt shares a similar dilemma. Trying to remain faithful to feminist process is tricky when you are executive director and close to the top of the hierarchy.

"I'm in a very odd position. If I am a feminist, I'm in a role that is not conducive to a collective or non-hierarchical feminist process. All I can do is take what I believe as a feminist and somehow use that within the context of this position."

The hierarchical relationship between board, staff and residents sometimes makes it difficult to get information from the residents to the board and vice versa. Proffitt says

that without regular input there is a danger that staff and residents can feel alienated from the decision-making process.

Women who come to Bryony House may be experiencing a relatively egalitarian environment for the first time. But for many women who leave a battering situation, the shelter's rules and policies can seem more like another form of control.

Tracy White, a Bryony ex-resident, and an active MUMS member, says sometimes the rules are hard to swallow.

"It's hard to follow rules when you've had no input in creating them in the first place.



All those everyday tasks of parenting get done no matter where mother and child are! Gail Howell fixes Amanda's hair after a bath, ready for bedtime at Collins House. (photo by Lori J. Meserve)



Caroline Askew cradles her son André during a conversation with staff member Rose Raftus at Collins House. (photo by Lori J. Meserve)

managed, structured organizations. Still, the houses are limited by a hierarchical decision-making structure which puts residents on the bottom of that hierarchy.

There is some degree of democratic input from staff and residents: staff have an equal say at staff meetings; residents have weekly meetings, and can express dissatisfaction with the operation of the house; and staff and the board take their opinions into consideration.

Norma Proffitt, executive director of Bryony House, says although half the board of directors (the Halifax Transition House Association), wouldn't consider

too, (as workers) are oppressed, although the face of our oppression may be different from the women who stay at Adsum. When we as women can share that with the women who live here, the bonding that happens really throws away any worries we may have about power imbalances."

Elaine Bishop, past director of Collins house, maintains that the Women's Emergency Housing Coalition began very clearly as a feminist organization.

"The Women's Emergency Housing Coalition is committed to meeting the needs of homeless women. I think feminism influenced the way the board makes

"I realize that a woman's stay at Bryony House can be no more than 8 weeks, so it would be impossible to change the rules every time a new group of women came in. But there must be a way where women who use the house could have more say about how the house is run."

White says she has problems with the daily log journal in which staff write down messages and observations of daily events around the house.

"As a resident you have no control over what goes into the log. I don't have any input on staff's character, so why do they have the right to do it to me?"

Leigh Anderson, an ex-resident of Collins House, says despite staff's unconditional support, there is still a power imbalance between staff and residents which puts residents in an inferior position.

"There is a gulf between the women who work at the house and the women who live at the house. For residents, it's like living under a microscope. It's frustrating to know your being analyzed," says Anderson.

Tracy says one way to reduce the distance between board, staff, and residents is for Board members to work a shift at Bryony House to see how the residents live.

Tracy says it's important that at least half of Bryony House staff come from a battering situation because life experience is important.

In the United Kingdom, for example, most refuges for battered women are run by women who had been battered.

The struggle for an egalitarian structure has been an integral part of the beginnings of Bryony House.

Mary Morrissey, one of the original members of the Halifax Transition House Association which

started Bryony house, says outside pressures from conservative funding agencies leave transition houses no choice but to conform to more traditionally structured services.

"In order to be able to apply for funding, boards often try to attract professionals. Unfortunately, these people tend to have a more conservative outlook. As a result we often give up our contacts in the community in order to have a board that is credible to our funding sources," says Morrissey.

And what money these shelters are able to squeeze from the pockets of government is never enough. Adsum, Bryony, and Collins are all underfunded, leaving them struggling much of the time to make ends meet.

"It's a catch-22. Because of the lack of funding, transition houses are scrambling for resources just to survive. Consequently, they don't have any time to look at other issues that affect battered women's lives. When Bryony House first started, the focus was on women working with each other. It was more of a solidarity movement. But very quickly the board got caught up with more management concerns," says Morrissey.

And that's exactly what the government wants.

As long as these shelters are individually fighting for adequate funding and do not join together, they will continue to be financially vulnerable. And without the time or the financial independence to look at the limits of their structure, shelters for women may be heading in a more conservative direction.

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Elizabeth Bosma is a relief worker at Bryony House while continuing to slug away at the Maritime School of Social Work.

Birth mothers meet to share experience

**Teresa Kilbride
Lori-Anne Muzzerall
with oodles of help
from Cheryl Downton**

Birth Mother. Natural Mother. Images of fullness, life, nurturing, bonding, joy and suffering may come to mind when you hear these expressions. Birthmother — sounds noble, strong.

Really though, a woman is called a birthmother only when when she places her child for adoption.

There are few words that adequately describe how a birthmother feels. Most often though, there are feelings of grief, guilt, anxiety, isolation, conflict of identity, anger and confusion.

It is fair to say that none of us comes through the experience feeling whole.

On the surface it may seem that we have a choice as to whether to keep or place our children. But, for some of us, adoption is the only choice.

Some patterns have shifted over the years and more women are now able to choose abortion or are keeping their children. However, a single, pregnant woman is still at the mercy of societal forces that decree that she must take responsibility.

Single mothers pay a high price for daring to raise their children alone. We, as birthmothers, offer our own particular agony. Either way, we are punished, whereas under more favourable circumstances, our motherhood would be cause for celebration. We now know that some of these feelings could be alleviated by change within the adoption system.

There are countless women who are birthmothers. Perhaps you know one. We come from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances. There is never just one reason why we place our children for adoption. Each of us has her own very complex story to tell.

Lori-Anne's Story

In the mid 1970's, during my first year of college, I became pregnant — a totally unplanned and unwelcomed event.

My first reaction to this news was that I would have to marry the baby's father. Although we had been together four years, it was a destructive and unloving relationship. The pregnancy made me realize that I did not want to marry this person and, in fact, I was wishing for the courage to finally break it off.

At first, I assumed I would keep my baby as that option was becoming much more acceptable. Late in my pregnancy the emotional havoc of my own life made me realize that keeping my child would be wrong for both of us. I was unable to take care of my own well-being — I could not take on the responsibility of another person.

In addition, I wondered if I would ever be free of the father if I kept my baby. At the same time, none among my family and friends offered me the support I needed in order to choose to keep my baby.

With these fears and concerns in mind, I chose to give my baby, a daughter, up for adoption.

The phrase, "gave up for adop-

tion" exactly describes the situation for me — I gave up and surrendered to the seemingly insurmountable obstacles to my becoming a mother.

Over the ensuing 10 years, I have continued to believe that adoption was the best choice, but certain things I have learned about being a birthmother have left me feeling angry and questioning the adoption system.

I realized that, contrary to attitudes I had encountered from friends and family, society does not generally value the decision to surrender a baby for adoption. The feelings held by society range from misunderstanding and discomfort, to open hostility.

On the part of other women, there seems to be an inability to relate to birthmothers — as seen in the all too common reaction, "it's very unselfish; I know I could never do it".

In giving up my daughter for adoption, I believed I would be protecting her from the destructive relationship between her father and I as well as the hostility between our two families.

I did not want her to become one more weapon in our battle. I thought the secrecy surrounding adoption would protect her, at least until adulthood, when she would be better prepared to handle it.

I was surprised and upset to learn that some adopted children experience feelings of rejection, anger, insecurity and confusion.

I am now painfully aware that my feelings of insecurity, inadequacy and childlikeness are somehow connected to the experience of surrendering my daughter for adoption.

The secrecy of adoption exacerbates the problem. I am the untrustworthy outsider who must always be kept at a safe distance, for fear of the havoc that I would bring into the life of the child I once let go.

This absence of trust on the part of the "adoption system" keeps me, in a way, "a child". The guilt that I have for surrendering my daughter to the unknown, for abdicating my responsibility, contributes to my feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, and affects my life even now.

My experience has led me to believe that with more openness in adoption, some of anguish and pain of birthmothers could be alleviated.

Certainly, to know that you are accepted and, more importantly, trusted by the adoptive parents — to the point that there is an ongoing exchange of information — would enable me to resolve the guilt that comes from choosing not to mother my child.

Teresa's Story

It is difficult for me to share with the world what remains the most painful, yet significant time of my life. But I believe that it is vital for me to speak — to reach out — so that others might find the strength to do so.



The Next Step welcomes support from all women. We are not an exclusive group. If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact T. Kilbride at Veith House, 3115 Veith Street, Halifax, N.S. or 453-4320.

Six years ago, following a series of crises, I found myself travelling down a road that led to certain destruction. I sought out the company of strangers in order to avoid dealing with my pain.

Caution was the last thing on my mind. Self-esteem was at an all time low. When I found out I was pregnant, it was as if I'd been dealt the final blow.

I moved quickly, blocking out my feelings. Virtually everything that belonged to my previous life was left behind. It wasn't until I was about seven months pregnant that I let my guard down and began feeling again. I was paralysed with fear and confusion. It was then I realized that I couldn't keep my child. I felt sure we couldn't survive together.

I loved my child — as much as I was able to love anyone at the time. But despite my love, there was a persistent voice inside me that said I must forego motherhood for the sake of my child and myself. To articulate this then was impossible. The voice was a part of that was unfamiliar, and I had no idea what it all meant.

The bottom line was survival. Financially we would have struggled, but that was not the issue. I felt that I had nothing to offer my child. It seemed that everywhere I turned my sense of inadequacy was reinforced.

I knew that I was not ready to be a mother. It took a long time to admit that I chose adoption not just for my child but for myself as well.

My son was born on a hot summer day with lilacs in full bloom. He was so beautiful, so fragile. To let him go was to deny my love for him, and so some-

thing died for me that day.

The pain was unbearable. But, by the time I signed adoption papers I had, out of necessity, buried my feelings. There was no room for my grief.

Minimal involvement in the placing of my child compounded my feelings of worthlessness and isolation.

For years I struggled to keep my feelings for my son locked inside, not realizing that I needed help. Other areas of my life were working out fairly well but I had frequent, uncontrollable outbursts of grief, anger and guilt. I never felt whole and attempted, in all kinds of inappropriate ways, to fill the void left by my son.

In the summer of 1984, I initiated a self-help program for birthmothers called The Next Step. Since that time I have come a long way. I now know that my feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-respect are directly linked to my adoption experience.

Contact with my son's adoptive family has been instrumental in my healing, but without support from others, I wouldn't have had the courage to ask for it.

Because of my own experience and what I have learned from other birthmothers, I feel strongly that change is needed in the "adoption system" so that others do not suffer needlessly. I am determined to fight for that change.

The Next Step has grown from a small support group to a very active community resource. We offer one-to-one counselling, as well as group support. Referrals have come from across the province, as have requests for speakers.

Last Spring we presented a brief to the Task Force on the Family strongly advocating for more open and humane adoption legislation. As it stands now, only non-identifying information may be given to those involved.

Open adoption was once an option in this province, but in 1984, the Department of Social Services declared that all adoptions (excluding private or in-family) must be closed.

However, there is a sense in adoption circles that doors are beginning to open. Adoptive parents are expressing a willingness for more communication. Some social workers have expressed frustration because of the limitations imposed on them.

We, as birthmothers are beginning to speak out. We believe that adoption can be a positive alternative, but only if women are truly given a choice, are treated with respect and fully trusted, and are given the opportunity to be actively involved in the adoption process.

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Lori-Ann lives in Dartmouth with her husband and three children. She works at the Halifax City Regional Library and has been involved with The Next Step for two years.

Teresa Kilbride is the co-ordinator of The Next Step, lives in Halifax with her cat, Mulligan, and is a community worker at Veith House.

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Big Mountain — Flagstaff Arizona

Hopi-Diné Neighbourship Gathering

Peggi Thayer

I take this opportunity to thank you for your support and assistance which enabled me to do volunteer work for the Big Mountain Legal Defence Committee (BMLDOC) in Arizona this past summer.

Prevented for financial reasons from returning this fall, I do intend to go back in the spring for an indefinite period, for the work of the Committee is far from over.

Even though the deadline for the relocation of the Diné People (Navaho), is passed, nothing has changed in terms of the law — the People must still move and there is no discussion of repeal.

Because of the failures of relocating people to border towns, the government now seeks a solution in the form of a land exchange, moving the People to lands in South-East Arizona.

Unacceptable to the People because of their religious ties to the homeland they occupy, it is further an unacceptable, irresponsible, and even criminal option due to the fact that the water source on the 'new lands' is the Rio Puerco River which is contaminated from up to 35 years of uranium mining by United Nuclear and Kerr-McGee directly upstream.

The BMLDOC attorneys are currently working on a lawsuit for repeal of the relocation law based on the First Amendment Freedom of Religion which will challenge the constitutionality of forced relocation. This case will be a precedent.

A highlight of my trip was the Hopi-Diné Neighbourship event, a Spiritual gathering of the Peoples in remembrance of a Spiritual Pact made between them in the 1600's, to live in peace with one another.

Traditional Hopi, for the first time, were given the opportunity to tell the world about their stance against relocation in a via-satellite press conference from the BMLDOC office the day after

the gathering.

These photos were taken at a feast following the press conference, which the BMLDOC staff had the distinct pleasure of preparing for the People. They had fed us many, many times in our meetings on the Land.

I am very proud to play a part in helping these amazing peoples to protect the Earth ... but more help is badly needed. Please phone 454-8450 for information.



Above, Hopi spokeswoman Marilyn Harris told me (left) "... don't cry — smile and pray... and keep working"

Above left and near left, Hopi elders of the womans' society. Hopi women have their own language.

Far left, Diné Verna Tullie, "our gathering was blessed with the female rain, the soft rain that said it was a good day."

Danny blackgoat (background), "we are tired of government harassment."

Below left, Dakota entertainer Floyd Westerman and native comedian Charlie Hill speaking out against development that replaces people: "Relocation... assimilation..."

Below, BMLDOC workers. My daughter Cora (centre) was called "the littlest BimLaDOCer"



photographs
by
Peggi Thayer

Childcare workers — organize!

Our poverty wages, lack of benefits shouldn't subsidize daycare

Bev Lewis

I have been a childcare worker for the past five years. I know what it's like to try to survive on poverty wages. Until this past year, 52 per cent of my income

went into the rent of a slum apartment. Now that I'm living in co-op housing, my standard of living has changed. It requires a fair amount of dedication to be a part of a co-op community, but it's worth it. In the same way, it took a lot of commitment, time and energy to work with other women to found a union. But our members have been very committed because they believe the only way things will change for childcare workers is through one, strong, collective voice. We, as childcare workers, believe we have the right to change our present conditions.

Our union, Canadian Union of Child Educators and Allied Workers, is a small union with few financial resources. We have 14 members and jurisdiction over two centres: University Children's Centre, Dal-

housie Unit and Dartmouth Developmental Centre. We are an independent, Canadian child education union that was born out of necessity because of the conditions governing our workplace. But it was created for each and every childcare worker in this country.

I know that some childcare workers think "I don't need to join a union. My director is a sweetheart, she'd bend over backward for her staff. She gives me a bonus at Christmas. I do have a paid vacation and I do get some sick time. Anyway, our daycare doesn't make any money, so how can they afford to pay me any more than they already are. I love my job. I'll subsidize daycare with my poverty wages and lack of benefits."

We're such martyrs. We're such fools. We don't have to put up with this situation any longer. The majority of us are women, working in a ghettoized situation. We have to assert our rights as working women. It is our right to have a decent living wage. It is our right to have job protection. It is our right to have attractive benefits and pensions. It is our right to have strong maternity clauses to encourage us to go back to work — not to penalize us because we get pregnant.

Right now, CUCEAW is negotiating its first collective agreement. Everything we are trying to get in this contract is important because we are starting with nothing.

We have workers in our union who are making barely \$10,000 a year, with no job security, no grievance procedure, no maternity benefits, no pension plan, and the list goes on. Before the union, we had no control over our workplace. Until we secure a good contract, we will not have the kind of protection we need.

Although we are just novices to the labour movement, we are already establishing positive alliances with other trade unionists and active women's committees. It's refreshing to meet with other women who share the same concerns. Although we are workers in different occupations it is good to know that there are other union sisters who understand the frustrations that one encounters in a new union.

I was surprised, however, to note that during the task force on childcare that met here in Halifax this year, the general community didn't realize the importance of childcare workers to be organized.

It was common consensus that

there should be top quality universal childcare available to all who required the service. But what about the workers who need top quality working conditions and a living wage to produce a successful universal program?

If the workers continue to subsidize the service with their poverty wages, they continue high staff turn-over and burnout. Where is the incentive for the workers to provide the service if they are not being compensated for their education and long hours of dedication and hard work. The only way I see this goal being accomplished is through the unionization of all childcare workers. If you are interested in taking part in or supporting this organization, contact me at 423-2293 for more information.

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I am president of CUCEAW and a single parent with a 13 year old son who has special needs. I can sympathize with parents who are faced with the lack of proper childcare facilities.

Our history

It's been an exciting, sometimes harrowing, two years since women at the University Children's Centre, Dalhousie Unit, first met to discuss unionizing. We had earlier formed the Society of Early Childhood Educators because we wanted staff representation and some say in governing our centre. We wanted self respect and we needed dignity. It's the least you can expect when you're living on poverty wages.

It didn't work out. We were team players, but the captain was still boss, still making all the rules, as in all non-union workplaces. After one of our workers, our staff representative, was terminated, we decided we needed a union — fast.

We had made contact with other unions but we didn't feel comfortable or satisfied with their approach. So, we formed our own. After our experience with a simple "society," we went underground to establish a constitution, print cards and gain our majority.

On December 12, 1984, we had our founding meeting in the board room of the Public Archives. Our union was duly constituted by the majority of employees from our Dalhousie Unit of the University Children's Centre. The very next day, a man from the labour board came in to the centre, informed the management that the staff of the centre were applying for certification as the Canadian Union of Child Educators and Allied Workers.

It was the best Christmas present I ever got when those papers were tacked to the bulletin board notifying the employer that we were bringing in the Union.

On December 20, 1984, the vote was conducted. At the end of January, 1985, we attended the certification hearing before the Labour Relations Board. On February 1, 1985, CUCEAW was certified as the bargaining agent for all employees at the centre.

That July we began negotiations for our first collective agreement. We are still negotiating but hope to conclude negotiations soon. If not, we will be going into conciliation shortly.

Any woman interested in a discussion of

feminist therapy

with a view to either planning a conference on this topic in 1987 or simply getting together with local feminist therapists regularly to provide dialogue and support is asked to contact:

Vicki Wood
76 Shore Road
Dartmouth, N.S.
B3A 1A3
469-1610.

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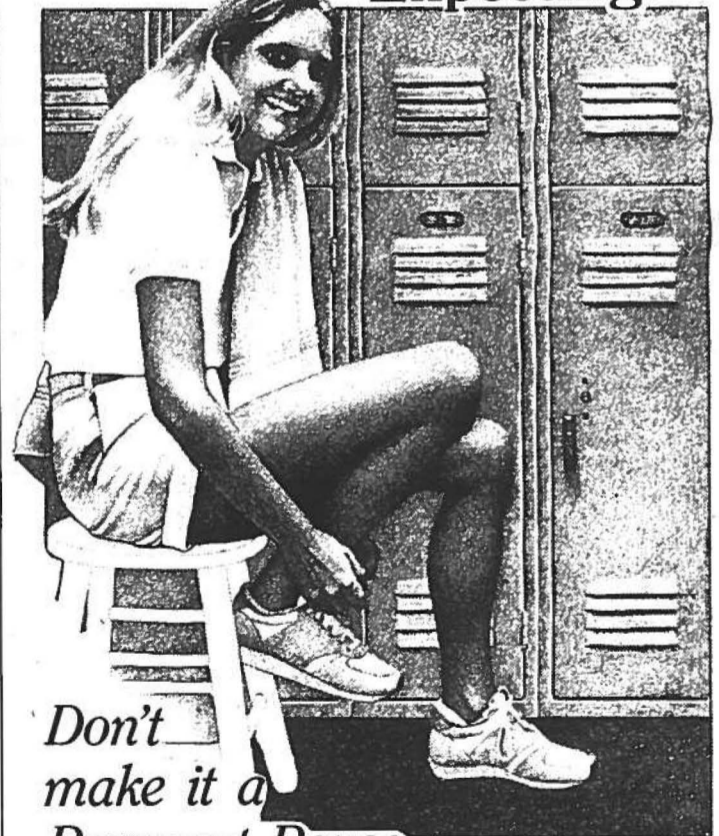
Registration for winter term will take place January 12. For more information see January 10 edition of

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Violence against women

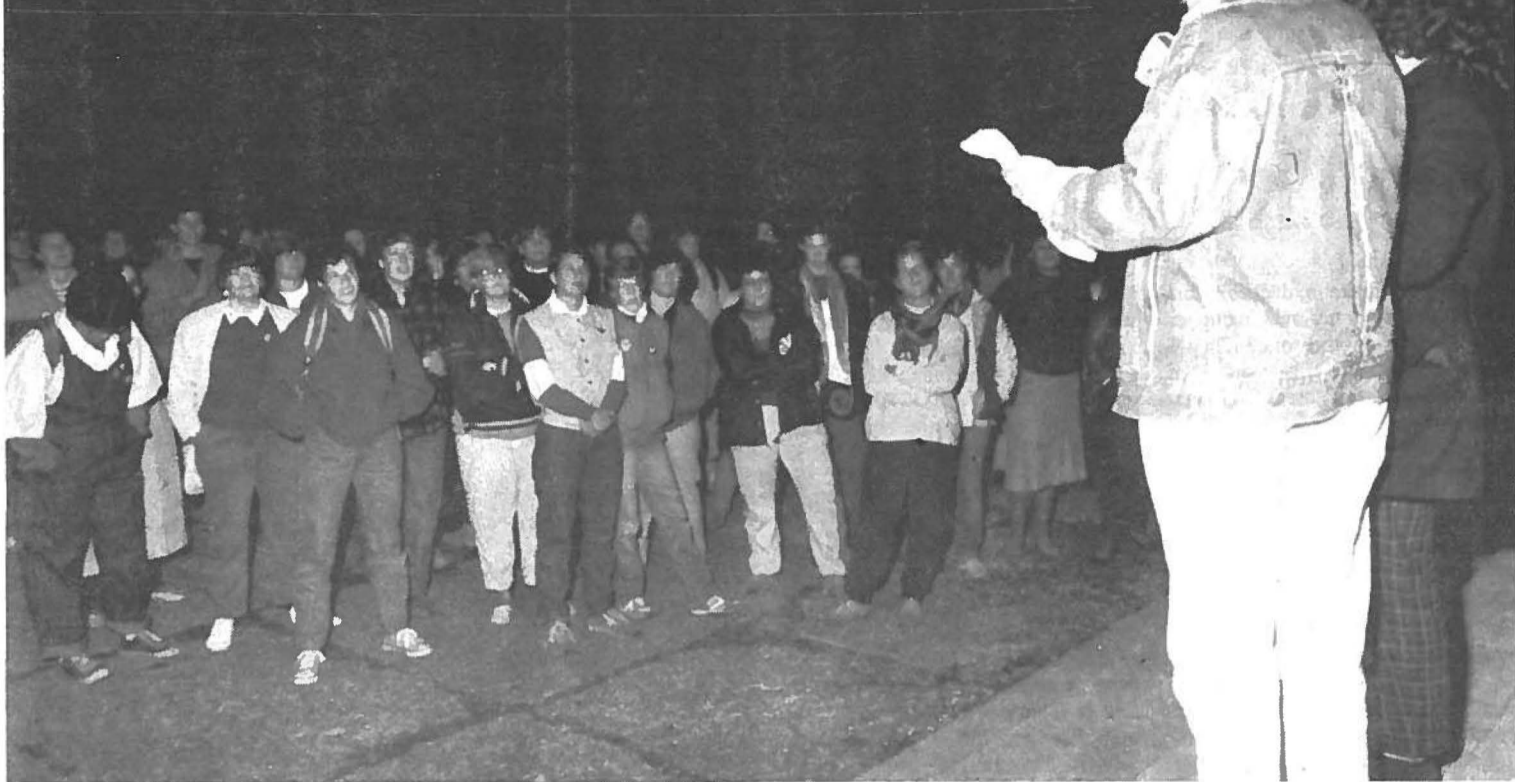


photo by Lori J. Meserve

April date for housing conference

The organizers of the Atlantic Women and Housing Conference are pleased to announce that they have received funding through the Secretary of State, Women's Program, for a portion of the conference costs.

However, due to delays in receiving funds, the event has been re-scheduled for April 2 — 5, 1987. It will be held at the Memramcook Institute in St. Joseph, New Brunswick.

As before, the purpose of the event will be: to bring together individuals, organizations and institutional representatives who are concerned about or active in the field of women's issues and housing. Those who gather for the conference will share information and explore innovative solutions for meeting the housing needs of women in Atlantic Canada; develop potential strategies and mechanisms for increasing the effectiveness of agents working to provide adequate, affordable shelter for women; and increase public awareness of the issues of women and housing.

The United Nations has designated 1987 International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH). The Atlantic Women and Housing Conference will give concerned individuals in Atlantic Canada a timely opportunity to examine housing issues from a regional perspective.

The conference will be preceded by provincial pre-conferences, in each Atlantic province, to lay the groundwork for coming together in April.

Anyone wishing more information on either the pre-conferences or the main conference, contact the Organizing Committee, Atlantic Women and Housing Conference, c/o 1094 Tower Rd., Halifax, N.S., B3H 2Y2.

The conference organizers are attempting to raise money for full or partial scholarships to enable a good cross-section of participants to attend. They cannot provide child care at the conference but are willing to assist with child care costs women may have.

Women take back the night in solidarity, strength

Women face sexual violence every day of their lives, everywhere they go. Women of all classes, races, affectional preference, age and ability are sexually assaulted by men. This violence against women, is a singular expression of the violence perpetrated by racism, by classism, homophobia, agism and ablist.

Certain women are more at risk because they suffer from double and triple oppressions. They are targeted because our institutions do not support them, because the men of their race and class, their age or ability, have less power to protect or avenge them. Lesbians are seen to be without male protection at all.

For the last 10 years, women all over the world have marched through the streets, taking back the night, the time of most likely

attack. This year, Patchwork and Pandora sponsored a Take Back the Night march in Halifax on September 19. Many women participated in the speeches and the march through the campus, around the hospitals and down to the Halifax library — areas that are common sites of sexual violence.

The most recent issue of *off our backs* includes information about Take Back the Night marches from the Vancouver collective. They have put out a kit that helps groups organize, avoid problems and make all kinds of good connections. Time to start organizing for 1987?

In the photograph above, Toni Goree (foreground) makes connections between race, class and violence against women as Patchwork's Alison Brewin holds the megaphone.

Doctors provide support for sexually assaulted women

Valerie Mansour

For many women who have been sexually assaulted, to encounter first a male police officer and then a male doctor is almost as traumatic as the first violation.

In Dartmouth, this situation has often been intensified because women suffering from sexual assault have been turned away from the emergency department of Dartmouth General and sent to a Halifax hospital.

Beginning in December, both these problems should begin to disappear. A group of 10 women physicians have decided to provide around the clock, seven days a week, on-call service at Halifax and Dartmouth hospitals for women who have been sexually assaulted.

Fionella Crombie of the Dalhousie Family Medicine Centre organized the service in conjunction with Carol Wackett of the Service for Sexual

Assault Victims.

"I asked her if there was a problem with women victims not coming forward because of no women physicians and she agreed."

Crombie also says emergency rooms were receptive to the idea because it is difficult to guarantee uninterrupted time in emergency.

Carol Wackett says it is a major and positive step: "Many women won't go to their family doctor or to a male doctor. Now more women will come forward for a medical examination."

Fionella Crombie says she thinks medical services for assaulted women have improved. "I'm no expert on this, but I know from reading that doctors are very aware of victims now — they put the patient first and foremost. They know they must believe the story."

The doctors will be based at the Halifax Infirmary and the Dartmouth General.

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It's Tuesday night — women's night at Rumours and this time I'm going!!!

Jeanne

It's Tuesday night, I'm a lesbian, and I know that it's Women's Night at Rumours, (a club for gay men and lesbians). I know that the address is 1586 Granville Street. I've never seen a sign and I'm not really sure where it is. All I know is that it's the two, big, wooden doors across from the Texaco station and it's right before a little restaurant.

I have decided that I will find it tonight. I'm not going to go too early because I don't want to be recognized by anybody and I'm hoping to be able to just blend in. It's nine, time to go: I walk down Barrington Street, turn the corner besides the Misty Moon, pass in front of Secretary's. I'm almost tempted to go in there, but that would defeat my real purpose tonight.

So, I keep on going. I turn right on to Granville Street and finally find what I'm looking for — the two, big, wooden doors.

It takes time to get up enough nerve to go in. On the other hand, I can't stand in front of the doors in case somebody drives by and reports back to my mom that I was seen standing in front of a gay bar. So, I decide to walk around the block to have a little more time before I meet those doors again.

This time I go in without even giving it a second thought.

I find out I don't have to pay anything because it's before 10. But the man at the door is obviously waiting for something. Finally he tells me to sign in. Being a little paranoid, I begin wondering why they want my

name.

I have to make a decision fast — should I sign my real name or come up with another one? Then I decide if you can't trust your own kind, who can you trust, so I sign in under my own name.

Then a woman in the coatcheck tells me that she wants my jacket, which is ok because I can't dance with it on.

I make a quick go around of the place. There are maybe 12 women standing and sitting at tables. I go past the bar to the upstairs lounge. It has another bar, piano, lots of tables and a rack of magazines. It gives off an air of peacefulness.

Back downstairs I stand near the dance floor watching women talking at the tables. Each one has a candle to provide a more relaxing atmosphere. I am really surprised to see how this place is well organized.

I'm playing the role of an observer. As more and more women come in, I notice the differences in their ages — mostly young women, which I think is great. There is, however, a wide variety of ages for lesbians and most are represented as the evening goes on. I guess this is because no matter how young or old you are, you know what your sexual preference is.

By now I'm starting to relax and enjoy myself. The music started at ten, women started dancing and it felt like a safe space. Nobody was looking over their shoulders to see who might be watching them.

Suddenly I really feel at home. A woman I know from the valley

comes in. She comes over to say hello, we dance, I meet some women she knows. All of a sudden I'm having a good time.

I'm really grateful to have heard about the Club, and would like to take this opportunity to thank that special and wonderful woman who told me about it. Now, I'm there almost every Tuesday night because I feel safe and have come to know a lot of wonderful women. Rumours is a great place because you do fit in and feel positive about being a lesbian.

There's a great community out there, you just have to go out and find it. That's what I did and I can truthfully say that I can feel the support I'm getting from Halifax women.

□□□□□□□□

Jeanne is happy to be out and about in Halifax.

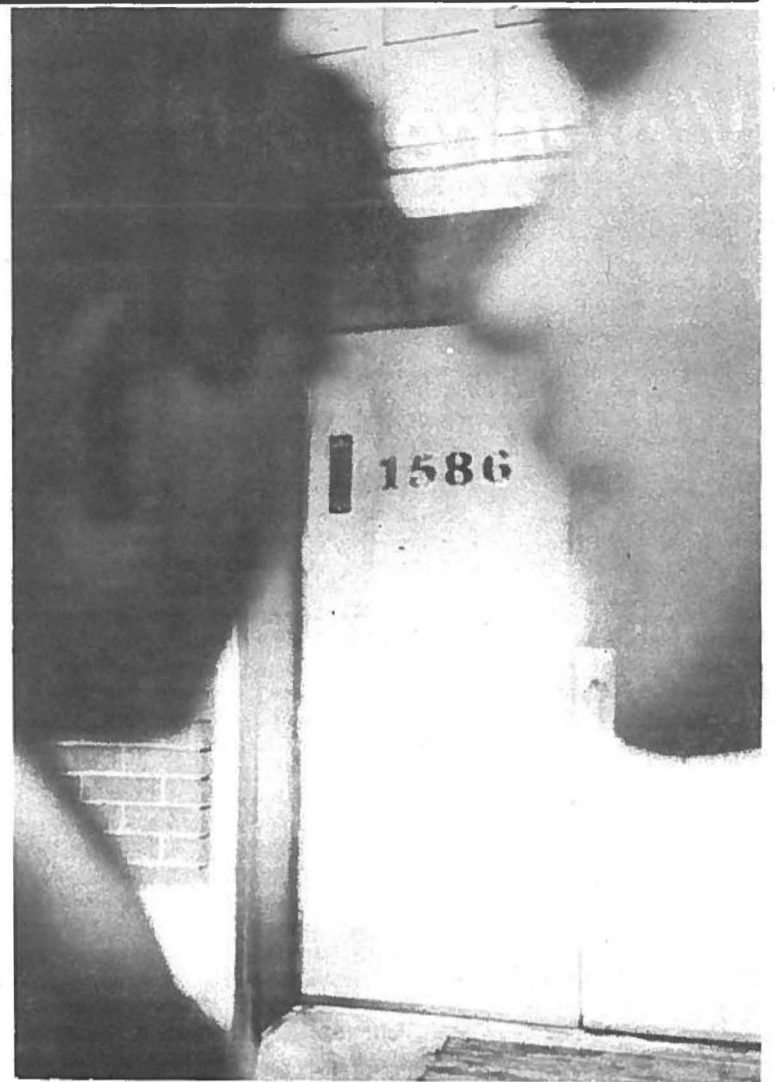


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DECEMBER

5-11

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VAGABOND

FRANCE, 1986
Agnes Varda's VAGABOND won the grand prize at the Venice Film Festival last year and is undoubtedly one of the most important films ever made by a female director. Indeed it may be the finest film to address the shattered dreams and spiritual inertia of post-1960 youth. Sonda Bonnaire won a French academy award for her portrayal of Mona, a tough, independent and aimless wanderer. The film begins with her demise in the middle of winter, alone. Varda spares the sentiment by coolly and dispassionately interviewing her last acquaintances and portraying Mona's last weeks of cold indifference. 'Clearly the picture of the year' — Andrew Sarris, the Village Voice, France, 1986, Dir. Agnes Varda.

JANUARY

5-15

MON.-THURS.
EACH EVENING AT
7:00 & 9:00



MONA LISA

GREAT BRITAIN,
Director Neil Jordan (The Company of Wolves) had the great British actor Bob Hoskins (THE LONG GOOD FRIDAY, COTTON CLUB) in mind when writing MONA LISA. Cannes awarded him the best actor award; critical reaction has been ecstatic. It is clear that Jordan has fashioned a film noir masterpiece that is Britain's answer to TAXI DRIVER. Hoskins plays naive ex-con who chauffeurs a high priced call girl (Cathy Tyson, a Royal Shakespeare Company member in an astonishing film debut). The contrast of innocence and cynicism provides the catalyst for their relationship; declining modern-day London provides the noir milieu. Michael Caine plays a crime boss in a cameo appearance. MONA LISA is an extraordinary essay on the dark ethics of sexual commodization. Great Britain, 1986, Dir. Neil Jordan, 104 mins.

23-29

FRI.-SUN.
EACH EVENING AT
7:00 & 9:00



DOWN BY LAW

USA, 1986
Jim Jarmusch's follow-up to STRANGER THAN PARADISE stars John Lurie (making a return appearance), Roberto Benigni and Tom Waits as a misbegotten trio of jailbirds who have flown the coop. The dank surroundings of New Orleans and the respective Louisiana swamplands are well served by Jarmusch's laconic cinematic style and by Robby Muller's luminous black and white cinematography. The director calls DOWN BY LAW a 'Neo-Beat-Noir-Comedy'; the three aimless characters in a desolate landscape suggest more. Whatever the case, the film is a slightly more demonstrative example of Jarmusch's understated style. With songs by Tom Waits. USA, 1986, Dir. Jim Jarmusch.

30-12

FRI.-THURS.
EACH EVENING AT
7:00 & 9:30



BLUE VELVET

USA, 1986
David Lynch's new film BLUE VELVET was inspired by the famous Bobby Vinton song from the early sixties. The setting of the film is contemporary yet it feels like the 1950's. It looks fabulously artificial, with the lighting and intensity of colour very much like Hitchcock of VERTIGO and NORTH BY NORTHWEST. The dialogue consists of incredulous phrases and banal exchanges that seem to have their cadences in refined clichés. The plot and dramatic urgency derive from murder masochism and madness. Lynch has all but abandoned conventional storytelling so that he can reveal the 'magic moment' in each frame. Clearly the reason why BLUE VELVET has caused so much controversy lies in the fact that Lynch has unleashed the visionary splendour of ERASERHEAD and the ELEPHANT MAN on a fractured film noir narrative. He is not afraid to deal with the cinema on its own terms and BLUE VELVET is the staggering result: a film of overwhelming originality. It stars Kiyee MacLachlan, Dennis Hopper, Isabella Rossellini and Laura Dern. USA, 1986, Dir. David Lynch.

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Theatre, by definition, seen as spiritual event

JoAnn Latremouille

As we go to press, many readers will have attended Neptune North's production of Antoinette Maillet's *La Sagouine*, starring Joan Orenstein. This production marks the professional return of director Linda Moore to her home city of Halifax.

Linda's career in theatre began at the age of nine, studying elocution in a school drama club in Winnipeg. Her involvement continued uninterrupted through the Manitoba Theatre School, the University of Calgary Faculty of Theatre, and experimental and community theatres in Montreal, Calgary and Halifax.

A period of freelance directing on the Canadian professional stage led to a two-year stint as Associate Artistic Director at the Manitoba Theatre Centre, Canada's oldest regional theatre.

Beside numerous productions at M.T.C., Linda has directed at the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, the Belfry Theatre in Victoria, Mulgrave Road in Guysborough, and at Acadia University Department of Drama. Last year she acted as assistant director to Ronald Ayre for the acclaimed production of Gogol's *The Government Inspector* at the Stratford Festival.

Linda's next production will be *The Faith Healer* at Montreal's Centaur Theatre.

Q. For a long time you've seen involvement in the theatre as a spiritual pursuit. Will you elaborate on that idea?

There are two things that happen when I do the preparatory

work on a play. If I'm doing a play set in Mississippi, I suddenly learn about Mississippi. It's like opening a door on a whole field of knowledge that I may know nothing about. That's in the realm of general research where you find out about the social element.

The other thing that's happening in a good play is that there is a language behind the language. If you can tune into the playwright's intention, you can find and develop a whole other level. It's not artificial, it's really thematic.

That can often be a spiritual pursuit in the sense that there are fundamental human needs that are expressed in plays. There are funda-

mental conflicts, moments of great joy, moments of despair. They are rooted in the quest of the characters. If you allow the research to go far enough, you can understand the play on a spiritual level.

It's often through mythology that things open up in terms of the spiritual nature of theatre. Theatre by definition is a spiritual event, or has been historically because of the whole sense of ritual. It is a release from human suffering. It resolves in the joy that the characters involved continue to survive. Right now the need for theatre is very sublimated in our society, but it's still there.

When you see something that affects you, you may not be able to articulate why, but you have a sense that you are nourished. I don't think that every play can nourish us, but it's something to

strive for. If I don't feel that a play has that capacity, I'm not fully engaged in it. Sometimes a play will surprise you and that side of it will open up. That's very important to me.

In any creative process or any process that involves some thought, some contemplation, you have to work on making yourself available to the work. I'm just beginning to understand that I do that.

I see directing as a male/female process within myself. I define the preparation, the letting the work be available and the communication aspect of it as feminine. The passive moment is invaluable. I feel like I'm in a cave when I'm doing that work. It's about growth and nourishment.

But the other thing that you need in directing is a real ability to push when it's necessary. By the time you get into technical rehearsals you have to be very precise and determined. I hope no one will take offense, but I see that as more of a masculine side, or I define it as that within myself.

I like it when the process is balanced. I can feel the shift happening. When I go out of preparation and into rehearsal.

Q. When you are in preparation you work meticulously with a script to discover what is called "subtext". Would you explain this?

Well, there is not always a "subtext" in a play, but what I look for is a way of mapping the conflicts as they relate to the central issue of the play.

What happens in a given scene is that somebody gets what they want or doesn't get what they want and then does something about it.

If you've followed the conflict through and you know what one character is trying to get from another, then that becomes the fuel for the scene. That's what subtext is: understanding the true nature of the scene and then giving the actor the intention in the scene which will serve his goal. You have to be meticulous about it.

You may have a scene where two characters are discussing the weather, but there's always a reason for a scene to be in a play. Perhaps one character wants to escape a situation and doesn't know how. She starts to talk about how hot it is and the need to go to the beach because she wants to escape the emotional trap that she's in. The other character has a million reasons why she shouldn't go.

They never talk about the tension between them but you can create a very powerful scene from what on the surface is a conversation about the weather.



photo by Kathleen Flanagan

Linda Moore

Audiences respond amazingly well to this. The reason that people get bored in the theatre is that sometimes it is just a scene about the weather and they know that there should be something more.

It doesn't have to be heavy handed, but actors' minds should be very clear about their character's intention. I ask an actor to find everything that is said about his character in the play. That gives them a basis to begin to find out what that character is about. Often you see a play where the emotional line is handled but there hasn't been a search for character. That can be frustrating to watch.

person's life? Do you find that way in?

No. I work from what's required in the play. If in rehearsal the focus is on the play and in solving whatever problem is presenting itself within the work, then basically the actors and I are the resources that have come together to solve that problem.

As soon as you are working on the actor, then it gets tricky. It would be completely wrong from my point of view to say to an actor, "You don't seem to be showing the anger that this score asks for. Have you ever experienced anger?" I would never say that to an actor. I would find another way. I would talk a lot about the situation in the play to try and trigger an empathetic response.

In fact, if actors begin to feel that they don't have the resources then they start shutting down. Often they'll find ways of solving problems that are surprises, but they are right because they come from them.

I have a great respect for actors, which I understand from actors is rare among directors. It's partly because I know they have a special skill, and only a few people really, really have it.

Ideally as a director, I want to make it possible for them to bring the best of their skills to a play. They are, after all, the ones who are left with the task of bringing the play to the audience and it is a vital relationship between audience and actors that makes good theatre.

□□□□□□□□

JoAnn Latremouille has her own business as a landscape artist in Halifax and is a freelance writer on the arts.

There are fundamental conflicts, moments of great joy, moments of despair.

Every cast is a complete surprise, even if you know the people ahead of time.

Q. Is there a difference between directing men and directing women?

I find every actor different. Every cast is a complete surprise, even if you know people ahead of time. That has something to do with how they are mixed, whether they get on with each other, whether they have worked together before. It all affects how they behave in rehearsal.

Trying to find the language that suits them is a real challenge. Sometimes you are at a loss as to what will mean something to an actor. I do use a slightly different language with women because I suppose I have a sense of their recognizing a more emotional language. It's easier to get right into depth with women. You can do it with men, it just takes longer sometimes. Sometimes you realize that they don't understand so you have to find another way.

Q. Do you work from the

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Search leads to herself

Rachel Carter
I lived in a battering situation for 11 years.

I am not going to go into a lot of details, but I will say my spouse was violent, not only to me, but also to my family and his own family.

I was 13 years old when I met him. I didn't have a lot of insight or I would have known that a man with a violent criminal record was not a suitable partner.

I left my home with my small child and went to Bryony House. I ended up selling my home and moving to Second Stage (housing for battered women) as I was still in fear for our lives.

My child and I have started from scratch on a journey into finding each other and finding ourselves.

When we first left, we were

both underweight, frightened, and had not the least bit of confidence. Two weeks after moving to Bryony House, we both started to gain weight. A year later my child's confidence has improved though I am still struggling.

It was a blessing for me to hear about the G.E.D. (High School Equivalency) Course at Veith House, because not only did I upgrade my education, getting my grade 12 certificate, but also my feelings about myself have started to change.

I have received encouragement and support from both my teachers and the staff at Veith House and also from my friends, the women who are in my class. The stories I have written have also boosted my confidence.

I was always a guilt taker. I took the guilt for everything, all of my life - what I did, didn't do, or what other people had done.

I didn't like myself very much or I wouldn't have stayed in an abusive situation. I want this to change and I am going to change it.

I am starting to throw away and deal with all of the guilt, anger, and hurt, and get on with my life, because I realized that I

have done the best I could do and no-one can ask for more, not even me!

It seems that I have started to find what I have been searching for. The search to find myself is the search to like myself. It can be hard to do. To find out that I like myself is the happiest discovery I've ever made.

Now if I can help my child to always like himself, I will be a proud woman.

Because for me, our happiness is the most important goal in our lives from this day on.



graphic by Brenda MacKean



graphic by Brenda MacKean

Friend helps on journey

Brenda MacKean

Only a short while ago, I met Rachel, a young woman who is very special to me. I feel that we have grown together to form a wonderfully unique friendship. She has lived and experienced life in a way that most people, even in their prime old age, will never

have encountered.

Rachel has taught me that although life is very fragile, one can overcome suffering and hardship with courage, with an inner strength to survive and not give up.

So many people, including myself, get trapped in self-pity

and waste good years dwelling in despair, and hope lessens.

When Rachel speaks of her struggle to face her fear, anger, and pain, she is filled with such determination! Striving to make a better life for herself and small son, her journey is now beginning toward happiness and inner peace, at last.

Rachel is my friend, sister, and teacher. She is a wonderful, caring mother. The world can learn much from her, as I have.

She is continuing her journey on a new and different road and will settle in familiar surroundings with family. Still, her wisdom and gentle spirit will always remain close to me, even when she is thousands of miles away.

Rachel Carter and Brenda MacKean have created a children's book, *Timothy*, that combines their experience and skills. Rachel wrote the book and Brenda drew the illustrations — two of them are reproduced above. The children's book talks about Timothy who lives in a house where "his parents were always fighting," is educational, comforting reading for children and adults both.

Rehabilitation not the issue

Perseverance changes form

Fifteen women learned more than high school English at Veith House last year. As members of the Headway 85-86 project, they studied for high school equivalency exams, but they also shared life experiences, produced a book, and won a victory over the provincial department of social services.

We have included a couple of examples of their work here, and Valerie Mansour, who talked with Brenda MacKean, reports on their victory:

According to Brenda, a member of the class, when the students started the course last October, they were given slips to sign in order to get money from social services for registration fees. They were rather shocked with the wording.

"The form said we were being rehabilitated! From what, I asked? I don't like this."

The women, who varied in age and had been out of school from

10 to 20 years, got together and wrote a letter of complaint to social services.

"They didn't like the letter," says Brenda. "They threatened to cut us off social assistance."

But the women persevered and met with a social services representative.

"They first said: You're over-reacting, you're hysterical. But we won and we did it in a very calm, professional way."

Brenda says the form is the same — except the word "rehabilitation" is gone.

"We cheered! We felt really happy."



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I've got two strikes against me. I'm disabled and I'm female, but — I'll make it!

by Tanya Carroll

It's tough being a teenager! It's even harder for a disabled teenager. Especially if you're a girl.

I've never been in a special school or class; my parents wouldn't want me to be, and neither would I. I like being integrated, but I do have problems. Some kids are nice to me, but others treat me as if I weren't human.

Now that I'm in junior high, some of the boys are mean to me. One day when the teacher was on her lunch break, two of them took four desks, put them together, and lifted me up, chair and all, putting me on top of them. That didn't satisfy them, so they pushed the desks over to the window and propped the front wheels on the window sill.

I was severely terrified, screaming my lungs out. The teacher was trying to correct exams, and she was mad because we were making so much noise.

She wouldn't give me a chance to explain why I'd been yelling.

Later, they tried to put me on the bike rack. Fortunately, they weren't strong enough.

My mother complained. Those boys got three days suspension.

Other times, they've taken my lipstick and smeared it all over my face, spit in my hair, hit me, and called me names — names I'm not allowed to use at home. They've even done it in front of the teacher. She just said, "Don't do that."

As for the girls, some of them are nice to me. They stand up for me. But some of them are snobs who don't care what happens. They'll do anything in their power to hurt me, usually emotionally. They tell lies that make me look bad; I've lost friends that way. They call me names, too — scrag, ugly bitch, and the worst of them all, a stupid cripple. Whenever I hear that word, I try not to show I'm hurt, but inside I'm screaming.



Tanya Carroll

photo by Sara avMaat

People who are born disabled sometimes have problems with growth. I was born with my big toes crossed over the second ones; I'm small, and when I was five or six, my back started to twist. The kids used to tease me about my toes, and they still make comments about my size. If

they noticed my back, they never said so.

Well, I noticed, and I didn't like it. In grade five I had a twelve-hour operation. After it, I could sit straight. Chair aside, I looked pretty normal. The improvement in my self-image made it all worthwhile.

In the neighborhood I've got good girlfriends. But they have their own lives; they can't hang around me every second. Still, it hurts when they go off on their bikes or go swimming. I've gotten used to those kinds of hurts.

Once in a while my friends even forget I'm disabled. I really like that.

I'm starting to get interested in boys, but they're not very interested in me. That's because of my wheelchair. They don't see me, just the darn chair. Now I'm allowed to wear makeup; I wonder if it'll make any difference.

It's fairly easy to be friends with some boys, but they see me more as a sister or buddy than a girlfriend. They see me as one of the guys, and I'm not.

This summer, I finally got to go away for the first time without my parents. I went to camp for disabled kids. There were kids with all kinds of disabilities, aged 9-15.

There I got to be a kid like any other. I was Tanya, not just the one in a wheelchair. Some of the others were more disabled than I am; some were less. None of that mattered.

I hated getting up at 6:30 and going to bed at 8:30. But I loved swimming, going to P.E.I. to see Anne of Green Gables, and the dances we had. The counsellors kissed us goodnight every night, and if we were homesick they sat with us. We even had Christmas.

The last night we got special awards. I got one for the best clown face. During the last camp fire, everyone cried.

Now that I'm home, I miss everyone so much. I'm definitely going back next year!

I know that some disabled kids are abused or over-protected by their parents. I'm lucky to have parents like mine. They encourage and support me, so that someday I can be independent. Recently, they've shown their faith in me by allowing me to babysit my little brother. It makes me feel good to know that they trust me to do that kind of thing.

I know I'm going to need a good education. As Mom's always pointing out, I've got two strikes against me: I'm disabled, and I'm female.

It won't be easy, but I'm going to do it, no matter how long it takes me, and no matter who tries to stop me!

□□□□□□□□

Tanya Carroll is thirteen years old. She was born with spina bifida, a congenital deformity that results in paraplegia. She is an eighth grade student at A.J. Smeltzer Junior High School.

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— Muriel, nursing attendant.

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— Paul, ambulance worker.

Produced by Laura Sky for the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

Yes, we can! is suitable for union meetings, lunchtime discussion groups, educational workshops, women's gatherings or get-togethers at home.

Yes, we can! is available on 1/2" VHS video cassette from Joanne Harvey, Education Representative, CUPE, 7071 Bayers Road, Suite 213, Starlite Building, Halifax, N.S. B3L 2C2 Telephone: 455-4180 or 455-2392.

Rental Fee: \$25.00

Free to CUPE locals.

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PACIFIC SHOP

1541 Barrington Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia

422-2177

NOTICES / CALENDAR

•Volunteer tutors are required to assist adults and students in elementary and junior high school subjects. For more information, phone Veith House Outreach Tutoring Services at 453-4320.

•Service for Sexual Assault Victims is offering a support group for parents of sexually abused children. The group will begin in January and run for 10 weeks. For more information, call 455-4240.

•Patchwork Community Women's Resource Centre at Dalhousie University will be offering lunchtime films every Thursday for six weeks starting January 22. Subjects to be discussed include young women, image and women in society, older women, and native women. For further information, call Patchwork at 424-2526 or drop by the basement of 1247 Seymour Street in Halifax.

•LAIG (Latin American Information Group) meets at 7:30 pm on the first Tuesday of each month at the Oxfam-Deveric office, 1649 Barrington Street, Halifax.

•Coalition Against Apartheid meets at 7:30 pm on the first Thursday of each month at the Oxfam-Deveric office, 1649 Barrington Street, Halifax.

•Oxfam-Deveric Resource Centre is open to the public Monday to

Friday from 10 am to 4 pm at 1649 Barrington Street, Halifax.

•Listen to Women's Music on Sundays 7-8 pm on CKDU 97.5 FM in Halifax.

•Women's Times, a 15-minute radio show about women's issues on CKDU 97.5 FM Tuesdays at 5:30 pm in Halifax.

•Any woman interested in a discussion of feminist therapy with a view to either planning a conference on this topic in 1987, or simply getting together with local feminist therapists regularly to provide dialogue and support is asked to contact: Vicki Wood, 76 Shore Road, Dartmouth, N.S. B3A 1A3, Phone 469-1610.

•Women's Program at Halifax Library North Branch, Wednesdays, 10-12 noon. Join the women from the area to discuss issues of community concern, hear guest speakers, get to know each other and the community.

•The Pictou County Women's Centre in New Glasgow, N.S. has established a Rape Line. This line offers confidentiality, anonymity, information, and peer counselling for female victims of sex abuse, incest, and rape. The line is staffed by volunteers. Phone 752-2233.

•Can your co-workers say the word lesbian? While in the presence of

gay and lesbian clients, do they appear "homosexually challenged?" Atlantic Gays and Lesbians in health care and social services is a group which offers support and information to each other about issues affecting us and our gay and lesbian clients. For more information call Liz at 422-2867 or Ken 425-6967.

•Coming Forward, a group for lesbians, meets every Monday at Radclyffe Hall, 5559 Macara St, Halifax at 7:30 pm.

•Red Herring Co-Operative Bookstore will be holding a number of orientation meetings for anyone interested in becoming a volunteer. Call 422-5087.

•Feminist lesbian caucus meets to discuss issues around living as lesbians in a heterosexist society. Some of us are also interested in direct action projects. Call 455-1287 for more information.

•The DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) of Nova Scotia invites all women who are disabled, or who wish to work with disabled women, to write for more information. Marg Hiltz, 5651 Ogilvie Street, Apt. 1016, Halifax B3H 1B9

December 2
•LAIG (Latin American Information Group) meets 7:30 pm the first Tuesday of each month, 1649 Barrington Street, Halifax.

December 3
•Regular Pandora meeting at Veith House, 3115 Veith Street, 7:30. All women welcome. Call 423-9469

December 4
•Coalition Against Apartheid meets 7:30 pm the first Thursday of each month, 1649 Barrington Street, Halifax.

December 5
•Oxfam-Deveric Open House, 1649 Barrington Street, Halifax. Call 429-1370.

December 5-7
•Vagabond: "undoubtedly one of the most important films ever made by a female director". Won the grand prize at the Venice Film Festival. Playing at Wormwood's, 1588 Barrington Street, Halifax, Fri. & Sat. 11:30 pm; Sun. 2 pm. 422-3700.

December 17
•Regular Pandora meeting at Veith House, 3115 Veith Street, 7:30. All women welcome. Call 423-9469

January 14
•Regular Pandora meeting at Veith House, 3115 Veith Street, 7:30. All women welcome. Call 423-9469

January 14
•Fireworks: a film celebration about three Quebec women writers: Louky Bersianik, Jovette Marchessault, and Nicole Brossard. Filmmaker Dorothy Todd Henaut will be present to answer questions. Playing at National Film Board, 1571 Argyle Street, Halifax at 8 pm. Free admission. 422-3700.

January 28
•Regular Pandora meeting at Veith House, 3115 Veith Street, 7:30. All women welcome. Call 423-9469

February 11
•Regular Pandora meeting at Veith House, 3115 Veith Street, 7:30. All women welcome. Call 423-9469

February 24
•Women and Depression Series: Overview of Depression with Jenny Irving. 7:30 pm. Halifax City Regional Library, 5381 Spring Garden Road, Halifax.

February 25
•Regular Pandora meeting at Veith House, 3115 Veith Street, 7:30. All women welcome. Call 423-9469

February 28
•The Best Time of My Life: Portrait of Women in Mid-Life, and Is it Hot in Here? Two movies about mid-life and menopause. At National Film Board, 1571 Argyle Street, Halifax at 7 and 9 pm. Free admission. 422-3700.

March 3
•Women and Depression Series: Post-Partum Depression with Dr. Patti Pearce. 7:30 pm. Halifax City Regional Library, 5381 Spring Garden Road, Halifax.

March 10
•Women and Depression Series: Pre-Menstrual Syndrome with Dr. Pat Barrisford. 7:30 pm. Halifax City Regional Library, 5381 Spring Garden Road, Halifax.

PANDORA CALLS HER SISTERS



WOMEN WHO WRITE

The Literary Supplement has been postponed until March!

We already have some material, but we would like more! If you have poems, short stories or excerpts from longer works, please send them in. Submissions should be no longer than 800 words.

Submissions may be any kind of creative writing as long as they don't violate our editorial guidelines.

Send to: Joanne Jefferson, 2708 Belle Aire Terr., Halifax, N.S. B3K 3W8
For more info. call 454-4711

DEADLINE: JAN. 10, 1987

We would love to publish everything but there is only so much space. Therefore, not everything can be printed. If you want your material returned, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

WOMEN WHO PHOTOGRAPH

Pandora is planning a Photographic Supplement for the June issue.

Women who have photographs (black and white or colour prints) they would like to have considered for the supplement should send them in as soon as possible.

Submissions can have any subject matter (hopefully women!) as long as it does not violate our editorial guidelines.

Send to: Pandora Photo Supplement, 5533 Black St., Halifax, N.S. B3K 1P7
For more info. call 423-9469

DEADLINE: APRIL 1, 1987