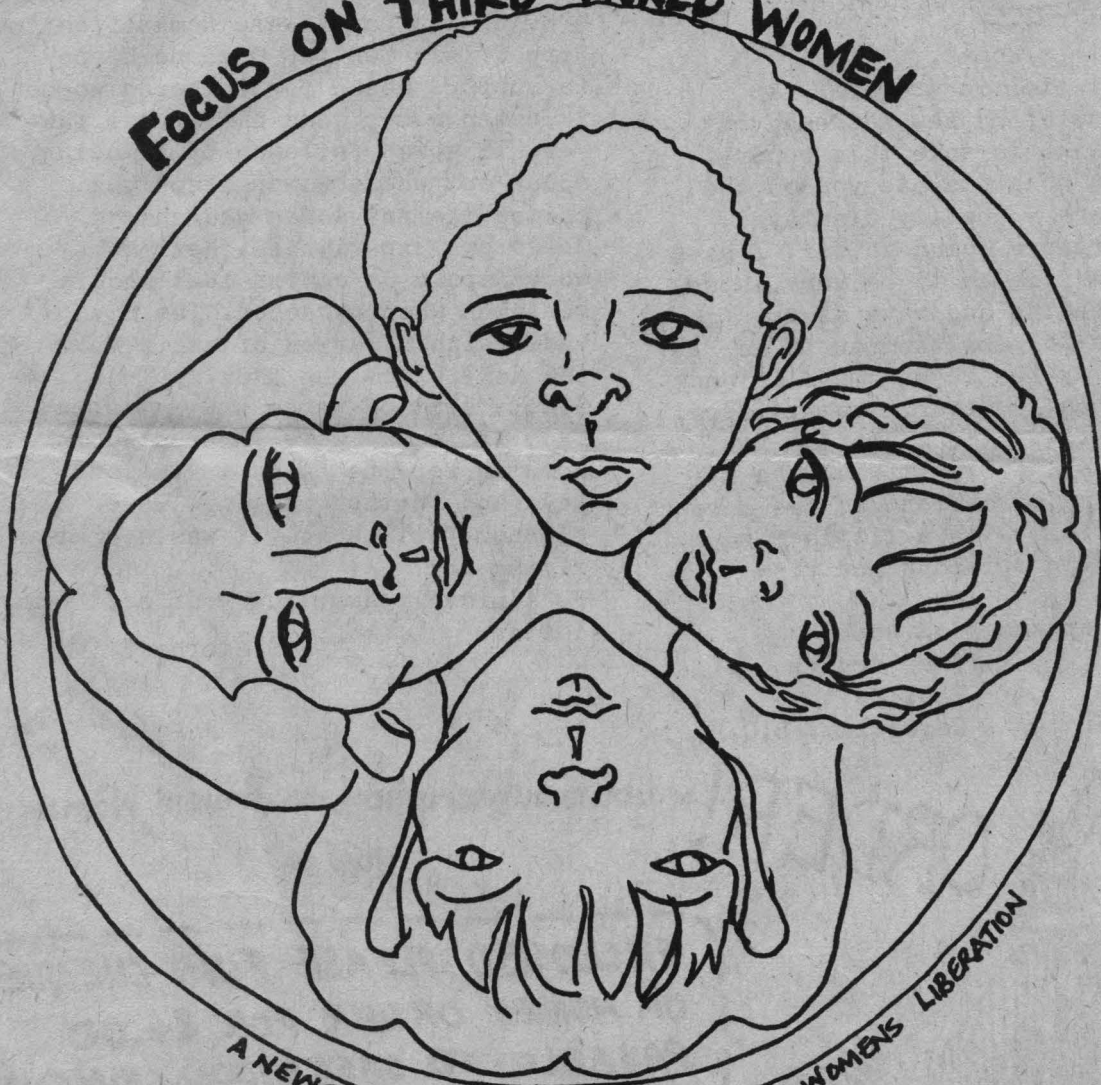


PRAIRIE WOMAN

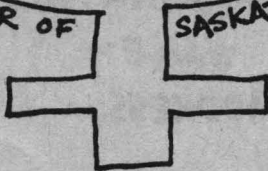
FOCUS ON THIRD WORLD WOMEN



A NEWSLETTER OF

SASKATOON WOMEN'S LIBERATION

VOLUME N°6



DECEMBER 77

LETTERS...LETTERS...LETTERS



Dear Prairie Woman,

This letter is primarily to inform you of my new address, but I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the fine literary quality displayed by the Prairie Woman so far. I have found every issue to be very interesting reading and have always attempted to pass them on to as many of my female and male friends as possible. However, the articles, though well-written, are too few in number, I feel. It would be a tremendous improvement to see more contributions with a little more diversity in opinions and viewpoints.

Keep up the good work.

Yours truly,
Paul Koit,
Coquitlam, B.C.

Dear Prairie Women,
I would like to congratulate you on your excellent newsletter. It's very interesting to hear news from my prairie sisters. Your November issue on rape was very informative and I hope your National Day of Action Against Rape was a success.

We were pleased here in Winnipeg with our turn out on our Day of Protest Against Violence Against Women. Our day began with a panel of speakers. On the panel were women from the Rape Crisis Centre, Osborne House (a support house for battered women), 2 Indian women, and a feminist lawyer. This was followed by a moving speak-out where women described crimes against women and shared their own experiences. Next a woman spoke on action that should be taken when harassed. The day ended with a series of skits from the Nellie McClung Theatre Troop. Also a list of names was gathered from those who were interested in working for the cause in various ways and further meetings were planned. All in all it was a gratifying day.

Anxiously awaiting your next newsletter

In Sisterhood
Joyce Quigley



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Editorial

When the collective decided to devote an issue of the newsletter to women in the third world, we were not aware of the meagre knowledge we possessed of third world countries, let alone of the women within them. As a result our research concerning third world women served only as an introduction to understanding their problems.

We realized that the struggles of our sisters in these countries could by no means parallel ours because of the political, economic and cultural differences that they face; thus, only third world women themselves can analyze, organize and combat their own oppression.

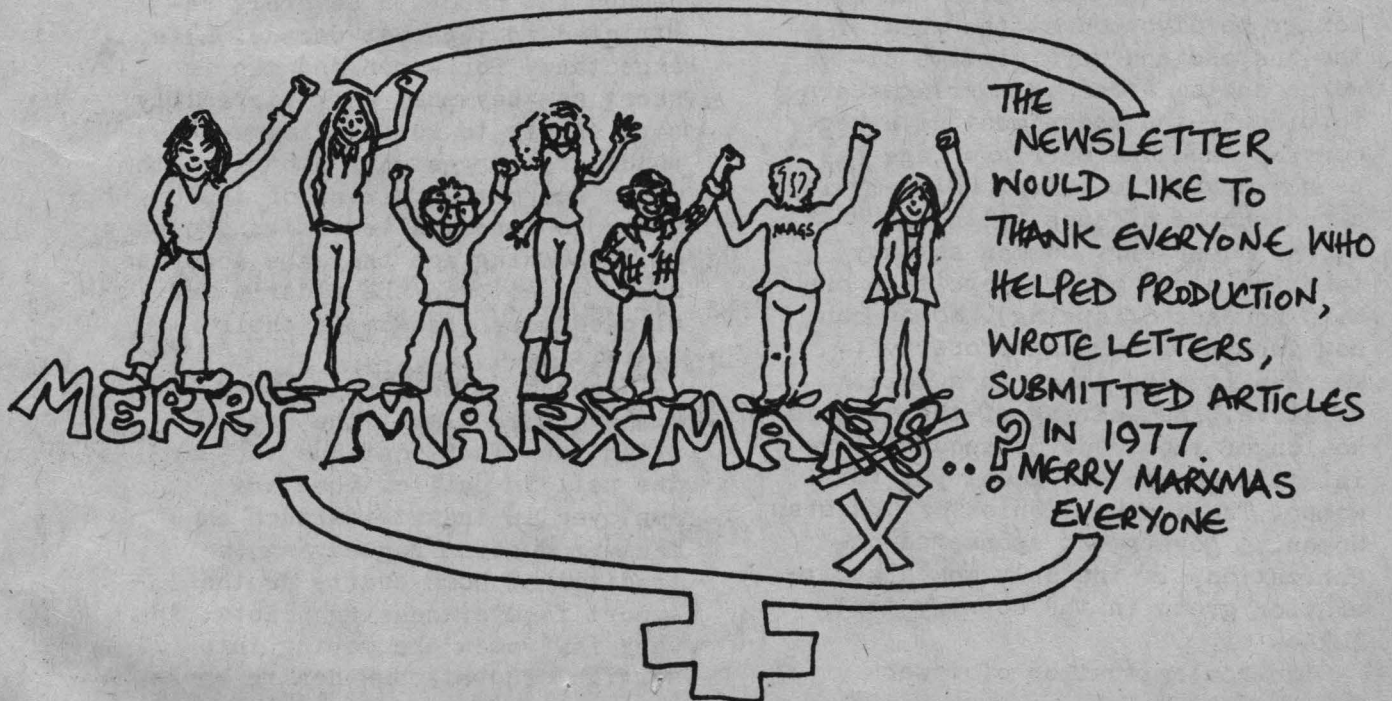
We can only speculate how this can be achieved. Perhaps their involvement in building and developing their own nations will begin action that favours the cause of women.

It is our hope that this newsletter will provide some insights into the problems faced by third world women.

It is our role to educate ourselves both about their struggle and about our own complicity in their oppression.

Prairie Woman Collective

December, 1977



WOMEN IN TUNISIA

1973

by Shelly Gordon

Tunisia is a North African, predominantly Muslim country. Habib Bourguiba led the overthrow of the French colonial regime in 1956 and the formation of a democratic republic. He has since declared himself President for life and acts as grand patriarch of the country—a "benevolent dictatorship." Tunisia enjoys a relatively affluent position in the 3rd World. Over $\frac{1}{2}$ of the work force is rural and many of them work on nationalized co-operative farms. Others are nomads and individual subsistence farmers. The urban lower class consists of industrial working and traditional crafts-persons. Tourism is one of the nations biggest industries. An urban, educated elite (usually civil-service workers) comprises the indigenous upper class.

Habib Bourguiba took a personal interest in the improvement of the lot of women and passed several progressive laws. In 1957 women were given the vote. A short time later he passed the Code of Personal Liberty which goes directly against the Muslim religion. Wives can no longer be divorced at the whim of the husband and may initiate divorce suits. Arranged marriages are forbidden—the woman must give her consent—and the marriage age has been raised to 18 years. Polygamy is a punishable offence (although it was never very common as only the rich could afford more than one wife and her offspring). Women can now inherit money and property whereas it used to go to a male relative. The wearing of the veil is no longer required. Subsequent legislation guaranteed equal pay for women. The National Union of Tunisian Women, a government sponsored organization, is the only women's liberation group in the country that I know of.

The real situation of lower

class women differs radically from the law. They are still subject to the most blatant, primitive forms of oppression.

The birth of a boy, especially the first-born child, is a celebrated event. The birth of a girl goes almost unnoticed. Females are a liability as a dowry must be provided if they are ever to marry. Marriages are still arranged and only the rarest of young women would go against her parent's choice.

Women have almost no personal freedom of movement or action. They eat separately from the men, having only what is left when they are finished. Pregnant women eat very little so as to make the birth easier. Children are born in the home (a tent or building constructed of mud in the rural areas) with the assistance of a mid-wife. All of the village women gather for the occasion. Birth control is available but seldom used as men want male children as workers, heirs and status symbols. In the 1960's abortion was free and on demand but has been severely restricted in the last decade. Life expectancy for women and men is short as they must work incredibly hard simply to survive. Same-sex bonds are very strong amongst both women and men as mixing of the sexes is taboo. After women are past child-bearing age they are accorded some respect due the elderly and allowed more freedom in their activities.

Women from the urban lower class are in almost the same situation. They continue to wear the veil in public. Some are employed in industries such as mass-production rugweaving (a traditional home craft) or the export food processing plants. A very few women are moving into service occupations—health work-

ers, secretaries, sales-clerks, and primary school teachers.

Education is now compulsory under law and many young girls are sent to school for seven or eight years. Only $\frac{1}{4}$ of secondary school students are female. Total segregation of the sexes is maintained in the schools and the disciplinary system is unimaginable to us. Schooling is state-financed and facilities are inadequate.

The daughters of the upper class are educated in more amenable

conditions, are allowed to wear western dress and enjoy more freedom of personal movement. They are much more likely to be able to take advantage of their legal status. Some may even go to university in France or Russia.

There is essentially only one lot for women in Tunisia--to be the property of a man. They may be overworked and poor or have an easier, wealthier life but they will still be property.

REFLECTIONS ON THE DAY...

Nancy Allen

While the Day of Action Against Rape was basically a success, it fell far short of being truly a day of action. Instead of having an angry, visible group of women demonstrating, we settled for an orderly audience listening to a panel made up mostly of men, none of whom seemed to share our anger and our fear. Of the six panelists, only those from Women's and Men's Liberation seemed ready to discuss why rape occurs and tackle the problem of how to change a society that permits, often condones this crime of violence against women.

Although it is probably useful to have an understanding of police, hospital and court procedure in the case of rape, none of the speakers covering these topics made any reference to the nature of the crime or the necessity to eliminate it.

The day itself could have been better organised: while the first hour was set aside for films, only one 15-minute film was shown. Sheila Crampton and Vicki Barclay provided the one lively spot in the day with their guerilla theatre. Part of the impact of the day was lost because no reference was made to the national nature of the

action ("protest" in other cities) and the activities in Regina, nor to the very wide spectrum of endorsing organisations--even Saskatoon City Council. There was no opportunity to meet new women because there was no floor mike on the day of the action, and only an Amazon could have made herself heard from one end of the room to another.

What most upset me was the focus on reaction, there was far too little time spent discussing the thorny problem of what we can do to remove the danger we all face. Bringing more cases to court is not going to reduce the incidence of rape, nor make it safe to walk on the street at night.

We must remember that this, like many of our struggles, is an international one, and that we will only see results when we create enough pressure that we cannot be ignored.



W.A.C.H. REPORT

BY NANCY WALKER

W.A.C.H. is a group of Regina women with aims and interests similar to those of S.W.L. They will be contributing a monthly column.

On Nov. 5th over fifty people attended a public meeting to mark the National Day of Protest Against Rape in Regina. The event held at the public library was sponsored by WACH (Women's Action Collective on Health), Regina Women Community Centre, rape crisis line, the action committee on the Status of Women and the Moose Jaw Women's Centre. The city saw a successful publicity campaign in the week preceding the Sat. meeting. An article appeared in the Leader-Post announcing that Regina City Council, after much disagreement, proclaimed Rape Awareness Week, Oct. 30th-Nov 5.

About a dozen women hit Regina streets the previous weekend in a leafleting blitz directed at the downtown and suburban shopping centres. On Saturday alone almost 2,000 leaflets were distributed.

On Sat. Nov. 5th at 2 p.m. chairperson Ursula Thoma opened the meeting by putting rape into a historical context. Next on the agenda was a dramatization of an actual court room scene. Judy Eichorst played a woman who had been raped by a group of men---her interrogator was played by Teri Posyniuk. The brutality and humiliation of the scene stunned the audience, however a few minutes later the next speaker Shelley Gavigan pointed out in her presentation on rape and the law that it was merely a "moderate" questioning. Gavigan exposed the flimsiness of rape law reforms brought in under Otto Lang in 1976 and pointed out that it is no accident Courts continue to victimize women. Gavigan stated "Women must not wait for the courts to stop rape---only women can stop rape".

The next speaker was Pat Cavanaugh who attacked each of the sexist myths about rape as well as a number of general lies about the nature of male and female sexuality. Cavanaugh challenged the narrow legal definition of rape, pointing out that within these limits a man cannot be accused of raping his wife, furthermore she argued that sexual coercion on the job, public humiliation of women on the streets and wife beating must all be treated as acts of rape. Two testimonies of rape experiences followed, they verified in an intensely personal way how deadly rape and the fear of rape affect a woman's confidence and self-identity.

Next two women, Abby Ulmer and Bev Rollick from the Regina rape crisis line spoke, describing the services they offer and making a case for the extension of such a facility.

The last speaker of the day was Barbara Nymark. She urged all women to struggle against the limits our socialization has imposed on us and to develop strength and physical confidence. Nymark called for improved physical education for women in schools and free accessible self-defence courses for all.

Women emerged from the meeting with mixed feelings. We discovered that rape remains a difficult topic for many of us, however women were excited about continuing the campaign against sexist violence. Later, WACH members met to analyze the Nov. 5 action. We all agreed that it was a victory for us to have joined women in other Canadian cities in a public protest against rape and to have provided a forum for us all to learn more about our oppression. Some felt that a socialist perspective of rape should have been voiced at the meeting. Sexism was described thoroughly but no one

ANNOUNCEMENTS

analyzed this as a mainstay of capitalism. We were concerned that no solutions except that of self-defence were offered to the women who had attended the meeting. While it is crucial to adopt an understanding of rape, we must also develop strategy to struggle together against it. It must go beyond individual solutions and beyond self-defence. Ultimately we must join together in an offensive campaign against a society that perpetuates sexist violence. WACH decided that a second public function might be the means by which women could take up questions left unresolved on November 5th.

1. The next general meeting of Saskatoon Women's Liberation will be Sunday, Dec. 11 at 233-22nd Street East. Meeting will start at 7:00 pm.

2. The Women's Directorate is sponsoring a Women's party, 8:30 pm, Friday Dec. 2 at the Gay Community Centre-310 20th Street East.. Music will be provided. All women are sincerely invited.

PAPUA NEW GUINEAN WOMEN

Anne Jayne lived and worked in Papua New Guinea for 1½ years. She now resides in Saskatoon.

At the Mexico City conference in 1975, women from the Third World countries criticized the directions that women from more industrialized countries seemed to be taking, and the emphasis on certain objectives which Third World women were unable to endorse wholeheartedly. The lesson was clear in Mexico City, if not before, that the women's movement must reflect the needs and aspirations of women in each country.

For example, some of the most important objectives of the "ordinary" woman in Papua New Guinea may seem almost insignificant at first sight to an urban woman from Canada. One of the most active women's organizations in Papua New Guinea has succeeded in leading large scale protests in recent years against the legalization of prostitution and easy access to liquor. Both campaigns were undertaken without substantial male support--and many of the women who participated were marching in spite of clear opposition from their husbands. Both campaigns were remarkably effec-

tive. The 1977 campaign did prevent the provincial government in the Gazelle from legalizing prostitution, and the earlier campaigns against drinking led to the national government's move to pay civil servants on Thursdays and to close all bars on that day. While there is a black market operating to provide liquor on Thursdays, there is a greater chance that the husband's wages will be available to maintain the family rather than to engage in marathon drinking sessions with his friends.

There is a clear link in Papua New Guinea--and particularly in the urban areas--between liquor, prostitution, and the general health and welfare of women. The minimum wage in urban areas is 22 Kina (K22) per week; in rural areas, K11 per week. A carton of beer (24 bottles) costs K8 at regular retail outlets, K12 on the black market. Thus, a wage-earner who buys a round of beer for his buddies after work will usually make a substantial dent in the family budget for the week. If normal socializing patterns are followed, --and he then shares the rounds his buddies buy for him--he will not only spend a fairly large proportion of

his wages but will arrive home intoxicated and will often assault his wife. The incidence of battered wives is very high because of the combination of social values which sanction physical violence within the family and intoxication of the husband. Wives have very little protection in these situations.

The further effect of the dissipation of the husband's wages on liquor has been the increased incidence of prostitution by women who need the money to maintain the family. There are not many legitimate sources of income in the urban area—even positions as domestic servants in expatriate households are usually filled by men, not women.

Thus, the selection of liquor and prostitution as major issues by the Gazelle women clearly indicates their concerns with immediate issues of the welfare of women and their families. These are by no means merely spiritual issues. The Gazelle organization is of particular significance because it is an organization representing the "rank and file" of Papua New Guinean women, not the elite—and because these women were prepared to defy their husbands to participate. (It should perhaps be noted that the Gazelle society is matrilineal though not matriarchal).

The assertiveness of the Gazelle women is matched by the increasing militance of university women at the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby. The women students at the university are outnumbered by the men students by a ratio of about 10 to 1. In the past, the women students have endured considerable harassment from male students—ranging from wolf whistles at women who arrive in class late to assaults and rapes committed upon women students on campus, and even in the women's dormitories. Women who wished to participate in university activities such as clubs or student government were often ignored. Many women were reluctant to enter male-dominated areas of study because they dreaded the likely sexual harassment they would receive from male students.

In March, 1977, the women students organized a boycott of classes to protest intimidation by male students. A number of faculty members cancelled classes in sympathy with the boycott. The national newspaper, the Post-Courier, publicized details of the boycott and the women's protest against their lack of security while on campus.

The male students reacted to the boycott with anger, charging that the women had shamed the university and that they should have resolved the problems within the university. The women responded that nothing had been done about their complaints in the past, and that the only possibility for reform would be to resort to outside pressure. The Acting Vice Chancellor pointed out that if the women would stop wearing short skirts they might be left alone.

The women were infuriated by the comment and promptly called for a second day of boycotts and put up a placard outside the University Library with a picture of a woman riding to class on a bicycle—and garbed in a black veil.

The Prime Minister intervened in the dispute to order police protection for women on campus. Students were prohibited from having liquor in the dormitories. The university club, which normally served liquor to both faculty and students, was closed for a month. The Police Department began recruiting female police officers because of complaints by the women students that women victims could not discuss these matters with male police officers. Male students retaliated by ignoring the women students socially, though some threatened physical violence against identified leaders of the boycott.

The university women are in a difficult position in psychological and social terms, aside from their vulnerability to intimidation and social ostracism from male students. Papua New Guinea is generally a traditional society based on subsistence agriculture; proportionally only a tiny minority

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of PNG citizens enter university and the high level careers that follow. Thus, most women have been trained to view family obligations as central to their lives--not necessarily in terms of housework and childcare alone, but also in terms of their productive work in farming. When they enter university, there is a clear conflict for them between their high career aspirations and their desires to share in family life. They have few role models available of women who have combined both careers and family life, since they are the first generation of women who have attended university. Of the prominent Papua New Guinean women in government, business, politics and the media, a number are married to expatriates, not to Papua New Guineans and thus have circumvented some of the demands of traditional marriage. Nevertheless, most of these prominent women are almost contemporaries of women now in university.

In terms of family goals, the university educated women often find that male students prefer to marry less educated women--particularly women with only a high school education, since they will have enough sophistication to cope with the husband's own career aspirations, but not so much ambition that they will seek to have careers of their own. Thus, some university women are delaying marriage, others are marrying expatriate men--a move which attracts the criticism of the Papua New Guinean university male since a properly nationalistic young woman would choose a Papua New Guinean!

In career terms the university women wish to have their wages and promotions based on merit, but find that there is discrimination against them as women, even in the public service. The national government is the largest employer in the country--50,000 employees--and might be expected to offer equal opportunity to men and women. Generally, women are employed at the lower ranks, mostly as clerical workers. Some government departments routinely

dismiss women who marry or become pregnant. University educated women who have entered the public service have also encountered department-wide policies limiting certain benefits--e.g. overseas conference trips--to men. Some departments have policies restricting employment to women. The Administrative College in Port Moresby, for example gives first priority to male applicants, second priority to single women; and third priority to married women. One branch of government service that has been opened to women is the National Broadcasting Service, which employs a large number of women as broadcasters and writers.



Politically, women have been more involved than has been the case at any time in the past. Six women were candidates in the Parliamentary elections held earlier this year. Of the three who were successful, one heads a secessionist party and another was appointed to a cabinet post. There are some women in important posts--such as the Women's Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister but there are no women civil servants who head departments or who are within the top three or four ranks in their departments.

In a developing country like Papua New Guinea, there will be some segments of the society whose demands echo those of the Women's movements of industrialized countries--demands for equal opportunity, equal pay, access to university education and high level jobs, particularly at policy making levels. There are also women whose primary concerns center around family, clan, and village. They are concerned with the problems



Winnipeg Women's Liberation Newsletter

of liquor and gambling, and the migration of young men to the cities which upsets the normal balance of the society. The male oriented nature of colonization appears at the most

fundamental levels of village life--the Australian colonizers imposed peace on the warring tribes, thus freeing men from the primary demand on their time, and introduced labor saving devices which reduced the work load allocated to men (clearing land for farming), but did little to alleviate the work load of women (who were responsible for the actual on-going farming operations). Thus, men had more time to drink and to gamble, and more inclination to move to the city. The social structure of the village was disrupted, and the balance is not easily restored. The government encourages people to remain in the village rather than migrate to the cities. In practice it has often been the young men of the village who decide to try city life for a while. Thus, there has been a surplus of women remaining in the village--and marriage opportunities have been affected. (Polygamy is permitted by custom but many Papua New Guineans have converted to Christianity and remain monogamous). The traditional village life is thus in a period of transition as people adapt to the new reality.

In many ways the woman's position

in the village is stronger than that of the urban woman. The village woman is a productive worker, not economically dependent on a wage earner. The value of her services is recognized in the custom of bride price. The husband and his family would traditionally give valuable possessions such as pigs and shell money to the woman's family, to compensate for the loss of her services and to demonstrate their gratitude for the marriage. As productive members of the village, women often have a real if covert political influence. that is absent in the city. Women can also rely on their own relatives for assistance if they are mistreated by their husbands. Further, it is easier to control the problems associated with drinking in the village--the woman is often almost self-sufficient in feeding herself and her children and she can seek assistance from clanspeople.

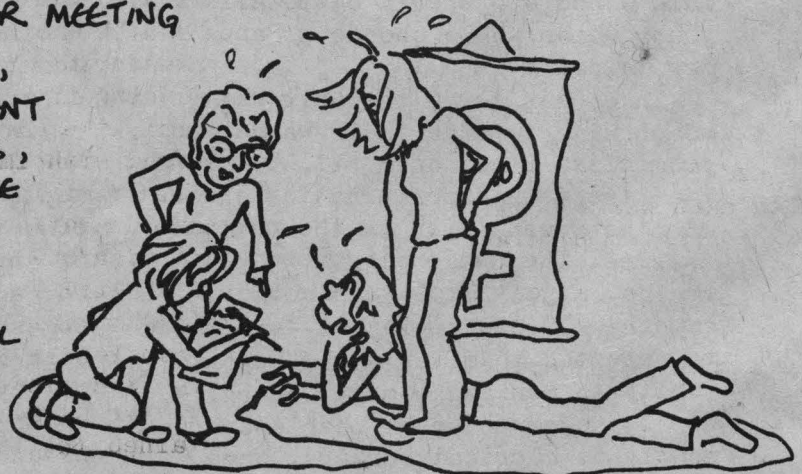
Usually, the husband will drink with his friends in the village rather than disappear into an enormous hotel bar, where violence is frequent.

Papua New Guinean women are beginning to identify the issues of significance in their own lives and to act decisively to attain their objectives. Their women's movement is nascent, but it does reflect their own interests and not those of Australia or North America.

COLLECTIVE BLURB.

A TYPICAL NEWSLETTER MEETING
WRUGHT BY BICKERING,
MISUNDERSTANDINGS CONSTANT
MURMURINGS, WITTICISMS,
OCCASIONAL UNMENTIONABLE
WORDS AND MUTUAL
DISRESPECT.

BUT IN THE FINAL
ANALYSIS THE STRATEGICAL
IMPORTANCE OF FORMING
A UNITED FRONT TOWARD
THE ULTIMATE END... THE
RITZ.. SOLVES ALL CHEERS .





BOTTLE-FED BABIES IN THIRD WORLD

Rosemarie Rupp

One of the most pressing problems currently facing Third World women is that of exploitation by multinational corporations. The infant formula scandal is without question the most outrageous example of such exploitation.

Following trends in the industrialized world, the rate of breast feeding in Third World countries declined sharply over the past number of years. Several contributing factors led to this decline including the lack of nutritional knowledge of a people who are often undereducated, the apathy of health professionals and nutritionists, the increasing move to urbanization with its attending changing lifestyle, and the tendency of mothers to work away from home (although at present this affects a very small proportion of women). But most important and insidious in promoting bottle over breast feeding is the unethical campaign of baby formulas by commercial concerns.

All major infant food firms participate in advertising and promoting in the Third World. They use the mass media, newspapers, radio and occasionally television, as well as direct advertising in the form of posters, pamphlets and free samples to health centers and hospitals. These baby food companies often sponsor medical society activities which leave doctors indebted to them, unable to protest practices detrimental to the health of their patients. Perhaps most effective of all is the hiring of "milk nurses," local health care workers attracted to the milk companies by higher pay than hospitals are financially able to meet. Their function is to promote the products of the company, by visiting new mothers in hospital and at home, explaining the advantages of bottle feeding and giving away free samples.

The response of women in the Third World has been understandable -- they want only the best for their babies. Their misguided desire to emulate women in developed countries who had chosen what they regarded as a technologically superior method of infant feeding and appreciating themselves the greater convenience of bottles (or so they were told), they abandoned mother's milk for the powdered preparations of the multinationals.

This campaign, however, is definitely not in the best interests of the people to whom it was directed. It was successful in its goal of reducing the rate of breast feeding in countries where breast feeding had always been the practice. This in itself is a severe cultural disruption. More important, once abandoned, lactation could not be resumed, and formula feeding is an expensive proposition few families can afford. A study done in Nigeria, for example, showed that on the average about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total family food budget would be needed to feed a child exclusively on the formulas in the recommended quantities. The only alternative often is to feed diluted quantities which results in malnourished children with retarded mental and physical development. It is also absurd to expect women to be able to maintain the necessary standards of sterilization for bottle feeding in countries where sanitation facilities are poor. Problems encountered with impure water supplies and non-sterilized bottles and nipples have dramatically increased the rate of diarrhea and mamasmus in formula-fed children.

What initiated the campaign to promote bottle feeding in Third World countries? The potential for capturing a lucrative market there gained in its appeal as declining birth rates became evident in the existing markets of developed

countries. The multinationals moved in quickly to insure that profit levels were maintained.



Opposition to the campaign of these companies have been slowly growing as information of their practices become more widely known. Initially papers were published renouncing the campaign in professional journals, but to no avail. A United Nations committee on the feeding of pre-school children exposed the problem and succeeded in the consciousness-raising of pediatricians and nutritionists. Most recently the attack has been journalistic, with the result that the multinationals have become the object of much adverse publicity. Nestles brought a suit against a German group which had put out a pamphlet about their practices, but later withdrew the charges concerning unethical advertising and the use of milk-nurses.

The latest tactic of those opposing the practices of the baby food companies is to call for the boycott

of all Nestle products (see below). It must be emphasized that Nestles are merely the worst, but by no means the only offender. They have the largest financial investment and have proven themselves to be most adept manipulators in defending their actions. Other companies involved are Bristol-Meyers and Beech-Nut Baby foods.

In reacting against the exploitive practices of such companies, we must not deny mothers alternatives to breast-feeding. Although human milk is admittedly superior for the health of the baby and is important in fostering mother-child emotional bonds, there are problems which must be recognized. The mother is virtually inseparable from her child while breast-feeding. These may be either economically or socially unacceptable (i.e. commitments outside the home or wishing to share child-care responsibility). We must demand the right for all women to make these choices, whether they live in Canada or Tanzania. What is needed for women unable to breast feed is a low cost form of breast milk surrogate—not the highly prized, high-pressure advertised products of the food companies.

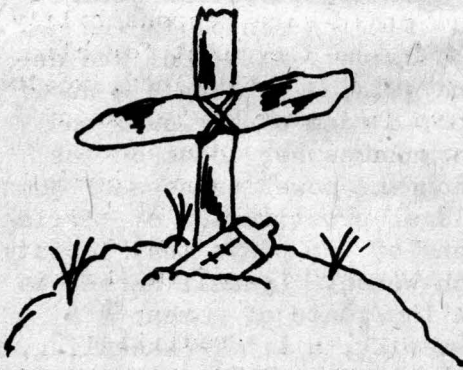
While all of the realities of bottle-feeding have been brought to the attention of the multinational firms involved—the lack of sanitary water supplies, the absence of the necessary facilities to sterilize bottles and the dilution of formula due to prohibitive costs—the companies still refuse to withdraw their campaign. Developed societies have the resources to combat such immoral practices—developing countries do not. Grave upon grave is marked by the most valued possession the infant received in its short, painful existence—the baby bottle—the very instrument of its death.

Because of Nestles role in promoting the use of formula feeding in Third World countries, where inadequate resources for sterile bottles, pure drinking water and enough money to buy sufficient quantities has resulted in malnutrition, disease and death of children, the Third World Institute of the Newman Centre has called for a boycott against Nestle. Nestle is a Swiss-based multinational corporation with many subsidiaries. If you object to their actions in the Third World please don't buy their products.

BOYCOTT LIST:

Nestles
Nescafe, Nestea, Taster's Choice
Libby's
Crosse and Blackwell's
Stouffer's
Jarlesburg Cheese
Keiller
McVities
Maggi
Dear Park Mountain Spring Water
Lactogen Infant Formula

James Keller & son, Ltd.
Crawford Products
Gerber Cheeses
Prices French Onion Dip
Swiss Knight Cheese
Cherry Hill Old Fort Cheese
Provolone Locatelli
Major Grey's Chutney
Hum
Wispride
Kavli Crispbread (Flatbread)



Write to Nestles and tell them you're boycotting their products:

Nestles Co. Inc.
100 Bloomingdale Road
White Plains, New York 10605

For more information contact:

Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFACT)
c/o Third World Institute
Newman Center of the Univ. of Minnesota
1701 University Ave. S.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414
(612) 331-3437

For more information and further documentation, please see International Journal of Health Services, Volume VII p. 249 (1977) and Volume VI p. 609 (1976). These journals are available at the Health Sciences Library, University of Saskatchewan.

DOUBLE COLONIALISM

by Maggie Butcher

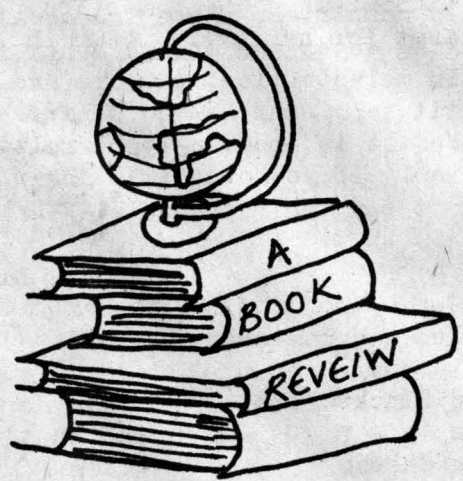
In 1883 a young South African woman went to England taking with her the manuscript of a novel she had begun writing as a nineteen year old governess in her homeland. The Story of an African Farm was immediately taken up and praised by the leading public figures of the day and its shy and awkward colonial author found herself at the centre of London's literary and social scene.

Ragged and unpolished as it is, An African Farm struck a new note in English literary circles. It was a daringly outspoken account of a young woman's refusal to tolerate the conventional restraints that Victorian society imposed upon women. So outspoken was it that its author was pressured to provide the heroine with a wedding ring in order not to offend the sensibility of W. H. Smith's, the railway book sellers. She refused.

There is very little actual 'plot' in the novel. What gives the book its peculiar strength and power to stay in the mind long after reading it are a number of intense and dramatically vivid scenes which because they occur time and time again in Olive Schreiner's other writings and are so powerful seem to have their origin in the experiences of the author's own life.

In childhood Waldo, the heroine's confidant and friend, is haunted by the ticking of a great clock whose every movement seems to be damning dying souls to hell. His faith in God is later shattered by his reading John Stuart Mill's Political Economy and his life is profoundly changed when a stranger gives him Herbert Spencer's First Principles of Logic. Both books were, on Schreiner's own admission, crucial in her own rejection of orthodox Christianity.

Lyndall, the heroine, quickly sees through the superstitious ignorance of her elders and endures their punishments with calm, if cold, indifference. She succeeds in her



ambition to be sent away to school but her experiences there are, on the whole, bitterly disappointing: "of all cursed places under the sun where the hungriest soul can hardly pick up a few grains of knowledge, a girl's boarding school is the worst." However, at school she demands and gets, like Virginia Woolf after her, a room of her own, and there formulates her ideas on the subjection and powerlessness of women.

The legal prostitution of marriage is but one of the ploys that society forces on women. Lyndall harangues Waldo on the state of women: "A little weeping, a little wheedling, a little self-degradation, a little careful use of our advantages, and then some man will say--'Come be my wife. . .'. There are men enough; but a woman who has sold herself, ever for a ring and a new name, need hold her skirt aside for no creature in the street."

The Story of an African Farm is a is a strange and unbalanced book with long passages of diatribe and tedious 'allegories', a form of symbolic writing that Schreiner found particularly congenial, perhaps for no other reason than it allowed her to write in a short, sharp burst with no need for revision. Nevertheless, the passion that surges through the work

is the more forceful for its being crude and unrefined. Lyndall is too cold and dogmatic a heroine for one to identify with or feel attracted to and yet what she stands for is as valid today as it was in 1883.

More recent South African writers, such as Dan Jacobson and Doris Lessing, have acknowledged their debt to Schreiner for her having been the

first to present the South African landscape in a work of fiction. If as a writer she was the first to map out the colonial territory, she was also the first to recognize that, as a woman, she suffered a double colonialism, being subject to the values and mores of a male-dominated society. In her work as in her life Olive Schreiner set out to conquer both.

MEETING REPORT

At the October 30th general meeting, Saskatoon Women's Liberation passed a motion to sponsor a Prairie Woman's Conference in February or March of 1978. It is hoped that the conference will help establish contact with other groups and will be a vehicle to further our political direction. The members of the planning committee are: Maylynn Woo, Shelley Gordon, Delia Burdeyney and Sylvia Pusch. The committee has begun contacting women's groups across the prairies and submitted a proposal for the conference agenda at the November 13th meeting. In light of their initial efforts a motion of confidence in the planning committee was passed. It was agreed that conference workshops and socials would be open to women only.

Final plans for the Day of Action Against Rape were made at the October 30th meeting and a motion was made that Saskatoon Women's Liberation donate \$50 to help finance the events.

SWL will be having an educational booth at the Sundog Pleasure Fair, November 24-26. Maureen Graham and Maggie Dykes volunteered to look after scheduling of staff and planning of the booth and Susan Woolway and Delia Burdeyney offered to help build the booth frames. The Oct. 30th meeting decided that the booth should display back issues of Prairie Woman, T-shirts and a leaflet giving a brief background of SWL. It was agreed that we would purchase more T-shirts for the fair.

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regretfully accepted the resignations of two valuable committee members at the November 15th meeting. Sylvia Pusch has resigned from the Political Positions Committee and from the Conference Planning Committee. These openings will be filled by Susan Woolway and Pat Atkinson respectively. Audrey Hall will be taking over Alva Jangula's responsibilities as Treasurer and as a member of the Steering Committee.

Several policy decisions were made at the November 13th meeting. Firstly, a motion was passed that the content (or an outline of the content) of speeches or letters representing Saskatoon Women's Liberation should be approved by either a general meeting or the steering committee. Secondly, a motion was passed that writings in the process of being worked out should be regarded as internal documents and thus, should not be taken to other organizations before being approved by Saskatoon Women's Liberation.

Because of the complexity of the paper dealing with the general political position of Saskatoon's Women's Liberation the November 13th meeting agreed that members wishing to comment on it should submit their suggestions in writing to members of the Political Positions Committee.

General meetings of Saskatoon Women's Liberation are held every second Sunday evening, 7:00-9:00 p., p.m. at 233-22nd St. E. Interested women are invited to attend.

PRAIRIE WOMAN is a newsletter of Saskatoon Women's Liberation. Contributions in the form of articles, news items, poetry, graphics, cartoons, and photographs are welcomed from women. Interested men are invited to contribute letters or funds. Because the newsletter is put out by voluntary labour, financial donations are encouraged.

PRAIRIE WOMAN is run as a collective. Writers have had their efforts acknowledged with their articles. Others working on the paper as an editorial collective are:

Maylynn Woo
Maggie Dykes
Linda Charlton
Rosemarie Rupps
Colleen Odegard
Vicki Barclay
Gail Osachoff

Original graphics and headlines were drawn by Maylynn Woo and Vicki Barclay.

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PRAIRIE WOMAN
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