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APRIL 1978

A NEWSLETTER OF

SASKATOON WOMEN'S LIBERATION

PRAIRIE WOMAN



# Letters

Dear Friends:

Would you please accept half-payment of \$2.00 for the Prairie Woman newsletter to be sent to the Women's Archives. I am sorry that I cannot afford to send more.

I have always followed as well as I can the activities of women's liberation in Saskatoon. I remember, as history, the women's liberation conference held in Saskatoon held, I think, in 1970--a year before my own involvement. It was also the participation of the Saskatoon women in the abortion caravan which I remember--the event which brought me to my socialist-feminist understanding.

The Women's Archives received by some good luck your February 1978 Conference issue. I would have gone eagerly to the socialist-feminist conference sponsored by Saskatoon Women's Liberation if I had had enough money. There is very little discussion here in Toronto of what it means to be a socialist-feminist. I miss the kind of contact that the Saskatoon conference would have offered. Would you be kind enough to send me all the conference material--minutes, notes, leaflets, etc. for the Women's Archives (and for my personal information)? Please continue to send Prairie Woman to the address below. And any other back

issues of the current revival of the Saskatoon newsletter. The Other Woman had collected copies of the newsletter from 1975 and as far back as 1973. But the Women's Archives would like to continue this connection in whatever way possible.

In Solidarity,  
Pat Leslie Toronto

Dear Sisters:

Thanks alot for the inspiring conference you planned. I learned greatly I also picked up your past years' newsletters and greedily read them all. Sounds like you have something great going!

Six of us who attended the weekend (plus the 14 hours of driving time) are forming a group. Right now we're looking at education (feminist, socialist, anarchist, etc.) support and action. We decided not to print a newsletter, but to combine efforts with the Calgary Women's Newspaper put out by SWAC (Status of Women Action Committee).

We all found your efforts stimulating and exhilarating--and the reentry back into the general mainstream somewhat traumatic.

Appreciatively and  
Affectionately,  
Dawn  
Calgary



**SUBSCRIPTION FORM**

PLEASE SEND ME A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION OF PRAIRIE WOMAN TO:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE *please* \_\_\_\_\_

To SASKATOON  
WOMEN'S LIBERATION  
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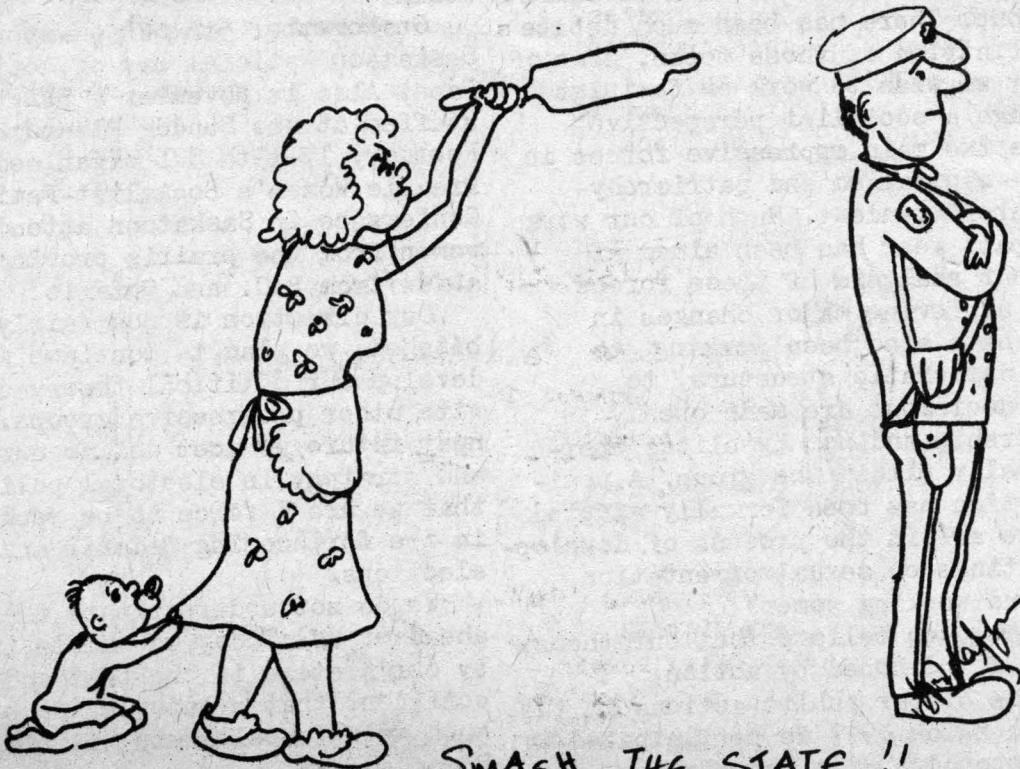
 \$4.00/YR.

# EDITORIAL

The month just passed has been one in which women's issues have drawn more attention than at any other time of the year. This edition of the newsletter reflects that activity. International Women's Day was celebrated locally, the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women lobby was carried out in Regina at the provincial level, and federal M.P.'s spent a day attempting to persuade one another they were genuinely concerned about women's issues.

Politicians have failed to convince us that their concern is genuine. Yet women cannot afford to ignore the power for change that exists in the political arena. It is imperative that we express our views publicly and collectively. But while it is important for us to join with other women's groups in pressuring government, we must be careful not to allow controversial demands to be smothered by compromise. We are approaching election time at both the federal and provincial levels--it is time for us to sit down & discuss our strategies so that we are prepared to advance our cause and force political hopefuls to take our concerns seriously.

Prairie Woman Collective  
April, 1978



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# Saskatoon Women's Liberation...who we are

-by Audrey Hall

Prairie Woman is reprinting the text of the speech Audrey Hall gave on behalf of S.W.L. at the March 8 International Women's Day celebrations.

The present wave of Women's Liberation in Saskatoon started to organize in the fall of 1976 after a hiatus of approximately one year. The previous organization, which had expressed itself mainly through the Women's Centre, had been rendered apparently moribund under the cumulative weight of the hype of International Women's Year. From 1973 to 1975 Women's Liberation had become increasingly involved in providing services to women. Services (of abortion referral, rape crisis, etc.) which the established health and social services would not handle. Much energy had gone into obtaining government grants to support these services and a number of women became burnt out after months of arduous work on meagre wages.

When we came together again and examined our collective experience we learned some important lessons. No longer are we interested in expending our time and energy to supplement inadequate government services. During the past year and a half we have identified ourselves as a socialist feminist group. There has been much debate over the definition of those terms, some of us would say we wish to work on feminist issues through a socialist perspective. We recognize two main oppressive forces in our society--capitalism and patriarchy--which are interdependent. Much of our work during the past year has been aimed at developing our analysis of these forces and ways of achieving major changes in society. We have also been working to establish a democratic structure, to ensure that decisions are made openly by the membership and not by elites operating informally within the group. A position on abortion has been formally adopted by SWL and we are in the process of developing our positions on sexual orientation, child care and working women.

As activists, we believe that our theory must be tested and honed by action. These are some of our public actions in the past year. In March 1977 we participated in and were co-sponsors of a Gay Rights

demonstration in Regina. Letters were written to Premier Blakeney and the council of the New Democratic Youth questioning NDP policy on abortion and demanding the resignations of Herman Rolfes and Wes Robbins as Ministers of Social Services and Health, in view of their anti-abortion statements.

In April, SWL organized a demonstration at the J.S. Wood Library where a meeting of anti-abortionists was taking place. On May 28th we co-sponsored a multi-issue demonstration in Regina.

In May a number of members attended the Working Women's Conference in Saskatoon. A demonstration was held at University Hospital protesting the lack of abortion services provided by that hospital to women of Saskatoon. In June we participated in the large anti-nuclear demonstration in Saskatoon and on the 15th brought our raspberries to a strawberry tea for Herman Rolfes.

Also in June the first issue of Prairie Woman was published.

At the beginning of July members of the Lesbian Caucus of SWL participated in the National Gay Conference in Saskatoon.

On October 14th a very successful benefit dance was held to support Prairie Woman.

On November 5th SWL co-sponsored the Saskatoon National Day of Action against Rape. Also in November a SWL booth was staffed at the Sundog Pleasure Fair. February 17-19th SWL organised the first Prairie Women's Socialist-Feminist Conference in Saskatoon attended by 140 women from the prairie provinces, with a few from B.C. and Ontario.

Our direction is now fairly well established, we plan to continue working to develop our political theory and to work with other progressive groups. In the near future we must define our role and strategy in electoral politics so that we are a force to be reckoned with in the forthcoming federal and provincial elections.

We do not underestimate the struggle ahead of us. Today we salute the gains made by our sisters in the past and we are confident that eventually we will have much more to celebrate on International Women's Day.

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

-by Maylynn Woo

Over 120 women and men celebrated International Women's Day on March 8, 1978 in the auditorium at the Saskatoon Public Library. The unity of women representing many different political positions was demonstrated by the number of groups that participated. Similar meetings held across the country and around the world symbolize the common front of feminism versus the sexism inherent in every society regardless of geographic locales.

Chairperson Cindy Devine began the meeting by reading telegrams of support from Regina, Winnipeg and Toronto.

Shelly Gordon of SWL emphasized the importance of International Women's Day both from a historical perspective and in contemporary demands of European women.

## SORWUC

SORWUC was represented by Jean Burgess. She described the union which was formed primarily to organize non-unionized workers, the highest percentage of whom are women. She went on to outline the fight in which SORWUC is engaged to certify bank workers in Saskatchewan. At present only 2 banks in our province are certified; neither of these are in Saskatoon where there are 32 branches and approximately 300 bank workers. The management of these banks is actively planning strategy to keep SORWUC out - one of the tactics employed being intimidation of workers within branches. Beyond being part of International Women's Day celebrations, Jean called on volunteers to help leaflet all 32 bank branches on the following day.

## WOMEN'S DIRECTORATE

Wiesia Kolasinska spoke for the Women's Directorate on Campus. She outlined the actions of the Directorate over the past year and the present fight against the engineering students' newspaper, the Red Eye, in which they are presently engaged.

## SASKATCHEWAN ACTION COMMITTEE

Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women was represented by Kathie Storrie. She described the group which was formed in 1972, to be concerned with implementing the recommendation of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. She outlined their upcoming lobby on March 20th at the legislature in Regina in which women from all constituencies are invited to take part in presenting a brief of 40 demands to their respective MLA's. The demands include: women and child-care, education sex stereotyping, paternity and adoption provisions under the labor standards act, native women's rights, rights of co-ownership, increased funding of rape crisis centers, and the enactment of the Badgely report.

## WOMEN AND DRUG USE SOCIETY

A little known group, Women and Drug Use in Society, was represented by Gloria Carey. She described the increasing dependence of women on drugs, such as antidepressants and tranquilizers, coupled with the increasingly indiscriminatory nature in which they are prescribed by doctors. Their action is aimed at raising the consciousness of women to become more aware of these problems.

## WOMEN IN SOCIETY TODAY

Lenore Rogers spoke for Women in Society Today, an outreach project of the Canada Employment Center. They are primarily involved in three areas of work; direct services such as counselling and support, a Daycare branch for establishing family daycare homes and employment counselling services for single parents on welfare.

## BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB

Fran Alexson spoke for the Saskatoon Business and Professional Women's Club. Their objectives were outlined as follows:

to develop and train women in industry and work toward improvement in conditions for working women, to stimulate interest of women in government affairs, and to cooperate with their international network to implement its aims and objectives. Their actions include lobbying for qualified women in the Senate, lobbying for women to serve on juries, implement the enactment of federal and provincial laws toward equal pay for work of equal value, and to repeal abortion laws.

**CUPE LOCAL 1975**

CUPE Local 1975 was represented by Janice Kell, a member of the Status of Women of CUPE at the University of Saskatchewan. They are engaged in increasing the participation of women within their union branch. Of the 13,040 people employed at the U of S, 900 are women. The importance of an active voice by women within this union was stressed if the interests of women were to be met.

Joyce McCall, a shop steward within this union announced the symbolic walk-out of library staff on March 8th to protest the discontinuation by management of the job evaluation programme.

**SASK. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

Carole Geller of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission emphasized the continuing discrimination against women within our society.

**RAPE CRISIS CENTER**

Maureen Cramer spoke for the Saskatoon Rape Crisis Centre, presently funded from the Department of Social Services and City Hall. Their objectives are to give support to rape victims, to sensitize groups dealing with victims and to raise the consciousness of police, the law and the public

**FEDERAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Doris Serne spoke on behalf of the Federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women. She is one of a thirty member federal committee representing Saskatchewan. She stated that 40% of the committee's recommendations had been implemented, 43% had been partially implemented, and that 17% had not yet been looked at.

**CHILEAN WORKERS COMMITTEE**

One of the most moving speeches was made by Bessie Pino speaking for the Chilean Workers' Committee. She addressed her greeting on IWD to women of the world but particularly to the women of the Chilean People for their part in the struggle for their own liberation and in the construction of a socialist

society in Chile and Latin America. She described the torture and humiliation of her comrades in struggle, and the daily struggle of women to feed their children. She concluded that the popular resistance will triumph.

**PLANNED PARENTHOOD, SASK**

Nadia Greschuk spoke on behalf of Planned Parenthood, a body representing four centres in Saskatchewan. These centres provide support and counselling to women about birth control, abortion and health related problems. The aims of the group are to remove abortion from the criminal code, to establish sex education classes for children, and to fight for equal pay for work of equal value for working women.

**GAY COMMUNITY CENTER**

Ann Vanderhooft of the Gay Community Center called for pressure to be put on governments to include sexual orientation in human rights legislation. She went on to describe the public action that gay women and men are presently undertaking to increase public awareness of the oppression that they face. She also described the formation of a new provincial body, the Saskatchewan Gay Coalition.

**WOMEN AND THE LAW**

Willa Voroney, representing Women and the Law spoke about the aims of the group, these being public education, women's rights and the encouragement of more women to enter law school.

**SASK. NEW DEMOCRATIC WOMEN**

Anne Boulton spoke on behalf of Saskatchewan New Democrat Women. She described the discrimination that existed within the NDP against women.

**CALENDAR COLLECTIVE**

Vera Marie Wolfe spoke on behalf of the Calendar Collective, a Saskatoon group which assembles the women's calendar, "Herstory". This publication includes the herstory of outstanding Canadian women.

**SASKATOON WOMENS LIBERATION**

The final speaker was Audrey Hall for Saskatoon Women's Liberation. Her speech is reprinted in this issue.

The meeting ended with a rendition of "Bread and Roses" and the hope that in future years some of the demands and actions presently taking place will be met and we will have more to celebrate!

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# NOT ONLY IN SASKATCHEWAN...

## SEXISM on CAMPUSES

The Women's Directorate in Saskatoon has been fighting the local Engineering paper "The Red Eye". It is encouraging to see women on other Canadian campuses standing up for their rights, and protesting other sexist activities of the engineers. Though divided by distance, we are united in the spirit of fighting for every woman's right to dignity of her being.

by Doreen Allan  
reprinted from Kinesis, Feb. 1978

A naked woman, supposedly representing Lady Godiva, was lead on a horse through the UBC campus in January. The event celebrated Engineers Week. Witty engineers accompanied her, singing "We are/we are/we are the engineers;" "we can/wecan/drink forty beers."

Unfortunately, I was not there to join the protest, but it was described to me by one of the protesters as being a frightening experience. He said, "It was like the warriors returning with a prisoner or the hunters coming home with their kill." I find this analogy appropriate, considering the damage it does to women.

I went up to UBC to speak with individual engineering students about their annual events, and to find out what they are like outside their pack.

They said Lady Godiva is their mascot. When I asked them, "Why Lady Godiva?", they didn't have a clue. One person tried to justify their parade by comparing Godiva's legendary, unconventional act of charity to the engineers' witty acts of charity. (They raise money for some band-aid causes during Engineers' Week.)

Godiva was an eleventh century English woman who rode through the streets naked to urge her husband to abolish a heavy tax.

Godiva's famous ride has nothing to do, in fact, with men humiliating and degrading a woman to prove their power over her.

The engineer's paper, Red Rag, appeared on the scene during the festivities. It contains a plethora of gross jokes that particularly contribute to the oppression of women. One cartoon depicted a male character violently raping a female character. Rape is funny? There were "Humourous" titles, such as Ram Her INc. and "jokes" comparing the odour of female genitals to that of a dead fish. Red Rag is about 90% sexist, but there are also racist and anti-gay jokes. The only things it does not attack violate and criticise, are their almighty penises, which are clearly depicted as weapons.

The protest against the Lady Godiva ride came in the wake of and attack on the women's office at the UBC student union building. Women's Committee posters were stolen and photographs of nude women taped to the walls. Damage is estimated at \$100.

The engineers' annual activities are just examples of countless attempts by the state to perpetuate male domination and female oppression. They are not to be taken lightly.

The last issue of Prairie Woman carried a report on the actions being taken by the USSU Women's Directorate against those responsible for publishing the sexist Red Eye. The February 23rd Student Council meeting had defeated a Directorate motion seeking permission to file a formal complaint with SHRC. The motion was reintroduced at the March 2nd meeting, and was passed 18 to 8, allowing the Directorate to file a class complaint.

The ESS (Engineering Students' Society) has subsequently hired legal council. Since the Human Rights Commission is now officially involved, the Women's Directorate is not planning further action at this time. It seems probable that our complaint will be heard before a Board of Inquiry. We will keep Prairie Woman readers informed about our efforts at stemming the tide of sexist assaults against women on campus.

# THE CONFERENCE ANOTHER REPORT

The following article was published in the latest Briar Patch. We reproduce it, grateful that another publication gave the conference such good coverage.

by Shelley Gavigan (WACH)

The Prairie Women's Socialist Feminist Conference held here February 17-19 has marked an important step forward.

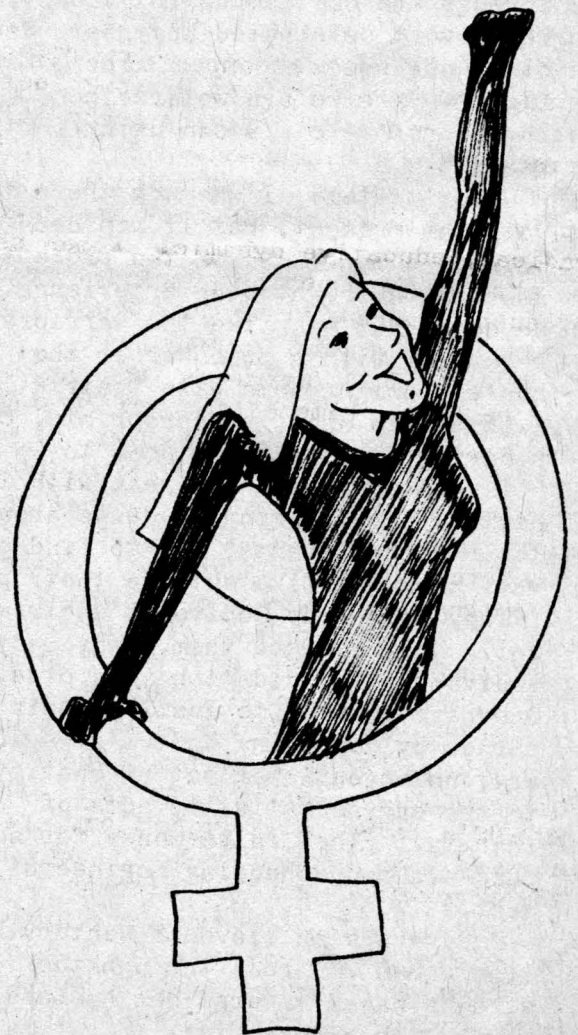
Word of the conference was spread through the loose network of socialist women's groups and by word of mouth. The response was impressive—over 130 women, many of them independent of any organized group, met together for the first time at the university here. Clearly the need for "an internal discussion of the women's movement" was great. Clearly we are still alive and struggling.

The series of workshops were designed to deal with organizational and theoretical issues facing socialist women in the women's movement. The type of movement we want to build and our role as socialist feminists were the subject of intense debate, marked by the openness and honesty that tends to be one of the unique traits of left women's politics.

"The Articulation of the Women's Movement" workshop questioned whether the movement's relative invisibility over the last three years had been a death, a lull, a change of focus, or the result of changing media coverage. Many argued that neither death nor dormancy was an adequate description. Changing issues and conditions, and the focus on service roles for activist women had resulted in a focus on internal discussion, evaluation, and development of theoretical understanding and tactics for the future.

An emphasis on structural problems raised the question of how to bring new women into the movement. There is a need for a structure that can involve and educate new women without restricting the scope or activities of the more experienced. There were a variety of opinions on the extent of organization and the types of decision making processes required.

Three major positions were put forward at the session on "The Autonomy of the Women's Movement and its Relation to the Left". One posed the need for a revolutionary socialist feminist organization completely encompassed within the women's movement. A second argued for a socialist wing of the broader movement which could work with mixed left groups





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and support women who chose to work within male dominated groups.

The third position, which sparked little discussion compared to the other two, argued that building an autonomous women's movement only diverted energy from the primary struggle of the working class against capitalism. There was little doubt that most of the women who attended the conference came committed to maintaining an autonomous women's movement.

It was argued that the session on "Bourgeois Feminism vs. Socialist Feminism" ought to have been called "Reform vs. Revolution". The importance of reforms and how to work for them without losing sight of socialist feminist goals and principles was discussed.

It is important that reforms sought apply to a majority of women and have a radical, educative dynamic. Women should be able to foresee the practical results of such demands—rather than working towards some seemingly remote end.

The "Women's Movement in Relation to the Workers Movement" focused on both international and local events. A representative from Service Office Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC) gave an historical sketch of that union and outlined to an extremely receptive audience the struggle to organize bank workers in B.C. and Saskatchewan.

SORWUC, with its tireless fighters for the rights of women workers, grew out of the women's movement. The union's open welcoming of community support hit a responsive chord with movement women. SORWUC's fight for recognition, even survival, is being waged also against the bureaucracy of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). The challenge of women organizing women in their own unions apparently is perceived as a threat. With tacit support of the CLC, the Steelworkers may raid SORWUC without censure, taking members organized by the women, as has already happened in Saskatoon.

The presence of SORWUC organizers posed a direct challenge for a practical commitment. Near total support was given a resolution at the final plenary Sunday: "Since women are largely unorganized and it is essential that in order to begin to organize their power, women be organized, participants in the Prairie Women's Socialist Feminist Conference give full support to SORWUC as a union for working women and specifically to its increasingly successful role in organizing bank workers." Eighty dollars were collected for the strike fund.

The workshop on "Women in Relation to their Means of Production" focused on the "Wages for Housework" campaign and the legitimacy of reaching and organizing women in the home around that issue. Pro and con positions were presented formally. The speaker in favor came from a recently-formed study group.

Discussion was rather confused and produced more questions than answers. Wages for Housework has been widely used as an organizing tool in Europe, England and parts of Canada and the U.S. Further examination of the issue by western socialist feminists will be needed.

Sunday's evaluation session produced many criticisms and suggestions. Definite enthusiasm was generated for future gatherings and some form of ongoing communication between participating groups and individuals.

The role of socialist feminists in the upcoming federal election was discussed with no clear resolution of direction. In addition to the SORWUC resolution, notice was formally taken of the Saskatchewan visit of Anita Bryant: "Participants of the Prairie Women's Socialist Feminist Conference oppose the Anita Bryant Crusade and all that it represents. We urge all progressive individuals and groups to fight against this campaign."

In conclusion, the conference was a tremendously exciting and invigorating experience for most who shared it. We hope it marks the beginning of continuing dialogue and action among prairie socialist feminists.

# REGINA LOBBY<sup>-10-</sup>

-by Linda Charlton

March 20th, 1978 witnessed the gathering in Regina of over 300 women for the purpose of lobbying the 61 members of the provincial legislative assembly.

The stated goals of the lobby and the concurrent rally, as outlined by the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women, were to educate the MLA's and the public regarding women's concerns and to establish communication links between women and their elected representatives. The brief, covering ten areas of concern and including forty recommendations was a reflection of SAC's attempt "to be all things to all people." No doubt this desire to represent all women and to attract a broad base of support lead to the omission of several important issues. For instance, no reference whatsoever was made to abortion or to sexual orientation. As well, this "something for everyone" approach lead to the inclusion of

far more recommendations than could be dealt with in the half hour allowed for interviews with MLA's. One could wonder if concentrating on fewer demands might not have been more effective.

However, this emphasis on the broad common goals of women was successful in attracting a wide spectrum of women: native women and farm women; working women and homemakers; young women and senior citizens. As well as those people physically present there were letters of support from many more individuals and groups throughout the province. The Saskatchewan Government Employees' Association, which was picketing the Legislature at the time of the rally, was notably supportive--both financially and through actual participation in the lobby.

Certainly in terms of organization and mobilization of women from all over the province the rally and lobby were successful. In terms of the stated educational objectives, the outcome is far less clear.

The reactions of the individual MLA's varied from disinterest to actual verbal commitments in which they agreed to take action on some of the recommendations. Indeed, during the question period in



the legislature that day, several members of the opposition did in fact challenge the government on points raised in the SAC brief. Even without any commitment to women's issues, the opposition readily took advantage of the ammunition provided by the brief to attack the government. It would be interesting to observe the question period the next day following the lobby by the Pro-Life Coalition--one would suspect that the opposition would take up their arguments just as readily.

In summary, the Saskatchewan Action Committee must be commended for their effort in carrying-off this mass rally and lobby. The organization was masterful, the participation of hundreds of women was encouraging but to expect much concrete action from the politicians at this time would be a delusion.

## BRITISH SOCIALIST-FEMINIST CONFERENCE

We present a "Prairie Woman Exclusive".

Through personal contacts, we were able to obtain a report on the 4th British Socialist-Feminist Conference from two Canadians who attended.

On a typically English, grey, wet weekend at the end of January, 1000 women gathered together in Manchester England to hold the first Socialist Feminist conference in two years. The national conference, with women traveling from all parts of Britain to attend exceeded the organisers' expectations three-fold. In spite of this, the organisational structures bore the weight extremely well, with the minimum of hassles. The majority of those attending were bedded and boarded by late Friday night, ready to commence the conference Saturday morning.

The first day of the conference was devoted to workshops. Discussion was centered on questions such as: what is socialist-feminism, what is socialist-feminist practice? what should be/is the relationship of the socialist-feminist current to the Womens Liberation Movement? What is/should be the relationship between the socialist-feminist current and the organized left? Women stayed in the same workshop all day and the composition of each workshop varied considerable depending on how long women had been involved in various aspects of the WLM and the socialist-feminist current, what part of the country they were from, their personal priorities for activity, involvement in left groups, etc. This led to the actual content of the workshops being quite varied.

Some continued discussion on some of the papers which had been distributed for discussion by local socialist-feminist groups prior to the conference. Others rambled from topic to topic, and a few had trouble getting started at all. Many women left these discussions frustrated at the lack of focus.

Saturday evening was rounded off with a "bop" at the local university, with music played by an all-woman band.

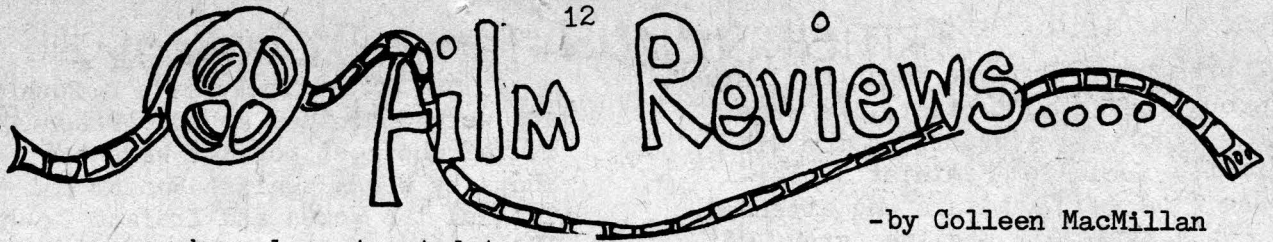
Sunday workshops were less uneven--and also somewhat unsatisfying in that each woman was able to choose which she would attend. These sessions were concerned with "special interest" issues.

by Trish Blackstaffe & Ruth Taillon  
and were organized around presentations. Two of the most popular were the workshops by Women against Racism and Fascism and the Women and Ireland Group. The latter was the best attended with over 100 women. Unfortunately, the unexpectedly large turnout combined with the structure of the conference and the wide variety of experiences, expectations, and viewpoints produced a situation in which it proved very difficult to draw any clear conclusions from the workshops. However, on the positive side, it was most encouraging to see such a large number of socialist-feminists gathered together to hold these discussions. It was generally accepted that it would not be possible or useful to decide to prioritize any campaign or area of work for the current as a whole. In the end, only two decisions were taken at the Sunday afternoon plenary--the first, that there should be another socialist feminist conference in a year's time, with details to be worked out at the national WLM conference in April. The second was that efforts would be made to ensure that the socialist-feminist journal Scarlet Woman would be produced more regularly and that it would play a more central role as the organ of the socialist-feminist current as a whole.

The plenary, a brief interlude of women's theatre and the Saturday evening social, were the only opportunity for all the participants in the conference to come together as a group. However, by Sunday afternoon many women had left and others were thinking of long journeys home, and this cut across what could have been a more productive session.

Greetings were warmly received from sisters representing the struggles in Ireland, Argentina and Iran. The most positive aspect of the conference was that over 1000 women, from individual activists to members of political organizations from all over Britain, were able to meet together with a minimum of hostility and red-baiting. While much is still undecided, it is clear that the socialist-feminist current is an important sector of the WLM, and will have much to offer it in the months and years ahead.

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# Film Reviews

-by Colleen MacMillan

For years we have been treated to movies in which male virtues have been extolled, while the role of woman in society has been quietly ignored. By all appearances, this trend is beginning to change and critics are calling this the year of women in the movie industry. One film which highlights this new trend is Turning Point, starring Shirley MacLaine and Anne Bancroft. Turning Point presents a fundamental dilemma which many women face--to seek the security and social acceptance of a traditional role in the family or to pursue fulfillment outside the home.

Shirley MacLaine plays the part of the embittered woman who has been tormented most of her adult life by her decision to abandon a promising future in ballet for that of wife and mother. Anne Bancroft, a long-time friend of MacLaine's and now-famous ballerina, is the physical embodiment of MacLaine's frustration and bitterness. MacLaine wonders if she could have attained the status and adoration which Bancroft now enjoys. The two women were competing for a starring role just at the time MacLaine realized she was pregnant. Bancroft, as friend and confidant, urged her to carry through with the pregnancy rather than to seek an abortion, thus securing her own position in the cherished dance role.

Bancroft has achieved fame and stardom in the world of ballet, but has relinquished the comforts of a family life. A solemn parting of ways between her and a married lover is the final break between her and any semblance of a lasting friendship.

Enter Leslie Browne, daughter of MacLaine, and by now an accomplished ballerina in her own right. Brown represents something to each woman. To MacLaine, it is a throw-back to her own youth, a painful remembrance of what might have been. To the aging Bancroft, she symbolizes the unavoidable death of her own stage career as younger women challenge her for starring roles. But Browne is also Bancroft's god-daughter and the closest thing she has to real family. Bancroft embraces the young dancer as her own and

is rewarded by Browne's affection--a relationship which is fostered by tensions between mother and daughter.

The two old friends are caught by the circumstances they each face and predictably blame one another for their plight. A verbal assault results which not unexpectedly leads to a brief tussle on the theatre steps. However, once the vengeance has unleashed itself, their friendship is restored, even though the losses and insecurities each has had to endure have not been resolved.

Turning Point is an important movie for women. Women pay a high price for making the choice, no matter which one it might be. Despite the many achievements the women's movement has made, it is important to be reminded of and to recognize the physical and emotional turmoil forced upon women by a male-dominated society in reconciling this dilemma of choice.

"A Special Day" brings us closer to another picture of the lonely desperation a woman faces when life's pleasures are measured in terms of the fluctuating moods of a brutal and uncaring husband. Set in a background of fascist Italy, Sophia Loren's oppression in the home is a reflection of the oppressive atmosphere throughout Italy. Mussolini and his fascist cohorts have introduced a "celibacy tax" for unmarrieds, while bestowing a "fertility award" to families with seven children or more. Loren, a mother of six in incredibly cramped conditions, is reminded by her husband (John Vernon) that one more child will win the award for them. Outside of this function, Vernon is capable of little more than shouting orders and abuse at his harried wife.

It is the day of a huge rally when Hitler joins Mussolini in a festive celebration of the glories of fascism. Everyone is off to the rally for the day, but Loren, faced with the daily grind of domestic chores, is compelled to stay home. Even her great admiration for Il Duce is not enough to free her for a day.

By chance she meets another occupant of the huge apartment complex (Marcel

Mastriocanni) who is portrayed earlier as a man on the verge of suicide. Just as he seems ready to take his life, there is a knock at the door. Mastriocanni opens it to find a disheveled Loren seeking her lost Mina bird. He welcomes his unexpected visitor and urges her to stay, but Loren's uneasiness is apparent and she departs hastily. Mastriocanni seizes upon the opportunity of lending a book to Loren in order to secure the companionship he so desperately needs. Their time together is one of extreme emotion--one moment sharing experiences, the next Loren ordering Mastriocanni to leave, partially facilitated by the interruptions of a local party worker who plays upon Loren's apprehensions at having a male visitor alone in her apartment. The old woman deprecates Mastriocanni and tells Loren he is anti-fascist.

Loren eventually succumbs to the physical attractiveness of her male visitor, but finds him to be unresponsive and insulting. The two part ways in anger, but not before Mastriocanni shouts after her that he is homosexual.

A reconciliation which is initiated by Loren culminates in a love scene between the two, although Mastriocanni is obviously detached from the lovemaking. The experience breaths life into the haggard Loren. She anticipates future meetings and leaves her lover a new woman, only to return home to six hungry children and the abusive Vernon. In the evening she picks up the book Mastriocanni has given her and places herself by the window so that she can gaze into his apartment. She witnesses the departure of Mastriocanni, accompanied by two fascist police members, who are deporting him to Sardinia because of his homosexuality.

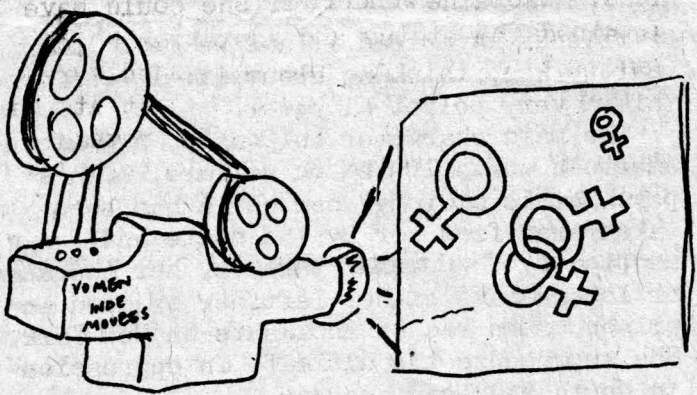
Loren never grasps the significance of the repressiveness which grips Italy. She seems oblivious to the connection between her own situation and that of her lover to the all-pervading force that governs them. Whether one is loyal to the regime or not, the consequences are pretty much the same. Unfortunately though, the predicament which faces Loren is not unique to fascism--women in the home are still potentially the prisoners of their keepers.

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Writer-Producer Sandra O'Neil has successfully brought women's issues to the Canadian stage with her musical comedy "Sweet Reason".

O'Neil admits that her personal experiences were instrumental in her decision to attempt this type of production. A stage veteran of fourteen years, O'Neil decided in her mid-twenties that she was ready for the life of a homemaker. Six years, two children and a divorce later, O'Neil is back where she feels she belongs. She does not regret her decision to have children; on the contrary she places a high value on her private and personal life. She does confess however, that she naively assumed it was possible to leave behind the excitement and challenge of the theatre. It is apparent that O'Neil is very comfortable in the role of entertainer and hopes to take her hit to New York following its Toronto run.

"Sweet Reason" is a mixed bag of skits and music--all of which focusses on the role of women in society. In Kissin' K-Tel --an obvious spoof on mass-marketed goods--O'Neil offers the doll that does everything. Buyers can expect the full array of



household services, a great bed partner, competent mother and a woman who has the proper physical endowments which makes any man proud to display her in public. If the purchaser tires of the doll, all he need do is discard it--there is an ample supply of replacements. The tongue-in-cheek song "Glad to be Single Again" considers the painful experience which accompanies this new-found freedom. "Mr. Big" is a humorous but provoking reflection on secretary-boss relationships. Madam Prime Minister is a grossly exaggerated portrayal of male incompetence in household management, but makes the point aptly.

In a CBC interview, O'Neil was asked about her reaction to newspaper coverage of her show in which her 47½" legs were a subject of some discussion. Ms. O'Neil does not object to this typical male obsession, but adds that she would appreciate some recognition of her professional credentials. It is apparent that O'Neil has not yet managed to overcome the socialization process which encourages women to accept this sexist flattery, however she has advanced the women's cause in a new and refreshing manner.



Book Review-Woman on the Edge of Time  
by Marje Piercy Reviewer-Audrey Hall

I read this book approximately 4 months ago and was very excited by it. A number of friends have read it and we have found that we keep thinking about it. I consider this a very political novel.

The main character is Connie, a Mexican American woman living on welfare, with a psychiatric history, her child has been taken away from her by the state and adopted by "suitable" parents, her husbands or lovers have either left her or died in prison or in racist incidents in New York. She represents the ultimate in oppression in North American society.

All her life Connie has been a victim, she has never attempted to fight back. Finally she does, she assaults the man who is her niece's pimp and consequently is institutionalized in a series of psychiatric hospitals as a danger to society.

But Connie has discovered that she is a "receiver", she is in psychic contact with a woman living two hundred years hence in Massachusetts. This woman, Luciente, is involved in a project to make contact with people from the past and travel through time. Luciente's world is extremely decentralized, people live in small, semi-autonomous communities which are self sufficient in most respects.

This society seems to have successfully dealt with all the "isms". There is a fascinating description of the means of reproducing and raising children that reminded me of the proposals of Mulamith Firestone in "A Dialectic of Sex."

I was interested by the models presented in this book in terms of relationships. Recently I have read a number of books of feminist science fiction and have been disappointed in the lack of imagination with which many writers approach this aspect of the future. In particular I remember "The Dispossessed" by Ursula Le Guin which I highly recommend, particularly to those for whom science fiction has had little appeal. My only criticisms of this book is that Le Guin idolizes heterosexual, monogamous marriage (which is not the norm in her future society) and does not present other possibilities in a positive light.

The rest of the book has two settings, Mattapoisett, the future community which Connie visits with Luciente's help, and the hospital where Connie is a subject in a research project which aims at controlling behavior by implanting a device in people's brains which constantly feeds a drug into them.

Connie is engaged in two battles. Her own personal fight is with the state which is attempting to drug all the rebellion out of her. But it is crucially important to the future that people in our time do resist because the future represented by Mattapoisett is not the only possibility. Time exists as several continuums. Connie visits another possible future accidentally and finds herself in a society where sexism has developed to frightening proportions. Women exist as very little more than "tits and ass", In contrast to Mattapoisett which is a very unmechanized society (everyone travels by bicycles which are communally owned) present-day society is highly automated.

Eventually Connie wins her personal battle by killing the research team, but she will be lobotomized and institutionalized for the rest of her life and she has lost the ability to time travel. Yet this is not a depressing ending to the book. Even though she has paid a terrible price we applaud and are energized by her spirit and hope that it infects many others.

# Announcements

- March 26, April 9, April 23-Sunday 7 p.m. Room 14 of the Lower Mub. Saskatoon Women's Liberation general meetings at School of Social Work, 233-22nd St. E. First hour for business, second hour for discussion. All interested women are welcome.
- Family Planning Birth Control Clinic is held every Thursday, 2-9 p.m. at the Public Health Dept, City Hall. No appointments are necessary and counsellors and a doctor will be on hand. For further information call 244-7989.
- U.S.S.U. Women's Directorate general meetings are held Mondays at 5 p.m. in Room 14 of the Lower Mub.
- April 21-23. A conference on "Women in Violent Society" to be held in Calgary, sponsored by the Calgary Status of Women Action Committee. Speakers will include Robin Morgan and Dr. Diana Russel. For further information on registration contact Status of Women Action Committee, 223-12th Ave. S.W., Calgary
- United Bank Workers, SORWUC, is a support committee to help organize bank workers. If you want to help, contact 136 Ave. F. S. or phone 244-2887.

## MEETING REPORT

### Meeting Highlights

February 26/78- Saskatoon Women's Liberation voted to join the Saskatchewan Gay Coalition and appointed Wiesia Kolasinska as official SWL representative to the Coalition.

SWL agreed to make donations to the following organizations: United Bank Workers, SORWUC; Cindy Devine's Campaign Fund; Saskatchewan Gay Coalition; and the Body Politic Defense Fund.

March 12/78-Prairie Woman is 9 months old! Treasurer Audrey Hall reported that the income from subscriptions and the benefit are just about meeting the expenses of producing Prairie Woman.

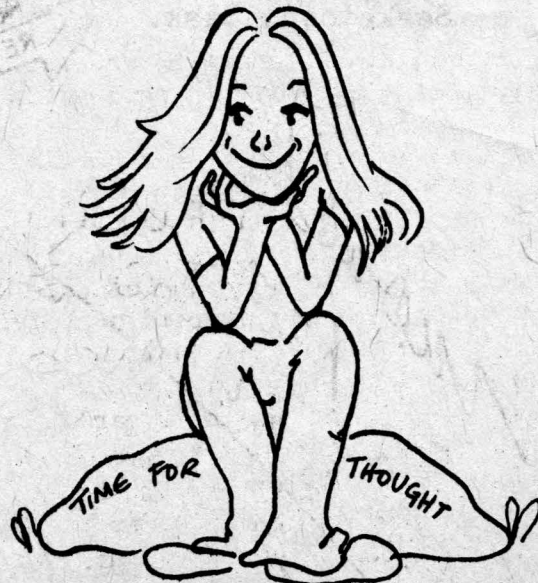
Saskatoon Women's Liberation has purchased a typewriter to be used for SWL business and Prairie Woman.

It was felt that the public meeting on International Women's Day was successful with over 100 people in attendance. Attempts will be made to maintain contacts with the groups represented at the meeting.

Rosemarie Rupps and Maylynn Woo finish their terms on the Steering Committee March 31 and Shelley Gordon is resigning from the Political Positions Committee. These positions will be filled at the

next meeting.

Starting at the next meeting there will be a change in format. General meetings will still be held every two weeks but discussion of business will be limited to the first hour and the second hour will be set aside for discussion of special topics, guest speakers, etc.



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 are:

Linda Charlton  
Wiesia Kolasinska  
Gail Osachoff  
Colleen MacMillan

Rosemarie Rupps  
Maylynn Woo  
Susan Woolway  
Janet Nattress

PRAIRIE WOMAN is published monthly. The deadline for all material is the 20th of each month. Submissions are welcome, but are subject to editing..

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