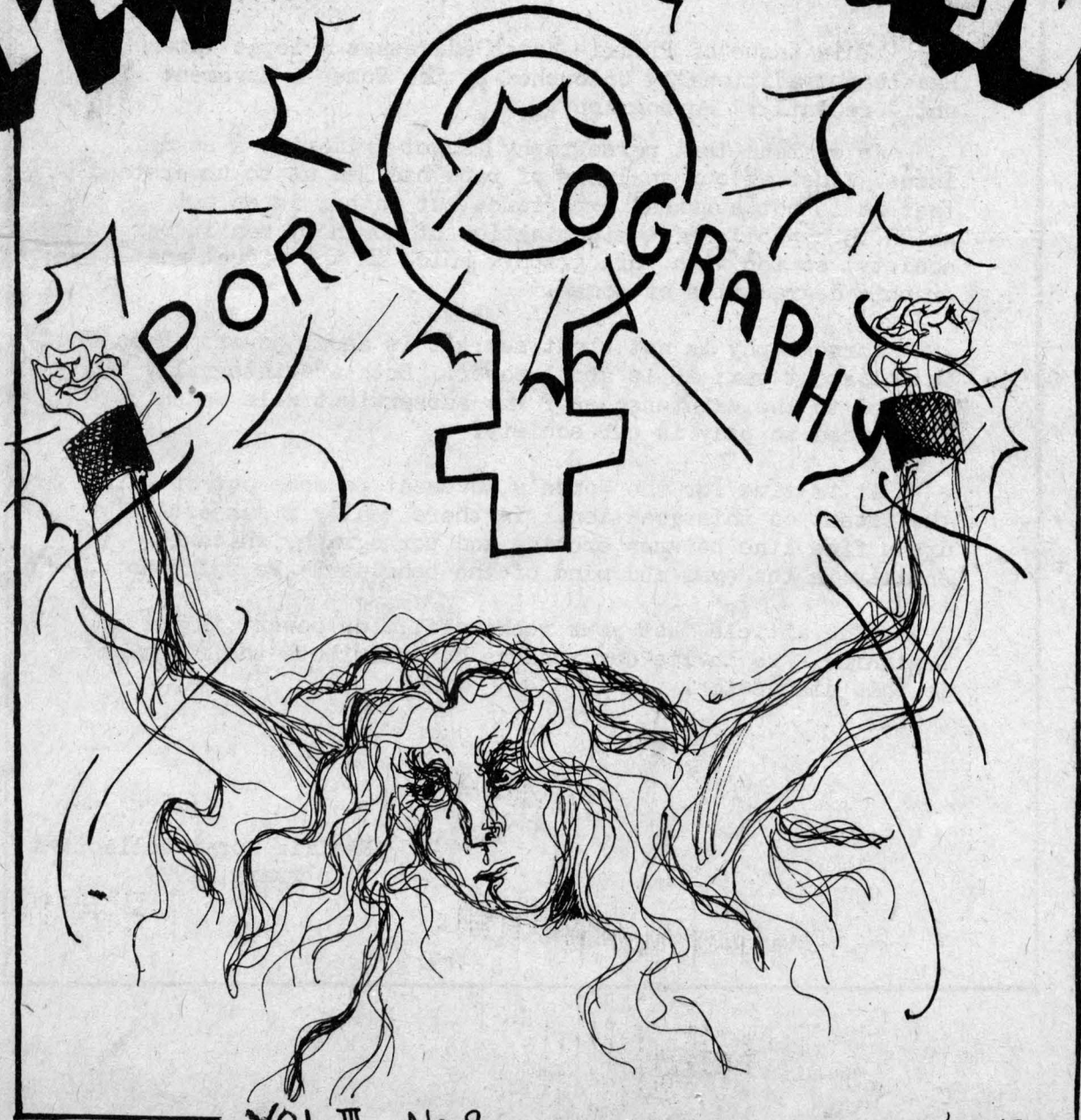


PRAIRIEWOMAN

PORNOGRAPHY



EDITORIAL

This issue of Prairie Woman addresses a topic which has been traditionally untouched by the Women's Movement until recently: Pornography.

We contend that pornography is not primarily a sexual issue. Just as our analysis of rape has led us to understand that it is not a sexual experience but rather is an act which is symbolic of the domination of woman by man in our society, so too with pornography, which is the visual and graphic degradation of women.

Pornography is not about sex; it is about power. Rape is not about sex; it is about power. Both are integrally related to the maintenance of the subservient role women are forced to play in our society.

It is time for the Women's Movement to come out of the closet on this question. Is there really a subjectively drawn fine line between erotica and pornography which is entirely in the eyes and mind of the beholder? We think not..

The article "Get your rocks off....on power" is our beginning. We invite our readers to contribute their thoughts to this discussion.

Prairie Woman Collective
February, 1979

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE

a report from December fifteenth.

Approximately 60 - 70 people attended the public meeting held December 15th, 1978, on abortion, sponsored by Saskatoon Women's Liberation. Although these numbers are encouraging, we must face the reality that is largely the same men and women who turn up for these educationals; it's a case of preaching to the converted. Don't misunderstand me, I believe it's very important for us to get together in a public way on this issue, to reaffirm what we believe in, and to bolster our morale in the face of the escalating efficiency of that insidious misnomer, the "Pro-Life" movement. The fact that there were many new faces at the meeting, and new women signed our contact sheet was encouraging; the educationals will continue.

December 15th saw the introduction of feminist theatre to S.W.L. activities. The evening opened with a presentation of Myrna Lamb's But What Have You Done For Me Lately?, an underground classic written

during the angry beginnings of the Women's Movement in Chicago. The play is essentially a role reversal: "a lawmaker, pregnant against his will, is given the legitimate opportunity to voice every imaginable feminist argument in favour of abortion." "A female Tribunal, the perpetrators "of the unwanted pregnancy, are offered the equally legitimate opportunity to give voice to every conceivable paternalistic and pseudohumanist rebuttal." (Women in Sexist Society; 1971, p.39) Each of the man's increasingly impassioned pleas are rejected by the Tribunal, who tell him that "if one plea is valid, so might they all be, "and that he must "learn to accept society's interest in the preservation of the fetus," no matter what happens to him socially, emotionally, or physically. In the final scene, the momentum builds as one of the three women reveals herself as one who has suffered at his hands, and the laws which he has



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♀ in Society Today

You may have heard we are in times of economic restraint. The government is asking everyone to tighten their budget and pinch those pennies. In some cases, the government is doing the job for us. Such is the case in Saskatoon.

On January 18th, 1979 Women in Society Today (W.I.S.T.) received word that the Canada Employment Centre, Saskatoon, would not fund their project after March 31st, 1979. A directive issued by the Department of Employment and Immigration in the fall of 1978 stated that projects developed to serve women would no longer be considered a priority for federal Outreach funding.

The project, Women in Society Today, in operation since March 1976, works primarily with female heads of single parent families in Saskatoon. Their objectives are to assist women to: re-establish in the community, to enter the labour force as an alternative to social assistance and to become, over time, more economically, socially and emotionally independent. Women in Society Today was also an integral part of the formation of the Pre-Trades programs in Sask.

The cutbacks in federal Outreach funding to employment projects come at a time when more women than ever before are trying to enter the labour force due to economic necessity.

In Saskatchewan a group of interested people are launching a public campaign to try and keep the program retained. We see this cutback as a definite move by the federal government to keep women out of the labour force and out of the unemployment statistics. This is a denial of

women's right to develop themselves as participating citizens in a democratic society.

We are appealing to all interested individuals to assist us in our campaign. The first step is to write personal letters to: your member of parliament with carbon copies to the Prime Minister and Bud Cullen, minister responsible for Employment and Immigration, your member of the Legislative Assembly with a carbon copy to Premier Blakeney urging the Provincial government to take a strong stand on this cutback; and a letter to your city or town councillor.

Suggested Questions to ask:

1. Are women no longer a target group under Manpower and Immigration and what is the basis for this decision?
2. What programs are available within the Canada Employment Centres' structure to aid low income, single parent and other special needs groups?
3. What agencies will absorb the clientele presently assisted by Outreach programs?
4. If Affirmative Action is the Government's newest program to aid women in employment, what will this program do for the special needs groups?

We feel the most effective method would be for you to write the above mentioned politicians four letters in four consecutive weeks about the suggested categories. Further action is being planned. If you have any suggestions and/or time, please let us know.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Women in Society Today
136 Avenue F South
Saskatoon, Sask.
244-7158

N.B. If you belong to a group, club

BOOK REVIEW

Ways of Seeing by John Berger is an easy to comprehend introductory look at art in history and art today. Over half the book consists of images which the author attempts to get the reader to look at from a new perspective.

The book shows how art has a political meaning. This is done by using oil paintings in general and nude paintings in particular. The political meaning we get from an art work is affected by what we know and believe. (This is received from our environmental or sociological background.) As well, art reflects how something once looked to the artist and therefore is a direct reflection of history.

The author explains that what one class of people sees in an art work may be completely different from what another class sees. It is easily seen that the capitalist's view of art in western society is widely accepted by art historians. Art historians mystify art to keep it exclusively owned and in the domain of the rich rather than having it enjoyed by and benefitting the majority of the people. This keeps art entrenched in the tradition of being viewed as something valuable depending on its rarity and high price tag.

The author then moves into the area of the nude painting of women. The nude painting is one example of how art is being exploited by a privileged class. There are hundreds of thousands of nude paintings that make up this tradition. Everyone is familiar with at least one. The European thought that produced this tradition can be summed up as "To be born a woman has been to be born into the keeping of men." In a nude painting the woman is portrayed both as the surveyor as well as the surveyed. She is a surveyor in that she has to survey everything she is and does.

This is so because how she appears to men is considered most important to her success in life. She is surveyed in that her every action is read as an indication of how she would like to be treated. Women watch themselves being looked at by men. The surveyor in herself is the traditional male; the surveyed the traditional female. Thus the nude painting portrays the woman naked knowing she is being seen by a spectator, not as she would be if she were herself but, as the spectator wants to see her. Her nakedness then, is not the expression of her own feelings but becomes a sign of her submission to the spectator's feelings or demands. The result is nudity of women being placed on display for men.

The author points out that this unequal relationship is so deeply embedded in our culture that women have continued to survey their own "traditional feminity." The author confirms the idea that the nudity of women in art of the present still reflects this relationship. Pornography is not the only example of this tradition being continued. Today, this sexism is expressed through all avenues of the mass media (advertising, journalism, and television).

For those who are not familiar with art, Ways of Seeing gives it a very distinctive and introductory approach.

Angela Bishoff

The Driver's Seat, a short novel by Muriel Spark (Macmillan, 1970), is a most fascinating and perverse story. Of her other nine novels, only The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie is familiar to me; and judging from my experience with that book as transformed into a stage play and then a movie, I expected to be confronted by some relationship between

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or organization please ask them to discuss this issue/action and if possible, set aside time to write these letters as a group.

Writing letters to a Politician

1. write only personal letters
2. be constructive and end with a question
3. send copies to both the member and the leader.
4. answer their replies with more letters also ending with a question
5. show their replies to your friends.
6. don't be afraid of your own lack of knowledge - you don't have to be an expert to be concerned - or to see the moral issue
7. you'll never go wrong if you express your own feelings and opinions!

(Thank you to Gay Saskatchewan, Feb./79 for the above article).

57 ARRESTED BY RIOT SQUAD

from Montreal Women's Information Service and Referral Service Bulletin

On November 7, the Coalition of Women of Montreal Against Violence Against Women organized a demonstration at the performance of the punk-rock group Battered Wives at Theatre St. Denis to draw public attention to the most recent attempt of the music industry to profit from the physical abuse of women.

Approximately 200 women and men picketed the theatre in an orderly manner. However, at about 8:30 p.m., the riot squad broke up the demonstration. Thirty-three women and 25 men were arrested and detained at Station 4.

Women involved in the demonstration have made the following report:

8:30 a.m.: one of the women from our Coalition receives an anonymous telephone call. "Yes?" "Are you a member of the group Women Against Violence Against Women?" "Yes." "If you're planning to do something tonight, watch out!"

6 p.m.: There are two police cars in front of the private home where we are meeting in order to prepare placards.

7:15 p.m. Several paddy-wagons are already stationed on Ontario Street, near St. Denis. Several officers of the riot squad are already there.

7:45 p.m.: The demonstration begins.

8:20 p.m.: The police surround us. There are about 30 police cars - why? They order us to keep moving but won't let us move. We sit down in order to keep calm in the face of this encirclement.

8:25 p.m.: The Riot Squad hits St. Denis St. in tight ranks, in helmets and with batons. In front of the door of the theatre, they make a turn. They advance on us like a tidal wave. We scatter. Disorder takes over, a general free-for-all. People passing by chance, completely ignorant of the demonstration, are stopped and hurt. In all, 57 of us are arrested and put into the paddywagons. One of the demonstrators hears a policeman say "You want trouble, that's what you're going to have."

8:45 p.m. to 4 a.m.: Thirty-three women and twenty-five men are held at Station 4 without any charges being laid against them.

Charges were later laid against some of the demonstrators. Trial was set for late December.

Western Women March Against Rape

Women in two major Canadian cities in the prairies have taken to the street in the last few months to protest violence against women - particularly rape. On November 18th, a march was held in Edmonton through the 'skid row' part of the city, a particularly dangerous area for women. The march of about 200 women was organized by the Edmonton Womens' Coalition in direct response to a rape which occurred in that city. An Edmonton woman had been raped and had spent 45 minutes searching for help after the attack. Her nose had also been broken. Cars passing in the street wouldn't stop, apartment dwellers ignored her plight and three people passing on the street refused to help outright.

The five kilometer protest march occurred without incident. It ended at the University of Alberta campus where a rally was held. The rally managed to raise \$450 to defray expenses and to support the Edmonton Rape Crisis Centre. The Centre was unable to participate as an organization in the march due to its status as a registered charity.

Elsewhere, in Winnipeg, about 200 women marched through the streets on the night of January 6 to protest the fear women have in going out alone at night. The march was organized by a group calling itself the Coalition Against Violence to Women.

PORN LAW CHANGES EARLY: WOMAN AND THE LAW

Following an address on pornography given Nov. 18 by Monica Townson, former president of the federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Ottawa Association of Women and the Law has resolved to ask the federal government to suspend action on its proposals to amend the sections of the Criminal Code dealing with pornography.

The Association agreed with Townson that the government's amendments had been too hastily drafted and that further research and discussion - particularly by women's groups - was essential.

Many women, said Townson, still appeared reluctant to treat pornography as a concern affecting them. For example, resolutions on the government proposals passed at the federal Advisory Council's recent Saskatchewan meeting had dealt only with the aspects affecting children and had ignored those affecting women.

This is in keeping, said Townson, with the traditional approach to pornography in terms of the supposed tendency for morals to be corrupted by exposure to sexuality. "Many feminists, however, are now distinguishing between material which is merely sexually explicit and material which can be viewed as promoting the hatred of women." Racist or sexist material, feminists are saying, should be banned because it teaches and condones unacceptable behaviour towards those portrayed.

Townson told the meeting that Danish data showing a drop in sexual assaults on women after the country's pornography laws had been relaxed was the basis for a 1970 US Presidential Commission to conclude that there was no causal link between pornography and violence. But she said, Eleanor Burwell, a Carleton University professor, has recently shown that the data used for this study was unreliable and that, in fact, the number of assaults against women did not fall, but rose following liberalization.

GET YOUR ROOTS (A FEMINIST ATTACK)

In the past number of years the Women's Movement in Canada has been tackling the grim issue of violence against women, with considerable energy being expended on our fight against rape. Rape, we say, is not a sexual act. Rather, it is an act of violence and aggression against women.

But what of pornography? Our silence on this question is about to end. Until recently we have consistently avoided taking a position on pornography, fearing perhaps being attacked as sexual puritans who support censorship or for accepting the notion that pornography is neutral or even harmless.

We need only examine the root of the word pornography itself. The ancient Greek *Porne* means, literally, prostitute or captive. This notion of female sexuality is not new...our bodies, per se, have long been considered obscene. Myrna Kostash, an author and free-lance writer in Edmonton points out "when to our Judaeo-Christian inheritance that woman is venal and the gate of perdition, you add the medieval romance that sexuality is separate from spiritual love and the Victorian notion that 'good' women experience sex as a violation, then you arrive at the conclusion that women who assert their sexual needs for their own sake are perverse and deserving of discipline. Their victimization is justified. (And that of unassertive women too. If women are 'naturally' submissive and masochistic, then 'naturally' they will enjoy being brutalized. A (1) justification for every occasion!)"

The dictionary, or legal definition of pornography is not really what concerns us. Besides, the societal concept of obscenity would obviously be different from ours, as feminists. To us pornography, like rape, is not really about sex at all, but about the control and power men exercise over women. It is about the subtle violence of unquestioned patriarchal authority. It is this concept of male supremacy that confuses and twists its underlying hostility towards women into one of pseudo-eroticism. Needless to say, pornography does not eroticize social relationships or work either. "On the contrary it provides a cheap and non time-consuming method of 'servicing' freed sexual energies so that the worker can return continuedly to a job that is anything but satisfying." (2) As well, the hustlers of pornography would have us believe that pain and humiliation are to be equated with pleasure and eroticism. But "people do not react irrespective of their cultural baggage. While watching a pornographic film, say, they have with them the consciousness shaped by their sexual socialization, by their values of and feelings about family life and work life and by the lessons imbibed at school, in

IS OFF... ON POWER (ON PORNOGRAPHY)

church and in the media. As long as that cultural baggage is characterized by the myths of male superiority, as long as the social situation of a film is the generalized coercion of women in our society, then pornography can only be a sexist event." (3)

It has become difficult then, to separate true eroticism, i.e. the joyful celebration of bodies from pornography, i.e. the degradation and powerlessness of women (the whips & chains mentality). The double (male) standard of monogamy for women and promiscuity for men is therefore continuously re-inforced. After all, "a freed sexuality directly threatens the system because people begin to realize how grossly the workplace and established social relationships distort their needs for sensual enjoyment and playful activity." (4)

Not surprisingly it is men who decide what is obscene and/or pornographic. Playboy, Penthouse and Oui magazines, etc. are mysteriously absent from any 'smut' list. (Can 10 million readers possibly be wrong??) If we look closely enough though, it appears

that the enforcement of these male-oriented obscenity laws is a very selective procedure. The Body Politic (Canada's

National Gay Newsmagazine) is presently before the courts facing a string of obscenity charges. The Body Politic has been published regularly in Canada for more than six years and their lawyer Clayton Ruby says that the raid on The Body Politic offices in December of 1977 was illegal in its scope and he calls it "a blatant attempt at old-fashioned state censorship." (5) Obviously the notion (and visual image) of homosexuality (particularly male) is far more distasteful and pornographic than, say, the victimization of a woman on the cover of the Rolling Stone's album "Black and Blue."

We must crack the liberal arguments which suggest that our fight against pornography leads us inevitably to an attack on freedom of expression and support of state censorship. Let us be quite clear. We do not ask the state to legislate, or even assist us in determining what does or does not degrade and/or humiliate women. We are more than capable of meeting this task ourselves. After all, as Myrna Kostash says "do we really trust the authorities in our society to confine themselves to censorship of pornography, to not extend that mandate to include censorship of anti-establishment points of view?" (6) Nevertheless, we must struggle against this situation which tolerates, even encourages such sexist propaganda.

We must realize that sexism and racism are an integral part of the economic system in which we live; we do not hesitate to denounce racist attacks on

Indians and ethnic minorities. We support their struggle for recognition of basic human and democratic rights. We recognize, too that Human Rights legislation is an important pre-condition in that fight.

It follows, we feel, that our attack on pornography is a vital issue in woman's struggle against sexual oppression. We have the right to demand that, as Myrna Kostash does "materials depicting the bondage, mutilation or murder of women for no other purpose than sexual arousal be banned, whether the image is in a pornographic film, book or magazine, or on a billboard." (7)

It is time the trashing of our sexuality for profit and 'blue money' stopped. We must re-define our eroticism based on true sensuality and equality.

Shelley Gavigan
Andrea Walker

Footnotes

1. Myrna Kostash, "Pornography: A Feminist View," This Magazine, vol 12 #3, July/Aug. 78
2. Michael Betzold, "How Pornography Shackles Men and Oppresses Women," For Men Against Sexism, Jon Snodgrass, ed., Monthly Review Press. New York.
3. Kostash, op.cit.
4. Betzold, op. cit.
5. The Body Politic, 1977
6. Kostash, op. cit.
7. Ibid



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Celebrate International Women's Day!!

The Saskatchewan Working Women's Association (SWW) and the Saskatoon Public Library are sponsoring a film by Marin Karmitz called BLOW FOR BLOW.

BLOW FOR BLOW, made largely by and for women in France in 1972, reconstructs a successful occupation of a textile factory by its female employees.

BLOW FOR BLOW is an exciting, collectively produced film which supports and encourages workers' solidarity.

BLOW FOR BLOW will be shown at 7:30 p.m. on March 8, 1979 in the Public Library Auditorium. A nominal admission fee will also cover the Social (with munchies) following the film.

For more information contact: Joyce McCall at 373-8328 or Shelley Young at 652-5723.

MORGANTLER

On Friday, March 2, Saskatoon Women's Liberation, Women in Law, and the Women's Directorate at U. of S. will sponsor

"Morgantler" - "a film of an incredible effort by an undivided to help those who came to him seeking, essentially, to maintain control of their lives."

12:30

12:30 p.m. 146 Arts Bldg.,
U. of S.

8:00 p.m. School of Social
Work, 233 22nd
St. East. (discussion & snacks
to follow.)

MARCH 8 - INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY

MARCH 31 - INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF ACTION
ON ABORTION,
CONTRACEPTION
AND NO FORCED
STERILIZATION



SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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

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CHEQUES PAYABLE TO:
TO SASKATOON
WOMEN'S LIBERATION
P.O. BOX 4021 SASKATOON
SASK



\$4.00/YR.

upheld. She stands before him and accuses him in the most emotionally packed passage in the play; "You murdered. You destroyed the lives of young women who fell prey to illegal abortion or suicide, or unattended birth. You killed the careers and useful productivity of others....You killed their ability to produce children in ideal circumstances. You killed love and self-respect, and the proud knowledge that one is the master of one's fate, one's body being the (physical) representation of it. You killed. And you were so damned self-righteous about it."

The final verdict is handed down by a Board of women, all of whom suffered in some way from the laws which he so ardently supported. They decide "that out of compassion for the potential child...and regarding those qualities of personality and not sex which make you a potentially unfit mother, that the pregnancy is to be terminated."

It's a powerful play, despite its many flaws, undeniably political and unabashedly feminist. It makes its points in no uncertain terms. Some women felt the play was "anti-child", or "anti-pregnancy." While the seeds of this interpretation are to be found in the play, this is not its focus, or its intent, and perhaps says more about the time in which the piece was written, than anything else. Most viewers were moved by the performance, and indicated they would like to see more feminist theatre in Saskatoon.

The play was followed by two presentations; Lynda Shepherdson, Unwanted Pregnancy Counsellor at the Community Clinic, concentrated on the abortion situation in Saskatchewan, and particularly in Saskatoon. She described

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what procedures were necessary to obtain an abortion in this city, and how, although therapeutic abortions are legal, they are impossible to get in some areas, such as Regina. Sylvia Pusch, a member of S.W.L.'s Steering Committee, spoke about the abortion situation nationally and internationally. The Statistics are frightening; only 23 million of the 55 million abortions performed annually in the world are legal. Here in Canada, we are in danger of losing the meag gains we made when the abortion laws began to be more "liberally" interpreted in 1969. The reactionary back-lash initiated by Pro-Life Movements is well organized, and their incessant lobbying on our politicians is having its effects.

We cannot sit back and rest easy. Pro-Life members are being trained like combat troops to deny women the right to bear children if and when they want them.

We totally reject the idea that the purpose of all sexual intercourse is reproduction; we refuse to let the twisted morality of others be forced upon us. Gaining access to free, safe and legal abortions will not "liberate" women; the right to control our own bodies is the bottom line.

Committees have been struck to plan for March 31st, the day on which Saskatoon women will be tying into an international network of women co-ordinating workshops, marches and rallies under the banner Abortion, Contraception and No Forced Sterilization.

The next issue of Prairie Woman will deal almost exclusively with these issues in preparation for March 31st.

Debbie Woolway

(1) Women in Sexist Society, ed. by Vivian Gornick & Barbara Moran. 1971, from the introduction.

(2) Our adaptation; the original had only one female character.

EDMONTON WOMEN'S COALITION

HAPPY NEW YEAR SISTERS!

1. International Women's Day is less than two months away. Centres like Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto are getting ready to celebrate it in a number of ways. In Edmonton, the E.W.C. is hard at work planning a great symposium.

We have chosen nine workshops and we are arranging for speakers and resource people for all of them. We have been lucky to get Maria Campbell (author of Halfbreed and several children's books on Indian and Metis life, feminist and Native People's rights advocate) as one of our keynote speakers. Several groups of out of town women, active in feminist organizations elsewhere in the country are planning to attend and contribute to the workshops. We will be getting the Power Plant for our party,

and we have a permit to use Jasper Avenue for our march. Support, contributions and involvement have begun to come from individuals and other local groups, including Alberta Status of Women Action Committee (ASWAC), the Edmonton and District Labour Council, and the Rape Crisis Centre. In all, it looks like a great celebration.

The entire celebration will be free, though we will be asking for donations to fund it. As well, we are offering free child care, and billeting for out of town women.

In order to organize this, the I.W.D. Committee has broken down into four sections:

- 1) Workshops and speakers,
- 2) Publicity,
- 3) Public Action (organizing the demonstration),
- 4) Physical Organization (getting rooms, arranging billeting, budgeting, etc.)

If you can offer your home for billeting an out of town guest (that's bed or floor, not food), or would like to help put this celebration together, please call Carroll 439-2771, Mary Doug 454-3349, or Susan 454-3378. As always, volunteers are welcome for any EWC activity.

Thanks to those we have heard from, and to those of you who haven't responded, remember that if we do not hear from you, your name will be lost in the mailing list update. If you have articles or announcements for the newsletter, please send them along.. As we have said before, we cannot turn this into a real newsletter without your help!





WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE

The present Toronto group, Women Against Violence Against Women, grew out of the original Day of Protest against Violence Against Women held on November 5, 1977. The specific action which galvanized hundreds of women on that day was a street demonstration which culminated in a protest against the movie SNUFF. The extent and intensity of that protest demonstrated in concrete form the anger women feel at our victimization, in image and in fact.

During the following week, direct street action was combined with attempts to draw attention to the issue through established channels such as presentations to Toronto, Metro and City Councils, letters to newspapers, etc. These established channels proved as unresponsive to this as to other demands and protests made by women now and in the past. Our concerns were trivialized by the media and others. Some politicians attempted to co-opt our energies towards the hypocritical 'clean up Yonge Street' which penalizes working women and leaves the profiteers unscathed.

The SNUFF OUT SNUFF action is an object lesson, in case we need any, in the realities of power in our society. The women of WAWAW are determined to challenge this misogynistic power and the violence perpetrated against women. Since November, WAWAW has become involved in:

- * work towards the decriminalization of prostitution
- * inauguration of a Remembrance Day ceremony - "For every woman raped in every war".
- * protests against the deportation of immigrant women on clearly sexist and racist grounds
- * action against Renaissance International's "Christian Liberation Crusade" which imported Anita Bryant to Canada and which promotes anti-feminism and homophobia
- * organizing with local women against domestic and street violence in the suburbs

(Taken from Kinesis)

JUST HOW WELL DOES THE PRESENT CRIMINAL CODE PROTECT YOU FROM SEXUAL MISCONDUCT?

Our latest Report to Parliament, entitled "Sexual Offences", examines the weaknesses and anachronisms of the current Code sections dealing with sexual offences and recommends ways to improve them. These proposals would provide better protection for everyone and, in particular, for children and special groups; abolish spousal immunity from sexual assault charges; broaden the protection of young people against incestuous behaviour, and; equalize the law for both women and men.

several characters that would demand a moral judgement on the part of the audience or reader. That pattern prevails in The Driver's Seat, but the relationship (if it can be called that) is extremely weird and the judgement when it comes is, at best, a bit shaky and ambiguous.

The Driver's Seat shows us the horrifying effect of one woman's successful attempts to enact her death and rape fantasy, to bring into actuality the imaginings of a sick mind. She plays out her fantasy on the stage of Europe, leaving highly visible clues of her search for the "perfect rapist" wherever she goes. When she spots the "right" man, she smiles at him in "relief and delight".

If anything, the novel is a Gothic story in reverse: the victim is hunting out the murderer who does everything he can not to be found.

It is evident from the beginning that Lise is a very repressed woman: "Her lips, when she does not speak or eat, are normally pressed together like the ruled line of a balance sheet, marked straight with her old-fashioned lipstick, a final and a judging mouth." She is about 35 and has worked in an accountant's office since she was eighteen "except for the months of illness" five years before. Very few details are given about Lise's past and what little information is there, is presented in such an offhand way that it can be easily missed.

In a way The Driver's Seat is a psychological mystery story except that there is no detective to help us unravel the case to solution is provided at the end. It is not so much a "who dunnit" story as a "why did she want it done to her" story. The reader learns early the nature of Lise's demise. Even before she gets to her destination in southern Europe, we know that Lise "will be found tomorrow morning dead from multiple stab wounds, her wrists bound with a silk scarf and her ankles bound with a man's necktie, in the grounds of an empty villa." We know what happens to Lise, and where and how she is killed, but

the suspense is still perversely unbearable because we want to know by whom she's killed and why.

Lise's murderer is a crazy young man: "He stares ahead with glazed and quite unbalanced eyes, those eyes far too wide open to signify anything but some sort of mental distance from reality." Perhaps that is how she is able to spot him. He had stabbed a woman some years before, but she didn't die and he was sent to a mental institution. He has undergone six years years of treatment and has been released to start a new life. Nevertheless, Lise is able to spot him and use him to fulfill her desire for death.

When she takes him to the scene of the murder, he says, "A lot of women get killed in the park" and she replies, "Yes, of course. It's because they want to be." A minute later he says again, "A lot of women get killed," and she answers, "Yes, I know, they look for it." Since Lise doesn't like the "afterwards" of sex, she says, "I don't want any sex . . . You can have it afterwards. Tie my feet and kill, that's all." However, perhaps she had not realized what going all the way would imply in the context that she has so perfectly arranged: "As the knife descends to her throat she screams, evidently perceiving how final is finality." Thinking that she would not want to avoid death, Lise had not planned for a rescuer to appear.

What judgement is the reader supposed to make of Lise and her murderer? What Spark seems to have done is take the idea that "women ask for it" to its furthest extreme. It is evident from The Driver's Seat that Lise did, indeed "ask for it" and get it, and she is shown to be crazy. Thus, we can say that only crazy women ask for it - only women like Lise. But we know from experience that not only crazy women get it and that not only women who ask for it get it. The truth is spoken by the murderer who is the victim of the victim: "No, they don't want to be killed. They struggle. I know." His verdict may be the key to this modern tale of perversity and horror.

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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:

Debbie Woolway

Angie Bishoff

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