

THE NEW FEMINIST

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EDITORIAL

GROUP FORMATION can be seen as the major, and without a doubt the most necessary, activity of women in Canada and the U.S.A. in 1969. In Canada, groups have evolved in all major cities and on university campuses; the same is true in the U.S.A. where groups have been faster to form and where radical actions have been more numerous to date.

The names of the groups reflect a radicalism which is the vital part of any rebelling group (Women's Liberation, Red Stockings, W.I.T.C.H.) but, although the names are different and the approaches indicate intended movement through different social channels, there is a uniform awareness of woman's present situation and a corresponding desire to change that situation for the better. We are on the same course because all of us want radical change for the female half of the human race; the long-range forecast cannot be other than radical change for all human beings.

In the spring of 1970 the results of the Royal Commission on the Status of Woman will be published. There are bound to be reassuring promises of good intention from various sections of the community and the present public attitudes of hilarity, ennui or disgust will change; be prepared to take a hard look at the arguments which the big "institutional guns" come up with because they will be as old as Mother Nature herself and will, therefore, be suspect all the way down the line. Promises of change should not mislead any of us.

During the coming year this group of 'revolting females', the New Feminists, will conduct intensive analyses of woman's situation, will disseminate literature, will initiate actions and will actively work to raise the consciousness of women in as broad a way as possible.

Get on the mark... get set.... REVOLT!

"On the arrival of ...

THE QUEEN IS IN THE GARBAGE" - a novel by Lila Karp

This will not be a review of the normal sort, which is to say, it won't explicate the book and attempt some kind of critical evaluation. Rather, I want to say something about why it is important that such a book was written - and why women should read it.

The title of the book gives the clue to its theme: the queen, contrary to what popular myth would have it, is not eating bread and honey - she is in the garbage. Her situation is not exalted - it's debased. It is not desirable - it stinks. It is not even pleasantly superfluous. The king is counting money (i.e. wielding power) - she's getting fat in the parlour. It is without value to anyone, the queen included. It becomes apparent that we are dealing here with a somewhat rare phenomenon: a view from down-under; a voice from the oppressed describing its condition.

Politically, this step is very important. Fundamental to the dynamics of oppression is that the oppressed group comes to internalize the view of itself held by the oppressing group. Examples from the black situation are obvious: black people aped white people (straight or bleached hair, premium on light skins, similar dress, etc.) believing that they were inferior and that white, not black, was beautiful. Which is to say that they came to accept the white fantasy of what it meant to be black.

For women, this has meant that we have come to believe that we are intuitive rather than rational, that we are helpmates of men, and so forth. We have internalized the belief that we are adjuncts to men - and it is not the prerogative of adjuncts to have an independent consciousness. Black people are now writing the history they've never been allowed; women are still written out of history. Black people are becoming aware of a shared heritage; women still get theirs from men. Black people believe that "black is beautiful", and to hell with the white conception of beauty: women are still forcing themselves into preconceived male models of so-called feminine beauty. In sum, black people are creating a black consciousness, while women still largely see themselves through the eyes of men.

What this means in literature is that we have almost no books in which we hear the stilled voice speaking out of women's age-old situation. This is not to say that women are intrinsically different from men; rather, we live out our lives in a situation of which men have no real awareness. It is a situation which stunts our growth as human beings. Worst of all, it is a situation which blinds us to the reality of our predicament.

A book which speaks to us of this situation is very important. I'm not going to talk about its specific content because I think it's a book which has a highly subjective impact. I've not yet heard of a woman reader who didn't find in it some passage which spoke to her directly out of her own experience. So I merely say - read it. See where it fits. See why it fits. Be glad that a woman has finally written such a book for us. The book is being made into a film. Be glad of that, too, and look for it.

- by Bonnie Kreps

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"femininity?"

-by Judith Masters

"She has surrendered her dearest RIGHTS, and been satisfied with the privileges which man has assumed to grant her, whilst he has amused her with the show of power, and absorbed all the reality into himself. He has adorned the creature, whom God gave him as a companion, with baubles and gewgaws, turned her attention to personal attractions, offered incense to her vanity and made her the instrument of his selfish gratification, a plaything to please his eye, and amuse his hours of leisure..."

Sarah Moore Grimke

The above quotation, written in 1837, is as relevant to the feminist revolution now, as it was then.

How do we become 'feminine'? Obviously, the way we dress, walk, sit, etc. has somehow become an accepted (and expected) part of our personality. The subject of 'femininity' is one of the 'sacred cows' that very few of us dare question too intimately. To say that women deserve equal pay for equal work, day-care centres, equal representation... is very easy for us, because we can support this type of impersonal platform without looking too deeply into our own personalities. But, as feminists, we have to go SO much further than this, that an issue such as equal pay begins to look like a very superficial argument.. We still have to understand the 'why' of discrimination.

It is difficult to study our own attitudes because we need to be aware of just how much we have unquestionably accepted as truth. The fear of not being considered a 'real woman' stands in the way of development towards equality. How many times have you heard someone who thought themselves to be 'up' on the woman question remark that: "Women should have equal rights, BUT surely that doesn't mean women need to be unfeminine or unwomanly?" To worry in any way if females will lose their 'femininity' in the coming feminist revolution implies a typical anti-feminist attitude, usually entertained by 'little liberals' jumping on the band-wagon. YES, we will lose our so-called 'femininity'.

'Femininity' is greeted with smiles of approval, but the patronizing leers are another sign of our degradation as human beings. We are promised "power" and "love". This type of power and love is still based on dependence. The 'good nigger' can only go so far. We have to get to the point, each one of us, of being invulnerable to any suggestion that we are 'unfeminine', and recognize this attitude for what it is.

As feminists, we are caught in a double bind. The motive behind appearing (somewhat) acceptable when addressing an audience of women on the issues of feminism is understandable. How far can we go? Will they listen if we appear too 'unfeminine'? There is a danger in playing the accepted female role in any way while at the same time, trying to change it. To put on 'clothing' of one type rather than another is to make a statement, just as you make a statement in words. To appear 'feminine' so

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as not to offend women (potential feminists), is a compromise similar in impact to a compromise in words. This is not meant to be an argument to convince all feminists to wear pants (even though I could go on and on about the symbolic sexual slavery of female garb, and the advantages of doing away with it) but to have each of us question the motivation behind our conformity.

Some women will argue that they wear skirts, nylons, make-up, etc., because they choose of their own free will to do so. Others claim that very few women look good in pants. These arguments are usually rationalizations for continuing to wear 'feminine' apparel. By whose standards are we to judge what looks 'good' on females? If you feel that you have freely chosen your 'femininity', it may be wise to question the coincidence that your choice is exactly what is expected of you as a female and also that the majority of females have chosen it. Slavery is hardest to fight when the slaves themselves accept as their own, a personality imposed on them by their social situation.

Many people feel that dress, etc., is of little importance in the fight for women's rights. It is probably a mistake to spend too much energy on this aspect alone, as we cannot afford to lose our total revolutionary approach, but let's keep in mind that differences between the clothing, mannerisms and grooming of the sexes is part of the separation and alienation of the sexes and needs to be destroyed. 'Feminine' attitudes are just as prevalent in females as the choice of 'feminine' garb, so there is more involved than what we wear.

There is, however, a danger that we could end up just "women with jobs"-BIG DEAL! The cultural interpretation of what a female or a male is, could remain basically unchanged: our cages could be a little roomier, but still cages. To raise male children to be 'masculine' or female children to be 'feminine' is to mentally cripple them for life. Ideally males and females should aim for the same balance between 'femininity' and 'masculinity' to become well-rounded human beings, and we must hope that eventually both sexes will be free to develop personalities, regardless of roles.

By attacking 'femininity' we will start to get somewhere. By liberating ourselves, we will have no need to be 'feminine', for we are human beings and should accept nothing that is taken for granted by society as 'natural' for our sex. The more taken-for-granted it is.... the more suspect. I would suggest that acceptance of any role-playing sexual differences amounts to a negative approach and will be harmful to the feminist movement.

So, accepting nothing, we shall begin.

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HOW'S THIS FOR MALE LIBERALS?

-by Joan Lawler

Overheard on Bruno Gerussi's morning show, CBL Radio, Tuesday, 13 January

Gerussi and guest, Barry Callaghan, discuss revolution. Which ones are for real? Callaghan has all the answers. The French Canadian is the most important (or does he mean successful?) revolution now occurring on the North American continent. The black one is in trouble since the Black Panthers are being systematically picked off, and blacks themselves are divided. The criteria of revolution? The amount of violence, says Callaghan. The French Canadians have thrown more bombs over a longer period of time. The blacks, it seems, haven't thrown so many bombs. (Does this mean the black revolution is less serious, or less important? Or does it mean that blacks are more fundamentally oppressed and face more virulent opposition?)

This preamble, for our purposes, adds up to a definition of revolution which emerges from Callaghan and Gerussi as a combination of these things; long and systematic preparation; violence; and success. These, it seems, Callaghan and Gerussi would accept as seriously revolutionary.

There follows some static about the affrontery of middle-class young whites who shoot their mouths off about the black situation. Example quoted: a middle-class white "chick" who talks flippantly to a black man about soul-food. (Am I being over-sensitive about the example selected, in view of all those white radical male youths who shoot their mouths off every day?) White youth (and particularly "chicks"?) should keep quiet, Callaghan and Gerussi imply, since they know nothing of black experience. Then Callaghan and Gerussi, from the depth of their experience as women, proceed to shoot their mouths off about women's liberation as follows:

"What about women's liberation and all that jazz?"
inquires mild-mannered Gerussi of Guru Callaghan.

Smug, brush-it-off agreements between the two of them that women are a "little repressed in our society", you know - equal pay and all those trivialities. But the audacity of these women, "they take themselves seriously", says instant Superman, Gerussi, humourlessly, "no humour". "And to make the master-slave analogy with blacks - it's disgusting!" howls Callaghan. "What woman was ever lynched in our society?" (Or spent her life as a man's unpaid, personal house servant, or had her body bought and used, or suffered a beating from her masterful husband every Saturday night, or was forced to breed babies she didn't want? According to Callaghan and Gerussi, the criteria of oppression and a master-slave relationship is that you be lynched. Otherwise, sisters, you're laughing).

So our analogy with blacks is fallacious and disgusting? Eldridge Cleaver, male, militant, revolutionary, black, Black Panther, doesn't seem to agree. In fact, he finds the analogy very serious indeed:

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"... even old faithful Uncle Tom has a self-image. All men must have one or they start seeing themselves as women ..."

What is Cleaver saying? That a woman is a person without a self-image? That's a serious state of oppression for a black man, Cleaver seems to be saying - but he's also implying that in our society it's the normal state for a woman. Radical, revolutionary Cleaver then goes on to prove himself as "liberal" as any white man when it comes to sexism. This is how he continues directly from the above quote:

"... women start seeing them (black men) as women, then women lose their own self-image, and soon nobody knows what they are themselves or what any one else is..." (refer Soul On Ice - page 94).

A woman lives through a man's self-image (like a slave through a master's?) Get it girls? Don't upset the hierarchy. That's like taking the bottom card from a house of cards, or the slave from a cotton plantation: the power structure collapses.

Once again, it's the same old story every woman has heard a thousand times, about the male ego, identity, image, self-respect - or whatever it is men so desperately need, but women apparently don't.

Except that we do. And our revolution is underway. We haven't fulfilled all of Callaghan's and Gerussi's criteria for revolution yet. But we're working on it. We're serious (as they noted with disgust and indignation). And some of us have been engaged in long and systematic preparation over a period of years - not forgetting that we have the experience of other oppressed groups to draw on, which should hasten our development. Callaghan, particularly, was hung up on the point of violence; he needs it to take a serious view of revolution. Since he is representative of liberal society at large, he will surely get violence because our aim has to be that we convince society that we are serious. And that we intend to succeed.

But now we are getting altogether too serious. Let us finish on a note of humour, as did Callaghan. He concluded with a light comment, laced with contempt, about "broads in the centre-fold of Playboy". (Like the niggah playing the banjo in the minstrel show?)

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"TO change attitudes without changing social institutions is a rather hopeless quest"

- Gunnar Myrdal

Letter from Teacher

The following letters are in response to a situation in which my seven year old daughter underwent prolonged pressure to make her wear dresses to one of Canada's supposedly most liberal schools. She was taken aside by her teacher and told that she was being "unfair" to the other girls by wearing pants (note the implications of such a statement), and the teacher announced to the whole class that "tomorrow Lisa will wear a dress - won't you Lisa?" Well, Lisa didn't. She is still wearing pants. In answer to my request for the school policy on dress, I received the following letter:

"Dear Mrs. Kreps:

December 10, 1969

At Huron we have a general policy regarding the dress of little girls; we like to see them wearing dresses or skirts. For health reasons alone we feel that girls benefit more from slims when worn outdoors only. Also, general behaviour is more ladylike when girls are dressed in skirts than when like their male schoolmates.

Personally, I agree with the school policy because in the classroom it creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and well-being between the boys and girls when girls are dressed in a feminine manner.

If you have any further questions, please let us know.

Sincerely, (Mrs.) Carol Turner"

Here is my reply:

"Dear Mrs. Turner:

January 9, 1970

Your letter explaining the Huron School policy on dress is most interesting. It is a concise statement of a position toward which I have total antipathy.

I shall pass over your health argument, because it is patently absurd. As for your claim that the behaviour of girls is more "ladylike" when they are forced into dresses, you are no doubt entirely correct. Dresses are impractical and hamper free movement, and they teach little girls to be careful, neat, and ornamental - rather than affording them an opportunity to explore the world as boys do.

Our society is based on arbitrary sex roles which we adults impose on powerless children whether they like it or not. We divide humanity into two separate camps, "masculine" and "feminine", which become alienated as they become strangers to each other.

Your comments about dress inspiring "mutual respect and well-being" between the sexes is a personal value judgment, and one

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which flies in the face of the experience of many of us, who feel that the relationship between the sexes is largely a "hostile game between strangers". There is much new evidence in psychology and sociology about the role of expectation in human behaviour. We are shaping our children up in a learning sense. Insofar as we consign them to arbitrary roles based on sex rather than individuality, we are robbing them of the free choice which they have every right to make for themselves.

I am enclosing some additional material which I hope will give the school food for thought. I shall also take this general question up at a higher level.

In sum, I find your policy regrettable and pernicious. I shall, therefore, encourage my daughter to wear pants any time she wants to. I shall also help her to make other children understand the reality of the situation which is now being imposed on them by adults.

Sincerely, Bonnie Kreps"

YOU CAN'T TRUST ANYONE DEPARTMENT

Here is what the late Adlai Stevenson, that spokesman of democratic liberalism, said to the graduating class of one of America's best women's universities:

"The point is that whether we talk of Africa, Islam or Asia, women "never had it so good" as you. Far from the vocation of marriage and motherhood leading you away from the great issues of our day, it brings you back to their very center and places upon you an infinitely deeper and more intimate responsibility than that borne by the majority of those who hit the headlines and make news. This assignment for you, as wives and mothers, you can do in the living room with a baby in your lap or in the kitchen with a can opener in your hand. If you're clever, maybe you can even practice your saving arts on that unsuspecting man while he's watching television... I could wish you no better vocation than that."

With friends like that, who needs enemies?

FORUM

Economic factors have always played a part in man's attitude to woman. The advent of commerce meant that woman was looked upon as a valuable commodity. As a dehumanized sexual possession she could be traded in marriage for property and, as a status symbol, she could be used to bolster a man's ego - having been exploited without regard to her own self-interest.

In the 11th and 12th centuries it was a common and profitable practice for nobles to sell off unmarried girls of property - "as though they were beasts" - (R.B. Hays' "The Dangerous Sex"). The scene hasn't changed much: today we have the multi-million dollar advertising industry using media of every type to perpetuate the evil myth of woman as a sexual object. She is passive, pretty, sweet, helpless, ever-willing-to-please, and completely exploitable.

As though backing up this theory, the daily newspaper with its ghetto "Woman's Section" does nothing to dispel the man-made myth of woman as something "other" "different" and, somehow "set apart". Situation comedies on television relentlessly hammer out the old chestnut of Big Daddy who goes out to his job and, through it, relates to the world - and the little woman who stays at home and relates to the world through him. Cartoons abound with female figures of menace and terror: wicked witches, bad queens and cruel step-mothers and, at the other end of this myth is the beautiful Princess waiting for Prince Charming to come along and turn her on.

It is evident that, from an early age, a young girl is bombarded with

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these denigrating images of herself and, bearing in mind that images of women created by men are strongly influenced by deep anxieties, any attempt to deviate from them is likely to be met with extreme antagonism.

Fortunately, more women today are questioning the male power structure in our society for, while it is advantageous psychologically to the male ego, as well as economically, women are beginning to realize how it has devalued them as human beings.

Women have every right to voice protest against the media industry's socially-sanctioned violence towards them; and furthermore, to organize a vigorous program of radical reform which will take into account a woman's full potential as a human being.

-Barbara Chaplin.

Editor's Note: FORUM is an open column expressing readers' opinions and arguments. 500 word limit.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The second of a series being held on FEMINISM is to take place at our new premises on TUESDAY - January 28.

We'll present New Feminists' views,
and your own will be welcomed.

Time: 7.30 p.m.
Place: 67 Huntley Street
Toronto 5.

(closest subway - Sherbourne)

Phone 921-9356 if you would like more information - otherwise, COME ALONG & HEAR WHAT WE HAVE TO SAY !

FORUM

NEW FEMINISTS - Two of the rooms of our new headquarters are already in use; an office and a meeting room. The third room will be a library.

Donations of essential equipment have been good so far- but more is required. Specifically we need desks, chairs, lamps of any kind, long drapes, floor coverings, pre-cut lumber for shelves (carpenters too) filing cabinets, and tables. Can you give or lend any of these items?

Cash contributions are also needed. We have a Gestetner machine on which we owe \$100.00 and items which are not donated will have to be purchased. All contributions will be gratefully received and acknowledged.

Library: Cataloguing and cross-reference indexing has begun. We have more clippings than books at this stage, so this is another beg, borrow or steal plea! If you have books you are willing to lend, mark your name on them and we shall catalogue them accordingly. If you have clippings, please send them in - we will copy and return them to you if you wish.

The telephone will be installed this week in the name of New Feminists. The library will be opened as a reading room as quickly as possible. We plan on keeping you informed, but phone with any questions you may have.

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THIS IS THE SYMBOL OF
W.I.T.C.H. - Women's
International Terrorist
Conspiracy from Hell.

Basically, this is the biological symbol for woman, but, with the clenched fist in the center and the plus sign altered to represent a Maltese cross, it becomes a symbol of defiance for women!



NOW AND THEN

"WOMEN IN THE SEVENTIES" - a series of presentations to be held at the Don Mills Library (Don Mills Rd. at Lawrence Ave. East) each Tuesday in February.
Time: 8.30 p.m.

3rd

10th

17th

24th

The New Feminists with film, and four member panel will conduct the presentation on February 17th. Telephone the Library for more information.

"PARENTS TOWARD A SCHOOL IN THE SPIRIT OF THE HALL-DENNIS REPORT" - Lloyd Dennis will speak at a meeting on Friday, January 23, 8.30 p.m. at Bathurst Heights Library, 3170 Bathurst St (just north of Lawrence). Please contact 633-5962 for further information if you are interested. Members of New Feminists have attended one meeting of this recently-formed group and we believe that parents who share our concern about the education of children, most particularly of girls, should take the time to involve themselves in a venture of this kind.

"THE NEW SUFFRAGETTES" - Randy title of Pierre Berton's week-long program on women which will be shown on Channel 11 this week Jan 19th - 23rd at 6.00 p.m. and 11.10 p.m. Don't just watch it - analyze it.

The ATLANTIC MONTHLY, March issue, will be entirely on WOMEN. If you don't buy it, spend an hour at your library and read it.

UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALISTS WOMEN'S FEDERATION - held a day long conference in Toronto on Jan 12 to discuss "lobbying for implementation of recommendations" to emerge from Ottawa when the findings of the R.C. on the Status of Women are published in the spring.

"NAIR" at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. The myth is still being perpetuated in the so-called "Free generation"; despite the nudity on stage, women have a "fixed" role - and that role is a secondary one.

We need original writings, cartoons, graffiti, poems, facts and statistics about women both in Canada, and elsewhere. If you have something to contribute, please send it in with your name, address and telephone number.

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