

Free

# The Womanist

Fall 1990 A feminist newspaper distributed nationally Vol 2, #2

Lest we Forget

## About The Womanist

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**To subscribe:** To have the paper delivered, the price is \$10-\$25 a year. Institutions \$25, \$15 for non-profits.

**The Womanist** was created to empower and enable women. We want to get back to the basics, the common ground that built the women's movement, while celebrating our differences.

What can we agree upon? That we as women are important and that we have a right to be heard, to be respected and to be trusted.

As a movement we have a responsibility to enable all voices to be heard, equally. That is the commitment in this newspaper - to empower with ideas, information and inspiration.

**The Womanist** appears 4 times a year.

## Publisher's Message

We apologize to our readers for not coming out this year. We simply did not have the money. We decided from the start that our paper would seek no financial subsidies from the government. Instead we put out the paper by raising funds through subscriptions and advertising. However, there is quite a shortfall.

Each issue of **The Womanist** costs \$18,000 to produce. Two-thirds of that money comes out of our consulting firm and the work we do in other areas.

Half of our personal income and one quarter of our time is spent publishing this newspaper. We have staff who will work every night of the week without overtime pay to put out this newspaper. Why do we put ourselves through this wringer?

At this point in time in the women's movement, we believe it is more important to hear the diversity of women's voices than to have one collective voice represented by one leader. Women don't have a uniform vision. There are too many voices that have not been heard, or whose message has been interpreted and homogenized by others speaking on their behalf.

Each of us has limited time and resources in our lives and we all need to make a crucial decision. Do we, for expediency's sake, represent all women, speak on each other's behalf at conferences, to the government, in organizations? Or, do we enable each woman to speak on her own behalf? Because to do so means giving up some of our own personal visibility and power.

We publish **The Womanist** as a vehicle for many different women to present their views, their lives, their voices. The majority of women who write articles in our paper have never had

something published before. It is a forum for a diversity of women's views, not a platform for a dogmatic "party line".

But it is an expensive forum, in part because it reaches so many women - we are the largest feminist periodical in Canada - and we struggle to carry the level of personal financial commitment necessary to guarantee that the paper will come out regularly.

So we are asking you for support.

We know you want a paper. You have been patient and sympathetic and wonderful and we thank you for all you have done so far. Now, we are asking you to take the next step. This is how you can

further support **The Womanist**:

1. Ask friends to subscribe, or give them gift subscriptions.

2. Become a supporter. It costs us \$15 to print and send you four issues. Every dollar you contribute above that helps us pay for the thousands of copies distributed free to women who don't yet know **The Womanist**, or can't afford to subscribe.

3. Advertise, and encourage organizations and businesses you know to advertise.

4. Support those who do advertise in **The Womanist**, and tell them where you saw their ad.



The original artwork for the front and back covers was done by Joss MacLennan. The back cover is a reproduction of the poster made to remember the massacre of December 6, 1989. Joss is a freelance artist based in Toronto. She presently has an exhibit opposite the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa - "Looking Forward, Looking Back", 24 banners on the theme of milestones on the road to equality for women.

## Definition of Womanist

1. From womanish (Opp. of "girlish", ie, frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of colour. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "you acting womanish," ie, like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. Serious.

2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige and black?" Ans: "Well, you know the coloured race is just

like a flower garden, with every colour flower represented.") Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."

3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the folks. Loves herself. Regardless.

4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.

From **In Search of Our Mother's Gardens**, Womanist Prose by Alice Walker.

## Special Section on violence against women pages 24-35

"In this world-weary period of pervasive cynicisms, nihilisms, terrorisms, and possible extermination, there is a longing for norms and values that can make a difference, a yearning for principled resistance and struggle that can change our desperate plight."

Cornel West from  
Bell Hooks,

Yearning: Race Gender and cultural politics.

# Editorial

This issue has been a long time in coming and many things have transpired since we last published a paper. It has been a difficult year for many of us. We have been threatened with the destruction of our country through the Meech Lake process; many of us have lost our jobs or are threatened with losing them; we have been victims to an escalation of crime against women, aboriginal people and people of colour; and we have felt a profound sense of betrayal by this government as they have imposed government policies that we do not want and that are not effective. Now, we confront the possibility of a staged war in which Canada will be involved.

Throughout this year we have kept in contact with the many women who are active throughout this country and asked them to continue writing. They did, and what you see in this paper is a year of thoughtful and pained writing. Overwhelmingly, the articles are about violence - against women, against aboriginal people, against tolerance and against the integrity of Canada as a nation. Collectively, we are a very angry and frightened people.

### Violence Against Women

Some of this escalating violence is aimed at women. In Quebec alone, 22 women and children have been murdered this year by the men who "loved them." Why is this happening? In part, of course, because there is an underlying level of misogyny that permeates our society.

But the greatest reason is simply because permission has been given. It is open season for prejudice and violence. No one at the top cares.

The Mulroney government, and some provincial premiers, have shown a frightening lack of leadership in maintaining basic attitudes of tolerance that have characterized Canadian society for so many decades. True, the level of tolerance has not always been high, but consistently, if someone did falter, the government usually felt an obligation to remind them of values that Canadians strive for - to understand and accept one another as equals within our society.

After the Montreal massacre of December 6, 1989, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women didn't even attend the funerals of the women. The government then proceeded three months later to slash the funding for women's centres across this country, sometimes cutting their funding to zero. In some cases, these centres were the only places women could go in their communities when they were being beaten or had been sexually assaulted.

The government has been stalling for the last few months on its family violence strategy. Another act against women: this government has pushed through the House of Commons a new abortion bill which will guarantee that some women will be forced to risk their lives because they will not have access to a safe abortion.

And the list goes on.



### Dismantling Canada

This issue also contains a look at another type of violence - the Tory agenda, which is having the effect, intentional or not, of dismantling the country.

There are basically two types of leaders: one who envisions the best in each of us and enables us to get there, the other who panders to our fears and prejudices, escalating them. The first person brings us to independence and excellence. The other maintains power by reinforcing hatred, fear and division. We badly need a leader of the first sort, but that is not what we have.

There has always been a fine line in a parliamentary democracy between loyalty to one's party and party position, and representing the will of the people. This government has clearly stepped over the line. Witness the policies and programs that they have introduced in this country opposed by the majority of Canadians: Free Trade, the cutting of VIA Rail, putting abortion back into the Criminal Code, the GST, changes to Unemployment Insurance, cutting back on research in

alternative energy, the general cutbacks on research and development.

To add insult to injury, the government tells us that they have a mandate from the people to carry out this agenda. Sorry, I don't think so. Two years ago, we had a single issue election, in which the "winning" party failed to get a majority of the popular vote. Unfortunately, because of our electoral system, they still got a majority of the seats in the House.

This country is in serious trouble and a Citizen's Forum is not going to fix it. There is an agenda here, bigger than the average Canadian, an agenda that spells the end of Canada as we know it.

What is the government's agenda? Some of the general directions are:

• **Keep Quebec in Canada at any price.** It is unclear why

we do not believe in self-determination for Quebec: let them choose to stay in Canada, where they are welcome, or to leave, if that is what they want. Instead, we are going to sacrifice the entire country, including fundamental constitutional change, so that they can stay.

The result will be a radical reshaping of this country. Already, the Prime Minister's Office is "working on a major overhaul of the 123-year-old Confederation." Isn't that a bit premature? What about the highly touted Citizen's Forum? And who mandated this government to make these sweeping changes?

Constitutionally "reshaping Canada" fundamentally misreads the cause of our divided nation. The deepening division and malaise in Canada are not constitutional matters. They are about the lack of common vision and values.

• **The federal government will be less and less involved in funding health, education, and social services.** This does not mean they will stop taking our tax dollars. It means that other levels of government will need more money to provide these services.

More importantly, it means that we will no longer be a

nation. Each province will be on its own, and the level and quality of service will vary dramatically across Canada. Even the wealthy provinces will be hard-pressed; the "have-not" regions will be abandoned.

• **The Canadian economy will be completely open to the world economy, dominated by a small number of multi-national companies.** We will have high unemployment, as we provide resources to the United States

and Mexico provides cheap labour. We will be what Mr. Mulroney grew up in and what he understands, a branch plant community.

Oh yes, and sprinkled through that will be a few successful Canadian firms, which will continually be pushed forward every time we show concern for our crumbling economy.

(continued on page 4)

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### Lest we Forget





## Across Canada



## Editorial Cont'd

The road to free trade has a price. All those people who cross the Canada-US border every weekend to get cheaper goods do not make the connection between their desire to get the best deal for themselves over the short-term, and the undermining of this country over the long-term. And that is what this government counts on.

• **Much lip service and little action for people of colour.** Lots of visible minorities will be appointed to government bodies. Racial violence will be at an all time high, fanned by unemployment, misinformation, and silence from the highest leaders of the country.

• **Unfair taxes.** The tax burden will be on the individual and not the corporation.

• **A monolithic media structure that offers no genuine alternatives to the status quo.** A human rights organization in the United Kingdom recently warned that the degree of monopoly ownership of the media in Canada can lead, as it has in other countries, to the erosion of democracy. Since then, the Kingston Whig-Standard, the last independent daily newspaper in Canada, was sold to one of the two large newspaper chains that dominate print news in Canada.

• **A displaced and transient population will be concentrated in large urban areas** with the resulting social and economic problems. How many people can we pile into Toronto? And at what cost? What happens to an illiterate fish plant worker when he moves his family from Newfoundland to Toronto?

What happens to young people who are forced to leave the family farm and move to cities to live and find work? What does it do to our collective Canadian spirit when so many people feel disconnected and dispirited?

• **Foreign policy will increasingly mirror U.S. policy** and we will be less and less independent. We will go to war because the Americans want guaranteed oil supplies. Kuwaiti sovereignty is the last thing on George Bush's mind, and our political leaders should not assume Canadians are so gullible. If sovereignty were the issue, where were we when UN resolution after resolution called on South Africa to end their illegal military occupation of Namibia? Diplomatic and economic channels were good enough for Canada then, while Namibians waited 75 years for independence from their occupiers.

Our hypocrisy is not lost on the rest of the world, who watched the events at Oka with alarm, and are now watching us steam into the Gulf, body bags at the ready.

• **In the end, we will be a highly polarized, non-country, divided economically, geographically and racially.**

## Search for an alternative

The majority of Canadians reject that agenda and are looking for leadership to take us forward to a more positive, ethical and sustainable future. Unfortunately, that leadership is not readily obvious. Perhaps that is just as well. Perhaps it is time for Canadians to articulate the future we want ourselves, and get down to work building it.

There's no time like the present. Let's begin by talking about what kind of life we want. Just to start things rolling, here are a few thoughts.

I want to live in a democracy. Not the kind of democracy that the media described this year when they were witnessing the revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe. The citizens of those countries took a stand on political and personal freedom, but the Western media turned it into a major advertising campaign for capitalism. Do they really think that people died in the streets to ensure

that they could have four varieties of peanut butter in the supermarket? Now, as people face hunger, homelessness, and unemployment, there are some second thoughts about the rosy road of capitalism.

No, the kind of democracy I want is one in which the government represents the majority of people's wishes, and the best and highest values of Canadians. It would be a democracy where the news media would be diverse and independent of both government and monopoly interests, so that many points of view would be common on all major issues of our nation.



I want a planet, not a cesspool, or a timebomb. The western world, of which we are a part, consumes 85% of all the energy used. And what are we going to do with all of those Russians, Romanians and East Germans, not to mention the Third World, who have been enviously thinking that if they existed in a capitalist world they could have it all? It is estimated that we would need 4 1/2 planets to be our garbage disposal sites if all of the world used the same amount of energy that we do. Won't they be mad when they find out that not only have we used up all of the energy but we have affected their climate and their land in the process.

I want my basic needs met. That means I want a home to live in, food to eat, work to do. But need is relative. Do we really need two cars to every family? Or three bathrooms in one house? It is time to understand that there is a cost to these things. If we all have a refrigerator then we contribute to the destruction of the ozone layer. If we all have cars then we produce carbon dioxide and heat up the earth. If we want what is produced through coal energy then we create acid rain. There are connections between our "needs" and the

world we live in.

We have become a nation of people who are defined by what we buy, not what we believe in.

I want honesty and integrity. I don't have high standards for politicians: I don't expect an unblemished life, we all make mistakes, we are all full of contradictions. But someone who consistently and deliberately lies has no place in public office. The very least we should expect is that those in public office have some nodding acquaintance with the reality of Canadians' lives – and care about them.

I want stability, the right to

## Political action

People in most countries in the world spend much of their individual and collective time seeking to expand their democratic rights. In Canada, we don't use a tenth of our powers. All we do is talk about how lucky we are, but we don't use that freedom.

We have to act. Democracy isn't just showing up to vote. We have an individual responsibility to understand the issues, and to act, alone or with others, to have our voices heard, and to live in a way consistent with our beliefs. Here are some things you can do:

1. Take an inventory of your life. What do you want? To stay in your community and work? To have better public transit to reduce your car travel? Do you want a job?

2. Change your personal behaviour. Be more conscious of what you buy, how you spend your time, how you travel, your leisure activities.

3. Get active in community groups, your children's schools, unions, churches, lobby groups - any organization that can mobilize change beyond an individual level.

4. Get active politically. Put pressure on the government now - all levels of government.

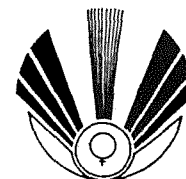
5. Prepare for the election. Prepare to organize, to get the best candidate nominated, to support your candidate (financially, volunteering, etc.) Perhaps most importantly, consider running. And then - vote.

We have two short years to get ready for the next election. There may not be much left of what most of us know of Canada by that time. We have a lot of work to do.



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# Ethel Blondin on Aboriginal Rights

(Following are excerpts from an interview with Ethel Blondin, Liberal MP for Western NWT, by Lynne Tyler of *The Womanist*. The interview took place on September 12, 1990)

Over the years there have been a number of attempts to deal with what is termed "the aboriginal problem".

The government ignores that Turtle Island, or North America as it is known in modern terms, built its first constitution in America on the democracies and principles of the confederacy of the Mohawks. They have borrowed our ideas, because they are good ideas, ones based on peace, sharing, union, and unity.

The Great Law of Peace was set out when the five nations said that their government would be one of union, one directed towards international peace, and that those who came into the nation from outside were welcome to have a home under the great tree of peace, as long as they believed in the same principles.

It has been very difficult to understand why Canada, through Meech Lake or another process, can't put a statement in the constitution that says aboriginal people are equal and have equal rights and should be recognized, in fact, as the fore-fathers of this country. Why can't Canadians recognize our languages and our cultures? Aboriginal people are not asking for a windfall or a gold mine, they are asking people to recognize them. We don't want to be assimilated. Why can't we be ourselves?

I couldn't believe that the government offered a Royal Commission during the Meech Lake process and then rescinded it. Why can't we have that now? The native population in Canada has been traumatized. We are constitutionally belly-up.

Indian people had the right to die for this country and we didn't even have the right to vote for our government until 1960. The Indian Act and its discriminatory policies against native women made temporary Indians out of our people, for the purpose of government bookkeeping. The educational institutions crippled the culture and the language of many native people.

The disfunctionality within many native homes has a lot to do with children who were put in residential schools for ten months of every year of their lives. They were put into an artificial environment that

resembled nothing of the closeness of aboriginal communities, then thrown right back into the bush and somehow expected to survive amidst all the cultural clashes.

If fundamental change does not take place, there is going to be no choice for native people. When I say the situation has to change fundamentally, I mean situations like how we presently negotiate with the federal government.

The Dene and Metis were forced to negotiate the extinguishment of aboriginal rights. Extinguishment means that never, ever, can future generations of native people re-visit any of those rights, even if situations change drastically. It means you give up your rights forever when you sign on the dotted line of the final agreement. Those are the conditions and the stresses under which negotiators have been operating. It is not negotiating, it is a prescriptive set of pre-conditions, where the federal government says, "take it or leave it".



Since the early 70's the total land claims submitted number about 570. Ones that have been achieved are forty – that isn't even ten percent. Forty-four were rejected. Sixty-nine were administrative referrals, fifteen are approved mandates. Just the wording is an indication of the problem. It is just a big bureaucracy of classifications for stalling claims. It is totally inadequate.

We want a judiciary land claims commission. Alternatively, the Canadian Bar Association has recommended the creation of a specific claims tribunal, which is disengaged from the government and has a broad representation. It would have a direct reference to government or to parliament, but not through the Department of

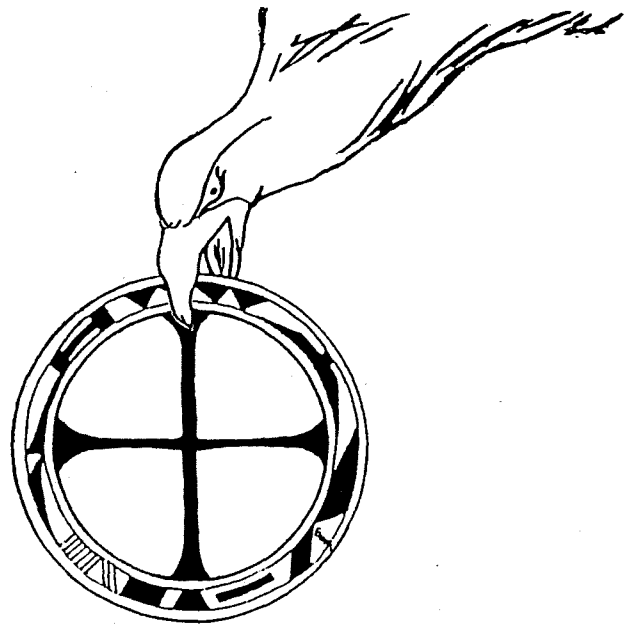
Indian and Northern Affairs. It would be accountable, responsible and representative. The government would not be the judge and jury at the same time. With the specific claims tribunal or the commission, the first order of work should be to address self government, sovereignty, and the outdated land claims policy.

It is really sad that the government doesn't see the public support for aboriginal people that is there. Just recently, a survey showed that 83% of Canadians feel that native people should be policing themselves and have their own justice system, and that 53% of Canadians say that native people have not been treated fairly in the courts and by the police. The government doesn't pick up those messages and use them. The government is basically self-directed and opportunistic, to the point where it works against the people.

Bourassa didn't listen to us during Meech Lake. Yet, we were told that if we signed the Meech Lake Accord, Quebec

would come to our aid. God forbid that we would ever sign that accord. Where would we be now? I honestly believe that if the Meech Lake Accord had been signed, there would be a lot more dead bodies than there are now.

Aboriginal languages are not a heritage language (designated for languages of immigrants other than English and French). We want an aboriginal language foundation. Canada should be building a foundation for its original people's fifty-three languages, only three of which are not threatened. They should be doing everything to preserve those languages because they are really the essence of Canada's history, indigenous to Canada. Once they disappear, they are gone. But



instead, the government just gives us constant platitudes about how it is really nice that people try to preserve these languages.

Racism is here. We have our work cut out for us. The bigots are saying, "I have freedom of speech. I can tell you that I hate you because you are a different colour and because you have different traditions. I can get away with that. It is my right, so too bad for you."

That is building a country on hatred. That is totally and completely wrong.

I think back to my people, because it always helps me in situations like this. An elder said to me just recently that if there is a land of people who do not hold any principles or beliefs, there is no real hope for the future of those people. We have to believe in something.

The recent election results are telling my party and other politicians, "listen, we are tired of the doubletalk. We want the real truth." Canadians don't want to be hoodwinked anymore. I appeal to non-native people not to allow government to manipulate them. Don't let them do this to you. Don't let them put a wedge between you and native people.

Native people have always been visionaries. I am not saying that other people can't see, but people restrict their vision. We have always been strategic. We appreciate yesterday, we enjoy today and we anticipate tomorrow. Our treaties are binding to us, because of the language our chiefs used, including my grandfather, who signed a treaty. They were people who could see ahead.

We always say that what is important is what will be left for the seventh generation. That is why we plan for the future. What I do, what we all do, as an individual today is going to be important for Canadian and native people, because our work is going to be able to influence the way people think of aboriginal people.

The government of the next century will be the government that is able to adequately deal with the aboriginal agenda: land questions, aboriginal rights, justice issues, education, self government, sovereignty. Those issues are here to stay. For years, we have swept them under the carpet, but they are not going to go away.

There is an equally long list of social and economic woes. The statistics are outrageous. We have the highest suicide rates. Assault and abuse are rampant in aboriginal communities, amongst children. The attrition rate in high school is nothing to brag about.

So the government plays their special words and tactics game with us all the time in the media, about how they do all these things for us. Non-native people seem to be very media-directed. They put a lot of confidence in what government says. If the government says it, and it is in a press release, then they feel it must be true. On our side, we have not managed, or manipulated, the media as well as we could have, because that is not our way. But we have an important message to get out: we were the first conservationists, we

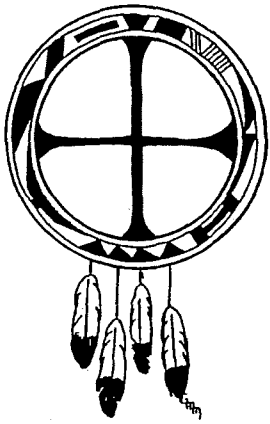
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## Ethel Blondin on Aboriginal Rights cont'd

have an affinity for our most prized possession, our children, who are so incredibly important to us. It makes politics seem so banal and so inane, when you put it right down to that.

This country is going to hell in a basket right now, from one end to the other. In a space of ten days, you see Oka; you see children with propane exploding in their face because they are sniffing cocaine; you have people in major confrontations; you have white supremacists burning crosses in the middle of fields; you have people running down barricades and speeding and killing other people.

I am so outraged at a government that doesn't want to listen, that is so bankrupt in policies and in sincerity, ingenuity, understanding and leadership. There is a vacuum, so people are attaching themselves to all kinds of spokespersons, because they want leadership. They are dying for it.

We have true leadership in our community. We have the kind of unity and leadership that even government can't eradicate, no matter what they do. So we just keep working at it, generation after generation after generation.

Within the aboriginal community, women play a very strong leadership role, because they are the steady, silent hand in the back, that is always there to provide spiritual guidance.

The women spokespersons for the Mohawk nation would have a very

definite traditional role of leadership, but the media would not recognize this, and in fact assume they have no credibility.

Women brought children into the world. They were the midwives. The children were delivered into their hands. They cleaned off the babies, they wrapped them up and garbed them, then raised them. The whole nurturing process is in women's hands. Each individual that comes into the hands of a midwife is sacred. This is a real responsibility, to give the world another person.

Despite all these things, we are human. We always look to a better day. My saving grace is the resiliency of my people. Despite the marginalization and colonialism, they always come back. We are always there, optimistic for a better future.

In my culture, we have a word which means your future

role. In the old days, that meant how you were going to live your life, how long you were going to live, what kind of a person you were going to be. Our medicine people could look at someone and say, "that person has a short future role, because they live like a dying person". No planning, totally erratic, always all over the place.

That is Mulroney. He was always criticizing the Senate, saying they are always sleeping and that we don't need them. Now look at how hypocritical he is.

The crux of the whole thing is that, without fundamental change, it doesn't matter who is in power or who is at fault. There has to be a complete about-face in the way that we deal with this problem. The government has to be the role model in building relations. How can the government of Canada expect the average Canadian to respect aboriginal

people, when it treats them with total disrespect.

I read Billy Diamond's book, and in it, he described how when Québec was going to build the James Bay Hydro development, his father went to speak to the Québec government. He got up to give his wealth of knowledge and wisdom to the Premier in Cree, because that is the language he spoke. I will never forget what Billy Diamond said. In the middle of Mr. Diamond's speech, the Premier of Québec got bored and walked out. He just left the room, left the speech, and left the man standing there.

The government is going to have to build trust between all peoples. It has to be dealt with, no matter what party the Prime Minister is from. They will regret the day that they don't deal with this problem, because it is not going to go away. It is going to be here for a long time.

## Survival Fund for Kahn-Tineta Horn

by Lynn Smyth

Kahn-Tineta Horn, a fifty one year old Mohawk native, was raised on the Kanehsatake and Akwesasne reserves. Since the 1960's she has been a strong and prominent spokesperson for her people and for all native peoples across Canada. During the past twenty years Kahn-Tineta has raised four daughters in Ottawa and had a seventeen year career in the federal government.

On August 17th of this year, she returned to Kanehsatake with two of her daughters, thinking she could help solve the crisis that had endangered so many of her relatives and friends.

When the army advanced, she ended up in the treatment centre as an advisor. She was present at the signing of the initial agreement with the



federal and provincial governments, the Quebec Police Force and the army.

She and her daughters stayed behind the lines until they walked out en-mass in September. Within a week, her ex-husband (a non-native lawyer for Indian Affairs) had (with the help of a court order) taken her four year old

daughter from her first day at school. Kahn-Tineta was fired from her job at Indian Affairs. For the first time in her life she is collecting unemployment insurance. She has also been charged with initiating a riot, for staying with her people in the treatment centre. She has lost her appeal for the reinstatement of her job.

Fortunately, she won her daughter back after some weeks, which renewed her faith in our justice system. She now faces the Oka criminal charges and the continuing fight for the return of her position at the Department of Indian Affairs. Kahn-Tineta needs our help to survive. The bizarre Oka tragedy has all but destroyed her family, her livelihood, and self esteem.

The "K. Horn Survival Fund" has been set up at: The Ottawa Womens Credit Bureau, 210 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1W8. The account number is 0069328, for those who wish to help her financially weather the months ahead.

Lynn Smyth is an Alderperson in the city of Ottawa.

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### Native press is killed in one cynical stroke

February 20, Budget day. Michael Wilson's axe falls hard on Secretary of State, cutting \$23 million from the department responsible for citizenship and multiculturalism. Almost half of the cut is to native programs. Gone are some 15 native newspapers, many of them bilingual.

Says Wilson: "I did it for our grandchildren."  
 (Toronto Star, February 20, 1990)

• 60% of Indian homes are without running water, sewage, disposal or indoor plumbing. The national average is 10%. Twenty per cent of native children finish high school, compared to 75% nationally.

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# Aboriginal women in prison

by Fran Sugar and Lana Fox



Below are excerpts from **THE SURVEY OF FEDERALLY SENTENCED ABORIGINAL WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY** submitted to the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women, on behalf of the Native Women's Association of Canada. This task force made the recommendation that the Prison for Women (P4W) be closed. That recommendation has been approved by the federal government. They stated in September of 1990 that it will take four years to replace P4W with five regionally based institutions for incarcerated women. One will be a longhouse specifically for aboriginal women.

This is a report about First Nations women in the Canadian federal prison system. It is also a very personal document, one in which it is difficult for us to be impartial. The experiences to which this report speaks are our experiences: we, the researchers, have lived them. When we retell the stories of the 39 Aboriginal women who speak through the pages of our report we are also sharing our own stories, for we too have known the brutality, violence, racism and oppression of which the stories tell.

In the past we have spoken to other Task Forces, Sentencing Commissions, reporters, investigators, Correctional Service staff and various other people who listened politely and nodded in apparent understanding. Yet afterwards our conditions, the conditions of our sisters, remained unchanged. The segregation unit continued to hold us hostage without heat in the dead of the winter, without toothpaste or a tooth brush. More seriously, medical treatment for crisis situations was so deplorable that we often believed that death was inevitable for Sisters who slashed. In three years the shower in the bathroom on the upper tier of segregation remained unrepaired. Cells in population have had hot water only since 1987, installed after grievances were organized.

The starting point for action lies not in abstract discussions but in the experiences of the women themselves. An essential recognition: prison and release from prison are not the starting

point. As our stories show, Aboriginal women who end up in prison grow up in prison, though the prisons in which they grow up are not the ones to which they are sentenced under law.

When movement passes were introduced at P4W in 1982 or 1983, they echoed another history. Our ancestors were required to obtain passes from the RCMP or from the Indian Agent to travel off reserve. Now we require written permission to go up a flight of stairs or to move three feet from A Range to the hospital. Our ancestors also understood that such laws were made to be broken. All this may seem trivial, but each part of prison existence for Aboriginal women has a context. It is experienced through eyes and feeling that are female, aboriginal and imprisoned. Each of these things makes a great deal of difference to the way prison is experienced. There is a great deal to be said here, but first it is best to let the women to whom we talked share their stories.

children. Twenty one have been raped or sexually assaulted either as children or as adults.

- I didn't like the way the social worker didn't believe us, she said if you're lying those people won't get foster children ever again, you can wreck their lives if you say they molested you.  
- The foster father tried to molest me plus a sister would cause trouble for me. I pulled a knife on the foster mother. I thought it was the only way out of there.

For many of us this childhood violence became an ongoing feature of life, and continued into childhood and adulthood. Twenty seven of the 39 women had experienced violence during adolescence. For many this violence was simply a continuation of childhood experience: sexual abuse by fathers or other relatives, physical abuse from parents, watching regular



Essential to a n understanding of the destructive nature of P4W is the history of violence that most of us share. For our stories show that we have all been the victims of violence. Many of us are not the victims of violence in the way in which victims of a mugging experience violence. Instead, and all too often, we are the victims of long term and systematic violence. Many of our stories tell about sexual and physical abuse during childhood. Some of this violence occurred in our birth families, in some cases it arose in foster homes and juvenile institutions. Twenty seven of the 39 women interviewed described experiences of childhood violence: rape, regular sexual abuse, the witnessing of a murder, watching our mothers repeatedly beaten, beatings in juvenile detention centers at the hands of staff and other

beatings of our mothers. However, to these things were added the violence of tricks, rape, and assaults on the streets. In adulthood, 34 of 39 had been the victims of violence, at the hands of abusive spouses (25), from tricks who had beaten and/or raped them (12 of 39 shared this experience and 9 had been violent towards tricks), or from police or prison guards.

- My girlfriends turned tricks for a living. I turned myself out to have money. I hated it. A trick offered me and my girlfriend money to make love to each other. It was my first lesbian experience. I tricked like this after that. Was jealous when my girlfriend would turn tricks to fuck men. One time I stabbed this trick six times out of hatred for prostitution and jealousy. Sick tricks you know. It was my first adult charge. I was found guilty, sentenced to three years for attempted murder.

- Where did the bitterness come from? Her reply was: "My mother was stolen from me as a child. Growing up never knowing why I didn't know my own mother. Then as a women, my life sentence, again life stolen. This time I was even. I stole a life too. Then my mother and I were so close to meeting (when she was murdered) and my life sentence was so close to being over. Life stolen. I didn't achieve a fucken thing in my life."  
- Usually women are there because of men.

The violence of which we are the victims, and of which our stories tell is not occasional or temporary. Most of us have experienced sustained abuse extending through much of our lives. Indeed, our stories have much in common with what the criminal statistics on violence say. The violence we have experienced has typically been violence at the hands of men.

There is no accidental relationship between our convictions for violent offences, and our histories as victims. As victims we carry the burden of memories: of pain inflicted on us, of violence done before our eyes to those we loved, of rape, of sexual assaults, of beatings, of death. For us violence begets violence: our contained hatred and rage concentrated in an explosion that has left us with yet more memories to scar and mark us.

- I seen my father beat my mother. Inside I said that it would never happen to me. My common law hit me. I shot him.  
- After many months of speed use I got caught up in a self made paranoid conspiracy trip. I thought everyone was out to get me. My murder charge was a result of paranoia. An

innocent man died because of my addiction. It was a crime of prostitution first. A trick. A trick with sick fantasies of me being a little girl. I was sexually abused as a kid. No fantasy for me. Not enough money for this little girl to play.

Our stories tell of all those self-destructive ways through which women who are victims seek escape. Suicide attempts are common. Thirty one of 39 had abused alcohol, 10 coming from families with



serious alcohol problems, and 10 considering their own abuse serious. Twenty seven considered themselves severely addicted to narcotics, and many were addicted to prescription drugs. Twenty three tell of addiction in institutions to prescription drugs provided by institutional psychiatrists or physicians. Ten of 39 describe slashing themselves: self mutilations that are not suicide attempts, but the relief of tension and anger, physical pain self-inflicted as escape from what lies inside us.

- Slashing releases tension. Pain and anger would disappear. It's the helplessness of doing time. Waiting, waiting, waiting. What was I waiting for? Life to end or life to begin?

Our stories also show that the regime of P4W is not one under which these things can be healed.

(continued on page 8)



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## Aboriginal women in prison cont'd

- I seen a lot of women die in there. No one gave a shit. Not the screws or administration or cons. They were dead and buried before their bodies left the cage.

- When I was Prison for Women I was the youngest one there. I was seventeen. This was 1977. Older women were there for drug trafficking charges ... few murder convictions. There was no security classification. I was released on mandatory supervision. Had no passes. Too young, couldn't be bothered with parole. I lived on the street when I got out.

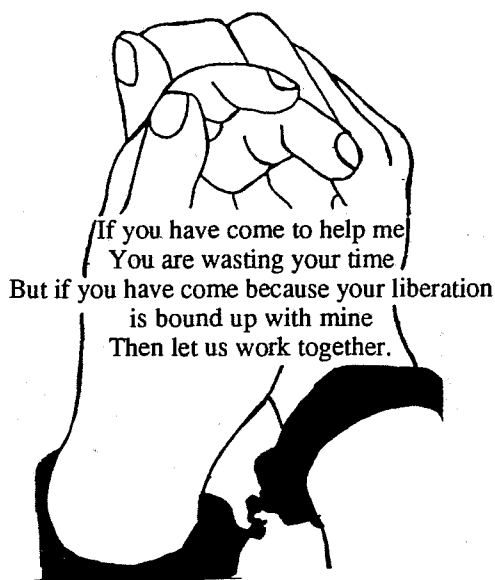
But to understand why places like P4W cannot help us, requires another insight, an insight into who we are. Not only are we women who are both the victims and initiators of violence, but we are also members of the First Nations, the survivors of people now forced to subsist on the margins of the lands where once they lived freely.

Our understandings of law, of courts, of police, of the judicial system, and of prisons are all set by lifetimes defined by racism. Racism is not simply set by the overt experiences of racism, though most of us have known this direct hatred, have been called "dirty Indians" in school, or in foster homes, or by police or guards, or have seen the differences in the way we were treated and have known that this was no accident. Racism is much more extensive than this. Culturally, economically, and as peoples we have been oppressed and pushed aside by whites. We were sent to live on reserves that denied us a livelihood, controlled us with rules that we did not set, and made us dependent on services we could not provide for ourselves.

- Back when I was growing up in Manitoba, if you were a native person in care you were put in a foster home or a mental institution. My brother was deaf. He was kept in the bug house until he was twelve. Finally they realized that ... he was not mental, only deaf. People in Portage still talk about it today.

For Aboriginal women, prison is an extension of life on the outside, and because of this it is impossible for us to heal there. In ways that are different from the world outside, but are nevertheless continuous with it, prisons offer more white authority that is sexist, racist and violent. Prisons are then one more focus for the pain and rage we carry. For us, prison rules have the same illegitimacy as the oppressive rules under which we grew up. Those few "helping" services in prison that are intended to heal are delivered in ways that are culturally inappropriate to us as women and as Aboriginal

order. They come through the bonds formed with other women in prison, through the support of people on the outside, and from the activities of Native Sisterhood. There are occasional reports of positive relationships with case-workers, but these stand out as exceptions to the prevailing pattern. The refusal of Aboriginal women to trust the "helping" services of prison becomes one more strike against them. Many of those interviewed share the experience of being seen as uncooperative. They were kept at high security classifications and denied passes. They were located far from their families



people. Physicians, psychiatrists, and psychologists are typically white and male. How can we be healed by those who symbolize the worst experiences of our past? We cannot trust these so-called care givers, and all too often in the views of those interviewed, we again experience direct hostility from the very people who are supposedly there to help. This is why Aboriginal women express anger at these care givers. This is why we refuse to become involved, and then are further punished because we fail to seek treatment.

Almost all the healing experiences that Aboriginal women who have been in prison report in our interviews lie outside the conventional prison

who could not afford to visit them and had their parole applications turned down because they refused treatment or were uncooperative.

- Because of Native Sisterhood I finally knew the meaning of spirituality. I learned how to pray in a sweat and with sweetgrass. I learned the meaning of the Eagle feather and colours. With that I was even more proud of who I was in my identity.

- Most women need extensive counselling, not prison.

- Finding my mother was also finding myself, as an Indian woman. Me and my mother never met. Her mother was murdered a year after their telephone contact. They



spoke twice on the phone during that year.

We'd be notified that another task force would be touring the prison and they requested to meet with Native Sisterhood members. We always agreed to meet, somehow believing that there was hope for change. That little hope flame in our circle wasn't for ourselves, wasn't because it might get us a parole or a pardon, but because at every meeting someone in our circle was always missing, usually in segregation on some ridiculous charge.

We never said out-loud that we were teaching them something about being a people. The circle of chairs we sat in represented the cycle of life from birth to death and that circle did not exclude anyone. In the ceremony of life that we are told to celebrate, we forgive and accept each person as an individual, as an individual who has made mistakes on their path of learning and teaching, and who can strive to reach a place where their spirit is healed. We'd come out of our circle meeting relieved at the outlet of anger at the prison system.

I have often said that the women inside have the understanding to help themselves, that all that is required is the right kind of resources, support and help.

The money spent on studies would be much better spent on family visits, on culturally appropriate help, on reducing our powerlessness to heal ourselves.

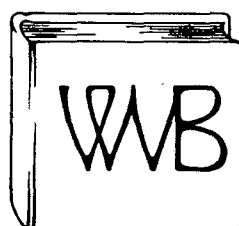
- Survivors of abuse all need understanding, we need love too. I think love makes us responsible. As long as one person believes in us we have hope. If we are isolated in the prison system from C.O.'s which most Indian women are,

then for sure we need that community support. The systems kills us, look at Patti, and Sandy, and then all the others that have left this world, no hope, desperate. Fuck, I nearly killed myself just to get out of there, I couldn't believe I would see the outside again. I even wanted to kill myself just because those women died, the trauma and shock, and then living through it.

The life stories we have heard speak strongly to the special treatment needs of Aboriginal women, needs that differ from those of non-native women.

The critical difference is racism. We are born to it and spend our lives facing it. Racism lies at the root of our life experiences. The effect is violence, violence against us, and in turn our own violence. The solution is healing: healing through traditional ceremonies, support, understanding and the compassion that will empower Aboriginal women to the betterment of ourselves, our families and our communities.

It is racism, past in our memories and present in our surroundings, that negates non-native attempts to reconstruct our lives. Existing programs cannot reach us, cannot surmount the barriers of mistrust that racism has built. It is only Aboriginal people who can design and deliver programs that will address our needs and that we can trust. It is only Aboriginal people who can truly know and understand our experiences. It is only Aboriginal people who can instill pride and self-esteem lost through the destructive experiences of racism. We cry out for a meaningful healing process that will have real impact on our lives, but the objectives and implementation of this healing process must be premised on our need, the need to heal and walk in balance.



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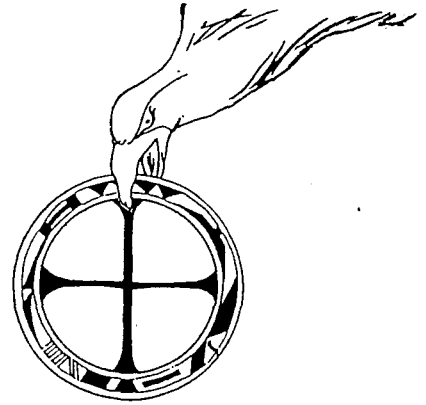
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# Peace

by Lee Maracle



Peace. "Tranquility, freedom from strife, freedom from warring conditions, freedom of the mind from annoyance." We have not had peace for some 281,614 days since Columbus first came here. Worse, our homeland has not experienced peace since this country's inception.

Violence: "organized, unwarranted, unjust exertion of force." We know what that is, beginning in the grand banks of Newfoundland with the slaughter of the cod fish and the Beothucks, to the great lakes and the slaughter of the salmon, sturgeon - the main source of food for the Six Nations people - and the reduction of the Huron to a small band in Ontario; the massacre of millions of beaver, mink, and Anishnawbeg people from Sudbury to Winnipeg, the slaughter of the buffalo and the death of the Cree Nation to the war against the Manitoba Nation and the dispersal of the Métis and Native people throughout the northern prairies, to the burning of our great forests in B.C. and the contamination of our rivers with toxic waste from pulp mills, saw mills and the very recent cutting of our forests - we know about organized violence.



Passive. Submit without resistance. Dispassionate, unemotional and unfeeling acceptance. We know what that is too. For hundreds of years, this country and its citizens watched us and our four-legged, winged, plant and sea relatives die. Creation is not a passive process. Our mother, this earth, knows it is not a passive person. She knows birth is active. It is a struggle. For every four legged, winged sister of mine, creation is a bloody struggle for mother and child.

Struggle: strenuous and resolute effort. We know what that is too. It took great effort to live the way we did centuries

ago, it took emotional effort, physical effort and spiritual effort. To discipline the self to live within the laws of "waste not want not" took huge efforts on our part. The struggle to survive the death of the earth and the disease plagues brought here by such an heroic people as the Hudson Bay Company. Huge efforts on our part, in fact; for a while it looked like we would not make it.

Thousands of citizens have decried violence in the resistance struggle of our people. Violence. "Organized, unjust and unwarranted attacks." We have never organized ourselves to attack anyone, unjustly or otherwise. Ours is a peaceful struggle, but it is not a passive one. Imagine your mother, she is up on the table, a host of angels yelling push, push, bear down woman, bear down and she says: I am not going to participate in this, it's bloody, it's painful, it's violent, it'll tear my body apart. You would have died had your mother abhorred such effort.

The same person who tells us not to be passive in the face of organized violence is the same person who will hack up a tree because it is obstructing his view. I am not a passive woman. I was there, bearing down and shedding blood in the creation process for my children and I will be there should anyone obstruct my

Every life on this planet is sacred. I swear to God, if lightning struck during this clearcutting, these logging barons, these corporate executives would accuse mother earth of violence.

We are absolutely opposed to anyone, organized with machine guns, assault rifles invading another people's territory to play shootemup cowboy. It takes great effort



photo: Brenda Henning

on our part, when faced with hunger, not to leave the barricades and run all over the town of Oka, playing shootemup cowboy. Despite the abuse directed at us, we believe life is sacred, creation is sacred. We know violence is lawless. We are opposed to violence.

We are not complacent. We will not sit idly in front of the television and watch the Québec Provincial Police invade our territory, and unjustly assault our people.

Violence: to distort basic meaning and understanding. To call upon us to submit to the organized violence of golfers, corporate logging companies, multinational oil corporations or any other such truck who seeks to strip mine, clear-cut or play games on the graves of our ancestors is to distort the meaning of violence. We are being asked to sacrifice our sacred creation, our children, our lineage. We cannot do that.

Peaceful struggle is all about expending great strenuous effort to live free from strife, free from war, free from conditions which annoy the mind. It annoys my mind to

think about clear-cutting, it annoys my mind to consider the invasion and death of the people of Oka, it annoys my mind to imagine golfers tromping on the graves of Mohawk grandmothers. So I struggle to put a stop to it. I walk, I picket, I block roads. I cannot watch a people die.

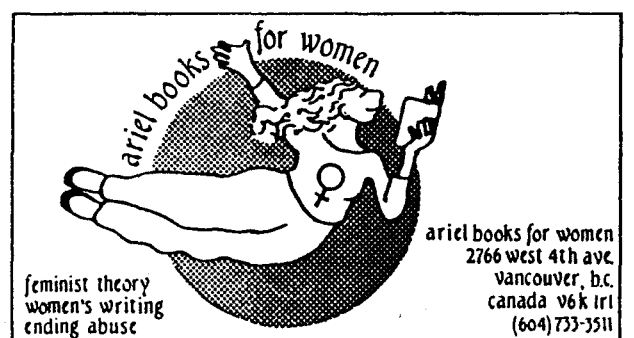
and harmony in which all creation is respected and cared for.

It cannot be done by people who have a hierarchy in their minds. All things, all life is sacred. There is no human life, animal life, plant life, more sacred than the next. Murder takes all kinds of forms, but if you think, if you imagine, you can trace the source of murder to a corporate system of violence. No single individual is responsible for the re-creation of a new way of looking at creation. We are all responsible. No caretaker can sit idly by while this assault goes on. We cannot watch a people die.

Struggle is hard work. It demands great care and a sacred sense of creation. It requires we get beyond our "me only" sense of strife. We have to rid ourselves of the bitterness of having had this country's citizenry watch us die with great complacency. It does not mean we hide the details of the story of inertia in the face of our death. It does not mean we pretend all people are good people. What other people choose to do is irrelevant. We, each and every one of us here, own our bodies. We own our minds, we own our actions. To rise above bitterness, anger, is to become conscious, emotional caretakers, people whose life is guided by the sacredness of creation, the wonderment of all life. This is hard work.

The struggle is struggle for peace, not just one against violence. Peace: harmony. Peace: freedom. Peace: tranquility. Rage is not tranquil. Bitterness is not harmonious. Being locked to someone else's perception of you is not freedom. Freedom is a state of mind. You are free to choose. You may choose to be complacent, you may choose to watch a people die, or you may choose to stop the

(continued on page 10)



# Indian spiritual abuse

by Andrea Smith

The New Age movement has sparked a new interest in Native American traditional spirituality among white feminists. Indian spirituality, with its respect for nature and the interconnectedness of all things, is often presented as a panacea for all individual and global problems.

Not surprisingly, many white "feminists" see the opportunity to make a great profit from this new craze. They sell sweat lodges or sacred pipe ceremonies which promise to bring individual and global healing. Or, they sell books and records which supposedly describe Indian traditional practices so that you, too, can be Indian. Lynn Andrews, author of *Medicine Woman, Jaguar Woman*, et. al., is one of many women who are making a profit off of Indian spirituality these days.

While it may appear that this new craze is based on a respect for Indian spirituality, in reality, these white feminists are continuing the same exploitative and genocidal practices of their foremothers/fathers. Despite the fact that there does not seem to be any desire amongst these writers to really understand Indian spirituality on its own terms and to respect its integrity, these white so-called feminists, unwilling to

give up their romanticized views of Indians, and despite the protests from the Indian community, continue to buy what they see as Indian spirituality.

Amidst all this profit-making, few white women have tried to understand how Indian spiritual practices operate. Indian religions are community based and not proselytizing religions. For this reason, there is not one universal Indian religion, as many new agers would have you believe, since spiritual practices reflect



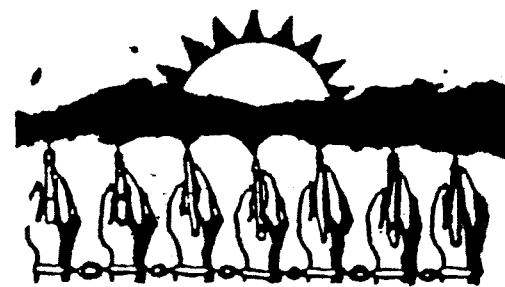
the needs of a particular community. Indians do not have the attitude that their way is "the" way, and consequently, they have no desire to tell outsiders about their practices. A message a white woman would be more likely to hear from a medicine woman is to look into your **own** culture and find what is liberating in it.

The "Indian" ways that these white, new-age "feminists" are practicing have little basis in reality. This fact is of little concern to them because they do not see Indians as real people who have real struggles and who are deserving of political and spiritual autonomy. Indians are still seen as objects of study by the white "experts" who do not need to have a voice of their own.

When we say that we would prefer it if whites did not perform sweat lodges or sacred pipe ceremonies unless they are invited to in an Indian community, we are totally ignored because we are not people who need to be taken seriously. Rather, Indians exist only to meet the consumerist needs of new agers. The fact is, however, that these new agers do not understand Indian people or our struggles for survival and thus can have no genuine understanding of Indian spiritual practices.

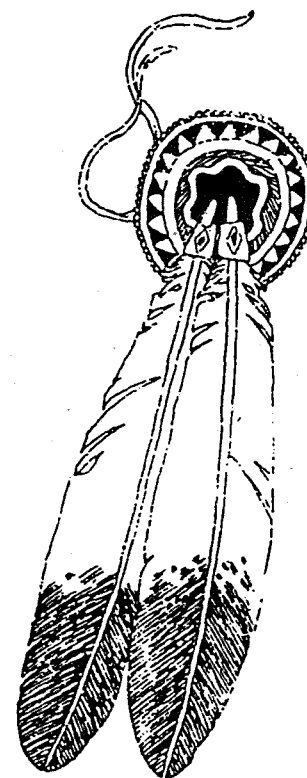
The result of this new age craze is nothing less than spiritual and cultural genocide for the Indian people. The one thing that has maintained the survival of Indian people through 500 years of colonialism has been the spiritual bonds that keep us together. When the colonizers saw the strength of our spirituality, they tried to destroy Indian religions by making them illegal. They forced Indian children into white, missionary schools and cut their tongues if they spoke their Native languages. Sundances were made illegal and Indian participation in the Ghost Dance precipitated the Wounded Knee massacre. Our colonizers recognized that it was our spirituality that maintained our spirit of resistance and sense of community.

Today, many white writers, such as Lynn Andrews, are continuing the practice of destroying Indian spirituality. They trivialize Native American practices so that they lose their spiritual force. They have the white privilege and power to make themselves heard at the expense of Native Americans. Consumers like what many of these writers have to tell them and do not want to be concerned with the facts presented by Native Americans. Our voices are silenced as a result. Consequently, the younger generation of Indians who are trying to find their way back to the Old Ways become hopelessly lost in this morass



of consumerist spirituality.

There has been a disturbing silence among white feminists on the issue of Indian spiritual abuse. Even those who do not engage in these practices, sell or promote these practices in their bookstores, record stores, or magazines. Even at the 1989 NWSA (National Women's Studies Association), Conference, Lynn Andrews books were displayed in a prominent area.



Indians are not respecting "freedom of speech" by demanding that whites stop promoting and selling books that are exploitative of Indian spirituality, the promotion of this material is destroying the freedom of speech for Native Americans by ensuring that our voices will never be heard. Feminists must make a choice; will they respect Indian political and spiritual autonomy or will they promote materials that are fundamentally racist under the guise of "freedom of speech?"

Many Indian feminists have given up on trying to convince white feminists to stop this exploitation. It seems that profit always gets in the way of solidarity between white and Indian women. However, white feminists should know that as long as they take part in Indian spiritual abuse, either by being consumers of it or by refusing to take a stand on it, Indian women will consider white "feminists" to be nothing more than agents in the genocide of their people.

**Our spirituality is not for sale.**

*This position paper is in response to a recommendation passed at the Delegate Assembly at the 1989 conference of the National Women's Studies Association. In that recommendation, the NWSA Indigenous and Native American Women's Task Force made the larger organization aware of extensive exploitation of Native culture and spirituality in recent books and seminars. In order to encourage further discussion and debate about these important issues, the Coordinating Council recommended a number of actions, including the distribution of this position paper.*

If white feminists are going to act in any type of solidarity with their Indian sisters, they are going to have to take a stand. Feminist book and record stores must stop selling these products. Magazines should stop advertising these products. All women who call themselves feminists should denounce exploitative practices wherever they see them. While some may claim that

## Peace cont'd

slaughter. Freedom is personal and significant. Freedom and peace require a deep sense of justice and great love. Harmony.

When those mercenaries for the multinational corporations, wind up their chainsaws on our hillsides to hack at the ankles of my mother's other children, it disturbs my harmony. It annoys my mind. I refuse to be passive about clear-cutting the Steins or clear-cutting the Mohawks. I was not passive about nurturing my children, I worked, I sweated, I stayed up nights as a tired youth, I stayed home when other young people were tipping back the amber in the pubs of the nation - I was not complacent and I will never be complacent about creation.

If we are all dead we cannot have peace. If we are allowed to die because the good citizens of this country

did nothing, they will be left with their violence. They will be left with the memory not of resolute struggle, great effort for peace, but with the memory of unspirited, unemotional, uncaring inactivity in the face of our genocide. My spirit is not passive. Injustice annoys my mind and disturbs my spirit. I will be that way for all eternity. We have done all the unjust dying a people should have to do. This land has done all the unjust dying she should have to do. Don't be a passive soldier for corporate murder. With peace and harmony in your heart go out and spend great effort, strenuous effort to change the story of Canada. Be active, be resolute, be caring and we shall have peace.

*Lee Maracle is a writer, a poet and a skilled orator who speaks internationally.*

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- The Black Women's Health Book. Speaking of Ourselves / White

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# Land claims

by Chief Cece McCauly

Many Natives have been lost souls since the government moved into the North West Territories in the late 1950's. Before that time we didn't have a government in the North West Territories. The government administered to us through the R.C.M.P. They became our **everything**, from health and law, social welfare, to marrying us. Before our people were good, healthy and self sufficient in those days. They were religious and strong in spirituality. They lived by the seasons and governed themselves by the laws of

nature and the almighty creator, as they called their God. They were good and pure and innocent people. Since the late fifties when the federal government decided to move into the North West Territories we have had many difficulties. Our people are mostly on welfare and are alcoholics and dopers, unemployed or illiterate. The majority of natives in the North West Territories are at grade 7-9 level. We have about fifty thousand people in the North West Territories, with the geographic space of about two

thirds of Canada.

Spirituality is not strong among young people but still very much practiced among the old people. Times are changing so fast and people are so busy with jobs. Sometimes people take two jobs to make ends meet, and like anywhere else in the country, people are trying to make extra money by gambling (bingo and Nevada tickets or lottery tickets).

Gambling is a consuming passion with most natives. I thought the worst vices we had were liquor, bingo and gambling, but now we have a worse vice: the V.H.S. or beta movies. Natives stay up late at night, watching movies. They don't get up in the morning for school or work. Sometimes I think the only salvation is for them to get back to their spirituality and get back to religion.

Racism in Canada, will always be here. At the receiving end are the natives. People who look Indian or Inuit or Negro, especially if they drink or are illiterate. Even in the North West Territories, where the aboriginal people are the majority, this is the case.

We have a territorial government now in the N.W.T., but the federal government didn't go away. We now support two governments at about one billion dollars each and our people are no better off. In fact, we are worse off.

The Dene and Métis people of the Western Arctic have been involved in land claims for the last fifteen years, with serious negotiations beginning

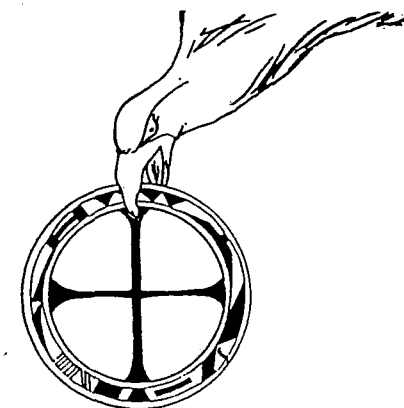
in the the last seven years. There are five tribes and five languages: Lauchaux, Slavy, Dogrib, Chepewijan, and Cree, and five regions the MacKenzie Delta Sahtu region, Dehcho region, North Slave River and South Slave River. The five regions are all different in their living and thinking, so negotiating is a very slow, frustrating process.

After fifteen years of land claims negotiation the Delta region decided to break away from other regions and go after our own regional land claims. It is such a complicated exercise with five different groups. The Delta region is the closest to the Beaufort region,

where the oil exploration has been going on for years. We are also neighbours of the "Inuvicute", the Eskimos to the north. We have seen their land claims settlement and it makes the Delta region restless.

People are discouraged. It looks like they are being used by white society and a white government system. People are trying to survive in this great society. Our spirits are fading and once the elders are gone, it might be the end of our spirituality.

*Chief Cece McCauly was the first woman band chief in the N.W.T. She is the chief of the Inuvik band.*



## Native program cuts called "intolerable hardship"

George Erasmus, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said yesterday, that "There is a great misconception that the federal government is improving the social and economic well-being of the first nations by pouring billions and billions of dollars into our communities."

"That is a complete distortion of the truth. In fact, since 1984 we have witnessed a steady loss in revenue for programs because the federal government refuses to compensate for inflation or our immense population growth."

(Toronto Star, February 27, 1990)



## Cuts show bias, native leaders say

"The native side is being cut but the French side is not," said George Erasmus of the Assembly of First Nations, noting that federal bilingualism programs will get additional funding. "Now you tell me is there some racial bias there or not?"

"Yes, there is racial bias in the cuts. It's extremely obvious."

Erasmus and the natives are complaining about cutbacks in funding from Secretary of State Gerry Weiner's budget:

- The Assembly of First Nations, which represents 593 bands across the country, will have its \$562,000 core funding scrapped July 1.
- The \$2.2 million Native Broadcast Access Program, which funds aboriginal radio and television broadcasts to remote northern villages, was cut by 16 per cent.
- The \$3.4 million Native Communications Program is to be eliminated, affecting 15 native language newspapers. Most of the papers do not have a commercial revenue base and depend on federal subsidies.
- About 27 regional tribal councils, equivalent to regional government, have had funding eliminated.
- Another seven provincial and territorial Indian groups were cut 15%. These are the umbrella groups for the tribal councils.
- The Native Council of Canada will lose its core funding for salaries, meetings and office supplies.
- Being cut by \$1.2 million is the Friendship Centre Program, which helps natives who move to urban areas with housing, job searching or education.

(Toronto Star, February 27, 1990)

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# The challenges facing black women

by Kike Roach

Stop and take a moment to think about where black women come from and where we're going. As Black women, we've travelled a long way from the days of imprisonment and torture on slave ships, but we do not now sail peaceful waters. It's been a long time since public whippings were stopped, but not long enough so that we no longer feel the sting of racism and certainly not long at all for those of us who continue to be abused in private.

Black women have been servants and victims, martyrs and leaders and for many years and up to this day have made major contributions as doctors, lawyers, community workers, artists, politicians, teachers, writers and musicians, among many other fields. None of these achievements have come without struggle. Progress is being made but our victories must be guarded and reaffirmed and new battles won.



To a large extent the concerns and needs of Black women are no different than those of past generations, and indeed those of other dispossessed and oppressed men and women. We struggle for equality, healthcare, a good education, economic independence, decent housing and self development, just as they do. But while non-white men and white women may be discriminated against, the load of the woman of colour is twice burdened by the racism of white society and the pervasive sexism of all cultures.

We are forgotten; considered not worthy of scholarly pursuit. We are insulted by racist teachers and employers. We are harassed and beaten by police who accuse us of stealing or dealing drugs. We are abused by men. We are abandoned with unplanned pregnancies. We are evicted from shelter. We are over represented in the lower income brackets of society and often unsupported as single mothers. We are ignored in the broader feminist movement. Black women have been silenced, rendered invisible and our problems left unresolved. But things must change. It's time to take things into our own hands.

Black women must make their voices heard. There is great need for forums in which we can make connections, seek guidance, support, teach, encourage and inspire each other. Barriers between young and old need to be broken down. An ongoing dialogue may help us to combat feelings of powerlessness, crystallize our thinking and increase our knowledge.

Our history has been denied us and consequently we find ourselves malnourished. We've been raised on a diet too high in eurocentric male chauvinism and much too deficient in healthful portions of Black and other women's cultural achievements. No wonder then that many of us feel frustrated, isolated or unsure of ourselves. It is important that we reconnect with the roots we've been severed from. A sense of our history will give us a better sense of ourselves and a deeper understanding of our present reality. We need to learn about, draw from and build on our rich past. The careers of Mary Ann Shadd, Carrie May Best, Angela Bailey, and Lillian Allen are just a few examples of excellence.

Indeed many examples of individual achievement can be noted but if as a group, an entire entity of society, we seek for our status to improve,

we can accomplish this only by uniting in work and deed; by proposing and fighting for programs or legislation that would be of benefit to us all. Defining our agenda and formulating our plans; uniting with a single-minded resolve to pursue clear and progressive goals; learning to empower ourselves, these are among the challenges we face.

things we seek are: fairness and justice, equality of opportunity, a better standard of living. Now who would object to that except those who hoard wealth and maintain privilege by sustaining the status quo?

When we call for things like affirmative action programs, it is not because we are claiming our due. After years of wrongdoing it's not enough to



As young Black women we begin to understand that struggles are interconnected. The same forces that propagate racism also ascribe to sexism. We begin to see that we must fight with a double edged sword of justice and equality because we are taking on more than just bigots or just chauvinists; we're confronting the prevailing ideology that governs this society. It is "an ideology of intentionally unequal social relations which are necessarily hierarchical, oppressive and fundamentally violent", as Geraldine Finn once said in describing patriarchy. We fight this not alone but with the solidarity and strength of millions of others who have been left out in the cold.

While we work alongside others, we must maintain our own voice, for *our* objectives too must be met. Our increased vocalization of our concerns will help to sensitize the women's movement to issues of sexism. We can no longer put parts of ourselves aside for the convenience of others. We are Black *and* we are women and what we do is for the benefit of both of these elements which are an integral part of us. In fact the work we do to advance ourselves contributes to the betterment of all peoples, because the

say you're sorry. The perpetrators must take responsibility and make amends.

Similarly young Black women must become more accountable for their lives and learn to assert themselves. Reworking concepts of sexual and familial relationships, resisting sexism in and outside the community and freeing ourselves to make the choices that will bring joy and meaning



to our lives are all also part of our continued growth and progress.

In short, winning our freedom and self-determination is what it's all about.

In your moment of reflection, remember that we are survivors. Remember the resilience and strength of our women, our race. Remember the victories but the pain too. And if you don't know your history, seek it out. You will discover we are a freedom loving people with a long history of struggle, courage and brilliance.

Remember the names of Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. Think of the Winnie Mandelas, the Rosa Parks, the Shirley Chisholms, the Angela Davises, and here in Canada, the Marie-Joseph Angeliques the Rosemary Browns, the Salome Beys and the countless others who've resisted, fought, succeeded and met the challenges of life in so many ways. Think of them, then add your name to the list. It's in your hands...

*Kike Roach, lives in Montreal and is attending McGill. She is a member of the Congress of Black Women.*

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# The new abortion bill

by Beth Ryan

## Abortion

Frightening times are ahead for the women of Canada if the federal government's abortion Bill gets through the Senate and becomes law.

Already, some doctors have decided to stop performing abortions because of the potential for legal action and harassment by anti-choice people.

According to the Canadian Medical Association, 50 doctors across the country have stopped providing abortions. Furthermore, a survey by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (S. O. G. C.) has found that out of 466 abortion providers responding to the survey, 275 physicians will stop performing abortions if Bill C-43 becomes law. The Bill makes abortion a criminal offence unless a doctor determines that the health or life of the woman is in danger. Health includes the woman's physical, mental, and psychological health. It does not define life or threat to life. As the S. O. G. C. notes:



"Only if there is complete understanding among physicians as to what constitutes a threat to life or health of a pregnant woman would this law pose no threat to those physicians continuing to perform abortions as a medical procedure."

The Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) has been documenting the widespread withdrawal of services by doctors following the passage of Bill C-43 in the House of Commons. Women are losing access to this vital procedure all over the country. The Attorneys General of Alberta and Ontario have promised to stay or take over all private prosecutions. But this still doesn't prevent physicians from being charged and exposed to publicity. For some physicians the fear of harassment is enough to deter them from providing abortions, a procedure which many find distasteful, although necessary.

Although the situation is no doubt changing daily, here are some of the chilling consequences of Bill C-43, as compiled by CARAL:

• In Ontario this summer, a 20-year-old woman died from a self-induced abortion, while a young girl sustained injury from a botched back-street

abortion. These incidents occurred after years of no recorded non-medical abortions in Canada.

• Individual doctors, Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, and hospital boards are reviewing their procedures. Various systems of protection for doctors are being created, many of them roadblocks to access for women. For example, the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons is advising doctors to get a second opinion before an abortion is performed. Some doctors will require a psychiatric evaluation, which of course will cause delays.

• Two doctors stopped performing abortions in Brantford, Ontario, after deciding the new legislation made it impossible for them to provide this service.

• In Brockville, Ontario, the one doctor who was providing abortions has stopped and an older doctor who would like to retire is left as the only physician willing to perform the procedure.

• In Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, all four doctors who had provided abortions for the entire surrounding area have stopped doing them, and the Algoma West Academy has decided the gap will not be filled. Consequently, the facilities for women in the area are in disarray, with some abortions being denied to women who need them. One unwilling pregnant woman, whose two other children are already with the Children's Aid Society, was told she would have to carry the pregnancy to term, deliver the child, and give it up for adoption.

• In Winnipeg, Manitoba, the number of names of physicians on the referral cards at the Women's Health Clinic have been reduced to seven. Operating room time for the procedure at the Health Sciences Centre has likewise been cut to two days a week, down from four.

• Doctors at both hospitals in Calgary and at the Victoria General Hospital in Halifax

menstrual period, and there is now a four-to-five-week wait for the procedure. Several Edmonton area doctors have said they will stop performing abortions when the Bill becomes law.

CARAL believes that other women might be forced through the same type of ordeal Chantal Daigle experienced during the summer of 1989. Daigle was dragged through the courts and the public glare by a vindictive ex-boyfriend who tried to stop her from having an abortion. She later obtained the abortion, although before the Supreme Court of Canada had struck down the injunction preventing her from seeking the procedure.

If Bill C-43 becomes law, any anti-choice fanatic with knowledge of an impending abortion will be able to obtain a civil injunction against the woman and / or the doctor, thereby stopping the abortion. After the abortion, the doctor could be subjected to criminal prosecution.

Despite Federal Justice Minister Kim Campbell's pleas to the contrary, the proposed law gives anti-choicers a wonderful tool for these forms of legal harassment.

As the C. M. A. said in its Brief to the House of Commons Committee studying Bill C-43:

"Although the probability of successful criminal charges being laid against the conscientious practising physician is small, the potential for harassment caused by the Bill is considerable. The professional reputation and practice that takes years to build can be destroyed in hours by the media exposure generated by an unjustified,

even frivolous, criminal or civil charge. With respect, we suggest that Bill C-43 makes the physician the target for such action related to this highly controversial, emotional, and politicized issue."

As the dangers of this Bill become more and more obvious, Kim Campbell still has the gall to call herself "pro-choice" and to defeat the "integrity" of this proposed law. She and other Conservative "pro-choice" women MPs all



lined up like dutiful handmaidens to the vote for a law that common sense tells us is destructive for women. Where were Barbara McDougall's impassioned pleas for women's right to choose when it came time to vote? Only three pro-choice Conservative Ministers voted "no" - David MacDonald, John Bosley, and Pat Nowlan.

Campbell still has the option of withdrawing the Bill, although she has shown she is prepared to stay with this law to the bitter end. She stated recently she is willing to consider amendments to the law if it leads to malicious or frivolous prosecution of physicians. (Interesting how she seems to respond to the

(continued on page 14)



CANADIAN ABORTION RIGHTS ACTION LEAGUE (CARAL)

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LE DROIT A L'AVORTEMENT (ACDA)

The purpose of CARAL is to ensure that no woman in Canada is denied access to safe, legal abortion. Our aim is to keep abortion out of the *Criminal Code*. We want to see the establishment of comprehensive contraception and abortion services, including appropriate counselling, across the country. We regard the right to safe, legal abortion as a fundamental human right.

I support the statement of purpose of CARAL and wish to become a member.

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# Taking on the Canadian

Following are excerpts from an interview with Michelle Douglas, a lieutenant forced to quit the Canadian Air Force because of her sexual orientation. She entered military service in 1986, and left in 1989.

She then launched a court case against the military. The Security and Intelligence Review Committee overruled the military's anti-gay policy and declared that Douglas should never have been stripped of her top-secret security clearance and should be reinstated.

**The Womanist: What happened?**

**Michelle:** I just wanted to go to work and do my job. But the military has a formal policy stating that if you are gay, you will not be promoted, or given career development or advancement opportunities of any kind. You are frozen.

**The Womanist: Why?**

**Michelle:** I was never able to find that out. They seem to have an unstated fear or feeling that you would be disloyal or a security risk. That's ridiculous. I'm completely loyal to Canada. I joined the service freely, because I wanted to.

Their fear is partly related to blackmail but if I were ever approached by a hostile power and threatened with revealing my sexual orientation unless I gave them secrets, I would say "go ahead and reveal it." I would protect my country.

The military thinks that being gay is so awful that you would do anything to prevent it being revealed. In fact, they defeat their own purposes by making it so difficult to be gay in the armed forces. If they weren't so discriminatory, there would be much less risk in being revealed!

It doesn't make sense. You can't say just because someone is gay, they will be disloyal to Canada. Someone

who is heterosexual and has an affair is just as likely to be blackmailed. The military can't ban all sexual activity.

There is a large underground of gays in the military service, but because it is so dangerous, you have to really earn their trust. It takes a long time to do that.

**The Womanist: Was their investigation of you related to your competence or skill in any way?**

**Michelle:** I was the top candidate in every course I ever took. My last boss, who is now a general, gave me the highest performance appraisal he has ever given to anyone in his career. But still, despite all this, I was designated as "not advantageously employable."

Once I came under investigation, people distanced themselves from me because I was gay. One of the ironies is

always felt torn apart, although I never actually conducted investigations on homosexuality. Nor was I ever in the position of recommending the disposition of somebody's career, because of the fact that they were gay, so I am thankful for that.

**The Womanist: What would you have done if you had been put in that position?**

**Michelle:** I am pretty sure that I couldn't have done anything, although I don't know because I was pretty desperate to save my career. Do you sink the ship to save your self? I almost can't answer that, but I would certainly hope that I would not betray my friends that way. I am very glad that I never gave any names.

I can only say that I certainly hope that I would not



that it was also difficult because of the position that I worked in. When I was posted to my first unit, it was the Special Investigations Unit.

One of the mandates of that unit is to investigate allegations of homosexuality. All the gays in the service kind of feared this unit, and then all of a sudden I was one of them. A lot of my gay friends automatically thought, "Oh my god, she is a plant. She is going to turn us all in now."

So I felt abandoned from that sense too. I could never really be as close in that circle again, and that was hard. I

have done that, although the military is a very strange thing. If someone orders you to do something, you may have no choice.

**The Womanist: Were you concerned about joining the military, given their anti-gay policy?**

**Michelle:** I had no reservations about entering the service initially because I hadn't had any gay experiences and I wasn't even aware of the policy relating to being gay. So, initially there was no barrier to entering the service.

**The federal government has decided to appeal the case that was ruled in favor of reinstating Michelle.**

Once I had an experience, I became just like everybody else, very paranoid about the possibility that we could be watched by this Special Investigation Unit. We all had to be extremely discreet and very, very, cautious but still I still believed that I could just go to work and no one would ever know. In a way, I wish that had happened, but since that is not the way it worked out, I am glad that I can force the issue now.

**The Womanist: How did the military actually find out about your sexual orientation?**

**Michelle:** It is not actually something I know. There again, you don't even know what you are up against, or who is saying things about you. I think to the military it doesn't even matter. If there is a rumor planted they will investigate it because they seize hold of these allegations, with about as much vigor as they would something like espionage. These people just seized on it and away they went.

Although I have a very good idea, it is only a personal belief, I have no proof. It wasn't through any indiscretion on my part. For me it was association with someone. In fact, I was told at one point by an investigator that where there is smoke there is fire, and they had never been wrong on that yet.

**The Womanist: What did the military do when they suspected you were a lesbian?**

Once the military had allegations to go on, they pursued it right to the bitter end, so much so that I was told that my movements were

monitored for over a year. You don't expect this in Canada. Furthermore, you don't expect that the military has the time or the money or effort to waste on something as pathetic as this. I am not referring to the issue being pathetic but I think that what they are doing is pathetic. As far as I can tell, that is all it was a rumour. Obviously that should run up against the Charter of Rights, saying that you have freedom of association. Obviously they have drawn some pretty heavy conclusions there. They were extreme at times for instance, there were occasions where I was taken to hotels under false pretences, and interrogated.

**The Womanist: What constitutes the "proof" of your sexual orientation?**

**Michelle:** I don't actually know because I guess I proved it to them. I was tired of the harassment and the interrogations, being taken to hotels under false pretences, and so on. I was absolutely fed up with it. It was very, very hard to deal with.

(continued on page 15)



## Immigrant Women's Organizing Manual VOLUMES I AND II

A resource and guide, researched and designed by Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan - Saskatoon Chapter, is now available. Volume I covers all the basics of organizing events, and Volume II focuses on topics and contents for workshops. Written in clear, understandable language, this manual is useful for any group interested in organizing efficient and successful events.

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concerns of doctors, and not of women - but ...be grateful for small mercies, women.) Campbell says she'd prefer to see if doctor's fears turn out to be founded after the law is in force. In other words, let's see how bad it really gets.

Free-standing abortion clinics, like the one Henry Morgentaler has set up in Halifax, will be our best hope.

## abortion bill cont'd

Quebec is the only province with any number of these. Toronto has four clinics, while Vancouver and Winnipeg have one each. Let's hope that we have enough doctors willing to take a political stand on abortion and to continue providing this essential service. Let's hope physicians display more courage than our politicians.

Beth Ryan is a former member of staff of *The Womanist* who is returning soon to her home province, Newfoundland. We will miss her.



# military

**The Womanist: How long did it go on for?**

**Michelle:** Even once they knew, they continued to bring me in and question me. It was over the course of a year that I was being hauled in. Even after they knew, it still went on. Interrogators have no idea of their impact on their victims. I'm trained in interrogation techniques, so you would think

that. I don't have any knowledge of that ever happening, but I wouldn't be surprised, the potential was certainly there for things like that to happen.

**The Womanist: What happened when you left the military?**

**Michelle:** It was a very difficult decision to pursue this publicly, through the courts.

comfortable with, but I guess that goes with the territory.

**The Womanist: What about the future? Would you like to go back to the service?**

**Michelle:** I am really considering that because I truly believe that it will be presented to me in the future, as an option. I think that it will go a long way if the military extends their hand inviting me back into the service, as opposed to it being dictated by a court. That would show some improvement and progress on their part. Many of my friends have actually said to come back, that it will be okay. That is good news, but it would be most important for me to hear it from a senior officer.

But it is a tough decision and I haven't reached my final conclusion yet. I have no illusions that it won't be tough, but it is not something that I don't feel that I can overcome also. The military could use me in a position of, say, public relations and education. I wouldn't mind helping in that position.

What happened to me goes beyond gay rights, and women's rights. It's a matter of human dignity.

I also filed a civil suit, to claim damages and to strike the military's policy as unconstitutional. This is beyond freedom of association.

As a result of all this, there was a specific reference to the issue in discussions of the Parliamentary Committee overseeing security and intelligence issues, about certain practices of the Special Investigations Unit. An investigative committee was struck, and recommended that the Unit should no longer undertake any investigations regarding sexual orientation. The military has agreed to this, and is apparently prepared to implement it. It's an indication that perhaps times are changing.

When I first went to my lawyer, I asked if I could do it anonymously. But he said it wasn't realistic, that eventually my real name would come out. So I thought about it some more, and decided to pursue the case.

Many friends in the service pulled away from me, and I can understand why — it was dangerous for them. But still, I was very alone. Some of my family were not aware of my sexual orientation.

My lawyer was great throughout. Now I have great support. My whole family knows now and they are being wonderful. Old friends have called or written. I have received letters from old friends and others in the service who thanked me. It's a strange feeling knowing I have touched people I don't even know. They feel like I stood up for them all.

**The Womanist: Was it all worth it from your point of view?**

**Michelle:** Yes, it was worth it. Obviously I don't have wonderful memories of certain aspects of the service, but I do have very fond memories of other areas, the friends I made and some of the experiences that I had learning how to work as a team, and so on.

More recently, in terms of taking the issue through the legal process, I have no regrets at all. It hasn't been easy. I find it difficult to be in the limelight to some extent. It is not a position that I am used to or feel particularly

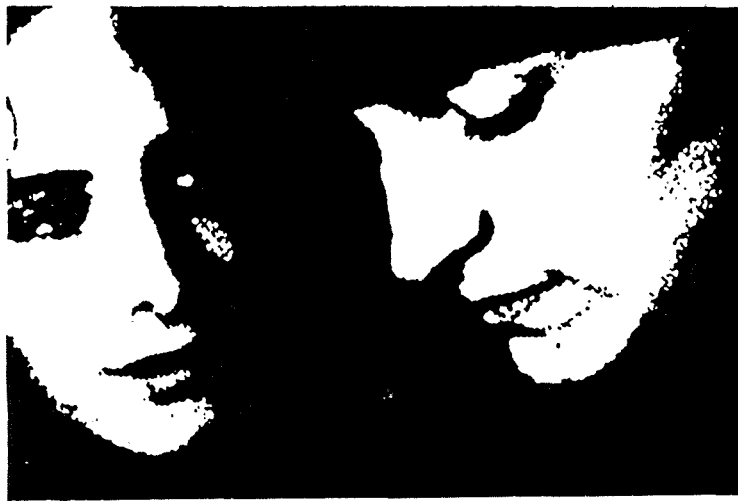
I could withstand the treatment, but it was so overwhelming. You feel totally dominated and powerless. It's devastating.

I still think about it constantly. There aren't many times when I'm driving to work and I don't say to myself, "Maybe I should have answered this or that question differently." It's still very hard.

**The Womanist: Why is it that they seize on this with such zeal?**

**Michelle:** It is not something that I can actually put my finger on, but I think a lot of it has to do with being feared. Some of the older people, or people in the old school of thought just do not know what gay people are all about. In fact, my boss used to really like me until the day he found out that I was gay. Then, he just shook his head at me and he asked me why. It just amazed me and I thought of how ignorant he is to even be in a position to ask that.

But that kind of attitude permeates the service. I don't think it is as bad at the junior levels or in the new blood that the service has, but much more in the old boys network. The military police in particular have a macho attitude towards stopping homosexuality. I think it would probably be worse for a gay man in my position. They would really "teach that faggot a lesson". They never physically abused me but I think that the military police may have done that to a man. I could actually imagine



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**Women unite, join the  
fight for equality.**

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## The Government Agenda



by Maude Barlow

The election of 1988 was witness to one of the most passionate and controversial debates ever raised in this country. The debate centred around more than just a dispute about how Canada should trade with the United States. It became a deep-spirited dialogue on the very nature of democracy, and the kind of country Canada would be in the next century. And it became clear that there are two very different perspectives on this future.

These distinct sides can be best described as a corporatist and human-centered. The government and its big business sponsors wanted the free trade

Rural communities, farmers, the Atlantic provinces and the North have all been told they're on their own. Services to these communities are being cut back, cut out, privatized or starved.

Manufacturing is fleeing south where labour is cheaper, and corporate taxes are lower. Workers in Canada are now competing against workers in the Maquiladora corridor of Northern Mexico - most of whom are women - and who earn about \$6 a day. This threat hangs over bargaining talks between employers and employees, and equality programs, such as pay equity, are under attack as being too expensive to allow Canadian

regional subsidies must be sacrificed. Overall exports to the United States dropped by almost \$3 billion in 1989. A massive sell-off of Canadian forests, high-tech firms and manufacturing industries is underway. Canadians have lost control of our energy resources, and are being forced to supply higher and higher amounts to energy hungry industries in the United States. Our territory is being used for the testing of increasingly sophisticated American weapons systems. And to add insult to injury, we have been given the bill to foot this betrayal in the form of the goods and services tax.

This is an issue of special concern to women. Public services are more essential to those at the lower economic end of the ladder. Women are poorer - a lot poorer - than men. We are more dependent on national social programs, medicare and regional funding to promote equality and social justice. Under the harsh system we are entering, women will be hit first and hardest. The President of Northern Telecom, David Vice, says that Canada is now in global warfare and we must turn out "soldiers" for our business armies. Most women are deeply uncomfortable within a system that promotes unbridled competition, a crude hierarchy and a survival of the fittest work ethic. Yet it is very clear that this is the direction in which Canada has now turned.

I deeply believe that our country and way of life is in a time of crisis. The equality fight Canadian women have waged in years past is under insidious attack that cloaks itself in sprightly talk about "level playing fields", international competition and labour discipline. The corporatist values are in the ascendancy, and the fight for a system that places people, and their right to live in a safe, clean environment is in serious trouble. Canadian women must enter this battle. The future not only of our country but the values necessary for the survival of all humanity, may depend on it.

Maude Barlow is the Chairperson of the Council of Canadians and author of the recently published book on free trade, *Parcel of Rogues*.



agreement because they believed that the resulting process would force Canada to harmonize its social and economic system to that of the U.S., and the process would "discipline" working people, lowering their wages and placing a downward spiral on Canada's social and regional programs. The return, they promised, would mean more jobs, greater prosperity, and an improved competitive capacity to enable Canada to compete in an increasingly hostile, global economy.

This agenda included deregulating many sectors of Canadian society, privatizing public enterprises that have existed to serve Canadians in all parts of the country, and ending universality of social programs.

It is essential to recognize that these interests got what they wanted. The free trade deal and the corporate agenda that accompanies it have started to work their free market magic.

employers to compete.

The major corporations, many controlled by American-based multinationals, also got the green light to move production out of Canada, and still sell their products here. Their interests no longer converge with the sovereign interests of Canada, and they see any government legislation to protect working standards, the environment, or Canadian sovereignty as a threat to their growth. So, although blatant self-interest motivated their support of the free trade agreement, it was crucial to convince Canadians that they were concerned with the general well being of all.

The tragedy is that the reality of this agenda is just beginning to be felt. The rate of job growth dropped by almost 100,000 in 1989 from its average of the last five years. Food, energy and housing costs went up. Canadians are being slapped with aggressive U.S. sanctions, and it is clear that our marketing boards and

# The government agenda

## Hurtig takes to ramparts over GST

Appearing before the Senate committee studying the bill, Mel Hurtig took to the ramparts over the GST.

His statistics, he says, all come from Canadian and U.S. government sources, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund.

In 1950, he says, corporations and individuals each paid about half of the income tax collected in Canada. In 1989, individuals paid 88.1 per cent of all income tax and corporations only 11.9 per cent.

Since 1986, while corporate profits increased substantially, federal government direct taxes from corporations as a percentage of their profits steadily decreased.

"So while the federal government was facing all-time record deficits, and while corporation profits were increasing substantially, corporate direct tax payments to the federal government fell by 22 per cent" - a phenomenon echoed at the provincial level. Overall, since 1986, while corporate taxes increased from \$14.4 billion to only \$15.3 billion, personal direct taxes rose from \$85.3 billion to \$112.8 billion.

Mr. Hurtig cites the banks as a particular galling example: "From 1980 to 1987 inclusive, Canada's banks made profits of over \$7.64 billion and paid federal income taxes at the rate of 2.48 per cent.

"These figures can only be described as appalling. It is completely beyond comprehension that any government, any elected officials, or any senior civil servants could have allowed such a situation to occur."

Mr. Hurtig says that, in 1987, taxes on corporate profits represented 8 per cent of total taxes in Canada. For the United States, the figure was 8.1 per cent; for Britain, 10.6 per cent; for Japan, 22.9 per cent. In 1989, Canada had the lowest corporate tax rate of the group of seven industrialized nations. West Germany and Japan had the highest. He says the higher tax rates imposed on West German and Japanese corporations have hardly deterred them from competing in the global market.

He then cites OECD figures showing that Canada led the G-7 in collecting the highest amount of personal income tax as a percentage of total tax receipts. The 1987 OECD figures show that taxes on personal income as a percentage of gross domestic product and as a percentage of total taxes were higher in Canada than the United States, Britain or Japan.

"The pattern of excessive reliance on personal taxation (in Canada) is consistent.

"The tax system in Canada has already been drastically altered to discriminate against individual Canadians in favor of corporations. Is it in the public interest to have corporations assume such a small percentage of the total income tax burden?"

(Globe and Mail, July 30, 1990)

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# An economic blueprint for Canada

by Joan McFarland

The federal government has created some frightening economic trends this year. The shifting of the taxation burden from the federal to the provincial governments will lead to a greater unevenness in the quality of life across Canada, particularly in the areas of health and post-secondary education. What will be available and what it will cost will depend on the province in which you live.

Second, the clawback clauses in the last budget may be a signal of the end of universality in social programs. Payback may begin at incomes of \$50,000 now but when might that start to come down?

Third, all Secretary of State programs are threatened. There are voices in Canada - e.g. Brian Calder of "Spend Less" in Vancouver - who have been advocating the shutting down of the department of the Secretary of State altogether, calling it an unnecessary "spending envelope". Cuts over the past two years in the Women's Program, Native Program, Multicultural Program etc. - all Secretary of State programs - suggest a trend in this direction. In the next budget we could see the elimination of Secretary of State.

Fourth, the remolding of our economy in a right-wing free enterprise direction is being furthered. Social programs have been cut this year. Taxes on the poor and middle class have increased. Petro Canada is to be privatized. This just adds to the list of privatizations and deregulation over the past few years - e.g. Air Canada, the Post Office and cuts to Via Rail.

Critics of free trade warned of the erosion of social programs, deregulation and

privatization as a result of the free trade agreement. These would be required by free trade, the negotiators told us, for the "harmonization of policy" and a "level playing field" between Canada and the United States. What it is, in practice, is the elimination of whatever the Americans might regard as subsidies. We have seen this happen this year.

Social programs and subsidies are under fire. In addition to the changes in our unemployment insurance program, a program about which the Americans have been complaining for quite some time, we have had cutbacks in education, social services and health.

Petrocan is to be privatized. The dominant American firms must be happy that there is no longer a significant Canadian presence in the oil industry.



Perhaps most significant, however, is the relationship between the deficit and free trade. It was this deficit that supposedly created the need for the budget's spending cuts and tax hikes in the first place. But how much of the deficit was caused by the government's high interest rate policy? And how much was this high interest rate policy a result of some unacknowledged condition of the Free Trade Agreement that the value of the

Canadian dollar would not be allowed to fall?

There is considerable evidence for both of these possibilities. The projected interest of \$39.4 billion to be paid on the national debt makes up 35% of national expenditures for 1990-91. Professor Michael Bradfield of Dalhousie University has calculated that simply by lowering the interest rate by 3%, the deficit could be eliminated. All of the program cuts and tax hikes would have been unnecessary.

Those that disagree with John Crow, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, would also applaud the lowering of interest rates. Crow is trying to convince Canadians that inflation is our most serious problem. Many would suggest that just the opposite is the case - the threat of unemployment and recession are what we are most concerned about. These analysts would call for a lower interest rate.

The interest rate is related to the value of the Canadian dollar. An interest rate differential between Canada and other countries attracts foreign funds to the country. This keeps the value of Canadian dollar high. It is said that this high value of the Canadian dollar was a *quid pro quo* (condition) for the Americans to sign the free trade agreement. It was insisted on quite openly by the (American) National Association of Manufacturers.

The high value of our dollar makes it very difficult for Canada to sell its exports abroad. This, in turn, creates the loss of jobs in Canada. However, a high value for the dollar is favourable to Canadian business wanting to buy into the American market.

In fact, the whole package, the high interest rate, the high value of the dollar, the cutting of social programs and the higher taxes on individuals not corporations -- certainly suits those who would like to see our economy restructured according to a Thatcher-Reagan type of free enterprise model.

On the other hand, it certainly won't make the women and children of Canada happy! I guess it all depends on who this government wants to please.

Joan McFarland is an economist teaching at the University of New Brunswick. She is the past president of CCLOW.

## The Government Agenda



## The Conservative gov't and women

by Mary Clancy M.P.

This year, while the government was cutting funding to women's centres, it was leasing office space in one of Halifax's most expensive office towers, for occasional Ministerial visits, to the tune of \$1.6 million.

What this says about the Conservative government can be termed in a word no less stinging than **hypocritical**. On the one hand, the Prime Minister claims to be the

hopes were high, but soon enough we learned how very political that appointment was. We now see that this appointment was designed to appease those concerned about Bill C-43, the Tory abortion bill. Worse yet, we see this same woman arguing for a bill which would re-criminalize abortion in Canada. A believer in equity or one who has mastered that art of towing the party line? I leave that up to you.

The last year has been particularly important for women in Canada. We saw the horrible tragedy at the University of Montreal, we heard a Quebec Judge say that women, like rules, are meant to be violated, we heard another judge argue that rape in the north is unlike rape in the south, we had astronomical cuts to women's program, and we now know that the federal government is not following its own pay equity guidelines. In short, we have before us tangible evidence that this country of ours is still far from being the truly equal and just society we claim to be.

There is still so much work to be done, if Canadian women are to assume their rightful place in society. I can only hope that we will remain vigilant in our opposition to the shortsightedness and indifference of this government. We can only hope that our perseverance will inspire this government to truly address the problem of inequality by finally making a genuine effort to address this problem.

Mary Clancy is M. P. for Halifax and the Liberal Status of Women Critic.

crusader for equality yet with a nod of his head he permitted the Minister of Finance to cut the Women's Program, the most necessary vehicle of equality in this country, by \$1.6 million.

When will this indifference stop? The last year has shown us that by no means is this government committed to equality. We were all so elated when the Prime Minister appeared to make a fair decision in appointing Kim Campbell as Canada's first woman Minister of Justice. Our

### GST flaws significant, report says

The current federal sales tax is not beyond repair as the government claims, and the flaws in the planned goods and service tax might outweigh its perceived advantages, a study published by the Canadian Tax Foundation says.

"The deficiencies of Canada's manufacturers sales tax could be rectified, and the perceived benefits of the GST over the old system may not justify a wholesale disruption in tax collection if the base of the tax for the GST remains as narrow as is currently proposed," says a summary of the 164-page study.

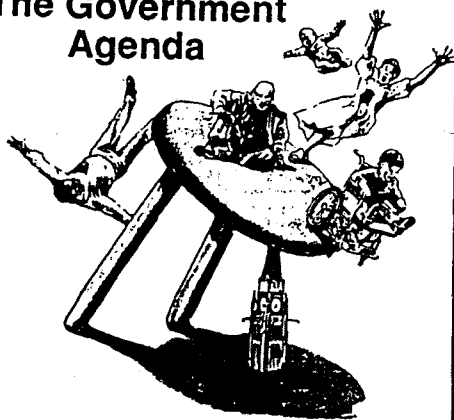
(Toronto Star, October 9, 1990)

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## The Government Agenda



# Quebec 2000

## Where will it be?

by JoAnne Williams Bennett

Native land claims have a tendency to harken back to the distant past in ways that lead many people to dismiss them. This is, after all, 1990. Ten more years and we'll be into the third millennium. What's all the talk of treaties with New France in 1713? That's story book time, fourth grade history. We have to look at where we are today and get on with living our lives.

But not so quick. It was, after all, these same dusty old treaties (or ones very similar to them) that established Upper and Lower Canada, and that distinguished Canada from the United States. The past lives on wilfully, sometimes almost perversely, into the present. Now, with secessionist (or, at least, **sovereignty**) rumbles once more coming from Québec, native people in that province are considering the impact of their much-treated past upon their future.

Even in historic times, Québec was not always Québec. Once it was New France and stretched from the present day Maritimes, and Labrador, past the Great Lakes and down the west side of the Mississippi, almost all the way to Mexico, taking in much of the American heartland.

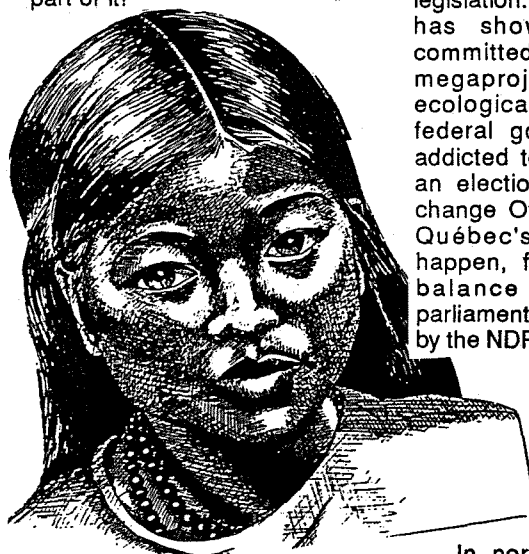
"Québec" was established in 1763 after the Seven Years' War and contained but a fraction of the territory that had once been New France. Essentially it comprised the land on either side of the St. Lawrence from its mouth westward to the Ottawa River. The name of this new territory changed from time to time over the next hundred years and the territory itself expanded and contracted **but at no time did it include the northern two thirds of what is now the province of Québec.**

This northern portion, part of Rupert's Land, was held by the British until early this century when it was given to Canada, not to Québec. The Québec Boundaries Extension Act of 1912 granted to Québec the eastern portion of Rupert's Land, increasing Québec to its present size and configuration.

Unfortunately, Québec never met all the conditions of the 1912 Boundaries Extension Act. For seventy-eight years it has been proceeding as if it had control of these northern lands, just as Canada has been proceeding as if Québec had signed the Constitution. Should Québec decide upon independence, however, there

are many people who might no longer be willing to proceed upon an "as if" basis.

Native people living in Rupert's Land might well prefer to remain part of Canada. It is a poorly kept secret that both Cree and Inuit are considering giving one more twist to the meaning of "distinct society." They may decide to secede from an independent Québec. Or, looking back at the agreements of 1912, they may claim they have never been part of it!



Dismal as relations have been between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian federal government, the record of the provinces has been worse. The treaties dealing with Aboriginal affairs were signed between Canada's First Nations and the federal government in Ottawa. The provinces have not been eager to enforce Aboriginal rights of land use, hunting and fishing. Rather the opposite. The newspapers are filled with examples of native people being prosecuted for breaking provincial game and fishing laws, laws which do not in fact apply to them. Québec is no exception. However, native people in Québec face two areas of immediate and particular concern.

First and most obvious is Québec's treatment of Aboriginal land disputes. Over the course of this summer the provincial government and its law-enforcement agencies, have shown themselves to be unsympathetic, intractable, even ruthless. If Oka is anything to go by, native people might be better off in a state of open warfare. Then, at least, they would not be subject to criminal charges for

trying to protect their land. How Mohawk land claims may affect Cree and Inuit claims in the north of the province is a moot point. But Québec's record so far does not inspire confidence. First Nations would prefer to negotiate with Ottawa, a point they have made again and again over the past few months.

The second area of concern is the environment. Québec currently does a poor job of enforcing environmental legislation. More to the point, it has shown itself to be committed to the kinds of megaprojects that spell ecological disaster. The federal government is also addicted to megaprojects but an election is more likely to change Ottawa's stance than Québec's. What might happen, for instance, if the balance of federal parliamentary power were held by the NDP?

In northern Québec the first phase of the James Bay Hydro development has proved devastating. Mercury poisoning has made fish inedible. Flooding has interfered with the migration patterns of both birds and animals, and therefore with hunting. Fluctuating water levels have made life impossible for mammals which depend upon the water - particularly for the beaver. If the second phase of the James Bay project is completed the Cree, and many southern Inuit, will have no other option but to become permanent welfare recipients. The traditional lifestyle of hunting, fishing and trapping will inevitably die.

In the far north animals are the only renewable resource that can reasonably be harvested without grotesque environmental damage. Trees grow very slowly. It can take a hundred years or more to grow a tentpole of just four inches in diameter. There are few edible plants apart from the berries which ripen in August. The death of animals due to environmental tampering will mean the death of the people who live on and by them, the people who have lived with them in symbiotic harmony for

the past eight thousand years. It is ironic that beaver are now in more danger from our light switches than from all the trapping native people have ever done.

Native people are already lobbying to protect themselves and their animal "sisters and brothers" from further hydro-electric development. Pending environmental legislation from the federal government may provide them some support. But what if Québec is no longer part of Canada?

Québec's politicians are not ignorant of native moves towards independence. Earlier this year Jacques Parizeau told native people that while he would happily agree to recognize Aboriginal people as distinct societies, he **could not** recognize the right of native people to secede from an independent Québec.

In much the same vein Bourassa, during the constitutional talks in June, demanded assurances that if Meech Lake passed it would not be possible, under an amended constitution, to create new territories out of an already existing province.

Why all the fuss?

If native people leave Québec they could take with them over half of the province's mineral deposits and ninety per cent of its hydro-electric capacity. Everything in the province north of a line drawn between Labrador City in the east and Rouyn-Noranda in the west could be under dispute. Québec's economic foundations would be severely compromised. No wonder there is some foot dragging going on about how distinct a distinct society should be. Or who is entitled to one.

And so, where **will** Québec be at the turn of the millenium? Probably in court, if these worst cases develop into fact. Lawyers at several levels of government are already gazing into their legal crystal balls. In the meantime, political support for First Nations, and vocal environmental opposition to hydro colonization of the north are something all of us can do to help.

JoAnne Williams Bennett is a novelist and a social anthropologist, currently doing research among the Cree and Northern Ojibway on the influence of culture upon the way people think.



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# The end of social programs in Canada?

Bill C-69, now before the Canadian Parliament, could change Canadian society permanently. Yet, few Canadians know what is at stake if this bill becomes law.

Bill C-69 withdraws federal money from national social programs. It moves Canada in the direction of more pronounced regional disparities among support programs for the sick, the poor and the needy.

provinces for these programs would be reduced each year, from its 1989 / 1990 level of about \$9 billion to zero by about the year 2004.

Bill C-69 would also, for the first time, place a limit on federal money for social assistance payments (welfare) and social services in the three "rich" provinces - Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

The provincial governments are responsible for

without child care and other supports - jobs that leave these people in poverty.

- National Anti-Poverty Organization

## Education

Education is a provincial responsibility under the constitution. However, the federal government has played a strong role in funding colleges and universities for more than 100 years.

Underfunding is becoming a serious problem. Students can look forward to crowded classes, higher tuition fees, out dated lab facilities, and inadequate student grants and loans.

No one disagrees that a well-funded post-secondary education system is essential to the future economic, social and cultural health of our country. Yet two federal governments have cut back the funding for colleges and universities. The total loss to post-secondary education from measures by the last two governments will be about \$9 billion by the year 1994-95. As a result, colleges and universities are using tuition fees to make up the difference.

What this really means is that education is becoming more and more a privilege. Several years down the road, only those who can afford the high cost of tuition will be able to go to colleges and universities. Because colleges and universities are publicly funded, we will be paying for education through our tax dollars. But only a few will benefit - those who can afford it. Jane might be at the top of her class in high school. She might have high hopes for her future. But the bottom line will be money. If Jane and her parents do not have the \$8,000 a year needed for tuition, books, transportation, meals and accommodation, Jane will not get a higher education. seeing welfare rates rise to cover real living costs. It also makes it more likely that the provinces will try to put restrictions on the number of people who can get welfare, the length of time they can receive benefits, and the type of benefits they receive. It means there is less chance that provinces will find long-term solutions to give people the opportunity to get decent paying jobs. Instead, the provinces will probably continue to pressure people on welfare to take low-paying jobs

## Poor Canadians

People on welfare are already struggling to survive on inadequate benefits. This bill reduces their chances of setting up and running health care, education, welfare and social services, but Ottawa shares the costs of these

## The Government Agenda



She will not become a doctor, or an engineer, or a teacher, and neither will her brothers and sisters...and, chances are, neither will her children.

- Canadian Federation of Students

## Medicare - killing it softly

More than 85 per cent of all Canadians believe that medicare is our best and most valuable service. It is among the most economical, effective, and accessible health care systems in the world.

Our system provides health care as a right, and does so more cheaply than the private-enterprise system in the United States. But Canada's medicare is being killed, softly, quietly, over time. Already there are symptoms.

not count the escalating cuts from the hidden effects of compound interest. Provincial finance ministers, meeting in Moncton in early 1989, stated that the cuts had already cost them \$11 billion since 1982 - 83.

## What can you do?

The House of Commons passed Bill C-69 on June 12, 1990. Before coming law, it has to be passed by the Senate and given Royal Assent by the Governor-General.

Organizations and individuals can do two things to stop this bill - convince the Senate to ask for changes or stall it, and convince the government to let the bill die without becoming law.

Write a letter to Finance Minister Michael Wilson telling him you oppose Bill C-69 and why. The address is:



Strikes for better pay. Long waiting lists for surgery. A lack of needed specialists in some areas.

The present crisis began in the mid 1970's, when oil prices set off a round of inflation. Medicare, then a new service, was expanding quickly to meet Canadians' health needs. In 1976, the federal government decided to put a cap on the expansion of costs in health and post-secondary education by block funding these programs.

Seeking election in 1984, the Conservatives promised that medicare was a "sacred trust." After the election, the first thing that the government did to this sacred trust was cut its promised funding by two per cent per year. Two per cent per year does not sound like much. But after five years, it amounts to 10 per cent, and in 15 years, it is 30 per cent. And that does

Michael Wilson, Minister of Finance, House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

No stamp is needed for letters to MPs.

Write a letter to your local Member of Parliament or call him or her. Ask him or her what he or she can do to help stop Bill C-69.

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper explaining what Bill C-69 is about and why it must be stopped. Letters to the editor are the most popular part of a newspaper. A published letter reaches most of the newspaper's readers.

For more information write to: Publications, Canadian Council of Social Development, 55 Parkdale Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4G1 or call (613) 728-1865. (taken from *Canada's Social Programs are in Trouble*, Canadian Council on Social Development)



Because the changes this bill makes are so fundamental, they should be the subject of widespread public debate before the bill becomes law. Canadians must be given the opportunity to speak up about the kind of society they want, what they expect from their social programs and how these programs are to be paid for.

## What would this bill do?

Briefly, if it becomes law, Bill C-69 would accelerate funding cutbacks for medicare and post-secondary education. Federal money paid to the

programs and services. The federal government has established principles for medicare and conditions for welfare which the provinces must meet in order to obtain federal funds.

If federal funding is reduced, the provinces will bear an increased financial burden which, in turn, could jeopardize the availability and quality of these programs across Canada. This would result in a dramatic shift away from the federal government's commitment to vital social programs and to helping those most in need.

It is easy to take Canada's social programs for granted. Most Canadians cannot remember a country without universal health insurance, welfare payments to the poor, old age pensions, family allowances and unemployment insurance.

We expect these benefits no matter what province we choose to live in. These programs are an important part of our federal system and Canadian identity. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said in his 1984 election campaign that social programs were "a sacred trust." Yet Bill C-69 is the latest in a series of cuts that have hurt social programs.

## Are drugs or alcohol causing a problem for you or someone you love?

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- Community education and workshops
- Assessment and referral

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Amethyst  
488 Wilbrod Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1M 6M8  
563-0363



## The Government Agenda



From what you read in the newspapers and heard on TV and radio, the VIA abandonments were a nostalgic turning of events. "Abandonments are sad, but that is 'progress'" ran the stories day after day.

Were the VIA cuts only "sad", we would not have much to worry about. Unfortunately, we will all pay dearly for Canada's backwards transportation policy.

Even if you travel at a million miles per hour, you cannot escape the environmental consequences of our lifestyle so dependant on automobiles and trucks.

Car and truck exhaust is the biggest killer of trees. It causes respiratory problems. Cars and trucks are also responsible for the warming of the earth's atmosphere which will affect the growing of food. Cars consume four times as much energy per passenger as do trains or buses.

At this time, when scientists tell us we must reduce the production of

carbon dioxide by 70% just to stabilize the level of greenhouse gases, Canada's transport policy promotes the most polluting modes of transport.

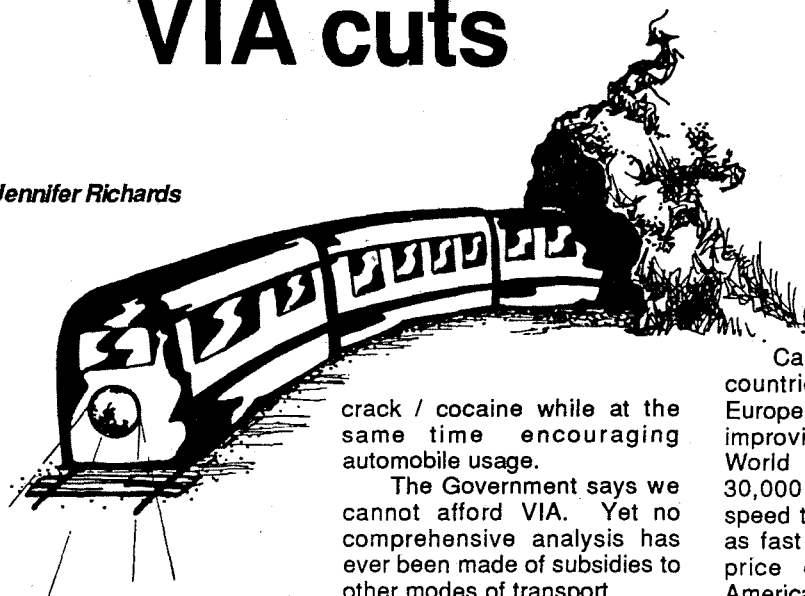
VIA has been cut in half. Due to lack of investment, VIA is forced to operate old, heavy trains that pollute more than the newer trains. Inter City bus companies have lost 12 million passengers since 1980. Rail freight declined 12 tonnes since 1980. Ship freight declined 30 million tonnes. Truck freight on the other hand has grown 60 million tonnes.

And the number of cars and trucks on the road doubles every 15 years. Even if cars and trucks become twice as efficient, the total production of carbon dioxide will not decline 15 years from now.

The decline of public transport in favour of private car transport is an alarming trend in an aging society. Old people no longer like driving on congested highways which were designed for a much younger population.

# The real story behind the VIA cuts

by Jennifer Richards



Many Canadians are affected by VIA cuts. Women are affected more than men because women account for 56% of VIA's passenger count on average across Canada. In the Maritimes they account for 61% of VIA's passengers, and in southwestern Ontario, 60%.

VIA cuts affect our children. Car and truck pollution causes respiratory problems for young people who have no say in transportation policy. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for persons under 30 years of age. Automobiles kill and maim more Canadians than crack or cocaine ever will. Yet the Government is at war with

crack / cocaine while at the same time encouraging automobile usage.

The Government says we cannot afford VIA. Yet no comprehensive analysis has ever been made of subsidies to other modes of transport.

The direct airport subsidy appears in the Government accounts to be only \$22 per passenger, but this is a much different accounting system. Excluded are the costs of policing, the opportunity cost of airport land, and the cost of the Department of Transport's administration overhead.

Much more dramatic is the indirect subsidy to air travellers, many of whom are middle aged males on expense accounts. Tax deductions for expense account travel costs federal and provincial taxpayers \$275 for a business class airline seat from Toronto to Vancouver. The tax deduction for an Ottawa to Toronto expense account airline passenger is \$63.

No one has a clue what roads cost Canada. The medical costs of 4,000 persons killed, and of 200,000 persons injured, in motor vehicle accidents each year show up in provincial hospital budgets, not road budgets.

Just try to comprehend the tax revenue lost because land under roads does not pay property taxes nor income taxes on the capital invested. By comparison, the railway companies must pay income tax on the capital invested in tracks and must pay property taxes on railway right of way. To add insult to injury, railway companies must fuel taxes on locomotive fuel, even though they do not run trains on the highways.

Canada is out of step with countries around the world. European countries have been improving train service since World War II. They plan a 30,000 km network of high speed trains that will be "twice as fast as the car at half the price of air". Even the Americans, who share our love affair with the automobile, are upgrading their trains.

The Canadian Government counters that Canada's population density does not justify railway passenger service. To come to this conclusion, they divide the number of Canadians by the land mass area. But no one is suggesting that we build rail lines on Baffin Island. A better comparison would be the population density in the settled part of Canada where trains run. Then we see that our population density is similar to Scandinavian countries where rail service is both electrified and frequent.

If you think that public transport is important to Canada's future, here is what you can do about it: write politicians in support of public transport; write letters to the editor and join Transport 2000, a national non-partisan organization that advocates the interest of public transport, cycling, and walking. The mailing address is Box 858, Stn. B., Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5P9. Individual memberships cost \$20 per year. Families cost \$30 per year. Students / retired are \$15 per year. Buy a copy of "Not a Sentimental Journey" by Jo Davis available from Transport 2000, cost \$9.95 plus \$2.00 postage.

Jennifer Richards is a member of Transport 2000, and collaborated with her husband and fellow member, Darrell, on this article.

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# The crisis in the fisheries

by Linda Hyde

The fishing industry in Newfoundland and indeed all of Atlantic Canada is facing a major crisis. How can you say there is a crisis on the one hand in the fishery, but say there is no crisis in the economy of Atlantic Canada, when the two go directly hand in hand?

We have whole communities and a way of life in our province close to extinction. The communities of Trepassey, Gaultois and Grand Bank, where the only industry is the Fishery Products International fish plants, will be totally wiped out with a possibility of becoming ghost towns in 1991 when the plants are scheduled to close. There

income taxes. The GST is yet one more blow to Newfoundland, which already has a staggering sales tax of 12 per cent!

In the midst of an uncertain economy, the fishery has traditionally been a stabilizer. The current crisis will therefore have devastating spin-off effects. These spin-off effects will not be fully felt until after the fish plants close. Think about small communities such as Trepassey on the southern shore, where the general store, a small department store, a hardware supplier, and other small businesses survive precisely because of the income that has been generated by the fish

are social problems that are on the increase, and many families feel they have lost total control over any say in their lives, present or future.

The federal government has shown that they care little or not at all about Newfoundland and Atlantic Canada. Their approach has been disgraceful and they have shown their total inability to manage the stocks and to take full responsibility for their mistakes in the estimation of the fish stocks.

The government says they are committed to retraining. Retraining for what? A person who is 40 years old and has spent 20 years in the fishery – what does she/he retrain for? What jobs are available? Who will hire these people at that age, in a province that has the highest unemployment rate in Canada?

The only income that will be available is unemployment insurance; and the new Bill C-21, if passed in its present form, will make people quickly return to the welfare lines.

The federal government is allowing foreign vessels to rape and pillage our waters inside the 200-mile limit and has shown a lack of intestinal fortitude, or in other words, good old-fashioned guts. They have refused to take direct action, such as possession of foreign vessels when caught and have only paid lip service to the European community that are now taking four times their quota of fish inside the 200-mile limit.

We should be considering underutilized species, and with government funding opening up new markets instead of throwing millions of dollars on retraining for a work force that is already skilled. The Government of Canada has a responsibility to the people of Newfoundland. We sincerely hope that they come forward with a better plan of action than what they have now. Which is no plan at all.

I would suggest that government work directly with all different sectors of the fishing industry, so that a fishery can be ensured for the future, and so the people the politicians represent can regain dignity through meaningful work.

Linda Hyde is the Unit Chairperson with the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers' union at National Sea Products in St. John's, Newfoundland.



## The Government Agenda



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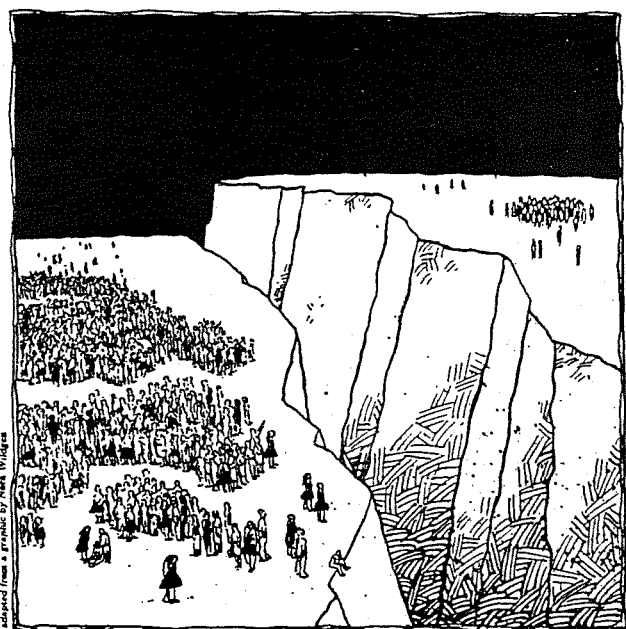
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are many families in these fishing communities where nearly every member works in the fishery. This year 900-950 people have lost jobs in the fishing industry; 5 plants have closed; 3 more are going to close, which will result in the loss of 1,200 more jobs.

Newfoundland was settled in 1497 by virtue of the fact that we are sitting on the richest fishing grounds in the world. It is and will continue to be for a number of years our

plant.

With the closure of these plants, entire families will be forced to leave their towns and province they love so well. We will see resettlement in Newfoundland that will be on a massive scale compared to the 1960s, with most of the people heading for Toronto and other parts of the mainland. The single income families will be hit the hardest as there is no other income they can count on.

These people will be faced with the hard fact that they will be added to the welfare rolls of this province, and many people will not be able to look for alternate work, training, etc.

Since many have small dependents at home and there is no financial help, these people sadly will be on a one-way street to nowhere. There

main industry. Although the federal government has promised other job opportunities, they are practically non-existent in this province.

It has always been difficult for Newfoundland, where we have the highest cost of living in the country, the highest unemployment rate, the highest provincial sales and



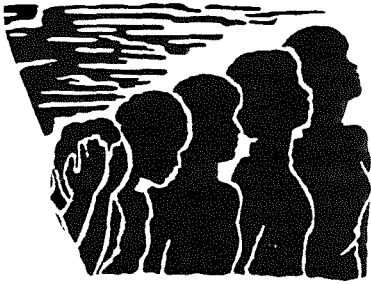
# Is it really social assistance?

by Janice Parsons and  
Patty Buckle

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination based on sex. In La Scie, Newfoundland, rights guaranteed under the Charter were violated. Two women in that community were subjected to a practice which has been condemned across the country as gender based discrimination.

On January 16, 1990, women in receipt of social assistance were visited by officials from the Department of Social Services in a search for "male" companions. One woman reported that at 8:05 a.m. one official "... went in the bedroom and under the beds..."! At the same time, a second official circled the outside of the building "to make sure no one came out of the apartment" (*Sunday Express*, January 21, 1990).

The department stated that these early morning visits are designed to uncover abuses of the welfare system



by people with undeclared sources of income. The Deputy Minister, Mrs. Elizabeth Marshall, argues that these "...do not violate standard welfare policies or women's civil rights" (*Sunday Express*, January 21, 1990).

However, the humiliation and belittlement of self-respect which commonly results from violation of personal privacy contradicts this. These rights to self-respect and personal privacy are protected under the Charter. We contend that subjecting women, in fact anyone, to unreasonable search and seizure not only violates federal and provincial statutes but is dehumanizing.

In response to this issue, Minister of Social Services, the Hon. Mr. John Efford, suggests that the incidents reported are "an isolated case".

However, from La Scie there are reports of similar incidents occurring over the past year. There is evidence that other communities have experienced "bed checks" as well. Some years ago, the Newfoundland Association of Social Workers criticized this infringement of people's right to privacy, but to no avail. Obviously then, this is not an isolated incident but a ongoing pattern of harassment.

The Department maintains that there is no policy which specifically requires "bed checks". However, the role of the Financial Assistance Officer in the Department of Social Services is publicly acknowledged to have been created for the purpose of uncovering abuses of the system and saving the government money.

This makes the Financial Assistance Officer into the role of adversary rather than "assistant" to those in receipt of "social assistance".

The Department has no official guidelines on how to investigate cases of suspected abuse and how to conduct home visits. The Department has sanctioned Financial Assistance Officers to "exercise judgement in professional matters" in the absence of Departmental guidelines and the professional values, knowledge and skill traditionally associated with social work. Consequently, this leaves the system open to abuse by its officials and to perpetuating discrimination against women. The crux of the problem is that Financial Assistance Officers are responsible for such investigations and usually do not have professional social work education.

It is well known that most poor people and recipients of

"social assistance" are women. They suffer oppression on two levels: that faced by all women in a male dominated society and that peculiar to their role as dependent recipients of a service which is "man-made" and in which they have little input and influence. The differential treatment which women receive at the hands of the social service system is

(continued on page 23)



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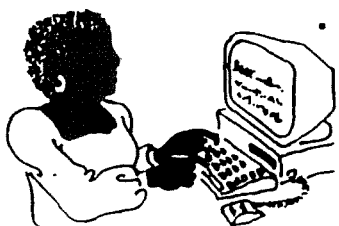
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- You can sign it with an imaginary name, but please include your own name, address and phone number.
- Please type or write/print clearly on 8.5 inch by 11 inch paper, with black ink.
- Black and white photographs, graphics and artwork are welcome. They should be labeled.



**DEADLINE: DECEMBER 15, 1990**

For more information, contact:  
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Not all letters submitted can be used in the anthology.  
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## An update on the Catholic church in Newfoundland

by Bobbie Boland

In April, 1989 the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. John's, Newfoundland and appointed a Commission of Inquiry into issues related to sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy. The mandate of this Commission, commonly known as the Winter Commission, was to inquire into factors which might have contributed to the sexual abuse of children by some members of the clergy. They were to inquire as to how such activity could have gone undetected and unreported and to make recommendations to provide for the spiritual, psychological and social healing of victims and their families.

Furthermore, they were to make recommendations that would enable the church to deal more effectively with deviant incidents that might occur, as well as making recommendations respecting the selection of candidates for the priesthood, their education and support.

The two volume report of the Commission was released in July 1990. A great deal of expectation and hope followed the report, as did a fear that the church appointed Commission would only produce a white-washed report.

Thankfully the report was an honest, articulate and profoundly disturbing assessment of the Catholic church in the diocese of St. John's Newfoundland. Volume two, comprised of supporting documentation, can stand alone as a resource on child sexual abuse.

The report places the church in the wider context of community and society and suggests that child sexual abuse must be addressed on all fronts if we as a church and a people, are committed to creating safe places for Catholics. They chose to demonstrate in front of the Basilica, in silence, to

symbolize the silence with which the church heard the victims of child sexual abuse and the silence the diocese has met with from Rome.

As I reflect on the last two years, the charges of sexual abuse, the Winter Commission hearings and report, the subsequent actions taken and those that should be, I have troubling questions rolling around in my head.

Is this a church that wants us to be forever children or mature, faithful adults?

Clearly the past two years have been a maturing process. Church members from the smallest communities to the cities are saying that they will not pass over power in a way that the church has had the power in the past. I recall at one of the public hearings of the Winter Commission three women, pillars of the church, probably in their sixties, who stood together and told the commissioners that if canon law (church law) allowed convicted priests to return to pastoral care - canon law should be changed! That kind of challenge would have been unheard of in the past. The Catholic Church of the 90's and beyond must be comprised of mature adults, confident of their gifts and the validity of their contribution: no longer satisfied to be treated as children.

Things can never be the same for the Catholic Church in Newfoundland. Historically, Catholics have felt that God and church were synonymous. The practicing Catholic was always in the role of a child, told what to do and say by the parent church. The moral authority exercised by priests in the past will never be the same again. Yet, at the same time, I do not sense that my church welcomes me as an adult who thinks, questions and has an opinion on how we as a church must act in justice.

children. The report is victim focussed, emphasising that victims are blameless and that child sexual abuse is primarily about issues of imbalance, manipulation and a betrayal of trust.

Victims of sexual abuse felt that the Winter Commission report was the first step in addressing systemic issues around child sexual abuse. They felt affirmed. The report was popularly received with gratefulness for its honesty and an overwhelming sense of horror at the picture it painted. After reading its evaluation of his leadership, Archbishop A.L. Penney offered his resignation to Pope John Paul ii.

The report of the Winter Commission was then sent out to parish committees with the expectation that they would read and provide feedback on the next steps to be taken by the diocese. An Archdiocesan meeting, convened in mid October, came up with a clear message:

1. The resignation of Bishop A. L. Penney must be accepted by Rome. It is past time for this to have happened.

2. The recommendations of the Winter Commission were endorsed.

3. An implementation team should be put in place to proceed with the implementation of the recommendations.

4. The Archdiocesan Assembly will meet again in three months.



The Pope's not acting upon the resignation of Bishop Penney shows a lack of compassion both for the people of God in the diocese of St. John's and for Bishop Penney himself. Three months after the submission of the resignation, two papal envoys were parachuted into the diocese on very short notice. Their mandate was fuzzy, and they seemed to be attempting to get an even clearer perception of the diocese than the Winter Commission illuminated. Their presence was maddening for some.

I am a Catholic woman; the values of Christianity intervene and empower me. I have a right to ask questions, a right to offer counsel. That right was given to me by my baptism. As a church, we have a wonderful opportunity to collectively

define systemic changes within church structures. The reality of church though, is that it is hierarchical and patriarchal and that power lies in the hands of priests, bishops, and the Pope.

I do not experience the church's use of power as empowering me. The church is not living out the value base of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but out of a need to protect and sustain the institution. Is the church truly interested in solutions?

Are there to be two churches: the institutional church and the "people of God" church? We will work on our issues side by side, but not co-operatively, virtually being ignored. We must choose whether to remain forever children or to move to the fullness and responsibility of adulthood. Will the practice of our faith be a weekly habit or will it be the challenge of living our values in every facet of our lives? If as a church we are able to name the evils, if as a church we root our existence in the lives and experiences of all the church - then the church will be alive and vibrant. Now, that is the church with a pew for me.

*Bobbie Boland is a church activist, involved in the community around issues related to sexual abuse. She is a mother, an active Catholic, and a social worker. She also sells cloth diapers.*

### Is it really social assistance? cont'd

evidenced in the press release issued by the St. John's Status of Women Council: "There does not appear to be the same vigilance in checking the beds of single men receiving assistance".

The Newfoundland Human Rights Association shares the Council's concern that the practice of bed checks implies that single women with overnight guests naturally accept money if the guests are male.

The Minister of Social Services reports that this issue has been "cleared-up". The only woman whom we were able to contact, declined further comment because she wants to put the matter behind her. This causes us to wonder just how the matter has been "cleared-up". Has it been at additional social, emotional, and/or economic cost to the clients? By whose standards has it been resolved? Have these women from La Scie learned that it doesn't pay to

speak up for their rights? The lack of any hint of apology from the Department or any significant degree of public outcry has meant that these women have risked a great deal by publicly confronting the Department with very little apparent result.

The Department has chosen not to set policy prohibiting "bed checks" and has allowed this practice to continue by maintaining a convenient "laissez-faire" approach to how cases of suspected abuse of the system are investigated. The prime objective of these checks appears to be uncovering abuse of the system at all costs: even if it means infringement of individual rights, discrimination against women and violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We suggest that such abuses would not have occurred or be permitted to continue if they were victimizing men.

It would be expected that any violation of rights guaranteed under our much acclaimed Charter of Rights and Freedoms should produce a response notably different than Newfoundland's deafening silence over this issue. This presents yet further documentation of society's willingness to condone the ongoing pattern of harassment, discrimination and abuse which women must battle on a daily basis. We are particularly appalled that the only daily newspaper in St. John's has failed to see this issue as newsworthy!

*Janice Parsons is Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Board Member of the Newfoundland Association of Social Workers. Patty Buckle is a student at Memorial University of Newfoundland and prospective social worker.*

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# Remember the day

# December

## Why November 25th?

by Laura McFarlane

On November 25th, women's groups in many countries will commemorate the International Day Against Violence Against Women. It is a day to remember and protest against the violence that affects the lives of millions of women worldwide.

This date was declared as an International Day in 1981 at the Encounter of Latin

grew up poor in the Dominican Republic. They became acutely aware of the immense economic and social problems of their country, and the perpetuation of these conditions by the leader Trujillo. Active and well-known in the struggle against Trujillo, they were perceived by his government as revolutionaries.

On November 25, 1960,

deaths appear as an accident.

This story is known to women all over Latin America, and each November 25th the Mirabal sisters are remembered. Campaigns to oppose violence against women address, in addition to political violence like that suffered by the Mirabal sisters, the many faces of violence against women universally:

*contra la mujer!* No more violence against women!

Written with information from "La Abeja", November 1989, newsletter of the Centro Ecuatoriano de la Promoción y Acción de la Mujer, Quito, Ecuador.



American and Caribbean Feminists held in Bogotá, Colombia, at the request of the delegation of women from the Dominican Republic. The delegation sought in this way to pay homage to three women from their country who, on November 25, 1960, fell victim to the violence of the military regime in power at that time.

The three Mirabal sisters - Minerva, Patria and Teresa -

Minerva and Teresa were on their way to visit their husbands in prison, accompanied by Patria. At a deserted portion of the road, they were met by the army's "intelligence" service. The women were taken to a nearby sugar cane field, where they were beaten, tortured, and killed. The army then put their bodies in a car and rolled it over the edge of a hill to make their

domestic violence that women suffer at home, physically and psychologically; sexual violence that occurs both on the streets and within intimate and family relationships; prostitution; pornography; and harassment.

The campaign urges women to realize that they are not alone, and to join with other women in denouncing violence, to shout *¡Basta la violencia*

by Judy Hughes

The tragedies of violence against women occur in our homes, on our streets and in our institutions. The threat of violence stays with us wherever we happen to be. This is certainly not a new revelation but stark reality to many of us. Killing women is not new; just the method changes.

Nothing can compare to the impact of shock felt by Manitoba women, when news reached us about the shooting deaths of fourteen women in Montreal, on December 6 of last year. Manitoba women expressed their grief and outrage both publicly and privately.

In particular, The Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women (MACSW) challenged Brian Mulroney to a meeting to discuss ways to end the continuum of violence against women that permeates our society. In fact, from all the correspondence sent to the Members of Parliament, I received only one response. This in itself is a very powerful statement coming from our politicians; and clearly, to women this confirms that we are once again required to join together to pressure the powers that be in an attempt to stop the on-going murders of our sisters.

Provincially, Manitoba women can become part of the strength that is necessary to challenge the social order that produces the violence in the first place. Two days after the Montreal murders, a group of women met to discuss the impact of the killings. The consensus of the group was that it was important to acknowledge and honour the

lives and rights of women in our province. Today they are called the December 6th Women's Memorial Committee. Their goal is to establish a Women's Memorial that will commemorate and honour the lives of women who have died from violent means. This has been envisioned as an earthworks, a women's grove, at Memorial Park in Winnipeg. The committee has been granted permission from the Manitoba government to proceed with the landscape architecture!

Unfortunately, that is the good news. From March 15 to October 13, 1990, Manitoba once again inched closer to becoming the murder capital of Canada with fourteen women (ages 16-75) dying from violent and suspicious means. Four of these women were killed by their ex-husbands / boyfriends.

The October 3 and 13, 1990 shooting deaths of two young women by their ex-boyfriends sparked the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women to call for a "Domestic Violence Special Committee". The last death occurred even though she had a restraining order and her ex-

Genevieve Be  
Helene Colgar  
Nathalie Crote  
Barbara Daigr  
Anne-Marie E  
Maud Haverni  
Barbara Maria  
Maryse Leclai  
Anne-Marie Le  
Sonia Pelletie  
Michele Richa  
Annie Turcott

### MATCH International Centre is

## Linking Women's Global Struggle to End Violence Against Women

From November 25 to December 6

A panel discussion on the anti-violence movement will be held at Ottawa University's Alumni Auditorium, November 30, at 7:30 p.m. The panelists are:

- Rozena Maart, a South African feminist active in the black consciousness and anti-violence movements;
- Johanne Despatie of the Action Committee of the Organizations of Quebec Shelters for Women Victims of Marital Violence;
- Dung Vuong, coordinator of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women Against Abuse, Ottawa;

**International Poster Campaign** is under way. Posters with the words "For me violence against women is ..." are being distributed around the world for women to write or draw on.

**Video presentations and workshops** will be presented to interested groups from November 25 to December 6. MATCH will show a video on the first Brazilian police station to be entirely staffed by women in order to respond to crimes of family violence and sexual assaults.

MATCH International Centre, a Canadian-based women's organization, is entirely devoted to the strengthening of women's global efforts for self-determination and equality.

**Make the Link! Take Part** in activities bridging the International Day to End Violence Against Women, November 25, and the anniversary of the massacre of women students in Montreal, December 6.



MATCH International Centre,  
1102-200 Elgin Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1L5  
(613) 238-1312





# December 6th Remember the women

Dear Prime Minister Mulroney:

National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Canada's largest feminist organization, is formally requesting that you call a Canadian Day of Commemoration to mourn the deaths of the fourteen dead women and all the other victims of male violence against women.

We ask your government to officially acknowledge December 6th as a Day of Commemoration by observing fourteen minutes of silence in the House of Commons, placing the flag at half mast and conducting a ceremony at Parliament Hill in remembrance of Genevieve Bergeron, Helene Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Havernick, Barbara Maria Kleuznick, Maryse Laganiera, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michele Richard, Annie Turcotte and all other women victims of male

violence. We believe that it is very important that the memory of the Montreal massacre not be allowed to fade from public consciousness. Silence is a powerful cloak that hides the reality of the male violence that women live with every day.

You know that one in four women can expect to be sexually assaulted at least once in her lifetime, half of them before the age of seventeen. And that one hundred Canadian women are killed by their male partners in their homes every year. And that almost sixty percent of Canadian women living in cities feel unsafe walking alone at night in their own neighbourhood. You also know that women victims have been victimized and revictimized in the criminal justice system by the judiciary, and the media and other institutions. Women's economic, social and political inequality are at the root of the violence we experience everyday in the streets, in the workplace, on the campuses and in our

homes.

We have contacted international women's groups to assist us in commemorating this day and we are also contacting the United Nations for action to recognize December 6th as a day to call attention to the worldwide problem of male violence against women. In paragraphs 257 and 258 of the United Nations Forward Looking Strategies document, to which Canada is a signatory, it says:

"Violence against women exists in various forms in

everyday life in all societies. Women are beaten, mutilated, burned, sexually abused and raped. Further action should be taken at family and neighbourhood levels, as well as at national and international levels, to achieve a peaceful social environment compatible with human dignity. The questions of women and peace and the meaning of peace for women cannot be separated from the broader question of relationships between women and men in all spheres of life and in the family."

Genevieve Bergeron  
Helene Colgan  
Nathalie Croteau  
Barbara Daigneault  
Anne-Marie Edward  
Maud Havernick  
Barbara Maria Kleuznick  
Maryse Leclair  
Anne-Marie Lemay  
Sonia Pelletier  
Michele Richard  
Annie Turcotte

boyfriend had been picked up by police three times in two weeks, each time being released. The mandate of this Committee is to review the procedures followed by police in domestic violence intervention. We urge our Manitoba sisters to write or phone our Justice Minister, to ensure that the unique concerns of rural and northern women are included in this review.

It comes as no surprise that male violence against women is a worldwide problem. The problem is that it has been allowed to continue and worsen. We cannot be silenced. The shock and horror of Ecole Polytechnique cannot be forgotten until women and children feel safe on our streets, in our homes and in our institutions. You can do your part by joining in a National Day of Commemoration on December 6, by initiating or participating in an event in your community. The address for the December 6th Committee is: Box 26033, Sherbrooke Westminister P.O., Winnipeg, Mb. R3C 2B0

Judy Hughes is a feminist and a Member-At-Large for NAC.

by Dawn Black, M.P.

- A Québec judge expressed the attitude that "rules are like women, they are meant to be violated". We only found out about this one year later, when someone reviewed a transcript.

- In Ontario last spring, a man was given an intermittent ninety-day jail term to be served on weekends for beating his wife's head in with a baseball bat. She spent a month in a coma.

- Another Ontario judge acquitted a man who threatened three women with rape, because according to the judge, these threats did not harm the women.

- A Manitoba judge was told by a review that there was nothing improper in his remarks on the bench that it is sometimes okay for men to slap women around.

- A Nova Scotia judge was removed from the bench for telling battered women to return to and obey their abusive husbands.

- Another Nova Scotia judge was given an absolute discharge for assaulting his wife.

- In British Columbia, a judge claimed that a three-year-old girl who was sexually assaulted by a drunk, grown man, was "sexually aggressive". The man was given a suspended sentence.

- Judge Sidney Harris, contrary to federal and provincial directives to prosecute wife assault as any other assault, warned prosecutors not to bring charges against every "outburst" of wife assault. He went on to say: "Is this criminal division...to be involved whenever transitory passion triumphs for a brief instant?" Murder and robbery are apparently never seen as "transitory passion", but assaulting women is.

- An Ontario judge said of an assault case in which a man dragged women at knifepoint into a van and raped them, that "this is not a crime of stark horror." Obviously the judge is not sympathizing with the women who had a stranger's knife pressing up against their throats.

- A Northwest Territories judge said rape in the North is less serious than in the south, "because women pass out from drinking". According to the judge, men see "a pair of hips" and "help themselves".

- An Ontario judge said there was no lasting psychological trauma for the victim when a father raped his teenage daughter four times. Incest survivors' groups have been fighting the attitudes that let such crimes go on, unpunished.

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in asking the Prime Minister to

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AND FOR ALL WOMEN HURT AND  
KILLED BY MALE VIOLENCE.**

Women around the world will be holding vigils at Canadian embassies that day. Women across Canada will be gathering in commemoration.

Write to the Prime Minister asking that the government recognize the significance of December 6 for all Canadian women.

Write: Prime Minister Brian Mulroney  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6



## Lest we Forget



# Some thoughts on the massacre

December 1990

by Joan Baril

In a short time a year will have passed. What can one say?

First, they are still and forever dead. Sometimes I think that all our talk and debate and theorizing just cannot encompass this reality. Each absence the centre of a circle of grieving parents, family and friends.

Just recently I saw a photo taken at the International Women's Day march in Toronto, which showed a group of young female engineering students standing together, each one holding a placard with a victim's name. The media event is over but women still remember.

In the three months

following the massacre, I was deluged with mail. Many were letters or articles written by men pondering how to disembrace themselves from the misogyny they had breathed from infancy. The hatred of women was publically out from under its rock, "All men hate women" wrote Brian Murphy in the Ottawa Citizen (Jan 6, 1990). Across the country dozens of articles and position papers and male group meetings were attempting to define the beast.

The beast is difficult to pin to the mat. Most of the male authored articles were thought provoking but curiously similar in analysis. The writers firmly located misogyny within the

male psyche, a pathology implanted by upbringing. None touched on the real benefits that maleness brings or the ways misogyny orchestrates social interactions to protect those benefits.

It also seems to me there has been a fundamental shift in focus in women's movement. The issue of violence, always important, is front and centre. It has become the issue. I am reading the workshop list of a women's conference held in Kenora in April 1989 - pay equity, mental health, privatization and so on. No workshop addressed violence. Somehow that seems naive to me now, as if from another era.

There is so much to learn.

At our Centre, we have been doing street interviews with women, Natives and old people about street safety. Our narrators state they believe Thunder Bay to be a safe city but at the same time, they tell us they are afraid to walk out in the evening or walk to certain neighbourhoods during the day. Many recount incidents of harassment (being followed, grabbed, threatened or obscenely insulted) and described their distress and fear, yet very few consider informing the police. It seems to us that the word safety has been distorted; we have become so accustomed to a level of danger that we call safe. At the same time, many

women still believe that violation of their personal and bodily integrity is unimportant.

There is so much figuring out to do as anyone knows who has taken part in a "Marc Lépine: Was He Insane?" debate. You soon find yourself arguing about the nature of insanity rather than misogyny. The focus of the question is all wrong of course. Just as the ideology and practice of anti-semitism produced both the final solution and Aryan superiority so does the ideology of male supremacy produce violence against women and male privilege. The task is to understand and destroy.

## The media encourages hate

Every morning I woke up feeling ill. My first morning thoughts were always the same - fourteen women had been massacred in Montreal. Even now the horror remains. I remember standing in the supermarket seeing their faces on a tabloid magazine at the check-out. I realized I was staring compulsively at them. They were young, most of them smiling. I also realized that the woman behind me was staring at them too. We just shook our heads at each other - a universal gesture of distress.

I know I am not the only woman who is still grieving, still in shock. At the school where I teach, women still talk about it.

The backlash to the massacre developed with frightening rapidity, within hours - not days - after the killings. It was led and fed by certain elements in the media (by no means all the media) and it took place regardless of what was happening in the real world.

The backlash coalesced around three elements which have been used for centuries to silence and oppress women:

1) the situation is defined by the oppressor and all language is directed toward this new definition;

2) all events and responses to events are measured against this re-definition; and

3) at no time is credence given to women's definitions, women's analysis, women's experience, women's ideas, women's pain, women's fear, women's emotions, women's needs or women's lives.

Thunder Bay's Northern Women's Centre was the centre of the backlash.

### Thursday, December 7, The Day After

The red light was flashing on the answering machine at the Thunder Bay Northern Women's Centre and both phones were ringing that morning. It was to be a day of phone calls for the women who were working on projects at the Centre that day. Other women - some members, some not - and also a few sympathetic men, came and went all day.

Our phone calls sorted themselves into three types. Most were from women (and a few men) who were saddened and horrified by the terrible news and just wanted to talk, offer help or ask questions trying to make sense of it all. The emotion in the voices was palpable. I listened to some of these calls on the answering machine later. Most voices were shaking.

But other women callers were much more distressed. Some were crying. Others said they were terribly frightened. Some related the violence that

had been done to them in the past. The killings had triggered powerful emotions of fear, rage, and pain. Everyone at the Centre was profoundly affected by these calls.

After a horrified nation had tuned in to hear the full details in the CBC news, they experienced Barbara Frum on *The Journal*. The program started with an analysis of the murders; each of the participants, including June Callwood, expressed the view that the massacre was related to the misogyny and violence experienced by women.

Frum would have none of it. As Melanie Randall later described in the *Globe and Mail*, (Dec. 12), "Frum was bullish in her persistent claim

that we should not focus on the fact that women were the targets; we should see the tragedy as something that 'diminished all of us' - men and women alike, and by extension, all equally.

"Apparently frustrated with the guests' insistence that the killings were a social expression of men's violence against women, Mrs. Frum repeatedly posed variations of the same general question about mass murder, expressed in deliberately gender-neutral terms. In so doing she not only denied the specific significance of a man's decision to kill women because they were women, she directly challenged women's right to grieve...and to organize

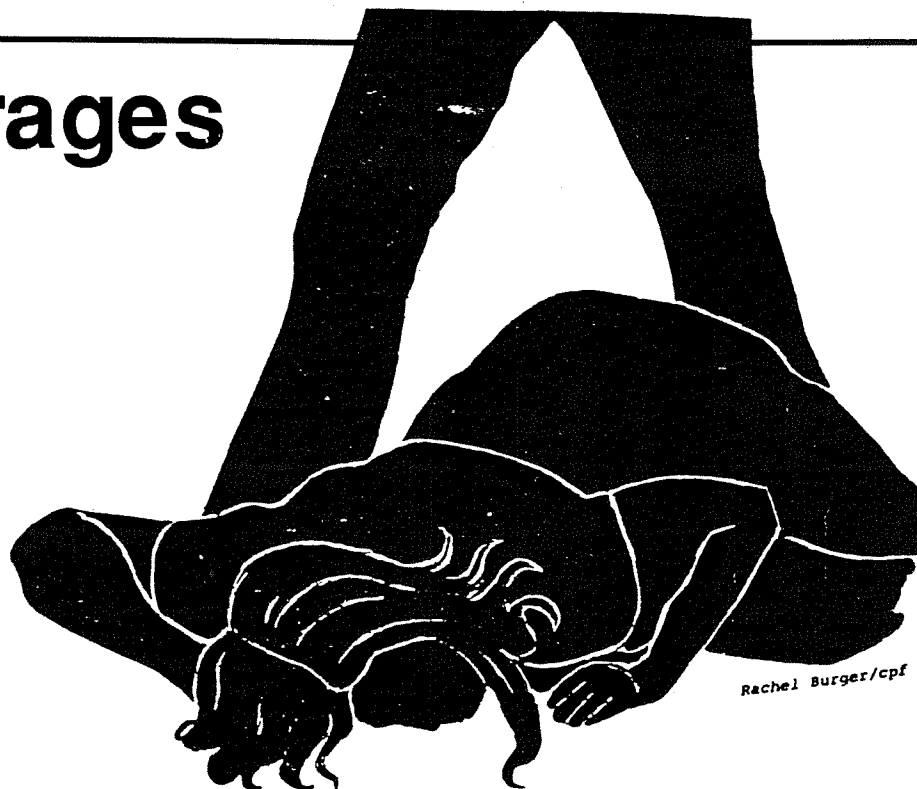
against this act of hatred against our gender."

Frum's persistent questions also denied women the opportunity to define the situation; she wanted to minimize the chilling words "You are women; you are feminists", to marginalize the ghastly last message which blamed women for all evils, the deliberate hunting for women from floor to floor.

The people on the panel seemed merely puzzled by Frum's insistence on this point. Except for June Callwood. Did I detect a shadow of despair on her wise woman face?

Frum was on the right track. On a Montreal hot line

(continued on page 31)



Rachel Burger/cpf

# The media encourages hate cont'd

Lest we Forget



show earlier, the men callers had blamed drugs, condom distributors, women who made men feel insecure, everything and anything but ...

**December 8, Two Days Later.**

Michele Landsberg in the **Toronto Star** warned, in a piece entitled "Killer's Rage Was All Too Familiar", we would be fooling ourselves to label this crime the act of a madman -- "in your town and mine... violent women hating is a daily truth." Doris Anderson's article was titled "A Hatred of Women Thrives in Our Society". Patricia Graham of the **Vancouver Province**, in a balanced article, described Lepine as a "social aberration" and warned that "though beyond the abyss (he) was also a misogynist."

Emil Sher, the Montreal writer, also decried societal violence against women and (prophetically as it turned out) noted that women's protests about violence have too often been dismissed as "the shrill protests of feminists". There were many other thoughtful articles along this line.

The editorials of December 8 also focussed on a violent and misogynist society as the basis for the crime. The **Globe and Mail** suggested Lepine "absorbed his attitudes from the society around him" and stated bluntly, "If the arrogance of male domination is to be found, naked and unashamed, at the heart of our democratic system and in centres of higher learning, it is evident that a deep seated fear and resentment is at work among many men." The **Globe** called on men to talk with other men about their continuing oppression of women. I had never seen an editorial such as this in any major newspaper before; it seemed a portent for positive change. **I was wrong.**

The **Toronto Star** editorialized that "we can only hope that this tragedy was a turning point in the battle to end hate against women".

Yet in Thunder Bay things were unsettling. We had heard about the hot line show in Montreal. We also knew that threats had been phoned into the NAC office in Toronto. We had a call saying local female engineering students were being harassed at the university.

The local newspaper's editorial was titled "Overreacting". The editor dismissed the idea that the murders mirrored anti-female attitudes because the gunmen's rage was not directed at all women but only at feminists, "the feminist movement in particular and perhaps at its most strident aspect". (Presumably hating feminists has no connection to women.)

The editorial went on to characterize Lepine as a lunatic and insane. "One cannot use his actions as a symbol of women's plight at the hands of society in general." In other words, by defining Lepine as "mad", all analysis is ended and any attempt to link his actions to wider social problems can be considered overreacting.

The same issue contained a courageous letter from seven local men saying they were attempting to come to terms with their "contribution to the oppression of women" and they invited other men to do likewise.

**December 9**

The local newspaper expressed it clearly. The shootings were caused by "the divisions created in Canadian society by the mere presence of the women's movement." By insisting on barring men from their vigil the Northern Woman's Centre "invites the very negative attitudes against women it strives to erase".

The story made the national media. Almost all reports omitted the fact that there were two other vigil services in Thunder Bay; nor did they describe the Centre's involvement with the other services. The impression created was that in Thunder Bay, the women had decided not to allow men to mourn. The language used was instructive. Men were "barred", "denied entry" or "not welcome". The media stories implied that there were dozens of men who wanted to attend the Women's Centre vigil but were unable to do so. In fact, we received no calls from men who wanted to attend our service. Nevertheless the Sault Ste Marie **Star** headlined "Thunder Bay vigil **excludes** men" (once again no mention of the other services). "**No men allowed at Ontario vigil**", thundered the **Toronto Star**, forgetting

their editorial approval given the day before to women holding memorial services. These impressions showed a shameful lack of responsibility on the part of the media.

A local alderman was quoted as saying that our actions were "mind terrorism". He was quoted (without further explanation) by almost every major newspaper and news broadcast.

No credence of any sort was given to women's desires or needs. We were thundered against in the press and on the radio.



We now began to get calls from feminists across the country wanting to know what was going on. Again the patient explanations. Again almost all women said that by talking to us they had a different picture from the one they had picked up in the media. But in general, the shift in focus from women's pain to men's perception of loss of rights was complete. As the same media mentioned just a day previously on December 8, we do indeed live in a very misogynist society.

By December 13, the **Toronto Star**, again forgetting their previous commitment to fighting misogyny, wrote an article about "the confusion" caused by the killings and stated some men "find the entire feminist analysis of the mass murders irrelevant, if not personally offensive".

The same article mentioned a male only service without comment (**Toronto Star** Dec. 13). As one Centre member so wisely put it, when men get together it is accepted that it is for a serious purpose; when women get together it is to exclude men.

Having created polarization, having heightened the misogynist tendencies around

us, the media now was expecting us to readjust our mourning to fit in with their definition of what mourning should be in order to solve the problem they had created. No better example of the power of the media and the power of definition (the power to create) can be found.

In an interview with a Thunder Bay Women's Centre spokesperson, Mike Duffy asked, wasn't the Centre doing what Marc Lepine did by separating men and women? (So absurd and insulting a question! We hope to heal women; Lepine wanted to kill them. There seems to me to be a fundamental difference here.) Aren't your actions paralleling those of Lepine, Duffy asked? And so on.

As the days went on, a spate of articles appeared blaming feminists for "using" the killings. Jeanni Read in the **Vancouver Province** (Dec. 10) claims that, although feminists were "impeccably correct in their societal critique", we were "using" the dead young women as symbols and so dehumanizing them. Like many other similar articles and letters, the author condemns violence against women but at the same time doesn't want the killings connected to it. There seems to be little real logic in that stance.

Throughout those days there was a constant attempt to differentiate between women

and feminists. According to this definition, feminists are extremists, while women are not extremists because "they don't make an issue of things", i.e. they are silent.

Perhaps we'll leave the last words on the backlash to the journalists. Thomas Walkom of the **Toronto Star** in a prophetic article (Dec. 11) described neo-conservatism in Canada as focussing on feminists as the enemy. He described widely read magazines like Edmonton's **Weekly Report** which blames feminism for the decline in education, in the family and in all cultural values in Canada. Walkom suggested this type of thinking is strong and spreading.

Melanie Randall (**Globe and Mail**, Dec. 12) related the mechanisms of reaction. She noted among other examples that as early as the day after the killings, CFPL-TV (London) termed a rally at the university a "feminist diatribe". She says conditions have been created in which it is now "inappropriate" or "extremist" to view the killings as an act of violence against women.

"How else can we possibly account for this chilling display of threatening and hateful behaviour...?" Nevertheless Randall is optimistic and hopes that feminists, progressives and pro-feminist men can work together towards an equal peaceful world.

I hope she is right.

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## Lest we Forget



He is not an evil man or even an uncaring one, and he embarks upon each court sitting with the best of all possible intentions. This not only describes Justice de Weerdts but a whole host of other judges, mostly men, who, from the lofty pinnacle of the Bench, re-victimize those on the receiving end of violent crime, usually women and children; although, the disabled and elderly are also particularly vulnerable.

Two areas which are causing great concern are family violence and sexual assault. We live in a patriarchal society. If you question that, ask yourself this: (I borrowed this from Norma Wikler, the noted American expert on Gender Bias in the Courts). "What precautions do I take to keep myself safe from sexual assault as I go about my day to day life? I don't walk in deserted areas alone at night. I don't go into bars alone, etc. etc. If you are a man, you will very likely say you've never thought about it. Why? Because you've been raised to believe it's not your problem."

Most judges sitting on the Bench today went to high school in an era when husband and family were the appropriate goals for women, with a little nursing, teaching or typing thrown in just for a "rainy day". They went to law school with almost all males and practised law in firms comprised of nearly all males. Remember that it wasn't until the late 1950's that married women could work in the Public Service of Canada.

Does that explain why many of the judiciary continue to deal leniently with wife beaters, child molesters and rapists, and why victims are often blamed for inviting or provoking the attack? I think if you study patriarchy in all its

complex and insidious forms, it answers that question.

So what happened in the Oakley case anyway? Joann Brekke and Wayne Oakley had both been drinking and quarrelling on May 7th, 1989. Wayne grabbed Joann by the hair during this quarrel, threw her to the floor and kicked her with his cowboy boots on. She was hospitalized. Another earlier "domestic dispute" between Wayne and Joann resulted in Joann being hospitalized in 1987. (Wayne weighs about two hundred pounds; Joann weighs about 120 pounds).

Justice de Weerdts was very annoyed that a "case of this sort" was cluttering up the docket of the Superior Court, which is meant, I presume, for much loftier cases. Justice de Weerdts sentenced Wayne Oakley with a general deterrent and did not see a need for a specific punishment or deterrent. Why?

I quote from Justice de Weerdts' preamble of the sentencing:

"It is no doubt an indication of the trivialization of the criminal jurisdiction of this Court in more recent times when petty assaults are all too often brought before it on indictment, that the present case arises in circumstances in which a middle-aged married couple, engaged in what began as a mutual aggravation and disregard, ended in a trip to the hospital for a number of somewhat minor injuries to the wife after a degrading scene in which the husband was clearly and deliberately provoked by her into committing unnecessary violence upon her. (The naughty t-shirt depicting three sexually precocious polar bears is the provocation)."

De Weerdts meanders off on a rather creative description

of "Euro-Canadian" culture as it pertains to marriage. He says that Joann's wearing of this naughty t-shirt caused fear and alarm in her husband, threatening his feeling of self-esteem, financial and social security. He says Wayne saw the t-shirt as an indication that

eyes and heads down to get your sympathy. All they want is the recognition that they are autonomous human beings, entitled to the full protection of the law, regardless of how they choose to dress, where they choose to work, how many times they choose to marry,

root cause which is society's acceptance that men are predatory creatures and women and children are the prey. The NWT Status of Women Council is undertaking a study into Gender Bias in the justice system of the NWT as it relates to crimes of violence

# The t-shirt incident

by Lynn Brooks



there was "at least the possibility if not the actual promise of sexual perversity and promiscuity." He goes on to say that not only was the assault provoked but was a foreseeable consequence of Joann's actions.

I take the liberty of translating this to mean that Joann was Wayne's sexual property, so if she wished to avoid a beating, she had better dress in a manner which he felt was modest and fitting.

After the interview I gave to the *Globe and Mail*, Justice de Weerdts asked me to meet with him. I agreed and was filled with curiosity for the two days prior to the meeting. It turns out that the learned Judge simply wanted to enlighten me as to the error of my ways. You see, Joann was a woman with a history. She'd been married three times. She had been drinking very heavily that night. Justice de Weerdts assured me that I had attacked a friend when I criticized him in the press and he gave me a copy of his resume and some judgements where he had "favored the woman", just to prove his point.

I left feeling very frustrated because what I really wanted to say to Justice de Weerdts and couldn't bring myself to was, "You just don't get it, do you? Women shouldn't have to come to court with broken teeth and black

what their views and attitudes are, or where they choose to play or walk or with whom they choose to associate."

On appeal, Mr. Oakley got sixty days in jail, but it should be noted that one of the three Justices on the Court of Appeal totally upheld what de Weerdts had said.

What can we do about this? Overhaul the justice system, call for more inquiries? I think we have to get to the

against women and children. I think this is one step in the right direction. I must admit that I think it will take a long time to change judicial attitudes and when I pay my taxes, I'm always a little resentful that although I pay the same rate as my husband, he has more real freedom than I.

Lynn Brooks is the Executive Director of the Yellowknife Status of Women.

EUNADIE JOHNSON  
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# The fear of rape

By Julie Rouse-Kyle

Lest we Forget



I've been asking the question 'why' quite a lot lately. For example, why is it that I just came back from the corner store with a four litre jug of milk in one hand and a three inch skeleton key nestled between the fingers of my other? I'm told, by the police, that the likelihood of my being raped in the five minutes it takes to walk from my house to the store is very slim, yet I must admit that at this time of night I rather like the feel of jagged steel in my hand as I walk very quickly and singlemindedly home to my beloved deadbolt. It's an illusory reassurance, but I feel more in control nonetheless, more able to confront my elusive night stalker if need be. By contrast, I am left with an angry sense of powerlessness when confronted with comments and catcalls from men (and boys) on the street, leers and honks from passing cars. I feel violated, yet I'm told there has been no violence.

About a month ago, I was walking a block and a half from my home at 9:30 pm when an older man spoke from across the street. "Hey Smiley, you walking home alone?" When I turned to walk back toward my house he said, "Hey Smiley, don't go away. I'm not going to hurt you." I was slightly more uneasy than usual. I think it was because his tone was as if he were speaking to a child. Maybe he thought he was.

A friend told me of an incident where she came across a group of men following a woman at 12:30 am taunting her with threats of rape. "Look, she's walking faster! She's scared!" In this case, the question most often asked is, "Why was she out walking alone at that time of night? She should have known better." We must not ignore the realities that script our lives and the potential dangers that face us, yet my question is why, if a

woman has to, or god forbid **wants** to, walk at night without a man or a dog to protect her, should she be subjected to that?!

According to Constable Murray Rodd of the Peterborough Police Department, there were 67 investigations of sexual assault in 1989. This statistic includes all forms of sexual abuse, and subsequent investigation led to the laying of 27 charges. Constable Rodd acknowledges that sentencing is definitely a problem in the majority of sexual assault cases which go to trial. He says that this may be owing partly to the lack of public pressure, noting that there is

**NO!**  
to  
**SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE**

not the same outrage over sexual assault as there is surrounding the issue of drinking and driving. Even more noteworthy is the fact that the consent and credibility of the victim undoubtedly become key issues in court. The attitude of the woman, her reaction or lack of reaction, partially determined by the nature of physical evidence (i.e. bruises), will automatically come to bear in an investigation. The responsibility is placed squarely back on the woman's shoulders, to prove her claim.

This point is crucial when trying to understand why only 67 reports of sexual assault were made to the police, when 280 women walked through the doors of the Rape Crisis Centre, resulting in 600 follow-up counselling sessions. How

many more weren't reported at all? And why?

Why is there rape? Because there are perverts in the world, somewhere very far from here. What about acquaintance or date rape then? Well, it's because the woman was giving out signals, the wrong signals. What signals was she giving and why were they wrong? She led him on. She left with him. She was dressed like a slut. What signals was he giving? What was he wearing? Didn't he leave with her? She wanted it. How do you know she wanted it? She said no, didn't she? No means yes.

"You should dress differently if you don't like being looked at", I'm told. Should I cover myself head to foot in a shawl in the middle of July then? Sundresses and shorts are definitely out if I don't want to provoke some poor man into saying something about my legs.

"Don't be so uptight. Lighten up. It's all in fun!" Well, what about when I'm walking down the street with my husband and someone screams out the window of a passing car, "Fuck her, I did!" I'm confused. I think I might be missing the joke. Should I laugh? I suppose some women do laugh. No wonder. It's either laugh or be called uptight. I guess I was supposed to laugh when I was talking of volunteering at the Rape Crisis Centre and someone said to me "As what, a victim?"

My choices then, I'm told as an oversensitive, intolerant, uptight woman, are to be flattered or else wear a snowsuit in public, stay home at night and shut up. It's no wonder a lot of people don't want to talk about it. Look what happens when you do? I think this one hits a bit too close to home.

Joyce Harley, from the Peterborough Rape Crisis Centre, suggested to me that to accept the subtler forms of sexual harassment on a daily basis makes us numb. When we are numb, our confidence is eroded and our ability to identify a potential rape situation is undermined because we accept the innuendo as more of the same. All in fun. The key is to ask the questions.

Why? Because. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. It is because it is. That can't be good enough.

"Don't question it, you'll burn out." There's a sense of security in sameness. But sameness breeds ignorance. We need to be empowered with information. We must ask the questions without being belittled. We must share the responsibility, as men and women, in order to be able to

break out of these patterns that structure our lives and encourage complacency. Our only weapon is our awareness.

*Julie Rouse-Kyle is a freelance writer living in Peterborough with her husband. She hopes to pursue a Masters Degree in Canadian Regionalism.*



## Survivor has the right to sue police

The Supreme Court of Ontario has ruled that a woman, who was sexually assaulted by a serial rapist, has the right to sue the Metropolitan Toronto Police for violation of her Charter rights, and negligence in the way they handled the rapes in her Toronto neighbourhood.

In a unanimous decision released August 31, three Divisional Court judges said that the woman's case can proceed to trial.

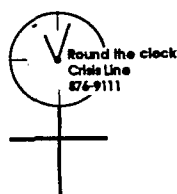
"This is a precedent-setting decision," says Christie Jefferson, Executive Director of LEAF. It establishes that police can be held accountable for policies and practices which discriminate against women, and that under the Charter, women can demand that police provide them equal protection

and benefit of the law.

"This woman's case is important for all women who live daily with the threat of violence," she said. "Rape is one of the most brutal forms of sex discrimination in our society."

"The woman is seeking to establish a strong precedent that police have a duty to recognize that women are the targets of sexual assault and to establish policies and practices which provide women protection."

LEAF is supporting the woman in her case against the police. Mary Cornish of Cornish Roland and Charles Campbell of Iler, Campbell and Associates are her counsel. For more information: Christie Jefferson, LEAF (416) 963-9654



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## Lest we Forget



Heather Snyder

On Saturday, September 15th, three hundred or more women and children marched in Ottawa to raise public awareness against domestic violence and abuse of women.

On Monday September 17th, a local newspaper displayed in their editorial section a cartoon picture of Brian Mulroney throwing knives into the body of a screaming woman.

When the picture was brought to my attention I was horrified and enraged by the blatant violence to women being shown to the public in the guise of "just a joke". As one of the survivors of domestic violence, I was overwhelmed with disgust. My immediate reaction was "How dare they (the local newspaper responsible) assume that they could advertise this kind of violence to women and get away with it, especially coming in the wake, (two days after) a national march to raise public awareness against just this sort of violence?"

Yet, I felt stymied, almost helpless. Thank the Goddess it only lasted temporarily, my anger pushed all feelings of helplessness aside. Although I am new to the city of Ottawa, I immediately called the newspaper and complained. Then I called all the women I knew, referred to the "joke", and asked them to help by calling the offending newspaper and letting them know that "wild women are watching them and we are angry".

So it turned out that I spent the better part of the day on the telephone. When I ran out of personal friends within the area, I picked up the phone book and called every listing



that bore the word women in it, alerting groups to the offence and asking for their help in this matter. Their help meant merely a phone call and maybe a follow-up letter, strongly worded, to the editor.

The "Take Back the Night" march held annually inspires women like myself to keep on fighting against the rising number of incidents of violence against women.

# The media message

I have recently been appalled by the repeated acts of subliminal violence, being dished up to an unaware insensitive public in the form of "jokes".

It is the "seemingly non-aggressive" accepted violence to women in the mainstream media that provides one of the hardest areas for women to continuously fight in, simply because there is so much of it and it comes from so many directions, such as movies, commercials, magazines, television and mainstream newspapers.

Women are constantly and daily put down, abused, belittled and prodded by male jokes in the "funnies". Yet, rarely have I seen such a vicious and brutal display of this violence as I saw in the cartoon in this newspaper on September 17, 1990. And don't think for one second that these are the only mediums that are used by men to abuse women.

Recently, I happened to open a copy of a Roget's Thesaurus, in dictionary form. A seemingly innocent, innocuous book, used in Canadian schools, to teach **our children**. Under the word "man", I found the words: courageous, brave, soul, manly, "two-fisted."

Under the word "female" (because they had no description for "woman" beyond lady, she, her) I found these words: weaker vessel, bitch, shrew, jade, hussy, baggage, wench, gold-digger. The obvious vicious attacks on women went on throughout the entire Roget's Thesaurus.

Nowhere are we safe from the hand of man, least of all when he tries to be funny.

It is my personal belief that all women everywhere must constantly be on guard,



prepared at every given moment to challenge and expose the attackers. Every subliminal message that is put out by insensitive males has to be thwarted in its birth throes and a solid warning issued to males that women will no longer tolerate violence against women. By publically shaming a few, we awaken the sleeping masses to the on-going battle that women face daily against domestic violence.

It is easy to feel helpless as I did, when I initially saw this cartoon and it is quite acceptable to allow those feelings for a few moments, but then we must drop the helplessness and pick up the "mythical sword" or the nearest telephone and begin to fight back. Take action, it's our only hope for the future.

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# Child victim

by Anne Dolina

"Judge finds assault victim, 3, was 'sexually aggressive' was the headline of Section B in the **Vancouver Sun** of Friday, November 24, 1989.

County court judge Peter Van der Hoop gave a suspended sentence to the man he found guilty of "touching with a part of (his) body for sexual purposes the body of a three-year-old girl" and placed him on probation for 18 months, directed him to take alcohol counselling and suggested he "obtain and keep employment." Van der Hoop considered that the girl appeared to be "sexually aggressive" and that Delbert Leeson, the attacker, was "under the influence of alcohol ... at the time and that he was also suffering from fatigue."

I was answering the crisis line at Vancouver Rape Relief when the first calls from women came in expressing horror, disgust, and outrage at the apparent scapegoating and blaming of the **three-year-old girl**. A letterwriting campaign began that first day, to B.C.'s attorney general, to MLA's, MP's, and to Mulroney. The following day Bud Smith, B.C.'s attorney general said that he would lodge an appeal because the sentence was "grossly inadequate in light of the circumstances of the offense," and that the sentence "failed to give sufficient weight to the principal of deterrence."

Socred MLA Grace McCarthy sent a letter to Bud Smith calling on the government to introduce a course for judges to "overcome what can only be described as courtroom ignorance when it

comes to knowledge of child sexual abuse." New Democrat MP Joy Langan (Mission-Coquitlam) filed a complaint with the Canadian Judicial Council to investigate the case. WAVAW Rape Centre (Vancouver) called a rally which was attended by over 200 angry protesters and hordes of media. A petition signed by more than 1,200

family, we learned, was not offered support services, unlike the attacker, who has his court-ordered counselling.

Finally, on January 12, the appeal court handed down a unanimous decision to uphold Van der Hoop's ruling. In an excellent article in the **Vancouver Sun** on January 13, not only were details of the appellant judges' written



people was sent to the Canadian Judicial Council.

Two weeks after the rally, an article appeared in the **Sunday Province** (Dec. 10, 1989) confirming our suspicions about the plight of the girl, now five and her mother, both native and living in a coastal community. Leeson was not living with the family at the time the abuse came to light, but was babysitting, yet the mother's children were placed in foster care for two months. The

reasons made public, but also a memorandum written by Van der Hoop to the three male judges.

Apparently all judges are invited to submit a report when one of their cases reaches the appeal level. Van der Hoop stated that he had "intended to highlight the fact that the girl was an active participant and that her actions were sexual in nature." It is obvious from the appeal court judges' comments that Van der Hoop's memo was given a great deal of weight

during the appeal. The chief justice, McEachern said "this is a case of the use of a word - just one word - in the whole judgment that was capable of receiving, and has received, an unfortunate misinterpretation," in reference to the use of the word "sexually." Apparently, if Van der Hoop had stuck to the "shorthand language of the trial" he would have stated simply that the three-year-old girl was aggressive, instead.

Many aspects of this case are worthy of scrutiny by feminists. For those interested in legal reform, the call for education of judges in issues like child sexual assault could be a hopeful sign. We must ensure that the knowledge, expertise, and analysis of the 25 year-old feminist anti-rape movement is not replaced by the gobbledegook of social scientists who prefer terms like familial violence and disfunctional family systems, instead of examining the oppression of women and children within the context of the patriarchy.

For organizers, it is interesting to note that the original decision was handed down 10 days before the first story appeared in Vancouver papers. In fact, the events following that first story are in response to the media and to the journalist who decided that this story was news. We have no way of knowing how many other decisions pass us by unnoticed.

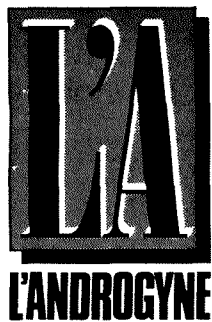
Under the current law regarding child sexual abuse,

anyone who knows or suspects that a child is being assaulted is required by the law to report it to the police or to social services. As more and more cases of incest and child sexual assault become entangled in the legal and social service systems, feminists must address some very difficult questions. How do we approach the question of accountability? To whom should this judge be accountable?

Women demanded that this judge be removed from the bench. County court judges are appointed by the federal government and never in the history of Canada has a judge been impeached. Do we trust his peers to hold him accountable? Van der Hoop is currently on sabbatical from his county court position and is teaching law at the University of British Columbia, passing on his knowledge to the next generation of judges. Can we continue to address this "ignorance" on an individual basis? I think not. The Van der Hoop case is a perfect example of the boys in the backroom sticking together and sticking it to a three-year-old native child. Four male judges came to the same conclusion. Nothing has changed. But something has to change. If not now, when?

Anne E. Dolina is a member of Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter collective, which operates a 24 hour crisis line, an emergency shelter for women and their children and a women's organizing centre.

Lest we Forget



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VIOLENCE AGAINST

Women



NOT JUST A WOMAN'S ISSUE

## Lest we Forget



What is ... significant is that we use the term "battered wives" rather than "violent husbands". It is rather as though the problem of international terrorists hijacking aeroplanes was described as "the problem of hostages"! The effect of this renaming of the problem is to shift attention from the instigators of the violence to its victims, and the shift tends to make it easy to blame the victim for the problem and to encourage a search solution among the victims rather than among the violent partners. This misnaming is probably no accident. (J. Pahl, *Private Violence & Public Policy*).

The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women released a study entitled "Male Violence in Relationships and the Justice System" in late 1989. The study, conducted by the Advisory Council over a 12 month period, looked at statistics and attitudes of interveners in the justice system.

"We know how many television sets there are in New Brunswick but we don't keep statistics on the number of wife assault cases", said Jeanne d'Arc Gaudet, Chairperson of the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

"Statistics are a first step in dealing with the issue. We should give wife assault enough priority to keep a count of the cases reported and the charges laid," said Ms. Gaudet.

What statistics were available showed that few charges are laid in cases of

wife assault. The Advisory Council called on the Solicitor General to issue a directive to all police forces in the province to lay assault charges in all cases where they have reason to believe that an assault did occur, as they do in cases of serious assault between strangers.

The Advisory Council found that the only statistics available from the Department of Justice were the number of charges laid in cases of assault between partners. However, these were clearly inaccurate, according to the



report. The official count of charges laid was 47 for New Brunswick in 1988; however the RCMP reported laying 165 such charges. Another 145 RCMP cases had been classified as "no charges laid; insufficient evidence".

A total of 1,523 domestic dispute calls were estimated to have been recorded in New Brunswick in 1988. However, those statistics are also inaccurate, according to the study. "How else can we explain that in Moncton, population 54,000 police

# Male violence in relationships

by Rosella Melanson



received 32 calls in 1988, while in Edmundston, population 11,000, police answered 119 calls? Does Edmundston have 20 times the level of violence of Moncton?", asked the report, written by the researcher Bernadette Landry.

No charges were laid in most cases of wife assault reported to police, even though, the study argued, it is even more important to lay charges in cases of wife assault than in other assault cases because men who have assaulted their wives tend to do it again and to increase the level of violence.

The RCMP, who have a uniform response policy on wife assault cases, laid charges in half of the cases reported to them, while municipal police only laid charges in one out of four cases, according to a study in Northern New Brunswick quoted by the Advisory Council.

The sentences given to convicted wife assaulters were low, especially given that cases that reach the courts are probably the most serious ones. More than half of the offenders received either a fine of between \$100 and \$300 or a probation period; only 10 of the 47 offenders were incarcerated, for periods varying from 10 days to three months.

According to a recent survey conducted for Statistics Canada by Decima Research Ltd., 12% of men in Canada (24% in the Atlantic Provinces) admit having used physical violence against their partner. In New Brunswick, that means every year approximately 40,500 women are victims of assault by their

partners, often repeatedly. Since only 47 charges were laid last year in New Brunswick, only one of every 1,000 assaulters was brought to court on assault charges. This is despite the fact that only 26% of women victims do not want charges laid against their spouse, according to a study done in New Brunswick's Acadian Peninsula.

Municipal police forces in New Brunswick, unlike the RCMP, do not have a uniform response policy on wife assault cases. Certain municipal police chiefs encourage their officers to lay charges whenever they have reason to believe that an assault occurred, while in some other municipality police let the victim decide whether *she* wants charges to be laid, except in cases where the victim was seriously injured. Many women who are asked this question interpret it as asking whether they want revenge. Their immediate concern is to be left in peace and to be respected.

One police chief said to the Advisory Council that the police should not be involved in this type of call, since their intervention will probably only

provoke greater violence.

Individual police officers' responses also differed greatly, depending on their attitudes. Some said they try to reconcile the couple, others will put the suspect in prison until his trial, and some others blame the victim. One of the officers interviewed said he did not know it was up to the police to lay charges in those cases. According to this officer of the law, "Assaulted women like being beaten. Often, they deserve it. I tell them, you like it since you stay with him. And I tell the guy to hit harder. If they go to court, these men have no chance. There is no justice. Feminists and Stalinists have influence on the judges."

Even though the Crown prosecutor's policy on such cases states that peace bonds should only be requested when the evidence does not warrant or is insufficient for a charge of assault, the most frequently requested procedure is the peace bond. The bond is a contract signed by the violent partner promising to keep the peace and to be of good

(continued on page 33)



*Working together, building a strong women's movement in Canada, and around the world.*

**DAWN BLACK, M.P.**  
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The **Women's Report** is a free, quarterly publication about my activities, and issues of interest in the House of Commons. If you would like to be on my mailing list, please write to me postage-free at the House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6.



# The unkindest cut of all

by Carla Rice

Women have been witness to a new assault by medical science with the popularization of increasingly intrusive techniques on the female body, particularly the rapidly growing use of cosmetic surgeries.

In the past ten years, the number of North American women choosing to go under the surgeon's knife for cosmetic reasons has more than doubled. According to the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, certified plastic surgeons performed over half a million cosmetic operations on women in 1989. Yet, because an increasing number of unqualified doctors have been performing cosmetic procedures, the number of women actually having plastic surgery last year in North America was probably closer to 1.25 million. An estimated 500,000 of these women opted for liposuction, an operation removing fat cells with an instrument resembling a vacuum.

Why has plastic surgery become such a popular medical procedure for women? Why are more and more of us opting to have these potentially harmful operations? How is it that appearance has become cause for medical intervention? To answer these questions, we must look at our relationship with our bodies, as well as the origins of fat hatred in Western culture.

## The Roots of Body Hate

In our society virtually all of us are taught to associate our self-worth with our appearance. We learn to shave, paint, pluck, camouflage, color, curl, fade, trim, tuck, tighten, diet and exercise before we begin to seek answers to other questions, like who we are and what we hope to do with our lives. These pressures to conform to cultural standards

abilities are deeply affected by widespread cultural pressures to be thin. It has been estimated that 90% of us dislike and are trying to reduce the size of our bodies; 70% of us are weight obsessed; 40% are yo-yo dieting; and as many as 15% have serious, health-threatening issues around food and weight. With a shocking 50% of girls in Canada dieting before the age of nine, it is difficult to dispute that these pressures are affecting us in



of beauty and femininity cause us to become profoundly insecure about our bodies. Insecurity gives way to self-hatred, as we come to understand how unattainable the ideals really are.

Yet generation after generation of women are caught up in achieving the prevailing ideal. Today, North American women of all shapes, ethnicities, ages, and physical

profound ways.

The slender ideal has taught women that our natural body sizes are unhealthy, our appetites shameful and our fat evidence of excess which must be controlled. Thus, we learn fat (or any other "flaws" in physical appearance), must be the underlying cause of our oppression. Yet the truth is women are naturally fatter than men, we need fat to meet our

## Lest we Forget



reproductive capacities, and having that fat may be an important, unique and powerful aspect of being female. Ironically, attempts to control body size lead us to become even more preoccupied with weight, as we develop harmful cycles of bingeing, dieting, and perhaps purging. We experience a greater degree of body hatred and more intense feelings of self-hatred, the more we try to control our weight.

But dieting, starving, abusing exercise, using laxatives, and vomiting are not the only methods we use in order to diminish ourselves and make our bodies more socially acceptable. If a woman is lucky enough to have access to the time and money, she can always have her body artificially shaped through cosmetic surgeries like a breast reduction or liposuction. When she finds herself unable to control her natural appetite or the amount of space she takes up in the world, a woman can try to achieve well-being and a sense of control by having a doctor restructure her body.

So what's wrong with cosmetic surgery? If it makes a woman feel better about herself, why should we be concerned about it?

The most obvious reason is that cosmetic surgery is just that - a form of surgery. This means it is not without risks. Some women die, many others experience debilitating complications. One woman having a "tummy tuck" suffered a stroke as a result of complications from the surgery. Another had her eyesight permanently damaged and face scarred from a chemical peel that was supposed to remove wrinkles. A third had her bowel perforated from the tool used to suck out fat in the liposuction operation, spreading bacteria throughout her abdomen, hips, and thighs and causing a life-threatening infection. And then there is the story of Toni Sullivan, a Toronto woman who died, probably from the complications of a botched liposuction operation.

In a sane world, even one death would be enough to call into serious question the ethics of performing unnecessary operations like cosmetic surgeries. Yet this has not been the case. Debate on plastic surgery sees who gets to perform the operation as the crucial issue, not whether it should be performed at all.

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## Male violence in relationships cont'd

behaviour for a period of up to 12 months; the peace bond does not give him a criminal record. The number of peace bonds issued each year to assaultive spouses is not known since the justice system does not classify bonds separate from the incidences of disturbing the peace. A report by the Solicitor General of Canada states that peace bonds are often violated with impunity.

An initial conclusion of the report is that some women have reason to hesitate before

they call on the present judicial system because they may very well be victimized again by the system.

The Advisory Council's study also pointed out that the preventive value of a law is dependent upon the certainty of arrest and of the appropriate penalty that criminals face. The law on impaired driving has shown to what extent enforcement of a law can be effective in preventing dangerous behaviour. The same could be done for wife assault.



A study in London, Ontario showed that when the municipal police force was instructed to lay criminal charges in all cases of violence in the family, the number of charges laid rose by 2500%. Follow-up studies found that a decrease in the violence and in the number of withdrawn charges were also reported.

The Advisory Council recommended that an information campaign be launched to increase the public's awareness that violence in relationships is a crime and to promote equality between the sexes. Training sessions for police and other interveners were also recommended in order to combat the judicial system's

tendency to minimize the seriousness of the crime and to provide a uniform and proper response to these calls.

The Advisory Council also recommends that sentences imposed on wife assaulters reflect the seriousness of the assault and include, whenever possible, mandatory counselling; that the provincial government take an active role in the fight against sexism and sexual discrimination. But much remains to be done.

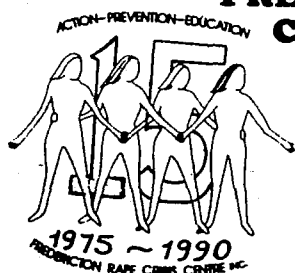
The study released December 5, 1989 has had a

significant impact on the New Brunswick community. Government action has been planned. The initial reaction to the report by some police chiefs only illustrated that they could not refute the statistics or the facts reported in the study.

We can only hope that the work continues.

*Rosella Melanson is the Director of Communications and Planning with the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women.*

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## The unkindest cut of all cont'd

Neither the risks associated with such surgeries nor the larger political context in which women are driven to seek them are acknowledged or explored.

Cultural factors causing women to seek plastic surgery are buried, and cosmetic surgery is sold as the solution to an individual woman's ill. A few years ago, the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons lobbied to have breast implantation classified as a necessary procedure: "There is a common misconception that the enlargement of the female breast is not necessary for maintenance of health or treatment of disease...[T]hese deformities [small breasts] are really a disease which...result in feelings of inadequacy, lack of self-confidence, distortion of body image and a total lack of well-being due to a lack of self-perceived femininity." Suddenly, small breasts have become a "disease" needing proper medical attention and intervention.

Cosmetic surgery is a rapidly-growing, multi-million dollar industry in North America, as well as one that nets its moguls big profits. Plastic surgeons have a product to sell and they have developed increasingly sophisticated methods of selling it. Unfortunately, these methods often perpetuate harmful stereotypes of women. A June 1988 advertisement in an L.A. magazine featured a highly sexualized image of a woman in a white bathing suit leaning against a red sports car, with the caption reading, "Automobile by Ferrari. Body by Forshan." It seems that for the right amount of money any woman can have her body transformed into a valuable sexualized object. Only in a culture where a "beautiful" body is the most valuable thing a woman can possess, does this kind of objectifying and degrading advertising make sense.

But degradation does not stop at the border. In December of 1987, the *Toronto Star* ran an article called *Sculpting Down to Size* which presented large hips as a "violin deformity" that afflicted "perhaps 75 percent of all women." The medical solution? Liposuction, of course. In labelling what is natural (large hips) a "deformity", the piece not only reinforced low self-esteem and body hatred among women, but it helped to create yet another new medical "condition" where

none existed before. Aside from the profit motive, this has the added bonus of netting the profession greater control over women's bodies.

Promoters are not beyond using sex to sell plastic surgery. In the *Sculpting Down to Size* article, liposuction is linked to violence against women and both are eroticized by the comparison of a lipo doctor's actions to "jam[ming] a meat thermometer into a pork roast" and

"ram[ming] it in all directions under the skin." The doctor is further described as grabbing patient's "saddlebag with his left hand and palpat[ing] it." He is then said to "select a hollow steel wand...plunge it deep into the fat...[and] tunnel...[H]is right arm stroking vigorously back and forth."???!! The sexual violence implicit in this quote points to larger cultural attitudes which suggest women are objects and have value only to the extent we are

sexually attractive to men. It further reinforces the belief that we must do everything in our power to make our bodies acceptable, even if it means hurting them. After all, we all know a woman has to suffer to be beautiful.

If this were not enough, plastic surgeons performing operations often explicitly reveal shocking degrees of misogyny. A recent article in the *Toronto Star* quoted one plastic surgeon as saying: "I

think people who go for surgery are more aggressive. They are the doers of the world. It's like makeup. You see some women who might be greatly improved by wearing makeup but they're, I don't know, granola heads or something, and they just refuse."

### "The Unkindest Cut"

Cosmetic surgery is an important issue for women because it is symptomatic of deeper and more far reaching issues related to the oppression of women. Debates on plastic surgery reveal sophisticated manoeuvres that threaten to increase medical control over women's bodies and lives, turn a cultural hatred of women into a hatred for our bodies, deflect women's energies from concern with our empowerment to preoccupation with self-control, and finally, cause us to see the ticket out of our oppression in a "solution" that can only perpetuate it.

The rapid increase in cosmetic operations being performed and the nature of the debates on cosmetic surgery are a spectre of our future. In order to prevent this spectre from becoming reality, women need to get more involved in the debates on cosmetic surgery. We especially need to educate each other about the real risks and problems associated with these procedures and become more involved in popularizing healthy and empowering alternatives such as political activism, consciousness raising and body image therapy. As individual women, we must examine our internalized attitudes and feelings about our bodies and begin confronting our own demons.

*Carla Rice is the coordinator of the National Eating Disorder Information Centre, a founding member of Hersize: A Weight Prejudice Action Group, currently a student at OISE and a writer and activist.*


**W** Just exactly who were you, lovely Laura Palmer? You seemed like the American Dream, a sweet blond prom queen who dished up Meals on Wheels and led the cheers for Twin Peaks High. Then we found out you were another kind of American Dream entirely: You were the young vixen who couldn't say no to her shrink, couldn't remain true to either of her boyfriends, somehow ended up across the border at a sleazy

**O** joint called One Eyed Jack's, and lived the high life right under the noses of the city fathers. You were not only too much woman for one town. But Laura, you wouldn't be too much for us. If you were still alive (and you are dead, aren't you?), we'd be on the phone to Mr. Leland Palmer pronto, our voices trembling, asking, "Can Laura come over and tutor us?"

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The real Laura Palmer: twenty-three-year-old actress Sheryl Lee, live and prewrapped.

## Esquire Magazine

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# R.E.A.L.W.

by Peggy Steacy



Much has happened since our last newsletter, including the shooting of the fourteen women in Montreal which I characterize as the insane act of an irrational man about to kill himself. Who knows why he did it? The thought immediately occurred to me that he just might have been a man whose child had been aborted by a "feminist" and that had been enough to trigger a terrible response to the abuse of his childhood. I was extremely annoyed by the feminist attempt to make capital of these poor women's deaths in their memorials and vigils where they demanded that men step back so the women could grieve alone. There were two

Canon Edward Gale of Pax House. We did not want to draw too much attention to the movie, remembering what happened when Rev. Bernice Gerard opposed the showing of "Caligula"; but felt that some protest against the slur on Christians must be made.

Glenda Simms, a Jamaican lady, was recently appointed to the post of President of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, (at roughly \$70,000 per year) filling the post left vacant last summer by Sylvia Gold, and in her first public speech informed us that Canada is a very racist country! She will be in Vancouver for the International

that will, hopefully, give you inspiration in your own correspondence with M.P.s, M.L.A.s. One of our greatest letter writers is Mavis Moore of White Rock, who, while not in the best of health, puts us all to shame with the output of her typewriter, particularly when it comes to subjects such as the so-called "Gay Games". What a title--how can what was a beautiful word like "gay" be used to describe the people and their activities who use the name. We have certainly not given up attempting to turn these events off. The thought of Vancouver being known as "San Francisco North" or more accurately "Sodom North" because we are more

which will keep them in a little comfort), and others who contracted the disease through blood transfusions (and guess where the blood came from?), are (with rare exceptions) simply reaping what they have sown.

Chantal Daigle was **Chatelaine's** "Newsmaker of the Year" to the disgust of many and the anger of those who thought she should have been "Woman of the Year"! And the announcement of her book "explaining" her abortion on International Women's Day was sick. She uses the line I understand the Victoria Drive clinic uses: that the baby and the mother have a chat in which the mother explains that right now just isn't the time and sorry about that--the baby replies that that's perfectly okay, Mum, I'll just hover around in the air and should you some day decide to actually have a baby, then I'll become the baby's soul, or words to that effect. I also found her remarks in the **Chatelaine** article highly offensive that while the "procedure" was actually happening, she prayed to her grandparents and also to "the little man up there".

We are afraid that if we do not continue with our intervention in the Lemay-Sullivan case, (the midwives whose "care" of a Vancouver mother resulted in the stillbirth of a 9lb. 5oz. baby boy) the court will rule that the State has a compelling interest in the protection of the unborn child only in the late stages of pregnancy, or, as stated by Madam Justice Wilson in **Morgentaler** "somewhere in the second trimester". Certainly the Law Reform Commission's report entitled "Crimes Against the Foetus", which recommended in effect unrestricted abortion at least until 22 weeks gestation, will be used as persuasive evidence before the court. The result of this would be that women would be granted a **constitutional right** to abortion. As soon as we know when this case will come up, we will ask lower mainland members to attend the court hearings.

There is also the Mossop case in which we support Focus on the Family's appeal: the Canadian Human Rights Commission ruled last spring that a gay couple can constitute a family. Brian

## UN Realwomen

husbands, several fathers, brothers, cousins, boyfriends involved with the murdered girls--men had every right to grieve with the women. Would you believe I had a phone call from a woman in Port Coquitlam the next week blaming me and through me, Realwomen, for the shootings? She informed me that she had heard me on radio, seen me on TV and that the hatred in my voice came through in every word? I get some pretty nasty calls from time to time but that one stands out, especially as the last comment was "you should get down on your knees and pray!" and slam! went the receiver.

Gwen Landolt appeared for us all before the Human Rights Commission (Court Challenges Program) in October in Ottawa and was the target of a vicious attack by Svend Robinson--she stood up to his abuse as only Gwen can, but it was obvious that his comments had nothing to do with the Court Challenges Program, or Human Rights, but was purely aimed at Realwomen, and Gwen herself--perhaps it was sour grapes, recognizing his own ineptitude and Gwen's calm expertise.

We continue to be called by the media for comments on any major event affecting the family--the latest being on the opening of the film based on Margaret Atwood's book "The Handmaid's Tale", which purports to be what will happen here if the right-wing, fundamentalist zealots (who, us?) get control. Barbara Stasuk, of our B.C. Board, did a BCTV spot with Gloria Kehler of Canadian Christians Concerned About Media, with

Women's Week celebrations.

We have again applied for funding for our conference and to set up a national office, and caused another furor in feminist circles. For new members, I will repeat our stand on funding: we are totally opposed to taxpayers' money going to fund **ANY** special interest groups (even us!) but as long as the government, deficit or no, continues to hand out millions to programs many of which work against the family, we will ask for a share to work **FOR** the family.

The Abortion Committee set up by the government to hear from interested groups on Bill C-43 was addressed by Gwen Landolt late in January for Realwomen. Svend Robinson again displayed his complete lack of courtesy by walking out in the middle of her remarks. Pat Hansard of Abortion Recovery Canada was part of Campaign Life's presentation and when she complained that Svend Robinson, Burnaby-Kingsway and Dawn Black, New Westminster-Burnaby, behaved like naughty children, constantly chatting, interrupting, walking around, etc. while she was speaking, Svend Robinson replied that they had given her words "the attention they warranted"! Please write to the Speaker of the House, B.C.'s John Fraser, and express your disgust and distaste for the treatment Realwomen and indeed any proliferers receive from such as Svend Robinson.

Your Conference kit will contain some members' letters

"accepting of their lifestyle" is sickening. Strange, someone who only eats vegetables can be call a vegetarian, someone who practices bigamy is called a bigamist but if you call someone who practices sodomy a sodomist you are homophobic and preaching hate! My reply to the "you're homophobic" is no, I'm homonaused--I'm sick and tired of being told what caring, wonderful people homos are, how it's a perfectly viable alternate lifestyle, that they can't help the way they are...HOGWASH! There are reams of research refuting the last statement in particular. Someone recently told me how loving and caring a particular homo was of his boyfriend who has AIDS. I replied that it's like the old joke on the definition of a husband--a husband is someone who stands by you through troubles you never would have had if you'd stayed single. A homosexual is someone who cares for you through an illness you never would have had if you hadn't indulged in homosexual practices. Most decent people do not know the disgusting, filthy activities indulged in by these people, homo and lesbians both, quite apart from which, and all moral considerations aside, we are paying roughly \$100,000 a year to look after AIDS patients, people who other than the unfortunate women who have discovered too late they have married a bisexual man, the poor babies born to them, the hemophiliacs (who have at last been recognized by the federal government and given grants

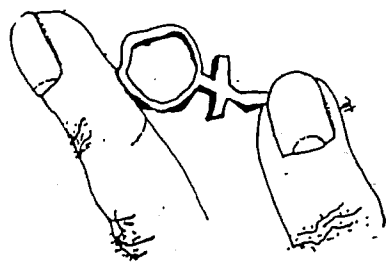


Members will have read that Realwomen have filed a complaint against Madam Justice Bertha Wilson for her remarks that time is long overdue for "the introduction of female values into a judiciary permeated by a male approach to the world". She believes that having more women judges will help correct a situation whereby (according to her) "the belief system of half the population is not reflected in a system of laws and judging". I wonder why she thinks all women think the same way--if that's true, why are there feminists and traditionalists like us? Women don't all think the same any more than men do. As Marlene Campbell said, who says male judges have the market cornered when it comes to stupid remarks.

Mossop, a federal civil servant, was denied one day's bereavement leave to attend the funeral of his lover's father in 1985. (Don't things like this make you want to get into bed, pull the covers up over your head and not come out till the world settles down? Unfortunately it's not going to, without a lot of hard work from all of us, so keep on "keeping on")...

Peggy Steacy is the President of Realwomen in B.C.

## Secretary of State



## Women's Programme

by Mona Forrest

This is the year in which we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the 50th anniversary of the vote for women in Québec. It is also the year we were required to fight for the only federal funding specific to women's organizations. We are aggravated by the message the government is sending to us: the Federal Business Development Bank can give out \$17 million for strip clubs, yet women deserve nothing.

The Women's Centre of Montréal has always been among those groups which defended the Secretary of State Women's Program. Over the years, we fought alongside other groups to have the Program's budget increased and to keep it from being decreased again.

But perhaps the Women's Program has not been strong enough in its own defense, fearing that they would be labelled as being too radical. Perhaps these women will join us now in having nothing to lose. If the staff of the program think that the funding still available to women's groups will last much longer, we think they are mistaken. And who will be left to defend the Women's Program next time?

The Women's Centre of Montréal will not close down because of the lack of federal funds. An average of \$8,500 is received by the majority of Québec women's centres. For many, this \$8,500 was an important core funding. After April 1991, it appears that the only funds available from the federal government to most centres will be short-term job

creation projects, plus whatever may be fashionable this year in the way of Women's Program short-term projects. The problem is that you cannot keep an office or meeting space open on short-term projects. You can not keep a phone line going. You can not offer consistent quality service. Because of this, we fear that we may see a new round of women's centres closing every six months if something is not done now.

User fees are not appropriate for the types of services offered by women's centres, and to ask the corporate sector to take up the slack is beyond being a joke.

An umbrella organization for Québec's approximately 80 women's centres received a letter on February 27, 1990, from Madame Violette Trépanier, Québec's Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. She shares her indignation in the face of federal government budget cuts, but indicates that she is unable to provide funding that has been cut, especially since the Québec government lost money through transfer payments to the provinces in the last federal budget.

The effect of the loss of core funding by women's centres will be devastating in terms of the ability of women in Canada to defend our previously acquired rights (if any of our rights can be said to be acquired), and to make progress with issues that still need work. Women's centres have in a way been a buffer and an agent for change. It is now absolutely essential for every woman in Canada who has ever participated in a women's

# The loss of the women's centres



## What happened to the publications that were cut?

An Update - These publications were cut 100% in the February, 1990 budget. What are they doing now?

### Healthsharing

Healthsharing is "alive and kicking." They have received a lot of support from their readers and \$12,000 in donations. The results of the cutbacks have been:

- Healthsharing will now come out three times a year instead of four;
- they have reduced staff to only two part-time staff; and
- they plan to rely more heavily on volunteers. They anticipate that this will be difficult because the economy is so bad.

They have cut all special publications and their regular issues are smaller.

RFR has cut back on staff and are relying on volunteers. Further cuts planned by the federal government for postal subsidies for journals may be the last straw. The future is bleak for the publication's continuation.

### Canadian Women's Studies (CWS)

CWS lost one half of their budget with the cuts. They are now relying on fundraising and subscriptions. CWS received a small grant from the Ontario Housing Ministry for their upcoming issue on housing. They have applied for project

centre activity, admired the work of a centre in a media report, referred someone to a women's centre or was helped in a direct or indirect way by a women's centre, to personally involve herself in this fight. Or you can expect - next week, next month or next year - to take your aspirations, your need for a helping hand or your ideas to a community centre, a political organization or a social service agency instead of to a women's centre, because there won't be any left in your community.

*Mona Forrest is the Executive Director of the Women's Centre of Montréal, a multi-service community centre for women which serves 30,000 women a year. She is President of the Board of Directors of Passages, a shelter for homeless youth and youth prostitutes, and Chair of the Status of Women Committee of the Zonta Club of Montréal, part of the international Zonta Service clubs for women. She is also President of the Eastern Region of the Foundation for Immune Diseases, a Canadian foundation for research and patient services.*

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Women of Vision Series, Box 1402, Station C. St. John's, Nfld. A1C 5N5

## Resources for Feminist Research (RFR)

RFR lost one-third of their budget when Secretary of State cut its funding in April by 100%. They receive other funding from OISE in Toronto and through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Today, two-thirds through the year, their money is so tight that they are staving off closure.

RFR used to publish four times a year, one issue was a double issue. This year they intend to publish three times.

funding from Secretary of State, which gives money for a specific project.

Project funding is crucial since subscriptions are not enough.

• CWS has only put out two issues this year, instead of four. They have another ready to go, but lack money to typeset and print.

• Went from three full-time staff to one full-time staff and one part-time.

• Will rely on volunteers for production.

• Also plan to do a "paper-bag" issue: low quality production to illustrate the effects of no funding.



A Canadian journal for feminist scholarship



# The state of federal funding

by Lynn McDonald

The federal government's cuts in the Secretary of State's Women's Program put a new urgency into the question of how the Canadian women's movement should be funded. The organized women's movement here, unlike that in any other country, is financed largely by government, overwhelmingly by the Secretary of State Women's Program. With the latest budget cuts some organizations, especially women's centres, will close down completely, while others will have to reduce services. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the umbrella organization comprising 600 plus women's groups, had been cut the previous year and advised of future decreases. These have already resulted in reductions

funded by government for their normal operations. Service organizations should be. If the lobbying organizations, especially NAC, were independent or more independent in their financing they could fight more vigorously and effectively for the service organizations. The Canadian women's movement as a whole might obtain more money from the government if its lobbying organizations asked for less. For the women of Canada this means that a voluntary investment in lobbying organizations, by membership dues and donations, could be rewarded with better funding for all the services women need.

As it is, our women's movement is highly vulnerable to cutbacks in government funding. Government funding

diverted organizational time from real work. The Canadian Medical Association and its provincial counterparts, by contrast, extract billions from government treasuries every year in fees for the services of their members. Yet the medical unions do not depend on any government for their own financing but their own members, who then deduct the fees, a much safer form of government subsidy. To use that system however, legislators would have to place value on the services women provide for women.

This is not to object to any form of public funding of voluntary organizations, women's or other. Tax credits, even a better system of tax deductions, could work, assuming the permitted aims and objectives included



Jo Beckelheimer/Spare Rib

in staff, office space, executive and committee meetings, publications and lobbying.

To address the funding issue we have first to distinguish between organizations that exist to provide a service—women's centres, sexual assault crisis centres, shelters for battered women, job counselling and various innovative programs—and those whose chief purpose, like NAC's, is lobbying. Some organizations, of course, do both. The National Association of Women and the Law, for example, lobbies governments and provides services to law students. Sexual assault crisis centres lobby on criminal justice and enforcement practices as well as provide direct services to victims.

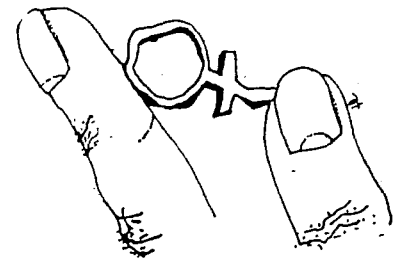
Bearing this complication in mind, let me make the argument that lobbying organizations should not be

for women's organizations began in the early 1970's and grew through that decade and well into the 1980's. Then, in 1989, the Conservative government lowered the boom.

The opponents of independent funding for groups like NAC have many arguments in their pockets. They argue that "Women are poor", and indeed most poor people are women and women earn, on average, less than men. Yet millions of Canadian women earn enough to pay dues of \$25 or \$50 per year, some even \$100 per year. Women favouring ongoing dependency on government argue an entitlement to the money on the basis of the worthiness of the services provided. Here lobbying is redefined as a service to legislators, which, in fact, it usually is. Still, the cold, hard fact remains that grants are being reduced and they always came with strings attached. They have always

lobbying. The government could go even further to provide for a system of allocating a certain sum of money to voluntary organizations through the tax system. The proposal I have in mind is not the usual deduction for a donation already made but the right for every resident to channel a certain sum of money — \$100?, even \$10 — through the tax system. At tax return time people would decide which organization they would favour with their allocation. Organizations, presumably including environmental, cultural and other worthy causes, would make their pitch to the public at income tax time. Organizations would survive and flourish on the basis of their popular support, without any ability of government to censor. There are no guarantees here either, of course, for a government could suspend the whole system or de-register an

## Secretary of State



## Women's Programme

organization. However, an enormous degree of independence would be attained, and for that reason it's unlikely to be legislated by any government.

The current situation is truly preposterous: a department of the federal government, the Secretary of State Women's Program, asks its major lobbyist, NAC, what lobbying it plans to do next year and then decides how much to pay it for this service! Nowhere else in the world does this happen. The National Organization of Women in the United States receives not a dime in government funding. Nor, do the women's organizations of Europe, north or south, large or small.

### Using NAC as an example:

With greater independence in funding, NAC's credibility would only grow. Surely the fact that NAC cannot raise \$50,000 from the women of Canada detracts from its claim to represent some four to six million of us. If NAC raised even ten cents each for five million women it would have an income of \$500,000. More than the amount of the total grant of NAC, before the cuts.

NAC would, in my view, desirably be completely free of government grants; reduced dependency through increased reliance on memberships should now at least be seen as a minimum requirement for survival. NAC's mailing list now comprises only 2600 names, individuals and groups combined. In theory member groups pass on information and pleas for action to their members through their own mail-outs. In practice few do with any regularity, detail or

enthusiasm. With its own membership list NAC would be able to mobilize letters, phone calls and faxes in response to whatever crisis. That it cannot do so now seriously impairs its effectiveness.

An individual membership for NAC, probably non-voting, and certainly in addition to the group structure, would improve NAC's lobbying clout as well as give it financial security.

Individual memberships would also give Canadian women the opportunity for consistent, ongoing involvement in the organized women's movement. For NAC, it would mean a new source of executive and committee members, no small matter in these days of burn-out. Today, participation in NAC is restricted to those active in a member group, usually with substantial, competing responsibilities in that group. This requirement belies the normal facts of life for Canadian women: geographical mobility, family and career changes. Women who might be active in a member group at one stage in their life move, have children and change jobs. With individual memberships in NAC these women need not be lost to the organized women's movement, which they now often are.

If NAC established an individual membership structure it would have to find something for its new recruits to do. Regional or local NAC chapters would build up a core of members knowledgeable about federal issues. Each locality could have visible events for the exchange of ideas, networking and fund raising. Desirably these would become enjoyable fixtures on the calendar. NAC annual and

(continued on page 25)

## Convergence

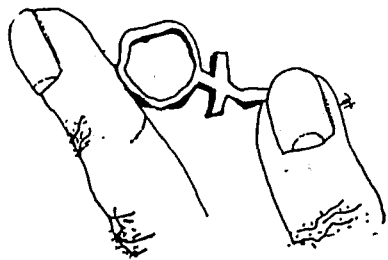
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## Secretary of State



## Women's Programme

Update from Mr. Weiner's office,  
November 6, 1990

The Womanist contacted the Minister's press secretary, who provided this update: "Spring 1990 was an interim measure only and will not be carried into the next fiscal years. The money was taken from various branches of the department as an emergency measure only. The Minister is meeting with women's centres to discuss 'partnerships' between the centres and provinces."

## What happened to Women's Centres this year?

- February 1990 Women's Centres across Canada start to get calls from their regional Secretary of State officer and are informed that they will not be receiving any more funding after March 31, 1990.
- March 1990 Women's organizations start to protest the cutbacks.
- April 1990 Women's Centres across the country start to shut down.
- Women in St. John's, Nfld. occupy Secretary of State offices. It happens in British Columbia also.
- May 1990 The Minister for the Status of Women and the Minister for Secretary of State announces that money will be taken from another account to keep the centres open until April, 1991.
- The money is only until April 1991 and then it will all start again.

## A VERY PUBLIC LIFE

WHETHER TALKING AS A POLITICIAN, MOTHER, educator, social activist or feminist, Rosemary Brown's views are always insightful and highly respected. One of Canada's most dynamic and outspoken personalities, she writes here about the people and events in her life and the issues closest to her heart - racism in Canada, the rights of women, abortion, education, and the political process.

*"Those interested in women in politics as feminists will find here almost every problem discussed in feminist groups. ...One can hear in the pages that soft, slow way she has of rolling ideas through her speeches until the point becomes unmistakably clear. I hope this will not be her last account of life in Canada."*

-Senator Lorna Marsden, GLOBE & MAIL

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## The state of federal funding cont'd

regional meetings should be large and open, encouraging the participation of individual members even if such status remains non-voting. An upgraded magazine or newsletter is needed as a link.

## The alternatives

If the women of Canada wish to continue to enjoy the blessings of an organized women's movement they will have to do its work and pay its bills. There are no short cuts. Nor can anyone reasonably expect Mulroney to change his mind about the cuts. Why should he hand out money to a group of women who so regularly and relentlessly lambast his government? Nor can waiting for a change in government be a viable option. It won't happen fast enough and might not result in greater generosity anyway. A return to the "good old days" of rising grants would, in any event, only postpone the inevitable; a lobbying organization financed by the government it lobbies will always be vulnerable. The previous Liberal government well knew this, fostered the dependency and used it skillfully.

It is time to blow the whistle on the crisis, suggest the sort of changes needed and ask Canadian women to respond promptly and generously.

Lynn McDonald is a former President of NAC and a former NDP Member of Parliament.

# Confessions of a state feminist

(partial, incomplete and self-censored)  
by Lyse Blanchard

*"Before women can work to reconstruct society we must reject the notion that obtaining power in the existing social structure will necessarily advance feminist struggle to end sexist oppression. It may allow numbers of women to gain greater material privilege, control over their destiny and the destiny of others, all of which are important goals. It will not end male domination as a system."*

bell hooks\*

Had I read Bell Hooks before I started a "career" in the federal bureaucracy, it would have surely changed the course of my life. But in 1971, feminist analysis had very few reference points, and I had none, except my own life experience. I was naive, idealistic, middle-class, and self-described as a n "indépendantiste" and a feminist. Fifteen years later, I left the bureaucracy a little cynical, more realistic, still middle-class, indépendantiste and a feminist.

I joined the federal public service when most government structures dealing with women's issues were being created: the Canadian Advisory Council, Status of Women Canada, and the Women's Program came to life soon after the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Over the years, these structures became increasingly solidified and entrenched. In the real world, the women's movement was spreading. Feminist analysis was constantly evolving as we began to understand the cause of our problems. There was no consensus on solutions, definitions, issues, strategies or anything else, but a common sense of purpose.

New women's organizations were being formed everyday, ideological positions and differences became more apparent and clearer, but an easier target for attack by counter movements. Class and race shook the movement more than right-wing thinking did. During this time, government structures survived, remaining static in their mandates but growing in size as if nothing was happening out there. No serious review and evaluation of these structures was undertaken, nor was there any questioning as to their relevance, effectiveness and usefulness except in the context of governmental cut-backs.

Government machinery became so complex and confusing, even to those who conceived it, that women's groups eventually lost interest in monitoring the various structures that had been established to advance the situation of women in Canada. Most of the mainstream media had difficulty covering the issues and one by one, feminist publications folded.

For years, I was well paid to work on women's issues, convinced that I could make a

opt the movement. I now realize that because there was not enough to go around, territoriality set in to protect whatever was available. Worst of all group solidarity practically disappeared. New and emerging organizations of immigrant, native, and poor women are unable to access funds which are already limited and earmarked for existing groups.

The process of state cooptation is always very subtle, slow and insidious. It

was not only peculiar to government but was also evident within the institutionalized government-funded women's organizations. There is little movement in the movement, mainly because the political and economic environment paralysed any attempt to shake the status quo, in fear that the minimal gains made may be lost.

Feminists have come to acknowledge that in order to

knew then that I could not. What I was actually doing was fighting to prevent the worst from happening rather than working towards positive change. Obvious as this may seem to most it is less clear when one is comfortably earning a living as a state feminist. So, I left - to work in a women's organization. That will be the subject of another article four years from now (maybe).

Was leaving a sign of courage or of cowardice? A little of both perhaps. Some might say it is courageous (or stupid) to relinquish job security, the best pension plan around, status and prestige that comes with being a senior executive. Others might say it is cowardly to leave the battlefield before the victory, and to abandon feminist co-workers who have chosen to stay. All I know for sure is that I had reached a breaking point. I did not feel support either from within the bureaucracy or from the women's groups - and, without a modicum of support or even the perception of support, I was powerless. And my bosses knew it.

Bell Hooks continues her statement on power as follows: "The suggestion that women must obtain power before they can effectively resist sexism is rooted in the false assumption that women have no power." The key for us, wherever we are in the social structure, is to recognize the powers we have individually and collectively, and use these powers to transform society. More specifically we must not confuse the illusion of power with real power.

\*Bell Hooks - Feminist Theory, From Margin to Center, South End Press

Lyse Blanchard is the new Executive Director of CUSO. She has spent more than 15 years in various government departments including CIDA, Status of Women Canada and the Secretary of State where she directed the Women's Program from 1984 to 1986. She was also the Executive Director of the YWCA in Montréal from 1986 to 1989.



fem

difference if I stuck to my feminist principles. The types of jobs I held kept me connected to a certain extent with the women's movement. I quickly found myself, however, in a "catch 22" situation: labelled a radical within the government, and labelled a "state feminist" by my feminist friends outside. Political correctness was a very fashionable concept in those days, except you never were quite sure who determined it. You were defined by others who did not know you, but knew your function.

I stuck to my feminist principles; tried to maintain the integrity of the program I was directing; prevented the funding of organizations whose aims were counter to everything women had fought for, and felt I had made a difference. Big organizations were generously funded, and strangely enough, the sky did not fall. Four years later, the written feminist word practically disappears because of cut-backs, and the sky is still up there.

Another illusion that I nurtured while "inside" was that state funding of women's organizations, since it was so infinitesimal, would never co-

usually begins with changes in the priorities of the funding program, an ever so minor shift in financial resource allocation. But just enough to force the groups to modify their own priorities in order to fit - and that's where the danger lies. It is not so much what is allowed but what is **not** that ends up doing the most damage to individual organizations' *raison d'être*. Once detracted from their purpose, it is easier for demobilization to set in and fragmentation to begin.

Over the past few years, certain topics and activities have become taboo with the funders, such as lesbian issues and abortion rights, so they disappear from the groups' agenda. Eventually, we end up losing the sense of who we are, and we become what they want us to be. Nice, polite, harmless, sensible, charming and, of course, logical and reasonable. Comparing the feminist discourse of 1975 with the one heard in 1990 is sufficient to assess the dramatic mitigation that has occurred over the years. Of course state funding is not the only factor but I am sure it is a significant one.

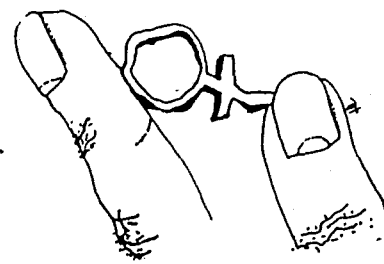
The failure to review and re-examine vision and focus

get out of the present paralysis, the women's movement needs to reorganize, to be more inclusive, to recognize the limitations of what it has been for the past twenty years. Women who have shaped the movement are resisting this to a certain extent. This is understandable. I myself have played an important part in creating this dilemma and it is not easy to admit that I have actively supported and sometimes created strategies and programs that eventually led to the quiescent situation that we see today.

It was after raising the alarm about anti-feminist organizations, when I was referred to in a feminist magazine as a "well-meaning feminist bureaucrat" but an alarmist, that I started to seriously consider the absurdity of my situation. In addition to having lost all credibility within, I felt that I no longer had any credibility outside. Although many other factors affected my final decision to leave, this incident was the catalyst which forced me to make a break which I should have made long before.

If ever I had thought that I could make a difference, I

## Secretary of State



## Women's Programme



## TWENTY YEARS OF PROGRESS

This December we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the release of the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. This landmark report focused unprecedented attention on the needs of women in Canada.

When the Royal Commission was appointed in 1967, women had no legal access to information about birth control, or to birth control devices. In many workplaces, women were dismissed when they married. Women could not testify in courts against spouses or partners who beat them.

The report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women prompted many changes: maternity leave provisions in our labour laws; human rights legislation; women's bureaus at the federal and provincial levels; employment equity laws; rape crisis centres and much more.

Through the work of women's groups, committed individuals, governments, business, education, labour and other groups, the status of women in Canada has improved greatly over the past twenty years.

But we still have a long way to go on the road to full equality. One way to accomplish our objectives is through partnerships - partnerships that call upon all players to work together to define shared solutions.

I am encouraged by the partnerships that women's groups are forging between themselves and with other organizations. In order to achieve equality, we must show, in our actions and our attitudes, that we are working together towards a common goal - full and equal participation for women in all spheres of activity.

**Mary Collins,  
Minister Responsible for the  
Status of Women**

## VINGT ANNÉES DE PROGRÈS

En décembre, nous célébrerons le vingtième anniversaire de la publication du rapport de la Commission royale d'enquête sur la situation de la femme. Ce rapport historique a attiré l'attention, comme jamais auparavant, sur les besoins des Canadiennes.

Au moment où la Commission royale a été nommée en 1967, les femmes n'avaient aucun accès légal à de l'information sur la contraception ou à des contraceptifs. Dans plusieurs entreprises, les femmes étaient congédiées à leur mariage. Les femmes battues ne pouvaient témoigner contre leur époux ou leur conjoint devant les tribunaux.

Le rapport de la Commission royale d'enquête sur la situation de la femme a amené plusieurs changements: des congés de maternité; des lois sur les droits de la personne; des bureaux de promotion de la femme aux niveaux provincial et fédéral; des lois sur l'équité en matière d'emploi; des centres d'aide aux victimes de viol et bien d'autres.

Grâce aux efforts de groupes de femmes, de Canadiens et de Canadiennes engagés, des gouvernements, du milieu des affaires, de l'éducation, des syndicats et d'autres groupes, la situation des femmes au Canada s'est grandement améliorée au cours des vingt dernières années.

Mais il nous reste encore beaucoup de chemin à parcourir sur la route menant à l'égalité complète. La collaboration est un moyen permettant d'atteindre nos buts. Une collaboration où toutes les parties concernées contribuent à trouver des solutions.

Je suis encouragée de voir la collaboration qui s'établit entre les groupes de femmes et d'autres groupes. Afin de réaliser l'égalité, nous devons montrer, dans nos actes et nos attitudes, que nous travaillons toutes ensemble vers le même but - la participation pleine et entière des femmes à toutes les sphères d'activité.

**Mary Collins  
Ministre responsable de la  
Condition féminine**



Status of Women  
Canada

Condition féminine  
Canada

**Canada**



# The Disappeared

documented on Renée  
Eplebaum by Elisabeth  
Jacobs-Reis

Renée Eplebaum perfectly fits everyone's stereotypical image of a mother. She is the first to admit this: an ordinary mother, an ordinary woman who leads an ordinary life; but most ordinary mothers that we know don't have their children disappear one day, never to see them again. On August 10, 1976, Renée expected to see her 25 year old son Luis sitting in a concert hall where they had arranged to meet. He didn't show up. In fact, Renée would never see Luis again. He had disappeared. Within a year after Luis' disappearance her two other children, Claudio aged 23 and Lila aged 20, also disappeared. Argentina's dirty war against its people had been waged.

In the summer of 1976, Argentina's president, Isabel Perón, was put under house arrest as a group of military officers took over the government in a bloodless military coup. Silence fell on Buenos Aires. The military, under General Reynaldo Bignone, said that they had only the best intentions, wanting to restore peace in the country. That they had the utmost respect for human rights. By August, Renée and many other Argentinians didn't believe them anymore. Witnesses were reporting barbaric military actions such as gruesome torture methods, the murder of adolescents, the kidnapping of children and pregnant women, and the dropping of innocent people into the ocean from helicopters.

Anyone who was slightly suspected of being non-

sympathetic to the military government and who spoke out against them disappeared. Most of these people were between the ages of 17 and 29. Doctors, teachers, social workers, activists -- all were subject to the military's wrath. Mothers lived in constant fear that their children would be the next to be taken. Those like Renée whose children had

information. Armed with only placards, upon which were written the names and pictures of their missing children, wearing white head scarves, they began something which is still continuing today: the mothers of the disappeared.

Renée says, "In the beginning, the 30th of April 1977, 14 mothers went to Plaza de Mayo, the big square in front

Documentary on Las Madres  
de la Plaza de Mayo, Interview  
with one of the founders:  
RENEE EPLEBAUM

go-ahead to continue its crimes, and the world would hear nothing about them.

As a response to the brutality of the regime and because our children have been kidnapped we decided to become living denouncers. Because all of us are witnesses of our history we decided to become active not to remain silent.

Renée heard news of her two children, Claudio and Lila, over a year after they had disappeared, from a man who had spoken to them when he was in an interim camp in neighbouring Uruguay. He assured her that though they had been tortured they were O.K. and that she would probably see them both soon. That glimmer of hope did not materialize into reality and Renée fears that they may have been detained for years and then murdered in cold blood - this was not uncommon. According to witnesses the government would destroy any evidence to the atrocities that they were committing. Between 1976 and 1983, Argentina housed between 200 and 300 concentration camps; mass graves have been uncovered throughout the country side revealing the bodies of thousands of tortured and murdered citizens of Argentina.

"It was a nightmare, a nightmare, but usually after a nightmare we wake up and say oh it was just a bad dream, no more," but unfortunately this was not the case. They kidnapped over 30,000 people, there were several thousand who were killed, tortured to a slow death. It was a nightmare but a real nightmare. When San Francisco had an earthquake all the people in America were shocked. The toll was high, but many, many more thousands died in Argentina. The earthquake was a cataclysm caused by nature. In Argentina the cataclysm was provoked by men.

In 1983 the military stepped down and a democratic, constitutional government took its place under the leadership of President Raúl Alfonsín. A commission of inquiry heard evidence that as many as 30,000 people had disappeared during the military reign of terror. Although President Alfonsín was a great improvement over the last government, the process of cleaning house was being hampered by the same old dirt.

"We have a civilian government, and a civilian president who is a very

democratic man, we have many expectations but we feel frustrated. We still have not received the information we were demanding."

Today in Argentina, the problem still exists. Right-wing groups which supported the military coup of 1976 are still active, applying pressure to the present government. President Alfonsín's government ordered a trial for 5 members of the military junta, only 2 of whom received life imprisonments. In early October of 1989 the newest president of Argentina, President Menem, made a move to pardon about 280 military officers and former leftist guerrillas. They had been accused of crimes ranging from torture, kidnapping, armed rebellion and terrorism. Common criminals in jail for crimes like theft must serve their sentences though.

Later the new president Mr. Menem signed a decree, and about 18 high generals who were still on trial, were freed because they were only obeying orders. Now these people are free. One of the men who was released is a man who applied an electric probe to a 2 month old baby, in order to make its parents confess any crime, real or not. We were so shocked that they did this again to ordinary people. We can't understand.

It is clear that the government is not ready to stir up political waters in a newly liberalized state, and the mothers who are considered national heroes after the military stepped down are now embarrassing heroes for the present government. President Menem says that Argentinians must accept these pardons in order for the country to push forward in creating a stable economy, especially when his hand has been forced to do so by powerful military men. The question is not an easy one though. When does a country leave the past behind? The past cannot be forgotten simply because the present has improved.

(continued on page 42)



disappeared were given no explanations by authorities as to what had happened to their children. The military had seized the most precious things in their lives, their children, and there was only silence.

In April of 1977, 14 women, Renée among them, went to the Plaza de Mayo in front of the parliament buildings to voice their frustration and demand

of the presidential palace, and from that day on, every Thursday from 3:30 to 4pm we march to the plaza. We are still marching, more than 12 years later. We still have reason to continue that march. We didn't receive the information we were asking for all these years. What happened to our children? Are they dead or alive, we can guess but we don't know. We didn't receive the information.

We were also demanding justice, a full account of what happened, during those years. As time passed the number of mothers marching increased, and the kidnappings increased. In the beginning we marched silently in pairs. One of the policemen told us to do that because in Argentina we were under a state of siege so no more than 2 people could be together publicly. In the beginning we just gathered. We stayed there at the plaza every Thursday for about an hour depending on the harassment we received. We were told you have to be mad to go to Plaza de Mayo and openly defy the military when no one else dared to do a thing like that. There were other people who tried to do something but not in the open.

The most important thing was not to be silent. Silence gave the government the full



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# The Condor meets the eagle

by Michelle Albert

The traditional view, taught in North American schools, is that on October 12th, 1492 Christopher Columbus "discovered" America. The 500 year period since the arrival of Columbus is generally viewed as an heroic building of a "new world", of new nations, through industrial and technological development and progress. The people living in the Americas at the time of the "discovery" are described as uncivilized and barbaric. The Europeans are depicted as valiant explorers or kindly missionaries who brought to the natives the word of God and civilized European ways.

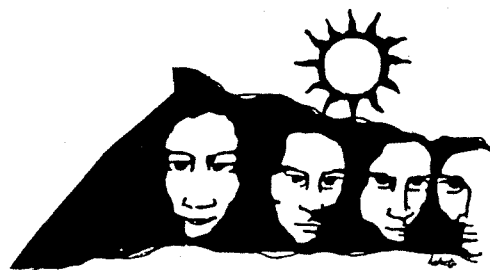
In Spain and Latin America plans are well underway for a large celebration in October 1992, the date of the 500th anniversary. For some the quincentenary is being viewed as a celebration, and the theme of Spain's planned festivities is "An Encounter of Two Worlds". For others counter-celebrations are being organized to call for the end of discrimination and oppression of Indigenous and Afro-American peoples.

Contrary to the European perspective that October 12th, 1492 is a day to celebrate, for the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and for Afro-Americans it was a tragic day. When Columbus docked his ship in the Caribbean, he was in fact opening up all of the Americas to European conquest. That day marked the beginning of the process of

colonization, which oppressed and exploited all those who were not European-born. This is not a cause for celebration. The use of the word "discovery" is not only ridiculous, but racist. People were living in the Americas for at least 30,000 years before Columbus. To call the meeting between the Europeans and Native Americans an "encounter"

decimated. According to statistics there were 80-100 million indigenous people in Latin America on Columbus' arrival in 1492. By 1650 that figure had dropped by almost 95%. In Mexico alone the Native population dropped from 25 million to 1 million in just 100 years.

The Europeans imposed their own culture and forbade



suggests a meeting of mutual respect, one that takes place on equal footing. To use these terms is to ignore the reality of history. Nothing was discovered. It was not an encounter. It was an invasion.

Native peoples were dominated and exploited by the process of colonization. To build a "New World" for themselves, the Europeans set out to destroy the existing world of the Native populations. Indigenous people were seen as an economic resource and were forced to work in the fields and mines. They were enslaved and treated as less than human. Through enslavement, war and disease brought by the Europeans, the native population was

all aspects of Native culture - religion, language, customs. Missionaries, through Christian doctrine, taught passivity and subordination to native people.

But not only Indigenous people suffered. Millions of Africans were brought over to America where they and their descendants remained in slavery for 300 years. When the Native populations declined, and were no longer able to serve the growing demands of the colonizers, the colonizers began to enslave Africans and ship them across the Atlantic. The conditions during the voyage were so barbaric that countless died. Once they arrived they continued to be treated as less than human and suffered brutal

violence under the colonial system.

But theirs is also a history of resistance and survival which has been ignored and denied by traditional historical research and teachings. The racism that still exists today against Indigenous and Afro-American peoples is evidence of the continued entrenchment of an imperialist mentality.

The Indigenous peoples of North America suffered heavily under the British, French and other European powers. A statement put forth by the Assembly of First Nations on the subject of the 1992 celebrations states:

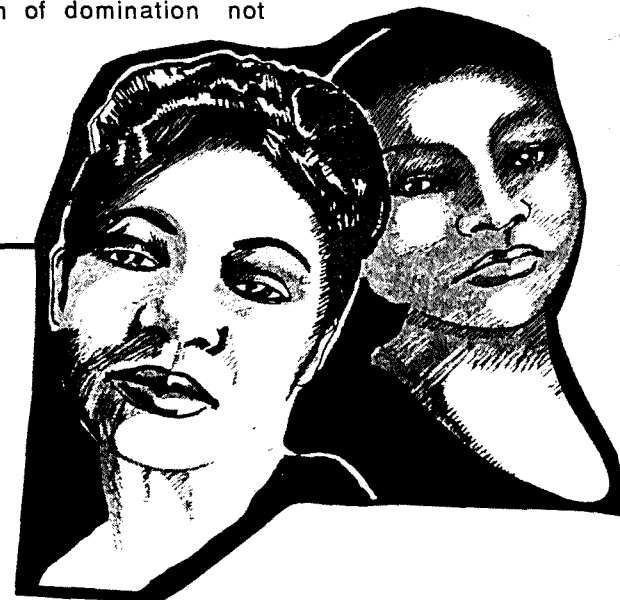
"For First Nations to celebrate the near destruction of our culture and identity would be insane. The concepts we associate with Columbus' voyage are reflection, invasion, conquest, colonization, assimilation and genocide, with respect to the Beothuk Nation to the east."

In re-examining the past 500 years, one must inevitably look to the present situation to get a clear picture of the consequences of October 12th, 1492.

Presently, North, South and Central America run on a system of domination not

unlike the earlier system of European domination. In fact, the present situation has its roots in the earlier imperialist power structure. Today it is the United States which dominates the other countries of the region. Native peoples still bear the brunt of the system, in Central and South America through the exploitation of their physical labour, in North America through endemic discrimination and cultural repression. In Canada and the U.S.

Native peoples are stigmatized through racial and cultural stereotyping; they are incarcerated at a rate much higher than whites; the education system has not reflected or respected their culture and few hold positions of power. First Nations people in Canada are involved in the basic struggle of self-determination and self government as they fight to keep their land. Witness the struggle of the Lubicon for control over their own land, and the Innu who are protesting NATO's actions in flying fighter planes as low as



## The Disappeared cont'd

Mr. Menem, our president, said that all of our people must reconcile and give, and you know shake hands, all of us must become brother and sister. I always ask, will you shake hands with a torturer? Would you call a torturer your brother? I think it's revolting.

Those in Argentina who do

not support Menem's acts of pardon are working and lobbying for a national referendum on the issue. They fear now that if the military officers are pardoned they might feel vindicated and repeat their acts of terror. What is happening in Argentina is closely being watched by

countries like Chile. A transition to democratic government after sixteen years of military rule by General Augusta Pinochet is being accompanied by calls for justice for his regimes, and human rights crimes. In Uruguay voters decided after much debate within the country to support an amnesty for military officers and leftist guerrillas who fought there in the 1970's. But meanwhile back in Argentina hundreds of mothers who march each Thursday must accept their country's lack of justice and walk the streets with the torturers who had taken and killed their children.


Among those who have been kidnapped or disappeared are social workers, physicians, students of medicine, and teachers. There were those who were Christians and went to shanty towns and tried to help their

people. They taught them how to write and how to read, telling the mothers that they have to boil the water so their children won't get sick. These people were called subversives. It was a nightmare.

Renée introduced me to her daughter - a pin up on the wall - "isn't she beautiful? She is now 27, see the cheerful letter she sent me from Europe before coming back. She is a biochemist. She has disappeared. She has been missing for 6 years now. She is a lively graceful girl. Look at her pretty handwriting. This is a poster she sent me from Portugal. She is very good at

drawing. This is the photograph I like best, where she is sitting at the coffee shop with her classmates. She is the one in the middle. I don't ask any more questions to anyone. I just talk to her at night when I am walking along those streets, its like having her by me."

"Now she always sleeps with me, most of the time she silently listens to me but some of those times she quarrels within me. But it is good. It should be so. Then she lives. And I go home all alone to wait for her. This is the photograph, let me introduce her to you. Isn't she beautiful...!"



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# Invasion of Kuwait

by Mary Mouammar

The recent invasion of Kuwait by Iraq has had countless ramifications for the nationals of both countries, and has extended well beyond the Arab world. However, none will be more radical than the impact it will have on the status of women in Kuwait.

While no one can predict the outcome of the present stalemate in the Gulf crisis, for the purposes of this article, I shall focus on the type of changes that are likely to occur if Iraq was to succeed in permanently annexing Kuwait, thus making it a province.

In order to do so, I shall present a picture of the present status of women in both countries. Once this is established the reader shall come to her own conclusion as to what impact Iraqi occupation of Kuwait will have on the status of women in that country.

Unfortunately, not much has been written on the status of women in Iraq. Recently

some articles touched on the difference between Iraqi and Kuwaiti women. In this article I will rely on information contained in the Minority Rights Report # 2. It was last revised in 1983.

Iraq, according to the Report, had always been a country where exceptional women would rise to the top. It was the first Arab country to send women delegates to the United Nations. Even in its tribal areas there have been two famous women judges. Girls' education was well established before the 1958 revolution. After the revolution, facilities for girls were further expanded. Since coming to power in 1963 the present government led by the Arab Baath Socialist Party, gave the status of women a lot of attention. For example, in its National Action Charter of November 1971 it provided for "the liberation of women from feudal and bourgeois concepts and from the

conditions of bondage that had rendered her to a mere means of entertainment or second class citizen."

Dr. Fawzia Al-Attia, then head of the department of Sociology at Baghdad University, provided the following information: Women made up 30% of the country's doctors, 33% of its teachers and university lecturers, 33% of the staff of government departments, 26% of workers in industry, and 45% of those on farms. It must be kept in mind that these figures were last revised in 1983. Given that there have not been any major changes in government or ideology, one can only assume that these figures have not changed much, or that they have improved.

Dr. Al-Attia believed that women in Iraq had made great strides in progress. Not only in political and economic organizations but in social relations, particularly between men and women. Their emancipation can be seen not only in their numbers in the work force but also in the type of rights and benefits they achieved. For example, married pregnant women are given 40 days leave before delivery and 43 days after. Government run day-care centres qualify any woman who wishes go back to work to use free day care facilities immediately following the end of her leave.

Traditional female attire is worn by the less educated women outside the Capital and veiling is rare in Iraq.

Dr. Al-Attia believes that the most notable development at breaking down the sex barriers has been the government's encouragement of co-ed primary and secondary schools. She believes that this is likely to have a significant effect because it shatters the impression that the sexes must be segregated. Issues such as women's inheritance and divorce laws were looked into in the early eighties. The biggest grievance Iraqi women have has to do with their society's attitudes towards pre-marital virginity. We all know the history of society's obsession with virginity. From the Vestal Virgins to the Chastity belt women have had to carry the burden of upholding their families' honor by remaining virgins. It had taken the West centuries to change this notion; hopefully, this will not be the case in today's fast developing countries.

Olivia Ward, the Toronto Star's writer on international affairs and the United Nations, described educated Iraqi women as high-powered females. She said they learn and earn, alongside men. Their role in the Iran-Iraq war, taking over many traditional blue-collar jobs, would have left conservatives in the Gulf states gasping with horror. In contrast, she described Kuwaiti women as the silent and subjugated half of the country. Few, if any, Kuwaiti women work outside the home. Many believe that it is demeaning for a woman to have a job. According to the Ministry Rights Report mentioned earlier, there is a small group of intellectual women in Kuwait whose talents and gifts are not

being utilized. They seek reform to the Islamic Shariah laws and seek to give women the right to vote. The picture is not encouraging since only men with a lot of property could vote in Kuwait. As Olivia Ward concluded, women's rights in the Gulf states, including Kuwait, "move forward at the pace of an elderly snail".

In the same article, Professor Albertine Jwaideh, who teaches at the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto, and who had studied in the Gulf States as well as Iraq, told Ward that she finds it ironic that the United States and the Western countries are rushing to defend the very regime that oppresses women the most. Perhaps the most telling aspect of the status of women in Kuwait is the social security provision of a monthly income, or pension, given to any girl who, at the age of eighteen, has not managed to find a husband. Such a provision, attractive as it may seem to some people, is a benevolent method of keeping women as dependants rather than treated as full fledged and capable members of society.

It is difficult to predict what the outcome of the Gulf crisis will be. However, one thing is certain, if Iraq manages to hold onto Kuwait and give Kuwaiti women the same rights gained by their Iraqi counterparts, as Olivia Ward concluded, once women in other Gulf States realize the gains being achieved by their sisters next door, "no amount of imported fire power could hold the explosion from within."

*Mary Mouammar is a self-employed consultant in Toronto who specializes in cross-cultural communications and immigrant women's issues.*

## The Condor meets the eagle cont'd

30 meters over their land, destroying their way of life. The Assembly of First Nations report states:

"The continuous oppression we still face within our communities in the social and economic perception such as high unemployment, alcoholism, suicides and other related indicators, can be attributed to the events of the last 500 years."

A report by the United Indigenous Delegation of Guatemala before the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous People also links the present situation to the past:

"...the sacking of our resources and the theft of the products of our work permitted the European powers of that time, as they do the U.S. at present, to develop their own countries at the cost of poverty and backwardness for our peoples."

But the focus of the counter-celebrations are not only the harsh realities of oppression but the vast history

of struggle and resistance against the colonial powers. We should focus on the struggles and successes of those who have fought against an unjust system. They did not accept the invasion and enslavement passively as some would suggest. As Enrique Dussel writes, "there wasn't a year either during colonial times or in the 19th and 20th centuries when some group or ethnic nation of the original inhabitants didn't rebel."

The 500th anniversary is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the past 500 years, to reflect on where we are now, where we are headed and where we want to go.

The events of the last year – the escalation of war in El Salvador, the rise of violence in Columbia, the assault on the Indigenous peoples in Amazonia, the Mohawk struggle at Oka and the struggle for control over the Panama Canal – all reveal that the system created during the last 500 years has led us to a

state of violent conflict.

It is time to look at events from the perspective of others, and to be aware of the mistakes of the past. The 500th anniversary can be the end of discrimination and oppression and the beginning of an inter-continental attempt to create a just society with respect for all human beings. Let us join with the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Afro-Americans in their celebration of the survival of their cultures.

For more information contact: 500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE AND SURVIVAL - 1992: The Condor Meets the Eagle, Toronah Support Group P.O. Box 591, Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1E4 fax: (416) 531-6214

*Michelle Albert is a Canadian feminist who lived in Central America for some time and is active at the local level in solidarity work in Toronto.*

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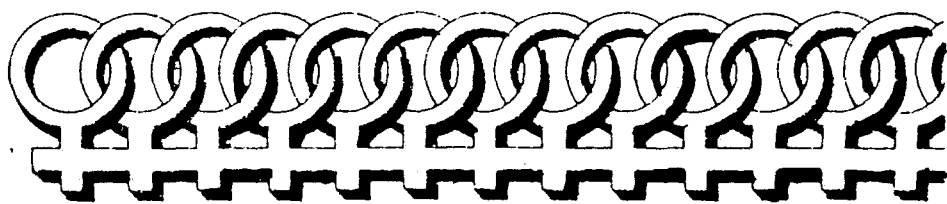
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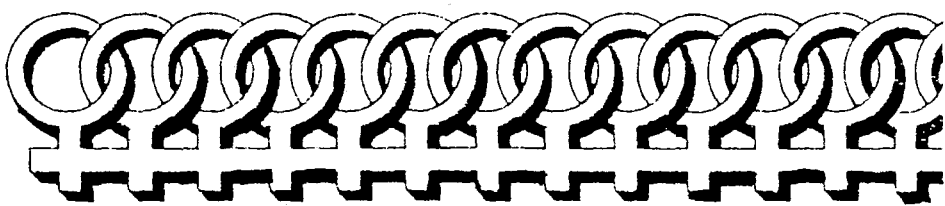
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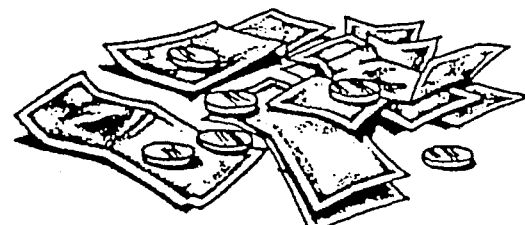
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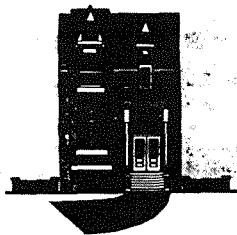
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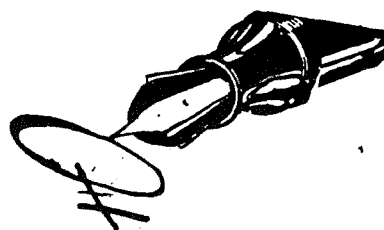
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to the womanist  
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in the battle for true  
equality. Mary Clancy*

# Womenspeak



Dear Sisters,

I'm an educated indigenous black female living in the Province of Nova Scotia. I was raised in the black community of East Preston. East Preston is one of the two black communities in Nova Scotia with large indigenous populations. I now live in the city of Dartmouth. I have achieved an academic education by successfully obtaining a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology at Dalhousie University. Other areas I have studied are Black History, Political Science and Criminology.

I am a single mother who is successful and continues to do well while raising my beautiful and intelligent twelve year old son, named Prince Wakai Afo Glasgow.

I have worked in many areas professionally, such as with the Department of Social Services as a Motivational Counsellor, and a Youth Worker for young offenders. Presently, I work as a Human Service Worker with the Black United Front of Nova Scotia.

I am interested in people with different cultures and customs. Most importantly, I am interested in the political change within our society.

## Question:

*The Womanist* would like to know what it is like to be Black in Nova Scotia.

## Answer:

To be black in Nova Scotia is like being a foreigner in Russia. People from the larger part of society treat you as if you were a refugee trying to get status in their country. Phrase: "If you don't like it; go back where you come from."

Racism is a real and serious problem here. Black Nova Scotians have lived in this Province for over **four hundred years**. We have not been given true and efficient status yet. Our

contributions to this Province haven't truly become fruitful or recognizable.

Being a black woman in Nova Scotia for me is a struggle worth fighting. I conscientiously and continually battle to overcome such obstacles as racism to keep my sanity.

Some people from the larger part of society seem to feel secure only as long as you're passive, don't take much initiative and let them call the shots. But as soon as they realize you're not willing to sit in the back seat because you also know how to drive, they feel so threatened they try to

figure out ways to get you to back down, back off or until you appear to be tamed. Sorry, I'm not tameable. I believe as a human being with feelings, a black and woman that I must love myself, honor myself and hold myself in the highest esteem.

Ms. Debbie Glasgow  
Halifax, Nova Scotia



Dear Editor:

I was pleased to discover this new newspaper at a bookstore but my head rocked back and forth as I read the contradictory themes juggled in last Fall's edition. On the one hand, excellent articles deploring violence to women, and violence, lack of care and provision for the world's children; on the other hand the advocacy for women to solicit the killing of their own children. Why does every valid women's issue have to be corrupted by the appearance of CARAL, reminding women and politicians that women must be entitled to the glorious choice of destroying their own offspring? What a nerve they have showing up at, and assuming recruits at "Take Back The Night". What's the line "Violence Against Women - No, Violence Against Unborn Babies - Yes"? Let's get honest.

If not through prenatal classes, or biology studies, then through Pro-life materials, the public is being permeated with information on prenatal human development and the practices of abortion. They will no longer be fooled by abortionists' misspeak. If the women's movement doesn't reroute its energy on the abortion issue into promoting avoidance of unplanned pregnancies, and the making good of those which occur and drop the lobby for this barbaric hypocritical practice, we shall lose credibility for the many worthy efforts for which we have and do fight.

I hope you will publish this letter in light of the fact you are committed to "enable all voices to be heard equally" while celebrating our differences.

Sincerely,  
Alice Rabideau,  
Toronto, Ontario

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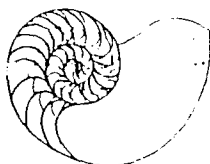
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Safuega, Lista de Correos,  
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## Goodbye to Jane Evans

In October of this year, the  
women's movement in Canada  
lost a wonderful woman. Jane  
Evans, who lived in Armstrong,  
British Columbia, gave gen-  
erously of her soul, brain and  
energy to the women's  
movement.

She reminded me of what a  
goddess must be: wise, funny  
and powerful. Shortly after I  
met her she told me that it took  
her till age forty to realize that  
she should stop listening to  
everyone else, stop being  
afraid of her power and use it to  
the good of the things she  
believed in. And she was a

passionate believer in women.

Jane sat on the National  
Action Committee on the  
Status of Women executive  
from 1982-87, including some  
time as a Vice-President. She  
also founded the organization,  
Feminist Grandmothers of  
Canada. In her spare time she  
taught at the University of  
British Columbia and raised five  
children. She is survived by her  
five children, many  
grandchildren and her  
husband. Our hearts reach out  
to all of them in their grief. We  
will miss her.



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### National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada

National Office:  
Suite 1102, 251 Laurier Ave West  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5J6  
(613) 232-0689

Organisation nationale des  
femmes immigrantes et femmes  
appartenant à une minorité  
visible du Canada

14 women died  
in Montreal  
December 6, 1989.

97 women died  
in domestic violence  
in 1988 in Canada.

First mourn.  
Then work for change.

