

The Womanist

Free

Fall 1992 Vol. 3, #2

A feminist newspaper distributed nationally

Before October 26



*"I believe
both votes are
for Canada, for
different roads and
different visions."
Dale Godsoe*



After Oct. 26

Read about

- NAFTA
- Bill C-49 and women with disabilities
- Nurses abused on the job
- History quiz, crossword
- End of Family Allowance
- Latest health issues: female condom, RU486, women & AIDS, new repro tech
- Reviews: *A League of Our Own*, *Silent Passage*: Gail Sheehy on menopause

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Front cover: Photos of leaders representing some of the organizations in the referendum debate. Top row left to right: Glenda Simms, President of the Canadian Advisory Committee on the Status of Women (Yes), Rosemary Kuptana, President of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (Yes), Judy Rebick, President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (No); middle row left to right: Audrey McLaughlin, Leader of the Federal NDP (Yes), Virginia Manness, Executive Director of the Native Women's Association of Canada (No), Deborah Coyne, Canada for All Canadians (No), bottom row left to right: Mary Collins, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women (Yes), Sheila Copps, MP, Liberal Party of Canada (Yes)

Front cover quote from Dale Godsoe, Chair of the Board of Governors of Mount Saint Vincent University (Canada's only university dedicated primarily to the education of women) and Vice-President, YWCA of/du Canada.

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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 approximately 4 times a year.

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.



Dear Editor:

In the summer of 1992, hoards of people gathered on Parliament Hill in Ottawa to oggle, criticize and support a small group of women who chose to bare their breasts in protest of a Canadian law that makes it illegal to do so. At the heart of the event was the idea that women's breasts should be a non-issue if women are to gain equal standing with men in Canadian society. Indeed, if women are to be viewed as more of a sex object than men, then women will continue to be discriminated against on the basis of their sexuality.

The law that bans women's breasts as sexually potent objects keeps the myth alive that woman is a sex object and is therefore less potent than a man would be in other spheres of Canadian society. As well, the law is discriminatory in that it discriminates against the vital role the breast plays for the nursing mother in feeding her child. The shame inherent in the law that bans a woman's breast in public goes so deep as to stop women from breastfeeding in public or in private. The law effectively places negative social values as well as legal restrictions on women's bodies. Women's breasts and bodies would ultimately be de-sexed by a change in the law that bans them from society as some sexually potent object. Then perhaps women could gain more potency as an individual rather than as a sex object and would perhaps gain a more equal position along side men in the home, the workplace and in the Canadian justice system.

Susan Jose
Ottawa, Ontario

To the Womanist:

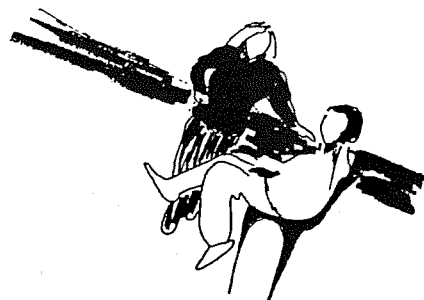
As an anti-pornography activist I read with dismay Tracy Adlys' "Pornography: The uneasy debate". Although Ms. Adlys' article could be described as thought-provoking, I felt there were some major flaws in her argument.

She points to a "growing acceptance of pornography in society" by citing a recent decision of the Ontario Film Review Board regarding triple-X videos. However, she fails to

Womenspeak

successfully prove that this indeed reflects acceptance of pornography by anyone but the members of the O.F.R.B.

One has only to look at the continued increase in the number of acts of violence against women, in spite of continued lobbying by women's groups and half-hearted legislation in Parliament, to see that theory and practice rarely meet. By citing the Film Review Board and the comments of a triple-X video store worker as a demonstration of what the general populace wants, Ms. Adlys in effect silences the women, men, and children who are adversely affected by pornography.



Ms. Adlys also refers to anti-pornography feminists as "dictatorial". The use of this term clearly confirms Ms. Adlys' lack of understanding of the anti-censorship position. As a member of the coalition which took exception to the sale of pornography on the University of Western Ontario's campus, I can assure Ms. Adlys that our stance was anything but dictatorial. We encouraged people to confront the pornography sold on campus, and make a decision regarding its worth for themselves. We also asked that, should they find it as sexist, racist, lesbophobic / homophobic and generally reprehensible as we did, they should girlcott the store that sold it. This campaign was based solely of freedom of choice and public education, and is a far cry from being a dictatorial approach to misogyny in our society.

Finally, I am at a loss to understand why, if Ms. Adlys understands the anti-pornography movement and theory as well as she claims to, she makes no reference to the fact that pornography is not simply an inanimate item to be consumed by the viewer, but is also a degrading practice in which millions of women worldwide are forced to participate. I would wager that many of them don't have the luxury of Ms. Adlys' non-discriminating tastes.

Fiona Hodge
Former Women's Issues
Commissioner
University of Western
Ontario
London, Ontario

To the editors and publishers

Congratulations on the spring / summer issue!

Last summer, while volunteering at 'Voice of Women's' office in Toronto, I spotted the paper for my first time. I was amazed by the diversity of information presented. I felt affirmed in my womanhood and also felt a stronger connection with other women. Your paper treats women as intelligent individuals capable of working towards positive social change, unlike most periodicals.

Therefore, I was very delighted when I received the spring issue.

I'm very sorry that the paper has faced so much underfunding. I wish I could give a little more, but I am a nursing student with little spending money.

I am very thankful that you both believe in this paper. I wish you both all the best.

Thank-you!

Jody Hoffman

Dear Editor:

I recently received the spring issue of your paper and a special thank you, as I am now residing in the very male-centered culture of Spain so it is a welcome for me!

Bravo! to Tracy Adlys and the 'Womanist' for raising the subject of "pornography" once again. I can only assume that two pages were given over to it due to the complacency that has recently taken place on the subject!

As a woman I can attest that I too have lusty, sexual fantasies and so do my women friends. However there is a huge difference between reacting and controlling one's own sexually explicit fantasy and the degrading images of women, children and even men that we promote by a billion dollar, profit driven, misogynist, porno industry! An industry that perpetuates myths of woman, sexuality and promotes violence such as rape, murder, sexual harassment, disrespect not to mention brainwashing.

Eroticism can be egalitarian, respectful, titillating, fun, very much a turn on, lusty and uninhibited as well as tender, loving and sensual. Pornography cannot! And that is exactly why it is pornography, because it degrades!



The Constitution Vote October 26 Pages 23-29

Women's History Month

October

As part of Canada's 125 celebrations the Honourable Mary Collins, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, has designated October 'Women's History Month'. By recognizing our Mother's and Grandmother's contributions in shaping Canada, we acknowledge a part of history seldom shared.

• Look for biographies of some of Canada's great women throughout 'The Womanist'.

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Womanspeak cont'd

I will never be convinced that pornography is anything more than destructive imagery and propaganda designed to make big profits for too few people, mostly men.

I would think that a journalist student such as Ms. Adlys, would be aware of the fact that there is a tonne of evidence and research that suggests very strongly the correlation between pornography and violence against women and children (especially girls). Studies have clearly indicated that pornography elicits sexualized aggression from men who view it. Even porn that is tagged as "non-violent explicit" or as "tasteful" demeans and degrades by exploiting sexuality and making the most precious, intimate connection people can share with one another (excluding the intimate experience of birth) into a commodity to exploit! A sad statement for world progress.

Though I was glad to see the topic raised, I am outraged, and very disappointed that a student of journalism, in her article on pornography and some of the sources she quoted such as 'Ali Biggs', neglected to address and consider the victims of pornography.

Let me make it clear I am not only speaking of the causal/effect victims who are raped, murdered, sexually harassed or have to deal with years of depression, low self-esteem, lost opportunities, suicidal feelings, shame, let alone a ruined sex life, because of sexual abuse often linked to pornography. I am also speaking of the victims who pose and act out the pornography. It is a fact that the majority of people in pornographic media often have childhood histories of sexual abuse. If Ali Biggs, Tracy Adlys or the numerous other women and men who get turned on by profit-driven pornography

would turn their attention to the very real sad faces of these victims who perform for wealthier peoples' titillation - they would see quite a different picture.

If they would take the time and look into the eyes and faces of the individuals who perform for the porn industry, what they would see is not a "turn on" but coercion, passivity, aggression, sadness, pain, feigned enjoyment, vacant expressions, forced leers and people often drugged. People who often feel themselves visible and existing only by the attention that their body attracts having had their spirits broken or lost their self-esteem long before in childhood through neglect and abuse.

Pornography is an industry similar to prostitution into which often abused, poor, illiterate, powerless and many third world women and children are used and forced, due to few choices and little personal power. Ultimately pornography leads to huge social problems in societies world wide. I hardly think that one can view it as a turn on and get titillated when the cost to the victims is so high.

Let us hear from the actual people who once worked in the porn trade. Let's see another two page article in *The Womanist* considering the victims, and porn's destruction.

Ultimately lets find other unique, individualistic, less destructive, and degrading ways to turn ourselves on sexually as we once did 4000 years ago in gylanic cultures, before the advent of patriarchy, television, film, magazines and video. Surely if we can be brainwashed to get turned on by people sexually degrading themselves then we can also wash our brains to get turned on sexually to people respecting themselves sexually. Thanks for listening.

C. Aurora-Allinot
Canadian in Spain

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For all intents and purposes, the Family Allowances Program, as we have known it since 1945, came to an end on September 17th.

Bill C-80, the Federal government's new Child Tax Benefit replaces universal family allowances, the refundable Child Tax Credit, and the nonrefundable tax credit for dependent children. All three programs have been rolled into one and will be delivered in monthly payments, rather than once or twice a year as is the case now.

So what is wrong with this new system? Lots.

Especially when you consider that this program is part of the Brighter Futures Program, a national initiative largely intended to provide assistance to the over one million children living in poverty in Canada. This new program will do little to alleviate the suffering of poor children in Canada because working poor families will receive only \$500 more than what they currently get and welfare families, the poorest of the poor, will receive no increase at all.

The National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) estimates that about 500,000 children are part of working poor families and 500,000 children are part of welfare families.

By targeting increases to one group of people only by virtue of the "earned income

supplement," this new program has created two classes of poor - the deserving poor and the undeserving poor.

The federal government sees this as an incentive for poor people to go out and find work. This premise is based on two false assumptions - first, that there is work and second, that people on welfare don't want to work.

With an unemployment rate of 11.6% and a continuing recession, jobs are very, very scarce in this country. This program sustains the myth that poor people on welfare don't want to work. NAPO, as the voice of Canada's poor, knows this is false. A great majority of Canada's poor are asking for nothing more than a fair chance at a job paying reasonable wages. But jobs offering decent wages and benefits are very hard to find, especially if one is a single parent with sole responsibility of children and few opportunities for skills upgrading.

It is true that working poor families will be the net beneficiaries of this new program, receiving a maximum increase of \$500 a year when compared to what they are receiving now. Working poor parents definitely need financial help in raising their children. But \$500 a year cannot begin to cover the extra costs of adequate child care, nutritious food, or decent housing. Families living below the poverty line need more than

\$500 a year if they are to step outside the vicious cycle of poverty. They need jobs paying decent wages. They need access to safe, affordable housing as well as access to quality child care programs.

Like the current child benefits system, the new scheme will be only partially indexed to the amount of inflation over three percent a year. This means that the real value of benefits will fall steadily over time. In addition, fewer families will receive assistance over the years because the income levels used to determine eligibility are not tied to the full increase in the cost of living.

Some may argue that ending universality to redistribute income to those most in need is a step in the right direction. But the end of universality means that there is no longer equal treatment nor recognition of the contribution that parents make to society in raising future citizens. Wealthier Canadians who no longer receive family allowance cheques may not be complaining now, but in 10 years will they still be so generous? When benefits accrue equally to all, no one complains, but when benefits are targeted to a specific population, it invariably leads to criticisms and feelings of injustice.

generous, this must be put in context. Over \$3.5 billion have been siphoned from the program since 1985 when partial de-indexing of benefits was first introduced. In effect, the government is only putting back into the program what it has taken away in the last six years.

Faulty process

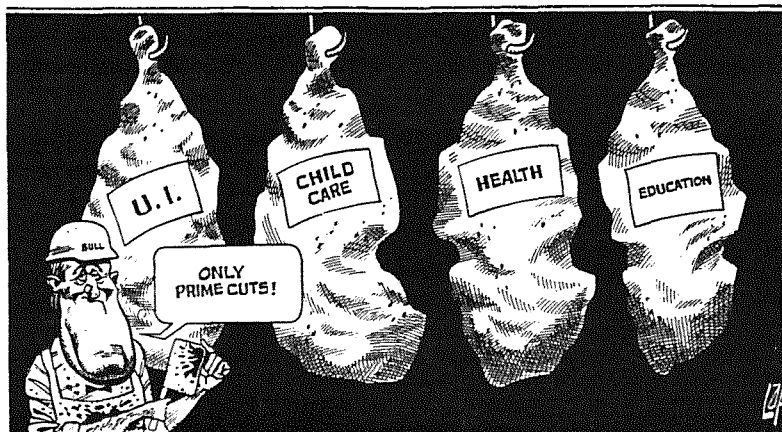
The process whereby this new legislation was passed is also of great concern to NAPO and other advocacy groups. When Bill C-80 was first introduced in the House in the spring of 1992, many groups voiced their objections. Unfortunately, the parliamentary process was designed to limit and contain the criticisms. The parliamentary committee held only nine days of hearings and provided very little notice to groups wishing to present their arguments. Given the impact and the consequences of this new program, it is deeply disturbing to see the bill rammed through Parliament while Canadians were preoccupied with another question - Constitutional reform.

On the surface, the new child benefits package may seem to be supportive of the anti-poverty objective. But a more careful look at the program indicates this is not so. The new program directs very little additional aid to low-income families and the minimal assistance it does provide will shrink over time. The poorest of the poor, Canada's welfare families, will receive nothing more from this new program. Universality of this program as we know it is ending. Will other national universal programs will meet the same fate?

The fight against child poverty in this country is far from over.

Lynne Toupin is the Executive Director of National Anti-Poverty Organization NAPO.

MULRONEY'S SACRED COWS



End of universality

During the debate on Bill C-80, what has been most profoundly contested is the removal of family allowances, a move that signals the end of the universality of Canada's child benefits system. In fact, universality of child benefits actually disappeared in 1991, when the "clawback" provision was fully implemented, meaning higher income families had to pay back the entire family allowances at income tax time. Nevertheless, every family with children received a monthly cheque. This will no longer be the case as of January 1st, 1992, when the new benefits system comes into effect.

With the end of family allowances, we can no longer consider universal programs in Canada to be a "sacred trust". Many Canadians are now asking themselves whether other universal programs are on the chopping block. It is a legitimate question, given the passage of Bill C-80. Canadians have a right to be worried. What's next? Medicare or pension?

\$3.5 billion already lost

Proponents of the new program point out that the federal government will be adding another \$400 million a year to the child benefits package. Seemingly

Feminist Archives finds new home

Canadian Feminist archives have found a new home at the University of Ottawa. This unique collection is expected to be of tremendous value to faculty and students as well as members of the public.



The Canadian collection includes documents from conferences, cultural events, and demonstrations organized by more than 2000 women's groups since 1977.

For more information contact Jonathan Dueck (613)564-2344.



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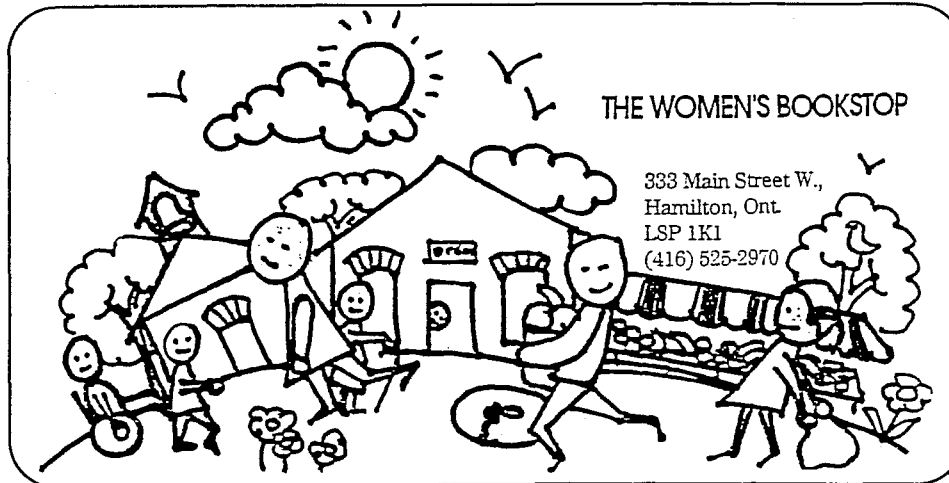
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Ignored again: The "Rape Law" and women with disabilities

by Shirley Masuda

The consultative process was historic; the Bill is the best that we have had yet. When Minister of Justice, the Honourable Kim Campbell, invited women's groups to offer advice for the new rape legislation, women for the first time had the opportunity to help create a law that affects us directly.

This is a new concept for lawmakers. It resulted in a better law.

Despite this, Bill C-49 is less than adequate in protecting women with disabilities from rape or in bringing men who rape women to justice.

This visibility would make it impossible for the courts and/or offenders to ignore the fact that we are also protected by this law.

The definition of consent is the strongest part of the Bill. However, this again leaves women with disabilities vulnerable. Lack of agreement to sexual activity is expressed by words or conduct by the complainant. This does not protect women with disabilities who are non-verbal and who cannot by conduct express non-agreement for sexual activity.

Women who are paralyzed and communicate by looking at

particular concern to women with disabilities. There is another weakness that concerns all women. We feel that a women's past sexual history is never relevant in a sexual assault. Although some restrictions have been spelled out, it is still at the judges discretion. We have already lived through that one. Women will not report a sexual assault knowing that if they had sex with a man ten times they cannot be raped on the eleventh time.

Women with disabilities are taught to comply with the demands of persons in their environment just to survive. We have not been taught the skills to resist. If under this new legislation we decide that we can now report sexual assault that has been going on for some time, we cannot trust the courts to convict the offender because we have complied before.

Although some of this could be addressed under the abuse of a position of trust, power or authority, we are assaulted by many persons who are not in official positions of trust, power or authority. Many women with disabilities live independent lives. We live alone going about our business and we are assaulted by men the same as other women.

a bliss board, women who are non-verbal and have spasticity and have no control over the movements of limbs or facial expressions cannot express non-agreement. Our argument to include 'gestures or any other means of communication' would have filled this gap but again the politicians felt that it was not important enough to make the change. As it now stands if a woman can't speak or push the offender away it is alright to rape her.

These are issues of



Although Bill C-49 is much better than the old Rape Shield Law, its power is limited by the invisibility of the women who are most vulnerable to sexual assault -- women with disabilities, aboriginal women, immigrant women, lesbians, refugee women, sex trade workers and women without full citizenship.

DAWN Canada (DisAbled Women's Network) argued for the naming of these groups in the preamble because the naming would make us visible.

Court Challenges Program Eliminated

Since 1985, the Court Challenges Program has existed to help disadvantaged groups and official language minorities gain access to the courts to clarify both constitutional equality and language rights.

The Court Challenges Program closed its doors on Wednesday September 30th, due to federal government funding cuts announced in February of this year.

The Program, with an annual budget of \$2.5 million, funded test cases in courts to fight discrimination and win equality rights under the Canadian charter of rights and Freedoms. Groups such as women, people with disabilities, racial and ethnic minorities, Aboriginal

people, lesbian and gay men and other disadvantaged groups were represented.

"Cancellation of the Program is devastating for equality-seeking groups", says Helena Orton, Litigation Director of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) "Without access to the courts to get the benefit of equality rights, the guarantee of equality is hollow."

"The danger is that if disadvantaged groups are unable to get to court, only those with money and power will be able to influence Charter decisions."

Orton adds, "Disadvantaged groups need to be able to initiate cases and to be able to be in court to protect against

cases seeking to roll back laws designed to benefit women, such as challenges to the Rape Shield law and obscenity provisions."

The Equality Rights and the Language Rights of the Program have approved respectively 178 and 79 test cases on these issues. Many of those cases have resulted in landmark rulings.

On June 16, the all-party Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons strongly condemned the federal government's decision to abolish the program and has called for its reinstatement and insulation from further government interference.



Dr. Emily Howard Stowe. Denied admission to medical school in Canada, she trained in the United States. In 1867 she returned to Toronto to become Canada's first practising female medical doctor - although she was not officially recognized as a member of the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons for another 13 years! An early suffragist, Emily Stowe founded the Toronto Women's Literary Club, known after 1889 as the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association.

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre

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Shirley Masuda is Senior researcher and project co-ordinator for Dawn Canada. She has been working on violence against women with disabilities for seven years.

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MEN WHO RAPE

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- women's organizing centre

NAFTA: Extending the damage

by Maude Barlow

As Canadians have been agonizing in a very public way about the nature of our constitutional future, the federal government has been deeply locked in negotiations to write a new economic constitution for North America in which Canada can only be a net loser.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is the second phase of the Reagan-Bush dream to build one economic union from the Arctic to the Southern tip of South America - a huge free trade zone without standards, where transnationals can move production to suit themselves.

Phase one was the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. It badly eroded our political sovereignty, as well as Canadian control over our energy industry, and destroyed over one-quarter of our manufacturing jobs in just three years. Michael Wilson insists that these losses are due only to the same recession that hit the U.S., but is unable to explain why the job loss in Canada has been four times greater than in the U.S. in the same period, and why the Canadian recession hit before the one in the U.S.

The third phase has already started. It is the addition of the other countries of the Americas, probably starting with Chile. The goal is to build a trade block on this hemisphere to allow the U.S. to counter the emerging might of Europe and Japan.

The dream is built on American technology and money, Canadian resources,

Central and South American cheap labour, and the political acquiescence of all countries to one economic vision - a vision controlled by the one superpower of the region, whose economy is larger by far than the combined economies of all 34 of its prospective partners.

This is an issue of real importance to women in all three countries. In Mexico, the workforce of the Maquiladoras is largely female, very young, and very badly treated. Mexican labour laws prohibit employment of anyone under the age of 18, but factories regularly hire women as young as 14 and 15. If the women organize, they are fired. If they become pregnant, the same. If they become ill from the long hours of work in appalling conditions, including working with toxic chemicals, they have no claim to compensation or sick leave, and this goes for children who are born deformed from the chemical poisons their mothers breathe during pregnancy.

The workers are among the lowest paid in the world. The transnationals put nothing back into the system - not training, not health care, not sanitation, not sewage treatment, nothing. Entire families live beside chemical dumps, some that have been found to contain toxic poisons in concentrations many thousands times greater than allowed by law in Canada and the U.S. Mothers feed their babies Coke and Pepsi from baby bottles because they cannot afford juice or milk and



there is no clean water left.

A sad irony of this situation is that it took the horror story of a rash of American babies in Brownsville, Texas, being born with no brains, to bring the attention of the American public to bear on these conditions. Brownsville is right across the river from Matamoros, Mexico, one of the worst havens for corporate environmental crime in the country and the toxic waste was carried across the river.

While the story for women in Canada and the United States is, of course, nowhere as horrific, there are real problems in the two more northerly countries. For one thing, as we create a free trade zone based on growing deregulation, the lowest common denominator will become the norm. Once corporations are entirely free from national considerations or rules, they will be able to move production to the areas where environmental, wage, social and labour standards are the

lowest and not have to pay any price for this behaviour in the countries they left. Canada has joined in a race to the bottom - competitive poverty - and this bodes badly for Canadian women.

As well, free trade and deregulation create winners and losers. In fact it is a system that accepts that to have winners like Donald Trump and Conrad Black, a country must accept a high rate of

unemployment and poverty. These are the sad but necessary penalties for "success" under this model of competition. The middle class is disappearing and because women represent a disproportionate number of the poor in our society, deeper class divisions will hurt women first and more.

And with the disappearance of our industrial base and the economic crisis we are facing, our social programs are in danger. Again women, who are poorer than men, are more dependent for equality on the universal nature of Canada's shared-cost social programs than men. Without them, many Canadian women will fall between the cracks like their American sisters.

NAFTA, like its predecessor, the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, is a bad deal for Canada. It is a bad deal for women. It is a bad deal for the fight for equality rights. It must not be rammed through our Parliament.

If you wish to join the fight against it, please join us at the Council of Canadians, 1006-251 Laurier Ave. W., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5J6. We are non-partisan, and non-profit, and seek to preserve and enhance Canada's political sovereignty and true democracy in the face of a corporate culture trying to change the very nature of our country.

Maude Barlow is the voluntary national Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, and the author of two books, *Parcel of Rogues*, *How Free Trade is Failing Canada*, and *Take Back the Nation*.

MARGARET L.M. BUIST LAW OFFICE

'PRACTICING LAW FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE'

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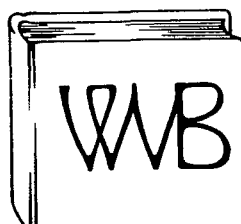


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Taxes: What you pay and why

by Linda Marcotte

As a single mother who lived on welfare during the 1980's, I never paid much attention to the issue of taxation. The daily struggle of getting the things we needed, the hopelessness I felt about ever having our lives change, and the powerlessness I felt took all my energy.

The issue of taxes came up when:

- I would struggle to fill out the income tax form every spring. If I got more than the year before, I was happy and if I got less, I was mad;
- I was feeling bad about myself and our poverty, I felt very guilty and ashamed that I was living off working people's taxes. I remember feeling overwhelmed one day while getting on a bus with my kids with the fact that I was getting about \$1000 a month and probably would for a while longer and how much money that was adding up to every year and how many people's taxes we were using;
- I lived in Alberta before I was married so I was aware when I moved to Québec and later to B.C. that the sales taxes on non-food items I bought in stores was a provincial matter. I felt it was unfair that I had to pay sales tax in B.C. while just across the border in Alberta people like myself were not paying it.

Maybe I'd read about a change in taxes but I did not pay much attention to that kind of information as it was boring, hard to understand, overwhelming and mostly about rich or working people.



I felt left out, most of the information about the world swirled around, above and beyond me. TV, radio, other people, books and newspapers were for people who were workers or consumers and since I was not one of the first, I was too poor to be one of the second group.

Since 1989, I have worked at End Legislated Poverty (ELP), a B.C. coalition of 28 groups that believe that poverty is a systemic rather

than an individual problem. Instead of asking: "Why is this person poor?" "Why is this group (be it single mothers, people with disabilities, women, aboriginal people) poor?", we ask: "How could the law be changed to help poor people?" "Who is making the decisions to keep this group impoverished?" "Who benefits from our poverty?" Instead of studying the poor to understand poverty, ELP studies the very wealthiest and powerful. ELP has collected information about wealth, poverty and the economy and developed a participatory workshop called: "The Corporate Agenda and You".

Changes to tax laws are one of the ways the government has been restructuring our economy to cater to the needs of big businesses at the expense of the majority - working people, women, aboriginal people, people with disabilities, children and seniors.

Policy and legislative changes that make up the corporate agenda are:

- privatization, selling government services to businesses to make a profit;
- high interest rates;
- free trade deals with other countries and business' right to manage not only trade but investment, energy, the environment, wages, health and education, culture and resources;
- a new labour market strategy, designed to increase the flexibility of the workforce, increase low-wage, part time and contract employment, reduce the strength of organized labour;
- cuts to federal spending.

The government has been restructuring the tax system to benefit Canada's wealthiest.

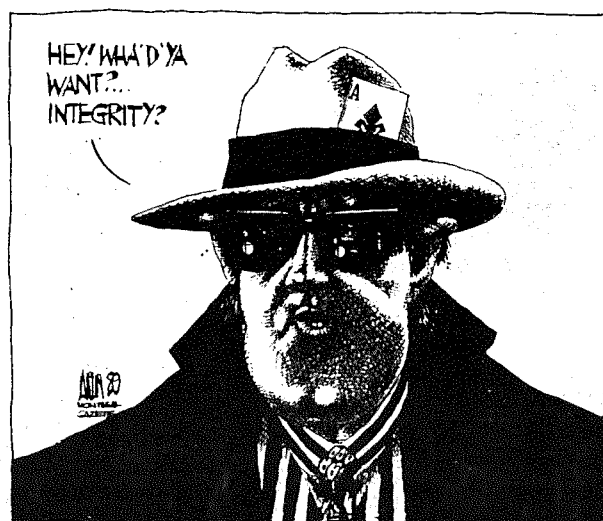
- Over the years, corporate income tax has continued to make up a lesser portion of overall income tax revenues. In 1989, individuals paid 88.1% of all income tax and corporations paid only 11.9%.
- In 1950, corporations and individuals each paid about half of the income tax collected in Canada. Mel Hurtig, *An Outrage and a Scandal*.
- In 1988 terms, if the corporate sector tax contribution matched that of personal taxpayers the government would have a surplus of \$18.5 billion instead of deficit annually of \$30 billion

- Canada has reduced its overall corporate tax rate from 34% to 28%. Canada's combined federal-provincial corporate tax rate is between 38% and 42% Germany taxes corporations at 56%, Sweden's rate is 52%, and France and Japan tax corporations at a rate of 42%. These statistics indicate that higher Canadian corporations rates wouldn't be out of line with many of the industrialized

benefiting high income earners the most. As an example, a two parent, single earner family with an income of \$76,000 will save \$185.00 in taxes. A two parent, single earner family with an income of \$29,000 will save less than \$30.00.

3) increased childcare deductions. This tax deduction benefits as income goes up, and provides the greatest tax saving to upper income earners;

4) policies that treat people living common-law as married for tax purposes.



countries. From Information: Facts about corporate taxes.

- In the early 1970's anyone earning \$400,000 paid a tax rate of 57.6% on each additional dollar they made. In 1988 the federal government changed the tax structure and the top rate is now only 29%, not much above the middle rate of 26%.
- Between 1984 and 1988 income tax went up 44% for "working poor" families, 10% for middle income families and DOWN for upper income families.

The 1992 federal budget changed taxes further and hurt working and poor people, while helping middle class and rich people:

1) the end to the universal family allowance and an introduction of the child tax benefit. With middle and higher income people not benefiting from this program, their support for it will erode or end. This will undermine political support for the meagre benefits that low income people do get and make us vulnerable to more cutbacks;

2) the reduction in the surtax on the federal income tax. We all paid 5% federal surtax, this was reduced to 3%

The new rules will likely have the most negative impact on low income families, who live common-law more often than families from other income groups. The above is from Campaign 2000,

- In 1987 there were 93,405 corporations in Canada who paid no income tax at all
- Neil Brooks, a tax professor at York University, has calculated that tax giveaways amount to a loss of about \$13 billion a year for the federal government - almost half the deficit.

According to Bill Blaikie, the federal NDP's tax critic, "The minister of Finance has refused to do anything about loopholes, which benefit the privileged and the wealthy in our society. By choosing instead to cut funds for health care, education and job training in his latest budget, (former finance minister) Michael Wilson is confirming his place as the latest in a long line of finance ministers who have robbed from the poor, and given to the

rich"

"Linda McQuaig in her book *The Quick and the Dead*, writes of the \$4 billion a year in tax breaks that Ottawa handed the manufacturing sector with the move to the GST."

What can we do?

Justice in taxes to me means: the more you have, the more you pay, with low income people not paying taxes. Government could redistribute wealth from people with an excess to people dying from lack of money.

We get a least five calls every week by low income people who are shocked and outraged by new federal government legislation that allows the government to take away people's tax credit if they owe the government money on a student loan. We are getting these people to use the righteous outrage and energy they have for their personal tax problems to work together as a group, and to join with other groups to include tax justice as part of our anti-poverty agenda.

We'll win "when we have a clear agenda that is unsanitized and unapologetic, a mobilized mass that is forceful and public, and a conviction that is uncompromising and relentless," says Susan Faludi, in her book *Backlash*

What are the next steps? What are you going to do?

Linda Marcotte is a Vancouver anti-poverty activist.



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Limits on who gets to stay in Canada: lesbians fight back

by Chris Morrissey

Canadians fall in love with other Canadians and often with citizens of other countries. If one partner is non-Canadian, our immigration laws allow heterosexual Canadians to sponsor their spouses as immigrants to Canada. This basic right is denied to lesbian and gay Canadians. - Excerpt from 'Growing Old Together'

For many years, I lived outside of Canada. During that time I met Bridget with whom I have been sharing my life for the past fifteen years. Almost four years ago we made some new decisions about our lives, including the decision to return to Canada. As well as significant cultural changes for us as we moved from South America back to North America, there was another important detail that would play a very significant role. Bridget and I do not share the same citizenship. We did not realize this would threaten our life together.

Shortly after arriving in Canada, we began searching for information about how Bridget could become a landed immigrant. On some level we took it for granted that things would work out and that it would be possible for us to continue our life together. It was a big shock when we discovered that this was not going to be so easy. We spent the first three years in Canada surviving, settling, building friendships and struggling with Immigration. And we experienced a great deal of insecurity, anxiety and fear.

As lesbians, we feared losing

our jobs and because my family was not aware of my/our sexual orientation at that point, it was impossible for us to share with them our anguish. We were afraid whenever we went to Immigration that they would 'suspect' and make it even harder for Bridget to become a landed immigrant.

There was always the overriding, overwhelming fear that one day we would have to separate. In many ways we felt alone, isolated, powerless. There were many good reasons for our remaining invisible and silent as we had decided that the price for being open about our sexual orientation was too



high. There appeared to be no way that Bridget could become a landed immigrant under the Immigration Act as it is. We decided that our only option was to challenge that Act in court.

Both immigration and human rights for lesbians and gay men are current concerns and in the news these days. Bill C86 proposes changes to Canada's Immigration Act. Others are probably more knowledgeable than I am in this area and better able to critique the proposed changes, especially as they will affect racial and cultural groups and refugees. For my

part, I am always suspicious when I am told by anybody, many of whose values I do not share and whom I do not trust, that proposed changes are to "protect society" and are for "a fairer system". (phrases quoted from Keeping in Touch, newsletter of John A. Fraser, M.P. to his constituents of Vancouver South.) As women, I believe that it is important for us to be aware that these proposed changes are being put forward by a system in order to protect the privileges of those who are the real policymakers, primarily white, able-bodied, wealthy, heterosexual men.

What about those of us who define our relationships differently, Canadians and immigrants alike? Once more we are kept invisible. Once more our relationships are not taken seriously.

Our decision to go public and to go to court has had some very positive effects. It has brought us together with others who are experiencing similar difficulties.

Our collective experiences made it clear that we have no access to Immigration because we do not have enough money, the "right" education, are too old, and are not heterosexual. The list goes on and includes race, gender, abilities, etc.

Lesbians have formed an alliance with gay men who are similarly affected by problems with immigration. Together we form the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task Force (L&GIT).

On June 10, 1992, L&GIT presented to Bernard Valcourt,



Graphic by Sarah Orlowski

Canada's Minister of Employment and Immigration, a brief entitled 'Growing Old Together', which describes the impact of present immigration policies on the lives and relationships of some individual Canadians. It also offers a proposal for change. The recommendation is that a new category, similar to Australia's "mutual interdependency" category be added to our

immigration law. Such an addition would at least provide access to immigration for same-sex partners of Canadians who otherwise have no access. Conceivably, it would not be exclusive to homosexual persons but, for example, could also extend to heterosexual common law partnerships.

L&GIT has a commitment to working for a more inclusive immigration policy for Canada. It provides support and information to individuals through what are often difficult and fearful times. Anyone who would like further information and/or would like to participate in the Task-Force may write to: L&GIT, P.O. Box 00384, Station A, 757 W. Hastings St., Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2N2.

Chris Morrissey is a lesbian feminist who is at present working on immigration for same-sex partners and is co-chair of L&GIT.

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National Women's Centres Day

Women's Centres across Canada celebrated the second annual National Women's Centres Day on September 23rd, 1992.

Women's Centres marked the day by participating in a sister's coast to coast Phone Tree. Each centre was matched with a counterpart in another region whom they phoned to discuss the issues they face. The goal of this project was to strengthen the links between the 180 Women's Centres in Canada.

This year's theme 'Wake Up To Women's Centres' includes

lobbying governments for more funding, and planning a National Women's Centres Conference entitled 'Ensemble' for 1993.

A bilingual 3-day planning meeting will be held in St. John's Newfoundland at the St. John's Women's Centre.

This meeting will be held November 20 - 23 1992, and is still looking for input, particularly from women's centres in the West.

Contact the St. John's Status of Women Council in Newfoundland at (709) 753-0220.

Another way to keep non-white women out of Canada?

The new legislation for domestic workers

by Crisanta M. Sampang

Domestic work, caring for a family and home for pay, may be one of the oldest professions on earth, yet up to this modern age, domestic workers still get no respect. Domestic workers continue to be exploited, looked down upon, and discriminated against by the rest of society.

Domestic workers need and deserve to be treated like other workers in the labour force. They are an indispensable component that keeps the wheels of the economy rolling. Ask any working couple.

Before, under the FDM, foreign domestic workers entered Canada as potential landed immigrants. After working for two years as live-in domestics, they could apply for landed status.

Under the new LCP, a prospective applicant has to successfully complete the Canadian equivalent of Grade 12 and have six months full-time training in a field related to the job she is applying for. The applicant must also be able to speak, read and understand either English or French.

allow only European nannies?

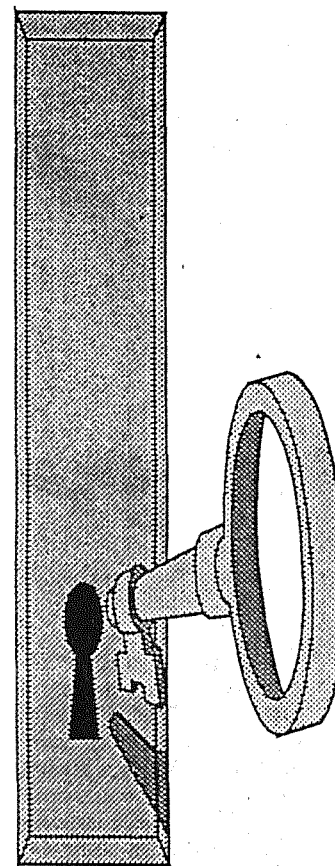
Also, under the LCP, job experience has become irrelevant. Obviously, the program is not designed to ensure the best people are found to care for Canadian families. On the contrary, it deprives the family of the right to ask for and choose the best caregiver suited to their needs. In our mind, no amount of education can replace true-to-life, hands-on experience where nannying and caregiving are concerned.

Women are now only eligible to do jobs that match the training they have received. This requirement has successfully eliminated all experienced domestics with outstanding references, but who do not have the required six-month training. The LCP has also successfully halted the influx of third world domestic workers.

In the meantime, employers are looking around for available full-time nannies at affordable rates and finding none. Some of them have resorted to sharing domestics with other employers.

"We urgently need to find someone to look after the kids while we are both working, we need a full-time worker whose salary we can afford. So far, we are still searching," complained Robert and Mary Afan, a couple from Ladner, B.C.

Grace Nicgos, a Filipina nanny, says, "I have a friend in the Philippines who has been waiting to find an employer here



The demand for domestic workers continues to grow; meanwhile, the government is endeavouring to cut off supply. At the same time, the minister does not regulate the activities of the employment agencies under the new program.

The West Coast Domestic Workers Association (DWA), an organization based in Vancouver, anticipates that some agencies will quickly set up caregiving courses in third world countries, charging exorbitant amounts for courses to women who are desperate to come to Canada. Courses which, may, on closer look, not even meet the standards set by the new legislation.

The DWA also expects that some agencies will now play a greater role in establishing a relationship between a domestic and her employers through agency contracts. As a result, it will be easier for agencies to exploit domestics by making them sign contracts that grossly favour employers. There is no provision for nannies and employers to enter into an enforceable contract under the LCP.

Crisanta M. Sampang is a domestic worker and a freelance writer rolled into one. She came from the Philippines four years ago. She is an active member of the West Coast Domestic Workers Association. she received lots of help from the DWA in writing this article.

in Vancouver. She had worked for four years in Singapore and is a college graduate but unless Philippine schools come up with care-giving courses that are recognized by Canadian immigration, she will have to wait a long, long time."



Unfortunately, Minister of Immigration, Bernard Valcourt, thinks differently. He seems to believe that foreign domestic workers would take over Canada, if he didn't do anything about it. So he did.

Last April 27, 1992, the minister announced an end to the Foreign Domestic Movement Program (FDM), replacing it with the new Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP).

These educational requirements exclude many women from third world countries like the Philippines and Carribeans, who are presently caring for our homes and children. These countries do not have schools that provide live-in care training. Thai and Chinese applicants will have difficulty with English, let alone French. Are these requirements formulated to

Pandora wins human rights case

Pandora, a feminist newspaper published by a non-profit organization in Nova Scotia, is desperately trying to re-establish themselves after winning a landmark human rights case.

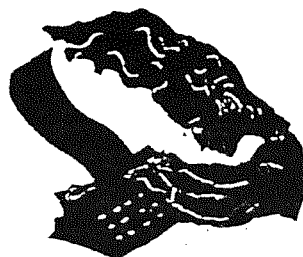
The Human Rights challenge came about when a non-custodial father charged Pandora with discrimination after they refused to print a letter he had written.

A two year legal battle followed with a decision being reached March 17, 1992, David Millar an adjudicator for the Human Rights Tribunal ruled that Pandora did not refuse the letter because Mr. K was a divorced father but because he was a man.

"It is implicit in the act and in the right of the disadvantaged

group to prefer it's members over the advantaged group...The evidence satisfied me that historically and to the present day women as a group in our society have suffered substantial inequality and disadvantage in all aspects of public and private life. I am also satisfied that this inequality continues to the present day to a sufficient degree that is reasonable that women's groups may decide to form women-only organizations, such as Pandora, for the promotion of women's equality and that such organizations may advantage women over men..."

Pandora's case will have far-reaching impact on all Canadian woman as it sets a precedence that guarantees



women-only organizations can exist. Thanks to Pandora's effort women's groups can, without fear of legal repercussions, exist solely to benefit women.

In total Pandora's Human Rights case cost more than \$40 thousand. Pandora's lawyers donated \$13 thousand of their time and fundraising efforts so far have earned about \$15 thousand.

Pandora is currently looking for donations towards the remaining \$25 thousand. Donations can be sent to:

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Slow progress for persons with disabilities

by Beth Phinney, MP

As we approach a federal election within the next year, I think many Canadians with disabilities will be asking themselves an important question: what has this government done to improve the status of disabled persons in Canada since they were first elected in 1984?

I'm afraid the answer is, not much.

A shocking number of Canadians with disabilities continue to live in poverty. They often feel that they are treated like second class citizens in an affluent country that likes to pride itself on its human rights record and high standard of living. Disabled women are particularly disadvantaged, and have an even higher rate of poverty than disabled men.

It is especially disturbing to see that Canada is lagging behind some other industrialized nations in key areas concerning disabled persons.

The approach of the Mulroney government to disability issues is to make grand speeches about their "achievements", but to actually do as little as they can possibly get away with. Progress in this area has been at a snail's pace, and much of the progress can be attributed to the efforts of disabled persons themselves, rather than the federal government.

This is a government that has made very few promises in this area, and those promises have been "extremely vague commitments", in the words of one parliamentary committee report. Quite simply, disability issues are not a priority for this government.

Many of the problems confronting Canadians with disabilities are difficult and complex. But others are relatively simple matters that could be resolved easily and inexpensively if the government just had the political will.

One example that comes to mind is the issue of closed captioning for television. Closed captioning means that



subtitles appear on the television screens of deaf persons. This is done either through a special decoder box, which is fairly expensive (nearly \$100 in some cases), or through a special decoder chip which can be built into a television in the factory for only a few cents.

It would be a simple matter for the government to require all televisions sold in Canada to have this chip included, as is done in other countries, but there is no sign that the government will do so.

It may seem a small issue to some, but consider the important role that television plays in the lives of so many Canadians.

In 1981, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons issued an all-party report called 'Obstacles'. The report included 130 specific recommendations, and was the first and most comprehensive study ever prepared by a parliamentary body.

Ten years later, many of these recommendations remain unfulfilled.

In June 1990, the same committee issued a report entitled 'A Consensus for Action'. The report urged the government to take action to

improve the economic integration of persons with disabilities. In November of that year, the Conservative government responded by rejecting five out of six of the committee's recommendations.

The committee took the unusual move of rebutting the government response, issuing a further report called 'Unanswered Questions'. The report was highly critical of the government's "extremely vague commitments," and pointed out that "vague promises in the past have not brought solutions, but have served chiefly to inflate expectations and foster subsequent disillusionment."

The government responded in May 1991. It vowed to make the economic integration of disabled persons a priority, and promised that a five-year, national action strategy for disabled persons would be announced in the fall of 1991.

Accordingly, in September 1991, the government announced in its strategy that \$158 million would be spread over ten departments, over five years. This amounts to about one dollar a year for each disabled Canadian, per department. Only a fraction of this amount is new funding.

In May 1992, the government tabled an omnibus bill (Bill C-78) containing amendments to six federal acts on matters related to persons with disabilities. The major amendments in the omnibus bill were changes to the Election Act, to make the election process more accessible. There were also changes to provide federal government publications in accessible formats, such as braille and large print.

These were welcome changes, and long overdue. However, many extremely important issues were not addressed in the government's omnibus bill, including changes to:

- the Immigration Act, which excludes most persons with disabilities from being granted landed immigrant status or Canadian citizenship;

- The Broadcasting Act, to require broadcasters to provide closed captioning for all television programming.

- The National Transportation Act, in order to ensure accessibility to rail, bus and air transportation within a reasonable and specific period of time.

These are issues which are a top priority for many people in the disability community. The community has brought these

community has come to realize that "review" and consultation" are simply code words for delay and inaction.

This year, 1992, has been particularly disappointing for Canadians with disabilities.

In February, the government cancelled the Court Challenges Program. This program provided funding to human rights groups, including disability groups, which seek to clarify in the courts their legal rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Howls of protest followed this shocking decision. Human rights groups, provincial governments, the Canadian Bar Association, a retired Supreme Court justice, and an all-party report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and Disabled Persons have all urged the government to restore the program. So far, the government has not given any indication that it is reconsidering this cold-hearted decision.

More recently, persons with disabilities were appalled to discover they were excluded from the Canada Clause in the constitutional agreement. This came as a total surprise as persons with disabilities were specifically mentioned in the federal government's draft constitutional proposals last fall.

The Canada Clause contains references to the rights of Aboriginal peoples, linguistic and ethnic groups, and women. Disability organizations are afraid that their exclusion may mean that disability rights will be granted a lesser degree of judicial protection.

As the saying goes, where there's a will, there's a way. I have concluded that the Conservative government simply does not have the political will to ensure true equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities in Canada.

Beth Phinney is M.P. for Hamilton Mountain. She is Liberal Critic for the Status of Disabled Persons.



issues to the attention of the government time and time again for many years, so they were naturally angered to see that their concerns were not addressed in a bill which was supposed to be a comprehensive piece of legislation.

The government quickly sensed this feeling of anger, and began to speak of "Omnibus II". They promised further action at unspecified future dates, after "further review" and "further consultation". The disability



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DEBATING

Silence condones violence in media

by: Patricia Herdman

The verdict is in. The Supreme Court has responded in favour of protecting women. Yet you and I don't hear much about it and when we do, newspaper columnist screech *censorship!* Then everyone gets quiet again.

After a summer of mainstream movies which celebrate violence against women, I'm not willing to be silenced any longer. No matter how much money is poured into education for gender equality, we can never match the buying power of Hollywood unleashed into our subconscious.

We have to talk and figure out how we can protect ourselves.

The Supreme Court of Canada has acknowledged that depictions of degrading dehumanizing sex and sex with violence "almost always: constitutes undue exploitation under the Criminal Code. A Feb. 1992 Supreme Court decision stressed that sexually violent material can create a "poisoned" environment for women and that freedom of expression must be balanced with the right of women to live without fear and the threat of violence.

Yet it also noted that depictions of explicit sex between consenting adults is not the least bit obscene. The High Court directed the lower courts to always err on the side of art when deciding between obscenity and art.

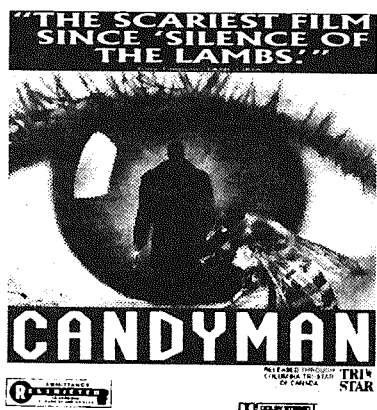
This sounds reasonable to me. Why haven't our governing bodies come to grips with this profoundly compassionate and reasonable High Court decision?

Movies are powerful. They shape our views and become models of our collective dreams. Right now we're having a nightmare.

Extremely violent fare has moved mainstream. People watching films in their neighbourhood theaters don't even realize that they're watching pornography. The makers of Freddy Kruger dolls thought nothing of the fact that this homicidal maniac, in the

movie *Nightmare on Elm Street*, ripped the breasts off a teenage girl before killing her.

Violence gets piped in to our homes and marketed as "entertainment", night after night. And when parents, like me, become concerned about marketing violence to children, the ever present shriek of *censorship* chimes in.



But what is happening to our culture when a movie like *Whispers in the Dark* can be marketed as a "sensual thriller"?

Liz Braun of the *Toronto Sun* reviewed *Whispers in the Dark* and noted that "it offers some gruesome and fairly graphic scenes of violence against women -- bondage and the odd bit of mutilation, for example."

Why are we not allowed to question why *Love Crimes* is rated Adult Accompaniment (which means that children 13 and under must be accompanied by someone who is 18)? Catherine Dunphy noted in her *Toronto Star* review that in *Love crimes*, director, "[Bergin] humiliates in order to have brutal sex" and the Ontario Film Review Board quietly noted "sexual violence" on its AA rating.

Also rated acceptable for children's viewing was *Liquid Dreams* which "will keep viewers glued with guilty suspense to the sado-masochistic fantasies it dramatizes" as Jay Scott noted in his *Globe and Mail* review.

What kind of society are we living in when the words "sensual" and "violence" are whispered in the same breath and hardly anyone takes issue with this? Why are we letting movies tell us that rape is sensual? That tying up women and hanging them upside down is sensual? That depictions of apparently dead women is

erotic? That killing girls and women can be fun?

"Don't be a prude" is the simplistic response from people who don't know any better. But it's time we start informing ourselves. Most newspapers don't want to tell us about this, but you should know:

When Denmark decriminalized pornography and prostitution, the number of violent rapes increased.

The original study neglected to highlight some very important points:

- Prior to the new laws in Denmark (back in the 60's), pornography and prostitution were counted as "sex crimes".
- The original study (by Kutchinsky) compared the *wrong* information and mistakenly reported that sex crimes went down. They only appeared to go down because pornography and prostitution were no longer counted as "sex crimes" after the new laws were in place.

Study after study shows how images of sensualized violence influence and increase the number of crimes against women. The Supreme Court of Canada's unanimous ruling on obscenity acknowledged the reasonableness of these reported links. For example, a study conducted by John Court in Australia found the following:

Two Australian states handled pornography differently. Queensland refused to allow the easy

distribution of pornography while South Australia relaxed its laws and permitted easy and accessible pornography.

In comparing the rape rate per 100,000 over a 13-year period, the study found:

- Queensland, which did not permit pornography, showed no increase in its rape rate.
- South Australia, which allowed easy access to pornography, had a rape rate which increased six-fold over the same period.

New Zealand also found that its rape rate increased in conjunction with the easy availability of pornography. Its government then re-restricted the distribution of pornography and the rape rate in that country began to decrease.

Knowing this, how do you feel about the fact that pornography is now available in your neighbourhood theater and rated so that children can watch it and thereby shape their world views?

How do you feel about the fact that convicted sex offenders openly admit to being profoundly influenced by what they watch, like a drug, these images celebrating violence against women and girls influence their behaviour and the lives of innocents.

I feel sick.

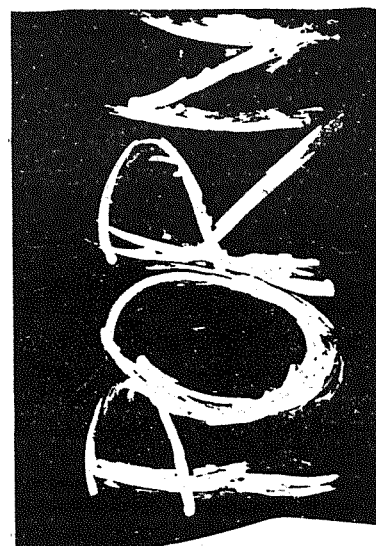
I also feel responsible to work for change.

Censorship!!!!

Calm down, calm down, I try to tell the politicians and newspaper writers. We don't have to be that Draconian. We can simply start to look at the stuff that's marketed to us and decide where and how to permit its influence.

For example, not everyone who drinks a glass of wine will become an alcoholic. But we know about alcohol's influence on people and so we made some laws to curb its effects. For one, we don't allow alcohol to be marketed to children. We also don't allow it to be sold all over the place (to avoid children from accessing it) and we are very careful to frown upon people who show they can't control themselves. We don't allow advertisements for hard liquor on TV and we get really tough, with drunk drivers.

Why not take the same approach with the marketing of violence? Why not say we can't hook children with violent entertainment? Other democracies, like Sweden, restrict the amount of violence they accept. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was restricted to adults and older children accompanied by an adult.



Why not say that extremely violent "entertainment" can only be viewed in certain places. Because we know that the celebration of violence affects the safety of women and children, people who watch this stuff could pay a fee which goes directly to women's shelters across the country and towards educational programs designed to reduce public acceptance of violent entertainment.

Erotica Implicit or explicit depictions of sex between consenting adults engaged in a mutually-rewarding activity.

Pornography Implicit or explicit depictions of sex with violence or images which glorify and sensualize power imbalances (rape, mutilation, bondage, etc.). Also includes depictions of sex involving children.

Why not force the entertainment industry to put warning labels on violent fare so that consumers can be properly informed about the material they are about to watch?

I am sure there are other solutions which could be developed, but we have to give ourselves permission to talk, and to explore.

There. That was easy. There wasn't a snip of a pair of scissors to be found. And yet we managed to begin the dialogue about solutions, solutions which would place protections on our collective dreams so that more women and girls can live to dream their own lives.

Patricia Herdman is a Guelph-based writer and activist who has been involved in justice issues for many years. She recently co-founded "For the Safety of Our Daughters", an organization devoted to informing the public about the known effects of violent entertainment on the lives of women and girls, and to encourage public dialogue about solutions. For more information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to P.O. Box 24040, Guelph, Ontario, N1E 2V8 or call (416) 457-7191.

W O M E N

If you are physically, emotionally or sexually abused, call 1-800-265-7233 836-5710 for support and information.

For general information and education materials about violence against women and children contact: GUELPH-WELLINGTON WOMEN IN CRISIS 836-1110 or one of our programmes:

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Nurses: The violent story

by Jo Dunaway

"It was May 21, 1991 -- neither a good or a bad day. The weather was fair, all was normal until 10:45 a.m. Since then nothing is right, nothing is fair, and definitely nothing in my world is normal. How could I have known that in five minutes one patient was to change the course of my entire life?"

That is how Della Mitchell remembers the last day of her career as a nurse. Mitchell has 23 years of experience as a nurse in the fields of Mental Health and Long Term Care when she was attacked by a psychiatric patient in a health care facility in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

"I was aware of a loud, very strange crunching sound and a pressure to the left side of my face. My next memory is standing in the dayroom, holding the remnants of what were once my clothes, pushing frantically at my personal alarm button, confusion reigning, noise and people everywhere."

She also remembers the co-worker who had attempted to come to her aid apologizing over and over because he had been powerless to stop the 238 pound assailant and had succeeded only in riding his back like a pack sack throughout the assault.

Mitchell suffered multiple contusions to both sides of her face, above the left eye, occipital areas, base of neck, across both shoulders, and concussion. Persistent pain led to a further diagnosis of fractured roots on both sides of the lower jaw (the strange crunching sound). She has also suffered from Post Traumatic Shock Syndrome, has not worked since the attack, and most likely will never work again as a nurse.

Mitchell does not represent an unusual and isolated incident. Unfortunately, she is one of thousands of nurses across Canada who suffer violence while at work every year. In British Columbia, injury through violence ranks as the second highest cause of workers' compensation claims for nurses and other health care workers.

The British Columbia Nurses' Union, which represents more than 23,000 working nurses, is tackling the issue of violence head on. A recent membership survey on violence prompted the Union to produce a video, **Nurses: The Violent Story**.

The 18-minute film, which features nurses recounting their own experiences with assault in the workplace, is proving to be a potent tool for raising awareness and educating, among both members and non-members.

between nurses who are abused on the job and other women who are abused in the family setting. As in the larger society, nurses have been socialized to excuse the violence that is committed against them. All too frequently, nurses believe that physical and verbal abuse is part of the job. When it occurs, nurses blame themselves -- they feel that they should have done something to prevent it.

But, as in the larger society where more and more women are reporting the violence



The video has evoked such strong emotional responses and feelings of identification from nurses that a facilitators' guide has been developed to accompany showings.

Most acts of workplace violence against nurses are not reported and it is estimated that injury statistics in B.C. reflect only about 20 per cent of incidents. The places we work reflect the attitudes and realities of the society we live in. There are strong parallels

committed against them and demanding an end to it, nurses are saying that violence in the workplace is not acceptable. They are demanding that employers provide a safe workplace and adequate education on how to deal with violent situations. With the help of their unions, nurses are beginning to insist that attacks against them in the workplace be treated with the same seriousness as physical assault on any other citizen.

It was not unusual that Della Mitchell was attacked and injured in her workplace. What is unusual is Mitchell's refusal to be discouraged from laying a complaint. She was certain that the patient has been able to form the intent to injure her and had acted on that intent. Stubborn, courageous persistence in the face of discouragement from her employer and the local police carried her through the next 14 months until, with the support of the B.C. Nurses' Union, charges of assault causing bodily injury were brought against her assailant.

While the defendant was subsequently found not criminally responsible because of a mental disorder, the fact that he was charged and found fit to stand trial is a major breakthrough in the wall of obstacles that confront nurses and other health care workers who experience violence in the course of their work.

"We don't have to let someone hurt us and get away with it," says Mitchell. "Now there's a vehicle in place that nurses can use to ask for justice."

"It is still fairly uncommon for nurses to hold clients accountable and it is a difficult and courageous step to be undertaken by someone who has been attacked and injured", says Debra McPherson, president of the B.C. Nurses' Union. "When nurses take this step, it is essential that their complaints be accorded the weight they deserve."

The message from Debra McPherson and the nurses of British Columbia is that violence and assault are not an acceptable part of their job. The video **Nurses: The Violent Story** is helping to sound that message loud and clear.

Jo Dunaway is the Communications officer for the B.C. Nurses Union.



The British Columbia Nurses' Union, which represents more than 23,000 working nurses, defines workplace violence as: "an act of aggression, verbal or physical, assaults or threats in the workplace to which the worker is subjected in the course of employment (coming from sources such as patients, patients' families, physicians and other allied personnel). The act may involve, but is not limited to, name calling, swearing, use of a weapon, sexual harassment, assault and/or battery, or threats thereof."

Workers' Compensation Board statistics and a recent membership survey conducted for the B.C. Nurses' Union reveals the following:

- Between 1986 and 1990, 651 nurses lost time from work due to acts of violence and acts of force. Nurses injured through acts of violence (1985-1989) remained on WCB claims for an average of 28 days. (WCB statistics)
- Between 1985 and 1989, 10 nurses were permanently disabled as a result of workplace violence. (WCB statistics)
- 72% of BCNU members reported experiencing abuse or threats within the past five years and (Survey on Violence, B.C. Nurses' Union, February 1991)
- 16% of nurses interviewed have seriously considered leaving nursing because of violence, while almost 14% reported that co-workers had left the workplace in the past two years as a result of violence. (Survey on Violence, B.C. Nurses' Union, February 1991)

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Another important women's organization established during this period was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1875 by Letitia Creighton Youmanns to campaign for the prohibition of alcoholic beverages. She was concerned about the plight of women and children in abusive households. By 1886, the WCTU had branches across the country.

Nurses speak out on violence on the job

by Jane Tapsell and Shirley Broekstra

In a southern Ontario hospital, a nurse was administering care to a male patient when he grabbed a pair of scissors and stabbed her in the back.

No criminal charges were laid against this patient and the nurse returned to duty the following day. She was directed by her supervisor not to discuss the incident with anyone. Fearing for her job, she kept silent.

This incident, and an awareness of similar violent acts against nurses, prompted eight nurses to form the Nurse Assault Project Team. Their goal was to conduct a study into the prevalence and impact of assaults against nurses, with a view toward effective prevention.

With funding from the Ontario Women's Directorate, the 'Nurse Assault Survey' questionnaire was mailed to nurses across the province. Respondents were asked to describe their experience with assault in the workplace. The group recently released their findings:

- 59% of nurses have been assaulted during their career, with 1 in 3 reporting assaults during the past year alone.
- 80% of nurses reported having witnessed, heard about or talked to a nurse who had been assaulted.
- Nurses perceive that assaults are on the increase.
- Patients are responsible for the majority of assaults, but families, doctors and other hospital staff are also cited.
- Males accounted for twice as many assaults as females.
- Most hospitals have no policies in place to deal with violence.

The nurse is trained and socialized as a care giver, and nothing in her education prepares her to deal with the violence in the workplace. The majority of assaults took place while nurses were doing what they enjoyed most...giving care to their patients.

They reported feelings of shock, anger, anxiety and disbelief which affected their ability to cope both personally and professionally. Several nurses were fearful of returning to the scene of their assault, and also reported a decreased level of confidence in performing their job.

Over one quarter of the nurses felt sorry for their perpetrator, while one in five felt responsible, blaming themselves for the incident. As a care giver, the nurse is expected to place the patients' needs above her own. The nurse is in the unique position of having to care for the very person that has assaulted her.

Nurses reported being shoved, kicked, punched, and bitten. The majority of injuries resulting from the assault were described as pain, bruises and cuts. Because these injuries were viewed as minor, the majority of nurses were required to complete their shift. Very few nurses reported taking time off work, and those who did, used their sick time, even though the incident was work related.

The most frequent action taken by the nurse was to discuss the assault with her co-workers. Most of the nurses reported receiving little or no support from physicians or administrators. After being struck in the face by a patient, one nurse wrote, "The head nurse told me that this behaviour was expected in the emergency department... the doctor laughed, stating it was better me than him".

Several nurses reported their immediate supervisors blamed them for provoking the assault.

The failure of the health care system to validate the assault experience serves to silence the nurse. The prevailing attitude is: "assault is just part of the job".

Nurses' perception that "nothing will ever change" is reflected in the fact that only 15% of the respondents approached administration with suggestions for improvements, and only 2% of the assaults resulted in charges being laid.



Women's College Hospital

Nurses who want to prosecute, are discouraged from doing so by the administration, or the police.

Nurses were asked what their employer had done to help them deal with violence in the workplace. Fifty-three percent reported that nothing was in place. Health care facilities that had programs in place, placed emphasis on the nurses being trained in techniques on how to "manage" disturbed behaviour. There is no supporting evidence that the techniques are effective in "eliminating" violence. One nurse described a situation where "two doctors stood around waiting for the nurses to subdue a violent patient before they would approach him".

Because the responsibility is placed solely on the nurse to handle violent situations, nurses who have received training can be blamed because they misused or forgot an important technique.

Just as assaulted women are silenced in general, nurses are silenced and their assault experiences minimized, by a health care system dominated by a male power structure.

Assault is an issue which requires an informed and responsible attitude by management. This will lead to a proactive, effective response to this urgent problem. It is essential to examine the intrinsic ATTITUDES which condone violence and perpetuate the belief that women (nurses), whose primary role is caring for others, have surrendered their rights to personal safety, security and justice.

As one mental health nurse wrote: "The belief that abuse is part of a nurse's job description has got to change! Nurses must get more support in this area. The example we set for women is critical. How can we impart to our (female patients) that they should not be accepting of abuse in society when we accept it as part of our job".

The report has generated great interest among Ontario's nurses. Many have contacted the project team for consultation in order to establish effective policies and strategies for dealing with

nurse assault. The Ministry of Health has also indicated a willingness to look into the violence within the health care system.

The Nurse Assault Project Team is encouraged by this. We also believe that nurse involvement is critical in order to work together to eliminate violence against nurses in their workplace.

Jane Tapsell is a nurse therapist on the Psychiatric Out Patient Department at the Toronto East General Hospital, Toronto. She is also in private practice and co-leads therapy groups for women.

Shirley Broekstra is the Clinical Nurse Manager, Forensic Division at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, Toronto, Ontario.

The White Ribbon Campaign

This national group encourages men to denounce violence against women by wearing a white ribbon Dec. 6-8. This year, the White Ribbon Campaign hopes one million Canadian men will wear how their support.

A massive mail-out, fundraising and a survey are all planned to mark the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre in which Mark Lepine denounced feminists as he fatally shot 14 women at Ecole Polytechnique.

Donations received from a mailing to seventy-four thousand men this summer will go to future mail-outs and to the Canadian Women's Foundation for distribution among violence prevention programs. For more information, call (416)351-0303. Or write White Ribbon Campaign, 220 Young Street, Suite 104, Toronto, M5B 2H1.

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Federation of Women Teachers Fight For Autonomy

by Mary Smirle Bruce

The only women teacher's union in the world, the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, (FWTAO), now in its 75th year, awaits the decision of an Ontario Human Rights Commission Board of Inquiry in what is hoped will be the final round in a series of challenges which go to the heart of its very existence.

The Federation, the largest, and arguably the most influential teacher group in Ontario has had from its beginning one of the strongest voices for the rights and advancement of women and girls in Canada. It represents 42,000 women elementary teachers in the public schools of Ontario.

Progress towards equality, while too slow by any measure, is demonstrably happening in the education system and beyond. Women are moving against strong resistance into positions of responsibility in education. The effects of their presence at decision-making levels is being felt in the schools through changes in programming for increased awareness of gender issues like sex-role stereotyping, women's rights and women's contributions to society and to humanity.

FWTAO was instrumental in the call for government action on violence against women and children that resulted in the format of the Canadian Panel on Violence. It is seen by many as a vital force for women's equality. Its right to function on an equal basis with other teacher federations has been under attack for several years by its smaller counterpart, the Ontario Public School Teacher's Federation, which has initiated a number of

legal and political challenges to FWTAO.

The current action under the Ontario Human Rights Code is only the most recent foray. Previous attempts include:

- concerted efforts over the years to convince the Federation to discuss amalgamation with the men's group. The response has been a resounding NO!, repeated this year at its Annual Meeting.

- a challenge under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, filed in 1985. This challenge was dismissed, first by a panel of three judges, then by a single judge after two weeks of argument, and then again by a unanimous Court of Appeal ruling.

A request for a further appeal, to the Supreme Court of Canada, was denied, firmly closing off the Charter as an avenue to disabling the women

teacher's group by forcing it to compete for the right to represent women and the fees that members pay, and this is seen by many members as the real issue.

- an attempt to restructure the Ontario Teacher's Federation. The membership rules of the OTF, the umbrella group to which both federations belong, assign women elementary teachers in public schools to pay membership in to FWTAO. Repeated attempts by the men teachers' group to change these rules have failed.

The final attack, the Human Rights Code action, will come to a close in the next few months. It is seen as one which will make legal history and is being watched carefully in Ontario and across Canada because of its wider implications for equality law.

The route to the Human Rights Commission Board of

Inquiry was a circuitous one. It began with a complaint by two women teachers who said their rights were being violated by an OTF by-law. This by-law forced them to be members of FWTAO and to have their fees used to promote women's equality.

They also complained, that the men's group would not let them be full members. Actually, the men's group does invite women to full participation for a nominal fee of \$25. Perhaps what the complainants meant, was that their money would not be directed to the men's group!

Their complaint against the OTF and the men's federation, throughout 137 days of hearings over four years, was supported legally by the men's federation - probably the first, and certainly the most expensive, human rights case ever to be paid for by a group against whom the complaint was filed!

FWTAO argued that the case, by two dissatisfied members out of its 42,000, is in reality a concerted attack on FWTAO's funding base. This attack, if successful, would subvert FWTAO's energy into recruiting and retaining their own members, instead of continuing their real work of moving a very resistant society

towards equality.

While the right decision is of vital importance to one of Canada's most powerful women's groups, the broader legal significance of the outcome is of interest to every equality-seeking group in Canada. Says Elizabeth Shilton, one of FWTAO's highly respected lawyers:

"This case has some very important implications for the development of equality jurisprudence in Canada. It is being watched with great interest by theorists and practitioners in this area and across the country.

It is a test of the ability of the Human Rights Code to weed out discrimination claims based on outmoded notions of formal equality, and to ensure that the enforcement of human rights in Canada will proceed along the lines developed by the Supreme Court of Canada in which we look for results which foster and promote substantive equality.

It is a test of the ability of the Code to recognize that the problem of the systemic inequality of women requires systemic solutions.

It is a test of the ability of the Code to recognize and promote the right of disadvantaged groups to develop and implement their own collective strategies for equality and to value such collective, self-determined solutions."

The Commission's decision is expected in the next few months. Legal and human rights history is in the making, once again under the impetus of women working together for their mutual benefit. We await the outcome with one corner of the mind quietly planning the celebration.

Mary Smirle Bruce, former teacher and vice-principal in Etobicoke, is an Executive Assistant with the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, responsible for communications. The Federation has published a legal history of the Charter challenge, "The Case for Women's Equality".



Board of Directors, 1947-1948, Federation of Women Teachers



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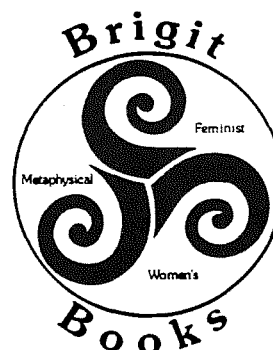
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Patty Callaghan

What happened in agriculture in the last ten years?

by Nettie Wiebe

This has been an unkind decade for food producers in Canada. The farming community took a sharp turn for the worse a decade ago and has been travelling rapidly downhill ever since.

Farmers have had hostile weather conditions, including a series of drought years during the mid-eighties. But the outdoor weather has been relatively benign compared to the political climate farmers have had to contend with during this period.

The overriding objective of the federal government since 1984 has been to make agriculture more "competitive" in a global marketplace. Underlying this directive is the assumption that growing food must be treated like any other business in a capitalist economy where fewer people producing more products for lower prices is deemed to be more efficient and competitive. Predictably, restructuring agriculture to achieve this goal is having drastic consequences for farming people.

Throughout the term of this government, farm people have been promised that becoming more "self-reliant, competitive and market-oriented" (the pillars on which federal Agriculture Policy rests in the 1988 "Growing Together" paper), will make them more prosperous and keep the



about half the Canadian domestic price at the time. (Significantly, consumers did not enjoy any drop in the price of bread while wheat farmers suffered that financial loss).

Meanwhile, the milling industry has had to "adapt" by rationalizing and merging with multinational corporations. Much the same has occurred in many other food sectors. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) will lead to more of the same in larger measure.

In its determination to be globally competitive, the federal government has systematically undermined any means farmers have in place to get a fair price for their products, supply domestic food needs, take care of the land and maintain rural communities. Farmer

controlled marketing boards are under attack. The benefits of orderly collective marketing bodies such as the Canadian Wheat Board, are being tossed into the jaws of corporate alligators, whose appetite for ever cheaper raw products is insatiable.

As the farming community struggles with both farmgate prices that do not meet the costs of producing food, and debts with attendant high interest bills, the federal government continues to teach us lessons in adaptation and self-reliance. Hundreds of miles of rail lines are abandoned so that the cost of transporting grains is transferred to farmers. Farmers have just been handed the bill for agricultural research with the passing of check-off legislation (Bill C-54) this September. Federal

responsibility for crop insurance and other farm income programs have been handed off to the provinces. The list could go on for pages.

Periodically, like the landlord who has evicted a tenant in a winter storm tossing her a blanket through the window, the federal government has delivered *ad hoc* aid to farmers. Despite the publicity and gratitude attending these hand-outs, they have, in fact, not changed the overall position of farmers a great deal.

The 1991 Census tells the story in numbers. Canada had about half as many family farms in 1991 as in 1971. Even more alarming is the fact that the rate of losses has increased sharply during the last five years. Twenty-six percent of the farms were lost in the period from 1986-1991.

A look at the income decline on farms explains why family farms are not surviving. It is no longer possible to make a living growing food for prices which multinational corporations deem competitive. Indeed, the 1991 figures reveal that the surviving farm families earned more income from off-farm jobs than from farm sales.

Instead of applying a tourniquet to stop this bleeding of people from the land, government policies continue to open new wounds.

By now, many farming communities are anemic beyond recovery. If these policies continue, Canada will be left with a small number of large commercial farms producing most of the product, a smattering of "hobby" farms reliant on urban employment and very few vibrant rural communities. And Canadian consumers will become increasingly dependent on imported food.

Nettie Wiebe is President of the Women's Program of the National Farmers Union.

**In 1991
Canada had half
as many family
farms as in 1971**

industry viable. The possibility of selling more foodstuffs into the international market is touted as a great opportunity. Those who don't share this enthusiasm for the liberalized global market and the further industrialization and concentration of food production are discounted as nostalgic, unrealistic and non-adaptive.

The federal government has pushed this competitive model of agriculture on every front. Internationally, it entered into the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, which undermines the possibility of having a domestic food policy. For example, with the border open to U.S. baked goods, Canadian millers demanded Canadian milled wheat be supplied to them at U.S. price which was

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The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACS) is an independent organization, funded by the federal government to advise the

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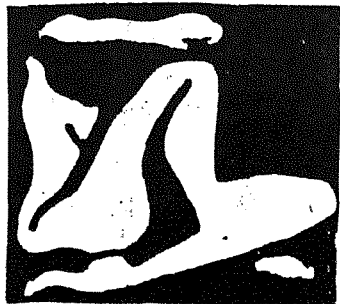
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Women and Our Bodies



The Latest

The Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies was created by the federal government in October 1989, to examine medical and scientific developments related to new reproductive technologies (NRTs). In particular, the Commission has been directed to examine the social, ethical, health, research, legal and economic implications of the technologies, and their impact on women, children and society as a whole.

Among the technologies the Commission was directed to examine, were those which deal with human conception, such as *in vitro* fertilization, artificial insemination, and surrogacy (preconception arrangements). As well, the Commission has been directed to consider other areas, such as embryo and fetal tissue research, pre-natal diagnosis and genetics, judicial intervention into gestation and birth, and the causes and prevention of infertility.

One of the most frequent themes emerging from the Public Hearings was a belief that new reproductive technologies are powerful, with many different consequences for society.

Many people told the Commission that they feel technological developments in this area are outpacing society's ability to understand and control them. They fear a misuse of science and technology that could have serious, negative, and unanticipated consequences for society. They also said that these consequences might extend beyond Canada's borders, and that Canada therefore has a responsibility to help develop appropriate checks and balances on international developments including, if called for, cooperation with the United Nations.

NRTs: What the Royal Commission heard

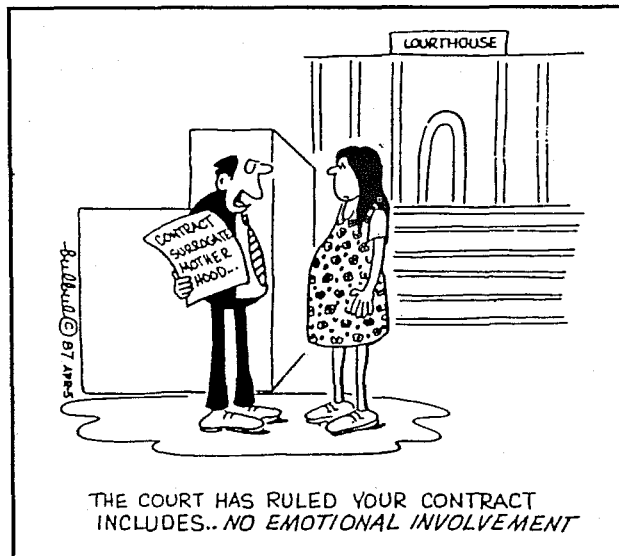
It was increasingly obvious to the individuals and groups who appeared that our technological capabilities have opened up a range of new choices, both for individuals and for society. The individual need for new reproductive technologies must be evaluated in the context of a wide range of social interests including the collective interests of women in equality and reproductive health, the interests of the embryo/fetus, and the interests of society in determining resource allocation in health care.

The Commission heard, primarily from women, that doctors and other health-care practitioners have not treated them as full participants in decision-making. Many people who appeared eloquently called for a mutually respectful partnership between physicians and patients that will allow consumers to make their own informed choices. They also expressed concern about the medicalization of pregnancy and birth.

Two forms of assisted conception were widely regarded as unethical, in part for their impact on the status and equality of women. The first, surrogacy (preconception arrangements), was seen as having a potentially negative effect on society and on the child and was seen as likely to foster exploitation of women, in spite of the fact that it enables couples to have children. There were few specific suggestions on how to prohibit such arrangements.

Groups representing ethnic minorities told the Commission that they fear minority women in Canada and the Third World could be pressured economically into gestating a fetus which has been created from the ova and sperm of a contracting couple and to which the woman is not genetically related.

"There should be less medical authority, power, and control over women's bodies.



One of the most severe results these technologies can have for women) is the emergence of a class of professional, female breeders causing women, especially the unemployed, economically stressed, less educated, immigrant, and visible minority women to exploited and abused. It is these women who will be manipulated to benefit white, upper middle class Canadian



women. Legislation must be introduced which prevents racism, sexism, unethical experimentation on human reproductive tissues, exploitation of women, and reproduction being treated as a commodity. We strongly oppose any kind of marketing or commercial service of a woman's reproductive capabilities", said Lee Leonard, from National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women

The second technique widely considered unethical

was sex selection for non-medical reasons. The most common reason for opposing sex selection was because the abortion of a fetus simply because it is female, is wrong and would have a discriminatory impact on women. Groups representing immigrant and visible minority women were particularly disturbed by the provision of technology for this purpose, saying that many of their communities have been targeted by those offering the service.

Leonard, asked, "What happens if a couple is unsatisfied with the sex, race, or physical state of their fetus. With the development of NRTs, people are invariably going to want "perfect" children. Where will this lead us in terms of selective child bearing and abortion? Again, the law must first determine, then protect the rights of the foetus.

"One of our major concerns is the development of the reproductive eugenics which places a higher value on some lives over others, perhaps even causing babies to become a commodity. We ask, "Will certain types of offspring - those free of mental and physical disabilities, and those of the preferred race or sex be of any real value?" It is this form of institutionalized racism that must be avoided."

A number of speakers questioned whether new reproductive technologies could be said to be in the best interests of the child at all.

excerpts from "What We Heard - Issues and questions raised during the public hearings" September 1991

They felt that they reduce children to "made-to-order" objects of a technical process. On the other hand, other speakers questioned how new reproductive technologies could not be in the best interests of the child, since it is almost always better to be born, even under disadvantageous conditions, than not to be born at all.

The Commission also heard concerns that members of ethnic and racial minority communities may be denied the benefits of new reproductive technologies, and instead encouraged to control their fertility. Concerns that new reproductive technologies may be used in ways that exploit minority women were also raised.

Several groups expressed fears that immigrant and minority women may be pressured into surrogacy (preconception arrangements). Some presenters said that women may also be pressured into aborting female fetuses because of a cultural preference for a male offspring, or a fetus with a disability because of lack of resources. Others said that minority and poor women may be vulnerable to judicial controls such as court-ordered sterilizations or interventions into pregnancy or birth.

Many groups who appeared at the hearings expressed concerns about the potentially negative impact of prenatal diagnosis on people with disabilities. They fear increasing public intolerance of people with disabilities because couples have the option to terminate a fetus with a disability. They called for increased efforts to change public attitudes toward people with disabilities.

"It is hard to persuade society to respect the equality of people with disabilities while scientists are declaring disability to be undesirable and unacceptable. Many of us are horrified by the malevolent attitude advocated by people who are advocating for sex selection and a preference for males. We must make sure that those same malevolent attitudes do not affect our thinking about disability and whether or not having a disability is really a life not worth living." (Canadian Disability Rights Council).

The Commission will be releasing its final report in October of 1992. To get a copy of the report contact the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies toll free at: 1 (800) 668-7060.

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By 1892, Canadian women were permitted to study law, and five years later, Clara Brett Martin, after intense opposition, became the first woman barrister in the Commonwealth.

Grace Annie Lockhart was the first woman to earn a university degree in the British Empire. She graduated from Mount Allison University in New Brunswick in 1875.

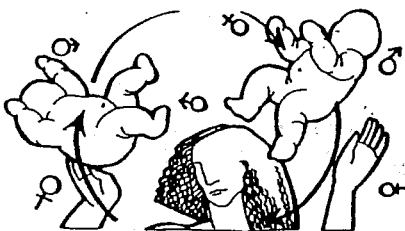
The real problem with sex selection

by Margrit Eichler

Sex selection clinics are starting to find a permanent place in Canada.

The conventional argument against sex selection clinics is that couples will choose to have boys rather than girls. If practised widely, this could be problem as it would first, affect the sex ratio of the country or second, bolster the belief that boys are more valuable than girls. In my view, neither version of this argument deals with the real problem.

As far as any effect on the sex ratio is concerned, this is not a trivial concern if we take a worldwide view. In India, there are indeed more boy than girl babies. However this population difference cannot be entirely accounted for by sex selection (primarily via



selective abortion). In India the general undervaluing of girls takes multiple forms, and includes less food intake by girls than boys. Sex selection is just one expression.

In Canada, by contrast, I would not expect that the practise would ever become widespread enough to affect sex ratio. The second point, of undervaluing girl children, is more relevant, but not comprehensive enough.

Let us turn the situation around. Would we, as feminists, still object to sex selection clinics if the majority of clients chose to have girls rather than boys? According to the way in which the argument is formulated at present, our objections should disappear at that time.

My objections remain equally strong, whether the sex chosen is female or male. Why would parents choose one sex over the other, whatever sex that may be? Clearly because they expect that they can do something with a boy that they cannot do with a girl or vice

versa. Sex selection therefore supports the notion of a natural sex differentiation which is one of the bases of sexism. What is there that one can do with a boy that one cannot also do with a girl? And if you wish to be cared for in your old age, and therefore want a girl, why not educate your boy to do so?

Sex selection, in general, reinforces sex stereotypes, and devalues both sexes, no matter which sex is chosen.

There is one exception. I do believe that there is one, and only one instance, in which sex selection of babies is acceptable and, indeed, desirable: if the parents are carriers of a sex-related genetic disease that manifests in only one sex.

And this brings us to the next issue: the commercial aspects of the sex selection process.

The sex selection clinics which use Dr. Erickson's (check spelling) method operate on a franchise basis, and a fee is charged each time the technique pioneered by him is used. If there is a legitimate medical use for this technique, and I have already stated that I believe that there is one such instance, regular medical doctors cannot use the technique.

In addition, since sex selection clinics operate on a for-profit-basis, their interest will be to increase the use of sex selection, since their livelihood depends on it -- whether or not there is any medical justification for the procedure. Since the use of the technique depends on the clients' belief in certain sex stereotypes, they will therefore profit from reinforcing such stereotypes. This is, of course, exactly the direction we want to move away from.

I therefore believe that we would be much better off banning for-profit clinics which perform such treatments, but offering it, in a few exceptional cases, where there is medical need through our regular medical system.

Margrit Eichler is the Nancy Rowell Jackman Chairperson of Women's Studies at Mount Vincent University in Halifax NS.

Making babies

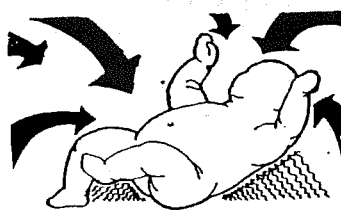
by Susan Pollonetsky

When first approached to review the two-part National Film Board series "On the Eighth Day, Perfecting Mother Nature", my first inclination was to decline the invitation for two reasons. One, I don't have the time, and two, having worked for the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies for almost two years, I really did not want to revisit this particular subject area right now.

I then reconsidered because despite the almost constant barrage of media attention (second only to the Constitution or the decay of the monarchy), there is still much to discuss about new reproductive technologies (NRTs) and their impact on women's lives.

These two videos directed by Gwynne Basen bear a strong imprint of Studio D at the National Film Board, which has for more than two decades supported the work of women filmmakers who have focused on issues that have been central to women's experience. Each video runs just under one hour and should be viewed sequentially.

Part One, sub-titled "Making Babies" examines the controversy over IVF, (in-vitro



fertilization), and touches on related issues such as contract motherhood (surrogacy), which are not truly new reproductive technologies. Personally I found the video a little contrived, although I understood the reasons why it might appear to be.

The viewers of the videos are assumed to have a basic familiarity with IVF and NRT's simply because there has been so much coverage in the media. In the first video, "Making Babies", interview vignettes are interspersed with didactic presentations of the biology of IVF, explaining the steps in the process, from follicle stimulation, cocyte retrieval, fertilization, re-implantation, etc.

While I found the structure or "architecture" of both videos a little distracting, admittedly this video may have been initially directed towards mass audiences of television which dictates a fast-moving, sexy approach to current issues in 50 minute bites. Complex,

broad issues and discussions simply cannot be explored in those strictures of time.

"Making Babies" does raise important questions nonetheless, which resonate throughout the video about the impact of NRT's on women. The viewer is asked to consider whether NRT's, in particular IVF, are a way of helping women to have children or whether it is a method to wrest control of reproduction away from women, into the hands of



the (predominantly male) scientific and medical establishment.

My problem with the whole perspective of "Making Babies" is that there seems to be a foregone conclusion that everything about the new reproductive technologies is sinister and anyone involved in IVF from a practitioner's perspective, is guilty of perpetrating remarkable injustices against women.

There is probably little common ground between people who believe that methods of medically assisted conception grew out of a need from science and technology to develop new products and create new markets for their products, versus those who

Women and Our Bodies



The Latest

may be more inclined to believe that science and medicine being "problem oriented" looks upon infertility as a problem, another frontier to conquer. This latter view may recognize the fallibility of science and medicine, but does not hold that its actions or impetus are conspiratorial.

This is where I have differences of perspective with many of the experts interviewed in the video that are probably irreconcilable.

I think we need to take much more care to ensure that any new or innovative medical intervention needs rigorous analysis and testing and evaluation before it becomes standard practice. I think we need to develop laws, guidelines, and standards to protect against the exploitation of women and children. I think that ordinary women, not just doctors and scientists need to become more informed about their health, their own bodies and reproductive systems to understand that there are indeed choices to be made, including choosing alternatives to new reproductive technologies.

IVF may not be an appropriate intervention for every infertile woman but is it inappropriate for any infertile woman? There is a high failure rate, as well as unknown long-term consequences but does this mean that further work on IVF to improve the safety and

continued on pg 18

Status of Women Council of the NWT

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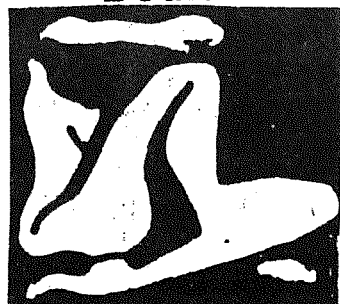
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Women and Our Bodies



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efficacy of this intervention must come to a grinding halt? Most of the experts in the video would say yes. It is too risky and not really treatment but reckless experimentation on women.

Is the second part any different? Well yes and no.

Part Two of 'On the Eighth Day; Perfecting Mother Nature, Making Perfect Babies' examines the issue of prenatal testing and diagnosis, and touches on embryo research and technology transfer from animals to humans. This video skips over the broad range of issues and techniques to focus on the most sensational and alarming potential misuses of these technologies.

In both videos, leading feminist theoreticians and critics of the new reproductive technologies are interviewed along with fertile women who have been through IVF and who are physically challenged.

This film presents a rather uni-dimensional view of prenatal diagnosis, and touches very briefly on related

Making babies: review of *On the Eighth Day*

issues such as informed choice and consent. The tone is not surprisingly quite negative.

Linkages are drawn between IVF, pre-natal diagnosis (PND) and eugenics. My own belief is that there are links but they are not so linear.

A highly articulate attractive woman with spinal bifida is interviewed and the clear message is she is here today because no prenatal diagnostic technique existed when she was in her mother's uterus some 40 years ago.

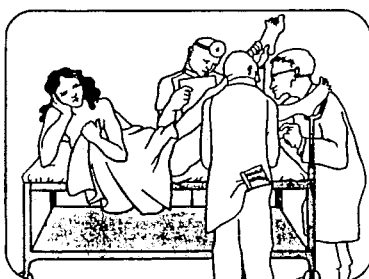
Although she does say that her mother has reassured her that even if methods of detecting spinal bifida were available that she would not have aborted her, the viewer is left to wonder.

Other people with congenital birth defects speak eloquently of their opposition to prenatal testing. The video then cuts to Nazi youth marching in goose step during the 1930's and then to newsreels about the eugenic movements in the U.S. and Canada in the same era. All this attests to the horrifying misuses of genetics and genetic theory.

A biomedical researcher at a western genetics laboratory is interviewed for the video, looking like the Marlboro Man surrounded by cows. The

viewer is told that many reproductive technologies were pioneered in the bovine species. In-vitro fertilization with donor sperm has now replaced normal reproductive methods in the cattle yard. Less expensive cows are now gestating prize winning calves a thousand times more valuable than their own biological calves might be.

The camera switches to the infertile woman patient in the



IVF clinic. The not so subtle inferences suggest that women are bovine like since we now utilize in some instances, methods once used exclusively on cows. Inevitably (female) reproductive autonomy will eventually be appropriated by the (male) medical community with normal human reproduction completely supplanted by artificial laboratory methods.

It is unnecessary to leave viewers with the notion that because IVF and artificial or donor insemination has become standard practice in animal husbandry, this will eventually happen to human sexual reproduction. Donor insemination has been around for more than a century but most babies are still conceived the old-fashioned way.

It is politically correct to speak of the rights of disabled people and their concerns about PND but absolutely nothing is said about the concerns of expectant mothers who may not want to carry a pregnancy to term if the child she is carrying is

anencephalic. Who should speak for women regarding their choices about bearing a child? It strikes me as paternalistic not to recognize women as autonomous beings, capable of making their own choices.

It trivializes the suffering and agony that parents and mothers experience to equate not wanting to bring a child into the world which will suffer terribly from the consequences of a devastating genetic illness, with creating a 'designer baby' with specifically selected attributes.

It is fallacious and harmful to leave people with the idea that seeking genetic counselling to avert an inherited disease is on the slippery slope to societal approbation of genetic engineering of inherited traits.

Both videos encourage tremendous cynicism and mistrust towards the scientific, medical and research communities that are involved in any capacity with new reproductive technologies.



Will this be a safer world, and a better world if ultimately we stop learning about human biology and genetics? Does possession of greater knowledge enhance our collective ability to do greater harm or good for people?

After viewing these two videos, I am still not convinced that we are safe only if we turn a back the clock and never pursue knowledge for its own sake because of its potential to be misused.

I would not discourage anyone from viewing these two

videos or any film which seeks to engage in a debate on new reproductive technologies. I would caution however, that this is not the last word on the issues. The viewer should seek other sources of information in order to become more fully informed. In the end she should make up her own mind about the many different new reproductive technologies and their potential uses and misuses.

A very valuable message that this video leaves the viewer with regardless of ideological bent is the fact that NRTs have already transformed social relationships in society. Our collective understanding of what it is to be a parent, a



mother, or a child has been inexorably altered because of our society's technological capabilities.

The door has been opened to amazing new interventions or therapies. All of us need to reflect about who, when, where, why, and under what circumstances these interventions should be chosen.

The Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies has released a number of studies already. These along with the Final Report should be given a careful study. There are other new sources of information about NRTs in university settings, including libraries as well as women's book stores which are expanding their offerings in this subject area.

Susan Pollonetsky is an Ottawa health and social policy consultant and a mother of three.

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Toxic tampons

The truth about toxic shock syndrome

by: Ann Montgomery

Tampons and Health

On July 26th, 1992, a 22 year old woman from Charlesbourg, Quebec died of tampon related Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). She thought she had the 'flu'.

Tampon producers and the Canadian Government have a responsibility to inform women of the risks associated with tampons. Public education is extremely important as more young women begin menstruation and need to know about the risks associated with tampon use. Companies that produce tampons and the Government have both made the ultra-condescending statement, "a woman has a greater chance of getting hit by a car than dying of TSS". Car accidents are not always preventable. TSS IS PREVENTABLE.

Tampons have changed dramatically. The cotton surgical gauze with a cotton cord sewn down the middle, is no longer commercially available. If you use tampons, take them apart, examine how the string is attached, dunk them in water and see how many fibres fill the glass. Compare yours to other tampons on the market.

These prudent little fluff balls never got much attention until Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) became an issue. It was then and only then that the Canadian Government and the scientific community felt that tampons warranted any time and money.

TSS became headline news in 1980. Previously healthy women were being admitted to the hospital emergency wards with flu-like symptoms. Puzzled doctors often misdiagnosed the disease and the victims became rapidly ill. Some women died. Almost all the victims were menstruating women using tampons at the time they became sick. The government and tampon companies decided to work together to educate the public.

Today, all tampon boxes have a caution sign on the side of the box. It states, "Because of the believed association of Toxic Shock Syndrome with the use of menstrual tampons, Health and Welfare Canada and (name of company) urge you to read the enclosed information thoroughly before using tampons".

On the insert, there is a generic statement to inform the woman. This information is misleading. It starts with "TSS is a rare disease". In fact, TSS strikes more women than AIDS.

Of reported cases, there are three to fifteen

menstruating women, in every 100,000, who contract the syndrome. Mortality rate is 3.8 to 8 percent. It goes on to say that "tampons do not cause TSS".

This is true, a tampon sitting on the shelf in your bathroom will not cause TSS. However, a tampon, plus menstrual blood, plus a normal body temperature of 37C, plus a vagina with a particular strain of bacteria called *Staphylococcus aureus* has the potential to cause TSS.

of symptoms. The initial symptoms are flu-like: vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, a painless sunburn-like rash, a sudden drop in blood pressure, sore-throat and fever. To be a statistic, there must also be peeling of the skin, especially on the hands and feet, the fever must be 38.9C (102F), and there must be a failure of at least one major system (ie. kidney, respiratory, nervous). In some cases, women who have died did not have all of the symptoms. This is the reason

hair and finger-nails, amputation of fingers and toes, chronic fatigue, memory loss, shortened attention span, arthritis, headaches, and double-vision have been noted among these.

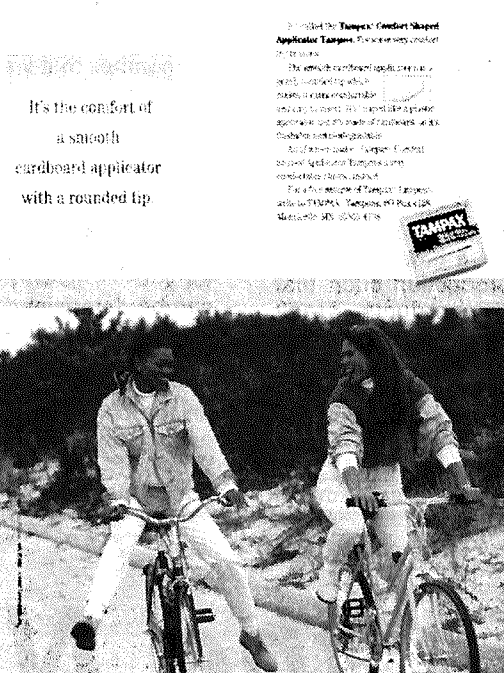
Other Health Issues Associated with Tampons

Since tampons are an internal device, they have a profound effect on the vagina. So since there is no accurate list of ingredients available directly from the manufacturers themselves, a list has been compiled from consumer group documentation and patent applications.

Tampons have been found to contain elements such as magnesium, boron, aluminium, copper, and titanium; organic compounds such as waxes, acids, alcohols, amines and surfactants (an absorbency enhancer); and some contain unnecessary chemicals called "fragrance".

Fragrance in tampons perpetuate insecurity about body smell. Menstrual blood has no odour until it comes in contact with the air - only then, when it begins to decompose, does the blood have a smell. There are many cases of women having allergic reactions to this complex chemical compound and vaginal irritation has been directly linked to the use of deodorant tampons. Deodorant tampons should be avoided. Excessive discharge and pungent odour are symptoms of a vaginal infection and tampons should not be used at all.

Tampons can cause micro-ulcerations (tiny cuts) due to the drying action the tampon has on the vagina. Tampons absorb 65% menstrual blood and 35% vaginal mucus. This drying action combined with the fibres that are released from the tampon causes sores on the vaginal walls. During an internal examination, if this is noted, don't use tampons for one cycle and see if the ulcerations heal.



I bet you're wondering why tampons have been around for fifty years and associated with TSS for only ten?

Tampons are more absorbent now, and made with synthetic fibres like "enhanced" rayon or rayon/cotton blends. It is speculated that for each additional gram of fluid absorbed, there is a 37 percent increased chance of TSS occurring. For this reason, choose a tampon with minimal absorbency.

TSS is caused by a toxin called TSS Toxin 1 (TSST-1). This toxin is released only by some strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* (also known as *Staph aureus* or *S. aureus*) which is normally present in healthy vaginas. The tampon provides a happy home for the *Staph aureus* to grow, fed by menstrual blood, and stimulated by the presence of oxygen in the tampon.

This toxin attacks other parts of the body. The word "syndrome" means a group of symptoms. To be diagnosed with TSS, the patient must have acquired a stringent set

why the TSS statistics are very low, often unreported and often misdiagnosed.

Since TSS symptoms are vague, you may mistake them for the flu. If you're wearing a tampon and you begin to feel sick, immediately remove the tampon. If the symptoms are mild, drink lots of liquids, rest, and contact a medical person who can follow the progression of the symptoms. If the symptoms progress to severe dehydration and low blood pressure, hospitalization will be necessary. Once the symptoms have started, antibiotics do not work but can reduce the chance of TSS recurring.

TSS can also occur when using a contraceptive sponge, a menstrual sponge or a diaphragm to catch the menstrual fluid. If you use any of these, it is important to be aware of the risks associated with these products.

The long term effects of a full blown case of TSS are debilitating. A survivor should not continue to wear tampons. Permanent deafness has occurred in survivors, loss of

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For environmental and health reasons, tampons with plastic applicators should not be used. The "petal-soft" tips of plastic applicators can tear the vaginal lining. You may prefer plastic applicators because you find that your vaginal mucosa isn't sufficient to accommodate a tampon without an applicator. Listen to your body. A dry vagina could be caused by the tampon itself. Try using only pads for one cycle, and you will notice that the vaginal mucosa will return to normal.

Menstrual Products and Dioxin

There are trace levels of dioxin in tampons due to the bleaching process and in the production of rayon. The level of dioxin found in tampons and menstrual pads is said to be below the stated risk level; however, scientists in Sweden have linked dioxin residue in tampons to uterine cancer.

There was a hearing on the Health Risks of Dioxin in Washington, D.C., on June 20th, 1992. At this hearing, it was confirmed that dioxin is in fact present in tampons and menstrual pads. Assumptions were made in determining the actual level of dioxin present in these products, and it was from these assumptions that menstrual products were believed to contain a low enough level to not take any action to warn the public.

However the Food and Drug Administration (F.D.A.) did not actually measure the level of dioxin in menstrual products and other medical devices. A F.D.A. scientist reported... "my bet would be that all possible exposure from all other medical device sources would be dwarfed by potential tampon exposure..." As of yet, the F.D.A. have not taken any steps to ensure that tampons and menstrual pads contain zero level of dioxin. It is

continued on pg 20

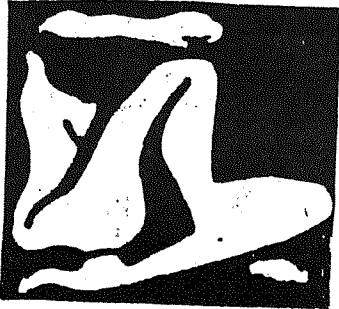
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suspected that the Canadian Government doesn't even know about the issue.

It is already proven that dioxin causes cancer in humans and animals, immunosuppression, and alters genetic material in fetuses. Knowing the risks dioxin poses to biological systems, dioxin exposure through tampons and possibly pads is a legitimate concern. The study in Sweden is the only one of its kind available to the public. It is ludicrous that more research hasn't been done in this area when we consider the amount of women each month who unknowingly are exposed to this harmful chemical (not to mention all the other suspected contents in these products).

Regulation

You may be wondering, "this can't be true, the government protects us". Well, the government has a lot to do, and women and menstruation is not at the top of the agenda.

It has been recognized that tampons are medical devices; however regulation is sketchy. Currently, tampons are regulated by Health and Welfare in Part V of the Medical Devices Regulation. Although this sounds impressive, all it actually means is that the tampon manufacturers submit data to the government for approval of sale of their



product in Canada. Health and Welfare do not conduct any of their own tests.

Health and Welfare requires uniform labelling, which means that a regular of one brand has the same absorbency as a regular of another brand. This

is important since switching brands ensures you that the tampon has the absorbency you've chosen to best suit you. Tampon manufacturers aren't required to explain this absorbency labelling on their packages.

Recommendations

Women have an enormous amount of consumer clout in the market of menstrual products. If we don't like it, we don't buy it. Advertisers may try to manipulate us and tell us we need this product. The government has slapped on the G.S.T. to illustrate that these products aren't necessary. Who should we believe? Neither.

Safe menstrual products are needed. Bogus advertising slogans aren't.

1. Remove bleach from all steps of production such that chlorine by-products aren't produced. Therefore, the product is free from organochlorines and the environment doesn't carry a burden of the effluent. This is possible if...

2. tampons are made of

unbleached cotton. Making them from cotton would mean that they don't contain rayon. Organochlorines are produced when the lining is removed from the wood-pulp in the production of rayon. This would create a less absorbent tampon.

"TSS (toxic shock syndrome) is a rare disease". In fact, TSS strikes more women than AIDS.

Remember that we didn't have TSS with us when we had cotton tampons. This could be one step in reducing the incidence of TSS.

3. Provide clear labelling on tampon boxes regarding "how to choose the right absorbency for you". This way absorbency can be determined in the store instead after you've bought the box.

4. Have a large caution sign on the box regarding tampons association to TSS, not one that blends in with the background colour of the box,

or requires a magnifying glass to read. Cigarette packages have it, why not tampon boxes? The government and tampon companies have to give up the medieval notion that women are hysterical beings who will act irrationally if told the truth.

5. Public education should be performed by independent individuals and funded jointly by menstrual product companies and the government. This public education should cover both the environmental and health aspects of menstrual products. If we're given the information, we'll choose the product that satisfies our own personal needs, not the economic greed of a company or the unresponsive position of the government.

Ann Montgomery is a fourth year Biochemistry student at the University of Ottawa. She also works with the Ontario Public Interest Group focussing on Ecofeminism and the health and environmental issues around feminine hygiene products.

Abortion in the NWT

Following reports that abortions were being performed in a Yellowknife hospital, an Abortion Services Review Committee was established by the Honourable Neillie J. Cournoyea, Minister of Health. Individual complaints as well as reports to Northwest Territories Status of Women Council

referred to abortion procedures, including access, referrals, physician attitudes and pain in the procedure.

The Report of the Abortion Services Review Committee dealing with Stanton Hospital Abortion Services in the NWT was released in June of this year.

The committee evaluated guidelines and procedures for abortions at the Stanton Yellowknife Hospital and the existing practice in relation to therapeutic abortions before, during and after the operative procedure. It also reviewed the process for soliciting patient response regarding services at Stanton.

The review was conducted through a process of open and closed sessions with physicians and other health professionals, hospital board members, national and community representatives and from individual women who underwent an abortion.

It was evident there were many problems relating to pain relief. Many women did not receive any pre-medication. During the actual abortion procedure, many patients did not receive any anaesthesia.

Following the procedure, most patients did not receive any prescriptions.

The report consists of an in-depth discussion of the hearings and concludes with 35 recommendations.

Access recommendations include guaranteed medical travel for abortion, clear and public notice of available services in all appropriate languages for the region served, guaranteed availability of abortion services as specific hospitals, and a Department of Health advisory body representing all regions which would advise on traditional values and teachings.

Recommendations regarding Medical Care focus mostly on issues of pain control. The report strongly states that "Patients are entitled to receive sedation (to calm) and analgesia (to relieve pain) appropriate to their needs" and adds "the patient is the best judge of need" and that the physician must respond with the assessment and safe delivery of adequate analgesia.

Other recommendations were dealing with information, counselling and education and Complaint Procedures and

Community Relations.

The report closes stating that "Stanton Yellowknife Hospital and the Department of Health should undertake to review progress in implementing these recommendations within a one year time frame and establish further periodic review milestones to measure progress implementation.

As Committee member Anne Crawford states in her supplementary material "knowledge is essential to any progress we might hope for, in

the North, for women, or for anyone anywhere. It is important to clearly acknowledge what has happened for several reasons: Firstly, knowledge guards against repetition..., secondly, knowledge is power to change, and finally, knowledge is affirmation. Many people knew what is in this report... Those people have wondered if they were crazy or simply imbalanced. They weren't. And this report attempts to confirm that truth."

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Why not here? The abortion pill

by Anne Burnet

RU 486, known as the 'French abortion pill', is available in France and Britain as an option for women who wish to have medical abortion as opposed to surgical abortion.

It has been successfully used by over 10,000 women in twenty countries during the last decade and has been called the most significant advance in birth control since the discovery of the pill. Its safety and effectiveness have been soundly demonstrated.

Why then are Canadian women unable to choose a medical abortion with RU 486? Abortion is legal in Canada. Why do we not have access to one of the most important breakthroughs in contraceptive development?

Unfortunately, the answer is political. Roussel Uclaf, the discoverer and manufacturer of RU 486 has not licensed the drug in Canada because it does not wish to be in the midst of what it perceives to be a major controversy over abortion.

Even though there are no criminal sanctions on abortion in this country, and the latest (June, 1992) Environics polls reveal that 79% of Canadians believe the decision to have an abortion is one which should be made by the woman in consultation with her doctor,

Roussel is withholding the drug. The Canadian society of Obstetrician and Gynecologists recently called this situation 'unethical'.

When the drug was first marketed in France, the boycott threats made by anti-choice factions caused Roussel Uclaf to withdraw it. However, the French government, which was at that time a shareholder in the company, ordered it back on the market, calling it the 'moral property of women'.

Nonetheless, Roussel Uclaf has more or less indicated that it will have to be 'invited' by the Canadian government to bring the drug into Canada. The government, on the other hand, does not want to be seen to be favouring one drug company over another. No pharmaceutical company has ever before needed an invitation to license a drug!

There is a compromise solution: the government could send a strong signal (through a ministerial speech perhaps) that advances in reproductive technology would be welcomed in Canada. This would encourage the drug company's submission and moreover indicate that it has utmost concern about Canadian women having the most

advanced reproductive health care.

You can help pressure both parties to find a solution! Encourage the Canadian subsidiary company, Hoechst-Roussel Canada Inc. to request permission to test and license RU 486 in Pro-Choice Canada! Write to: Mr. Don Buxton, President, Hoechst-Roussel Canada Inc., 4045 Côte Vertu, Montréal, Québec, H4R 2E3.

Be sure to send a copy of your letter to: Dr. André Ullman, Medical Director, Roussel-Uclaf (France), 102-111 Route de Noisy, 93230 Romainville, France.

Also, write to the Minister of Health, the Honourable Benoit Bouchard, letting him know how critical it is to ensure that the best technologies for women's reproductive health are available in Canada, including access to medical abortions. Send a copy of this letter to the Honourable Mary Collins, Status of Women, Canada. Both can be addressed to the House of Commons, Ottawa, K1A 0A6.

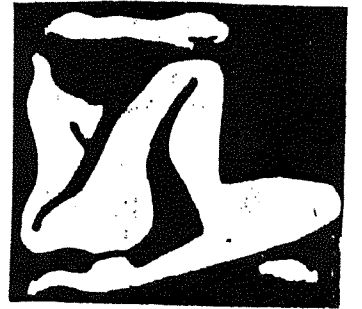
Anne Burnet is the Ottawa Board Member of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League and co-chairperson of its RU 486 Committee.

RU 486

An antiprogesterin, RU 486 blocks the action of the natural female hormone, progesterone, necessary to sustain an early pregnancy. Without the effect of progesterone, the lining of the uterus softens, breaks down and menstruation begins, expelling the fertilized egg. Used in conjunction with a small dose of a prostaglandin which causes uterus contractions, RU 486 is effective 96% of the time.

The action of antiprogesterins is effective in the first 7 to 9 weeks of pregnancy. In France, the drug is used up to 49 days, counting from the woman's last menstrual period; in Britain up to 63 days after last menstrual period. When a medical abortion is requested, a pregnancy test is given and a gynecological exam or sonogram will follow to determine the length of gestation. If the woman's medical profile is suitable and she qualifies for RU 486 and prostaglandin, she will be given a detailed explanation of the procedure and sign a consent form agreeing to undergo a vacuum aspiration abortion should the method fail.

Women and Our Bodies



The Latest

In the doctor's presence, she then takes 600 mg of RU 486 in three tablets, remaining in the clinic for one hour. Two days later, she returns to the clinic and is given a small dose of prostaglandin. She remains in the clinic for about four hours in her street clothes but wearing a sanitary napkin. Nearly 75% of women complete the abortion by this time. The remaining women complete it in the following hours. A follow-up exam is required in about two weeks to ensure that the abortion is complete. One of the reasons the medical profession likes RU 486 is that it metabolizes quickly and is soon out of the system.

Antiprogesterins are thought to hold great promise for treatments of other illnesses such as breast cancer, tumours of the brain and spine (meningioma), Cushing's Syndrome, endometriosis and glaucoma. Since their initial discovery, it is estimated that there are nearly 400 compounds in the generic family of antiprogesterin drugs.

Finally: the female condom

by Marcena Stewart Levine

Initially most women are intrigued by this odd shaped cylindrical baggie with flexible rings - how does it work? How does it fit? and how does it feel? are the usual questions.

As a study site for the Reality female condom we have fielded questions from around B.C. on this new contraceptive, the female condom or vaginal sheath. Health care workers, physicians, women and their partners were all anxious to have information on a contraceptive choice which gives women the opportunity to protect themselves from Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) as well as pregnancy.

The Reality female condom is a disposable seven inch long transparent polyurethane bag with a flexible ring inside the closed end and a wider ring at the open bottom. The smaller ring serves as an insertion mechanism and anchors the sheath in the vagina where it lines the inner contours. The larger outer ring remains outside the vagina where it provides broader coverage than the male condom, covering the woman's labia and the base of the penis.

It can be inserted into the vagina prior to intercourse using fingers or a plastic inserter, or it may be placed on the erect penis and inserted at the time of intercourse. In place, it is soft and stronger than a latex male condom. A prelubricated, single use product, it does not require fitting by a health care worker and will be available without



prescription. It is anticipated the product will be available in North America by the end of this year at a cost of \$2.25 each.

While the product is much more expensive than male condoms it provides better protection against AIDS, herpes, genital warts and chlamydia. This is due to the

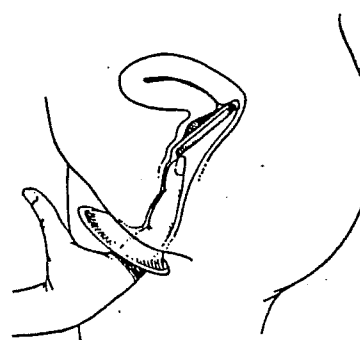
increased protective coverage of the outer ring, which prevents skin to skin contact.

Evaluation of the female condom in previous trials indicates a pregnancy rate of 15%, comparable to diaphragms. The tests also showed that the H.I.V. virus (AIDS) did not penetrate the polyurethane barrier. The risk probability of exposure to semen was 3% compared to almost 12% with the male condom.

Like all other methods, motivation is a strong factor in learning to use the female condom. Women who were concerned about S.T.D.s and who had used barrier methods (diaphragm, cervical cap, foam, condoms) in the past were able to learn to insert and use the female condom more quickly and effectively than women without previous barrier method experience.

Eighty percent of the women who participated in Planned Parenthood B.C.'s portion of the clinical trials preferred to use an inserter with the female condom. 66% reported that use became easier with experience.

One of the most frequent



comments from study participants and others relates to the "aesthetically unattractive appearance of the condom protruding from the body, particularly when standing."

On the positive side, women liked having control of contraception, liked the concept, and felt more secure as the female condom seemed much stronger than the male condom.

Women are becoming increasingly aware that a contraceptive method must do more than prevent pregnancy; it must also reduce the risk of STDs.

The female condom was developed to meet this changing need by empowering

women to have more control over their sexual health by no longer having to rely on their partner for protection from S.T.D.s.

Marcena Stewart Levine, R.N. is Clinic Director of Planned Parenthood B.C.'s 22 Family Planning Clinics. She has worked in the reproductive health field for the past 20 years.

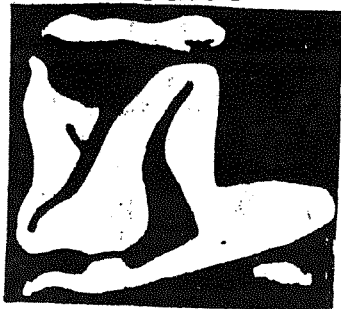
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Women and Our Bodies



The Latest

If you have been getting AIDS information from standard education and prevention campaigns, all directed at a generic 'you', it may not strike a cord. If you have a feeling that something is wrong, you are right! Something is wrong, something is missing: information that tells us how HIV/AIDS relates to women.

Information about diagnosis, treatment and statistics, and resulting prevention material - especially written for women is missing.

Diagnosis - Guidelines diagnosing AIDS are determined by symptoms men have experienced, and women do not fit into this disease pattern.

Women's "diseases" related to pregnancy and reproductive organs, like pelvic inflammatory disease or chronic vaginal infections, can cloak AIDS detection, as they are often misdiagnosed by health care workers.

A friend recently asked her doctor about the HIV antibody test and was asked: "Why? You're not promiscuous, are you?" and then told she had nothing to worry about.

Statistics - The way in which AIDS statistics are presently collected means we are not getting an accurate picture of how AIDS is being contracted. When a case of AIDS is reported, only one mode of transmission - the most likely way the person got AIDS - is recorded. Yet a person could be engaging in many different high-risk activities.

For instance, a gay man who received a blood transfusion would be recorded as exposed by homo/bisexual contact; a bisexual woman who has had sex with a gay man would be listed as exposed by heterosexual contact; a lesbian intravenous drug user would be recorded as exposed by her IV drug use. These 'high-risk' groups have been so devotedly concocted, but are not exactly accurate. The possible ways AIDS is transmitted is vital information, and to funnel them into simplistic, often stigmatized single activities skews statistics dealing with "high-risk" behaviour.

Treatment - If statistics about women and AIDS ignore complicated patterns and relationships of behaviours and activities, and if it is difficult for

a woman to be diagnosed with AIDS, obviously treatment is not forthcoming. Treatment is a political issue, a question of access: to information, informed health care, and drug trials (which often exclude women because of fears that drugs may affect fetuses or women's reproductive abilities).

Women are at risk for HIV and AIDS because they don't recognize themselves in standard prevention and education campaigns. A major obstacle to education is

between actual people and the concept of safer sex.

It seems as though, at least ten years into the AIDS crisis, we are only at the very beginning of imagining what our bodies look and act like in any of a variety of sexual situations. All efforts are concentrated on ensuring that condoms are placed around penises properly and consistently, both because it is assumed that everyone engages in heterosexual intercourse, and because the

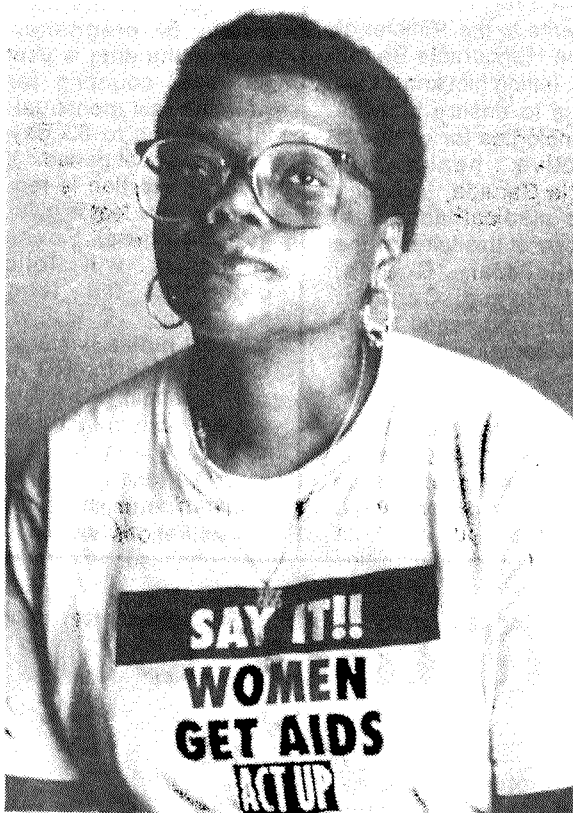


Photo of Wendi Alexis Modeste, an American out of the book *Positive Women: Voices of Women Living with Aids*. Photo by Ellen Bialock

sexism - dealing with women as a preconceived group, with no attempt to focus on women as individuals, or understanding how women live.

For instance, in many of these pamphlets, monogamy is listed as one way to avoid HIV infection - you've seen it, the "stick to one uninfected partner for life" line. But this information needs to be qualified in order to be accurate. HIV can be transmitted in any activity where bodily fluids are exchanged, and this could certainly take place in a monogamous relationship. The focus in most of this AIDS literature is not on such details, but on the larger message that sex + condoms = safety.

The notion of the condom is one of the most striking indicators of the nearly insurmountable distance

prevailing idea is that intercourse is a high-risk activity, and everything else is a lot safer. The other monolithic tool offered, if any other activity is considered, is the mythical dental dam, and, in rare cases, latex gloves, neither of which have been properly tested for effectiveness.

This focus on penises and condoms is ineffective for all women - lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual and others. In *On Our Backs*, July 1991, Risa Denenberg writes:

"the focus on the dental dam assumes that oral sex is the definitive characteristic of lesbian sex. Until we can frankly discuss how we really have sex, the dental dam will continue to be an ineffective symbol" The same can be said about condoms. If condoms have been tested, they can be modified for use in other sexual

activities. They can be turned into dental dams. They can be placed around your hand or on sex toys. Safer sex can be about more - not less - options.

HIV and AIDS are a problem increasingly affecting women. To make choices women need helpful, accurate information. You can be the expert on what you do, what obstacles you face, what skills you need to practice safer sex consistently.

Women, AIDS, and Activism educated me about the problems of statistics and diagnosis.

It is a question of access to services and non-discriminatory care. Access is, severely limited in our society because research does not adequately study women; because homophobia prevents full and necessary discussion of the reality of lesbian and gay sex, and prevents comprehensive AIDS education programs from being offered in schools; because of very real economic barriers to education and treatment.

Making it: A Woman's Guide to Sex in the Age of AIDS, written by Cindy Patton and Janis Kelly, has chapters on talking to your partner about safer sex, making condoms fun, artificial insemination and other topics that may be hard to find in standard education campaigns. These publications can direct you to further sources of information.

A final note on the 'uninfected partner' scenario: it isn't specific groups of the population that are affected by HIV and AIDS. Lesbians are not a "low-risk group". Haitian drug users are not a "high-risk group".

Everyone who engages in high-risk behaviour is at risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. If you can't be sure, take action.

Lorraine Munroe is involved in AIDS activism and education and is a community radio programmer in Peterborough, Ontario.

The Statistics

While the actual number of women's AIDS cases remains small, the reports of new cases of women with AIDS in Canada is increasing at about the same relative rate as for men.

HIV infected women have high rates of gynecological and obstetrical disorders, such as pelvic inflammatory disease, chronic vaginitis, and cervical cancer. These are often misdiagnosed because they are not seen to be related to AIDS.

January 1, 1992,

Adults diagnosed with AIDS
5583

Women diagnosed with AIDS
289 (5%)

Women who have died of AIDS
189 (65%*)

*65% of those diagnosed.

Source: AIDS Information and Education Services, Health and Welfare Canada, 1992.

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A comprehensive analysis of the Charlottetown Accord

by Joyce Green

Yes or No



On August 28th, amidst an excess of self-congratulatory backslapping, the First Ministers presented Canadians with the Consensus Report on the Constitution from Charlottetown. This political miracle of compromise and good will, we are told, forms the fragile foundations of a Renewed Federalism. While its authors acknowledge it is imperfect, we are cautioned that it is the best that could be achieved, and that nitpicking will destroy the consensus and potentially the country.

The package is to be brought before Canadians in a national referendum in the October 26th Referendum.

The impressive forces of both orders of government are arrayed to pull out the "yes" vote. "Information" is available to assure us of the merits of the deal, including the Charlottetown Consensus

but welcome acknowledgement of the right of aboriginal peoples to self-government, and the status of self-government as a third constitutional order of government in Canada. For the first time ever the Metis Nation's existence is acknowledged. These are all political statements of tremendous import, and I heartily endorse them.



The Canada Clause has incorporated the language of equality, and that is heartening. However, there is some concern that it also establishes a hierarchy of rights that will undermine Section 15 of the Charter (the equality rights provision). Respected opinions support arguments affirming and denying this possibility. Only a reference to the Supreme Court will produce decisive clarification on the matter.

The Consensus Agreement incorporates some of the more troublesome elements of the late, unlamented Meech Lake Accord on the matter of devolution of federal powers to the provinces; and the ability of provinces to opt out of federal programs while still receiving federal funds for programs meeting similar objectives. As in Meech Lake, it becomes most unlikely that Canada will ever see new national social programs such as childcare. It may mean an end to universality of other programs, as provinces treat the federal offerings as a sort of programmatic smorgasbord. The division of powers provisions further contribute to the checkerboard Canada, and the potential institutionalization of inequity between rich and poor provinces.

The Report says the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply to aboriginal government. The draft legal text qualifies this, repealing and replacing Section 25 of the Charter, to specify that the Charter shall not abrogate or derogate from the inherent right to self-government or the right of aboriginal governments to protect native languages cultures and traditions. As well, Section 33 is revised so that aboriginal governments have access to the notwithstanding clause.

No aboriginal law or any other exercise of the inherent right of self-government under section 35.1 may be

inconsistent with federal or provincial laws that are essential to the preservation of peace, order and good government in Canada. The legal text of September 10th implies that the provinces gain access to the exclusive federal Peace, Order and Good Government (POGG) power.

Officials state that both Québec and Newfoundland argued strongly for access to POGG powers. It should also be noted that both provinces are involved in significant disputes with Aboriginal peoples regarding natural resources and land claims.

POGG has been used to fill gaps in legislative power between the federal and provincial governments; to allow Parliament to legislate in areas of *prima facie* provincial jurisdiction that have a national dimension such as health care; and to permit Parliament to enact temporary legislation covering war, apprehended insurrection and other emergencies affecting the general well-being of Canada. POGG powers could be used in situations like the Mohawk uprising at Kanesatake or the Cree at the Great Whales project. These are speculations but we must be mindful of such possibilities.

The above legal text suggests that provinces can invoke POGG to displace aboriginal legislative authority. This has the further effect of creating a hierarchy of government, rather than a partnership of "orders" - equals.

While aboriginal governments will become the third order, and this implies partnership within Canadian federalism, the legal text makes it clear that constitutional conferences (and perhaps other First Ministers Meetings) will continue to be the power



preserve of the provincial and federal governments. However, the prime Minister will invite representatives of the aboriginal peoples (not "governments") to "participate" in discussions on specified constitutional amendments affecting aboriginal rights; and to attend a minimum of 4 constitutional conferences. This probably assumes organizational representation - and to date, has not included the Native Women's Association of Canada.

So why my sense of

sadness, of frustration, of impotence, regarding constitutional change? It is because, in my view, the past construction of our political institutions and processes envisioned a nation where the social, economic and political power was vested only in men - propertied white men, to be specific; and the current vision is not much different.

These brave new constitutional changes are not so brave as to admit the past systematic exclusion of me and my sisters by proposing new structures and processes that will permit our participation, in numbers proportionate to our presence



in the population, and to our skills and interests.

The gender barrier may, in the final analysis, be the most difficult to scale.

The Consensus Report is silent on the question of the restructuring of Canada's institutions and processes to better accommodate women. Worse, the package by implication condemns women to the sidelines of political evolution now and in the future. And, while all women are damaged by the patriarchal alliance, none are more so than aboriginal women.

The Native Women's Association of Canada is presently arguing before the Federal Court that the referendum campaign is illegal and should be terminated.

In this 'something for everyman' package, women's political analysis has been ignored. And, the most disempowered women in Canada continue to be aboriginal women. Perhaps because the dominant society is reluctant to criticize any element of the Assembly of First Nations' position, and perhaps because women's interests are typically subsumed by men's in the dominant society, native

women's concerns have been ignored, and there is very real potential for aboriginal women's rights to be violated by the third order of government. In fact, that result is almost guaranteed.

The historical track record of aboriginal organizations and band councils on women's rights is as spotty as that of the dominant society. Both are remarkable for the underrepresentation of women. In the absence of an equally compelling aboriginal constitutional declaration, aboriginal women have good reason to want assurances of the applications of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to aboriginal government.

The legal text relevant to Consensus Report provisions on aboriginal government states that aboriginal governments will have access to section 33, the notwithstanding clause; and that the Charter may not impair practice of the inherent right of aboriginal government, or the exercise of aboriginal languages, cultures or traditions. Some Aboriginal politicians have invoked "tradition" in support of excluding women on the basis of marriage to non-status men;



and to exempt Indian women from equality protection; and to argue against a feminist analysis by Indian women.

The difficult issue of membership or citizenship continues to be unresolved in aboriginal communities, most particularly in Status Indian communities. The pre-1985 version of the Indian Act, in the infamous 12(1)(b) Section, caused Indian women who married anyone other than a status Indian man to lose their membership in their band or origin, and their ability to confer that status upon their children.

cont'd on pg 26



Long term advocate of women's rights; dedicated to the creation of equal rights, pay equity and the elimination of violence against women and children.

Marilyn Churley, MPP

517 Pape Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4K 3R3
(416) 461-0223

Yes or No



This speech was given on October 7, 1992 to "Women's Forum on the Constitution" at Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

I approach the constitutional debate as a feminist. And as the first woman to lead a national political party I feel a special responsibility to the women of Canada and indeed all Canadians.

I have come to believe that the Charlottetown Agreement is a step forward for Canada, a step forward for the women and men of Canada. And I am saying YES on October 26th.

This constitutional accord is about tackling some of the political problems facing our nation. It's about addressing outstanding grievances. It's about reconciliation. Taking a step forward together so that we can move on to tackle the serious economic and social realities facing Canadians.

Each element of the Accord has its critics. But I strongly believe that when we consider this agreement, we have to look at the consensus achieved, look at the balances, look at the whole.

I know there are Canadians with real concerns, thoughtful concerns, including many women. And I think it's important to talk about these concerns and have a healthy debate.

Often, women are perceived as a homogenous group. Well, women have diverse points of view. And feminists have diverse points of view. It was that way when women sought the right to vote. We don't always agree on how best to attain the goal of equality. So on this issue, there is an impressive array of women on both sides.

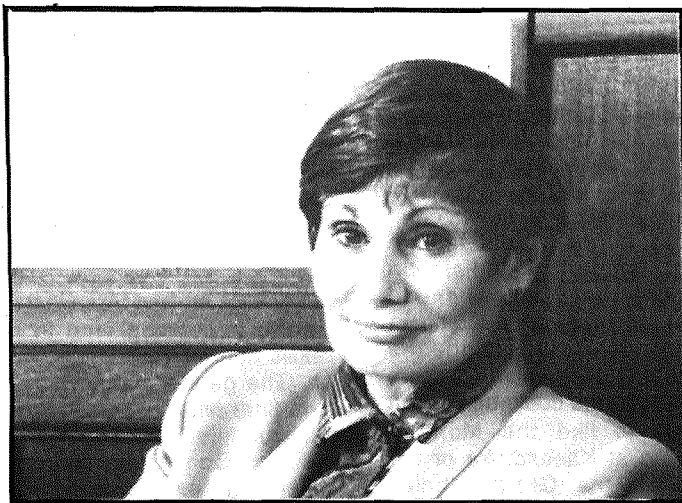
Some women suggest that the Canada Clause wording regarding gender equality is inadequate.

There is concern, specifically, that the wording in the clause only commits "Canadians" to gender equality

and not "Canadians and their governments".

The reality is, however, that Canadian governments are bound by all of the terms of this constitutions amendment and the Charter of Rights whether or not "government" is explicitly stated.

There is a concern also that the Canada Clause creates a hierarchy of rights, one that would diminish the equality guarantees of the Charter.



I disagree with this analysis, as does a large segment of the legal community. As constitutional lawyer Katherine Swinton put it, with section 15 and section 28 in the Charter, the "Courts are told two times that gender equality is important", and the inclusion of a commitment to gender equality in the Canada Clause can be seen as an affirmation rather than a dilution of Charter protections for women.

I do have one important concern with the Canada Clause that I believe can be addressed and that is to correct the omission of persons with disabilities through specific recognition of their equality rights.

A second important concern expressed by women is that related to social programs. Some argue that this agreement will make it more difficult to introduce new national social programs such

as a national childcare program. And that it will be more difficult to get provincial support for such programs - and that it threatens existing ones.

On the issue of new social programs, I ask you to consider this: the last national social program introduced in Canada was Medicare, 25 years ago. There has not been one new national program since.

Is that because of the Constitution? NO. It wasn't the Constitution that blocked new social programs over the last 25 years and it wouldn't be the Constitution that would block new social programs in the next 25 years. It would be governments. The key is who forms governments.

Some women are concerned, specifically about the ability of provinces to opt out of new national social programs. The reality is that the federal government does not at present have the power

to legislate in areas of provincial jurisdiction, and at present any new cost-shared programs have to be negotiated with the provinces. This is already the case. This is not changed by the Accord.

And if provinces choose to opt out, they can only do so if they are prepared to meet national objectives or implement higher objectives.

Rather than threatening existing social programs, I would argue that the Charlottetown Agreement gives greater protection to social programs and social rights than ever before.

That's because of the achievement of the social and economic union. I'd like to expand on that for a minute.

It was in March 1991 here in Ottawa that I first put forward the idea of a social charter. I suggested that a nation as diverse as Canada needs something in its Constitution to bring it together - an articulation of the values that bind us, the goals and aspirations that unite us, of our commitment to each other as Canadians.

Our Party and our Premiers fought hard for the social charter and the idea was embraced by Canadians. We should be very proud of the result of that work - the social and economic union.

What does the union mean for Canadian women and men? It means that, for the first time ever, the governments of Canada have committed themselves, in the Constitution, to important social goals.

They have committed themselves:

To ensure quality education, social services that meet the fundamental needs of each and every citizen.

To protect and respect workers' rights - the right to collective bargaining is recognized in the constitutions.

To promote a quality standard of living for all Canadians.

To pursue the goal of full employment not a minor achievement in the era of neo-Conservatism.

And, in the words of the document: To protect, preserve and sustain the integrity of the environment for present and future generations.

And the inclusion of medicare in the social union is of profound importance. Some people are trying to tell us that medicare is threatened by this agreement. That is just not true. As it stands now, there is nothing in the constitution preventing the federal government from scrapping medicare.

But with this new Accord, federal, provincial and territorial governments are committed to a health care system, and I quote, that is "comprehensive, universal, portable, publicly administered and accessible".

That's the language of the Canada Health Act - put in the Constitution.

Let me turn to Aboriginal self-government and the rights of Native women.

I know there is some

concern among women, and some Native women in particular, about Charter Rights being reduced under Aboriginal self-government.

And I know that there is a diversity of views about this among Aboriginal women, and that there are strong spokespeople on both sides of the issue.

The Accord states clearly that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms would apply to Aboriginal governments.

The recognition of the inherent right to self-government is historic, it is an example to the world. And it means that we can move forward together in this country, address injustices, and build a better future.

Aboriginal self-government, the social and economic union, bringing Québec into the constitution, greater inclusion of the north and responsiveness to the regions - these represent a real step forward for Canadian men and women.

This Constitutional Accord isn't perfect. I would have liked to have seen more progress for women and I fought hard for that - for a gender equal Senate for example - and I will continue to do so. But on the whole, I believe that this is a great achievement for Canada.

The biggest obstacle to equality for Canadian women today is not the proposed constitution of Canada, it's a lack of progressive policies, a lack of political commitment, a lack of political will. And my friends, we don't need Constitutional change to do something about that.

I believe we have a responsibility to deal with the constitution now. We have a responsibility to not let it drag on for the next generation. I think we should reflect on that. And reflect on the fact that a NO result means leaving these issues unresolved, it means tying the hands of the next government in dealing with the social and economic challenges ahead.

With a YES result on October 26th, I see a united Canada, a more inclusive Canada. I see a country moving forward with confidence and pride, with renewed hope, and most importantly, a country where we have a renewed sense of faith in ourselves.

That's why I'm voting YES on October 26th.

Audrey McLaughlin is the leader of the federal New Democratic Party.

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VOTING "NO" FOR CANADA CANADA FOR ALL CANADIANS

by Deborah Coyne

Canadians face a national referendum on the constitutional deal concocted by Prime Minister Mulroney, the premiers, territorial and aboriginal leaders. As citizens of a supposedly mature liberal democracy, this should entitle us to make a full assessment of the merits of the deal following extensive, open debate. We should feel totally free to accept the deal if we think that it will strengthen our nation, or to reject it if we do not.

But unfortunately this is not the case. Our leadership is treating us as sheep rather than informed citizens capable of judging what are the best constitutional arrangements to govern both ourselves and future generations. In the tradition of old-style dictatorships, they are closing ranks against the people and demanding that we click our heels and fall in line.

First, we are being asked to judge the deal without an opportunity to study the legal texts and without the benefit of an informed debate on its merits in every legislature in the country. This is absurd. Who would ever buy a house without checking on all the legal details or knowing the price in advance?

Second, we are told that there has already been such extensive consultation, no more is necessary. This is a false self-serving statement from those who cannot defend the deal on its merits. Not only are there several critical new elements in the deal that only emerged on August 28, such as the 25% floor for the proportion of Québec M.P.s, and the half-elected, half-effective Senate; but also the orchestrated consultation to date has been less than fair. Many of us will not soon forget how Canadians who raised doubts about the distinct society clause were shouted down during the Castonguay-Dobbie hearings.

Finally, we are told that the deal is a delicate compromise that we cannot question. We must simply accept any bad with the good. This too is unacceptable. We do not demand perfection in constitution reform. But we must demand excellence from our leaders. Canadians deserve better than a constitution that requires us to hold our noses.

Canada will not end if the deal is rejected. But what must end, at least for the foreseeable future, are these tedious, interminable constitutional debates. For the last five years in particular we have been constitutionalizing every problem that has come along. Let our leaders stop hiding behind sterile constitutional excuses, and get down to work to solve our real problems, notably the economy, unemployment, poverty and environmental degradation. Let them start to really serve rather than ignore the needs of the people of Canada. And let them focus their attention and limited resources on finding effective ways to improve our quality of life and building a fairer, more compassionate society.

Just think how much better off we would be had Joe Clark been appointed special minister in charge of economic recovery rather than national unity. And for those YES people who mindlessly respond that the status quo is not working, I have a challenge. Name just one policy or program that a government, or governments, should or could be pursuing that would be inhibited by our current constitutional arrangements. The answer is none.

The constitutional status quo, while not perfect, has served us well for the last 125 years. To argue other wise, as our leaders have done, represents one of the most divisive and dangerous myths that has been propagated in the last five years (in addition to the myth that somehow Québec is excluded from the Constitution). While such things as aboriginal self-government and senate reform are of high importance, surely we are mature enough as a nation to take the time we need to make a constitution that will earn the respect of our children and our children's children.

Why is this deal so dangerous? Why does it not reflect a viable vision of the country for the twenty-first century?

First, the deal is yet another step in the dismantling of the federal government, a one-way shift of powers to the provincial governments with new constitutional mechanisms to further shift power to the provinces on an ongoing basis. The cumulative effect of all the complex provisions will be an ineffective federal government that is increasingly irrelevant vis-à-vis provincial governments.

But why is such

decentralization wrong? It is wrong because, as global forces strengthen, we need a coherent national government; even more, one that can play an effective role on the world stage to meet the challenges of environmental decay, nuclear proliferation, urban sprawl and desperate poverty. Also, the federal ability to strengthen the ties among Canadians, whether through social programs or promoting our common Charter rights, is essential to offset the increasingly strong north-south pull.

For example, in many cases, the Charlottetown Accord forces the federal government to play cashier, handing over money to the provinces without effective control on how it is used. The taxpayers of Canada may be forced to fund provincial programs in perpetuity, despite changing spending priorities and needs at the federal level. This is thoughtless, not to mention contrary to the



principle of responsible government.

In a federal state as diverse as Canada, the establishment and maintenance of minimum national standards by the central governments in such areas as the environment, child care, social assistance, social services, health care and education, is essential not only to the economic union, but also to the social union. Since provinces can always vary these standards upwards, and usually have considerable flexibility in the design and delivery of such services, it is beyond me why provincial elites always cry foul and allege 'domineering federalism' and why the federal government timidly backs away. All Canadians, including Quebecers, benefit from national standards and the onus must be placed firmly on provincial governments to articulate clearly their reasons why they require jurisdiction to the exclusion of national standards.

A second broad objection to the Accord is that it would undermine the principle of the equality of citizens and the inviolability of individual rights that is the foundation of a

modern liberal democracy.

For example, individual and minority rights in the Charter will be undermined by placing the distinct society provisions in the Canada clause. This is unacceptable. The Charter is there to protect individuals and minorities from the 'tyranny of the majority'. It is not there to allow Québec's French-speaking majority to suppress individual rights, especially when that majority controls the Québec government and appears to be doing a good job with its existing powers in preserving and promoting the French language and culture. Moreover, Québec's distinct society is also defined in terms of its "unique culture" which makes Quebecers from other cultures outsiders in their own province. In any event, why should Quebecers have their rights under the Charter diminished when a June 1992 CROP opinion survey found that over 70% of Quebecers identify with the Canadian Charter.

The Canada clause, more generally, creates a hierarchy of group rights that threatens to undermine equality, and will greatly intensify inter-group conflict in Canada. Some groups are entitled to the preservation and promotion of their identity; others get

mentioned without any obligation on governments to advance their concerns (e.g. gender equality); and yet other vulnerable groups have been left out of the clause entirely (e.g. persons with disabilities).

The proper responsible approach is, first, to cool down emotions and remind people that constitutional reform is not necessarily so urgent as the government has claimed to date. The existing Constitution is working, something that too many people seem to forget or ignore. Second, the most important constitutional questions relating to the division of powers and institutional reform should be referred to an expert commission or in-depth study and recommendations over an extended period. Third, a new constitutional amendment procedure must be implemented to make clear that sovereignty in our democracy resides in the people. Further, it must provide for a permanent referendum mechanism to ratify any reform.

Yes or No



We certainly acknowledge that there will be consequences arising from a NO vote. But we can and must deal with them. The entire history of Canada has been a process of ongoing reconciliation between English and French-speaking Canadians.

If our current leadership, in particular our prime minister, cannot deal with the consequences of a NO vote, then he should do the only honourable thing on October 27, and resign. Indeed, the rhetoric coming from the YES forces about dire consequences is totally irresponsible, and makes a mockery of the idea of a free choice in this referendum.

We want principled leaders who will stand up to the threats and demands of Québec nationalists. We want leaders who will assertively argue the benefits of federalism to Quebecers, and how the federal government is as much the government of Quebecers as of other Canadians. It is not something to be feared and fended off, but rather, is there to allow Quebecers to play a constructive role in the wider entity called Canada and thereby to assure more effectively the long term future of the French language and culture.

We want leaders who will inspire us and transmit confidence in our future. If we are ever to dispel the cynicism that has enveloped our political system today, our leaders must show imagination and compassion. They must talk about the value of being Canadian in our interdependent world and the importance of national cohesion in the world scene.

If they succeed, we will have brought the poetry back to politics and restored the critical degree of confidence in our political institutions and faith in our national leadership that is so necessary to smooth the transition into the 21st century. And we will have found again that special sense of idealism captured in author Robertson Davies' comment:

"I think somewhere there is a dreamer, and he is dreaming us".

Deborah Coyne is co-founder of Canada for All Canadians and is the former constitutional advisor to Newfoundland Premier, Clyde Wells.

Yes or No



The C-31 amendments in 1985 were a partial remedy; as amended, the Indian Act causes no loss or gain of status via marriage. However, a number of bands have drafted membership codes that continue to discriminate against women who regained their status via the C-31 amendments. Further, a number of bands have resisted the physical return of C-31 women and their children, making it impossible for these people to enjoy their *de jure* rights.

Aboriginal organizations and many First Nations are budgeoning dissent with the argument that dissent on this matter undermines the political strength of the organizations; and is orchestrated by "white Toronto feminists" and that Indian women are not feminists and do not support feminism, i.e. equal rights; and that Indian government, returning to traditional ways or basing processes on traditional values, will put something in place (but not the Charter) to ensure equality among citizens.

Aboriginal women are vulnerable to being branded as puppets of the "white" feminist movements, as being un-aboriginal, if they speak up for women's participation and protection of women's rights in aboriginal contexts. This kind of powerful silencing technique is familiar to women of all races. Sadly, it is often effective.

In this last, seemingly interminable round of constitutional discussions and negotiation, women and women's organizations wrote briefs, made presentations, attended conferences, and

Comprehensive analysis (cont'd)



lobbied the mostly male politicians to secure a process with the potential - not a guarantee - for gender equity - in the Senate and in the house of Commons.

We spoke and wrote and sought a political solution to systematic exclusion, and a means to participate in agenda setting and prioritization. We spoke in favour of an asymmetrical federalism that would guarantee Quebec's distinct society. We spoke against a symmetrical federalism that would devolve



federal powers to all provinces, thereby making national universal accessible social programs and standards a political improbability. We failed.

The institutions that are charged with handling political agenda-setting and policy-making, the House of Commons and the Senate - are no closer to gender parity in legislators. I am not speaking in favour of quotas, but of mechanisms that enhance access to the political process. For example, structuring Senate elections on the basis of proportional representation (with the single transferable vote) would have the effect of making it more likely that women and other under-represented collectivites, could gain electoral success.

The Consensus Report leaves the mode of election for the Senate up to each province. The legislatures of most provinces are predominantly male. Newfoundland, for example, has 3% female MLAs. It is unlikely that these kinds of legislatures will see the need to

actively pursue gender parity in Senate elections. In any event, one never likes to leave one's rights to the good will or political caprice of governments.

Consider the federal government's public information booklet, "Our Future Together: An Agreement for Constitutional Renewal", available to all Canadians. On page 1, the document reminds us that Canada is "a country the United Nations Development Programs considers the best place in the world to live". True - if you are male.

If women are taken into account, the UN Development Program figures Canada to be about eighth. If women are taken into account?

This is why we must actively promote women's equality issues until the consciousness of the current inequities and our collective responsibility for change, is as normative.



Gender equality, we are told, will probably be on the constitutional table in the future. Gender equality, for my grandmothers, my mother, and me, has always been in the future. In this land of unfulfilled promise and so much denial, will my daughter have to fight these same fights?

In this aftermath of exhaustion, with most of us deeply desirous of a united Canada and some real renewal, we feel the weariness, the hopelessness, of once again having our issues deferred.

If women comprised half the legislators in this country, this deferral would be unthinkable. The marginalization of "women's" issues would stop. They would simply be issues, some more and some less

significant than the current batch. Our reality would be shared by our legislators. Our contribution would be valued.

All advances of equality are not limited to macro-politics and political institutions. But politics can be a potent agent of change, and an opinion leader in society. I want to see myself reflected by women's participation in the institutions that structure my society. It is the only way for my voice to be consistently, honestly, routinely heard.

Emma Goldman is credited with saying "If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution". All Canadian women, but especially aboriginal women, have been shut out of the dance, and yet we are instructed to vote "yes" to the Consensus Report (along with the legal texts we won't have reviewed). The fathers of Charlottetown, together with the "yes" contingent, are asking women to give the new constitutional process a degree of trust that is neither warranted by history, nor is prudent. We will need to reflect carefully on whether we

are comfortable with sitting on the sidelines; and whether we will ever get to dance or call the tune; and on whether constitutional restructuring that disinclines us is in fact good for Canada.

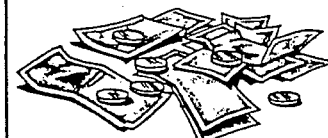
For myself, I shall probably vote "yes" in the referendum. But not with the joyous affirmation I would have wished.

It is a "yes" that comes of a fear that the stress of a "No" vote may fracture the country along existing fault line. But I would rather vote "No" to a constitutional package that treats the *de facto* exclusion of women as acceptable and blithely institutionalizes it.

Joyce Green is a political scientist and a feminist activist. She is currently the self-government and constitutional advisor to the Sitsika Nation in Alberta.

** Note of thanks for extensive discussions with Lois Pope of Whitehorse and Tom Issac of Saskatoon*

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Free speech?

by Céline Signori,
President

The Fédération des Femmes du Québec has been waiting for its operating grant since the spring. After numerous telephone calls, we finally managed to get a meeting with a representative of Robert de Cotret's (Minister of Secretary of State) cabinet. At the meeting, held on the morning of September 9th in Ottawa, we presented a resume of our Plan of Action for 1992-93. Mr. Beauregard admitted he was uneasy with the fact that our organization had taken a position on the question of Québec sovereignty (General Assembly, May 1991).

The same day, at the end of the afternoon, I received a call from Mr. Beauregard who asked us to sign a letter committing the organization to not participate publicly in the Constitutional debate. I didn't believe my ears and I asked him to repeat his request. I was terribly upset. "The fear machine rides again!" I told myself. I was both sad and very angry.

Having learned of these threats, the Board of Directors unanimously decided to make public the tape I had made of the second telephone exchange. They wanted to prevent other groups, particularly women's groups, from being subjected to the same blackmail. Papa Ottawa won't shut the girls up another time.

The Board had already decided, at its August meeting, first of all to intervene only to denounce the absence of women during the debate and the absence of specific measures to improve the status of women. Secondly, we wanted to prepare a document to inform women as to what is at stake for women's rights in the constitutional agreement so that they can make an informed decision.

While I am writing these lines, the process of consulting our members is under way. The partial results that have come in seem to indicate that we will take a position for the NO side and that our organization will be publicly involved.

Even though our grant was threatened, we will not give in to blackmail from any source. Québec women have spent enough time on their knees. They know that now is the time to stand tall. We intend to remain firmly planted on our own feet.

Court backs aboriginal women

by Teresa Nahanee

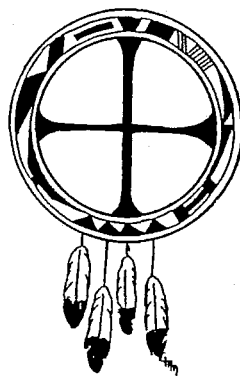
Freedom of speech is recognized as a cornerstone of Canada's democratic government. The Federal Court of Appeal has found this right was denied Aboriginal women and the National Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) in this current constitutional round.

Justice Mahoney, of the Federal Court of Appeal made this historic decision in the case of NWAC, Gail Stacey-Moore and Sharon McIvor v. Her Majesty, the Native Council of Canada, the Metis National Council and Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

Mary Eberts NWAC's counsel says that this court decision is unique in the world because it recognizes freedom of political expression for women. This is the first time a Canadian court has ruled on the right of women to freedom of speech in a political process, and it has recognized that this right has been infringed upon in the Charlottetown talks.

In its decision August 20th 1992, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that by funding the participation of the Assembly of First Nations, Metis National Council, Native Council of Canada, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada in the current constitutional review process but excluding the equal participation of NWAC, "The Canadian government has accorded the advocates of male dominated aboriginal self-

governments a preferred position in the exercise of an expressive activity...It has thereby taken action which has had the effect of restricting the freedom of expression of aboriginal women in a manner offensive to subsection 2(b) and 28 of the Charter. In my opinion, the learned trial judge erred in concluding otherwise".



The court held that the government of Canada choose who it funds, but "it is bound to observe the requirements of the Charter". Mahoney said "I should think a decision to fund will be made on the basis of need to permit effective and informed expression by an otherwise handicapped and particularly concerned interest group. A proper decision to fund one group but not another should be readily justifiable under section 1 of the Charter".

The Court found NWAC had justification to complain that its constitutional right to freedom of expression was infringed upon when Canada chose to fund only male-dominated

organizations.

The Court found that no aboriginal group in the constitutional process represents the constituents of NWAC. Justice Mahoney held that "NWAC is a bona fide, established and recognized national voice of and for aboriginal women". In this way, the Court has said we have rights, individually and collectively, as aboriginal women (as represented by NWAC).

The Federal Court of Appeal awarded costs to the Native Women's Association of Canada for both hearings in the Federal Court Trial Division and the Federal Court of Appeal. Seeing no reason why the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada and the Metis National Council should have intervened in this case in the first place, costs were denied to those organizations.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) did not intervene in the case but was, nevertheless, mentioned in the decision. Mahoney was highly critical of the AFN, saying it did not represent the best interests, or even the interests of aboriginal women. In fact, over the past years the AFN was noted for opposing sexual equality rights for aboriginal women, the court held. Mahoney recognized that the AFN and the former National Indian Brotherhood "have vigorously and consistently resisted the struggle of native women to rid themselves of the gender inequality historically entrenched in the Indian Act". This opposition took the form of adverse interventions before

Yes or No



Parliamentary committees and legal proceedings, including opposing repeal of sections of the Human Rights Act.

The Court rightly found that none of the intervenants--NCC, MNC, ITC, and AFN--represent the interests of aboriginal women and went so far as to find that AFN was likely to take a constitutional position harmful to native women.

The judgement is clear in stating that it is NWAC which represents the interests of aboriginal women. The history of the organization and aboriginal women's struggles was reflected in affidavits filed by Gail Stacey-Moore and Sharon McIvor, Executive of the West Region.

The case against Her Majesty was brought by the Native Women's Association of Canada, and by individual appellants, Gail Stacey-Moore, a Mohawk of Kahnawake, Quebec and Sharon McIvor, Executive member of the West Region and Member of the Lower Nicola Indian Band of British Columbia. The Court found they presented ample evidence of discrimination on the basis of sex and race in Canadian society, and on the basis of sex in some aboriginal communities.

Teresa Nahanee is Constitutional Adviser for the Native Women's Association of Canada.

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Yes or No



Mohawk Nation

by Karonhiahente
(Dale Dione)

CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE for the ADVANCEMENT of WOMEN announces 4 NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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CRIAW Paper No. 24 - *Canadian Women's Autobiography in English: An Introductory Guide for Researchers and Teachers* by Helen M. Buss, 1991. This study surveys a wide range of Canadian women's autobiographical writing in order to describe the ways in which women have constructed themselves as female subjects. A selected list of texts on the study of autobiography is also included.

ON THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

CRIAW Paper No. 26 - *The Women's Movement and Its Currents of Thought: A Typological Essay* by Francine Descarries-Belanger and Shirley Roy, 1991. This article examines the different currents of thought that have developed within and around the women's movement over the past decades.

ON WOMEN AND POLITICS

CRIAW Paper No. 28 - *Politics and The Hidden Injuries of Gender: Feminism and The Making of The Welfare State* by Thelma McCormack, 1991. This paper examines the development of Political Woman in Canada over the last century with a view to understanding the sensibility and the nature of gendered political cultures.

ON EFFECTING CHANGE IN PUBLIC POLICY

"A Policy Handbook: Strategies For Effecting Change in Public Policy" written by the CAAWS Policy Collective, 1991. This tool will interest any group working to effect change in public policy; the steps and guidelines are not specific to sport and physical activity.

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The Canadian form of "Indian Self-Government" is detrimental and totally unacceptable.

The original government of the Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) is based on the people and their clan, the women and chiefs. When the Dominion of Canada was created in 1867, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had long been accustomed to dealing with the British crown. But gradually, we found ourselves dealing more and more with an Indian Department that was acting as a colonial overlord, rather than an intermediary between equal sovereigns, (which is what the Crown was and should be today).

Commons Committee on the Indian Act. The Kahnawake delegation consisted of unified representatives of band council Chiefs and traditional Chiefs. The delegations requested that the Indian Act be removed from our communities, and that we not be made liable to Federal and Provincial laws in our territories. The Kahnawake delegation informed the joint committee that Natives were already in possession of rights and privileges as a Nation. That position remains unchanged to this day.

In 1960, after the Canadian government had granted to the "Indians of Canada", the right to vote in Canadian federal

Again, this is using a so-called Native organization to entrench Canadian colonial policy in Native National Communities.

The Kanienkehaka (Mohawk) as part of the Haudenosaunee has always maintained that we are a sovereign nation. The idea that self-government is "optional" is highly unlikely. As we view history we see that "optional" provisions become mandatory over a period of time through political pressure and through executive or legislative action.

Our government has always included the voice and strength of women equally. The clans are organized matrilineally; that is, the children belong to the clans of their mothers.

The women are the proprietors of the lands, gardens and homes. The Indian Act tried to destroy this system by not allowing participation of women at any level.

It has been formally recognized by the American Congress that our Constitution "Kanianerekowa" has greatly influenced the U.S. Constitution. Although a major difference is that the rights of women have been omitted.

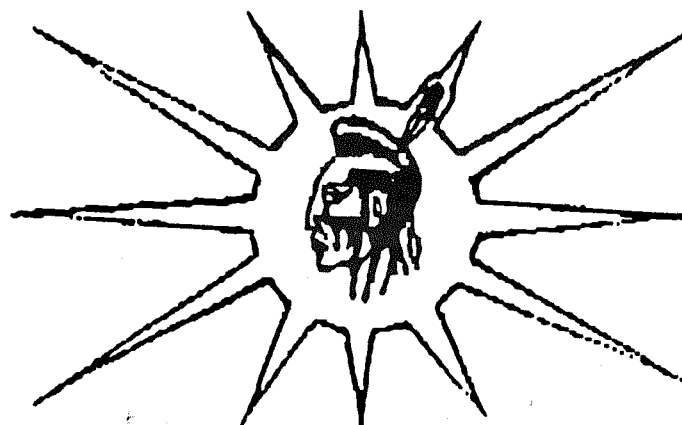
In our government women nominate chief statesmen as political and religious leaders. Women also hold the power to impeach any leader who fails after three warnings to serve the best interests of the people. If the founding fathers had disclosed the political powers of Indian women, white women could have argued that they deserved at least equal rights.

I wonder what the Americas would be like today had the women been given equal rights at the onset?

Although Kahnawake Mohawks have been subjected to the elected system of governing for some time, the women of this particular community somehow have managed to maintain a collective sense of responsibility and assertiveness in government and continually promote the well-being of the community.

Karonhiahente is a Mohawk Nationalist from Kahnawake and has been an advocate for the recognition of the right to self-determination in accordance with international law.

She is also involved with the establishment of an alternative school whose goal is to produce Mohawk speakers. In the past she has also been a teacher within the Kahnawake school system.



Since its existence in 1867, the Dominion of Canada, like a child that has never matured, has never assumed the responsibilities left with it by Great Britain, the mother country. It has violated our rights under the terms of many treaties and agreements including Two Row Wampum and the Covenant Chain. It has violated those treaties and agreements by passing laws and legislation for application over our people.

The Kanienkehaka has historically made its position on what we consider self-government according to our own constitution "Kanianerekowa".

In 1947-48, representatives from Kahnawake, Akwesasne and Kanesatake (all Mohawk communities) appeared before the Joint Senate and House of

elections, a telegram was sent by the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy) to Ottawa rejecting the "right" to vote. To this day, our people maintain their political sovereignty and do not participate in Canadian or American elections.

On December 6, 1982, the Grand Council of the Haudenosaunee passed a resolution concerning lands and government. It reads in part:

"The Haudenosaunee Confederacy is sovereign in the International Community, not within the Canadian (or American) context. The Haudenosaunee have no desire to separate from Canada since the Haudenosaunee have never been part of Canada. We have always had our own country and our own government".

For traditional Mohawk people, the Assembly of First Nations cannot and does not represent us as a nation. This organization is a Crown institution created under the Canadian Government's "Land, Revenues and Trusts Review". As a Crown institution, it would appear that there would be a conflict of interest in any negotiations or potential agreement. Needless to say, we cannot put our eggs in that basket. To promote this organization as the "Indian voice" is a misconception.

Adelaide Hoodless, founder of the Women's Institutes in Canada in 1887, also figures importantly in Canadian women's history. After her infant son died from drinking impure milk, Adelaide Hoodless dedicated herself to the domestic science movement to prepare women for motherhood and household management. Women's Institutes quickly spread across the country and around the world.

NAC's position on the constitutional referendum

The Charlottetown Accord is a bad deal for women. The accord threatens the rights of aboriginal women, seriously undermines equality rights and threatens new and perhaps existing social programmes. The absence of significant participation of women in the negotiation process has produced an agreement that excludes women and minorities from the so-called Canada Round.

The fact of an agreement among First Ministers and Aboriginal leaders, however difficult it was to achieve, does not mean that this is a good agreement for Canada. In our view, even if the agreement is accepted in Quebec and in the rest of the country, it will simply postpone further constitutional wrangling and will solve nothing.

We are also concerned with the tone of the debate thus far that reminds us of the scare tactics used during the Meech Lake Accord. The Charlottetown Accord is a fundamental restructuring of Canadian federalism and shifts the balance between federal and provincial government powers in a permanent and crucial way. It also shifts the balance between government rights and individual rights achieved in 1982. These are profound issues that need public debate. Furthermore, the people of Quebec and the aboriginal people have the right to democratically decide their future. The right to self-determination for Quebec and aboriginal people must mean the right to decide their future



democratically without being overwhelmed by a massive campaign orchestrated by the majority political elites.

Aboriginal women, with the exception of the Inuit, have been excluded from these negotiations from the outset. Despite a court decision that the exclusion of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) from the constitutional negotiations was discriminatory, the Prime Minister refused to invite them to the last meeting or to future meetings. There is no guarantee of gender equality for aboriginal women in the text and NWAC and the National Metis Women of Canada believe that their rights will be threatened under this self-government agreement.

The Canada Clause, one of the most significant elements of the new agreement, has received little public debate. It

is our view that the Canada Clause establishes a hierarchy of rights that will undermine Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While the Supremacy of Parliament and the equality of the provinces are enshrined as a fundamental characteristic of Canada, the Charter is not. Moreover, the clauses referring to racial and ethnic equality and gender equality are more weakly worded than the other clauses. Section 15, which deals with equality for other groups, does not mention people with disabilities, lesbians and gays as fundamental characteristics of Canada. The very minimal demand of racial minority groups that Section 27 of the Charter be strengthened has also been rejected.

The problems with the Canada Clause can be overcome without violating the central principles of the agreement. The addition of an over-riding equality rights clause and amendments to the Canada Clause can be made (we are now working on language for these). If the intention is to create a hierarchy of rights and to weaken the Charter then Ministers should be honest about this with the people of Canada. If this is not the intention then changes to the agreement in this area must be made.

NAC opposed Meech Lake on the basis of the threat to new social programs. The Charlottetown Accord has the same "opt out with compensation" clause as Meech plus a new provision enabling First Ministers to restrict federal spending powers in existing social programs, such as medicare and education. The provision on new social programmes will be an enormous barrier to the establishment of a national childcare programme and other new cost-shared programmes such as initiatives to end violence against women, remove barriers to the participation of people with disabilities, clean up the environment, etc. The provision on new social programs gives license to First Ministers to restrict the instrument that has given us universal medicare in this country. The social covenant gives us no comfort because it is totally toothless.

The agreement on the division of powers is also threatening to women and other disadvantaged groups. A patchwork quilt of training programmes and immigration policies will mean even more

inequity between rich and poor provinces and a requirement to fight province by province for affirmative action in training and for fair non-racial immigration policy. We still fear that UI is threatened.

Moreover, the provision on inter-governmental agreements will permit a continuing devolution of power. We believe there was another solution that would have responded to Quebec's demands for more power at the same time as protecting social programmes. Unfortunately, none of our political leaders were willing to argue for asymmetrical federalism, which in our view is the only formula for a lasting constitutional solution within the framework of federalism.

The decision to permit provinces to decide how to elect Senators is a good example of the problem. Because certain First Ministers opposed the agreement to elect the Senate by proportional representation - an electoral system that better promotes the representation of women and minorities - the First Ministers have decided to leave the election of the Senate to the provinces. So far four provinces, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia have promised to design their electoral systems to promote gender equality. While we are pleased with their decisions, provinces that have the worst representation of women, like Newfoundland with 3% women in the legislature, will be the least likely to embrace a system that will promote a stronger representation of women.

Yes or No

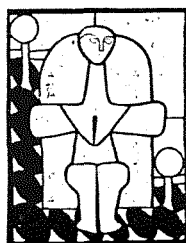


Now that changes to the House of Commons are also being proposed, we believe that the underrepresentation of women and minorities there should also be addressed. We have proposed a political accord that would begin a discussion on a system of proportional representation in the House of Commons, as well as other measures to reduce barriers to women and minorities in our electoral system.

While most of the decisions of the Constitutional Conferences were rejected by First Ministers, the public consultations before the 'behind closed doors' process did achieve important results. The most destructive aspects of the original Federal proposals, such as an economic union proposal that would have threatened social regulation, property rights, and Council of the Federation have been removed. Aboriginal self-government and minority linguistic rights have been strengthened.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women and other organizations concerned about Charter rights released the text of their proposed changes to the Canada Clause. The coalition includes the National Association of Women and the Law, the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) Canada, the B.C. Coalition of Persons with Disabilities, the Ad Hoc Committee of Women and the Constitution, and the Association of Lesbians and Gays of Ottawa.

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To identify as Black/Brown in a non-black world

by Jaya Chauhan,
Anne-Louise Brookes
and Melody Sylvestre

Jaya

Thirty-six years ago I was born in Kenya. My parents were born in India. When I was twelve, my parents moved me to England. I lived there until my recent move to Canada. For the most part Canadians tend to identify me as East Indian; a member of the visible minorities; a Woman of Colour. In England, I would be identified by some people as Asian. I, however, identify myself as a black woman living amongst a dominant group of nonblack people.

Melody

Twenty-nine years ago I was born in India within an Anglo-Indian community, distinct from the dominant Indian population in that we were a minority group of Christian religion constructed during the days of British colonialism: a minority group with power because of its roots. My parents moved to Canada when I was two years old and I have lived here since that time. I think that many people in Canada do not know how to classify me with respect to cultural or ethnic background. And as a result, I, too remain uncategorized in terms of my identity as white, brown, black or Canadian.

Jaya and Melody.

How and why we have chosen to identify ourselves as Black and Brown, respectively and what are the implications of such identifications with respect to organizing for social change?

Feminism, from our perspective, is where we all learn about each other so that we can each create a valued and knowledgeable text of Self. We think that there is a need for dialogue if the process of education is not to be severed by the submission of all voices

to one logic. But, effective dialogue, we think can only take place when there is support of the collective to enable risk taking. Using then the data of our experiences, our intent is to speak from our hearts and minds with the hope of feeling connection and affirmation in our respective journeys in life.



Jaya

I was brought up in a traditional Indian-Hindu household with heirarchal relations of male superiority and female subordination. I have lived a process of shifts: at one time, I uncritically defined myself as Asian/Indian. However, as my critical consciousness developed and I was able to name the gender, race, class practices that have shaped my being in this world, I chose to identify myself as a Black woman. My examination of the educational promotion of multiculturalism and a critique of racist practices and perspectives, motivate me to use Black as a concept that informs my everyday practice of living in a society organized to differently benefit race, class and gender and sexuality. In using Black, I revision a past that has

destructively claimed me and which I wish to be freed from. In the Gujarati language, with which I was brought up, the term white is synonymous with beautiful and the paler your complexion, the greater, the likelihood of being considered beautiful by others. In my community, appearance plays a key role in choosing a bride for marriage and therefore, is a signifier of how one will fare with respect to love, caring, relationship, marriage, the family etc. In my family, my complexion is dark compared to my other siblings and hence, in contrast to my siblings I am not considered beautiful. I can still hear echoes of my mother describing me in unfavourable terms: I was not a beautiful baby/child/adult whereas my sister was so beautiful. This, I am postulating had an impact on my subject in formation. Furthermore, my surname gives away my origins of being born in a low-caste Hindu family, and there are memories of humiliation associated with this: ironically, we could provide services to others of high-caste but they would not touch or eat food from us, (even in 1992, in England there is an Indian woman who uses my mother's sewing services but for whom eating or drinking in our household is taboo). When we lived in Kenya, because we were poor, every year my mother had to beg to the school principal to reduce the school fees: in my unconscious lurks the shame of poverty and being born into a low-caste family. In think that this has lessened me and it saddens me that even int eh eyes of those with the same skin colour as myself, I am viewed as being less worthy than them.

At school in England, it was very common to be called a "Paki" and since my name ends in ben, I earned the nickname "Currybeans": my family, my community, the way I lived were devalued and denigrated. Growing up with a dominant nonblack culture, the hierarchy of racism is in my consciousness and today, this leads me to resent the use of brown to describe myself. I am painfully aware that I was given the opportunity of an education whereas some of my peers, overwhelmingly from the West Indies and the Carribean, were confined to ESN (educationally subnormal) classes, considered as "dumb" and "stupid" and stereotyped to be lazy with no desire "to make it" in this world; that I was taken up by teachers at school which consequently enabled me to pursue higher education and which has made it possible for

me to become a respectable, privileged, middle-class woman that today has an audience to speak with.

I think that I am no more black than white people are white and that if I am a woman of colour then does this mean that white is not a colour and that white women are devoid of colour and are a special category? I am discomforted by others who resent my use of black because they signal to me a significant difference in how we understand conceptually the practice of racism in a society where difference is continually neglected. I, do, however, want to clarify that my intent is not to rely into truths certain social identities, but to speak from the chaos of my lived experience. For too long, I have felt locked in a cage of self-doubt and self-denial and I need to make sense of the knots that tangle my spirit and soul. At another moment, in a different social space, I may choose to identify myself in other ways.

The question I pose is how can we empower individuals living in a society where its social institutions and



understanding to think of some things as political and others as not is to support dualistic and hierarchical ways of thinking and being in this world. Critical learning skills, I think are essential to transform the self and the world around us with our identities being the foundation upon which we can organize community activism.

Dominant nonblack culture has not affirmed my difference, rather I have come to see myself as an outsider with a sense of alienation from others. I feel both, sadness and anger in that we are divided from each other at every turn and that the resistance expressed as a collective is always being undermined rather than strengthened. And today, while many women are, I think literate with regard to gender discrimination in our society, they are illiterate when it comes to discrimination based on race, class and sexuality. I think it is important for me as an individual woman who has existed on the periphery for a long time, to critically reflect on the constitution of my subjectivity living in a racist, nonblack society, which at (worst) defines itself as multicultural. I think that the feminist practices of naming, deconstructing, reconstructing and reframing cannot be separated from the lives we live or the institutions in which we work. I think that it is important to grasp that knowledge is socially organized, that the world is socially constructed and hence changeable. I have a vision of a different world and my intent is to continue to struggle to realise that vision.

Melody

From the age of five to sixteen I lived in a primarily white suburb north west of Toronto, and I identified myself with the dominant culture. The only time I recognized myself as different was when I looked in the mirror. I never questioned why I could not attend childhood neighbourhood picnics; I simply thought that the reason I was ostracized was due to something about me, rather than the colour of my skin. Today, of course, I realise that my personality is in fact being defined by the colour of my skin.

When voicing opinions about the existence of racism to others, I encounter disbelief. Most people in my experience, refuse to believe that racism is prevalent in our society. A friend stated, "I've never noticed any racism; it's never

organization encourage us to consider social issues and concepts as if we were on the outside, detached from the very relationships and practices that produce them? Thus, the problems faced by some are seen as individual problems rather than our collective problems. How can we get people to see that we need communities of resistance and a commitment to a politics of hope if we are to effect change? I think that it is only when we stop splitting the private, individual from the public and political world and recognize that politics is not confined to public, organized spheres of practice that we will be in a position to transform the world. In my understanding, every action and word that I utter is political, it relates to someone's politics somewhere. Furthermore, in my

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To identify as Black/ Brown in a non-black world

cont'd



affected me." For that person, therefore, it does not exist. Similarly, when the subject of feminism and equality came up with another friend, she stated, "I've always been able to get whatever I wanted, equality has never been an issue in my life." These responses have deeply hurt me and I have often questioned why I have my concerns, why I am so different from my friends. The answer for me, is that it is precisely because my life experiences have forced to me to examine events, the action and reaction of people to my existence in their lives.

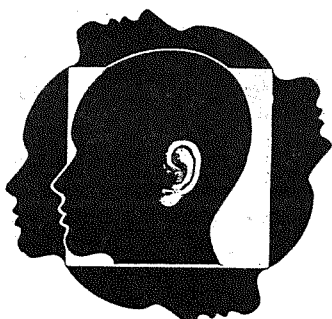
The process by which I have come to grasp the concept of racism has been personal, involving first, my own acknowledgement of my difference from others, a decade of struggling to fit in somewhere, anywhere; secondly, an ongoing acceptance of who I am; and thirdly, a questioning of whether I am an Anglo-Indian. The Anglo-Indian community in Canada is neither strong nor readily visible. My parents have virtually no affiliations with that group. I was raised within the boundaries of Christian doctrine, learning only the English language and being exposed to traditional foods from my place of birth. I have lived in a Canadian society, absorbing the dominant values, beliefs and behaviour of my peers, yet somehow I am not considered to be the same as my peers.

In my family racism was a subject that was never talked about nor considered an issue of concern. As it became an issue for me, and one that I was ready to deal with, I went back and listened for the first time to the experiences my mother has encountered in the work force. She was denied employment many times because they said that she would not fit in: her personality did not match what they were looking for."

I have encountered racism in my relationships and similarly, my brother, my cousin, my Korean friend, my Indian friend, my Canadian friend who married an Egyptian man, they, too have experienced racism. I think that the way in which society places emphasis on physical features of individuals and groups with a comparison of those features is what creates and reinforces the need for labels: we attach labels to each other and ourselves. I think that as women, as visible minorities, there exists a sense of insecurity and fear in our daily lives. Issues of racism, of feminism and equality, in our ordinary daily life are often

considered taboo subjects. The struggle I believe is the same; equality, to change our society from the perception of non-acceptance to acceptance.

For my own child, I hope to promote in him a sense of confidence, openly discussing different identities and values of people, promoting the richness of the two dominant cultures of his past, by helping him confront questions about his present ethnic category/identity, or lack of category/identity for his interracial composition. This, I think is the challenge facing society today: to promote pride and a sense of belonging, as individuals and groups create new identities while maintaining chosen aspects of their heritage, evolving amidst sometimes foreign values and behaviour. My intent is to empower my child with the tools to determine his own identity in a positive way. For myself, I am still searching for those who are similar to me, not so much in colour but in experience, and understanding. Unable to fit



into in a nice neat category, I conclude that all I am doing is being present in Canadian society, and because I am, I would appreciate the concept of 'equal opportunity' to have more than just mythical value. I may never be able to change the stereotypical images that have evolved as a result of racism in our society, but I think that we can learn much from our experiences by critically reflecting on them. Ultimately, I want to be hopeful that we can achieve social change through our personal resistances and struggles that we live on a daily basis. Underneath our skin, regardless of the colour of our skin, we are all alive, and I think that we all deserve to be alive and feel the beauty and joy of living, sharing and respecting each other for who we are as individuals. The spirit of the community is, in my belief, vital to the sustenance of individual growth and development.

Jaya Chauhan, Anne-Lousie Brookes and Melody Sylvestre are students of the Department of Sociology at St. Francis Xavier University.

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Polygamy

by Luanne Armstrong

Diverse forms of marriage and family are practiced by different religions and different cultures all over the world. However, in the United States in 1879, the Supreme Court ruled polygamy in that country illegal. In his decision the Chief Justice stated that "while laws ...cannot interfere with mere religious belief and opinions, they may with practices." He added that allowing a religious organization to go against socially established norms would make "professed doctrines of religious belief superior to the law of the land." The Canadian law against polygamy is based upon this American precedent. The assumption in such a ruling is that North American social norms are white, Judaeo-Christian, heterosexual, and monogamous, and will remain so.

The Creston (B.C.) group has the characteristics both of a cult, and an abusive family. Its existence is based on the continued exploitation, oppression and sexual coercion of women. Although the leader of the group has stated that women can choose whether or not to marry their designated husbands, in what sense can a fifteen or sixteen year old girl raised in this group be said to have a choice?

Incidents of sexual abuse and sexual assault are dealt with within the group. For women to access any kind of information or support is very difficult.

One can only speculate whether the surrounding community, and the provincial and local authorities would be

so extraordinarily tolerant towards this group if its members were non-white, or wore bright coloured robes, or had religious practices that were not based on Judaeo-Christian origins. People in Creston seem to have bought the prevailing myth of this group as a large happy family. In particular, Creston people mention the fact that the children always look clean, and well dressed and that the group practices high moral standards.

At this point, the group seems to exist in a legal vacuum. Although they are nominally breaking the Canadian law which prohibits polygamy, this law would have to be tested under the Canadian Charter of Rights. If the law forbidding polygamy was struck down, it could conceivably make it possible for members of the Church of Latter Day Saints, or other cultural groups or religions to practice polygamy.

Deb, and other women like her who have managed to leave the groups have difficulty finding counsellors and other helpers who understand the nature of what they have survived. A blanket of secrecy, denial, and misunderstanding continues to exist around this group. This silence continues to hurt these women by denying the reality of the abuses that they lived and experienced and continue to experience.

Luanne Armstrong is a writer and an organic farmer on the east shore of Kootenay Lake, B.C.

Since 1945, a small group of people in the southeastern corner of BC have successfully defied Canadian law forbidding polygamous marriage.

They have created a communal lifestyle, with an outwardly peaceful facade. But life in the group, according to women who have left, is based on compulsion, coercion, and the subjection of its women members. Until recently, the group has been either ignored or tolerated by its neighbours, the residents nearby Creston, B.C. and by local, provincial and federal authorities.

persuasion was to turn the property over to a United States based corporation called the United Effort Plan (UEP). At present, all of the debt free property is under the control of the UEP. As more property is acquired, it is also turned over to the UEP. The Creston leader is one of the UEP trustees and members of the group have become 'tenants at will' in homes they build at their own expense.

Their religious leader also owns several local companies and employs most of the male members of the group. Women who aren't required to care for

God," by the "prophet" in the USA. After begging and pleading, she was finally given a "release" (a form of divorce) from this husband. In August of 1982, she was married by the "prophet" to her third husband. He was ten years older than her and was initially kind and understanding.

By this time, because of the attempted suicide that landed her in the local hospital, Deb had begun seeing a counsellor in secret, an extremely difficult process when she was being so closely watched. She was also painfully and slowly questioning the claim to God's will to which the leaders of the group attested. Then in 1986, her husband molested her daughter.

The leaders in both Canada and the US were informed, but they in turn told Deb to keep quiet about it. (Deb then pregnant with her seventh child told her counsellor and Social Services about the abuse). After being sexually assaulted by her husband, Deb's doctor recommended she go to a psychiatric ward for relaxation therapy.

Just before Deb went to the hospital, she and her children left the group with the help of an aunt in Calgary. Accessing schools and creating a life for herself and her children was a new and very difficult, experiences. She had already been taught to put all responsibility for decisions in the hands of the group leader.

Once in Calgary, she and the children all began receiving counselling. A year after the children had been in the Calgary schools, she was told that her son had also been molested. She was instructed to inform the authorities. The Crown now had seven documented charges against her ex-husband and took him to trial.

During the trial against her ex-husband, the group received publicity by local, provincial and national media. In several stories, the smiling group leader was quoted as saying he supported the equality of women, and that women in the group have free choice in marriage.

Reaction from the Creston community was defensive. Some letters to the editor defended the group saying they were "good Christians who are following their faith." Among the local men, some openly express admiration or envy for the polygamous men who "really know how to control their women".

Women in the group have no



The Bountiful Polygamist group consists of approximately 450 men, women and children, directed socially, economically and religiously by a group of five men, four of whom live in the United States. The fifth, Winston Blackmore, is the leader of the Canadian group. The group is a break away sect from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), descendants of Mormons who left when the church gave up polygamy in 1890. There are an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 polygamists of various affiliations throughout Canada, the United States and Mexico and the group has carried this myth to its extreme when the ones who suffer most are women and children.

The Bountiful Polygamist group was formed in 1945 when Ray and Harold Blackmore, Eldon Palmer, and Dalmon Oler left Alberta with their families to live near Creston. The property was owned individually in the beginning, but since 1965 the emphasis of the religious

children at home, work in the government funded private school, which all the children attend.

In 1988, Deb Palmer left the community after reporting several incidents of sexual abuse to police. Her story illustrates the difficult and sometimes desperate life of women in the group.

She was molested by the group leader's son when she was four and was continuously subjected to abuse until she was fifteen. She was then married, 'for time and all eternity' to the 57 year old leader of the group. She became his sixth wife. He died of leukemia in 1974, leaving her with one daughter.

She was then married to another man, 40 years older than her, as his fifth wife and bore him two sons. He was emotionally destructive to Deb and his second wife, and in 1982, Deb had a complete breakdown, culminating in attempted suicide.

She had left him twice and been sent back, "in the name of

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by Luanne Armstrong and
Deb Palmer

individual identity and are the property of the group leader or their husband if he continues to be deemed worthy. A woman's desire, instilled in her from birth, is to serve the leaders and their husbands and to, "raise up pure and holy spirits, like calves in a stall."

Young women are given in marriage at the age of fifteen or sixteen, to a man who may be much older and have several wives. The women have large families, 10 to 15 children is not uncommon. The children receive little individual attention, since their mother is usually either busy working or has a new baby. The father has to distribute what attention he can among a very large group.

In all of the families, some or all of the "sister wives" must find ways to help support the families, as the husband is often uneducated. Furthermore, he is limited and controlled

by the group leader in his ability to earn a living. Even with the women and men's combined incomes, the standard of living is often well below the poverty line and the families suffer as a result. Because the parents are either absent or exhausted from working long hours, and often under severe emotional stress, the children's physical and emotional needs are often neglected. The long term psychological effects on the children are unknown. What is known is that there is an increase in sexual abuse in the community.

Since men who are not leaders control very little in their lives, sexuality and the powers of procreation are very important. The men fulfil their calling by bringing more pure souls into the "True Church". Young men are taught they must respect as well as work for the leaders, or they will not be given wives. Men have absolute power over their wives, unless they are in disgrace with the leaders, in which case their wives must remove all alliance from their husband and take direction from their leader.

Frustration, coupled with a distorted sense of morality and sexual boundaries, translates into devastating sexual control by men over women and children. In the closed and isolated environment of the community, leaders collect information about abuse and use it to increase their control against both the victim and offender. No action is taken outside of a token probationary action.

Since leaving, Deb has written many letters to ministries within the BC government.

One request was for an investigation into the education of the group's children. Assessments on her children done in Calgary indicated they were two and three grades behind. The education ministry stated in response that the



LDS school meets educational requirements.

Deb and Ruth Perrin, another former resident of the LDS community, made a presentation called "Polygamy is not a Victimless Crime" at a 1991 conference on Women in a Violent Society, Banff, BC. Over a thousand petitions were signed and sent to the Attorney General's office asking that action be taken.

In May 1992, the Attorney General's Office in British Columbia announced that it would not be proceeding with criminal charges against members of this group. Regional Crown Counsel Hermann Rohrmoser said that the present law was probably not prosecutable under the provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and that legislative changes were needed to deal with this as well as other similar situations.

Former members have since formed a support group called the Committee on Polygamous Issues which believes legislated attempts to deal with this issue will also impact other non-traditional family structures in Canada, such as gay and lesbian families.

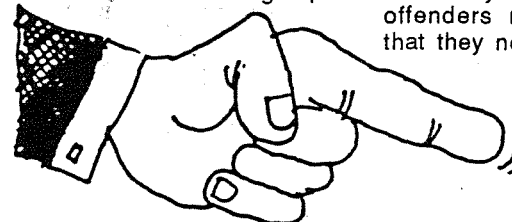
In September, 1992 the group was given a grant of \$10,000 from the Ministry of Women's Equality in British Columbia. It is now in the process of researching the historical, legal, social, and political aspects of polygamy in Canada. They will make recommendations for changes based on this research.

Deborah Palmer is presently writing a book about her life in the group. She is also the founder of a support group for women and families who have left polygamous communities.

July 1 1992

Having lived in the polygamist community in Creston (B.C.) for thirty-two years and having left only four years ago, I have mixed feelings about the decision of the Crown not to prosecute this polygamist community. I believe the government must now move quickly to enact laws that will protect women and children in polygamous relationships. At present these women and children have no family or property rights under Canadian law.

Historically, devoted members of polygamist groups in the United States, and in Canada, have been prepared to die for their right to live in polygamy. Attempts to prosecute these groups have resulted in their leaders claiming that they were being persecuted for their "Higher Law ordained by God," thus proving that they are "the Lord's Anointed, the chosen few." In every case the people went underground and the fear of government agencies increased the control the group



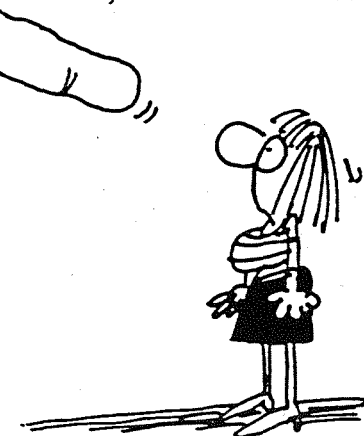
leaders already had over the people, making these communities closed and secretive. My family in the polygamist community in Creston are prepared to die protecting their leaders and their sacred principle of polygamy.

For sixty years this polygamous community has existed outside of Canadian society and law. The excuse for this has been the leader's rationale that "God's law is more important than man's law." This reasoning has resulted in the group members accepting that the leaders are the law. This isolation, defensiveness and fear has created a closed society where leaders exercise absolute power over vital aspects of life. Despite nominal cooperation with police and government services, unlawful acts are likely to go unreported in such an atmosphere unless a slip in the secret-keeping system

occurs.

To make this control complete, the children in this community are being taught from their earliest breath to do exactly what they are told by group leaders whom they believe speak for God. The consequences of disobeying this dictatorial attitude are swift and harsh. Family members are directed to cut themselves off from all disobedient members.

Despite the polygamous leader's claims that there are no abusive situations in this community, this is one of my most pressing concerns. From my thirty two years of life inside this community, I know that there is abuse. The political and social structure ensures that cases of abuse are rarely reported. Neither the victim or the offenders receive counselling or are even aware that abuse has occurred. In most situations, children are directed to refuse to cooperate with attempts made by Social Services to investigate. They are told, "talk but don't talk." As a result, only in rare cases have any of the victims or offenders received the help that they need. Under these



circumstances it is difficult to determine if anyone really has a free and informed choice about important decisions such as marriage, education, and employment.

I have been in therapy for eight years learning to face the reality of my life, and how to live with thirty two years of abuse that I was told was "God's will". Every day continues to be a challenge, but I have worked hard to understand what happened to me, and my seven children. My research and personal experience tell me the following:

by Deborah Palmer

Polygamy is here to stay. Despite determined attempts of the Federal government of the United States, and the States of Utah and Arizona, to eradicate polygamy as a lifestyle, the membership of polygamist groups has grown in over one hundred years, to an estimated 60,000. There are at least sixteen different polygamous groups, each with their own "prophet" and policies of internal government. They share the belief that as long as polygamy is illegal they will continue to defy the law. We also have a growing population of Middle eastern people in Canada bringing to light the question of their right to polygamist belief and practice.

Polygamy is a patriarchal lifestyle. I believe it can be lived without damaging those involved, but only if controls and safeguards are legislated.

As a result of government services refusing to take affirmative action both in the United States and Canada, the polygamist communities are in a tragic state of internal warfare and abuses are rampant. We are now in a position in Canada to make a positive and definitive difference.

Our country accepts alternate lifestyles and is multicultural. Many adjustments have been made in our society to tolerate and understand complex family units. If the law presently making polygamy a criminal offence cannot be enforced, then government must legalize polygamy. At the same time, reasonable controls and regulations must be legislated both in criminal and family law. The present legal limbo solidifies the abusive situations that jeopardize many innocent women and children.

When polygamy is legalized, the polygamist community will then have the right to live their version of God's law. However, they will be doing so within legal and social safeguards, curtailing the possibilities of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

Stay at home wife wins \$\$ for lost income

by Georgia Stormes

HAMILTON, Ont.--When Deborah Elliot and her husband decided to have children, she readily agreed, like many Canadian women, to stay home with the kids until they reached school-age. Although she knew she was temporarily derailing her management career, she was willing to make that sacrifice for the well-being of the family.

After all, she figured, their marriage was a joint venture. They both considered child-rearing as critically important--her contribution would of course be viewed as equal in value to his. And she assumed the marriage would last.

End of fairy tale.

When Deborah was ready to return to the labour force full-time in 1989, after eight years spent raising her sons Brandon and Tyson, she could only find a part-time position with her former employer, Bell Canada. In 1990, her marriage broke down and the couple legally separated and subsequently filed for divorce. Deborah's husband Michael was willing to divide their assets fifty-fifty and help look after the children, but spousal support was out of the question.

Suddenly she had neither career nor partner. She had fulfilled her part of the marital bargain and was left standing out in the cold.

Every day women find themselves in the same leaky boat. The difference in this case is that 37-year-old Deborah decided to press for legal recognition and compensation for the toll that her hearth-and-home stint took on her career. And, breaking new ground, she won.



Legal counsel Jill McLeod of Toronto commissioned an economist to estimate Deborah's lost future income because of her child-rearing absence from the labour force and in a precedent-setting decision released in August, Senior Judge David Steinberg of the Unified Family Court in Hamilton, Ont. determined that she was entitled to a \$70,939

lump sum settlement.

In the wake of that victory, divorce proceedings from coast-to-coast may now take on a new dimension.

"This is something that not just women but lawyers and married men across Canada should be paying attention to," says McLeod, who has specialized in family law for nine years, following three years in civil litigation. "Now it will no longer be a question of whether women deserve compensation for the costs of career interruption to look after home and family, it will be a matter of how much they're entitled to. That's a dramatic step forward."

"Lawyers who fail to explore this new ground," she says, "will be neglecting their duty."

According to the *Lawyer's Weekly*, Deborah's award "confirms the crucial importance of expert economic evidence quantifying the costs to women of their career interruptions to look after home and family."

As well, the publication points out, "it holds, apparently for the first time, that the financial cost of lost economic opportunity to the wife, as a result of a joint spousal decision that she stay at home and rear the children, should be borne equally by the spouses because marriage is a partnership."

Deborah got married in 1978 at the age of 23. Four years later, she left her job as a Bell Canada manager, earning \$27,000 annually, to have her first child. Her second son was born 18 months later.

In 1985, Deborah started working part-time and four years later, she tried and failed to find a full-time job. She now works for Bell Canada 26 hours a week as a clerk, earning about 26,000 a year--less than when she left the company more than a decade ago. A Bell Canada supervisor testified at the trial that Deborah is a competent employee, who will likely get full-time work when it becomes available but, that may be several years off.

Deborah's ex-husband, an engineer who works as a national sales manager, makes \$55,000 annually.

Peter McCabe, Economist and professor at McMaster University, testified that Deborah's projected future income loss from 1992 to her retirement at the age 65 in 2020 was \$353,000. That figure was arrived at by subtracting what Deborah will actually earn from what she would have earned if she had not temporarily dropped off her career track.

Judge Steinberg reduced that figure to \$158,206, then

made a 33 per cent deduction for income tax, bringing the figure to \$105,471. He then added \$45,748 for the net loss of income in the 27 months between the Elliot's separation and the date of trial. That sum was subsequently divided in half for a total of \$75,609, the rationale being that the couple's child care decision was arrived at jointly so he should bear only 50 per cent of its repercussions. Another deduction of \$4,670 was then levied because Deborah Elliot had interim exclusive possession of the matrimonial home for 27 months.

The decision will not apply to every divorcing woman in Canada who has stayed home with her children, says McLeod. "But, it's going to be significant when a career interruption is involved."

"The next step we're probably going to see is a lot of debate about what kind of economic models should be used to calculate the economic

loss involved in career interruption. Actuaries are already tooling up for this."

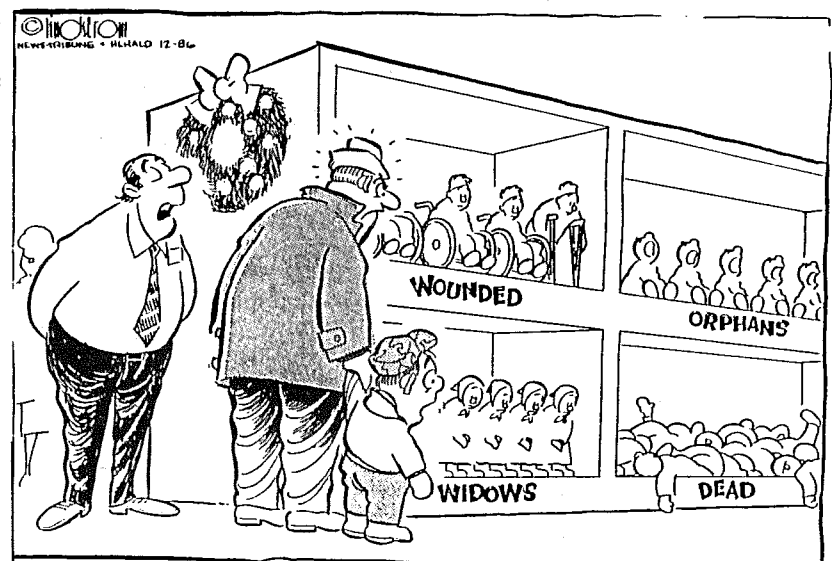
The federal government, in fact, just released a new study this summer that recommends guide-lines to arrive at spousal support or property splits that more equitably compensate women for earning capacity lost.

This is the first government endorsement of the concept of compensating women for lost career equity as a result of raising children.

For instance, it is projected that, in contrast to a counterpart who never interrupted her career, an average 35-year-old divorcing woman who returns to work can expect a future earnings loss of about \$15,000 after a two-year break; \$50,000 after five years; \$87,000 after 10 years, and \$94,000 after 15 years.

Those estimates do not include what she has given up

cont'd on page 35



"BUT, SIR -- YOU ASKED TO SEE OUR WAR TOYS."

Free Choice?
by Josie Wallenius

In 1945 the United States did two things. It took from the shoulders of Europe the white burden of ripping off the Third World and suppressing their indigenous uprisings and it made the military industrial complex the base of its economy.

Canada is fully incorporated into this economy with various trade agreements. We make lots of parts. The Western military weapon used on its domestic population has been absolute and unrelenting propaganda since 1945 in the mainstream news outlets.

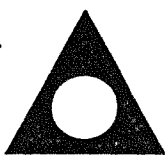
As one astute woman at the Women's Centre in Thunder Bay said, drawing attention to the face of the parent (not the man, the parent) and the child, (not the boy, but the child)

"Look, the child is amazed, he was never told what he is being programmed to do in the future. Look at the fury on the man's face, he can't pretend any more."

As for GUILT. Tell me about it. Ask me how I feel as I imagine explaining to a woman who has just had her kid's leg blown off that I am AFRAID of using this cartoon, that I am AFRAID of putting this cartoon up at the labour centre, that I am AFRAID of putting it up at work, where everybody wants a fun time at Christmas.

I don't feel guilty, I just feel frightened of not being liked.

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Groups**



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Pension justice for military spouses

by Lucie Laliberté

Mary Allen (a pseudonym) dedicated herself to raising her children and furthering her husband's military career for nearly thirty years. Her husband achieved a high rank in the military and just prior to retirement, he found a younger woman and left Mary.

A judge prevented him from obtaining a divorce until he had ensured Mary's pension entitlement was looked after by separation agreement or court order.

Before the issue went to trial or an agreement could be reached, Mary's husband died.

OSOMM and four of its members have initiated a constitutional challenge against several discriminatory sections of the pension plan which Canadian Forces members pay into.

Under the existing plan, one of our members has been deemed dead by Treasury Board in order to deprive her of pension benefits. Treasury Board has the right to do this because it determined that when her husband died they were separated and she was living with another man. Treasury Board is empowered

women.

By these and similar methods, tens of thousands of women are deprived of pension benefits paid for from family funds. As a result of these policies, many women find themselves in poverty in their senior years. Every province now recognizes that pensions are an asset of the marriage.

Likewise, spouses who are divorced, even after lengthy marriages, cannot receive benefits upon the death of their ex-husbands because Treasury Board's definition of "surviving spouse" excludes

direction that will allow spouses who have an agreement or a court order giving her the pension as a property entitlement, to apply for her portion of the pension directly from the Superannuation Plan. The new provisions allow limited retroactivity but exclude many women who have been fighting for these changes the longest.

There is also very limited flexibility allowed by the new Act because those few women who currently qualify will only be able to transfer a lump sum into some form of RRSP, annuity, or their own pension plan to be locked in until age 55.

This is true even though under the early retirement provision of the military plan, the contributor may be receiving his annuity as early as age 40.

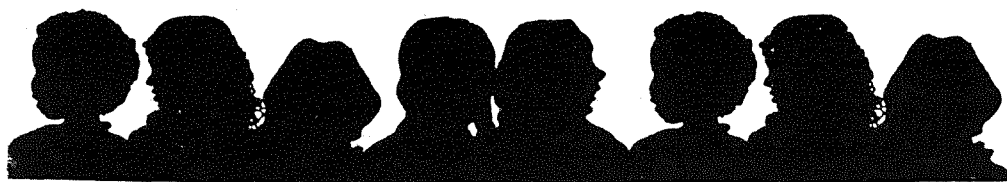
The government has ignored OSOMM's submissions that many women would prefer to receive their share in a monthly cheque from the plan on the same terms as the contributor. This is true for two reasons; first, because women often need a regular income as they attempt to re-establish themselves in the labour

market after extended absences to raise their children and further their husband's military career; and second because judges are reluctant to give adequate support orders.

The government had the opportunity to deal with this issue in a comprehensive and fair manner. Instead, some women will benefit in a limited way but the majority of women will have to hope for a positive outcome from OSOMM's court action launched in December 1990 for a solution. In the meantime, women will continue to be deemed to be dead in order to deny them their benefits and many more will be forced to file for bankruptcy and live in poverty in their senior years.

OSOMM's address is:
c/o Pothier and Gahrns
305-116 Albert
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5G3

Lucie Laliberté is one of the founding members of OSOMM, has been a military spouse for 24 years and is the mother of 5 children. She recently graduated from Queen's Law School and practises law in Ottawa.



Mary was deprived of the death benefit (a lump sum equal to three times his annual salary) which went to the common law spouse as did the CPP survivor benefit. Because she was not living with another man she will not be deemed to have predeceased her husband and may even be allowed to share part of the monthly pension benefit with the common law spouse, but that is entirely at the discretion of the Treasury Board.

New legislation to amend this discretionary practice will not apply to her because her husband died before the new legislation was introduced into the House of Commons (February 14, 1992) and because she had no agreement or court order.

The Organization of Spouses of Military Members (OSOMM) is a national support group for spouses of members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

to gather information and affidavits from her neighbours who attest to her "mode of living".

Treasury Board's view is that by living with a man this woman has "disentitled herself" to the survivor benefit and is presumed to have predeceased her husband.

This view was confirmed in a letter OSOMM received from the Associate Defence Minister. On the other hand, the fact that her husband was living with another woman "entitles" that woman to receive the pension entitlements earned during the 20-odd years of the first relationship.

Women who are separated from their husbands at the time of his death but who are not living with a man may receive the entire benefit. However, if the deceased husband had been living with someone else, the usual practice is to split the benefit between the two

"former spouse."

These women lose entitlement even though they may have a separation agreement or court order granting them their share of the pension on a monthly payment basis.

As one wise woman (Susan Rawley) said regarding pensions: "The work of bearing and raising children is not rewarded in old age. The only lifetime activity that is rewarded in old age is that of making money. The work of nurturing and caring for others - in fact 'producing others' counts for little."

For these and other reasons, OSOMM's position has been that the legislation discriminates on the basis of sex and marital status. The legislation focuses on an irrelevant point in time - the death of the husband. Proponents of this type of archaic thinking try to convince us this is about two women fighting over his pension. In reality, the problem is that these women are being defined according to their relationship to him and it is solely his interest being protected.

OSOMM's view is that the relevant time period is the period when the contributions were made.

The person who was there through the contribution period is the one who has earned the benefit. If there is a second or even a third spouse then the benefit should be split on a **pro rata** basis similar to the Canada Pension Plan.

Royal Assent was given on September 29, 1992 to the Pension Benefits Division Act. A small step in the right

Woman routinely faced opposition in their desire to pursue non-traditional roles. One Native woman, **Charlotte Flett King**, born around 1860, was interested in zoology. She sent collections of animal skins to American naturalists and museums, including the Smithsonian Institute. The wife of a Hudson's Bay Company trader, her interests apparently did not endear her to the Company. According to one account, Mr. King's "usefulness to the Company" was "hindered by being married to a Native of interfering manners."

Faced with this type of reaction to their efforts to participate more fully in society, women formed a number of organizations in the latter part of the century to fight for improvements to women's rights.

Stay at home wife cont'd from page 34

in pensions and other benefits, and they are over and beyond the wages lost while the individual is actually at home.

With the benefit of hindsight, Deborah, meanwhile, says she would never have entirely left the workforce if she could live the past 11 years over again. As for the future, "all I can say is that if I ever get married again, I'm going to go into it with as iron-clad a prenuptial agreement as is possible," she says. "There are no guarantees about anything these days and we'll all be better off if we prepare for all possible contingencies."

Georgia Storme is a Communications and Management consultant in Toronto.

Taking our place

Prenons notre place

To help more women take their rightful place in the House of Commons, the New Democratic Party has created a special fund to give financial support to women candidates.

With your support for the Agnes Macphail Fund, women candidates will have a better chance. And that means women will have a stronger voice. In 1988, the Agnes Macphail Fund helped 84 New Democratic women who sought election to the House of Commons.

Pour aider les femmes à prendre leur place légitime à la Chambre des communes, le Nouveau Parti démocratique a créé un fonds spécial qui soutient les femmes qui se portent candidates.

En contribuant au Fonds Agnes Macphail, vous offrez de meilleures chances aux candidates. C'est ainsi que la voix des femmes portera. En 1988, le Fonds Agnes Macphail est venu en aide à 84 femmes néo-démocrates qui ont heuré les suffrages dans le but de siéger à la Chambre des communes.

☐ I support the Agnes Macphail Fund. J'appui le Fonds Agnes Macphail.

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Send your donation to the New Democratic Party, Agnes Macphail Fund, 600-280 Albert St., Ottawa K1P 5G8. Contributions are eligible for tax credit on federal income tax. Faites parvenir votre don au Fonds Agnes Macphail, Nouveau Parti démocratique, 600-280 rue Albert, Ottawa K1P 5G8. Les contributions vous donnent droit à un crédit d'impôt fédéral.

Agnes Macphail

Getting men to pay for their children in Ontario

by Judy Poulin

In the province of Ontario, over 90 thousand families are registered with the Family Support Plan (FSP), established in July of 1987, by the Ontario provincial government. This plan is designed to ensure that court ordered family support payments are paid. Most, 97% of parents ordered to pay family support are fathers.

The major problem is that our court system, (which reflects public attitude) considers these payments as second class debts. Payers are allowed to get away with not paying for months and months. Often a payer will go to court and have his arrears set aside

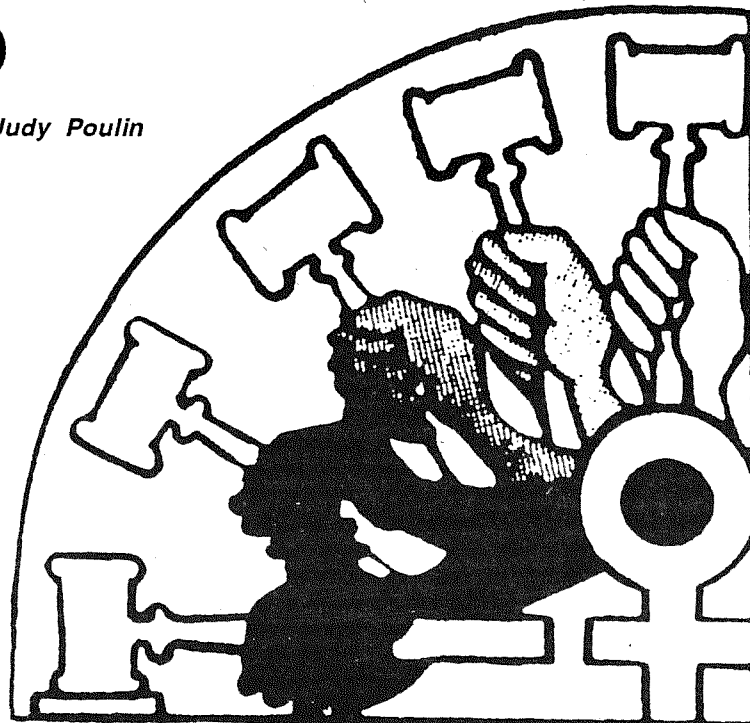
or reduced. This would not be possible with an income tax or credit card debt.

As of March 1, 1992, support orders registered with the court will be subject to a new program of automatic wage deduction. Most of these new orders will require employers to deduct support payments directly from the payors wages. Although this sounds great there are some drawbacks with this system. This new plan does nothing to deal with the problem of the self employed payer who continually gets away with not paying; it will remain the responsibility of the payer to inform the plan should he change jobs; information

from federal data banks remains inadequate, taking up to 10 weeks to receive vital work related information.

The larger problem of unrealistically low child support payments remains, even if we have a better system of collection. Two-thirds of divorced mothers and their children live in poverty, even with the support payments arriving on time. Contrast this with the 16 percent of ex-husbands that are living below the poverty line after making support payments.

The federal government has produced a research paper on child support guidelines. The



Because wife assault usually happens at home, people tend to think of it as a family affair. But wife assault is not a private matter. **It is a crime.**

As a community we should all be concerned.

For emergency assistance or referral, call the Wife Assault Helpline, listed in the white pages of your telephone directory or call the police.

Ontario Women's Directorate

 **Ontario**

WIFE ASSAULT IS AGAINST THE LAW.

problem with the economic data is that the figures they produce are too low. One of the models in the study comes up with a figure of \$1.10 a day to raise a child. Although we are in favour of guidelines, data which is more realistic must be made available soon, as many families are in need of higher support awards now.

A research paper by Miriam Grassby, published in the May 1991 issue of 'Reports of Family Law' shows that the average support award is considerably less than half of the actual cost of raising children. Ms. Grassby says: "It is easy to deprive children if you appear to be paying a large amount for child support. It is very difficult to deprive children if you are living with them."

The problem is further aggravated by the income tax system. Many women end up paying income tax every year because they have to claim child support as personal income when in fact the money is for children. This can drastically reduce the amount of support, and often this is not taken into account when the original payment order is made. If she remarries, it becomes even more costly because she will lose her equivalent to marriage exemption. The payer gets to claim every dollar paid as a deduction. We would think that the public would be enraged by this, as in effect this parent gets a huge break on his income tax for supporting his children.

The Department of Justice lists the following reasons to justify paying tax on child support:

a) It is a principle of taxation that, where a deduction has been claimed by a payer in respect of a payment, the recipient of that payment should pay income tax on it.

b) By requiring support recipients to include the amount of child support within their income, the system recognizes the basic fairness that tax payers with the same incomes from different

sources, should pay the same amount of tax.

c) The tax assistance offered by the deduction may provide an incentive for the payer to make regular and complete payments.

d) The tax treatment provides a subsidy which benefits the children since it encourages higher support payments.

These reasons are flawed and do not address the reality of raising children (emotionally and financially). For example, why does the payer need an incentive to make regular payments to support their children?

The time is politically correct to change this unfair tax law. SCOPE is asking for your support. Please send your objections to this tax that discriminates against women and children to The Honourable Don Mazankowski, Minister of Finance, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0G6 and to Sheila Regere, Status of Women, Constitutional Square, 360 Albert Street, Suite 700, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1C3. If you have to claim child support as income, we urge you to appeal your tax return. 'How to' kits are available through Support & Custody Orders for Priority Enforcement (SCOPE).

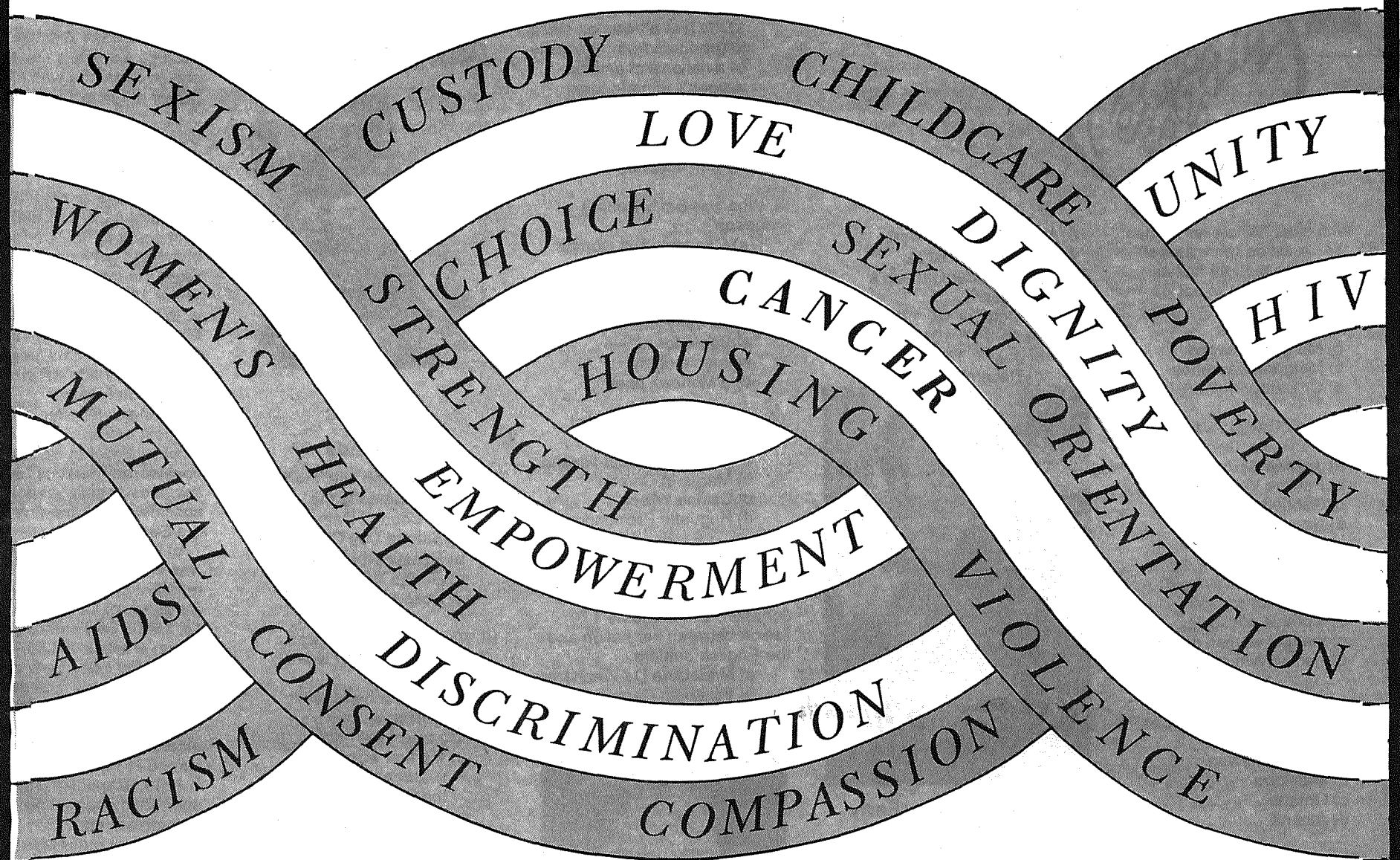
SCOPE is a non-profit organization committed to improving the enforcement of child support and changing societal attitudes about the responsibilities of parents after separation. We are working on all of the issues identified in this article.

SCOPE publishes a newsletter approx. 4 times a year. If you would like to be on our mailing list or if you have any questions feel free to contact us by mail at, SCOPE, P.O. Box 381, Cumberland, Ontario, K0A 1S0, or call us at (613) 833-2452.

Judy Poulin is the founder of SCOPE. She lives in Ottawa and has been fighting for the last 10 years to receive child support for her three children.

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Women's History Quiz

Write Women Back Into History

1. Who said, "Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult." ?

- a) Sheila Copps
- b) Margaret Atwood
- c) Margaret Laurence
- d) Charlotte Whitton

2. Who was Canada's first woman Governor General?

- a) Jeanne Sauvé
- b) Pauline Vanier
- c) Gabrielle Léger
- d) Norah Mitchener

3. Saskatoon Lily was ...

- a) a Canadian Olympic high jump champion
- b) a prairie wildflower
- c) the first woman on the Canadian Wheat Board

4. In which Canadian province did women first win the right to vote in 1916?

- a) Saskatchewan
- b) Manitoba
- c) Ontario
- d) Alberta

5. Who was Canada's first woman radio broadcaster?

- a) Ethel Cruise
- b) Thérèse Casgrain
- c) Idola Saint-Jean
- d) Anna Dexter

6. As of which date were women recognized as "persons" under Canada's Constitution?

- a) October 18, 1929
- b) April 17, 1982
- c) July 1, 1867
- d) December 11, 1931



Mary Two-Axe Early

7. Who was the first woman physician to practice medicine in Canada?

- a) Clara Brett Martin
- b) Emily Howard Stowe
- c) Catherine Parr Traill
- d) Martha Hamm Lewis

8. Who were the Edmonton Grads?

- a) the first all-women class to graduate from university
- b) a national champion women's ringette team
- c) an amateur women's basketball team
- d) a group of Alberta women scholars

9. Who was Emily Pauline Johnson?

- a) Canada's first woman lawyer
- b) Canada's first woman MP from B.C.
- c) an early leader in the struggle for native women's rights
- d) a Mohawk poet

10. Who was Canada's first woman Senator?

- a) Solange Chaput-Roland
- b) Margaret Carson
- c) Cairine Wilson
- d) Huguette Plamondon

11. This woman, a Mohawk, was born in 1736. She was the wife of Loyalist Sir William Johnson, and acted as a liaison between her nation and the English settlers.

- a) Madelaine De Verchères
- b) Elizabeth Couc
- c) Molly Brant
- d) Mary Fubbester



Mary Ann Shadd

12. Who was Elsie Gregory MacGill?

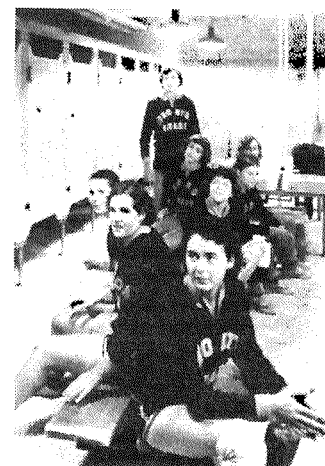
- a) Canada's first woman judge
- b) Canada's first woman journalist
- c) Canada's first woman aeronautical engineer
- d) Canada's first woman Dean

13. This woman founded the Anti-Slavery Society in Toronto in 1851, and is widely credited as North America's first black newspaperwoman.

- a) Susanna Moodie
- b) Mary Ann Shadd
- c) Rose Fortune
- d) Mattie Hayes

14. Who said, "Never retract, never explain, never apologize - get the thing done and let them howl" ?

- a) Laura Sabia
- b) Nellie McClung
- c) Emily Murphy
- d) Gloria Steinem



The Grads

15. In 1982, who was the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada?

- a) Sandra Day O'Connor
- b) Rosalie Abella
- c) Bertha Wilson
- d) Rose Lee

16. Pauline McGibbon was

- a) Canada's first woman Senator
- b) the coach of the Canadian women's Olympic field hockey team
- c) the first woman lieutenant-governor in the British Commonwealth

17. In what year did the first equal pay for equal work legislation come into effect in Canada?

- a) 1899
- b) 1952
- c) 1935
- d) 1967

18. This woman was largely responsible for the restoration of native rights to native women who had married non-natives.

- a) Nellie Mildred-Carlson
- b) Mary Two-Axe Early
- c) Jane Manuel
- d) Nellie Cournoyea

19. Agnes Macphail was

- a) the first woman to head a Royal Commission in Canada
- b) one time head of the Women Teachers Federation of Canada
- c) the first woman member of Canada's Parliament

20. This woman was one of the leading 20th-century reformers in this country. She led the struggle for women's suffrage in Québec before World War II.

- a) Marie Gérin-Lajoie
- b) Laure Gaudreault
- c) Thérèse Casgrain
- d) Annie Buller

This quiz was produced under the auspices of the Canadian Committee on Women's History in partnership with Status of Women Canada with funding from the Women's Program, Department of the Secretary of State.

Answers

1. d) Charlotte Whitton. She became Canada's first woman mayor when she was elected mayor of Ottawa in 1951.

2. a) Jeanne Sauvé became Canada's first woman Governor-General May 14, 1984.

3. a) In more sexist times, Saskatoon Lily or Ethel Catherwood, "the world's champion girl high-jumper", was rated the most beautiful athlete at the 1928 Olympics.

4. b) On January 29, 1916, Manitoba women won the vote.

5. d) In 1928, Anna Dexter became Canada's first woman radio broadcaster.

6. a) After a lengthy legal and political battle, the British Privy Council declared women to be considered "persons" under the law, thus enabling them to be considered for appointment to the Senate.

7. b) Dr. Emily Howard Stowe was finally registered as a member of the Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario on July 16, 1880. She had originally set up practice in 1867 after graduating from medical school in New York, but was denied a license in Canada until 1880.

8. c) The Edmonton Grads, an amateur basketball team, was formed in 1915 and disbanded in 1940. Canadian, American and World champions, their records are unrivalled by any team in any other sport.

9. d) Emily Pauline Johnson was a world renowned poet. Two of her better known works were "The Song My Paddle Sings" and "Ojistoh".

10. d) Cairine MacKay Wilson was appointed to the Senate on February 15, 1930.

11. c) Molly Brant was a diplomat, negotiator, cultivator of crops and an expert in the medicinal qualities of herbs.

12. d) Elsie Gregory MacGill was the first woman to graduate from aeronautical engineering in the world and the first woman elected to the Engineering Institute of Canada. As an engineer for Fairchild Aircraft Limited, she and her staff of 4500 designed and produced more than 100 Hurricane aircraft per month in 1940.

13. b) Mary Ann Shadd was a journalist and human rights advocate. At the age of 60, she was the first female law student to attend Howard University in Alabama.

14. b) Nellie McClung was a novelist, journalist, suffragist, and temperance worker who fought tirelessly for women's rights in Canada.

cont'd on page 39



Emily Murphy & Nellie McClung

The issue of women's suffrage - the right to vote - was also a focus of attention for women. Among the most active suffragists were **Emily Murphy** in Alberta, and **Nellie McClung** in Manitoba.

Born in 1868, Emily Murphy was an accomplished author, writing under the name of "Janey Canuck". In 1916, she was appointed police magistrate for Edmonton - the first woman

magistrate in the British Empire.

Her friend, Nellie McClung, a writer and journalist, was instrumental in obtaining Canada's first provincial vote for women in Manitoba in 1916. Nellie McClung later sat as a member of the Alberta Legislative Assembly, and then, in collaboration with Emily Murphy and a group of Alberta women known as the "Famous Five", advanced women's rights through the Persons Case.

A young woman speaks out: identity and double discrimination

By Hisako Mori

Female youth are challenged by today's society. Through employment opportunities and education, young women are realizing their potential. In the fields of athletics and academics, women have proven themselves to be a driving force.

Being a Japanese-Canadian youth has given me an extra challenge which I'm certain many have faced. Finding a

slanted tiny eyes and dark coarse hair? Why was my body so different from everyone else's? Why did everything about me seem worse than that of my friends? I continued with these questions and this attitude until early high school. With patience my parents watched as I shunned the Japanese community only wishing to be "Canadian". In magazines and on billboards I saw only healthy, attractive

appreciation and a better understanding of the difficulties facing visible minorities. My hope is that others may find a part of themselves which is unique, and to seek individualism, (but not isolation), rather than total assimilation and conformity. It is through distinctiveness that an individual will be most recognized.

The obstacle which I am still forced to face on a regular basis is that of double discrimination. Being a visible minority and a woman has posed threats to education and employment opportunities for many women. For myself it has reiterated a sense of insecurity I felt I had conquered.

Clearly, I am not yet over the sense that I am being judged by my appearance. Certainly, prejudice is not acceptable in any form, and it is sad that we have reached a time when women are hired to fill quotas rather than on their own merit and achievements.

As is the case with every other youth of this generation, I am faced with daily challenges, and I am displeased to report that certain things have not changed. Though the circumstances and the times have changed, today's young

women face as many of the insecurities as women of generations past. The trial is in finding a better way to overcome the obstacles.

There is an ever-increasing number of young women who are of a visible minority, or who are physically or mentally handicapped. We must make an effort to give these individuals positive reinforcement in our society. Double discrimination is a problem not admitted by many in authority. As women, we must strive to excel in our endeavours. It is only through determination that we may prove ourselves worthy of notice.

Regardless of race, religion or age, we must all find and be comfortable with our sense of identity, and we must confront all forms of discrimination facing the people of our diverse society.

Hisako Mori is a 19 year old student in her second year of the Psychology programme at the University of Ottawa. She was also a participant and speaker at the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women conference "Widening the Circle, a Gathering with Young Women."

A key issue in Québec was the lack of legal rights for married women. One of the women who worked for many years to change the situation was legal expert **Marie Lacoste-Gérin-Lajoie**. The author of a series of articles and a book on the rights of married women under the Québec Civil Code she co-founded, in 1907, the *Fédération nationale Saint Jean-Baptiste*, the first French Catholic feminist organization in Québec.

Marie Lacoste-Gérin-Lajoie was also among a group of prominent French Canadian women in Québec responsible for the establishment of *Hôpital Sainte-Justine de Montréal* for children in 1907.

This effort was spearheaded by **Justine Lacoste-Beaubien**, who was concerned about the high infant mortality rate and the lack of bed space for children under five in Montréal's hospitals. Even after the hospital opened its doors however, the organizers continued to be hampered by their status - as women, they could not legally be responsible for the daily operations of the hospital! After an important and well-publicized legal battle, these women finally won the legal right to run their charity themselves.



Photo of the participants of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women's conference, **Young Women Speak Out**, of which Hisako Mori was a participant.

sense of identity and confronting double discrimination are among key obstacles I experience and am attempting to overcome.

My parents are of Japanese ancestry, my father being a third generation Japanese-Canadian, and my mother a landed immigrant, now a Canadian citizen. Although I have been schooled in English, my mother tongue is Japanese.

I remember thinking of myself as "not normal" from a very young age. My first memory of anger towards my parents was regarding my name: Hisako. Why was I not given a common name like so many others? It was not a unique name to me then; it was demeaning. I wanted to assimilate with the others. Why had my parents given me

Canadian women promoting fashion and beauty products. I thought for a long time I could grow up to be one of these women. Then one day I looked in the mirror.

What I saw went beyond my physical features. It was as if I had taken a trip to my inner self. Of course I was Canadian; that could not be denied because of the country of my upbringing. Yet my childhood had combined two different cultures and I realized that I had been fortunate enough to have had those two cultures with me all of my life.

I soon became involved in many Japanese cultural activities, and through time became proud of my heritage, and my new-found identity.

I developed a deep



Mary Clancy, M.P.
*Official Opposition Critic
for the Status of Women*

*Best wishes
to the womanist
its staff and readers
in the battle for true
equality. Mary Clancy*

quiz cont'd from page 38

15. c) Bertha Wilson's appointment in 1982 ended 107 years of all-male membership.

16. c) Pauline McGibbon was Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario from 1974 to 1980.

17. b) It wasn't until 1952 in the province of Ontario, that a law finally recognized women's right to be paid the same wage as men for the same work.

18. b) Mary Two-Axe Early, a full-blooded Mohawk, was almost single-handedly responsible for the restoration of native rights to Indian

women in Canada who had been disenfranchised through marriage to non-natives. In 1985, her years of work paid off: Bill C-31 amended the Indian Act, and Mary Two-Axe Early was the first native woman to be re-enfranchised.

19. c) Agnes Campbell Macphail was elected to the House of Commons from Grey County, Ontario in 1921. She went to Ottawa as Canada's first woman member of Parliament.

The women's movement in Nicaragua and Central America

by Maija Kagis

January 1992. A women's conference, the first ever NOT sponsored by a political party, has to find a new home two nights before the event because the numbers have gone up from an expected 300 to over 800 women. To achieve a proportional rate of participation in Canada a conference would have to attract 4800 women.

March 1992. Five hundred women descend on Nicaragua, from all the countries of Central America for an overtly feminist conference under the banner "A New Woman, A New Power". Is there something going on here?

Conferences are not necessarily a reliable measure of issues and power, but they do provide some indication of interest. Women in Central America and Nicaragua are mobilizing. In Nicaragua it's taken a year or so after the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas for women to recover from the shock and begin to seek new political (in the broadest sense) ways of analysing and acting on issues facing them. Power, political and private, is a major thread linking the discussions. One manifestation of that thread is the struggle against violence against women: the struggle to ensure that this manifestation of male power becomes public, unacceptable and illegal.

Nicaragua has undergone a long and painful process of revolution, and counter-revolution: violence was, and in some areas remains, a normal aspect of daily life. The country has also undergone a profound social transformation. Hope lay in moving the society from a feudal economy, a client state of the United States, to an egalitarian and democratic society in which everyone was able to participate. Women struggled with men in the years of the Sandinista revolution to construct this dream, but found that their own concerns were consistently subsumed to the "more pressing" political concerns of the country.

Then in March the Central American conference was held,

a conference whose overall theme was POWER: the power women have, the power they don't have, the power women need and the power they want. The meetings began with discussions about power relations in the private domain, in families, in relationships, and continued with discussions of those same relations of power in the public domain... the church, the state, the school system, unions, political parties.

Discussions progressed to the issue of the autonomy of the women's movement and as a political face able to influence the course of events in participants' respective countries. The issue of an autonomous women's movement is particularly important in Central America.



Progressive women have traditionally participated in revolutionary movements, movements which have paid lip service to their needs but have proceeded to subsume them to the "larger" interests of the revolutionary movement. How, or in what form, can an autonomous women's movement exist in the midst of a struggle for national self determination? How can women ensure that their concerns are not marginalized under the rubric of women's issues (children, kitchen, church) and that their unequal power relationships are discussed honestly and respectfully? Many of the Nicaraguans stated quite baldly that the women's

movement in Nicaragua would never have been born had the Frente Sandinista won the elections in 1990. It would have remained a clandestine movement, continuing to try to establish itself within the party, subsumed to the "larger" political, party interests.

Currently all over Central America there are many small groups working separately. The conference provided them with the opportunity to view their own issues in a broader perspective and to recognize their commonalities. There are some who would like to see a clearly feminist women's movement coalesce quickly. Others are willing to work more slowly, stating that a movement is not created overnight, that it grows and builds as common activities are undertaken and common analyses uncovered. All recognize that building a feminist movement in any country of Central America is not an easy process. Despite years of revolution and revolutionary theory, the culture remains essentially conservative; the whole society mitigates against such a movement. Can feminism offer any solutions to the drastic daily economic problems facing women? Feminism is not a populist movement.

There are fewer and fewer jobs for both women and men; daycare centres all over the country have closed down; there are more and more incidents of violence, as men frustrated by lack of any economic opportunity feel it is their god-given right to beat the women with whom they live.

There are ever increasing numbers of women and children begging or selling Chiclets in the streets; women who have babies in hopes of keeping their man; looks of surprise when a woman admits she has no children; a resurgence of beauty contests (an issue about which the women's movement was remarkably silent); there are still thousands of empleadas (live-in household help), whose middle class employers do not view the women's movement as relevant or necessary to their employees. One-third of Nicaraguan women are single mothers, (when asked "why?" the response is a shrug and the words "paternal irresponsibility"), one-quarter are illiterate, and comprise one half of the unemployed labour force. Fully one-third of young women between 15 and 19 have been pregnant. But many women do not see themselves as victims. The "market women" are amongst the

toughest group of women you'll find anywhere; there's a whole group of bright, articulate young women who were given the chance of an education in the last 10 years and are now participating in struggles of students for a free education, in struggles of unemployed workers to create jobs.

There is still a unilateral divorce law, which permits a woman to divorce her husband without going through a long



and expensive court procedure; there is a law which requires men to pay support for the children they have fathered and left; there is a little more openness about all the issues surrounding sexuality and sexual preference.

Recently, however a Catholic, and conservative assembly is attempting to pass a series of laws which would

1. make all relations between homosexuals illegal;
2. make a rapist responsible for a child he may have fathered, thus attempting to close the door to the possibility of abortion for a rape victim.

Yet the women's movement is having an impact: within the unions one finds women's secretariats who are attempting to include discussions of gender roles in the workplace.

Violence against women is being raised as an issue of human rights; some cooperatives, where traditionally the members have been men, are examining property relations. Small gains individually, but together they signify major gains for women in Central America.

Farm workers are organizing to defend their land; unions are providing legal advice to battered women; small women's centres are springing up in the poorest of barrios; women are organizing to provide their own health services. The demand for workshops on women's issues is increasing; the connections are being made.

And the women's movement has to face not only issues of gender, but are part of an analysis that recognizes issues of class; the gulf between the rich and poor in Central America is a gully, not an undefined border. In Guatemala, the issue of ethnicity is added to the debate. Indian women are the poorest of the poor, the lowest of the low, but hope has been offered to them through burgeoning political re-organization.

It's a long and sometimes tedious struggle, but the courage and, above all, the humour of the women who travel hours in an open truck to attend a workshop, who put in 24 hour days in order to remain part of the political process, make it seem possible.

Maija Kagis is a CUSO worker in Managua, Nicaragua.

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What happened at the World Summit

by Margaret Gallagher

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), otherwise known as The Earth Summit, brought together world leaders, members of non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and over 7000 journalists in the summer of 1992.

As the "official" UN conference got under way, government delegates and politicians wrangled over The Rio Declaration, a symbolic environmental charter with no legal means of enforcement, and *Agenda 21*, a non-binding plan of action for sustainable development.

On the other side of an overcrowded city, NGOs met at The Earth Summit's alternative conference, *The Global Forum*.

Richer western countries (the North) and poorer countries (the South) clashed on issues of responsibility - while the North pushed an environmental agenda, the South spoke up for their right to development. The United States became a world leader in apathy and self-interest by refusing to sign a biodiversity treaty and watering down the climate change convention.

Of the 175 heads of state, only three were women, and despite endorsing a policy to have equal gender representation, Canada's official delegation was less than 20% women. At the more grassroots Global Forum, the count was not much better.

Women fought hard to be on the agenda at UNCED. The summit was more than two years in the making, with a series of four preparatory meetings (PrepComs), involving more than 175 national delegations. It wasn't until the third PrepCom that women were put on the agenda - as a minority issue.

By the time *The Rio Declaration* was drawn up, women were present in Principle 20, which states "Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to sustainable development."

Out of these gatherings came an alternative to the official *Agenda 21* that was ratified in Rio. *The Women's Action Agenda 21* calls for radical changes to the present system of foreign aid and development, "from now and into the 21st century." As more than half the world's population, women are not simply a special interest group. But their concerns are not always considered when it comes to policy-making decisions.

"When policies are made, the impact on women has not been looked at, because it is men making the decision. In many policies applied, if there is a negative impact, that impact is mostly felt by women," said Gulzar Samji the chair of the Gender and Development Group of B.C.

The consequences are felt most acutely in the South, where women are responsible for the bulk of food production, but remain poor. In Africa, women perform up to 80% of the work related to food production, yet virtually all of the training and development resources go to men.

According to the Caribbean's Peggy Antrobus, the general coordinator of Development Alternatives for Women for a New Era (DAWN), the "environment questions" must begin with a hard look at women's conditions, because "what you begin to discover, is that the forces that are impacting on women's health and livelihood, are the same forces that are creating the global phenomena."

Antrobus urges women and governments to re-examine the structural adjustment programmes designed by multilateral bodies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which force governments to spend less and earn more.

Under these programs, Southern governments have had to cut public expenditures

to reduce budget deficits and meet debt obligations to the richer nations.

Social services are slashed, transferring responsibilities to the household, and ultimately, women (who, ironically, are the first to be left out when it comes to health care and education services). Antrobus notes that the clipping of social services has a "very negative effect on women, and is based on the assumption that you can exploit women's time and labour."

She adds, "The conditions that have been imposed on developing countries in order to repay their debts, in order to



maintain a free flow of goods and services between countries have created enormous pressures on the human and natural environment."

"The push to earn more foreign exchange has led many governments to engage in contracts with multinational investors, but these very contracts have led to the massive destruction of forests and fragile ecological zones."

The struggle for survival and environmental protection are inseparable. As the main providers of food, fuel and water for their families, women in developing nations are acutely aware of the need to protect their surroundings and manage natural resources. But given a choice between feeding their families and preserving a tree species in the tropical rainforest, people will choose their families.

In the poorest countries, the struggle for survival is fueled by high population and the failure of policy makers to recognize that as long as women remain poor, fragile ecosystems will remain at risk.

Says Bella Abzug, co-chair of the New York-based

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), "The world will not survive unless there's a dramatic change in the models in which we look at the economy, consumption patterns, trade patterns."

"The invisibility of women in Earth decisions can well destroy this earth," Abzug warns.

Prisca Molotai of the Zambia Alliance of Women says women are not part of the decision-making process because they have been systematically "disempowered".

"We're seeing a population explosion in Africa and developing countries, yet women have no right over their bodies. You are married but someone else decides how many children you are going to have - this is the disempowerment of women."

Dr. Nafis Sadik, executive director of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), says that unless women are given the freedom and means to manage their own fertility, their effective participation in all spheres of life will be limited. "A woman's control over her own fertility is basic to her freedom. It is the source from which all other freedoms flow."

Some of the 1500 women at the Global Forum charged that developed countries in the North were using population as a political tool against the people of the South.

And there was a growing voice from Southern NGOs calling for richer states to share responsibility for environmental degradation because of their lavish lifestyles.

Said Rosiska Darcy DeOliveira, president of the Women's Forum, "We refuse to discuss population without the conference taking into account the fact that, for example, one person living in the United States consumes 200 times more energy than someone living in a developing country. We cannot begin to speak about the protection of the

environment without first, speaking about fighting poverty and excessive consumerism."

No miracles came out of UNCED, but many women were not expecting any. "If world leaders think they can make a change in Rio... they're dreaming in technicolor," said Sharon Venne, a lawyer from Saskatchewan and one of the 400 Native representatives for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples which preceded the Earth Summit.

Despite this, women of different backgrounds and perspectives have been encouraged to act through UNCED. "The two years of preparation and the hype has really mobilized all kinds of groups, not just the government", said Samji. "Now the government is almost taking responsibility, where before it wasn't answerable to anybody. Now look at the 18,000 people who went to Rio... they will not sit back."

More important than the documents signed, the speeches given, the photos snapped were the contacts made - and not just in Rio. People around the world have begun a dialogue on change. Perhaps for the first time, people have begun to realize how inextricably linked the concepts of environment and development are and can now start working together. Women have been mobilized to take their place in that arena, and stand up for their rights.

Though the agendas of women from rich and poor nations often vary, and men remain entrenched in power positions, changes have begun. "Whatever the outcome of the Earth Summit," author Perdita Huston writes in the UN's Development Forum newsletter, "women have been empowered by the UNCED process." It is up to all of us to keep up that momentum.

Margaret Gallagher is a writer currently working at the United Nations Association in Vancouver.

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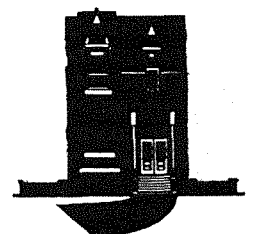
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Amnesty International calls for an end to international rape and sexual abuse

In the spring of this year, Amnesty International called on governments around the world to stop one of the most demeaning human rights violations inflicted on women being raped or sexually abused at the hands of soldiers, police and prison guards.

In the report, **Rape and Sexual Abuse**, the human rights organization showed that women were raped or sexually abused by government agents in all regions of the world and that even pregnant women and girls as young as 14 have been victims of this abominable treatment.

"Governments can't brush rape in custody aside as a lesser abuse or an isolated act," Amnesty International said. "When the rapist is a government agent, that rape is torture or ill-treatment and the state is responsible for it."

Yet despite repeated reports of rape, many governments persistently refuse to recognize rape as a serious human rights violation. Investigations are seldomly held, and the few perpetrators disciplined or prosecuted, usually get little more than a slap on the wrist. Most know they can get away with it unchallenged. In a dramatic

case in India in 1990, soldiers at a roadblock in Kashmir opened fire on a bus carrying a large family wedding party, then dragged the 18 year old bride and her heavily pregnant aunt into a field where up to six soldiers raped them. And even though the authorities

"The threat of yet more violence, the social repercussions of being raped, and the apparent futility of reporting rape to the officials who condone it mean that much of this torture is never talked about."

In its report, Amnesty



eventually admitted that the two women had been gang raped, the soldiers involved faced only the lax punishment of being suspended from duty.

"The most extraordinary thing about this rape is that it was publicly reported," Amnesty International said.

International said that in many countries with an armed opposition, rape has become a military tactic used to intimidate women. In Uganda, soldiers have raped women and girls while "screening" villagers in the search for rebels, and in the Philippines women's groups

have documented many cases of rape and sexual abuse of women detained during military operations. In one case, two young women had been taken to a military camp for interrogation after police found candy and cigarettes on them, which officials later claimed were provisions for rebels. Both women were sexually abused, and one was apparently raped.

Some women run the risk of being raped or otherwise abused because they, like other political activists, are targets for government oppression. A Guatemalan trade unionist said she was kept naked throughout her interrogation and threatened with gang rape if she didn't give the information they demanded. Twelve women in Greece were picked up after police found them sticking up political posters. At the police station they were ordered to strip naked, were kept in an open room full of policemen who made obscene gestures and comments, and several were reportedly beaten.

In some cases women are raped or sexually abused not because of their political involvement, but simply to punish them because they

happen to be related to men targeted by the authorities. In Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1990, some 14 girls were taken by soldiers at gunpoint to a group of huts, stripped naked, beaten and repeatedly raped - all apparently in reprisal attacks on men involved in regional autonomy movements.

It is during interrogation that these methods, like other forms of torture or ill-treatment, are used to break people in order to make them confess to crimes or give information. Dozens of Palestinian women and girls detained in the Israeli-occupied territories have reportedly been sexually abused or threatened during questioning, and in Turkey rape is one of the torture methods commonly used to extract confessions. One 20 year old woman arrested there last May said she was repeatedly stripped, hung up by her wrists with leather straps, tortured with electric shocks on her breasts and genitals and sexually assaulted in other ways, all to get her to sign a confession.

The report ends with eight steps to prevent rape, sexual abuse and other torture and ill-treatment of women in custody.

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Human Rights Declaration

The 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person (art.3), and that no one shall be subject to torture, or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (art.5).

Yet everywhere women and girls are systematically subjected to violence, torture, coercion, sexual abuse, starvation and economic deprivation because they are female.

For example, in the United States, battery is the greatest single cause of injury to women with 4000 women beaten to death by their partners each

year. In India girls aged 2-4 die at twice the rate of boys because of malnutrition and neglect. And around the world, 84 million women have been subjected to genital mutilation. Such violence is a pervasive form of human rights abuse cutting across social, ethnic and national boundaries, and still, it is often excluded from the human rights agenda.

In Vienna, June 1993, the United Nations will hold its first World Conference on Human Rights in 25 years.

A coalition of women's groups from around the world is sponsoring a petition to urge the committee which sets the



agenda for this important conference to include women's human rights and gender violence as central concerns. The petition has been translated into 12 languages and is being circulated in 80 countries. In March 1992, 75 thousand signatures were presented to the UN's Secretary General.

Join our campaign to stop violence against women by contacting: Charlotte Bunch or Nianh Reilly at the Centre for Women's Global Leadership, 27 Clifton Ave, Douglass College, New Brunswick, NJ 08903. Phone (908)932-8782 Fx:932-1180.



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Review: The Silent Passage: Menopause

By Gail Sheehy
Random House, New
York, 1992

If you are approaching menopause and believe your appearance of eternal youthfulness is central to your feeling of personal success in life, this book is for you. When Gail Sheehy wrote her famous book, *Passages*, she had not encountered menopause. *The Silent Passage* is a return for a closer look at that part of life she now knows more about.

Sheehy uses her own experience and expands upon it by talking to a number of health professionals and many women between the ages of 40 and 70. In so doing she found menopause to be a powerful and mysterious taboo, until she published a magazine article on the topic and was overwhelmed by requests for further information.

Women fearing menopause have few places to turn in order to gain knowledge. As the author pointed out, historically most women were dead before their menopausal years ended, our mothers did not communicate to us about it, and we no longer look to male doctors as god-like experts on the subject.

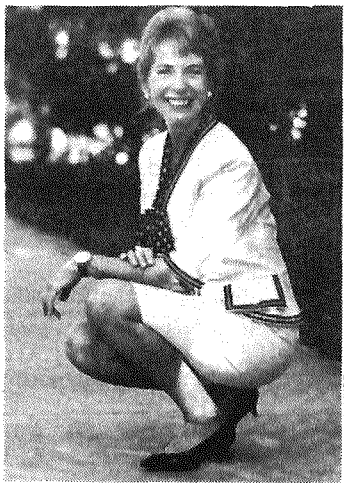
Indeed, menopause is not a disease anyway, but part of a natural process: aging.

Women fear menopause because it interferes with their perennial quest for youthfulness. We are caught by the web of North American media advertisers' adoration of almost all that is young, fresh and carefree. The denial of aging is common until hot flashes and night sweats no longer allow a disregard for what is happening. Not getting a good night's sleep and losing interest in sex are frequent complaints among women who are approaching the end of their menstrual periods. Depression for no apparent reason and a sense that one's body is falling apart often accompany these symptoms. The reduction of estrogen production is believed to be the cause of these often embarrassing, sometimes frightening experiences which affect almost all women to some extent.

Hormone replacement is a logical treatment for these conditions and can have other beneficial side effects as well. Sufficient estrogen is known to reduce the rate of bone loss in osteoporosis and current research appears to indicate that estrogen also improves blood circulation and reduces the chances of having a heart attack. On the other hand there are contra-indications to hormone replacement therapy (HRT), and breast cancer is one of them.

Although Gail Sheehy and the cancer specialist she interviewed believe the benefits of estrogen are worth the risks of breast cancer, the Canadian health professionals I interviewed disagree. They believe a personal experience with breast cancer or a family history of breast cancer is a contra-indication to estrogen replacement.

One clinic however, following a holistic approach, presents each patient with the results of the complete physical examination, the



mammogram, the osteoporosis screening and the blood hormone, nutritional and physical activity assessments, and suggests recommendations regarding each of these. If one, or more, of the tests indicate a greater than average need, the woman is referred to a clinic within the hospital complex which specializes in that concern. Ultimately, the woman receives the information and support which will answer her questions and help her to make what she considers to be the best decision for herself. This clinic is three years old. A number of people working there will soon be attending the third annual conference of the North American Menopause Society.

As the 'baby-boomers' move through this part of their lives, it is expected that not only will there be more facilities available to older women experiencing menopause, osteoporosis, heart disease and so on, but the whole concept of 'old age' will change to a more positive view. A new life with newly-found freedom, self-acceptance and, as Gail Sheehy says a sense of being 'together'.

The long-term goals are self-esteem and self-acceptance. The interim goals are to assess the way you are feeling now in terms of menopausal constraints. (remembering that menopause

is only one of the signs of aging) Consider your risks regarding osteoporosis, heart attack, breast cancer, your weight and level of exercise. Give yourself time to reflect on your relationship with your partner and recognize that any negative differences in your sex life has a great deal to do with what your mate is experiencing: work, un-met aspirations and aging, (for examples); and think more about the kinds of things you want to do with your life.

My personal experience of menopause was so different from what was described in *The Silent Passage* I wondered if Sheehy's book described an experience which was American, but not Canadian.

I went to a menopausal clinic to find out. Essentially I was most surprised to discover how parallel the information I received in Toronto was to that in *The Silent Passage*. Almost all the women interviewed in the book, read North American magazine articles on menopause, live in middle or upper middle-class homes, and have at least a secondary school education.

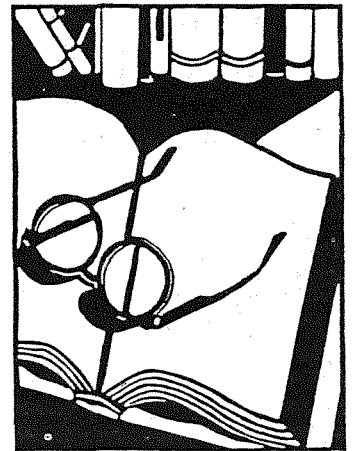
While they are having sleepless nights, how many women living in Canada, who do not fit this socio-economic category, fear dealing with menopause-related concerns, as well as restless teenagers, aging parents, insufficient family income and outside-the-home employment? What experiences of Canadian women are not congruent with those cited in *The Silent Passage*?

Although Canadian women may be reluctant to talk about menopause, we must certainly be interested in the topic. *The Silent Passage* held second

reviewed by Beverly
Jean Brunet

place in Macleans' non-fiction best seller list for most of this summer. Gail Sheehy's book is written primarily for women who are banging their heads on the glass ceiling. It is interesting, anecdotal and persuasive. *The Silent Passage* is "North American", however, in that it explores most of the issues from the assumption that all women have difficulty accepting the natural process of aging. For women who can gain information from here and there and everywhere, it is a helpful book. For those who need their information in logical order, I recommend *Ourselves Growing Older: Women Aging with Knowledge and Power* by Diana Laskin and Paula Brown Doress. It is a leisurely, in depth look at all the pitfalls and joyous escapades we encounter as we age.

The dust jacket of *The Silent Passage* is a most alluring part of the book, and something, I believe, all women aged forty or older would ponder, particularly if they are not already feeling good about themselves. The word "menopause" is printed on a green maple leaf that is just beginning to yellow around the edges. Think for a minute; how



many cars clog the highways in autumn to see the maple leaves when they turn to glorious shades of pink and scarlet and gold and bronze? Living many years past menopause is a new experience for women in this world. Let's make the excursion worth our while.

Beverly Jean Brunet is an action consultant living in North York, Ontario. She specializes in issues of concern to women.

Another important women's organization established during this period was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, founded in 1875 by Letitia Creighton Youmanns to campaign for the prohibition of alcoholic beverages. She was concerned about the plight of women and children in abusive households. By 1886, the WCTU had branches across the country.

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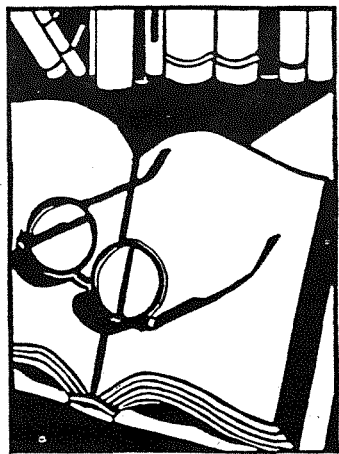


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Review: Our bodies, Our selves?

Book reviews by
Joanne Steven

Jane Dick, *Conceptions*,
Montreal: Guernica, 1992

Beth Goobie, *Could I Have
My Body Back Now, Please?*,
Edmonton: NeWest Press,
1991

Mary Melfi, *Infertility Rites*,
Montreal: Guernica, 1991

In this month's SELF, one of the millions of women's fashion-and-lifestyle magazines, there is a layout on fitness across the life-span. On page 179, there is a photograph of a naked woman, taken from the rear, as she reaches up and stretches, holding a piece of diaphanous cloth between her hands. Her body is indeed beautiful: long shapely legs, rounded hips and buttocks, narrow and lithe waist, graceful arms, the swell of her breasts merely hinted at as her torso slightly twists with her stretch. An altogether charming image of a slim, beautiful woman.

What spoils this image, turning it from an aesthetically pleasing sight to an instrument of oppression is the caption: "This is what 50 looks like if you're fit".

Among other things, what makes this caption oppressive is the embedded imperative: If you don't look like this, it's your own damn fault. Never mind that most women don't look like this at 16, let alone 50, or that the interfering variables of genetic heritage, racial difference, disability, and differing cultural definition of beauty are completely ignored. The overall message is: we ought to be able to control our bodies and if we don't, it's a moral failure.

Cartesian philosophy severed the body from the head ("I think, therefore I am"), and guess which part became the better, higher one? The head, of course. And guess whose property that became? Right again! Man's, of course. Woman was relegated, bleeding and bloated, to wallowing in her messy animalistic body, while man maintained the fiction of rationality, of godliness, of

Writer Kit Coleman travelled afield, as the first accredited female war correspondent in North America. A popular journalist with the *Toronto Mail*, she covered the Spanish-American war in 1898.

cerebral detachment from all things biological and mortal. Whenever man happened to find himself rutting or shitting, he either made it something shameful to be swept under a religious rug, or he blamed it on woman.

Well, women have been working for a long time to redefine the borderland between body and mind, to sew up that Cartesian split forever. Sometimes we've tried to deny our bodies altogether, tried to become pseudo-men, ignoring our biological clocks and our tidal emotions, and sometimes we've glorified the female body, and put maternal feminism on an oppressive pedestal in an attempt to praise all that is female.

The results of our mind-body struggle haven't always been positive: eating disorders, low self-esteem, dangerous "cosmetic" surgery, poor body image, to name just a few. But at times we succeed. For example, some workplaces (too few, mind you) have finally realized that women can be mothers as well as productive workers, and have incorporated on-site daycares and extensive parental leave benefits. And women continue to explore through prose and poetry their relationship with their own physicality - an attempt to heal the Cartesian split through art.

Mary Melfi's *Infertility Rites* explores one woman's quest to become and stay pregnant despite her husband's objections and her tendency to miscarry. Nina DiFiore, an Italian-Canadian painter, longs for a child. Her husband, an art professor, is at first against the idea for a number of reasons: not enough money, loss of freedom. But more and more, Nina argues for a child. This is a profound switch for her: she'd always vowed not to become like the women of her family - baby factories - but increasingly her body wills her to procreate. While reading this novel, I was reminded of a friend's decision to have a baby at the worst possible time (in the middle of her doctorate program); she told me, "I know it's stupid, but we just have to." The body has its own reasons.

Nina secretly stops practicing birth control, becomes pregnant, and her husband gradually, reluctantly, accepts the situation. Melfi chronicles, through Nina's journalistic eye, the medical testing, the trips to fertility doctors, the horrors of miscarriage until the final good

news at the end of the novel: her pregnancy has "taken hold." Nina's emotions throughout the book run wild: self-blame ("I cannot do the most natural thing in the world: fuck and conceive") to resentment and anger ("I do not care about the country's problems. My country is my body and a revolution against it has taken place"). Woven in between are acerbic asides about her strained marriage, her job as an underpaid



research assistant, her co-workers and her family, in particular an annoyingly fertile cousin named Dora.

The black humour which threads throughout this book helps alleviate what must be one of the most sorrowful of situations: not being able to get pregnant when you so badly want to.

Conceptions, Jane Dick writes poetry about love's delight and pain, and about pregnancy and motherhood.

Depending on your mood and your emotional proximity to an intimate relationship, these poems are either erotically joyful or painful. All in all, they focus on the physical knowing by one person of another, by women of men, by women of children.

The first part of the book, *Kaleidoscope*, surveys the land of relationships: physical

infatuation, problems, anger, reconciliation. Longer poems such as *Release*, a woman's hymn to her lover's body, are interspersed with short snapshots such as *Beside You*: "there are times when/just waking beside you/is all the pleasure/i can contain."

The second part of the book, *Conceptions*, consists of poems about women and children: their own and others. Physical longing for a child vies with disgust, as in *Anomaly*: "i like to think/i once carried your child in me/i would wake in the night/my belly black and blue/beating on it like a drum/bashing its brains out." I like the fact that the poems in this part of the book refuse to sentimentalize children, as in the chilling *Warriors*, about the desolation of foster children, or *child images*: "little children picking scabs/gleeful watch their own/fascinated blood/bubble painlessly forth."

Could I Have My Body Back Now, Please?, by Beth Goobie,

A book of "body fictions", prose and poem about the absurdity of our bodies, our physical vulnerability and the politics of gender.

Goobie herself is visually impaired and thus knows firsthand how fallible our physical shell really is. Her writing is humorous, surreal, and strongly feminist.

I especially like the title story, a weirdly funny fable about a woman whose secretarial work and sexist boss literally dismember her body into floating breasts and buttocks until she undergoes a political awakening and disarms her boss (and reclaims her body parts) with her newfound power. I also enjoyed *Peripheral Vision*, a horror story about the violation of a woman, both literally and psychologically, by a male intruder in her neighbourhood.

Some of Goobie's poetry, however, I found rather didactic: both, *victim takes a passive verb*, about a raped woman, and *face without a verb: meditation of the montreal massacre* struck me as clumsy in their attempts to get across their ideological point. I prefer Goobie when she's employing her black humour as a more subtle teaching device.

Throughout this trio of books, women view their bodies, their selves, with an illuminating mixture of love, pleasure, disgust, anger,

World Love



Music review

Toronto singer-songwriter Lisa Lougheed, has just released her debut album, *WORLD LOVE*. Produced by TazzDab Productions, this album's thought-provoking messages on world issues combined with Lisa's talent and voice are sure to provide notice of her arrival to the recording industry.

The theme of *WORLD LOVE* which powers this album and gives it its name is driven by Lisa's own experiences and convictions. The simply but powerfully articulated argument that no one should be judged by his or her skin color is one which springs from Lisa's upbringing.

"My mother is a black Canadian from Nova Scotia and my father is Scottish Canadian from northern Ontario. In my family, I'm what you'd call the white sheep, because everyone else is black!"

Lisa collaborates with other Torontonians to achieve the R&B, pop/funk rapping mix that makes her music dance-floor friendly. "WORLD LOVE is about the hatred and violence that stems from setting up artificial barriers," says Lisa.

Rose Fortune, was a black woman who lived in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. Dressed in a white cap, a man's coat, and boots, she worked as a baggage handler on the wharves of Annapolis Royal in the middle of the last century. One of Canada's first female entrepreneurs, she is also said to have been North America's first policewoman.

resentment, puzzlement, and humour.

Perhaps it is humour, humour fuelled by anger, which ultimately has the most power to heal the harmful schism between women's bodies and their minds.

Joanne Steven, MSW, does group work with large women on body image and weight issues.

We'Moon 1993: Gala Rhythms for Womyn

We'Moon '93: Gala Rhythms for Womyn

Published by: Mother Tongue Ink
Estacada, Oregon 97023
\$13.00 US

reviewed by Roberta Hill



A Bee Whispers What It Knows © Sudie Rakusin 1984

The moment I laid eyes on the cover of this year's *We'Moon* appointment book, I knew that I wanted a copy. The front contains a sculpture of the Nile River Goddess by Nancy Blair and on the back cover is a powerful image entitled *Moontime* by Deborah Koff-Chapin.

Opening it up, one discovers the added bonus of a monthly lunar calendar as well as a wonderful collection of celebrations, women's art and comprehensive reference material.

I cannot help but wonder how many other women, would be interested in using this calendar/anthology if only they knew of it. I was surprised to discover that this is the 12th year of publication for *We'Moon*. It appears to be the child of Musawa, who remains Editor, Publisher and Distributor.

Although many of the contributions come from the American West Coast, there is a strong international flavour and clearly many cultures and races are represented. The calendar itself rotates each week by using English, French, German and Italian when listing the month and days of the week. What a wonderful approach and perhaps next year non-European languages will be added.

The publisher appears quite insistent in communicating to potential users that "the '93

edition has been bound with a brand new technology so it looks like a fine softcover book, but it still lays flat and even bends all the way back for ease of writing."

I don't know how true this will prove over the year but, I must admit, I felt some comfort at treating the book more roughly than usual.

The relatively high cost in Canadian dollars is warranted when one considers the short articles and charts that have been included. Women who are just beginning to become interested in women's spirituality and our moon cycles should not be discouraged from selecting *We'Moon*. A solid primer on using the appointment book, as well as background information, is provided throughout.

If you tend to find *Herstory Almanac* or *Everywoman's Almanac* as radical as you would like to get, then perhaps this is not the calendar for you. However, for anyone who wants to discover new ways of celebrating the Goddess, this is one format that can be referred to and appreciated throughout the year.

Roberta is an Ottawa based consultant who specializes in management training. She enjoys tumbling rocks and catching dreams when not cruising the corn fields of Carp in her Miata.

Perspectives of Indigenous peoples over five hundred years

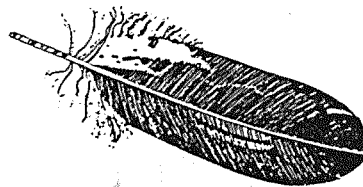
by Eutonnah Olsen-Dunn

The Indigena exhibition opened April 14, 1992 at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Québec.

It is a showcase for the perspectives of Aboriginal people on the 500 years since the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas.

A variety of native artists address issues of European colonization through paintings, multi-media presentations, video works and photography. The core of the project is an exhibition of contemporary Native art presented in conjunction with a range of films, performances and panel discussions.

The exhibit can be seen until November 15th, 1992.



The Indigena exhibit at the Museum of Civilization presents recent works by nineteen artists of aboriginal ancestry. Through various art forms the artists reflect on the lives of native peoples since the occupation of the Americas five hundred years ago.

With colour, stones, skin and bones the artists portray the losses of their people and their hidden hopes. At a quick glance, one breathes in the bondage, anger and genocide of native North Americans.

From portrayals of Wounded Knee and Louis Riel's execution to the depiction of Native peoples caged or in shackles, the artists truthfully and daringly mirror the lifeless evolution of aboriginal peoples for five hundred years.

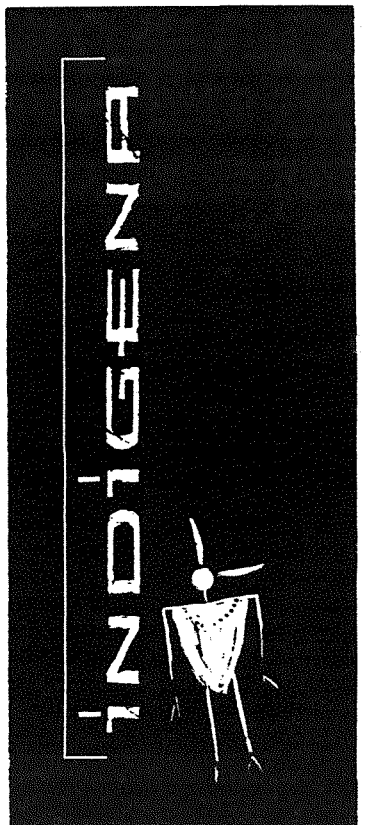
The early 1980's saw the last of the residential school system but the artists make it clear that the pain caused by the abuse of this contemporary society, continues.

If you spend time with the exhibit, you begin to experience the underlying hope and relatedness of aboriginal peoples to the future and to the earth. The native symbolism found in the exhibit holds great truths and wonders waiting to be revealed to those who can 'see'.

The female artists mirror not only the hope but the spiritual foundation of aboriginal peoples. Native matriarchal societies with strong Clan Mothers have a great sense of cultural coherence and political continuity and this is validated in the artists work. It is the Mother who knows that nothing dies that is not reborn, like the leaves on the trees. This is powerfully portrayed in *SHAMAN NEVER DIE*.

The exhibit not only reflects the past but captures contemporary reality. Aboriginal people have survived. And the artists show that native peoples hold the final key for the healing of the planet. This is reflected in the *HEARTLAND* exhibit. The artists say, "HEARTLAND is a way to 'dream ourselves back to remembered places', reclaiming and sharing our ancestry, uncovering and fostering an indisputable pride in Native cultures."

The healing and wholeness that is found in the many depictions of the Sacred Medicine Wheel serve to inspire a Renewal. One of the pieces, *Trains-N-Boats-N-Plains*, expresses the distortion of the Medicine Wheel when forced into a



square. Its' artist asks, "What is the reason for this great veneration of Columbus? Since this hero of European self-worship has come to America, this land has been visited by plagues, famine and pollution".

It is apparent that native peoples have had to wait until the conquerors were conquered by their own abuses. Only then would they begin to listen and adopt primal ways of relating to the 'other'. One artists said, "I do believe that when we deny our origins, when we separate ourselves from nature, something in us is castrated".

Indigena is a powerful exhibit which effectively reflects a people who have survived a holocaust in an effort to help heal 'the people' and lead them into a new age.

It is a disturbing success and each of the 19 artists is capable of deeply and profoundly effecting the viewer/participant. Meegwetch.

Eutonnah Olsen Dunn is a Cherokee woman from the Wolf Clan. As counsellor-consultant, she has spent the last 30 years in Canada working to share the inherent balance of Aboriginal culture with Non-native people.



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Review: A League of Their Own

by: Lorna Drew

There was much grumbling in 1943 when a woman's baseball league was formed. There were those who thought playing baseball would make men out of women. It was considered unfeminine, even un-American for girls to play ball.

According to "A League of Their Own", director Penny Marshall's patronizing nod to the woman's movie, the crêpe-hangers needn't have worried. In the opening scenes, an older woman is packing, obviously getting ready for a trip. She seems undecided. Her daughter throws a catcher's mitt into an open suitcase, and the decision is clinched. Dottie Hanson, ex-catcher for The Rockford Peaches, is on her way to the reunion of America's first professional all-girl baseball team.

In the driveway, Dottie stops to watch her grandsons playing basketball. The boys have their own cheering section; two little girls watching the game from the sidelines. With this reassuring opening gambit, Marshall hammers patriarchy firmly into place. Women still have children (specifically boys), boys play sports while girls watch, and white men can still jump; all this

in spite of the fact that women once had a league of their own.

The camera pans on Dottie's face and fades to the dreamy green fields of a kinder gentler America. We're back in the good old days, when men were fighting World War Two and women kept the home-fires burning. Two of these women, Dottie and Kit Hansen (played by Geena Davis and Lori Petty respectively) are "discovered" by a scout who wants to hire super-catcher Dottie and has to take her kid sister Kit as part of a package deal. The sisters are (surprise) rivals, thus enabling Marshall to structure her plot around a cat fight.

Also "discovered" is Marla, the "ugly" daughter of a doting father who raised her all by himself. Marla is gawky, awkward, painfully shy and so homely that the scout rears back from her face in mock horror. (The only purpose of the several vicious sight gags made at Marla's expense, is, as far as I would tell, to pad the roll of the scout).

But because this is a feel-good movie, ugly-duckling Marla is redeemed. The naughty girls on the team take her to a bar where, after a few drinks, she takes over the mike and sings a lustful swan song



(would you believe Melancholy Baby?) to a local swain who she later marries, thus proving to her relieved daddy that tomboys are girls after all.

In fact, mandatory heterosexuality is one of the recessed themes in this film.

The boys come home and the girls cede them the balls. At the reunion, Dottie's sister, the team tomboy and my (shattered) hope for the next generation, comes accompanied by a passel of kinfolk as evidence of her marriage and motherhood skills. Some of the girls have married very well indeed. In a really disgusting plot ploy, one old girl credits her youthful appearance to the skills of her plastic surgeon spouse.

"A League of Their Own" in fact suffers from an overdose of plot clichés. The sisters' rivalry erupts, to no-one's surprise, during the play-offs. Coach Tom Hanks plays an alcoholic, tobacco-spitting (yuck) has-been who becomes all lovable when his "girls" turn out to be good. One of the players, a single parent, has to bring her son along on the bus trips. Naturally, he turns out to be an uncontrollable little horror who proves the patriarchal point that women ball players make bad mothers.

Lest I be accused of hating every last bit of this silly movie, let me add that the old black and white clips of the original league players were wonderful. Where did those women get to?

Are they really all married with children? Are they really all straight?

And, by the way, in those shot sequences on the playing field, why do we never see an entire play? I like baseball. I like to see the ball leave the bat, arc through the air and smack satisfactorily into a waiting glove, all in one slow beautiful motion. The games in this movie were just exercises in quick cuts.

But I did like some of the scenes on the bus, where the girls were imagining having lives of their own. There were some pleasurable vignettes. "All the way" May/Madonna teaches a team-mate to read -- from a pornography text. Letters from home are shared. There are make-up lessons.

Unfortunately, a few pleasant clips do not a good movie make. Every now and then, Hollywood throws women a movie to keep them believing they're still in the ball park. "A League of Their Own" is one such movie. But its text makes clear that feminism and mainstream Hollywood films are almost always antagonistic.

Lorna Drew is still hoping for a sequel to "Thelma and Louise".

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Feminist Puzzle

by Sharon F. Jensen

INSTRUCTIONS: The words in this puzzle are in all directions - vertical, horizontal, diagonal and backwards. Circle each word or letter you find in the puzzle then cross it off the list. Letters may be used more than once, but there are no words within words. The letters left over will give you a hidden message relating to the puzzle.

ACHIEVEMENTS, CENTRAL, CHANGE, COLLINS, FEMINIST, FORMAT, FORUM, FRACTION, FUNDING, FUTURE, GAIN, GOALS, GOVERNMENT, GROWTH, INTEREST, LEAD, MEDIA, MEET, MERGE, MERIT, MOVEMENT, NEW, OLD, PAST, PERSPECTIVE, PLANS, POCKET, POLITICAL, POSITIVE, PRESENT, PRESS, PROGRAMS, QUOTE, REBICK, RESEARCH, ROLES, SIMMS, SPLINTER, TEACH, TIME, WANT, WORK.

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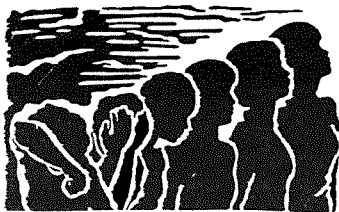
HIDDEN MESSAGE: 11 LETTERS - 2 WORDS -
answer on page 47

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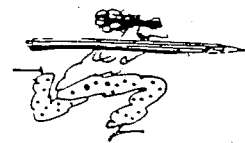
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HIDDEN MESSAGE: THE WOMANIST

The Almost Back Page



With every issue, there are topics that come up at the last few editorial meetings that we all want to see an article written about, yet we can't convince a woman to write an indepth, comprehensive insightful article on the topic in three days or less or we just didn't get the article when we expected. **The Almost Back Page** is going to pick up on some of those issues that we just can't wait to tell you about and hopefully that will inspire you to want to write for us.

You were probably surprised to see us not have an article on the **Panel on Violence**. So were we! Let me assure you it was not for lack of trying. The fact is that no one wants to talk about the Panel and it's not from shyness. Rather, the two responses were "I've been too hurt already by those women" or "I can't deal with the amount of division in the women's movement." Are we our own worst enemies?

I'm big on **murder mysteries** and this summer I took a month off and sat on my back porch, when I wasn't in the garden, and read a few new and old authors. A couple I would like to warn you against. If you are a fan of **Martha Grimes**, I think you will be disappointed in her most recent book, *The End of the Pier*. She moved away from her formula of the Scotland Yard Detective Jury to a psychological thriller and it was good. It was good like all the others are were their is the inevitable intertwining of male violence and female sexuality. It's a tired theme, doesn't require alot of originality, just look into the newspaper any day. Another author I was thoroughly enjoying was **E. X. Giroux** until I came to his/her book *A Death for Adonis* where I get strung along throughout the book thinking that this author is gay positive only to be set up for the most self-righteous homophobic ending. I recommend you skip this author even if they are Canadian.

The other piece of reading I managed to pick up this summer was **Gloria Steinam's** book on self-esteem, *Revolution from Within*. The thing I remember most about the book was a quote from **Robin Morgan**, "Love specifies, hate generalizes." This really held meaning after reading **CRIAW's** conference booklet on Racism. They have workshops for aboriginal women only, black women only, asian women only and one for women with **white skin privilege**. I've asked women, white, black, brown, red and yellow, what they think of this label. "Self-hating, meant to promote guilt, an acknowledgement of white supremacy, a starting place for some women. I'm not sure what I think or even where I would fit in that spectrum of colour. Certainly, it is a spectrum in which we are not always given the opportunity to define ourselves. What about the halfbreeds many of us are? Do we select on the basis of our colour or our cultural heritage? Or has culture been simplified to just mean colour?"

About **Woody Allen's** film, **Husband's and Wives**. Don't go. Just a thought but maybe we should financially support the films, books and other cultural material that is made by people that we actually respect not just for their art but for their personal integrity. Although we control millions of dollars in consumer dollars, we still manage to funnel it into things that we profess not to support in our political work.

Caitlin Frost, a new member of our staff ran out of time on a critic of the second **Batman** movie. But one point that really deserves being made again and again is - do you really want your kids going to a movie that shows that a catWOMAN can die seven times and still be alive?

And in closing, some thoughts from a surprising source. An excerpt from **Rosanne's Barr's** book, *Rosanne*. "**Mother:** To give birth to: to create; the act of giving birth or creation (not necessarily offspring). To accept responsibility for that which you create. To mold, nurture, connect with on a spiritual, psychic, emotional and physical plane, and continue to guide, protect and feed. To give form to, to invent, to assume the ultimate innate power of humanity, the act of replication. The physical, personal and political act of caretaking - to bring forth the primordial. To oppose carnage and destruction, to set the physical world right. **Motherhood:** To put a hood or restraining device around the powers to Mother-ing for control, gain and separation for self, to the determinant and destruction of all living things. Who Is and Is Not Yet."

Keep on mothering!



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