

# The Womanist

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**Spring 1993 Vol. 4, #1**

A feminist newspaper distributed nationally



***Remembering  
the Past***



***Envisioning the Future***

## **In this issue...**

NAC appoints new President • Former Yugoslavia • Gloria Steinem  
• Transnationals • Breast cancer • Breastfeeding • Remembering  
Audre Lorde • CIDA's cuts to international development • Women in  
Russia • Tory Family Caucus • Family values •



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Front cover: Photos from top left in a clockwise direction: Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, first President of the National Council of Women, photo provided by the Council of Women of Ottawa and Area. Audre Lorde, poet and writer. Photo by Dagmar Schultz, 1990. 1992 Nobel Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchu. President - elect of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Sunera Thobani.

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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.



#### Dear Womanist

Your newspaper has impressed me immensely!! I love your board range of coverage; Women of Colour, disabilities, religion, art, business, etc. More than anything I love that we hear from the "experts", the women who have lived their experience this is so educational for us and empowering for them. Keep these newspapers coming and all the good work!

Sincerely,  
C. Aurora;  
Artist in Spain

#### Dear Womanist:

I would like to comment on a letter by C. Aurora-Allinot, in your Fall 92 issue. I, too, was disappointed by the article on pornography that she refers to, in **The Womanist**. The bottom-line is this: Pornography hurts men and women. And children. It's scary that it has become an industry... of course, everyone's judgement of what is "pornographic" is subjective... but violence, coercion, humiliation can never be considered "sexy"! Pornography exploits the sexual misery of some men (or their anger at women), and exploits the financial misery, or poor self-image, of some women! The result? A dead-end. If some people "need" that material to "get off", fine... let'em buy it. But let's not be hypocrites. I look forward to an honest discussion of this problem. For it is a problem (social, sexual, and political).

Miss Chantal Bigras  
Montréal, Québec

#### Dear Womanist:

I have just recently been given a copy of your newspaper, the Fall 1992 issue. Thank-you for a wonderfully thought provoking edition. I am currently going to university part-time and found so many of the articles timely. As I start to look at our society with a more critical eye and to question our social structures, **The Womanist** will be an invaluable source of feminist thinking. Please add my name to the list of subscribers. I am grateful to have access to a paper with values and ideals so parallel to my own newly emerging ones. Continue the good work, for we all know feminism works!

Sincerely,  
Melanie Williams

# Womenspeak

A Firing Shows  
Growing Problems in  
Shelters

Anita Martinez was fired from her job abruptly with no prior warning and without just cause, on January 25th of this year. Anita Martinez was a counsellor for eight and a half years at Bryony House, a shelter for battered women and their children located in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She had been the President of Bryony House's staff union for five years, since its formation in 1987.

Anita is 53 years old. She is an ex-resident of Bryony House and a survivor of childhood abuse who has been able, through painstaking work, to understand and change her circumstances. She has acquired her skills and knowledge through experience; she epitomizes what transition shelters can be about - giving women a chance to break the cycle of violence and reconstruct their lives, through the support they get at the shelter and through integration back into the community, so they in turn can help women reconstruct their lives.

Anita does not have a university degree and we believe there is a growing trend across the country towards hiring only "professionals" as transition house workers. This

trend discounts feminist grassroots participation and undermines the concept of user-directed services, where there is a sharing of the power and a diminishing of imbalances, allowing for the possibility for women to become the counsellors.

An abusive relationship deprives women of power and control over their own lives. The very structure of the user-directed service provides women with power and self-confidence. Feminist organizations work with and for women and value the experience of all women by recognizing that users of a service have as much to contribute to the organization's structure as the workers.

Transition houses in Canada were modeled after the shelter movement in Britain embracing a feminist ideology. Many shelters were started by grassroots community activists. However, in order to survive financially, government funding has been required which, in turn, restricts and compromises some of the feminist principles.

Hi!

I just read your newspaper for the first time and loved it!! I smiled many times; smiles that reflected how good I felt to have my reality confirmed and affirmed, and to hear from other women about woman's bodies and issues and experiences that women face. I felt connected to a large group of women and it really felt great!!

I only recently (2 years ago) began acknowledging and celebrating the woman who I am. I learned as a young child that to survive meant I had to be strong, tough, never weak - physically or emotionally, to rely only on myself, not to trust others, etc., etc.; all that stuff that I needed to do as the time to survive but which as a young person, and then as an adult, really got in my way. I also learned that being a girl or a woman meant all sorts of undesirable things. I knew I didn't want to be that, and so I became embarrassed and ashamed of my gender (as well as any other people in my family who were of that gender) and in effect, denounced my being a girl (or woman).

So now that I'm celebrating my being a woman, I'd love to be receiving your newspaper.

Kelly Hine

"Professionalism" has surfaced as a means of complying with government guidelines in competing for funding. It has been put forth by some British feminists that there is no longer a battered women's movement, but that transition shelters have become another social service, quite oppressive to workers, and that furthermore, feminists should get out of the refuge "business".

The "professionalization" of transition house staff is not a new controversy and has been raised by the Co-ordinator of the Ontario Association of Transition Houses, Trudy Don. Currently, in the province of Alberta, the transition houses are now staffed exclusively by "professionals".

During the past five years, while the Union at Bryony House made attempts to have the wages of its workers raised, a controversy over credentials began. Again there was a struggle surrounding the issue of the "professionalism" of the staff - should staff with

cont'd on pg. 42

## 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.

## Editorial

**"In the end, we will conserve only what we love,  
we will love only what we understand, and we will  
understand only what we are taught."**

Baba Dioum, Senegalese conservationist

These days a shadow often passes through my thoughts that leaves me either afraid or dismayed. I have for a long time called myself a feminist. Although often critical and feeling excluded, I have actively supported and participated in the women's movement, yet lately I increasingly feel disassociated from the actual organizations and women who are speaking on behalf of feminism and women. Why?

We aren't talking about the important issues. I am afraid of the world economic system and the political mindset that has trapped us into believing that famine, environmental degradation, cutting back on medical care and increased poverty are beyond our control and inevitable.

We are being lied to and we, as a movement, have not only accepted these lies, we are creating strategies that accept that paradigm. We spend our time constantly being in reaction and afraid. We can spend our lives living out the destructiveness of globalization and deficit reduction and political corruption or we can take control of a system that controls us.

There are other options. It is possible to protect the ozone layer, to end world hunger, to deal with racism, but it means creating an alternative that challenges a world economic system that is based on inequality.

I am continually struck by aboriginal wisdom that tells us "Whatever we do to any other thing in the get web of life, we do to ourselves, for we are one. We will ultimately be affected by our affluence in the face of global poverty.

Joan Kuyak, in her article on transnationals, points out how there is no one keeping tabs on what is happening to the world in the big picture. We exist in an economic system which is built around encouraging us to exploit the earth and ultimately hurt and eliminate ourselves.

We in the women's movement are dealing with very different issues but in the same value system.

The movement does not feel inclusive. Women are afraid to be who we are, to say what we think. What are we constructing if we are not beginning from women's lived

experiences? We are being lied to if any woman will not acknowledge our reality and instead reconstructs it.

I have watched as the traditional feminist movement has tried to make overtures to the aboriginal community through absorbing or appropriating native teachings. But for the movement to be able to understand and integrate what native women are saying we will have to rethink our paradigm.

As feminists we have focused on rights: our rights in the workplace, at home, in



relation to men. The native teachings begin with responsibilities: our responsibilities to ourselves, to mother earth, to our children and to the people in our life. They are essentially two halves of a whole, but how do we now integrate those two? Responsibilities imply a relationship with others - feminism has focused primarily on our rights as individuals.

There is a theme running throughout the articles - whether it is Gloria Steinem talking about personal revolutions, Joan Kuyak talking about transnationals or Carolann Wright talking about race in the women's movement - this is a time for reflection and change in the movement. It is time to reclaim our lives, ideas and people we value and build what women originally envisioned.

As Stephanie Coontz points out in her article, "The Women's Movement was not based on the goal of women working twelve hour days for megabuck corporations, hiring other women to take care of the dirty work at home, or winning equal opportunity to engage in exploitative economic, political, and sexual relations. It presented an alternative, value-opinionated vision of how society should function, a



*critique of work and redistribution arrangements, as well as household and reproduction arrangements."*

We have to return to discussing values that will ensure that the world survives.

I continue to miss Audre Lorde for her ability to recognize how difficult life is and yet her ability to hope. Many times when I read her books or heard her speak I would feel a complete validation for what I am and an incredible gratefulness that someone understood. The world is much richer because of her but a little lonelier without her.

We should continue her work by validating each other and creating a world that is built to support and sustain life as it is and should be.

Let's begin by making our own personal list of who we want to be responsible to and commit ourselves to a future of mutual respect.

*if we speak we are afraid  
that our words will be used  
against us*

*and if we do not speak  
we are still afraid*

*so, it is better to speak  
knowing we were never  
meant to survive*

*("A litany for survival"  
The Black Unicorn,  
Audre Lorde)*



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# Offering inspiration

*Speech by Rigoberta Menchu delivered at the CRIAW conference in November, 1992.*

*Translation from Spanish to English by Michelle Albert and Gema Sanchez-Gonzalez.*

*Rigoberta Menchu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. Her work at the UN has played an important role in focusing attention on human rights violations in Guatemala. She has also been a member of the Board of Directors of the International Council on Indigenous Treaties (ICIT) where she has continued to work for the rights of indigenous people.*

To begin with, I would like to salute all of you and your struggle. Many of the values that our mothers taught us have been lost today and it is necessary to recuperate them. Women have a tranquility, a sensitivity, great values and qualities that need to be brought to the forefront, especially in the face of the huge problems facing humanity today.

There is no single part of the world where women have won total emancipation, total liberation, or a total dignified participation. Rather, those of us who are conscious of these aspirations towards total participation, have to fight an arduous and constant struggle to be able to achieve something. I hope one day that women will achieve complete liberation.

It is not easy to understand the struggle of Indigenous peoples, neither is it easy to understand the struggle of women. Both struggles are in a very similar situation and both come up against a high level of resistance. It is precisely because of this that the topics of Indigenous peoples and of identity are very controversial throughout the world these days.

Where there is a woman in the world, there's a shimmer of hope. It is up to each of us as to whether we work on this shimmer of hope or not. It will require very hard work in order to prove that women are able to understand what many are calling "times of change" - that women are able to understand the needs of society, the processes of the many different struggles in the world and the solutions to these processes for the future.

Many people say that times of change have to pass on the backs of those who have suffered most the imprints of oppression, discrimination, marginalization and racism. I believe that a fight against racism is a fight that deserves a lot of respect and one that we must fight. But the day we eliminate racism in all places, our children will have other problems. We shouldn't idealize the future, rather we should contribute to the



Nobel Peace prize winner Rigoberta Menchu

society as a whole, a society which wants to see in us an example of resistance, struggle, and a possible future.

There are many limitations. One's face doesn't help if you were born cream-coloured. If it is also the face of a poor person, the face of a woman, then the challenges one has to confront are doubled.

One should be valued for what one does, for one's personal effort, whether one is a woman or a man, especially if one works with dignity. Many people have died on this continent, with a lot of dignity and a lot of conviction for the future. I would like to tell you that our nations have lost many people. America, especially Central America, the land where I was born, has seen many brave women, like Marianela Garcia of El Salvador. I met her many times, she was an active woman, her dark skin made it difficult for her to cross many borders and sometimes they checked her out more than they did me. Because I always wear my colourful clothes, I always received a lot of attention. If they didn't mistake me for a Bolivian or a Peruvian, I would be lucky and pass by quickly. But Marianela always had problems. We agreed that any time she spoke in public she would mention the

situation in Guatemala and any time I spoke in public I would mention the situation in El Salvador. It was just a few days after we did a tour together that she was killed.

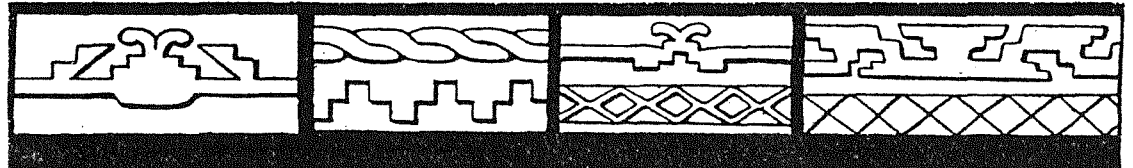
Mirna Mac was a Guatemalan sociologist and anthropologist who dedicated her life to research and investigation and who was killed by eleven knife stabs. So did Dinora Perez and Alida Fope, a Guatemalan woman who had everything; economic resources, studies, everything. But nothing satisfied her, nothing made her

whole normally doesn't do. In many conflicts, women's voices and opinions are not heard. We have seen delegations of mayors, university directors, the United Nations and other international institutions observe and verify conflicts and keep watch on the human rights situation, but women are often silent and we do not make a big statement during conflicts.

There is a mission here: why don't women create our own international organization and go and verify the conflicts? It's our right! We don't need to wait for verification by the UN, or verification by famous international organizations. Why don't we make our own organizations that observe the human rights situations and offer a political solution to the conflicts in the world?

Women need to make a significant battle. I hope that in the future women can unite on two or three things, although they may be the only things we agree on, because we also argue, right? Women also fight among each other. It's normal, we have our differences, but there are things we can do together.

We are very hopeful for a better Central America and also a better world, that will respond to an immense number of problems that affect life and will respond to people everywhere in the world. When we have seen refugees, when we have seen Indigenous peoples being exterminated, when we have seen death up close, when we have lost many friends in many conflicts ... when we have seen all that, we are motivated by existence, we are happy to be alive and we enjoy doing something that will make a mark in history as a contribution for the future.



feel complete, except for her social consciousness and her choice to talk about justice. Now she has disappeared. There are many similar stories. The most important thing is that our knowledge and our struggles be at the service of many other peoples of the world.

I want to say something else that I have said before, in many different places before I received the Nobel Peace Prize and why not say it now? I would like to see a huge network of women who do all the things that society as a

We are at the point of starting a new millenium, we know that the next millenium is only a few years away. All our generation and the generations that have followed us are going to be from the last century. And imagine what that means, to be from the last century! We will either be accused of being out of date, or we will be glorified as generations that achieved many things before the turn of one century to another.

I believe that there is much to do, the most important of which is to understand the

history of different peoples and their struggles; to understand women's history and struggles. I have discovered that on this continent there exists every kind of struggle, each struggle so special, so particular and so full of experience and life. Each struggle has its own dynamic and we must respect these struggles.

When I left Guatemala, I didn't understand the struggles of women anywhere, simply because I didn't have an idea about them. I was always around circles of people who each gave a different version of the struggles of women, and there are many stereotypes about women and indigenous people.

We must be motivated to ask "and what does that mean?", in order to learn about very different realities. The struggle of women will pass down hard roads, very difficult paths in order for the future to flower. The day that people accept that Indigenous people have a normal, acceptable struggle, a struggle that is part of the pride of a country, then women's struggle will also be seen as normal, real, and as part of the construction of a society where there are both individual and collective rights.

I will leave you with this: I hope that we continue forward, that we unite one with the other, whether there are few or many things that can unite us. The most important thing is to find what does unite us.

Sometimes we have to continue the fight even when we don't know the faces of the peoples, or their protagonists. There are movements that need to be embraced even when we don't know the leaders, or their names. When we later realize that we embraced important struggles, we feel proud of ourselves, and

proud of our own talents. We, women, don't need to know the exact face of another women in order to be able to fight for her rights. For me, as an Indigenous person, neither have I wanted or needed to know exactly every face of every Indigenous person in order to feel their pain. I think that we must also feel their dreams, and aspirations, wherever they may be.

As I said at the beginning, hopefully wherever there is a woman, there will be a shimmer of hope for the future. Thank-you.



# Continuing the revolution

Excerpts from the speech given by Gloria Steinem in Ottawa on March 7, 1993

Someone once asked me why it was that women didn't gamble as much as men did and I responded common sensibly, because we don't have as much money. Since then I've realized that it's because our total instinct for gambling has been satisfied by marriage.

You marry him, you live out your life as a hostess, a mother and a homemaker and then when he dies, through no fault of yours, of course, only then are you allowed to take over the political seat, or the newspaper chain, or the restaurant business, or whatever it was. Margaret Mead always pointed out that in the patriarchy only widows are a going concern. Of course, this path to power is as hard on men as it is on women.

Here's my plan. If all goes well, each of us, will leave here with one new fact, one new feeling of support, one new organizing, subversive tactic and a way of sharing each other's collective list.

Let's turn this into an organizing meeting where we can come together and have that most intimate, important of all realizations of women in a patriarchy, people of colour in a racist society, people with sexual lifestyles that don't fit into a heterosexist society, and anybody who is marginalized - that is, to realize ultimately that we are not crazy: the system is crazy.

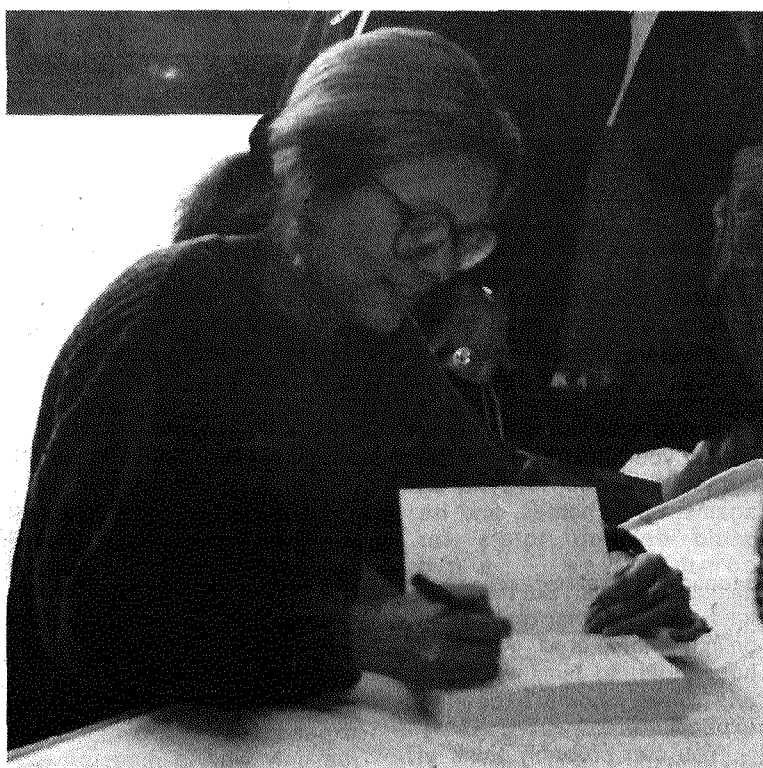
I think that what the women's movement in both of our countries has systematically done is to deepen and widen our understanding of what politics is, so that it goes far and beyond the electoral system. That means in a very daily sense that when we go into a department store and we see that women are selling men's underwear and men are selling kitchen ranges, we understand that this is not expertise; this is politics. When we look at the offices and factories of our countries and we see that there are many of one type of human being (secretarial pools), and just a few of another kind of human being giving orders, that is politics. It's visible, physical politics. We also understand that when both parts of the male/female couple living together are working outside the home and yet the woman is still responsible for taking care of the children, and getting the meals, and making the lists for grocery shopping and so on, that's politics.

I think we've been broadening and deepening the definition of politics so that we now understand that politics is

any power relationship that is not based on talent or experience but is based on condition of birth.

Revolutions, like houses, don't get built from the top down. They only get built from the bottom up. It means challenging the politics of our language, our media, our families, as well as our government systems. We are only beginning to deepen our understanding of politics - understanding that authority systems undermine our self-authority in order to get us to obey them. No system of

The moment that we are made in childhood to feel that some of those qualities are not appropriate or right for our gender, or for our race, or for our class, then defective self-esteem begins. We become ashamed, we suppress a part of our normal, natural, human selves and we begin the construction of a false self, a mask that is necessary to achieve love and approval and survival. In a deep sense we believe that there is something wrong with the person behind the mask. Men may believe this less because they are



Gloria Steinem on a Canadian-wide tour

political or military force could possibly keep in line an entire society without internalization of the political structures that are designed to keep us in this particular hierarchy.

What happens to us as children is that, even in the most ideal of families, we are immediately divided by the way that we are raised. Infants and little children, boys and girls, are raised almost totally by women. We come to believe that the qualities necessary to raise small children - empathy, flexibility, compassion, and patience - are only female qualities. If we are boys, we cannot have them, and if we are girls, we must have them.

We compartmentalize females within a space which is made up of only 25% of all human qualities, and call masculine the other 75% of human qualities. These are human qualities - each of us have within us a full 100% circle of human qualities in unique form.

allowed to have a greater range of human qualities, a whole 75%. But they are also robbed of some part of their whole human selves and made to feel deep shame at anything that might be considered feminine. And women, of course, are robbed of much more, therefore experiencing much more the sense of emptiness, or lack, or shame within.

It is into that emptiness that we try to put many other substances. With women it's usually love and approval of other people; with men it's frequently the control of other people. We do not believe the truth, which is that progress lies in completing ourselves, progress lies in the direction we haven't been. Instead, we believe that progress lies in getting more of what society says we should have, whether we are a man and it's control, or whether we're a woman and it's some form of approval.

I've been travelling around the country a lot in the last

year, continuing the conversation of the book **Revolution From Within**. I've been learning a lot from audiences and I've been instructed by the 12-step groups which seem to me to be a great model of pre-populist "you can find it anywhere, in church basements groups". Groups understand the healing magic of personal stories and that the person whose experienced something is always more expert than the experts.

Though these groups often rescue people in dealing with the addictions that come from this emptiness within and save people's lives, they don't analyze where the addictions come from. In a way I fear that they keep people permanently addicted to those groups and are not, in my view, politically active. They aren't completing the whole circle. They don't tell us that a co-dependent is just a well-socialized woman. Nor do they tell us that there's a reason why female people and people of colour, poor people and gay people are more addicted than people in more powerful positions. It's because the emptiness - what has been taken away from within us, is much larger.

And yet I find these groups quite inspiring in their democracy and their availability. They've caused me to imagine, to fantasize that we could have a great continental honeycomb of small revolutionary cells of five to thirteen people that meet at least weekly to support each other, to tell each other stories, to explore the politics of our daily lives, to see what we can do about the inner circle, in order to see what we can do about the external circle.

What social movements are about is defining yourself, declaring your self-authority. Certainly that's what the women's movement was about in the small consciousness-raising groups that were its origins. These groups of the late 60s and early 70s, gave birth to the women's movement by allowing us finally to become visible participants in our own lives - by telling an unsayable thing in a group and hearing a group of other women say "you feel like that? I thought only I felt like that", seeing the shared themes in our experience which, of course, were the origin of political insights.

I fear that in the last twenty years we've lost this. We've lost the balance between the personal and political.

Women, whatever our race, or age, or ethnicity, or

sexuality, need these small, consciousness-raising groups. I think of them as revolutionary cells. Women are the only group that has never had a nation and will never have a nation. This makes us anti-nationalistic and subversive. But we also don't have a neighbourhood, most of us don't even have a bar and a lot of us are undermined by the places in which we work.

It becomes absolutely crucial in a woman-hating society to have a woman-loving group in our lives. It truly is the only antidote. I know that they're often disguised as reading clubs or coffee clubs. But whatever you want to call this revolutionary cell, I hope that you might consider having this kind of support because now we can make them even more wide and deep than they were in the early 70s. Then we were only analyzing the politics of our everyday lives - who was doing the dishes, why we felt that being a wife and mother was not enough and so on.

Now we can analyze the politics of our childhood and the ways in which we are repeating patterns that were not chosen by us and perhaps are very painful. We can analyze the way that organized religion has affected our lives. I don't know about you but I find there's a big difference between organized religion, for the most part, and spirituality. I've come to think that religion is perhaps just politics made sacred - just up there in the sky and God looks like the ruling class. Very suspicious. Spirituality is profoundly subversive and revolutionary because it is the sense of godliness of each of us.

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# Transnationals:

As a community organizer in two small Ontario cities, I have become very familiar with the ways in which we all work for social change at home. But in the past six years, I have had the privilege of travelling extensively in this country and elsewhere in the world, talking with women and men engaged in trying to understand and change the world in which we live. This has taken me to large cities and small farms, to places of poverty and great wealth, and to a variety of forms of social and economic organization.

From all this experience, I base my belief that reclaiming food production and rural community is an essential act not only for ourselves, but for our grandchildren and for the future of this precious and beautiful planet. Those of us who are engaged in active and principled community-based economic development are part of a global movement of women who share this work and belief.

Last July, I attended the Global Forum of Women in Dublin, Ireland. At this conference, presided over by the women presidents of Ireland and Iceland, over 400 women from 53 countries, affirmed the analysis that I want to present to you. Three years ago another conference, this one sponsored by the World Council of Churches in Seoul, Korea, and attended by 1000 delegates from all over the world, came to the same conclusions.

To understand how to reclaim rural community we need to understand what is destroying it. To do this, we need to tackle the limitations of traditional economics.

Most of us think of ourselves as economic illiterates. We are so intimidated by the language and concepts that are used by economists that we feel powerless to challenge or

debate them. When we try to raise issues of the environment, neighbourhood, peace or health, we are told that we are not "realistic" and we "don't understand good business practice". Often, what they describe as "sound economics" seems like dangerous gobbledy-gook to us. It is.

Economics is supposed to be about the organization of the material needs in a society. It should be a ground for critical debate about the kind of world

**Of the world's largest 100 economies, 47 are now transnational corporations - not countries! This means that approximately 138 countries of the world - the vast majority - have smaller economies than those giant companies.**

we want to live in and how well the society achieves it. Instead, we are served up a value-laden and self-serving justification of the profit motive by those in power. At the root of this distortion is the premise that only those things that can be measured in dollars have any value or meaning.

In any society, different kinds of work are undertaken by its members: the basic work of survival (food, shelter, clothing), the work of raising children and providing care for the elderly and the infirm, the work of building good relations between people and maintaining community.

You would think that all this work is important; but to a traditional economist, most of it does not exist. He can only deal with those activities which are exchanged for dollars. So for example, my caring for my

children and my neighbours' children has no value, unless I sell my services and make sure they are recorded in government statistics. Clean water has no value, unless it is sold, and then the only value recorded will be its selling price, either as a tourist attraction, a beverage, or an industrial component.

In your household, an economist could not measure the contentment of family members or the beauty of the surroundings. He does not measure anything you produced for yourselves: bread, preserves, vegetables, furniture, house-repairs, nor can he measure things like job satisfaction or quality of production. He could not measure satisfactory sex, or healthy children, or good community relations. Neither could he measure the effectiveness of all the hours you put into community, political, or recreational activity.

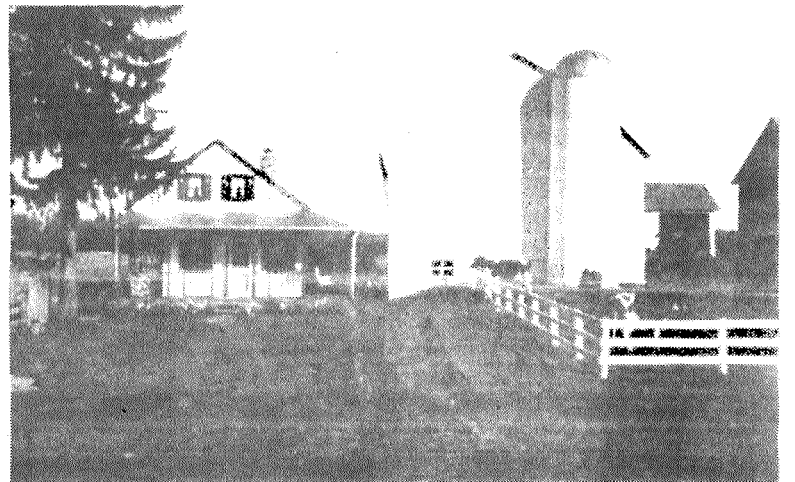
What the economist could measure in your household would be the amount you consume and the amount of money you bring in. He could measure these statistics against other homes, and he could develop totals for communities and neighbourhoods. But he would have no idea what really went on in the home at all. A healthy household, to him, would be one where income exceeded expenditure.

You can probably think of many other examples: health care data that cannot value health; agricultural data that cannot value earthworms, nutrition, or community relations; forest data that cannot take oxygen production, global warming, or aboriginal survival into account.

The world economy is shaped by this absurd reasoning. It is monitored and directed (where possible)

according to this dollar-based economic system, and the success of any enterprise or activity is judged by its ability to show an excess of measurable benefits over costs. This is called "showing a profit". If the benefits are not measurable in money, then they are deemed not to exist.

The basic economic unit of our society is the corporation. In law, corporations are treated as individuals, although they might be made up of thousands of workers. Any corporation is designed in a hierarchical fashion to facilitate control from the pinnacle and rapid response from the bottom of the pyramid. Each corporation,



like each household, maintains its own ledger, and a healthy corporation is considered to be one where income exceeds expenditure. In a corporation, the only way to measure job satisfaction is in terms of higher productivity, and the only way to measure impact on the environment is through potential loss of income to the corporation. Although concern is often expressed for other factors there is no way to have them enter into the accounting system.

It should be clear that no one is keeping a ledger for the whole of creation, and no one is keeping a ledger for the

immeasurables.

Globally, since the Second World War, most wealth has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of large transnational corporations. Maude Barlow gives the details: "The United Nations tracks the movements of these T.N.C.s. Last year it reported that the 600 largest T.N.C.s now accounted for one quarter of the world's total output. They do 80% to 90% of the industrial world's trade but employ just 3% of its work force. They control 80% of the world's land cultivated for export crops, displacing millions of farmers from their land and millions of workers

from domestic industry. Of the world's largest 100 economies, 47 are now transnational corporations - not countries! This means that approximately 138 countries of the world - the vast majority - have smaller economies than those giant companies.

"Ownership of these T.N.C.s is concentrated in the United States and a handful of other countries. The T.N.C.s however, don't define themselves in national terms. They may have their head

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## Gloria Steinam cont'd



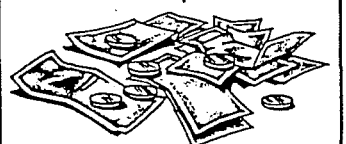
I think in a way, nations are like people. You can't really change without looking back at your childhood. I'm not really sure we can keep from repeating violent patterns until we look at the violent childhood that the European part of our two nations had, nor can we discover the joy that was there. We need to change what we learn in school, to change the system that now makes women's self-esteem diminish with each additional year of higher education. We need to really transform our religious institutions into those that

nourish spirituality. We need to make our families the microcosm of democracies that we hope to have in the world-at-large so that the children have rights and values and are viewed as individual people, and both men and women are treated equally. We need to do so much, but most of all we need to strengthen ourselves if we are going to make a world that fits us, instead of an us that fits the world.

When I was writing this book, I wrote something that at the time I didn't intellectually think was true but I thought it

sounded good so I wrote it down anyway. Doesn't that happen to you sometimes? You're not sure it's true but something in you makes you write it down. I've realized in the past year that it was, in fact, true. It is this: that if our greatest dreams for ourselves as whole people - whatever it is we long to do, whatever gives us joy and pleasure and accomplishment, for the kind of societies that we want to have and the communities we want to live in - if those dreams weren't already real inside us we couldn't even dream.

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# you need to know

by Joan Kuyek

office in one country, but production will be scattered in many third world nations, with tax shelters, administrative offices and research facilities located in others.

"They are economic fiefdoms - flexible, dynamic, and autocratic. Their goals are to grow in power and to accumulate wealth. They seek to circumvent and weaken national jurisdictions, creating a world without borders. They play governments and workers in one country OR region off against other, more desperate countries, and regions. The environment too is a pawn in this game of corporate chess.

corporate allies around the world are creating a global system in which the most powerful institutions are transnational companies above national laws and beyond the control of any international agency.

As an example, we can look at the panic over the deficit. Murray Dobbin points out that most of the deficit has been created by changes in revenue collection over the past decade: breaks for corporations and the wealthy, uncollected taxes, and the interest on the debt. Only 6% of the increase in the deficit is from a growth in spending. Yet

has been enormous growth in contract work, home work and part-time labour. In the garment industry alone over 33,500 jobs have been lost since 1988. Now the industry uses home work to continue production, and many women are engaged in piecework under Third World conditions.

At the same time, in Canada there has been a shift in the distribution of wealth. In 1992, the richest fifth of the population controlled 68.8% of the wealth, and the poorest fifth controlled 0.3%. If the wealth owned by all people in Canada were divided equally, each man, woman, and child would have assets of in excess of \$78,000. While people are lining up at food banks, others are planning the purchase of their newest yacht, or fancy car, or the takeover of the next company.

For each of us, with our own needs, desires and visions, our lives become battlegrounds for the competition between the balance sheets of different corporations. It is our time the corporations want, our dollars and our energy. When our children get cancer, when our food is valueless, when we have trouble getting to meetings, being loving to our friends and families, spend three hours a day getting to and from work or find that we are always having to move to find affordable housing or work. These are economic and political problems, not "social" ones. The problems of our economic system are located in the very real stuff of our lives.

Globally, this economic system has equally devastating consequences.

The first is the growing inability of the planet to absorb the plunder of her resources. To name some of them: ozone depletion and the resulting immune deficiency diseases, the greenhouse effect and the resulting climate changes, storms, and global warming, the pollution of our air, water

and land, soil erosion and destruction. All these things lead to massive movements of refugees and migrants, wars over scarce resources, the growth of megacities and dislocation, and the violence which follows that.

Secondly, governments can no longer control the economy. Corporations go where they wish, seeking the cheapest labour and places to turn into commodities, running from

**If the wealth owned by all people in Canada were divided equally, each man, woman, and child would have assets of in excess of \$78,000.**

nationalist and environmental movements. They develop trade blocks - the Americas, Europe, Southeast Asia - which literally squeeze the life out of Africa and South America. The concentration of power and wealth marginalizes entire countries and entire peoples. We are left trying to create wealth or income after they have taken the lion's share.

Third: T.N.C.s are increasingly able to bully nations into accepting the rules that they want through the I.M.F., the World Bank and military force. The structural adjustment packages imposed on the Third World require major cutbacks in social spending, privatization and increased export production, in return for rescheduling foreign debt payments or new loans. In Peru before the structural adjustment, over 8 million Peruvians lived in extreme poverty. Now the figure is 13 million out of a total population of 22 million. Canada is now facing its own structural adjustment package.

Fourth: In a world where economies are controlled by transnationals and not the government, peoples'

aspirations for democracy are thwarted and sometimes misplaced. We watch in horror as the struggles for democracy in Eastern Europe create huge income disparities, starvation, and despair.

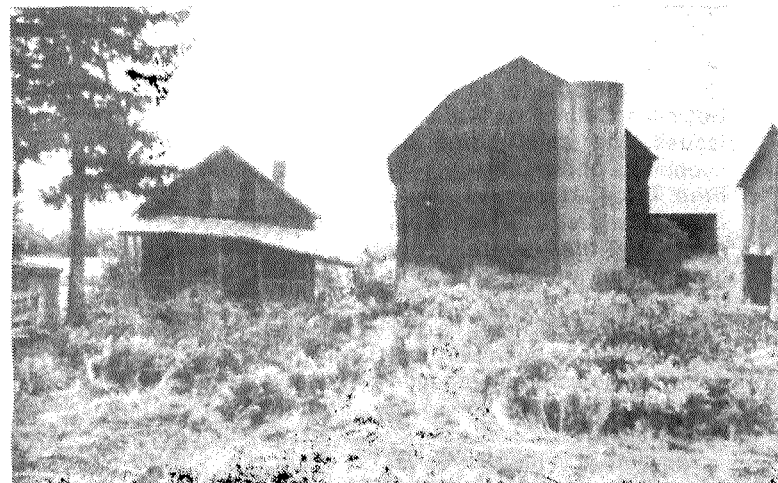
Fifth: Working conditions continue to get much worse everywhere. Dangerous industrial jobs are exported to the Third World. Microchips are made on assembly lines in Singapore where young women go blind working on them. The Free Trade zones in Mexico (maquiladores) pay pennies an hour in dreadful working conditions. Young men and women from the Philippines are forced into bonded labour on driftnet trawlers and in the sex trade just to survive.

When I visited Taiwan three years ago, I met with prostitutes on Washee Street in Taipei, who had come from the Philippines seeking work to support their families - twelve year old girls with vacant eyes who were beaten and drugged to keep them from running away. I met fifteen year old Filipino boys who had signed on to driftnet trawlers to support their families where conditions were so abysmal that many jumped overboard rather than endure further misery.

In Canada, real wages drop, job security falls apart, unions are weakened. My brother, a corporate lawyer in Winnipeg, and a former president of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, has told me that he too sees a change in the way companies bargain. "Many of them have no interest in building the local economy," he says, "they really will close a plant rather than compromise with union demands".

This is not an accident. This is not a coincidence. This is the logical extension of a form of economy that is based on the accumulation of wealth and power and private ownership. Silence is consent. If we don't stop being complicit

cont'd on pg. 8



"Because these companies are privately owned, they are not accountable to the public. Because they are global, they can transfer funds from country to country at will, loading debt where they wish and minimizing their costs. One half of the world's trade consists of transactions within these corporations board rooms, rather than in the open market. Their power is greater than the power of the state - and therefore of democracy itself."

**Almost 1 in 4 Canadians are now unemployed or underemployed. Over 2.6 million people in Canada are on welfare and over 1 million of them are in Ontario. In Toronto there are more food banks than MacDonalds outlets.**

In the transnational world the rules come from the top down, not the bottom up. T.N.C.s view as a threat to their growth and independence any government regulations or policies designed to benefit all citizens. In Canada the T.N.C.s are represented by the Business Council on National Issues. They and their

the response to reducing the deficit is to target spending and ignore the primary reason that the deficit has increased.

In Canada we have already been subjected to many manoeuvres to restructure our politics and economy to conform to this T.N.C. agenda: the destruction of the family farm, deregulation of public services like transportation, telecommunications, energy exports; privatization of key public enterprises; opening our borders to unconditional foreign investment; cutbacks on funding to health care, education and social services; the free trade agreement and N.A.F.T.A.

Canada is in "a race to the bottom" - trying to keep and attract global dollars and jobs at all costs. Almost 1 in 4 Canadians are now unemployed or underemployed. Over 2.6 million people in Canada are on welfare and over 1 million of them are in Ontario. In Toronto there are more food banks than MacDonalds outlets. Between June 1989, and June 1992, Canada suffered a net loss of 1,417,000 jobs.

Not only have jobs been lost. At the same time the job market has been restructured. Ninety-four percent of all job increases since 1989 have been in low-paying and part-time service sector jobs. There

## THE WEALTHY BANKER'S WIFE

The Assault on Equality in Canada

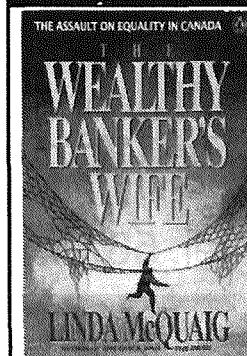
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# UIC amendments and you

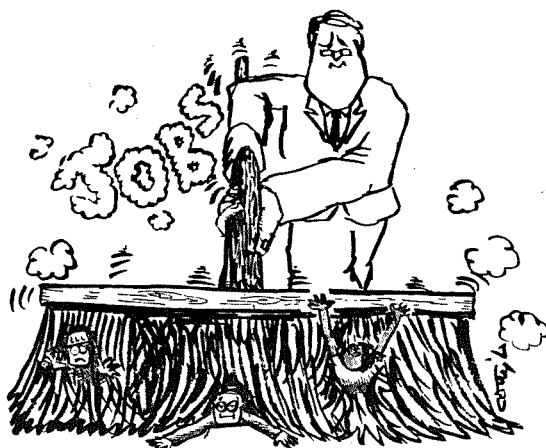
by Lorraine Michael

*"The men that I work with are very rude towards women. I have been sexually harassed by one of my bosses for years. I cannot speak up since it is a very complicated situation. Many people could be hurt. I have kept it to myself so that others would not have to be hurt...I have gone through stages of 'I hate my job and I dread going to work'. I always felt that when I can't stand it anymore and I'm fed up I could quit. That will be impossible now, won't it? If I want to quit now I would have to state why and I'm not willing to do that."*

This quote comes from a letter - one of several - sent to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) by a woman who feels that she has been "backed into a corner" by the new legislation on Unemployment Insurance (UI), Bill C-113. The bill, even with changes because of a nation-wide outcry against it, is

a new move by the federal government to undermine Canada's system of Unemployment Insurance. As of April 4, 1993, any worker who leaves her job without just cause or who is fired because of misconduct will not be able to claim UI benefits. Since women make up the majority of voluntary quits (57%), it is women who are going to be especially affected by the new legislation. As the experience of the woman already quoted indicates, Bill C-113 will be particularly oppressive for women who are working under difficult circumstances of sexual harassment.

While the bill does not define "sexual or other harassment" as a just cause for leaving a job, thereby making someone eligible for UI benefits, women do not always feel free to name the reason why they are quitting. Women across the country attest to the fact that in naming sexual harassment



they very often experience further harassment as they try to prove to others the validity of what they are saying. There is no doubt that the new restrictions on UI benefits put another block in the way of women who are trying to find their way out of a bad situation.

The new bill reveals a much harsher attitude towards all workers. Previous to Bill C-113, voluntary quitters underwent a disqualification between seven to twelve weeks as well as a reduction in the amount of benefits that the worker received. Under the new Act, voluntary quitters or those who are fired for misconduct will be denied benefits completely. At a time when unemployment is so high - the official figure continues to hover around 11% - these new rules put an added pressure on the backs of workers.

Besides the amendments to penalize voluntary quitters, Bill C-113 lays an extra financial burden on unemployed workers. As of April 4, 1993 people receiving UI will be getting only 57% of their

average insurable earnings. The UI benefits have gone from 66 2/3% of a worker's salary in 1977 to 60% and now to the present new rate, drawing ever closer to the 50% for which the Business Council on National Issues, the chief corporate supporters of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, have always argued. This latest move by the federal Tory government is another step in the ongoing erosion of the unemployment insurance system that has been part and parcel of the corporate agenda that they have been following since 1984.

The change in the UI benefits rate will be harder on women than on men since women are at an economic disadvantage whether employed or unemployed. On average, women earn approximately two thirds of men's salaries. Consequently, when they become unemployed and have to depend on UI they suffer worse consequences than men. A change in benefits from 60% to 57% of one's salary will be a greater hardship on the

lowest paid workers, the majority of whom are women.

In the April 2, 1993 news release announcing Bill C-113, the government maintains that this bill is "an Act to provide for government expenditure restraint". The curious thing about this rationale is that of all the programmes that might be said to be a drain on the government's spending, Unemployment Insurance is not included. In the 1989 federal budget Michael Wilson announced the end of government contributions to the Unemployment Insurance account. The government certainly hasn't lost on this one. According to their own figures, the Canadian government saved \$1.9 billion in its first full year after the pull out which became effective 1 January 1990.

With this bill, the Tory government has proven once again its disdain for the needs of all workers in this country, but especially for those of women. Because women and their children are the poorest in our society and therefore most require a social safety net, every change in our social and insurance programmes has a greater impact on women. Policies like the UI amendments, will only ensure that women will be out there on election day, to turf the Tories out of office.

Lorraine Michael is director of the Women and Economic Justice Programme of the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice. She is also co-chair of the Future of Women's Work Project of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

## Transnationals cont'd

in it, it will destroy us all. This is the challenge to women all over the world. We have to reclaim economics for our children and grandchildren and the future of the planet.

- we need to rebuild and manage the economic relationships of our communities so that we care for one another, and cooperate rather than compete. We need to stop the leakage of capital from our local economies.

- we need to affirm those values that cannot be measured and live within the limits and loops of nature. We need to continue to insist on

One half of the world's trade consists of transactions within these corporations board rooms, rather than in the open market. Their power is greater than the power of the state -and therefore of democracy itself."

education, recreational and social life that builds community and does not exclude through fees and class biases.

- we need to challenge the logic that small enterprises need to grow bigger to succeed. This only concentrates ownership in the hands of a few, and forces smaller operations to die out.

- we need to recognize and affirm our allies in the Third World and at home, in

aboriginal struggles for self-determination, in the environmental movement. As Rita McNeil says, "you'll find yourself amongst the people you've been warned about".

- we need to withhold our consent and resist those actions of transnationals which create more poverty and planetary destruction. We don't need to do this alone. We are part of a global movement for change, each one doing their part.

- we need to share what we have with the marginalized here and throughout the world through alternative trading systems, people to people exchanges, and support for efforts at empowerment.

- we need to reclaim and rename economics for ourselves. We must dare to dream images of a world where there are no children dying of hunger, where there is not a division between economic, social, ecological, and political reality, and where those things that are not measurable are valued equally with those things that are. This reclaiming is an act of courage that can heal our community, our land and the planet.

Joan Kuyek has been a community organizer and writer since 1965. She has been a national animator for the United Church of Canada and the Economic Crisis Project. She lives in Sudbury, Ontario. Her latest book is *Fighting for hope, organizing to realize our dreams*.

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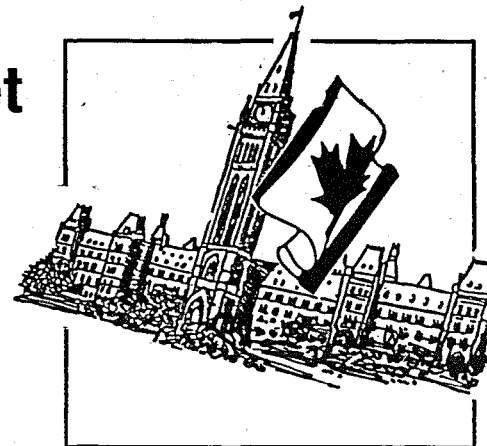
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# The Poverty Committee: "If you get free food, you'll never learn to be a good manager"

by Brenda MacKenzie



It wasn't too long ago that the chairperson of the subcommittee on poverty on Parliament Hill, Barbara Greene, got herself in trouble when the media picked up on her saying that food banks create dependency. If you can get free food, you'll never learn how to be a good manager.

Well, what has that committee been doing since? With very little media attention, the few remaining members of a House of Commons subcommittee on poverty -- all of them Conservatives -- are quietly continuing to meet. House of Commons subcommittees normally have representatives from all parties. But first the NDP and later the Liberals decided to boycott the hearings. Groups like the National Anti-Poverty Organization have declared they will not take part.

This is what is being said at those meetings: "Why did the Parliament of Canada unanimously pass a motion to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000? Why do people constantly stand up saying there are one million children living in poverty in Canada. Most of them are not poor." (Chairperson Barbara Greene, February 10)

"The Native community of Davis Inlet ... is characterized, I think universally, not only in Canada but around the world, as in extreme poverty. Yet we're told by some television reporters that every household there has a VCR." (Occasional committee member Alan Redway, March 17). Ms. Greene says that she intends to find a more "scientific" measurement of poverty in Canada, instead of the "fictitious numbers tossed around" by Statistics Canada and the Canadian Council on Social Development.

It would be easy to dismiss these quotes as insensitive right-wing ranting. But Ms. Greene is recorded in the minutes as saying, "I think this

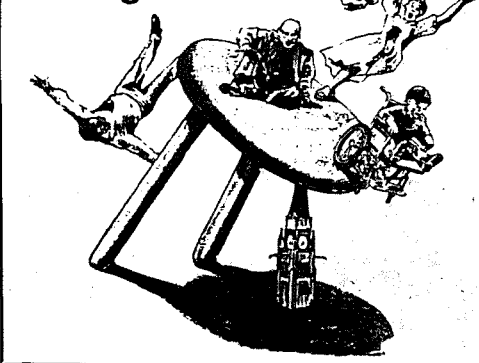
could be one of the most important things any committee has ever done in this country." That may be hyperbole, but it's got some people worried. Ms. Greene and her committee intends to solve poverty by moving the poverty line.

In her current work, Ms. Greene has been inspired by the writing of Christopher Sarlo, a professor at the University of Nipissing in North Bay, Ontario. Professor Sarlo's book, *Poverty in Canada*, was published by the Fraser Institute, a conservative think-

hair brush, nail clipper/file, feminine hygiene products, condoms, powders, ointments ..." which he calculated should cost the "average person" just over \$100 per year. Where are diapers \$100 a year? In this way, Professor Sarlo came up with a "scientific" poverty line all his own.

A single mother with one child living on welfare in an Ontario city receives total family benefits of \$16,545. She is not poor, according to Professor Sarlo. In fact, she is remarkably well off, taking in

## The Government Agenda



tank which was frequently consulted by British Columbia's former Social Credit government.

Professor Sarlo's suspicions about the true nature of poverty in Canada were aroused when his research showed that, among other things, nearly everyone officially classified as poor had a flush toilet. Professor Sarlo then painstakingly constructed a series of tables which shows exactly the bare minimum he believes necessary for basic survival. The main items in an impoverished person's budget were, of course, food and shelter, but Professor Sarlo left no details unexamined, including "necessary items related to ... age or gender ... diapers, bandages, pain remedy, electric shaver (and annual replacement screen),

60% more than Professor Sarlo's official poverty line of \$10,207. Professor Sarlo's poverty line is half the Statistics Canada "Low Income Cut-off" of \$20,497.

Others have found fault with Professor Sarlo's research. Jonathan Murphy of the Edmonton Social Planning Council found it harsh that Professor Sarlo's food basket excluded all grocery items not needed for good nutrition. "Expenditures on pepper or ketchup would be considered wasteful or a sign the family is not really poor," says Professor Sarlo.

The British Columbia Nutrition Council also found Prof. Sarlo's food choices so limiting that no one could stomach it. Further, they found unrealistic Professor Sarlo's assertions that the poor should buy in bulk and stock up on sale items. The poorest Canadians don't have enough cash on hand to do that, nor do they have freezers to store those specials, nor transportation to the large supermarkets which have these super discounts. The council expressed surprise that Prof. Sarlo did not take into account the fact that the same groceries can cost three times as much in remote northern communities.

Professor Sarlo excludes children's toys, books and writing materials from his list of things poor people ought to be

able to buy. Poor people don't need these things. From his experience on the Edmonton Social Planning Council, Mr. Murphy found it unlikely that most poor people could find apartments with heat and lights included in the rent, for ten per cent less than CMHC average shelter costs, as Professor Sarlo has asserted.

Mr. Murphy points out that Prof. Sarlo got some things just plain wrong. Prof. Sarlo claims in his book that the poor can always go to dental societies in major centres for free care, and get free eyeglasses from Lions Clubs across Canada. Not true, said Mr. Murphy.

But despite all that, Ms. Greene believes that Prof. Sarlo is fundamentally on the right track. And if he is, the government is wasting massive amounts of money by giving the poor far more than they need.

Chris Axeworthy, NDP social affairs critic and a boycotting member of the poverty subcommittee, agrees that government money is being wasted right now, not on the poor, but on the subcommittee itself. Public money is being spent to bring Prof. Sarlo to Ottawa as an expert witness. Even worse, according to Mr. Axeworthy, the subcommittee brought in Daniel Weinberg of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. "We, the country with the second worst record on poverty of the 17 industrialized nations, are asking the country with the worst record for advice. We shouldn't use public funds to ask them for assistance."

Mr. Axeworthy believes that the real point of the hearings is to find a way to reduce the numbers of people we call poor, so the government can "resist efforts to make business pay their fair share of taxes".

Dr. Michael Wolfson of Statistics Canada warned the subcommittee against being overly credulous. "One should be cautious of taking somebody who looks like an expert and is making judgement calls, clothing them in technical-looking analysis and trying to say they are scientific or objective. There's no way one can come up with a definition of poverty or even a definition of low income, which is a more modest objective, without making strong judgmental decisions, arbitrary from a statistical point of view."

But Ms. Greene has compelling reasons for changing the way we measure poverty in Canada. Parliament has decided to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. If the traditional Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-off is used as a guide, one million children in Canada are poor and if Conservative policies continue, one million children will continue to be poor in 2000.

Ms. Greene and Prof. Sarlo had this exchange during the hearings:

**Greene:** Could you outline under what circumstances Parliament could fulfil its resolution to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000, if you use the Statistics Canada low income cut-off definition?

**Sarlo:** I wouldn't be optimistic. One in five is the often used ratio ....

**Greene:** That would require a massive redistribution of income, which could have people in the top category suddenly having their incomes dramatically reduced. You could have an economic catastrophe ...

Need we say more.

*Brenda MacKenzie is an Ottawa-based writer with a strong interest in poverty issues.*



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# Cuts to the poorest of the poor

by Laureen Narfason

**1993 Government Estimates**  
Amount spent on defense:  
\$11 billion 970 million.  
Amount to CIDA:  
\$2 billion 106 million.

"The primary purpose of our development effort is to help the world's poorest countries and people" (Canada's Development Charter, *Sharing Our Future*, 1987).

In early December, the Canadian government dealt the international development community a major blow when Finance Minister, Don Mazankowski, announced that the foreign aid budget would be cut by 20% over the next two years. This announcement came as part of the government's mini-budget in which foreign aid received the largest cut of any program. With this cut, the government will have slashed more than \$4.3 billion dollars from the Canadian aid program over the last five years.

The cuts are especially disappointing in that they come only six months after Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was applauded at the Earth Summit in Brazil for promising to increase Canada's development assistance to .7% of the Gross National Product (GNP). Unfortunately, the 20% cut means that the percentage of the GNP allocated to development assistance will actually be decreased from its present level of .44% to .38% by 1994/95. Foreign aid currently accounts for only 2% of total government expenditures.

In January 1993 a leaked discussion paper prepared by the Department of External Affairs prompted even more cause for concern. The department proposal is to completely overhaul Canada's foreign aid program, with the aim of increasing Canadian "influence" and "leverage" internationally through the redistribution of Canada's foreign aid from the world's poorest countries - the development priority which was advocated by the government in 1987 in its *Sharing Our Future* document - to countries that are more profitable to Canadian trade and business. The government's new criteria for aid is not based on need, but on potential trade opportunities and strategic security positioning. This change in policy comes at a time when the gap between the world's richest and poorest countries has tripled.

Among the countries that are being advocated for increased foreign aid dollars are those of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union,

whereas the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America will see cuts to the aid they currently receive. However the standard of living in the EE/FSO countries is still in the top 25% in the world. The cuts will disproportionately affect the world's poorer countries.

In early March, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) revealed that programs would be almost totally cut in 14 countries in Africa and Asia. All 14 of the abandoned Asian and African countries are on the World Bank's list of 43 low-income economies, with gross national products per capita of under \$600. Meanwhile, Canadian bilateral aid to better-off countries remains high:



photo credit: CUSO

Egypt got \$31.6 million in 1991-92, Morocco got \$5.9 million, Thailand received \$20.5 million, and nearly \$40 million went to Indonesia.

That comes as no surprise to Andrew Clark, a researcher at the North-South Institute. A recent study found that 16 of the top 40 recipients of aid between 1988-91 were middle-income states with yearly per capita incomes of over \$610.

In other words, despite CIDA's 1988 commitment "to help the poorest countries and people of the world," there is no connection between a country's need and the amount of aid it gets from Canada. When he visited Ottawa in February, Mahbub ul Haq, head of the team that puts together the annual United Nations Human Development Report, said it would be "an unmitigated disaster" if Canada were to shift its focus away from the poorest of the poor.

It would also backfire, he said. "Poverty travels, and travels in very unpleasant forms - drugs, AIDS, pollution, terrorism, instability and even migration".

Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union need short-term help through foreign investment and technology transfer from Europe and North America - not aid, Ul Haq said.

The new policy direction

also has as an objective "to support sustainable development abroad as an extension of sustainable development in Canada". However in a critique of the External Affairs paper, the North-South Institute states, "No policy that pushed many of the world's neediest people to the margins of aid consideration could be considered serious or credible about the goals of human rights, sustainable development and the long-term security of Canadian interests."

The cuts proposed for the voluntary sector (NGOs), which, according to the paper could be as much as 50%, give credence to this criticism. According to the Institute, "the

reduced. Several cuts exceeded \$1 million.

The cuts will effect the capacity of Canadian NGO's who work closely with counterpart organizations in the developing world to offer the kinds of aid programs that meet the needs of the poor so that their capacities can be enhanced. Some examples of projects being affected by the budget cuts include:

**Despite CIDA's 1988 commitment "to help the poorest countries and people of the world," there is no connection between a country's need and the amount of aid it gets from Canada.**

"A nine-per-cent cut in CIDA's contribution to CUSO which means the aid agency must immediately wind down projects in Ghana, Tanzania, Laos and Honduras.

CUSO's \$2.8-million project in Ghana has helped more than 1,000 women in 40 villages by providing loans of up to \$150 to buy grain, seed, fertilizer or small plots of land, and set up small businesses. The women have also been trained in basic agricultural practices, accounting and management.

The five-year project was to wind down in September. The goal was to set up a revolving loan fund that Ghanaian women could continue to draw from, but CUSO spokesperson Chris Neal says that might not happen now. "CIDA has asked us to recover everything we can and pull out," he says. "It has put the whole thing in doubt."

Operation Eyesight Universal, a Calgary-based organization that funds and organizes sight restoration operations and blindness prevention programs in the Third World, is cutting back in all areas after receiving \$200,000 less from CIDA this year.

Operation Eyesight has 65 programs in 12 countries and performs 130,000 sight restoration operations a year. Instead of sending Canadian doctors, it trains local doctors and builds up local hospitals and clinics." (excerpts from the *Ottawa Citizen*)

The changes proposed by the External Affairs document have been made unilaterally; without any consultation from other parties. This runs contrary to an important tradition in our democracy - the commitment to public

NGO program is perhaps Canada's most successful way of channelling our aid to meeting the basic needs of the poor." In order for development to be sustainable, it has to be of the long-term nature practiced by NGOs, and must develop the capacity of the

**We have to address the systemic problems in the world that are creating human misery and disaster, and are setting the groundwork for conflict and environmental degradation worldwide.**

communities, (in which the development projects are being carried out) to continue once the NGOs are no longer involved.

The work that NGOs carry out is effective and, compared to bilateral (government to government) and business cooperation programs, cost efficient. However, the most recent cuts to NGOs meant a \$25 million cut, or 16% cut in real terms since 1991/92. Out of a total of 119 organizations, 25 NGOs were increased, 15 received the same allocation as last year and 79 were

consultation. In *Sharing Our Future*, the former minister for External Relations, Monique Landry, stated that "the shaping of foreign policy and aid policy is the responsibility of all Canadians, and not the exclusive domain of politicians or bureaucrats in Ottawa".

Although the paper does acknowledge that one of the best ways to support human rights and democratic development is through support to NGOs, it still proposes halving the funding to voluntary organizations and encouraging them to work as government contractors on short-term projects which focus on "themes" including human rights, good governance, and the environment. Short-term projects, however, do not ensure long-term sustainable development.

We need to view the global fight against poverty as a part of creating global security. We have to address the systemic problems in the world that are creating human misery and disaster, and are setting the groundwork for conflict and environmental degradation worldwide. These are problems that we will pay far more for in the long run if we don't do our part now. As Stephen Lewis said in respect to the latest cuts, "We've got over a billion people in the developing world who live lives of permanent impoverishment. You cannot create an international community where such insufferable indignity is visited upon four-fifths of the world's population."

It is short sighted and misguided to move toward a policy that is supposed to benefit Canadian interests, while ignoring the fact that 80% of the world's people live in developing countries and that the world's future security depends on our ability to reverse the rapid escalation of global poverty. If a commitment is not made to a such an objective, we'll all have a much higher price to pay in the future.

"Only through the eradication of global poverty can we create an environment that nurtures the tremendous creative potential of the human race, and frees it to build the world we all want to see" (Monique Landry, *Sharing Our Future*, 1987).

Laureen Narfason is a Program Officer with the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation.



# Homeworking: from the double day to the endless day

by Deena Ladd

The clothes you are wearing tell a story about the garment industry. Let's start with your shirt. If it's 5 years old, chances are that it was made in a factory in Canada. Now chances are that factory closed down and moved to Texas along with dozens of other garment factories. OK. Let's look at your jacket. Is it new? If you bought it last month, odds are pretty good that it was made in someone's home. In fact, the woman who sewed it together probably made about \$5.00, working on her own equipment.

The structure of Canada's garment industry has changed dramatically in just a few years. Toronto used to have a thriving garment industry. Now there are just a handful of factories, but there are literally thousands of women working from their homes, often for less than minimum wage and in poor working conditions.

The best way to describe the structure of the garment industry is to think of a pyramid. The top of the pyramid is dominated by a few large retailers. Retailers like Hudson's Bay Co., Eaton's and

Dylex control over 40% of the market. Dylex owns retail outlets such as Fairweathers, Braemar, Bi-way, Club Monaco, Harry Rosen, Suzy Shier and Thrifties. Because they control so much of the market, retailers can dictate to garment manufacturers when they want a garment, the exact time to produce it and the price they will pay for it. Some retailers, like the Hudson's Bay, are now even taking garments on consignment.

Retailers complain they are losing money. They say they can't compete. Well, in 1991 the Hudson's Bay Co. made almost \$160 million in straight profit.

The next level down the pyramid from retailers and manufacturers is "jobbers" or contractors. In many cases, garment manufacturers no longer operate factories directly. They work as "jobbers" as well. They design the garment, buy the fabrics and textiles for it and perhaps cut the garment. Then they farm the work out to other sub-contractors who farm it out to individual homeworkers to finish the garment. In other

words, well-known labels like Alfred Sung are owned by large corporations who send their work out to contractors and then down the pyramid to homeworkers.

A research study conducted by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) in 1991 showed that homeworkers are mainly immigrant women. They are most often paid less than minimum wage. The average wage is \$4.50 an hour and some homeworkers make as little as \$1.00 an hour. Homeworkers don't get

homeworkers and the staggering findings uncovered gave impetus to the formation of the *Coalition for Fair Wages and Working Conditions for Homeworkers*. The Coalition is comprised of labour, community, women and immigrant groups.

Since its formation in November 1991, the Coalition has been actively involved in many struggles in the fight for fair wages and working conditions for homeworkers. The ILGWU is organizing homeworkers into an Association which can

immigrant and disabled workers. Retailers and garment manufacturers will tell you that this is the only way they can survive. But is it really? The garment industry in Bangladesh employs children at 5 cents an hour. In Canada homeworkers make as little as a \$1.00 an hour. Does "competitiveness" really mean driving wages down, creating poorer working conditions and getting rid of unions?

There are alternatives. There can be fair wages and working conditions for homeworkers. Workers can use their skills and their abilities to work in their own communities and make clothes in Canada for Canadians. Retailers do not have to call all the shots. Factories can be modernized in a way that increases productivity and can sustain higher wages thereby giving greater control to workers. We need to fight back and create our own alternatives. We need to fight back and say no to the exploitation of homeworkers. We need to fight back and say we will only support those manufacturers and retailers who make sure that their workers receive fair wages and work under fair working conditions!

Deena Ladd is the Educational Co-ordinator of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and is an active member of the Coalition for Fair Wages and Working Conditions for Homeworkers.



vacation pay. Their employers don't pay Unemployment Insurance or Canada Pension Plan premiums. They don't get paid for overtime work. Often they don't get paid at all for the work they've done. They have no control over working conditions, sometimes receiving an order on Friday and being told it is due back on Monday. This is one reason why just two of Canada's largest retailers made over \$200 million in profits combined in 1991, in the middle of the worst recession we've had since the 1930's!

Many homeworkers used to work in garment factories. One of the common stories is that they did not return to the factory after a maternity leave because they could not find decent childcare they could afford. So now they are doing the same work, sometimes for the same employer, for less money in their homes. The double day of the factory work and family care becomes the endless day of homework and family care. Garment manufacturers are using homeworkers because large retailers, like the Hudson's Bay, Eaton's, Dylex, due to high competition, purchase garments at the cheapest possible price. The outcome of this pressure is then to avoid paying a decent living wage to unionized workers. This low wage strategy allows them to maximize their profits even in a time of recession.

The result of the ILGWU initial research study on

advocate collectively for their rights, and provides direct information and services for them. The Coalition has been fighting for enforcement of and legislative changes to the Employment Standards Act. We are also focusing on legislation that can enable homeworkers and domestic workers to be organized into a union if they so wish. In the last year, the Coalition has begun a widespread Clean Clothes Campaign. We want to pressure retailers to buy from garment manufacturers who are not undercutting factory workers and pitting them against exploited homeworkers. Clean Clothes are made by workers who are paid a fair living wage and under safe working conditions.

Global economic restructuring in the form of Free Trade, privatization and automation is putting pressure on all manufacturers to shift production to low wage countries or to pursue the cheapest labour they can find which means using women,

## Fair Wages and Working Conditions for Homeworkers Coalition

### Canada's Most Prestigious Label - Alfred Sung - Made by Homeworkers for Less Than Minimum Wage

The Alfred Sung label is sold at Eaton's, Hudson's Bay Co., Holt Renfrew and other popular retailers. The label is owned by ETAC Sales Ltd., a large clothing manufacturer who made over \$2 million in profits last year. Over the last two years ETAC Sales Ltd.'s revenues have grown by 36%. ETAC Sales Ltd., like many large manufacturers, sends much of its actual production work out to sub-contractors who, in turn, send it out to be finished by homeworkers.

### The Stories Behind the Label

#### Ming-Zhen

Ming-Zhen makes \$4.15 for sewing a women's jacket. It takes an hour to sew the jacket. As new styles arrive she has to teach herself to make the new design with no compensation for training time. At Eaton's the jacket sells for somewhere between \$275 and \$375.

#### Poi-Yee

Sewing a dress will take Poi-Yee at least an hour. She makes \$5 for her work. She has had to buy the sewing machine she is working on and she pays all her operating costs like hydro and heat. The dress sells for between \$150 and \$200 at a high-end retail boutique.

#### Yen

Yen is paid \$3 to \$3.25 for sewing a skirt. It takes at least forty minutes to complete the garment. Often the contractor delivers her work on a Friday and Yen is expected to complete the skirts by Monday morning. She works at least 10 hours a day all weekend. Yen has no child care and must take care of her children while working. The skirt sells for \$150 to \$200 at the Hudson Bay Co.

There are many other designer labels using homeworkers -- Jones New York, Linda Lundstrom, Peanut Power Children's Wear -- just to name a few.

(Homeworkers names are fictitious. Their stories are not.)

### What You Can Do...

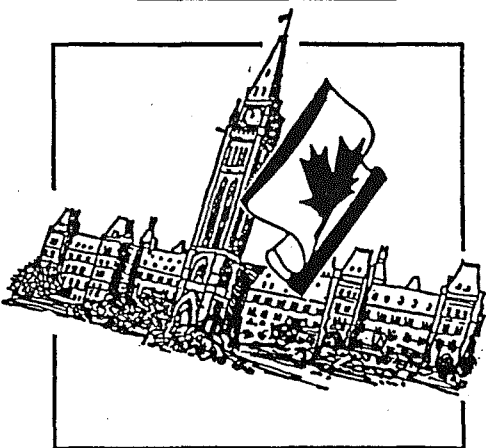
- Pressure retailers to buy from garment manufacturers who pay fair living wages and provide decent, safe working conditions. Phone the Coalition at 416-977-1384 for postcards to mail into Dylex, Hudson's Bay and Eaton's.
- Be an educated and aware consumer. See if your retailer is buying garments made by homeworkers and if they are being paid fair wages.



*Marlene Catterall*  
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# The family caucus: the Tories moral majority

by Donna Cameron

Have you spent sleepless nights worrying about the definition of "family"? Are you plagued with guilt because your children don't live with the man who participated in their conception? Do you and your partner sweat over the term 'family' which doesn't seem to include your living arrangement?

You'll be relieved to know that a group in the Conservative party has the family in mind as they meet to discuss the issues of the day. The group is called the "Tory Family Caucus", and from what I hear they are responsible for keeping the Tory caucus on the straight and narrow as recommended by such family experts as co-chairs Al Johnson, M.P. for Calgary South and Gabrielle Bertrand from Quebec with input from Barbara Greene, M.P. for Ottawa South, Don Blenkarn, John Reimer, Jake Epp, Perrin Beatty, Tom Hockin and Monique Landry. They place themselves on the cutting edge of moral conscience of government and their own

political party and they bring fundamentalist Christian morals and a narrow-minded heterosexual perspective to the issues of the day.

They have influenced various pieces of legislation with a definition of family which doesn't fit today's Canada but is reminiscent of the movie versions of the 1950's. In addition to the lessons on morals this Caucus shares, they also have held considerable clout within the Conservative party. Their clout has ensured the end of the Child Care Program promised in the last federal election, changes to the Income Tax Act to increase taxes of people living in common-law relationships, and a very successful campaign behind closed doors to allow continued discrimination against lesbians and gays in the workplace. Discrimination which has been written into the federal Human Rights Act, as amendments to the Act defined the family as a man and a woman married and together for the act of procreation. Therefore, family

would not/could not include same sex couples (even if they are together with children who have been created). This will continue to exclude lesbians and gay men from receiving employee benefits. Interesting that the legislation and changes relate to money.

When Kim Campbell was Minister of Justice, she promised the Human Rights Act would be corrected to include the protection of lesbians and gay men - she may not have intended to include sexual orientation in the Act or she may have given in to the pressure of Al Johnson and his caucus members; either way she ensured the definition of family does not include the families of lesbians and gays. Family benefits in the workplace will continue to be denied to many workers in this country based solely on their sexual preference, and the definition of family.

As economic pressures increase and wages and opportunities decrease we know full well the choices women have to make to support their children and to survive. Al Johnson says, "The changes in the income tax act are to be more fair to the married couple and take away the advantage common-law



couples have had in the income tax system". The long term objective of the policy is to encourage wedded bliss through economic measures. Women rarely come out ahead when we talk of economic planning thought up by the Family Caucus.

The changes to the Immigration Act introduced as solutions to the deficit and unemployment are based on the 'Tory family caucus' definition of families, a definition which does not take into account the forms of families understood in many

parts of the world. Examine your relationships, those people you care about and look after. Do you consider them your family? Does that fit into the definition preached by the Tory Caucus?

It is coming up to election time and this is the perfect opportunity to take away some of the power this "Family Caucus" wields. The list of the members of the caucus - thought to include about 35 members is not an easy one to find - perhaps Tory M.P.'s aren't quite as proud of their 'morals' police work as they are of other work. Ask the candidate in your riding if they are part of the caucus or supports their position, and then tell two people, who'll tell two people and so on and so on.

The fundamentalist right has developed an ability to use our language against us, they will polish those skills during the upcoming campaign. Be wary, ask for the incumbent voting record on issues which you care about, share that information with others. Inform yourself and others.

*Donna Cameron is a lesbian, feminist and lives with her family in Victoria, B.C.*

## 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 support to women candidates.

En contribuant au Fonds Agnes Macphail vous offrez de meilleures chances aux candidates. C'est ainsi que la voix des femmes se fera entendre.

In 1988, the Agnes Macphail Fund helped 84 New Democrat women seek election to Parliament.

## TAKING OUR PLACE

Here is my contribution of ☐\$25 ☐\$50  
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CODE : \_\_\_\_\_ TEL : \_\_\_\_\_

Send your donation to the Agnes Macphail Fund, 310 Somerset Street, Ottawa K2P 0J9. Contributions are eligible for federal tax credit.

Faites parvenir votre don au Fonds Agnes Macphail, 310, rue Somerset, Ottawa K2P 0J9. Les contributions vous donnent droit à un crédit d'impôt fédéral.

*The Agnes Macphail Fund*

## Update on the Panel on Violence

The Panel on Violence Against Women will be closing their offices by the end of June as their job comes to a close. It is anticipated that the Panel's final report will be tabled sometime in June, sandwiched between the leadership race and the new Cabinet.

The Panel will have available to the public a wide number of reports including an Executive Summary, the National Action Plan, approximately twelve research monographs and a community video.

To obtain copies of the Executive Summary or the National Action Plan please write Status of Women Canada at

360 Albert St.,  
Suite 700  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 1C3



# The family values trap

*The Family Values Trap  
adapted from a talk given  
at M.I.T Women and  
Politics Spring Lecture  
Series*

by Stephanie Coontz

There's a new convergence emerging about families; that families deserve support, that both values and economics are important for family success, and that obligation and commitment should have more of a place than they currently do, for both sexes, in our interpersonal and social relations.

For a lot of people, the T.V. character Murphy Brown summed it up in saying that since we all agree that the family is the source of caring and commitment, it's time to recognize that caring and commitment can come in many shapes and sizes.

There's something to be said for this. In the late 1960s, feminists and other social activists tended to concentrate on laying out criticisms of the pervasive inequality, domination, and violence in traditional families. We stressed how conventional family values masked racism, indifference to the poor, maltreatment of women, and suppression of dissent. Many people heralded every expression of defiance and cynicism about family values as a healthy development.

But feminists made two miscalculations. First, we tended to accept the right wing's assessment of how essential the so-called traditional family was both to capitalism and to male privilege.

Patriarchy theories, for example, leapt from correctly observing that men tend to appropriate and control women's work within marriage, to the incorrect prediction that men **needed** those personal services they'd stay and fight for them. It turns out that with the obvious exception of batterers, many men are far less concerned with what they can force women to do for them than with what they don't have to do for themselves. In some cases, that means deciding it's fine for the wife to work as long as she hires a full-time nanny; for others it means that when the woman demands too much parity in marriage or parenting, the man is perfectly willing to let a woman go it alone.

Second, we underestimated the possibility that many people who joined us in rejecting conventional family morality did not absorb the alternative social morality that we proposed in its place. Hence, we didn't spend a lot of time attacking people who let go of the old hypocrisy without putting any new ethics in its place.

Because the right wing was attacking all departures from

so-called traditional values, we hesitated to attack any, and found ourselves sliding into a defense of value neutrality.

But make no mistake, feminists and other anti-traditionalists were not originally value-neutral. The Women's Movement was not based on the goal of women working twelve hour days for megabuck corporations, hiring other women to take care of the dirty work at home, or winning equal opportunity to engage in exploitative economic, political, and sexual relations.



It presented an alternative, value-opinionated vision of how society should function, a critique of work and redistribution arrangements, as well as household and reproduction arrangements.

Our critique of the traditional family was based on the conviction that we could establish a firmer basis of caring and commitment in the workplace and the political system, not just insert women into positions where they could get their fair share of the spoils. But we did not fully realize that both business interests and individuals could accept our critique of a family arrangement and yet reject our critique of societal arrangements.

Failure to take account of these two problems meant that most feminists and political dissidents didn't anticipate the emergence of the world we presently live in, where some men quit a job so that they don't have to pay child support, where some women use the threat of child abuse charges as a bargaining chip, where a middle-class couple with no excuse of poverty or economic

stress will leave their kids alone while they gallivant off to Mexico, or where some parents are so busy pursuing relationships or careers that they don't have time for their kids.

The right wing taps into some legitimate concerns when they talk about a crisis of values, and it's important not to let them monopolize the moral discourse. We do have to discuss the comparable worth of values as well as pay rates, consider social obligations as well as individual rights, figure out personal and community commitments as well as make our wish list for government spending.

But that's a far cry from allowing a cosmetically-altered right to trap us into any supposed new consensus on family values. Because underneath the tolerant rhetoric and reconciliation of "moderates" on both sides, there still lurk debilitating myths about traditional families, and anti-social values about what makes families work.

We don't want to encourage any sentimentality about traditional gender roles and family relations. The word family did originally mean a band of slaves, and for centuries it referred to authority hierarchies, not love. Anglo-American law until well into the 19th century gave husbands the right to beat their wives. The old-fashioned family farms, small businesses and extended family enterprises that so many liberals now romanticize have historically been among the worst offenders in their exploitation of child labour.

Child abuse has too long and brutal a history to pretend that it's a non-traditional aberration. Incest indeed tends to occur in families with strong patterns of dominance and authoritarianism by the father, along with values reinforcing the submission of women and children.

One dangerous result in convergence is the increasing tendency of both sides to agree that, for better or worse, women now have to work outside the home. This may be true, but women also **want** to work outside the home. In the guise of sympathy for their plight this formulation feeds the illusion that there once was a time, and might even be again, when families could take care of dependents and protect them from poverty. In fact, though, the feminization of poverty is hardly a new phenomenon.

As for the idea that families can no longer fulfill their traditional commitments to elders, the truth is that they are fulfilling more commitments than they were ever expected to in the past. In 1900, the average adult spent 9 years caring for an aging parent. Today the average adult can expect to spend 18 years doing so, and well over 70% of elder care is provided by families.

Another problem with trying to reach common ground on family values is that, given the structural inequities and historical ideology of America, any "cultural consensus" about such values is likely to be racist, class-biased, and anti-female. If you doubt that, listen to liberal and conservative debates about how to handle substance abuse among pregnant women, debates that invariably assume we're talking about black women, when in fact white women are slightly more likely to abuse substances while pregnant, but black women are ten times more likely to be reported for it.

Finally, even in its most tolerant, multi-cultural form, the notion that family values are the main moral issues of the day and that family commitments are the best gauge of social responsibility represents a tremendous contraction of moral vision and ethical discourse. In enlightenment thought, virtue was a political word, referring to willingness to take on civic obligations. In the evangelical tradition character meant willingness to stand up for religious, social, or moral issues.

Compare these older definitions, whatever their limits for women and minorities, to the truncated sense of social responsibility and moral vision of those who tell us that family values are the most urgent issue in North America today and then define those, as David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values does, as "how we live and what we believe regarding sexuality, marriage, and parenting". By that definition, Mafia families should win the moral sweepstakes.

We shouldn't give an inch to this definition of morality. Of course, personal values are important. But historically there's a recurrent pattern in which whenever you find a huge amount of hype about family morality it's usually associated with a turn away from a previous period of political activism and social reform. It's almost invariably a

substitute for taking on larger issues of justice and ethics.

Of course it takes more than one adult to raise a child. But two are hardly much better. As an old African folk saying puts it, it takes an entire village to raise a child. Of course kids need more time and attention than many of them are getting; of course they shouldn't be warehoused in child care centres 10 hours at a time or left on their own all day; of course there's something special about kids, because they represent the future for all of us, parents or not; of course parents shouldn't walk away from their obligations or use kids as weapons in divorce fights. But these should be social values, not just family values.

If we have to appeal to tradition to get such values across, I suggest we go back, way back. I always think of the Native American traditions - for example that of the Naskapi, where strong family bonds were considered totally compatible with gender equality. This was a great source of puzzlement and stress for the European Jesuits, who offered a number of arguments against gender

**The Women's Movement was not based on the goal of women working twelve hour days for mega-buck corporations and hiring other women to take care of the dirty work at home.**

equality. One of their fundamental arguments was that "If you don't curtail your women, how will you know that the child your wife bears belongs to you?" A Jesuit recorded in his journal the telling reply of a Naskapi man: "Thou hast no sense. You French people love only the children of your body... we love all the children of the tribe."

That's a value worth fighting for. Unless we learn to treasure all the children of our tribe, then no child, however perfect her parents, can be truly secure. An overemphasis on narrow family values leads us away from the social issues and larger moral concerns we need to face in the twenty-first century.

*Stephanie Coontz is a faculty member at Evergreen State College in Washington. Her recent book is "The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgic Trap."*

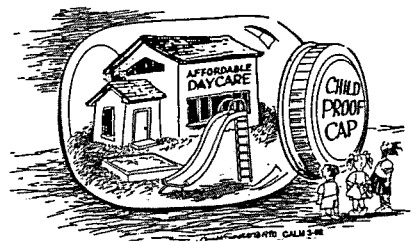
## Childcare campaign launched

excerpts from an article in "Interaction" by Susan Vaughn

A Canada-wide campaign was launched in April to put a national child care program on the political agenda for the upcoming federal election. The campaign, known as Children: Our Hope, Your Future -- Campaign Child Care 1993, will work at the grassroots level to bring together national and provincial organizations across the country that are affected by the lack of a comprehensive, accessible, affordable system of high quality child care.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC), National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada, Child Poverty Action Group, and National Action Committee on the Status of Women, have formed a working coalition to organize the campaign. Aboriginal groups have also been invited to participate.

The campaign's lobbying strategy includes working with the different political parties to ensure that child care is a priority on their agendas. An election kit will be produced consisting of an election brochure, questions that can be asked at all-candidates



meetings, fact sheets about the political parties' positions on child care, a report on the Progressive Conservative Party's track record, as well as some background information. "We also want to ensure there's a leaders debate on women's issues and that child care is part of that," notes Kass. A national poll question will also be developed and used as part of the campaign.

"A national child care plan is good for children and women but it has to be part of an economic social renewal program...it can't just be out there as a social program because it's so integral to how our economy works," says Jamie Kass, national co-ordinator for the CLC. "Labour likes to see it as a worker's issue, a people's issue and not just a women's issue, even though the reality is that women usually end up taking the issue on...We can't afford not to have it -- not for our children, not for society."

## A closer look at fertility clinics: Royal Commission on NRTs

Study of Canadian Fertility Clinics.

A survey of Canadian Fertility Programs was conducted for the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies by Dr. Thomas Stephens, a social epidemiologist, and Janice McLean, an Ottawa consultant. Under their direction a team of researchers that examined 41 programs in 27 Canadian hospitals and clinics that in 1991, were offering *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), and artificial insemination (AI). They also examined data from 11 physicians offering AI as a part of private practice.

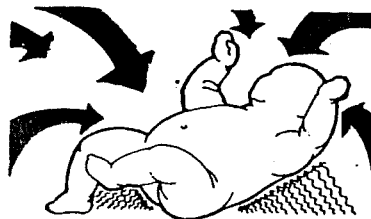
The study found two major areas of concern. They are: a marked variation in clinical practices and procedures across the country; and incomplete and sometimes unsatisfactory data collection and record-keeping of treatment and outcomes.

"Some 1991 practices surveyed raise questions about the safety of infertility treatment," said Dr. Patricia Baird, Commission Chairperson. "For instance, the study found that some practitioners were using fresh sperm, contrary to guidelines of the Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society. These guidelines require all semen to be frozen and kept for a minimum of six months and that

the donor be retested at that time for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) since it may take that long for the virus to be detectable. This practice is placing women and couples at risk."

Dr. Baird added: "The study also found that not all practitioners, clinics and teaching hospitals consistently evaluated donors for such things as sexually transmitted infections, family genetic history and prior medical history. In addition, the Commission is concerned that two hospitals and one solo practitioner were mixing donor sperm with that of the husband, contrary to the guidelines."

Wide variations in practices



were found in a number of areas. "While some flexibility and variation in practice is needed to take individual situations into account, the wide level of variance that exists, and the lack of adherence to existing standards is very disturbing," Dr. Baird stated. "Some physicians have made great efforts to put guidelines into place, but it is obvious that more emphasis should be placed on compliance."

Because of incomplete data collection and inadequate record-keeping by clinics, the study was unable to give reliable data on the number of live births from IVF in Canada. It was also impossible to calculate true success rates,

defined as live births per cycle of treatment. "Accurate and complete records are vital to the development of appropriate standards of practice, so that clinical practice can be altered to take into account outcomes and complications," said Dr. Baird. "They are also essential if, in future, it becomes necessary to know, for medical or other reasons, which donor was linked with which recipient. The Commission is disturbed at the inconsistent record-keeping that the survey showed."

In summary, programs and practitioners were found to vary a great deal in their actual practices and procedures for provision of infertility treatment. The lack of consistency and completeness in record-keeping in many programs makes it almost impossible to judge the outcomes and quality of service being delivered. The varied and often unclear ways in which "success rates" are defined make it hard for potential patients to assess their options and give truly informed consent.

The Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies was established in October 1989 to examine current and potential medical and scientific developments related to the new reproductive technologies. In particular, the Commission has been asked to consider social, ethical, health, research, legal and economic implications for women, children, and society as a whole. The Commission is using the findings of this and other studies in the area of infertility treatment to prepare recommendations which will be compiled in the Final Report which will be available in July 1993.



**Mary Clancy, M.P.**  
*Official Opposition Critic  
for the Status of Women*

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# Redefining family and marriage: lesbians and the law

by barbara findlay

The Supreme Court of Canada has passed up the opportunity to establish clearly that lesbians and gay men are entitled to human rights protections.

Mossop was a gay federal civil servant who filed a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 1985, claiming discrimination on the basis of family status. Mossop had been refused bereavement leave to attend the funeral of his partner's father, even though common law heterosexual partners had that right under the collective agreement. In its February 25 decision the court decided that Mossop had not been discriminated against on the grounds of family status under the Human Rights Act as it existed in 1983. But the court left the door open to a challenge by another same sex partnership denied benefits.

If you are heterosexual, the law takes a great interest in you and your spouse. Whether you like it or not, if you live together for an extended period of time you will acquire the obligation to support your partner if you break up. You will be responsible for supporting any children you have together, and any children that were part of your family even though they may not be your biological children. If you choose to get married, the law will look over your shoulder, specifying how old you must be to marry, what constitutes a valid marriage, who you can and cannot marry, (generally you can't marry close relatives). The law will also govern the division of your matrimonial assets if you ever split up.

Many laws treat "spouses" differently than they treat two single people. Some examples: married people and people living common law get premium breaks on their medical insurance. And if a married person dies without a will, his or her partner is automatically entitled to some of the estate that the deceased partner left. Heterosexual couples can get pension benefits, sponsor their partners to immigrate to Canada and have their partners visit if they are in prison.

On the other hand, if you are collecting social assistance, the law says that you get less money if you are married to each other or living common law than if you are two roommates living together. So in that situation marriage creates a disadvantage rather than an advantage. If you are employed by the government, you may be required by conflict

of interest legislation to declare the business interests of both you and your spouse.

Not only the law itself, but much of society, is organized to recognize heterosexual partnerships. Feminists have demonstrated that the legal and social institution of the family has operated to oppress women. The family is built on, and reinforces an assumption



that women are not equal to men. It is the major site of violence against women. And the surest way for a woman to ensure that she will grow old in poverty is to marry, have children and then separate from her husband.

Until very recently, the law has refused to recognize the families that lesbians and gay men form. That has meant that the benefits available to heterosexual men and women under the law have not been available for lesbians and gay men. Lesbians and gay men can not marry. They are unable to sponsor their partners through immigration. The laws governing relationships between heterosexual partners (laws about maintenance, child custody, access, and division of property) do not apply to lesbian partnerships or partnerships of gay men. If your lesbian partner died without a will, you have no rights as the surviving partner. Instead the estate of your partner goes to your deceased partner's blood relations. In employment situations, your partner is not always eligible for the employment benefits that a heterosexual partner is eligible for. Basically the law treats you as if you were roommates, "strangers" to each other.

On the other hand lesbians and gay men are able to conduct their relationships largely out of the reach of the legal rules governing heterosexual relationship. The question of whether lesbians and gay men should be seeking to be part of family laws has been a matter of debate, especially among lesbians.

Most of the political and legal work being done has

demanding that lesbians and gay men be included where heterosexual partnerships are recognized. Trade unions have been at the forefront, negotiating provisions in collective agreements which treat same-sex partners the same way that opposite-sex partners are treated. Most of the legal challenges which have been decided or are still making their way through the courts are brought forward by same sex partners.

Canada has moved from the situation where most provinces did not protect lesbians and gay men, to a situation where most provinces have legislated some basic human rights protection. And courts are holding that the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms extend to lesbians and gay men. In a case called *Haig*, the Ontario Court of Appeal decided that human rights legislation which does not include protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is in violation of the Charter of Rights, the constitutional guarantee of equality.

Fewer than twenty cases about lesbian and gay rights have been decided by the courts since the Charter of Rights came into force in 1985. They were brought under human rights statutes, where those statutes had protection from discrimination "on the basis of sexual orientation," or under the Charter of Rights, or both. Most of those cases have concerned the ways in which the law treats lesbians or gay partnerships. Some of them are finished; some are still being appealed; more cases are being brought.

The courts before Mossop have been quite inconsistent in their treatment of these claims. Sometimes, the courts have held that if lesbian or gay partnerships are treated in a discriminatory way in relation to heterosexual partnerships, that constitutes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Other times, courts have taken a much

narrower, and sometimes very homophobic view of what is meant by "protection on the basis of sexual orientation". They have said that such protection is only available to the complainant in respect of discrimination which s/he has suffered as a gay man or a lesbian. They have said that it is not discriminatory on the basis of sexual orientation to privilege heterosexual partnerships or marriages.

So the law remains unsettled. Lesbians and gay men will continue to go to court claiming the right to the benefits and protections of the law available to heterosexual partnerships, and discussions will continue in our communities about whether claiming status as "families" in the law is sometimes, never, or always a good idea.



These are difficult questions for lesbians. It is difficult to fashion a strategy for lesbian relationships. Straight women are oppressed within the institution of marriage in relation to their male partners. But straight women are privileged in relation to lesbians because their partnerships are recognized, reinforced, and rewarded by society, whereas lesbian relationships are not. The children in lesbian relationships have no legal protection in relation to their parents because their parents are not "spouses", the non-biological mother is denied parental custody rights, and escapes parental maintenance obligations.



The meaning which the law ascribes to "family" varies depending on the piece of legislation. There is a tendency for the meaning to be restrictive if it is legislation that costs the government money, and to be more expansive if it does not. It should be possible to argue, law by law, about whether the particular definition of "family" ought to apply to lesbian partnerships. But legislators do not think that way. In Ontario, where the provincial government is considering wholesale changes to eliminate discrimination against same-sex partnerships, the only model being considered is a direct substitution of same sex partnerships wherever heterosexual partnerships are recognized. It is an all or nothing proposition.

On the other hand, Kim Campbell's recently proposed amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act would add "sexual orientation" as a prohibited ground of discrimination, while at the same time limiting protection on the basis of "marital status" to opposite sex partners, only.

The current political reality in Canada is that the general public, if it understands the issues around recognition of lesbian and gay relationships at all, understands the issues entirely by analogy to heterosexual relationships.

*barbara findlay is a white able-bodied lesbian lawyer. She lives in Vancouver with her partner.*

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## Across Canada



# R.E.A.L. Women's appointment to PEI Advisory Council

by Helen Durie

In November 1992, the PEI government appointed a member of R.E.A.L. Women to the nine-member provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The move came as a shock to women's equality organizations in PEI, dampening a new optimism that followed the earlier appointment of a visible feminist from within the Council as the new Chairperson.

The appointment prompted an immediate protest by many women. The Minister responsible for the Status of Women replied by simply noting that the government had made a commitment to R.E.A.L. Women, following their representations to Executive Council. She did not respond to the specific concerns that had been raised.

As far as the Advisory Council is aware, this is the first R.E.A.L. Women appointment to any provincial Advisory Council in the country. The Council Chairperson has expressed her concern about the appointment, and about the anti-abortion and hateful anti-homosexual material that has since been distributed to the Council by its R.E.A.L. Women member.

Despite having the first elected woman Premier in Canada, PEI is a predominantly traditional and conservative society when it comes to the role of women and the family. The Advisory Council, since its formation in 1975, has made little headway in creating a voice in government for the advancement of women.

A number of progressive-minded women have been

centrally involved in the Advisory Council's work over the nearly 20 years since its inception. The Council has publicly supported the goals and work of community-based groups committed to women's equality. However, the government has generally not been an enthusiastic advocate for women's genuine equality, and few Council appointments have been drawn from the



community of women who have demonstrated an active commitment to improving the lives of women.

What are the implications of this R.E.A.L. appointment? What does it mean for PEI, and for the women's equality movement across the country?

R.E.A.L. Women is a very small group on PEI. However, its opposition to social changes essential for women's advancement and equality find widespread support on the Island.

PEI, for example, is alone among provinces and territories in having no local access to abortion. It lost its

only hospital therapeutic abortion committee several years ago, as a result of a concerted and virulent lobby, and a church-organized Island-wide strategy of bussing anti-abortion voters to a public meeting. PEI is also one of the few remaining provinces without anti-discrimination protection in its Human Rights Act for lesbians and gay men.

The government appointment will undoubtedly give new energy and credibility to R.E.A.L. Women, and to the intolerance and hatred that its views rest upon. Government is essentially saying that R.E.A.L. Women provide a legitimate perspective, and must be represented in the advice received from the Advisory Council.

And what kind of input is to be expected from R.E.A.L. Women?

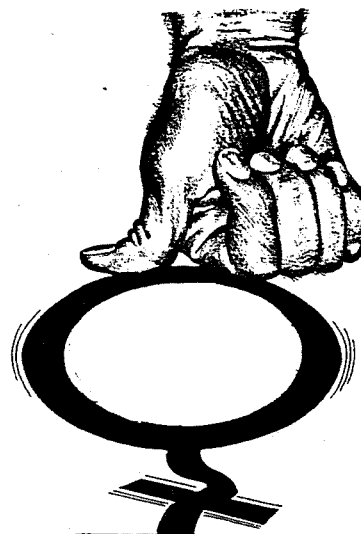
An information meeting organized by R.E.A.L. Women this past International Women's Day provides an indication. At their forum entitled "Women's Pain: the Goddess's Gain", they strongly attacked government funding of several local women's organizations. These included the Transition House Association (which operated the only shelter for abused women and children on PEI), the Rape and Sexual assault Crisis Centre, and services for Adult Survivors. Feminist therapy was denounced as having no room for Christianity and no respect for values. Feminism was equated with killing babies, infanticide, euthanasia, prostitution, and gay couples marrying and adopting children. R.E.A.L. Women's feminist list of targets covered a number of other women's organizations, including the Advisory Council. Those in attendance were urged to write letters to protest government funding to these organizations. Individual women were also named and ridiculed at this public meeting.

The R.E.A.L. appointment is particularly alarming given the government's poor funding record, its present single-

minded focus on the deficit, and R.E.A.L. Women's public campaign against funding of services for women and children.

Transition House Association (THA) and the Rape Crisis Centre are the only two women's services that receive grants towards their operating costs. THA's grant was reduced last year despite an increasing demand on its services. The Rape Crisis Centre's grant has not been increased since 1991, when its grant was cut by 2%.

Services for women have been frequent targets for R.E.A.L. Women criticism over the years. The difference now is that the R.E.A.L. Women crusade against them has been endorsed by the government. Even greater effort will be required by those who are already giving so much, to simply maintain the present inadequate level of services.



Additional time and emotional energy will also be required to hold off further advanced by R.E.A.L. Women, who are hoping to eventually claim more seats on the nine-member Council.

Some argue that the voices of all women should be represented on the Council. However, as Lyle Brehaut, Coordinator of the Rape Crisis Centre, points out, the primary role of the Council is to promote the advancement and equality of women. "Concern over this

appointment should not be seen as a situation of feminists versus other women; the real concern is that the purpose of the Council is being undermined."

For Lyle Brehaut and other women who provide the services under attack by R.E.A.L. Women, the appointment leaves them feeling even further devalued by the same government that relies on their services and pays their minimal salaries. In an ironic twist, part of the reason the Rape Crisis Centre has an ever-increasing demand for their services is that the government's mental health system is making increasing referrals to the Rape Crisis Centre.

The R.E.A.L. Women appointment in PEI is likely to have implications for women elsewhere in Canada. Over the years, R.E.A.L. Women has made its presence felt federally and in other provinces. However, its successful lobby for a Council position in PEI may well enable it to more easily gain the ear of other provincial governments. With its small and conservative society, PEI is a natural starting place, but it is unlikely that the R.E.A.L. lobby to obtain membership on the provincial Advisory Council will stop here.

The R.E.A.L. appointment in PEI is part of the backlash to the minimal advancements that women have achieved here. In a broader context, it is a further step for the fundamentalist movement that wishes to keep women in their second-class role in so many parts of the world.

But in PEI as elsewhere, support for women's genuine equality also continues to grow as more and more women and men question the social values that ignore the reality of people's lives.

*Helen Durie has been active in the feminist community in PEI for several years. She is a researcher and writer on issues of concern to women, primarily in the area of sexual violence.*

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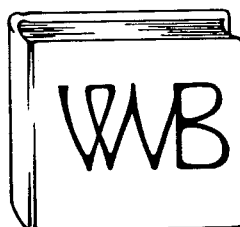
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# Hatred as law: the Alberta Tory government strategy

by Nancy J. Miller

## Across Canada



Racism, sexism and homophobia are being promoted by the Alberta Conservative government in their attempt to maintain power. It appears the Conservative strategy is intended to lure disillusioned, and particularly rural voters back on its side. It is also helping divert attention from the serious economic problems created by the Provincial Tories over the last 21 years.

The strategy began surfacing immediately following the Provincial Tory leadership race. Former Calgary Mayor Ralph Klein won the leadership after ultra-conservative MLAs joined forces to ensure his victory over Health Minister Nancy Betkowski. Klein repaid those who supported him by appointing an extreme right-wing cabinet with almost no representation from urban areas.

The brightest and most experienced Tory MLAs were relegated to the back benches while the inexperienced extreme right-wingers were moved into power positions. Calgary Glenmore MLA Dianne Mirosh was given sixteen areas of responsibility including Women's Issues, Human Rights, and Citizenship and Heritage (formerly Multiculturalism). Not only did she have too many areas of responsibility but she soon demonstrated how ignorant she was of the issues.

When the Alberta Human Rights Commission announced on December 7th that they would now investigate complaints of discrimination based on sexual orientation, the ultra-right snapped into action. Mirosh claimed gays and lesbians have "more rights than anyone else" and that the Human Rights Commission has been manipulated by well-funded, huge, powerful lobby groups.

If she had read the Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act she would have noticed that sexual orientation is not

included. Alberta, NWT and Newfoundland are the only provinces that do not offer legislated protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Her comments initiated a flurry of homophobic reflections by other Conservative MLAs, right-wing groups and fundamentalist churches.

Lacombe MLA, Ron Moore, said gays and lesbians shouldn't be protected because homosexuality is a lifestyle choice. "Whether it's on drugs or whether you are a rapist or whether you are a homosexual is a choice of lifestyle. The next group we're going to have is the rapists..." asking for protection from discrimination, Moore said. Alberta's equivalent of REAL Women, the Alberta Federation of Women United for Families, also expressed strong support for Mirosh's position.

Soon the fate of the Alberta Human Rights Commission came into question. On January 11th, Mirosh said she was considering scrapping the Commission as a cost-cutting measure. The Commission had been operating without a chairperson for nine months even though the previous Minister had advertised and received over 140 applications for the position and three applicants had been short-listed.

Mirosh also claimed that the Individual Rights Protection Act may be unnecessary since the Charter of Rights and Freedoms already guarantees equality for all Canadians. She ordered Commission staff to stop investigating complaints based on sexual orientation and referred the matter to the Justice Department to review the legality of the Commission to make the decision to take complaints.

Then on January 14th, Deputy Premier Ken Kowalski said the government should stop funding institutions that present "God Awful" lesbian exhibitions. The Kiss and Tell

collective from Vancouver had recently appeared at the government-funded Banff School of Fine Arts. The arts community reacted swiftly in condemning this potential censorship policy but the Conservatives weren't finished yet.

At a convention a few days later Agriculture Minister, Ernie Isley told a joke that condoned violence against women and shocked even Conservative women. It concerned a farmer who shoots his horse after it stumbles three times. When the farmer's "mail order bride" starts admonishing him, the farmer turns to her and says "That's once."



Ann Twiddle, acting vice-chair of the government appointed Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues said the joke "portrays women as chattel." Mirosh, however, said "I wouldn't take it personally and most women wouldn't."

Next on the Tory hit list ... The Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues. They have been without a chairperson since June 1992 and there are serious concerns that numerous openings on the Council will be filled with cabinet-approved, anti-feminist women. It is also rumoured that Mirosh, who claims "there are no women's issues," wants the Council abolished as a cost-saving measure.

Meanwhile, gay and lesbian groups initiated rallies in Calgary and Edmonton in support of the Human Rights Commission. Feminist, anti-racist, Aboriginal, religious, differently-abled and arts groups all gathered to protest the Tories' recent hatred-promoting statements and applaud the Human Rights Commission for pro-actively supporting gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

Although Mirosh claimed to be receiving overwhelming support for her position, she finally announced the appointment of Jack O'Neil as

the new chair of the Human Rights Commission. O'Neil, a long time Tory bureaucrat, was not one of the original applicants for the position. He was instructed to review the Individual Rights Protection Act and the cost-effectiveness of the Commission. He said "I think the review will generate much needed discussion about human rights and how best to protect them." Unfortunately, the gay and lesbian community were still left without rights to protect.

Mirosh then went on to insult women when she stated that Albertans **don't** want pay equity. This came just weeks after the University of Alberta Population Research Department released poll results showing over 89% of Albertans support pay equity.

It was becoming apparent that Mirosh was being supported, and possibly briefed on issues, by the anti-feminist Alberta Federation of Women United for Families. Mirosh even went as far as mailing out ultra-conservative "Focus on the Family" literature to a member of a feminist group who had written her a complaint letter.

But Dianne Mirosh had not finished with statements and actions designed to appeal to the "red-necks" of Alberta. Immigrants became the next target for her bigotry. In early April, she said Alberta should demand the right to pick its own immigrants so it could exclude non-English speaking people from settling here. She also claimed that elderly immigrants were being abandoned by their families and Alberta tax-payers were then burdened with the financial responsibility for them.

Again, another outcry arose from the progressive community and cheers of support from the right-wing. Finally, Premier Ralph Klein acknowledged that Mirosh had gone too far and he ordered her to apologize. Former Mayor Klein, well remembered for his

"Eastern creeps and bums" comment of the 80's, appeared worried her comments would decrease his popularity in immigrant communities. Mirosh apologized and then seemed to retract the apology the next day.

Examples of other Conservative comments and actions promoting racism, homophobia and sexism are endless these days. The Conservatives are using bigotry and hatred as a political campaign strategy and more Albertans than we would like to admit are agreeing with them. The Tories need the support of the rural vote to maintain power because it is likely that most city ridings will go to New Democrats and Liberals.

The immediate effects of this strategy are being felt by many minority groups. Gay and lesbian activists are receiving death threats, a gasoline-soaked 12 foot cross appeared on the front lawn of a rural lesbian's home, anti-semitism and racism are increasing and feminists are feeling the effects of the backlash now more than ever. Every bigot in the province now feels justified in their actions and words.

Equality-seeking Albertans and those working for change are angry, frightened, ashamed and discouraged. With a Provincial election expected early this June, activists are desperately hoping the Tories will be unseated. However, it won't be until after all the votes are counted that they'll be able to plan future strategies for what gays and lesbians call "The Colorado of Canada." Right now all attention needs to be focused on encouraging every single disenfranchised voter to get out and vote for anyone but the Tories.

Nancy Miller is the Calgary Project Co-ordinator for the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee and a member of the Calgary Lesbian and Gay Political Action Guild.



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# Atlantic Canadian women await decision on choice

by Melynda Jaratt

## Across Canada



The future of abortion services across Canada hangs in the balance as the Supreme Court of Canada debates Nova Scotia's challenge to the legality of Dr. Henry Morgentaler's private clinic in Halifax.

The case is especially significant for women in Atlantic Canada, for ultimately the Supreme Court will decide whether provinces can further restrict access to abortions in a region where they are already difficult to obtain.

"New Brunswick women have a lot to fear...because they will be affected first", says Kit Holmwood, President of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League.

Holmwood, who lives in Saint John, New Brunswick, says that women in the province and region already face a multitude of obstacles in their attempts to obtain a legal abortion paid for by Medicare.

A 1989 study commissioned by CARAL found that abortion services for women in the region were minimal at best. The study called **Telling Our Secrets**, revealed that women throughout the region are being denied information and access to abortion services.

"Doctors won't tell you where to go to have an abortion, they won't refer you to doctors who might perform the abortion, and in their attempts to delay women from obtaining an abortion they effectively force women into pregnancy," Holmwood explained.

Figures from the Halifax clinic support the contention that the services provided by Dr. Morgentaler's clinic are needed in the region. In 1991 and 1992 respectively, women from New Brunswick comprised 26.4% (155) and 31% (159) of the total abortions performed at the Halifax clinic, followed closely by women from Nova Scotia and PEI.

Although figures for abortions performed on Atlantic Canadian women in Montreal,

Toronto, and the U.S. are unavailable, one can extrapolate from the Halifax clinic to say they are significant.

Holmwood adds that a clinic which offers abortion counselling and referral services is particularly needed in New Brunswick, especially now that the Provincial Planned Parenthood organization is closed due to provincial government cut-backs.

She points to the grisley discovery of a dead newborn in a garbage can outside of Saint John on March 19, and the arrest of a teenager in the infant's death as an example of the lack of counselling services in the region.

In the aftermath of the infant's death, school counsellors and administrators were left scrambling to meet reporter's questions about the inadequacy of counselling services in the city and province. One counsellor said services offered for pregnant teenagers in the area are "adequate" - Holmwood and many others do not agree.

"People ask me if there had been a well advertised clinic in the area would that baby have died?", Holmwood says. "I don't think so. Even if she chose not to have an abortion, at the very least, that teen-ager would have received non-judgemental counselling services and would have been informed of what her choices were. That young girl obviously didn't know where to go or to look for information," she concluded.

Holmwood says that New Brunswick women and teenagers are being denied basic information on birth control and sex education. While school counsellors are expected to work with fewer and fewer resources, the government cuts organizations like Planned Parenthood. At the same time, it vows to fight the establishment of a private clinic by Dr. Henry Morgentaler.

If this government wants to reduce the number of abortions, it better put its

money into family planning centres and sex education courses," advises Holmwood.

"Study after study has proven that a well-advertised family planning centre which offers birth control information will reduce the number of abortions and teenage pregnancies," Holmwood says. She cites an Ontario study which revealed that every dollar put into family planning results in a 10 dollar saving in social services down the road.



Holmwood refers to another Ontario study which found that teenage pregnancies were reduced by one-quarter and abortion rates decreased by 23% in areas where well-advertised birth control information services were established.

Nevertheless, Holmwood and many others view the intransigence of the province of New Brunswick on the subject as simply another example of how the government has misled the people.

"At least in PEI, the government has given clear instructions that no hospital will perform abortions," Holmwood explained. "Island women know that they have no choice but to go out of the province," she says.

In New Brunswick however, there is a prevailing myth that abortion is available on demand and that simply is "not true", Ms Holmwood explains.

In New Brunswick, only abortions approved of by two doctors and performed by a gynaecologist in an approved hospital are paid for by the province.

Unfortunately, only four hospitals in the entire province will perform the procedure and they are all located in the southern part of the province: in Fredericton; Moncton; Saint John and Oromocto.

Although the government claims that northern women

can access abortion services in any one of these four hospitals, in practice these women and others are denied the service.

That is because in Saint John for example, abortions are simply not being performed. "Although the Saint John Hospital Board's policy allows abortions to be performed, no doctor is willing to do them. This means that in Saint John, access is lost," Holmwood stated.

"And in Oromocto," she continued, "where hospital policy also allows abortions, it is difficult, if not impossible to find a doctor who will provide the service" says Holmwood, abortions are provided very discreetly and on a small scale in Oromocto. "Basically, you have to know the doctor," she explained.

Of the two remaining hospitals that provide the service for New Brunswick women, limited O.R. times, especially in Fredericton, often forces women to opt for private clinics in Halifax, Montreal or the United States.

"So, in actual fact, women do have to leave New Brunswick and pay for abortions out of their own pockets," Holmwood explained. At the Halifax Clinic, the fee amounts to \$400, not including travel or accommodation, lost income, day care etc. This means that some New Brunswick women are paying as much as \$1000 for an abortion.

### Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia, the province fully covers abortions performed in hospitals, but will only pay one part of the cost, ie. the doctors fee (\$100), for a clinic abortion. Nova Scotian women must pay the remaining fee of \$300.

The province of Nova Scotia has gone to the Supreme Court of Canada to challenge the legality of Dr. Morgentaler's clinic in Halifax, and activists expect a decision before the summer. The province of New Brunswick and R.E.A.L. Women have received intervenor's status in the case.

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# NAC appoints new president

After three years, Judy Rebick will step down as the President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) at its Annual General Meeting in June. Sunera Thobani, a NAC Executive Member from Vancouver will be acclaimed the new NAC President at the AGM.

Thobani was born in Tanzania and came to Canada as a doctoral student in sociology in 1989. She has been on the NAC Executive for two years, and has been co-chair of both the Violence Committee and the New Reproductive Technologies Committee at NAC. She is also a member of the NAC Women of Colour Caucus. She has been involved in a number of women's organizations in Vancouver including the Vancouver Status of Women, and she is a founding member of SAWAN - South Asian Women's Action Network.

Sunera Thobani is a bright and capable candidate for the Presidency of NAC. She has strong support from Executive members and from women's groups in Vancouver.

There have been some concerns raised regarding the process used to select the new President. Questions about why there was only one candidate, and questions about whether acclaiming a President months before the AGM is good democratic politics.

Judy Rebick claims that the process is consistent with the NAC constitution - nomination forms and information were circulated to all member groups at the beginning of March, and nominations were closed on April 19th. At this time the only candidate for the position of president was Ms. Thobani.

Another Executive member indicated that she might run but in the end she did not. Only a few days after the nomination deadline it was announced that Sunera Thobani would be acclaimed the new President of NAC at the AGM in June.

This is not the first time NAC has acclaimed a President. NAC Vice-President Shelagh Day said that most Presidents emerge from the Executive, where they get a chance to get a feel for the job. "It is a very demanding job and requires a lot of sacrifices" Ms. Day explained. "A lot of women are not in a position to be able to give up everything else". The job involves demanding work hours, extensive travel and possible relocation.

Both women are very supportive of Ms. Thobani. "We were looking for someone who

would be capable of continuing the direction that NAC has taken over the years... a good speaker and someone who would be good with the media. We were looking for a woman who would continue the move toward diversity and representation, and that would continue to make NAC more accountable to its member groups" Ms. Rebick explained.

Most of the controversy

immigrant woman. She is a single mother with a small child. She understands what it means to be a disadvantaged woman. I think this is very positive for the women's community in Canada, and it is very positive for the country as a whole. She is a very bright woman."

Ms. Rebick points out that Sunera Thobani is very different from her, although "equally strong". She feels that



president-elect Sunera Thobani

surrounding Ms. Thobani's status as an immigrant woman seems to have been stirred up by the media and by individuals who are not members of NAC. Ontario Conservative M.P. John MacDougall stood up in the House of Commons and accused Thobani of being an "illegal immigrant" - a n accusation that was later deemed to be false by immigration officials. MacDougall is quoted as saying that he doesn't "think it's fair to Canadians that we're being represented by someone who is not a Canadian citizen". Thobani feels that these attacks are prompted by racism. She points out that her responsibility is to represent the membership of NAC, and it is the women who make up the membership who have the power to choose their President. She says that she has had a lot of support from the NAC membership.

Judy Rebick speaks very highly of Ms. Thobani. "I have known Sunera for three years now and I have been incredibly impressed by her leadership qualities. I have noticed a major change in the representativeness of the women's movement in Vancouver over the last three years - I believe that she has led that change. She is very good at bringing people together, and she is very good at debating difference without personalizing the debate."

Rebick also feels that that Ms. Thobani will bring a diversity of experience to her role as President of NAC. "She brings the experience of a Woman of Colour and of an

"this is a good thing". She will bring something new to the organization, and "it will also make clear the collective strength of NAC." Rebick points out that the strength of NAC is the many women across the country that are behind the publications, the political lobbies, and the NAC campaigns. "These are the women that are making things happen".

Judy Rebick has served as President for two terms, the maximum amount of time allowed by the NAC Constitution. Ms. Rebick leaves her position at NAC, known Canada-wide for her outspokenness on a variety of issues, including NAC's controversial "Vote No" position in the 1992 Constitutional Referendum. Rebick views the process of the Referendum as one of her greatest disappointments in her term as President of NAC. "We worked very hard with grass-roots groups across the country and we came up with some really positive and workable solutions...perhaps I was naive but I thought they would listen. They didn't."

In an interview with *The Womanist*, Ms. Rebick also voiced her disappointment with the inability to work out a compromise with the Panel on Violence Against Women. She feels that the situation created an unfortunate and unnecessary division between women, and that this could have been avoided with a little bit of flexibility on the part of the government.

Judy Rebick sees her time at NAC as having been very

by Caitlin McMorran Frost.

successful in a number of areas. She is very proud of the moves that have been made within NAC to make the organization more inclusive and representative at all levels. She feels that there have been significant changes in awareness of the need for change, and that there have also been important and necessary structural changes to include a more diverse group of women at all levels of NAC activity, from local and national committees to representation on the NAC Executive. Some of the growth has been difficult, but Rebick remains outspoken in her fight for equality for all women.

Sunera Thobani says that she has been impressed by NAC's "real commitment to developing an anti-racist politics". She feels that she can help NAC to take that work further. "I feel that groups of women that have been traditionally excluded now hold the possibility of moving the women's group further. Many of the women who have now made great gains stand a much greater risk of being co-opted...of stopping before there is equality for all women in fear of losing what they have gained. It is those who are most discriminated against who keep the struggle alive and keep it moving forward". Ms. Thobani explained in an interview with *The Womanist*. She says that she is excited by the potential and that it is one of the major

## In the movement



reasons she considered the position. "I saw myself bringing change..." she said.

Ms. Thobani has a number of visions for her upcoming term as NAC President. "I would like to see a more collective leadership. NAC is set up in a very hierarchical way. I would like to have the women who are actually doing the work have a voice". She feels that it is a real accomplishment that NAC has a strong national profile and would like to see the same thing on the ground. "I want to see more groups working together in the different communities and regions, and I would like to have even more groups joining NAC." In terms of what she would most like to see in the NAC membership, Sunera Thobani says "I would love to see women's groups learn to claim NAC, instead of NAC claiming women's groups."

Caitlin McMorran Frost is a South African born Vancouverite who is currently working for *The Womanist* in Ottawa.

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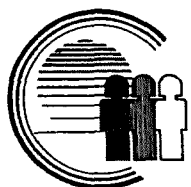
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# It's not just

## The June Callwood phenomenon

In the March issue of *Toronto Life* magazine, an article by Elaine Dewar entitled "Wrongful Dismissal" had as its intent, to explain why June Callwood had left Nellie's, a women's shelter in Toronto.

The story put forward a wide range of theories and assumptions which concluded that "angry anti-racists drove June Callwood from Nellie's...because she couldn't share her white skinned privilege."

Elaine Dewar attempts to link June Callwood's resignation to a takeover by black women of not only Nellie's but other services and political positions in Toronto.

As part of her article Ms. Dewar names many individuals and organizations including the Coalition of Women of Colour Working in Women's and Community Services, the Communist Party, the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Clarissa Chandler (a U.S. facilitator), and Carolann Wright, an employee of Women's Help in Women's Hands and a member of the Coalition.

The article focuses at some length on Carolann, her personal and professional life, and anybody she has been associated with throughout her life. Sweeping assumptions and unsubstantiated allegations are made throughout the article.

Elaine Dewar's article is consistent with the media's response to the Nellie's story, which has been to feel sympathy for June Callwood and outrage at those ungrateful black women who challenged her. As Peter Gzowski, host of *CBC's Morningside*, put it, he felt women's groups should be working on issues such as breast cancer, which he sees as "an issue that presumably would embrace all women in the way that perhaps the issue of racism would not."

The publishers of *The Womanist* do not believe that the mainstream media has dealt fairly with the story at Nellie's.

The question of why a group of women - some white, some women of color - could not agree on what problems they were having and how to resolve them remains to be answered. On one point, we do agree with Elaine Dewar: it does relate to power, politics and money. It relates to the power to be able to access the media and tell your story. Ask yourself, whose story have you heard?

June Callwood has had a forum in the *Toronto Star*, *Saturday Night*, *Toronto Life*, *CBC Morningside* and many other media. Have you heard from the 20 women that Elaine Dewar has named in the article. Why not?

It is about an emerging politic - the politics of gratitude where women are expected to be eternally thankful to women who came before and manifest that through not questioning, not challenging, not inviting change in these women and society. The politics of gratitude is about power - about who gets to define the world, decide what needs to change and when.

The response to a staff member's request at the Board of Nellie's to discuss race, procedures and values was met by June Callwood as, "Are you the same Joan Johnson all these women helped?" Joan responded by saying, in effect, "you want me on my knees forever."

What was June Callwood expecting when they helped Joan Johnson? Blind loyalty from a Joan Johnson that they constructed as the black immigrant woman victim that they helped?

Why was the discussion of race and values construed as "white women being pushed out of the movement"? Don't white women, even the ones that helped start some of our organization's need to change?

Finally, this issue is about money and about who do we trust to have control over the money in women's organizations.

Why is it that, when Women of Colour begin to join a Board in significant number, maybe even as the majority, suddenly there are questions about financial management? Why are Women of Colour assumed to be less competent, less skilled? Why is it that their perspective is "skewing" the financial priorities of the organization while white women's perspective on money is "neutral"? Are critics like Elaine Dewar trying to suggest that all the previous boards of white women didn't have their own agenda? And that it wasn't influenced by race?

We at *The Womanist* believe there is much more to be said on this question. The article that follows is an important contribution from someone who have been involved in it for many years. We plan to continue the discussion in future issues.

# about burning crosses

I received a call from a white woman who said she had just read the *Toronto Life* article and could I explain to her "Why I just had to get involved with the issues at Nellie's?" This question almost seemed to be a test of my patience around "Nellie-gate". I was being asked to explain an article that I had refused to do an interview for. I reminded the woman of just that, and suggested she phone Elaine Dewar, who "was responsible for the article. However I was happy to talk about racism in the women's movement and its impact on Black women and Women of Colour." She wasn't interested in that subject.

Her second question, "didn't I feel I owed women like June Callwood some loyalty (in other words why wasn't I grateful), because it was June Callwood and women like her that marched the halls of Parliament in the name of women's equality?" I was struck by the anger in her statement. She actually believed that I, a seventh generation African Canadian could owe anything to anyone other than the Africans that came before me. In particular my African mothers.

I pointed out to her that during the time that June Callwood and those like her were marching the halls of Parliament, my mother and grandmother were ensuring my very survival, by cleaning the homes and raising the children of those who were marching the halls. Our very survival in Canada depended on their ability to fight racism as a community of African people.

The comment "shouldn't I be grateful" was symptomatic of what is at the heart of the Nellie's issue. It's at the heart of issues in many organizations, either mainstream or community based - the politics of gratefulness. It is why people like June



Carolann Wright

Callwood can never be challenged without a hue and cry. Their good works are like an immunization against criticism or challenge on their racism. It is a dangerous precedent when we immediately exonerate people based on their good works of the past, and the good works they may do in the future, and not on how they are conducting themselves in the everyday interactions with Black people and People of Colour.

What is even more racist is that the white media has decided, as in the case of Nellie's, when we "have gone too far" as Black people. They

decided to redefine racist so that it is more palatable for Canadians. When Black people speak of racism in Canada, when we demonstrate, when we rally, when we protest, we are coming from the immediate, everyday realities of our lives.

Racism is talked about by whites in Canada as an American phenomena, something that they as white liberals could never be guilty of; Canadians are not as crude as Americans, who in the sixties hosed down people in the street, set dogs on demonstrators and lynched Black men and raped Black

by Carolann Wright

women. Canadians don't do that, therefore we aren't racist.

As a white person, having power means that you have the ability to define the very society you live in and to have it reflect your morals and values. Legislated slavery and segregation that have never made it into the Canadian history books or the school curriculum. White people have the power to deny. An example of this is when whites doing articles on racism, start off with their own definition of racism - one that makes them comfortable, and negates the every day realities of Black women and Women of Colour.

The news coverage of Nellie's only further points out this ability to rewrite and rename reality. It seems a bit ironic that the very person who was named in Nellie-gate as being inappropriate as a board member because of racist actions and statements - June Callwood, has now used her media power to exploit the pain of Black women and Women of Colour.

No truer horror is experienced than the one of meeting the face of the halo-laden victim on the cover of magazines looking beleaguered and worn out from the daily task of fighting off Women of Colour. We are still expected to explain ourselves regarding this issue, not because of the issue of racism but because of who was accused, which brings us to a very dangerous place in the fight against inequity.

What has received no coverage at all is the fact that Women of Colour have been emotional wrecks as a result of this issue; it has prevented the employment of some, and for those who remain employed in main stream organizations, it has made them almost apologetic about bringing forth issues of racism. Many have been accused of making this a "Nellie's Issue": if they do raise the issue of racism. It is important to note that the only reason that Nellie's received the coverage that it did was

## In the movement

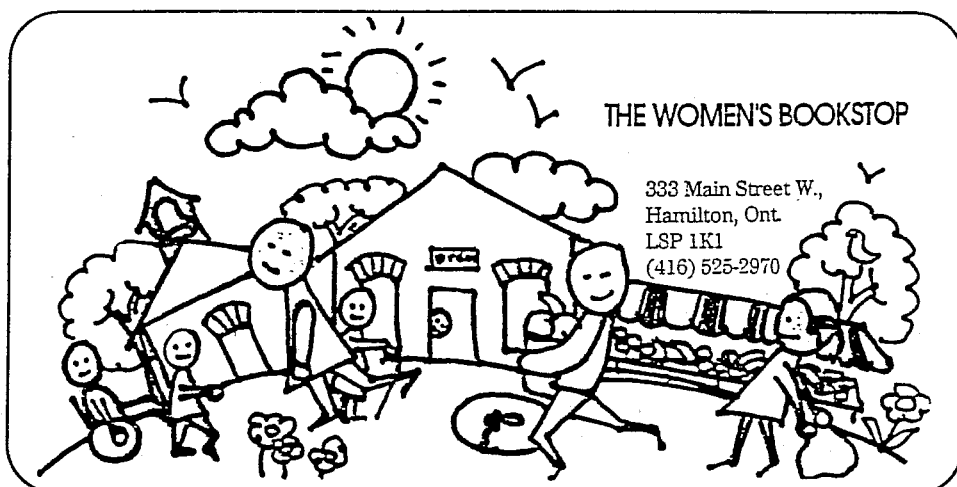


because of June Callwood's connection with the media and her need to exonerate herself before the news of her resignation reached the public. These issues are being grappled organizations all over the country without the sensational media coverage.

We have choices. We can have two separate definitions of racism; one that makes whites feel comfortable in Canadian society today (eg. racism is anything done in the extreme in the United States) or one that accurately reflects the reality of Women of Colour in this country, or, we can work toward a common definition. The choice is clearly yours.

I cannot allow white society to tell me how to feel my experiences and how to direct them. A continuation of this would only betray my ancestors and negate my mother's struggle and how she taught me to thrive. It would also keep the needed change from happening. My intention is to be consistent in the struggle in support of Black women and Women of Colour and to continue to challenge and make change whenever and wherever necessary.

Carolann Wright is a seventh generation African Canadian, born in Beechville, Nova Scotia. She has worked in Toronto for the past thirteen years in various areas of social advocacy. She is presently a Community Health Outreach Worker for Women's Health in Women's Hands - a community health centre for women.



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# Problems in Paradise:

I am a practicing feminist therapist who at once values and is critical of feminist therapy. When I think of feminist therapy, I am aware of both good intentions and good practice on the one hand and profound shortcomings on the other.

The understanding and intentions that gave birth to feminist therapy were political. Women were being gobbled up by a "mental health" system that pathologizes the problems that women have as a result of living in an oppressive society. Feminist therapists said: No. These women are not depressed because they have a chemical imbalance, they are depressed because society is sexist. Some even said: No. Maria is not angry because she has "borderline personality disorder". Maria is angry because there is something wrong with how society treats her as a woman, as a disabled woman, as a woman of colour. The creation of feminist therapy represented an important political thrust. Many women who might otherwise have been pathologized and electroshocked were understood, validated, and helped to better resist.

This value notwithstanding, there are some real problems with feminist therapy and feminist therapists. To be clear here, when I talk about feminist therapists, I am referring to about 10% of the practitioners who presently "call" themselves feminist therapists. Feminist therapy has become a commodity. The best way to get referrals in Toronto is to get registered with Women's Counselling Referral and Education Centre, and the easiest way to get registered with them is to call yourself a feminist. So that's what therapists "on the make" do. A lot of therapists use the term "feminist" for purposes of convenience. I am not referring to them. I am referring to the other 10% - to the ones who are indeed practicing feminist therapy as a therapy modality which assumes that women's problems in living are

created and exacerbated by systemic oppressions like sexism, racism and classism; and I am suggesting that here too there are problems.

There has been a gradual undermining of the women's movement. Before feminist therapy, we had far more consciousness-raising groups. Women were talking to each other, making sense of their lives in the sexist, racist, and classist society and then acting together politically to

women. In this regard, feminist therapy sends out the same sort of message as traditional therapy does: "Don't burden your friends with your problems. I'm paid to talk to you. Come talk to me." The message is a poor one. There is something profoundly wrong with bringing our problems once a week to a professional stranger and not talking to our friends at all. As a society, as a community of women, we need to be making time for

route that they could conceivably choose for themselves. Let's begin getting a whole lot clearer about this.

At the same time, let us be clear about the tendency that therapy has to sabotage political change and become more vigilant. We think that when we help people express their frustration, this in itself is inherently empowering. What happens, however, is far more complex. I am reminded here of Diana Ralph's book *Work and Madness*. Diana traces how the rise of programs to help employees with their emotional problems coincided with the waning of union activity in North America. Was this relationship simply accidental? No. There is a causal relationship. With the help of therapists, employees got in touch with their feelings. They expressed their disturbances. They "vented" and ended up feeling better. The upshot is, they stopped demanding higher wages. They stopped demanding better working conditions. Business paid for these programs precisely because they served the interests of business and disempowered workers.

What am I saying? I am saying that therapy exerts a very formidable if sometimes subtle pull in a depoliticizing direction. We need to be very honest about that pull if we are to counter it.

Therapy exerts this pull, whether there are therapists around or not, for we have all been affected by "therapy-think". Even when we are trying most to be political, there are many ways and many

levels in which "therapy-think" undermines us. As feminists, as activists, we have been affected. We keep turning political issues into individual problems, communication problems, emotional problems.

A recent example may be found in Lenora Fulani's book *The Psychopathology of Everyday Racism and Sexism*. Fulani strongly opposes racism. Affected by "therapy-think" however, she ends up "identifying" racism as a mental illness - a psychopathology. Racism is not a mental illness. Racism does not come from a chemical imbalance. Racism is a



Luca Verrelli

effect changes. The more we saw of feminist therapy, the less we saw of consciousness raising. In the process of politicizing professional help, we "professionalized" feminism and thereby isolated women from each other. Women need to start talking to feminist therapists somewhat less and to each other somewhat more. As women, and especially as feminists, we need to turn to each other. As feminist therapists, it is critical that we encourage the feminist movement.

When I say this, I mean a group political level and consciousness-raising groups. I also mean encouraging individual friendships between

each other. We need to be valuing each other. We need to be turning to each other. It is important, correspondingly, that feminist therapists encourage such relationships and discourage the overvaluing of therapy. We need to be saying, "No, it's not enough to talk to me. I'm just a person you see for one hour a week. I'm really unimportant, compared to your central relationships."

Feminist therapy, like all therapy, has overstated the importance of therapy. Curiously, there is an assumption floating around - an assumption created by professionals that serves the interests of professionals - that people really do "need" therapy. Now people need food. We all know that. Moreover, people need air. People need understanding. People need love. But people do not need therapy. Therapy is a professional invention - not a basic human need. It is one route among many for learning and growing. It is hardly a necessary route. For some, it is a good route. For some, it may be the worst



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structural oppression and we need to address it as such. The same applies to sexism.

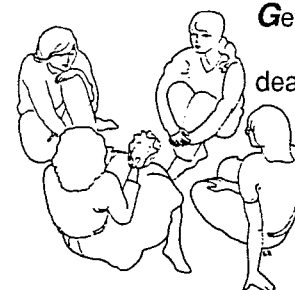
There are other ways in which the language of therapy has crept into our political work to the detriment of that work. For example: At a feminist gathering, a white woman says something about "the dark side of human nature". Clearly, the allusion is racist. A Black woman points out that the remark is racist. The white woman says, "Oh, but I didn't intend it to be racist. That wasn't my intention." The white

## Quest

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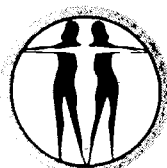
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# Feminist Therapy and the women's movement(s)

by Bonnie Burstow

woman is using "therapy-think" here. Therapy tells us that you are only responsible for your intended meaning. So if your intention is okay, nothing wrong has happened. Therapy tells us: if something "sounds" offensive, check to find out what the person's intention was. If their intention was okay, there is no issue. What's wrong with this? The Black woman has a perfectly valid criticism regardless of what the white woman's intentions were. "Not intending to be racist" does not make the remark less racist.

Another example: A Jewish woman hears something anti-Semitic and objects. In the process, she raises her voice and gets angry. The non-Jew who made the anti-Semitic remark responds, "I don't disagree with anything you said, but the way you said it is totally unacceptable." The way the Jewish woman voiced her feedback now becomes THE ISSUE. We all know where we got this way of thinking and dealing. We got this crap from therapy - from feminist as well as humanist therapists. It diverts the attention away from real oppression and makes the victim look like the violator. The overemphasis on process hides oppression and distracts us from the issues we need to be addressing.

A parallel problem: Just as therapy and therapy-think individualizes problems and camouflages oppression, it reinforces ethnocentrism and classism. How so? Because therapy as it is practiced and taught is fundamentally ethnocentric and classist.

Whether that therapy is called feminist or not, the central values that are assumed and promoted are the values of the middle class Anglo-Saxon women and in some cases, middle class Anglo-Saxon men.

With the exception of the literature on cross-cultural counselling, all the models

This orientation such as this is politically problematic regardless of the culture. It directly clashes, moreover, with community-oriented cultures such as Native and South East Asian. Covertly, it teaches us that the dominant mode of operating is the right way. It influences everyone to



suggest that it is better to be direct than indirect. Why? Because Anglo-Saxons are direct and most therapists are Anglo-Saxons. Ask someone from a Native culture, however, and she will tell you that being direct is intrusive. The norm in other words, directly clashes with Native values.

Middle class Anglo-Saxons are word oriented; so therapy tends to emphasize verbal articulation. Anglo-Saxon culture is individualistic so therapy teaches people to be individualistic. It emphasizes what you personally, what you individually want, need, do. Not you as part of a community.

operate this way, calling that influence "therapeutic help" and its effects "therapeutic progress".

These are not mild problems, but serious problems. Under "therapeutic influence" many women are "getting in touch with their feelings" and forgoing political action. Many women have become tragically isolated from

each other. Many women have lost touch with their friends and become dependent on a professional stranger. Many women are being taught individualistic, classist, and ethnocentric ways of being. They are being taught to "accept themselves", sure, but what they "accept" in themselves may not necessarily be themselves at all but the image of their oppressor. Operating out of "therapy think" many women are obscuring issues, are camouflaging their own oppressiveness. Sadly, many women are placing their faith in an individualistic therapeutically constructed self.

As a community it is important that we stop swallowing therapy-think and become clearer, stronger, and more radical. As feminist therapists, we need to muster the courage to acknowledge our mistakes, rethink what we are about, and recreate feminist therapy. I have seen changes on these fronts. I would like to see a whole lot more.



In the movement



Bonnie Burstow is the author of *Radical Feminist Therapy* (Sage: Newbury Park, 1992). She is a radical feminist therapist, an antipsychiatry activist, a prison abolitionist, and a Jew who is active in anti-racist work. She has taught social work at Carleton University and the University of Manitoba.



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## In the movement



When I introduce myself as a feminist mother-at-home, other at-home mothers sit rather quietly and wait until I move onto a less "political" subject. The awkwardness is no less evident, however, when I am in a room of feminists, because feminists are usually quite clear as to who they are, what feminism is, and what it is not. I don't fit, somehow, their image of the 1990s feminist. The silence in these situations is no less uncomfortable as they wait for an explanation as to how I can describe myself as both a feminist and as a committed at-home mother.

Often I begin by quipping that I am a child-centred feminist, which only draws quizzical looks. But at the very least, I try to reassure them that I don't want to turn the clock back and lose the gains that feminists have fought so hard for these past years, that I am not a mole for R.E.A.L. women, and I don't believe in the biological imperative of reproduction and nurturing ... in other words, that they have nothing to fear.

Let me place this in a specific context. In October 1992, I attended a National Child Care Conference in Ottawa (hosted by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association) as a delegate for the feminist support group for at-home mothers called Mothers Are Women (MAW).

For the past year, MAW had been developing a Child Care Policy which supports recommendations for an accessible, publicly supported,

national system of daycare as part of a comprehensive child care policy. MAW seeks to have child care recognized for its labour value in all settings and maintains that any child care policy must accept staying at home as a legitimate child care choice within the proposed system, and not as separate from it. I went to the Conference to advocate this position and, essentially, to begin a dialogue with daycare advocates towards broadening the child care debate to validate and include the child care work of at-home women in their strategy for national policy.

Aptly capturing the spirit of the Conference, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care was selling a sweatshirt emblazoned with the phrase - "The Hand That Rocks The Cradle, Needs To Rock The Boat." The irony is that it is not my hand, as an at-home mother, that the OCBCC saw on either the cradle, or the boat. What has happened is that the struggle for adequate alternate child day care for 'working' mothers has redefined child care.

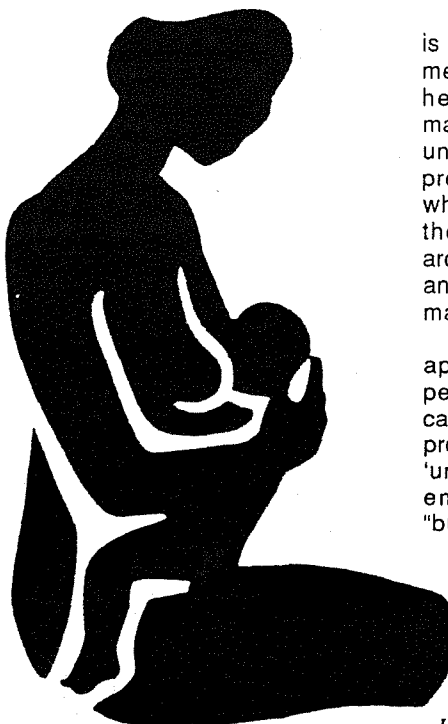
Child care is now understood in terms of child care services and mothers are merely users of these services. Yes, I am a mother caring for her own children, but I am not recognized as a child care provider. Because of this, while my participation and comments at the conference were appreciated, it was evident that many were not convinced that I was raising concerns appropriate to the need for a national child care policy. This is the real awkwardness, the silent pause on the part of the mainstream women's movement which waits for explanation.

So where does the feminist at-home mother fit, why is she interested in the issue of child care, and what does she want, anyway?

The contemporary mother is faced with considerable ambiguity about her role. She is left to manage the between her role as a caregiver and as, either a current or potential,

participant in the labour force. In the past two decades, we have seen increased numbers of women with children, especially young children, enter the workforce. These statistics indicate a fundamental reality in our society and it is imperative that the government meet the child care needs of these.

While reinforcing the urgent need for adequate, accessible and affordable daycare, these same statistics have skewed our understanding of child care. They have been used,



La Satellite

for example, to divide women into 'working' women and 'non-working' women. They have also misled analysts to conclude that all women need and want the same thing - to be in the paid labour force on a fulltime basis and have their children in licensed group care. The question of support for other caregiving options, specifically at-home parental care, is not on the agenda.

The argument is made that given adequate child care services, women will have won a major battle in the struggle for equality. It is certainly true that the lack of affordable child care prevents many women, especially those who are poor or are single parents, from participating in the labour market; and unquestionably increased access to child day care services will provide women with increased access to the labour force. There are, however, serious concerns that should be raised by feminists about defining equality through labour force participation alone.

The focus on alternate child care as a prerequisite to equality ignores other barriers

of discrimination. Judith Martin, founding chairperson of the Canadian Day Care Advocacy Association, has pointed out that women are misled by the assumption that they can compete on equal terms in the still predominantly male working world once they have daycare. Alternate child care does little to change the patriarchally defined workplace wherein women with children are forced to accept the burden of unrealistic expectations placed upon them in their dual roles as mothers and employees.

The present labour market is set up primarily by and for men. Little incentive exists to help women achieve or maintain a balance of paid and unpaid work. Beginning with pregnancy itself, it is women who are forced to structure their family responsibilities around their paid employment and to accommodate the labour market.

If women's equality is approached only from the perspective of alternate child care services, which works to provide the labour market with 'unencumbered' employees, employers will conduct "business as usual" and the

labour market will continue to be structured to accommodate men.

Feminists must demand a more comprehensive approach to the reality of their dual roles. Rather than having women adjust themselves and their families to the labour market, let us ask how can the labour market better accommodate women in ways which will acknowledge and support them in their role as caregivers?

At issue should not be a choice between either 'motherwork' and paid employment, or some unmanageable and unsatisfactory compromise between the two. Women's lives must be accepted as a continuum which includes both motherhood (if that be the choice) and paid employment as natural phases in the progression of life.

As the statistics on women in the paid labour force climb, mothers who have made the child care choice of being the primary caregivers of their children are increasingly forgotten or simply dismissed as irrelevant to discussions about child care. More

significant is that they are excluded from policy formulation on child care. Why? Why is the child care work of the mother-at-home rendered invisible?

The work involved in domestic labour - motherwork and housework - has remained largely invisible because it has been hidden in the private sphere of the home, and because men, for the most part, have refused to participate in it. Men have worked in the public sphere where work has 'exchange value'. Work in the private sphere, on the other hand, has only 'use value' and it is neither understood nor valued as 'real' work. While this perspective is expected from the labour market dominated by a patriarchal ethos, it should not be the criteria by which feminists define themselves and their work.

One of the more important questions in the evolution of child day care has been who would do the caring work that was previously done by women-at-home. The answer was, and has been, to pay other women (poorly) to provide alternate child care. In this way, caregiving entered the public sphere and has been given exchange value while the care given at home remains invisible. Now, one of the battles of the day care movement is to ensure that adequate wages and benefits are secured for child day care providers. The paid work of child care will never be properly valued, however, until the domestic labour - especially caregiving - that women have been doing for free in the private sphere is acknowledged and valued as legitimate.

The answer is not to bring all women into the public sphere through their full participation in the labour market. Even if this were done, 'motherwork' would still be invisible because it would remain in the private sphere. Instead, 'motherwork' must be made visible through its integration into the public sphere. This means that mothers-at-home who are the primary caregivers of their children must be seen not just as users, or potential users, of child care services, but be recognized as fully part of the system of caring for children in our society.

In the battle to improve the working conditions, wages, and benefits for child day care providers, the child day care advocates have stressed the importance of

cont'd on page 25

### Stephanie Irwin

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# needs to rock the boat" broaden the childcare debate

by Evelyn E. Drescher

professionalization, arguing that professional credentials ensure high quality child care. Child care 'teachers' and appropriate developmental models are the cornerstones in the development of educative child care programs. What is strikingly absent is an appreciation of the experiences and strengths of mothering, and what is implicit is the message that non-educated, non-professional child care is somehow inadequate.

This emphasis on professionalization comes at some cost to women. That cost is a significant loss of control by, and respect for, mothers and those providing for the daily care of children. These are replaced by

increased control of administrators, bureaucrats, and other men and women who are often removed from the actual caregiving. Quality care arguments which focus on professionalization and thus exclude and divide women rather than facilitate a common effort to work towards mutual help and support, should be questioned. Everyone is concerned with quality care. The challenge is to value caregiving wherever the setting and provide adequate support.

In the upcoming federal election, child care advocates will lobby hard for a commitment to the implementation of a national child care policy in which high-quality child care services are universally accessible and

affordable. Mothers Are Women believes that it is important that we, and other at-home mothers, join our collective voice with theirs. But we also recognize that we must argue our own case for a truly comprehensive child care policy which includes our work.

Individually and collectively, personally and politically, mothers-at-home are finding a collective voice - a voice which must be heard both within and by the women's movement, including the day care movement. Mothers-at-home must be part of the political agenda of the women's movement if indeed all women are to be empowered in their choices as women. The concerns of at-home mothers about child care policy

development cannot be ignored, or such policies, and all women, risk being compromised.

My hand does rock the cradle, and I believe now is the time for me, and other feminist mothers like me, to rock the boat as well.

"In order to change our reality, we need not give up nurturing, caring and taking responsibility for others. But what we must do, within the confines of our caregiving, is take greater control of our own lives. We must begin by making society conform to our needs rather than continually moulding, shaping and accommodating our needs to meet the demands of society." Sherri Torjman, *The Reality Gap: Closing the Gap Between*



Women's Needs and Available Programs and Services (1988)

To order a copy of the *MOTHERS ARE WOMEN Brief - Child Care: A Feminist Perspective* (includes 30 recommendations) please call the MAW-Line (613) 722-7851 or write to P.O. Box 4104, Station E, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B1. The cost of the Brief is \$7.00 to cover reproduction, postage and handling.

Evelyn Drescher is a feminist and the primary caregiver of her two children. She is MAW's Child Care Policy Co-ordinator and active on its Steering, and Research and Lobby Committees.

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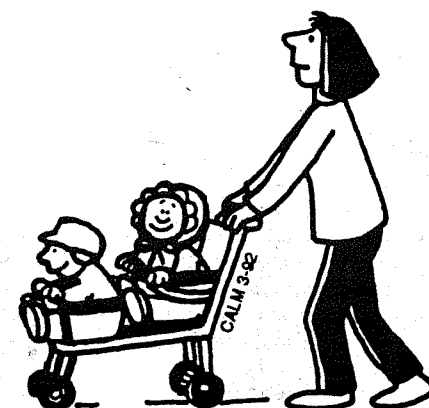


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The CACS is an independent organization, funded by the federal government to advise the government and inform the public on matters of interest and concern to women. The CACS produces original research on social, economic, and legal issues affecting women in Canada, including reproductive health, housing, income security, and violence against women.

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Contact the National Office for information on the CACS's 20th anniversary celebrations.

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# Remembering

The phone rings. It is Lisa, one of the graduate students with whom I work: "Barbara, I have bad news." Silence. "Audre Lorde just died in St. Croix." I am stunned, unprepared, though I should not be. Audre has had breast cancer for many years. I know she has had breast cancer for many years. I know she now lives in St. Croix, my ancestral home, where the sun and the sea are invigorating her. The islands, her mother's islands, would save her body, I had hoped. Lisa repeats: "Audre died in St. Croix." Silence. Then I say, "I will never see her again."

I will always hear her, though. Audre left for us her work - words that many African American women had been too afraid to speak. We had been taught that silence was golden, that it could protect you. Yet, as our daily lives and statistics proclaimed, we were steadily being attacked from within our homes as well as from without. Audre Lorde refused to be silenced, refused to be limited to any one category, insisted on being all that she was: poet, black, mother, lesbian, feminist, warrior, activist, woman.

As I grieve her passing on, I cannot help but think of the irony that we split her into her separate parts: So many white feminist-lesbians respond only to her lesbianism; blacks to her race activism; literary critics to her poetic craft; mother goddess followers to her African goddesses.

Ah - Audre - if there is any tribute we can give you, it is to acknowledge all those parts of yourself without which you would not be you.

*Love is a word, another kind of  
open  
As the diamond comes into a  
knot of flame  
I am Black because I come  
from the earth's inside  
now take my word for jewel in  
the open light*  
"Coal," *Chosen Poems:  
Old and New.*

I remember the first time I met Audre. It was 1968. Both of us were working in the SEEK program at City College, New York, a program designed to prepare apparently in-educable

and to be a homosexual (James Baldwin notwithstanding) was to be against the revolution, to be tainted by the white evil.

By the time I'd moved to California, in 1971, Audre had published "Love Poem," which was clearly about sexual love between women. Like Martin Luther at Wittenberg when he'd seceded from the powerful Catholic Church by tacking his precepts up on a church door, Audre, the librarian, had tacked her poem up on her office door for all to see. I heard the

**"I urge each one of us  
here to reach down into that  
deep place of knowledge  
inside herself and touch  
that terror and loathing of  
any difference that lives  
there. See whose face it  
wears."**

Blacks and Puerto Ricans for college. We were demanding our rights, insisting on structural transformation of the educational system. I'd read some of her poems and was inspired by the sinewy sound and honesty. In love with language, we talked about poetry, and protest, about social change.

I was beginning to realize the sexism within the Black Power Movement and was grappling for the words to express it. Unity was the call word of the day, even if it was a false unity. The black revolutionaries we thought ourselves to be could not be fragmented by such trivia. I did not then know that Audre was a lesbian. In 1968, to be a black

reverberations from coast to coast. Her insistence on speaking as her entire self, whatever the consequences, became a model for many women who had begun to realize that when the words "Black Liberation" were spoken they were not referring to us, precisely because we were women.

Like other women, I had been mute, silenced by the black rhetoric of the period. Audre's courage, her honesty, reminded us that we could not act for ourselves or others if we could not transform our own silence into speech.

*if we speak we are afraid  
that our words will be used*

*And if we do not speak  
we are still afraid*

*So, it is better to speak  
knowing we were never meant  
to survive.*

*"A Litany for Survival,"  
The Black Unicorn*

It is 1978. I am listening to the radio on a Saturday as I clean the house. I have a child, am married, yet might as well be a single mother. I am writing a book on black women novelists and am known as a feminist, yet feel troubled about European-American feminism. Its puritanical tendencies do not relate closely enough to many people's lives, our need to feel the connection between the pleasure we desire in our everyday life and the political activity necessary to change our lives. I hear a voice I think I recognize, a voice from the "Take Back the Night" feminist rally in San Francisco. It is Audre's voice, articulating for us how the erotic energizes our lives, analyzing precisely how political struggle is connected to our understanding of our desires.

*When we begin to live from  
within outward, in touch with  
the power of the erotic within  
ourselves and allowing that  
power to inform and illuminate  
our actions upon the world  
around us, then we begin to be  
responsible to ourselves in the  
deepest sense. For as we  
recognize our deepest  
feelings, we begin to give up, of  
necessity, being satisfied with  
suffering and self-negation,  
and with the numbness which  
so often seems like their only  
alternative in our society. Acts  
against oppression become  
integral with self, motivated  
and empowered from within.*

*"The Uses of the Erotic"  
Sister Outsider*

In work published during the 1980s - her biomythography *Zami* (1982), her two collections of essays, *Sister Outsider* (1984) and *A Burst of Light* (1988), her non-fiction, *The Cancer Journals* (1980), her poetry collection, *Our Dead*



*A Bee Whispers What It Knows* © Sudie Rakusin 1984

## Books by Audre Lorde

*A Burst of Light: essays by Audre Lorde*  
*The First Cities*  
*Cables to Rage*  
*From A Land Where Other People Live*  
*New York Head Shop and Museum*  
*Coal*  
*Between Our Selves*  
*The Black Unicorn*  
*The Cancer Journals*  
*Zami: A New Spelling Of My Name*  
*Chosen Poems: Old and New*  
*Sister Outsider*  
*Our Dead Behind Us*

*if we speak we are afraid  
that our words will be used*

*And if we do not speak  
we are still afraid*

*So, it is better to speak  
knowing we were never meant  
to survive*



**Audre Lorde  
1934-1992**



# Audre Lorde

by Barbara Christian



*we are afraid  
things will be used*

*not speak  
afraid*

*er to speak  
were never meant*

*The Black Unicorn*

*Behind Us* (1986), Audre emphasized the intersections of oppressions - that racism, sexism, homophobia, stem from the same source, from "the inability to recognize the notion of difference as a dynamic human force which is enriching rather than threatening to the defined self."  
"Age, Race, Class, and Sex"

Even those in search of social change tend to be intolerant of differences among their own constituents and thus recreate the societal pattern they claim to be opposed to.

What Audre learned from her outsider position in society is that real change cannot occur unless we stop killing the other in ourselves the self that we hate in others  
"Among ourselves," *A Burst of Light*

Her analysis of this fear has had ramifications for just about every area of our lives, from our sexuality to education, from the meaning of our identities to political coalition work. A poet-thinker, Audre enlarged the race-feminist theory of that period, so much so that the concept of difference as a creative force is today as "natural" a part of our analyses of the world as the notion that oppressions exist.

I last saw Audre at the peak of the divestment movement at the University of California at Berkeley. On May 14, 1985,

"The future of the earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference. The old and new definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation and suspicion.

For we have built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those

structures... the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape but the piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors' tactics, the oppressors' relationships.

Change means growth, and growth can be painful. But we sharpen self-definition by exposing the self in work and struggle together with those whom we define as different from ourselves, although sharing the same goals. For Black and white, old and young, lesbian and heterosexual women alike, this can mean new paths to our survival." *Sister Outsider*

Sisters Against Apartheid put together a poetry meeting to honour our sisters in South Africa. Together with the Native American poet Paula Gunn Allen, the Japanese American poet Janice Mirikitani and the Chicana poet Cherri Moraga, Audre Lorde commemorated the significance of women in the anti-apartheid struggle as well as the life-sustaining force of poetry in social change movements. It was an event that symbolized so much of who Audre was. As she rose to speak with women from all over the world about an issue to which she had been unstintingly committed, she stressed the gift of learning to use one's own power:

*It is important for black South Africans to know they are not alone. To know that our voices are being raised. It is a very important lesson, too, to know that learning to use your*

*power is not a free lesson; but it is an invaluable one, because to be able to know what it feels like to put all of who you are behind something you believe is a priceless present.*

*"Against Apartheid"*

In 1978, Audre learned that she had breast cancer. She could not be silent, as so many women had been. She wrote *"The Cancer Journals"* some ten years before the media would acknowledge that breast cancer is virtually an epidemic in the U.S.

I last heard her voice in 1988, when she spoke at Stanford University. By then, she knew that the cancer had metastasized to her liver. She spoke not of loss but of blessing: that she had been "blessed to believe passionately, to love deeply and to be able to work out of those loves and beliefs."

In working out of those loves and beliefs, Audre Lorde

clarified for us the multiplicity that each of us is. Rejecting a "mythical norm," she championed the complexity of life, named it a blessing and gave that blessing to us.

*Black mother goddess, salt dragon of chaos, Seboulisa, Mawu. Attend me, hold me in your muscular glowering arms, protect me from throwing any part of myself away.*

Barbara T. Christian is a Full Professor in African American Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. She is the author of books on African American women writers, notably *Black Women Novelists*, *The Development of a Tradition (1892-1976)* and *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers*, which includes an essay on Audre Lorde's collection of essays, *Sister Outsider*.



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*e Lorde  
-1992*

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In the  
movement

# The National Council of Women - One hundred years

1993 marks the Centennial of the National Council of Women. This marks one hundred years of work by hundreds of volunteer women working to make Canada a better place.

The National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) was founded in 1893, in a period when Canadian women were beginning to organize themselves for effective community action. Women saw the need for societal reform, better education for women, and women's suffrage. They

decided that they would be much more effective if they spoke with a united voice.

The International Council of Women (ICW) had been founded a few years earlier at a meeting in Washington D.C. The idea of a Canadian Council was developed at the ICW World's Congress of Representative Women meeting in Chicago in May 1893. The National Council of Women of Canada came into existence formally on October 27, 1893 at a public meeting in Toronto that was attended by 1500 women. Lady Ishbel Aberdeen was acclaimed the first president, and soon local Councils appeared across the country.

From its beginning, the National Council worked to

movement. There was some division in the Council around the issue of universal suffrage, but in the end the National Council pressed for women's suffrage in representations to provincial legislatures and the federal parliament.

A major thrust over the years has been the appointment of women magistrates and women to boards of directors, delegations and commissions. Throughout the twentieth century, many letters, briefs and telegrams have gone to the government asking for the appointment of women to boards, tribunals and international delegations. The government responded slowly. In the 1930's NCWC President Winnifred Kydd and Nellie

grounds for divorce. In 1964 it asked for the dissemination of birth control information and in 1971 it passed a resolution asking for the removal of abortion from the Criminal Code. In the 1970's the Council also asked for programs to protect prostitutes.

Over the years, as the Council's relationship with the government became more formal, the practice developed of presenting an annual brief to the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet. The National Council also presents briefs to parliamentary committees and royal commissions.

The strength of its lobby comes from a broadly based network of organizations

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The five Alberta women involved in the Person's Case in 1929: Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Emily Murphy. (Courtesy of Ruth M. Bell)

improve the status of women. Some of its earliest efforts were directed towards improving the lot of three underprivileged groups - women prisoners, women working in factories, and women immigrants.

One of the founding members of the Council was Dr. Augusta Stowe-Gullen, the first woman in Canada to obtain a medical degree, and leader of the women's suffrage

McClung were members of Canadian delegations to the League of Nations.

In 1930, Cairine Wilson, an active member of the Ottawa Council of Women, became the first woman to be appointed to the Senate. In 1929, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the United Kingdom, then the highest Court of Appeal for Canadians, brought down its landmark decision declaring women to be persons. Of the five women who brought the case through the courts, three were actively involved in the National Council of Women.

The Council worked to establish the first free libraries and supervised playgrounds, and on issues of public health and child welfare. They have been fighting for equal pay for equal work since the forties and pension plans for women since the fifties. In 1961 the National Council of Women advocated broadening the

affiliated with local or provincial councils, or with the National Council. It is these women who research and debate proposals for change and develop the resolutions which the National Council presents to government.

As it approaches the end of its first century, the National Council of Women of Canada continues to be concerned with a wide range of issues involving women, the family, the community and the state. Its role in the next few decades will be affected by its ability to respond and adapt to these changes while retaining the strength which comes from local grass roots participations.

The Centennial Meeting of the National Council of Women will be held at Carleton University, in Ottawa, May 13 - 18. For more information about the meeting or the NCWC contact Katherine Tait at the National Office in Ottawa at: (613) 233-4953.

### Simon Fraser University • Department of Women's Studies Professorship in Women's Studies

The Women's Studies Department at Simon Fraser University is seeking a senior candidate with an outstanding academic and/or professional record for the Ruth Wynn Woodward Endowed Professorship in Women's Studies. This is a limited term appointment, normally for one year, and will begin in September 1994. The area of specialization is open; however applicants with expertise in areas of sociology are particularly encouraged. Responsibilities will include teaching, public lectures and community outreach. Salary will be that of a senior scholar.

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# The gender question answered young men of the future

by Wendy Lai

Sexism is alive and kicking, dwelling in the attitudes of Canada's most intelligent, most privileged youth, our future leaders. This was recently shoved in my face, at the World Affairs Conference (WAC) at Upper Canada College (UCC) in Toronto.

The conference is an annual event held at Upper Canada College, a private, all-boys secondary school in Toronto. WAC is in its tenth year; UCC has been in existence for a hundred and fifty. This year, the politically-correct climate was such that the focus of the conference addressed the feminist movement. It was entitled "The Gender Question: A New Hope for Women and Men?"

For two days in the middle of February, I joined about a thousand other high school students from Canada, the States, Senegal, and South Africa under the imposing clock tower protruding into the Toronto sky. The event was professionally produced; delegates were provided with information packages, pens, note paper, buttons, and the opportunity to purchase t-shirts and baseball caps.

each under his own personal floodlight, watched paternalistically over. The walls were covered in lists of gold scripted names - former head boys and other accomplished alumni. The only really revered woman in the building was Queen Elizabeth II, a full-body portrait displayed prominently in the main hall.

We were shown a video of images of women in popular culture. Split-second clips of various hit sit-coms, old and new, and trend-setting movies flashed across the screen. Cat calls, whistles, and applause, of the type of a high school pep rally, erupted from the audience at the sight of a favourite show or scene. Few seemed to notice the frightening message the video sent: women in popular media are portrayed as stupid, confused, silly, or sexy, or any combination thereof.

Susan G. Cole, senior editor of *Now* magazine in Toronto, stressed the importance of getting to the root of our problems instead of dealing with the "mop-up operation" of scolding the perpetrators of rape, incest, and assault. Gender-neutral language, she

"only hope for sentient life on the planet in the future." All issues are women's issues; women are not a minority or "interest" group, but compose the majority of the human species. She mentioned in passing the "pale male" faces of the headmasters on the walls.

The key to feminism is empowerment to women. The old definition of power means power over; the new definition translates as power to. Patriarchy focuses on disconnection and compartmentalization in the manner of the divide and conquer philosophy. Feminism centres on connection. Feminism is linked to racism, ageism, the economy, the environment, etc. Women should be outraged about the present state of the world. Men should not be frightened, since they stand to gain as well. The outrage is an honour, an optimistic view for change.

Morgan asked that the audience stand while she read the names of the victims of the Montreal Massacre. She then gave some shocking statistics. More than half of college men say they would rape if they thought they could get away with it. Nine out of ten women will be sexually harassed at some time in their lives. In North America, one third of women will be raped, two thirds will be battered, and one quarter sexually abused before age 18. I am not an emotional person, by this point in the speech, I was in tears.

Other members of the audience were not quite as moved by Morgan's words. The first person to make a comment at the microphone told Robin Morgan to, and I quote, "Get a life." Another student said that he stood for the Montreal Massacre victims, not because they were women, but because they were human beings. "I thought this was an equality movement." Morgan responded that they were killed because they were women. Many UCC students took offence to her reference of the "pale males" on the wall.

The following morning, Lillian Allen described how women must find their voices, to seek, find, and bring themselves into existence. She recited some of her own "dub poetry," her form of finding her own voice. Incongruity reigned as she uttered the rhythmic words and sounds that characterize her work, in the great UCC auditorium at the lectern. Meanwhile, the organizers rudely moved large

sections of the audience down the main aisle as Allen was in the middle of a piece.

Rebecca Walker, founder of the Third Wave feminism, though tempted to walk out on the conference after the events of the evening before, stayed and simplified her speech on the Third Wave to an advisement of the steps to take in response to such reaction. She told the audience, "Don't believe the hype," since it is distorted by the media. She asked them to discover for themselves, what feminism has accomplished. She urged them to tell their own

Morgan and Walker had been off-base and excessively radical. They said their opinions were their own and not a product of the "male moment."

From there, for me, the afternoon rapidly deteriorated. The next session I attended was the presentation on Gender in Media. Most of the people in the auditorium were having conversations of their own, while Dina Lieberman from the Academy of Canadian Cinema and TV spoke about the representation and portrayal of women in current popular cinema and television.



story to dispel the myths. Each person's feminist theory, she said, should be developed out of her or his own personal experience. Most important of all is action.

I then attended a smaller session on reproductive technology. A doctor gave a presentation on the techniques available and said that she was a scientist and not an ethicist. The questions that reproductive technology raise in ensuing questions related mostly to the possible ultimate creation of an elitist superhuman race. The audience was not aware enough of the implications to conduct a discussion about them.

In the smaller discussion group afterwards, the general attitude was that the technologies were developed with the best of intentions and were acceptable if they were used with equally good intentions. And near the end of the discussion, the virtually all-female group concurred in their disagreement with the speakers of that morning and the night before. They felt that

Women compose 90% of the lower hierarchical positions in the industry, and 1% of upper management. Female directors and producers receive 9% of available funding. Meanwhile, next to me, two girls poured over and discussed loudly a *Seventeen* magazine. I started a huge, painful headache.

When the conference closed, I left the building with a pounding headache, completely dejected about the state of the world around me. After an evening of depression, though, I decided to act. This is probably hardly what the conference organizers desired in the outcome; I would not have thought myself that any good would come of such monstrosity. Happily, it has.

Wendy Lai is a grade 12 student at Lisgar Collegiate Institute in Ottawa. She is head and founder of the Women's Issues Group there, as well Co-Editor in Chief of the *The Lisgarwrite*, the student-run newspaper. She is graduating this year and plans to travel before going to university.



Every person was accounted for on computer. It was obvious that a fair amount of money and organization had gone into the event.

The conference chair, Damon E. Lee, delivered an opening speech worthy of the most polished politician, uttering beautiful, politically-safe words and not saying anything of note. This fine UCC student leader was probably eighteen years old and already skilled in such presentations. He explained to the half male, half female audience the significance of the flags on stage. (The South African delegates had asked that their flagpole remain unoccupied until the political discussion in their country came to a conclusion.) A woman and a black UCC student sat with authority on stage; they never spoke, nor was their presence ever explained. However, they looked correctly inclusive.

The delegates all sat in hard, wooden pews while past UCC headmasters, residing in heavy, gold-coloured frames,

said, is crucial because language permeates through everything. It is fundamental, and it must be fundamentally all-inclusive. She showed slides demonstrating the advertising trends concerning the portrayal of men and women, Jean Kilbourne style, touching on age, beauty, objectification, love and sexuality, and child pornography.

The audience, both male and female members, accused her of alienating men and inciting the women and causing a war between sexes. They argued that there exists an equal number of male-exploitative ads and products. Language, they insisted, is unimportant; there were better issues to address. And thus, the messenger was burned at the stake...

Robin Morgan, editor in chief of *MS.* magazine in the United States, in the first keynote speech of WAC ever delivered by a woman, discussed the encompassment of feminism, that it includes the

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# Turning the tide on the

In 1940, breast cancer struck one in twenty women. Today, one in nine women have a lifetime chance of getting breast cancer.

*As the tide of chemicals born of the Industrial Age has arisen to engulf our environment, a drastic change has come about in the nature of the most serious public health problems. For the first time in the history of the world, every human being is now subject to contact with dangerous chemicals, from the moment of conception until death.*

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 1962

These words, written by a brilliant woman at the peak of her scientific and literary career, were heralded around the world as an early warning of the dangers of synthetic chemicals to human health. Her book had a very simple promise: our personal health depends on the natural environment. Two years after *Silent Spring* was published, Rachel Carson died of breast cancer.

Her death occurred twenty-four years after the explosion of the Synthetic-Chemical Age (legacy of the Second World War).

Currently, this disease is

the leading cause of death for women in their prime - 40 to 55 years of age. Every day 40 Canadian women learn they have breast cancer. Every day, 12 Canadian women die of breast cancer. This year, at least 5,000 women in Canada will die from breast cancer.

Breast cancer is also one of the fastest growing of all cancers. Despite early detection, the overall mortality rate for breast cancer has remained unchanged for 30 years. The incidence rate has climbed from one in 20 Canadian women in 1960 one in nine today. In fact, breast cancer incidence is growing

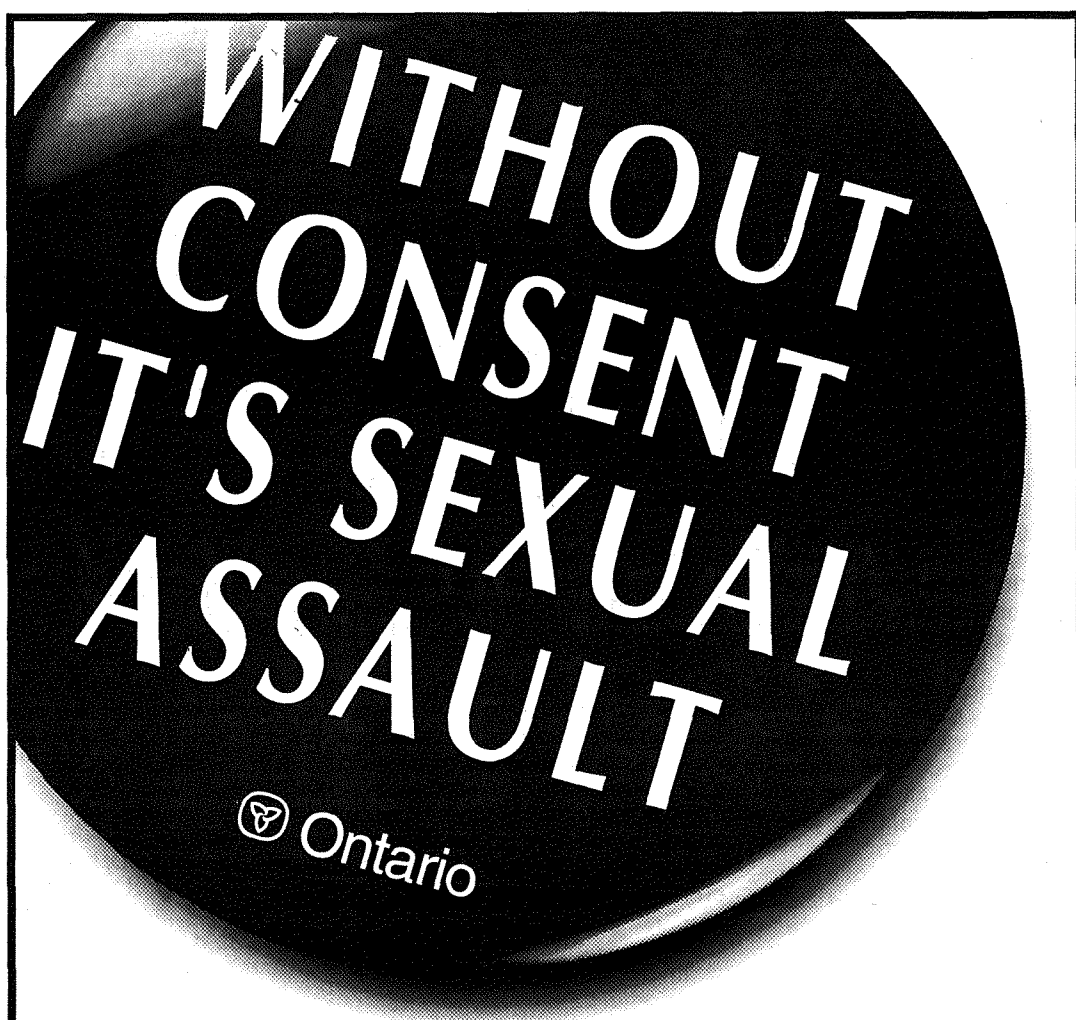
rapidly in virtually all of the world's industrialized countries.

In 1980, an estimated 560,000 women worldwide died of breast cancer. By the year 2000 over one million women are expected to die each year from breast cancer. In other words, we are facing an epidemic. This is an

(ACS), established risk factors alone or in combination account for only 20 to 30% of breast cancer cases. This means that 70-80% of all women who get breast cancer do not fall into any "official" risk category.

The popular analysis of causes of cancer omits one very important part of the

**Every day, 40 Canadian women learn they have breast cancer. Every day, 12 Canadian women die of breast cancer. This year, at least 5,000 women in Canada will die from breast cancer.**



You probably know a woman who has been sexually assaulted. It happens all too often. Maybe she felt uncomfortable when touched in a sexual way by a co-worker, or fondled by an attendant. Or maybe her date made her have sex, when all she wanted was a goodnight kiss.

Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual activity.

Women have the right to refuse sexual advances at any point. And men have a responsibility to respect that right.

If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted, contact:

- a rape crisis centre or hospital sexual assault care centre
- a women's counselling or health care service
- a local crisis line.

Ontario

outrageous and tragic loss of life, especially considering that this disease is largely preventable.

Cancer is an environmental disease and therefore preventable. Most cancer societies want us to believe that if we stay out of the sun, limit alcohol consumption, eat high fiber foods, i.e., if we exercise personal responsibility and follow the "right" lifestyle we can prevent cancer. If we don't, it's our own fault that we got the disease. This is called "blaming the victim" and as Rita Arditti from the Women's Community Cancer Project in the Cambridge, Mass. says: "It is a convenient way to avoid looking at the larger environmental and social issues that frame individual experiences."

In fact, the environmental connection to cancer has been pushed so completely out of the picture that one can read entire public educational tracts about it published by the American Cancer Society (ACS) without ever encountering the idea that cancers are caused by human-produced carcinogens. Yet extensive evidence exists to indicate that cancer is an environmental disease and therefore largely preventable. As far back as 1964, the World Health Organization stated that 80% of cancers were due to human-produced carcinogens.

The Cancer establishment, however, remains steadfastly stuck on limiting the risk factors for breast cancer to three: a history of breast cancer in the family, hormonal and reproductive factors, and fatty diet. The evidence for the first two is quite strong, although the role of fat consumption per se in breast cancer has recently been called into question.

Each of the recognized risk factors, however, are associated with very modest increases in risk. According to the American Cancer Society

picture - the environment. The National Institute of Health in the United States, recognized in 1979 that: "Environmental factors are generally thought to be the major cause of most cancers. Environmental factors encompass the total environment. They include cancer-causing agents found in air, water, food, the workplace and life-style."

Rachel Carson was one of the first to recognize the connection between the massive loadings of synthetic chemicals into our environment and rising rates of cancer:

*"The chemical agents of cancer have become entrenched in our world in two ways: first, and ironically, through man's search for a better and easier way of life; second, because the manufacture and sale of such chemicals has become an accepted part of our economy and our way of life ... A large proportion are by no means necessities of life. By their elimination the total load of carcinogens would be enormously lightened, and the threat that one in every four (now one in three) will develop cancer would at least be greatly mitigated."*

The worldwide increase in breast cancer has occurred during the same period in which the global environment has become contaminated with industrial synthetic chemicals. Specifically, it follows the trends in contamination by chlorine-based industrial chemicals called organochlorines, many of which are known to be widespread, long-lived and incredibly carcinogenic even in the tiniest amounts.

Organochlorines are a class of chemicals in which chlorine is bonded to the carbon-rich "organic" matter of which living things are made. Many organochlorines are very persistent, resisting breakdown in the environment for decades or centuries. Once released, these



# breast cancer epidemic

by Joan D'Argo

chemicals build up over time in the environment, where they are distributed around the world on currents of air and water. Many organochlorines also concentrate in fatty tissues and multiply in concentration as they move up the food chain.

Today, industry produces about 40 million tons of chlorine per year with the majority of it used for the production of PVC plastics. The pulp and paper and solvents industries are also big users, as is the production of other chemicals. With few exceptions, organochlorines do not occur in

women exposed to higher-than-normal levels of organochlorines and other pollutants have significantly elevated rates of breast cancer, including women who work in the chemical industry and who live near hazardous waste sites. Specifically:

- Women workers exposed to high levels of dioxin in an organochlorine pesticide plant in Germany have a mortality rate from breast cancer 2.15 times higher than the average.
- An analysis by the National Cancer Institute found that among female chemists in

tolerate their presence in our environment and in our bodies. Given our desire to stop degrading the environment and our inherent need to protect future generations, all input of persistent toxic substances can and must be halted."

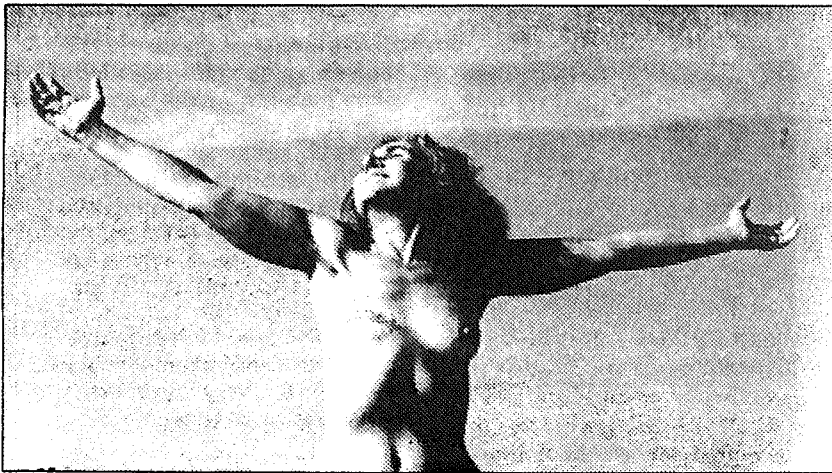
**Today, one in nine women have a lifetime chance of getting breast cancer.**

## Breast cancer organizations in Canada

Breast Cancer Action  
P.O. Box 39041,  
Ottawa, ON  
K1H 1A1  
(613) 731-6974

Breast Cancer Action - Montréal  
5-257 Villeneuve West  
Montréal, QP  
H2V 2R2

Breast Cancer Education & Research Fund  
51 Hillcrest  
St. Catharines, ON  
L2R HY3



Hella Hammid, TREE, 1979

significant quantities in nature, and they are not known to occur naturally at all in human tissues. But because of the massive quantities that are being produced, our environment has become saturated with them and in turn, so have our bodies.

Humans, at the top of the food chain, are now contaminated by organochlorines at levels thousands or millions of times greater than their concentrations in our surrounding environment. In fact, 177 organochlorines have been identified in the tissues and fluids of people in North America.

A growing body of evidence suggests the organochlorines contribute to breast cancer risk. For instance, many organochlorines are known to be "hormonally active". This means they mimic or interfere with the body's natural sex hormones, including estrogen. Studies have shown that

the US breast cancer was 63 percent higher than expected.

- A pilot study in the United States found that women with breast cancer have 50-60 percent higher levels of organochlorine pesticides in their breast tissue than women without breast cancer. (The findings of an extensive follow-up study to this pilot project to be released in April, will confirm and strengthen the original study.)

In the Spring of 1992, the International Joint Commission (a government appointed international body on the Great Lakes), declared in a precedent-setting recommendation to the two federal governments of the United States and Canada that:

"... it is clear to us that persistent toxic substances have caused widespread injury to the environment and to human health. As a society, we can no longer afford to

The IJC identified the class of organochlorines as a top priority and called upon the two federal governments to develop timetables to sunset (phase-out) all industrial uses of chlorine and chlorine-containing compounds. The Ontario government has recently stepped forward and promised that all organochlorine discharges from the pulp and paper industry will be eliminated by the year 2002.

As Audre Lorde, breast cancer activist and poet predicted: "Women are translating the silence surrounding breast cancer into language and action against this scourge."

Women's groups are on the cutting edge of looking at cancer as an environmental issue and prevention is at the top of their agenda. It is not surprising that new partnerships between women's groups and environmental groups are being created. We are natural allies on this issue of breast cancer prevention, and in fact, a potent and powerful combination to tell the truth and to mobilize people.

We need to be strategic. International momentum is now escalating around a global chlorine-free society. Stopping organochlorine pollution of the environment and our bodies should be a priority of breast cancer prevention strategies.

Jackie Winnow, a California activist who founded the Women's Cancer Resource Centre in Berkeley and who died from her breast cancer two years ago, said: "We have to stop being nice girls and start fighting as though our lives depended upon it. Because they do."

Joan D'Argo works for Greenpeace International on the Chlorine Campaign and is based in the U.S. She is in the process of organizing a national breast cancer prevention campaign in the United States. For additional information call (616) 223-7943.

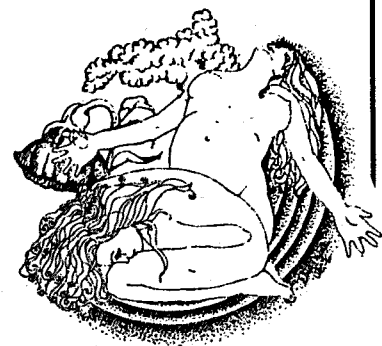
## Wilderness Challenge - Outdoor experience for women

Women who have experienced the trauma of carry the memory of their abuse not only psychologically but also in limitations of physical skills, body movement and attitudes toward challenges.

Wilderness Challenge provides an opportunity for women who have known abuse to challenge their own limitations and experience the success of knowing their own strength and power.

Wilderness Challenge is a project sponsored by the Eastern Shore Safe House association and funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Attorney General to develop therapeutic wilderness events for adult female survivors of sexual, physical or psychological trauma. The activities build progressively, requiring more and more physical contact and individual risk, always with freedom regarding participation. The experience provides a way of getting to the powerful opportunity for the expression of those feelings. Inclusion of wilderness events as an adjunct to their therapy has enabled women to move through the therapeutic process much more quickly.

For more information about Wilderness Challenge, contact: Judy Crump, R.R.#2, Musquodoboit Harbour, NS, B0J 2L0, or phone (902) 889-2975.



## Women's Education des Femmes special issue on Violence Prevention

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women has published a special issue of **Women's Education des Femmes focussing on Violence Prevention**. This special issue focusses not so much on traditional prevention strategies like self-defence, but on the importance of education in women's struggle against violence. What women and children can do to prevent or stop violence in our lives; what we as a society can do to reverse the social context in which violence is condoned. Articles include: "Concordia Women's Centre: A Place of Resistance", "What We Want" - a discussion of what Aboriginal women want for themselves and their families, "from One Who Works with Crones" - violence prevention for older women, and many other articles that discuss violence prevention in areas of gun control, women with disabilities, employment and policing. Stories of successful prevention are dispersed throughout the magazine as a powerful theme of resistance. Copies of **Women's Education des Femmes special issue on Violence Prevention**, together with the other special issue "Learning and Violence: Women Speak Out", can be ordered (for \$4.89 each or \$8.56 for the set) through CCLOW, 47 Main Street, Toronto, Ontario, M4E 2V6.I

# Reclaiming our breasts: breastfeeding in Canada

by Elisabeth Sterken

Breastfeeding women face an uphill struggle on many fronts. Breastfeeding women's contribution to the health and well-being of children and to society remains unacknowledged. The economic contribution they make - the invaluable quality of life they contribute is largely unrecognized. Moreover, they are likely to find their choice to breastfeed sabotaged.

Breastfeeding is a highly undervalued contribution that women make to society - a contribution that should be supported with public policy.

Canadian women faced with North American rules that only allow the exposure of women's breasts for the sexual titillation of men found a champion in Gwen Jacobs. If bearing one's breasts is against the law, what does this mean for

breastfeeding women? Breastfeeding in public already risks harassment - stares, looks, expulsions - and without legal protection does it risk arrest as well?

Canada's federal policy to not implement the World Health Organization marketing code for infant formulas puts the onus squarely on the new mother to resist marketing and institutional infant feeding practices that are designed to undermine her intent. Why do corporate interests - in this case U.S.A.-based transnationals - enjoy protection under the Competition Act and no legal protection exists for breastfeeding women?

Following a practice that is becoming common in hospitals across Canada, Women's College Hospital in Toronto recently accepted \$1 million dollars from Mead Johnson infant formula company in exchange for marketing privileges in the hospital - free formula, so called "educational" materials, and discharge packs that would be handed out to women just after they have delivered. In spite of strong protests from hospital staff and numerous women's health organizations, and against the advice of the Medical Advisory Committee, administration would not turn down this "incentive".

Why should \$1 million dollars over ten years, from a U.S.-based company, dictate infant feeding policy in a Canadian Hospital that receives millions more in public funding. Hospitals claim to be health promoting institutions yet they allow corporate promotions which interfere with a woman's ability to breastfeed when it has been proven that in almost all cases breastfeeding is the healthiest option for both mothers and their babies.

Women who breastfeed have half the chance of developing breast cancer as women who do not, and rates of ovarian cancer are also lower.

Also, children who are not breastfed have two times the risk of developing cancer in childhood. In numerous diseases, breastfed babies have lower rates of illness and lower rates of mortality.

Sadly, it is the women who buy the formula who will end up paying for the million dollars as it is costed back into the product. Can we not even expect policies that support and affirm women from a hospital that claims to function on behalf of women?!

Although institutional biases are nothing new to women, they nevertheless continue to astound. Immigrant women, coming from

backgrounds where breastfeeding is a normal practice, must be shocked and confused to find federal immigration guidelines advising that breastfeeding in public is "offensive". Small wonder breastfeeding rates drop significantly after arrival in Canada!

Similarly, the breastfeeding network of Kingston, Ontario discovered that breastfeeding was unacceptable to a local mall manager. In response to a request for a breastfeeding display during World Broadcasting Week, they found that breastfeeding was

offensive or vulgar. No. It is the flagrant for profit marketing of baby milks to replace vital breastmilk in environments where there is great poverty, very little medical care and infant mortality rates are already appallingly low. This pornographic exploitation of mothers and this needless form of infant death for profit must be stopped.

There are things we can do. First, it is necessary to continue to boycott Nestle. Nestle has the largest market share - over 50% - of infant formula sales around the globe. It is considered an industry leader. Putting pressure on Nestle enables us to expose the calamity mothers face when their babies die because they are artificially fed. We are acting in solidarity with many others around the globe working to stop the exploitative marketing of baby milks.

Another way in which we can act is to work in our own communities. We can inform the federal minister responsible for Health and Welfare Canada that the World Health Organization code needs to be



"too controversial". After some lobbying, a display was permitted without graphic visuals. No doubt breasts were very visible as marketing devices throughout the same mall.

In Hamilton, Ontario a local public library deemed a picture of an infant snuggled up to its mother's breast to be "pornographic".

In spite of research that tells us time and again that feeding man-made breastmilk substitutes can have serious health consequences for infants as well as their mothers, the scientific establishment still does not seem to get it. Heaven forbid that the product of a woman's mammalian organs be better than their laboratory concoctions. Where would the research money come from and how would their careers advance?

The infant formula companies, and in particular Nestle, play a major role in the continuing calamity that mothers in impoverished environments face. Even after many attempts by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, consumer groups, women's groups, and health care workers to eliminate the dangerous marketing of infant formulas, milks, bottles, and nipples Nestle and the other infant formula manufacturers continue to flaunt global outcries against this global injustice.

It is not women's breasts that are "pornographic", it is not women's breasts that are

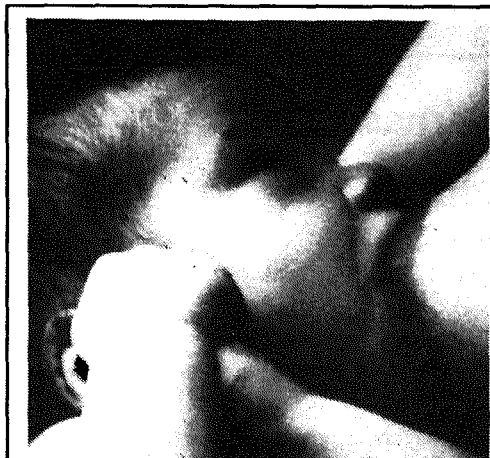
**Women's College Hospital accepted \$1 million dollars from Mead Johnson in exchange for marketing privileges in the hospital...**

implemented in Canada to protect women's choice to breastfeed from unnecessary commercial exploitation. We can lobby our local hospitals to become Baby-Mother-Friendly. This UNICEF sponsored initiative attempts to organize hospitals and maternity clinics to create environments in our health care institutions where women can feel that breastfeeding is natural and normal and where breastfeeding will again become the norm in our culture.

Third, women's right to breastfeed without harassment and without fear of bias or discrimination must be protected by legislation. Human rights is a provincial jurisdiction.

Change is always difficult and not without struggle. However, reclaiming what is ours can be an empowering experience. The benefits are well worth it.

Elisabeth Sterken is the national co-ordinator of INFACT Canada.



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#3



#1



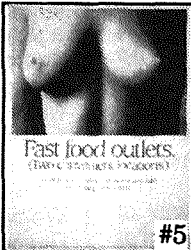
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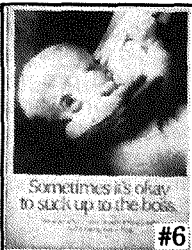
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#5



#6

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# Nestle bottle babies: the tragedy continues

(Reprinted with permission from INFACT.)

- More than half of the 1.5 million babies dying every year from Bottle Baby Disease are drinking Nestle formulas.

- A Nestle-funded study in Mexico shows the company violated Mexican law by distributing free formula to hospitals.

- In the Philippines, Nestle instructed its sales staff on how to circumvent the Philippines' infant formula marketing law, including the use of bribery. Nestle "sold" supplies to hospitals, telling them they can simply ignore the invoice.

- In Canada, Nestle, through its subsidiary Carnation, is promoting infant formula directly to pregnant and new mothers.

Carnation, by means of direct mail advertising, surveys households to determine if there is a pregnant woman or infant in the household. They offer free infant feeding information and free samples of formula. A toll free number allows for "an even faster response" to free formula requests.

Carnation supplies free samples of infant formula for distribution through physician's offices.

- In the U.S., Carnation advertises formula through TV ads. These ads are seen in Canada and in Mexico.

- The International Baby Food Action Network documented Nestle violations of 22 sections of the WHO marketing code in 56 countries between 1990 and 1991.

- Attempting to circumvent the WHO marketing code Nestle produced a "follow-up" formula and claimed it did not fall under the scope of the code. This formula is a cheaper product and many women use this inferior formula for young infants to save money.

- Nestle successfully lobbied to block a marketing code in Ghana.

- Nestle states that it will not end free supplies unless required by governments to do so.

- In Zimbabwe, which is attempting to recover from a devastating drought, Nestle is donating free infant formula supplies under the guise of "relief".

- In the former republic of Yugoslavia, Nestle (in a bid to capture the East European market) has negotiated to build an infant formula factory.

- In China, pediatricians report that during the 15 years since China opened up its markets, breastfeeding rates dropped to about 56% from what used to be a 100% breastfeeding culture. Nestle is the major distributor in China.

The same pediatricians are worried because this very notable drop in breastfeeding rates clearly demonstrates the power of marketing.

- In South East Asia, Nestle is shifting tactics. Physician's offices and administrative offices are blitzed with "medical reps" - Nestle sales people. These reps give large quantities of infant formula to physicians to distribute as free samples to their clients. The

As far back as 1978 the US Senate hearings heard the question:

"Can a product which requires clean water, good sanitation, adequate family income and a literate parent to follow printed instructions be properly and safely used in areas where water is contaminated, sewage runs in the streets, poverty is severe and illiteracy is high?"

In 1978 Nestle admitted,



Having been told she had enough milk for one child, and in keeping with cultural biases in favour of the male, this mother opted to breastfeed her son and bottle feed her daughter. Receiving a fraction of the essential nutrients as her twin brother, the daughter died the next day.

Credit: UNICEF/ Dr. Mushtaq Khan

mothers perceive the samples to be medically important for their new babies.

- In Brazil, Nestle produces a range of formulas. Although the Brazilian marketing code does not prohibit free supplies, Nestle did not distribute free supplies because it virtually controlled the Brazilian infant formula market. Nevertheless when Mead Johnson, an American competitor, entered the market, Nestle started to compete by means of free supplies. The Brazilian government is currently looking at stopping the practice.

- In countries where governments have prohibited the practice of free supplies, Nestle continues to distribute free supplies through private maternities and clinics.

Bottle feeding kills and maims babies.

"No." Sadly the same question needs to be asked time and time again. The answer remains "no".

To the industry, marketing of infant formula is not a matter of putting out its Lactogen or Nan brands for competition on a supermarket shelf and letting the consumer decide. Marketing of infant formula is intended to dissuade and disable mothers from breastfeeding. Nestle's marketing tactics are calculated to increase the number of mothers who bottlefeed and to decrease the number of mothers who breastfeed. Women who breastfeed are Nestle's competition.

Nestle's refusal to comply with the WHO marketing code - in place to protect breastfeeding - proves that

intent. It does not give out free samples of coffee or chocolate bars to hook consumers. However, in order to obstruct mothers from breastfeeding it influences hospitals to separate infants and mothers at birth, disposes of large quantities of free infant formula to maternity hospitals and birthing centres, utilizes medical services and physician offices to distribute free samples of infant formula accompanied by misinformation about infant feeding. It also buys the endorsement of health workers through gifts, bribes, research funds, and educational funds.

Why does Nestle behave so unethically, when there is so much pressure globally on them not to do so? Why does it not just adhere to the WHO marketing code?

To Nestle the infant formula market represents billions of dollars annually and it sees this as a growing market. Estimates set the global sales of infant formula at about \$8 billion (US). However, if one estimates potential sales based on global birth figures the capacity to increase this figure, is astronomical. To Nestle every new baby is a target for formula sales and every breastfeeding woman a competitor to be enticed with misinformation.

According to Elisabeth Sterken, National Co-ordinator of INFACT Canada, "Bottle babies are not a pretty sight. Their wasted and dehydrated bodies are never seen on the glossy promotional depicting fat healthy babies. Nor do we ever hear about the millions who survived but were unable to reach their full potential. Nor do we hear about the enormous social and economic loss when

babies are not breastfed and when mothers do not breastfeed".

The tragedy of bottle babies is no longer confined to Third World conditions. Poverty, as a result of structural adjustment, has become a global phenomenon. In industrialized countries such as Canada and the US, impoverished mothers are the targets of the infant formula industry. In Canada, mothers who are food bank users are also the mothers who bottle feed. At a cost of approximately \$125 per month this has become an unaffordable practice. In Toronto, new mothers have had to steal infant formula in order to feed their infants, or to put less appropriate liquids into bottles to keep their crying babies satisfied. Relief agencies report that mothers go from food bank to food bank in order to find formula for their babies. Breastfeeding would have given their babies a secure food source.

The inducement of women to formula feed must be seen as a crime against women and children. In spite of global efforts by UNICEF, the WHO, religious organizations, women's and consumer's organizations to stop marketing practices, Nestle continues unabated. When one marketing venue becomes "too hot: as a result of global criticism, such as the current focus on "free supplies", Nestle will make great pretence to change and appear to be conforming to UNICEF and WHO marketing restrictions. In the meantime, it develops alternate routes to get its product into the mouths of babes.

cont'd on pg. 34

## Boycott these Nestle Products...

...and continue the pressure for Nestle to change its deadly marketing practices!

**Nestle Quick, Nestle Crunch, Alpine White Chocolate, Raisinets, Nestea**

**Coffees:** Nescafe, Taster's Choice, Sunrise instant coffee with chicory, Mills Brothers, Chase & Sandborn

**Libby's products**

**Cross & Blackwell products**

**Maggi seasonings**

**Carnation products including all infant formula**

**Coffee-Mate**

**Perrier Water**

**Dr. Ballard's pet foods**

**Stouffer's frozen foods**

**Rowntree Macintosh candies, including Smarties**

**Laura Secord**

**Crystal Springs bottled water**

**Buitoni Fresco pastas**



# Women's Rights as Human Rights

by Charlotte Bunch

The first World Conference on Human Rights in 25 years will be held in June 1993 in Vienna, Austria. The hope is that women's rights will be discussed as a specific thematic item on the agenda, and that gender will be the discussions at the conference.

Spearheading the campaign, "Women's Rights as Human Rights", is the US-based Centre for Women's Global Leadership, led by Charlotte Bunch.

The group has collected over 75,000 signatures on a petition circulated in 78 countries, asking the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights to "comprehensively address women's rights at every level of its proceedings" and demanding that gender violence, "a universal phenomenon which takes many forms across culture, race and class, be recognized as a violation of human rights requiring immediate action."

Charlotte Bunch, of Rutgers University, presented startling facts about women and human rights at an international legal conference in Toronto held by the North-South Institute last September.

In Latin America, botched illegal abortions are the leading cause of death in women aged 15 to 39. (The UN says that the world maternal mortality rate would drop by 29 per cent if women who didn't want any more children were allowed a choice).

Amnesty International, by its own admission, never campaigned for a woman persecuted because of her gender until it broadened its definition several years ago. Now it has 25 national groups that focus on fighting the rape and sexual torture of women in prison.

And thousands of women are in jails around the world simply because they are female. In Pakistan, 4,500 women are imprisoned because they're

accused of breaking anti-woman religious laws. Many were rape victims who lacked the required four adult male Muslim witnesses to the rape, and were then jailed for having "impermissible sex". Human Rights Watch says that more than 70 per cent of these jailed Pakistani women are sexually assaulted by police and jail officials.

Michele Landsberg column,  
The Toronto Star

The campaign on Women's Rights as Human Rights is based on two central principles. First, we seek to gain recognition that the rights of women are a fundamental human right and not a secondary or second class concern.

Our work on Women's Rights as Human Rights is connected to the indivisibility of all rights. We don't want to see women used as a way to avoid other obligations in other areas. After all, women are affected by human rights issues in every area, both in a gender specific way and also in a general way.

Women's Rights as Human Rights will not seek to create a women's agenda but rather, to infuse an understanding of what women perceive of any human rights issue. The particular things that happen to women give us particular perspectives on other issues that should be brought into the dialogue.

Violence against women clearly illustrates that there are some specific dimensions of human rights abuse that affect women because of their gender.

We need to look at such gender-specific issues violence against women and the adaptation of existing mechanisms. Our primary goal is not to get interpretations of how existing conventions and instruments can apply to women by understanding the

gender-specific dimensions of issues.

Secondly, the concept of human rights is crucial to the question of democracy and development. The definition of human rights forms the basis for an understanding of who is a real citizen, who has the right to participation, who has the right to a life free of violence. If you look not only at women but to the other groups whose particular needs have been excluded from the definition of human rights, you see disabled people, lesbians and gays, indigenous people, and "illegal aliens".

Human rights are dynamic. What keeps them alive is the struggle of new groups of people to define human rights



for themselves. If we look historically at the concept of human rights, it was defined in a particular historical context. It's not that previous definitions should be invalidated, but those definitions must be broadened.

The initial definition of human rights which began at a particular historical moment, essentially looked at what a certain group of property owning, predominantly European and American males

viewed as the greatest threat to their rights, which was primarily civil and political rights in the public sphere. That definition of human rights has dominated other definitions which came from people who had less power.

Therefore socio-economic rights, women's rights and the rights of indigenous people tend to be viewed as second and third and fourth generation, with the inherent implication that these are somehow less important than the first fundamental set of rights. In fact, as society recognizes each group in their uniqueness, our definition of human rights will broaden to protect that uniqueness.

When you look at women's lives, the private sphere is where women's rights are primarily violated. Viewing women's experiences, the separation of the private from the public is simply not viable. We have to question the emphasis that the human rights community has put on separating the state from the rest of human rights violations, and begin to develop a creative understanding of the state's responsibility for protecting the rights of people in private.

This has been done in the case of slavery. The people who maintained slaves were generally not governments, but private individuals. Much of slavery occurred in the private sphere, in the home, or at least private plantations. We already have recognized that the private sphere and non-state actors are to be held accountable for their violations of human rights by state policies and state practices. Similarly, it's time to stop viewing what women are saying as somehow totally heretical and to recognize that this is another development in

understanding the relationship between the public and the private.

If you look at what is happening to women and the increase in the violations that women are experiencing or at least the visibility around the violations, it is clear that human rights mechanisms have failed to address these massive human rights violations. Why is the malnutrition of girl children, which is growing at alarmingly higher rates than the malnutrition of boy children not considered female genocide? Why aren't the 60 to 100 million women "missing" in the world, killed by female infanticide, unequal food and medical care, forced childbearing and domestic violence, considered a human rights violation?

If you read phrases about "degrading treatment", if you read phrases like the "right to life and security", then clearly these issues are violations of those women's rights. We need to put women in their rightful place in UN human rights documents.

For more information about "Women's Rights as Human Rights", you can contact

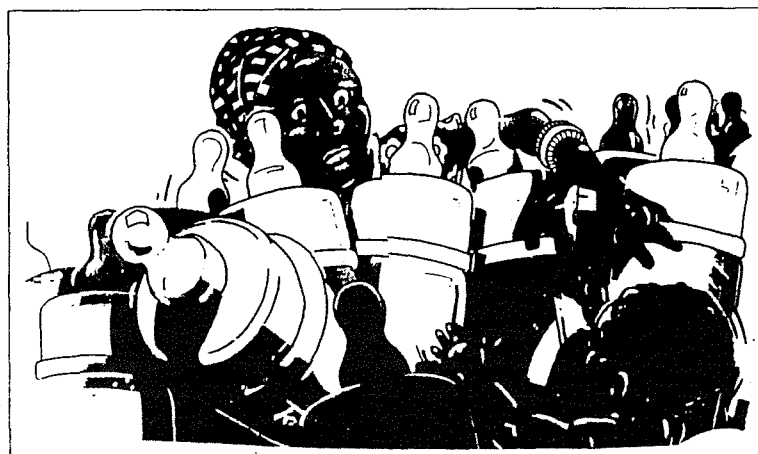
Centre for Global  
Leadership  
27 Clifton Avenue,  
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New Brunswick, NJ  
08903

Charlotte Bunch, feminist author and organizer for over two decades, was a founder of *D.C. Women's Liberation and of Quest: A Feminist Quarterly*. She has edited seven anthologies and her latest book is *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action* (St. Martin's Press, 1987).

## Nestle bottle babies cont'd

Nestle has had 12 years to conform to the WHO marketing code. The situation is still no better than when the code was passed in 1981. Our movement fears that current political trends to deregulate markets at a global level will dilute the ability of consumers and national governments to enforce marketing restrictions on the infant formula industry.

It is time to stop this immoral practice. Each day 3,000 to 4,000 children die because they were not breastfed. A national campaign in support of global boycott efforts could do much to get Nestle to make changes in its marketing practices.



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# How hard to hold up half the sky: women in Russia

by Juliet O'Neill

Something new and awful has been happening in Moscow lately: a wave of abductions of girls who are delivered to apartments where they are raped by gangs of men for hours or days, sometimes allowed to go home later, sometimes not. The abductors are paid a handsome fee; the girls terrorized for life.

Elderly women are targets of a new kind of crime, too. Dead and disappeared women, usually widows without relatives, are believed to have become victims of real estate swindlers.

Desperate for cash to buy food, and unaware of the soaring value of their usually dilapidated apartments, they sign away the title to their home, in exchange for a promise of income, and unwittingly sign away their lives. The Moscow police missing persons bureau reports eight such cases so far, believed to be the tip of an iceberg.

"Single landladies hunted down in Moscow," was how the *Commorsant Daily*, a business newspaper, reported the shocking phenomenon.

This is a city where just two years ago, a woman, young or old, could feel perfectly safe flagging down a lift from a "pirate taxi" or walking on a street, by day or dimly-lit night, in one of the world's largest but strictly-controlled cities. Now, the women who inspect street lighting for the city are working in teams on the night shifts.

The fear of once-invisible but all-embracing authority that went with communism has faded by the day in the capital of the new Russia, adding yet another layer of anxiety to the debilitating burdens of life for most Russian women.

You can still see women on road-paving gangs and among construction workers, looking like the now unfashionable socialist poster portraits of equality. But work-gang frumpiness has long been out; the hooker image with too-short skirts, too-high heels, and too much makeup on a sullen face is in.

Prostitution, by which a young woman can make in minutes what her mother earns in weeks or months, is soaring, with a laughable 12-officer police unit assigned to tackle some 200 sex businesses, ranging from escort services to porn video distributors. All sprouted practically overnight, and bolstered by the advent of the worst of Western advertising techniques in which sex sells anything and everything.

Russian women's main burden is making ends meet in

a country where shortages that made shopping a gloomy and irritating daily scavenger hunt have been replaced by high prices that have driven down consumption of meat and vitamin-rich foods and driven up consumption of bread and potatoes.

Even the cost of a loaf of bread has soared hundreds of times from a few kopecks to 35 rubles in the years since price liberalization began. Inflation

cigarettes, holding a bottle of vodka, an old pair of shoes, a piece of bric-a-brac, a jar of jam - anything that might sell, including junk collected from the garbage dumps of buildings where foreigners live.

Women comprise more than half the population and, on average, outlive men by a decade, with female life expectancy at 74.5 years.

The lifetime savings of millions of elderly and the value



zoomed by more than 2,000% in 1992 and government claims that it is ebbing below one per cent daily sounds more like politically-inspired wishful thinking than economic truth.

The crimes are extreme examples of some of the awful changes during the chaotic period between the collapse of communism and the creation of some form of capitalism in Russia, where plans for orderly reforms toward a "normal" society have been delayed and distorted, making despair a way of life for many.

Russia's social breakdown is far more visible than renewal, with women bearing some of the most apparent brunt of hardship and humiliation - from the lion's share of the first round of post-communist unemployment, to the gross pornographic magazines that litter the kiosks in underground walkways and streets.

The plight of women, especially the elderly, is apparent at any metro station or at the huge flea markets that dot the downtown streets of Moscow. Imagine your mother or grandmother standing for hours in the rain or in a filthy and dark underground passageway that stinks of foul

of their pensions, although increased time and again during the last year, have been wiped out by the price liberalization that marked stage one of post-communist economic reforms. After a lifetime of work, nothing.

The impact of the second stage of economic shock therapy - mass unemployment as state-owned enterprise is privatized - is bound to hit women harder than men. Statistics already bear that out. An estimated 70% of more than one million officially registered as unemployed are female. And experts say the real unemployment figures may be five times as high.

Worst of all, government policy pronouncements indicate this is a trend that will be officially encouraged.

"Why should we employ women when men are unemployed?" Russian Labour Minister Gennady Melikyan, was quoted in the *Moscow Guardian* magazine as saying on the eve of International Women's Day. "It's better that men work and women take care of the children and do the housework. In the past, women were pushed into the workforce as part of an

extensive strategy to develop the economy. We needed more people to fill jobs. But for what do we need them now?"

A government committee, assigned to draft laws to protect the family unit, threatens to carve such thinking in stone. At a glance, committee proposals to reduce a working mother's work week and to pay minimum wage to a stay-at-home parent with three children or more appears to be sound social welfare policies - if and when the state can afford it.

But the feminists at Moscow's Gender Studies Center, who are attempting to monitor the backlash against women, see such laws as pushing women out of the workforce in times when they will need an income more than ever.

There are more than three million one-parent families in Russia, most headed by women. The Russian president's family issues coordinator told the United Nations Human Rights Committee recently that parents are struggling to feed their children well, infant mortality is rising, infant health falling and child disability and delinquency is on the rise.

In Yaroslavl alone, a provincial region near Moscow, the number of children abandoned in 1992 almost doubled to 709. The *Trud* newspaper reported the case of a 25-year-old divorced woman who delivered her six-year-old to the police because she couldn't cope and wanted a life.

The police sent the child to grandparents for care but many children - some 100,000 at last count - wind up in institutions, many of them absolutely dreadful places.

There are also reports of people trying to sell their children and in one recent case reported by the Tass news agency, a student couple in Chelyabinsk, Siberia, tried to place a newspaper advertisement offering to swap their newborn baby for a bigger apartment. The mother said her 3,000 ruble baby's allowance from the government was too pitiful to cover costs of feeding and clothing the child. "Tell me: why don't I have the right to live decently?" the woman was quoted as asking.

Such are some of the reasons, as well, for the stunning number of abortions in Russia - six or seven each minute of the day, every day of the year at the present rate. In 1991, for every child born, two were aborted. There were 1.8 million births and 3.6 million abortions.

In the West, where feminists have fought hard for liberalized abortion, the right of Russian women to abortion on demand for the last several decades may seem progressive. Indeed, women were arrested and imprisoned during the Stalin years for having illegal abortions.

However, the decay in Russia's medical system, unsanitary conditions and shortages of proper equipment and medicine make abortion for many a nightmarish event.

At one hospital abortion is done only if the husband or friend comes along to donate blood and in another, you have to bring your own mop and pail to clean up before and after, said a report in *New Times* magazine. "Cleaning is endless: some mop, others vomit and then those who witness the vomiting throw up themselves and so on and on it goes."

Thousands of women who wind up in the main reproductive research hospital in Moscow are victims of complications from botched abortions or too many abortions.

"Family planning services are not developed so many women use abortion in Russia the way you (in the West) use contraception," pediatrician Yuri Barashnev said in an interview. "With the living standard declining and so many problems raising kids, abortion is used to prevent misery."

The seeds of an anti-abortion movement have been sown in Russia but they have not yet taken root. One legislative proposal would enshrine the right to life in law, but this is in no way a popular movement. A small anti-abortion group established with the help of an American activist has too few members to even consider picketing a clinic. And a recent feature in the *Trud* newspaper branded the idea of limiting abortion rights "absurd".

Such notions are laughable in Russia, journalist Larisa Lisutkina said in a bitter essay last year describing abortion as negative emancipation. "Indeed, in a country where so many lives have been snuffed out by repression and the Gulag, it is well-nigh impossible to understand why a yet unborn life should be protected ..."

*Juliet O'Neill is the Moscow bureau chief for Southam News of Canada. She has lived and worked in the former Soviet Union for more than three years.*

# El Salvador:

## Background on El Salvador

El Salvador is small, mountainous country bordering on Honduras, Nicaragua and the Pacific Ocean. About 5 1/2 million people live in an area roughly the size of Nova Scotia.

Twelve years of civil war have decimated the country, and resulted in an estimated 80,000 killed, many more disabled or exiled, and 8,000 people who have been "disappeared".

The war began because of extreme poverty and disparities in access to power, land and basic services such as education. During the 1970's, various groups began to form and work together (unions, cooperatives, Christian groups, etc.). Eventually they formed the FMLN - Farabundo Martí Liberation National (named after Farabundo Martí, who led a 1932 uprising against coffee plantation owners that ended in a massacre of 30,000 workers).

The FMLN began by organizing peaceful demonstrations, but the government responded with force. The Salvadoran government, backed by U.S. financing, military intelligence

and military training, used police and the Armed Forces against civilians, necessitating the FMLN's similarly military re-organization.

After twelve years of civil war, peace accords were signed in January 16, 1992 between the FMLN and the Salvadoran government, represented by the right-wing Arena party, led by President Christiani. The peace accords established a ceasefire and spelled out deadlines for dismantling the military forces of both sides, as well as changes to the constitution and other laws.

Many of these changes are still being negotiated. The UN continues to oversee the peace process through human rights monitoring and military presence.

1994 will be the first election in the history of El Salvador when all parties will be allowed to participate. Until now, left-wing parties have not been allowed to field candidates.

The current Arena government came to power during partial elections in 1989, held at the height of the war when most people were unable to vote.

*In January 1992, El Salvador signed a Peace Accord to effectively end twelve years of civil war. In March 1993, Maria Isabela Morales Anaya (Mirian) was in Canada to talk about the future of El Salvador and its women.*

*In 1992, after years of political activity, Mirian and other women leaders formed Melida Anaya Montes Women's Movement (MAM) of El Salvador to help coordinate the political work of the women's organizations throughout that country.*

*In addition to her work with MAM, Mirian is a member of the Central Committee and the Organizing the Political Education Commission of one of the most important organizations in the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).*

### What is El Salvador like today after the signing of the Peace Accord?

During the last 12 years of armed conflict in El Salvador, the internal situation hit a crisis in the areas of education, economics and politics. With the signing of the peace accord, El Salvador has started a period of transition. In this new era of reconstruction, one of the achievements has been the legalization of the FMLN as a political party and a social force. Now there are opportunities to organize new sectors of the Salvadoran population as part of a democratic process.

One group that in the past had been marginalized (despite the fact that we represent 52% of the population), and now is becoming organized is women.

Another major achievement has been an end to the military dictatorship in El Salvador. The military patrols that operated in the countryside and the national police have

both been disbanded as part of the agreement. A new force has been created called the National Civil Police. It has been formed with a new ideology of respect for the civilian population, and is made up of civilians. It is also a major accomplishment that many of the ex-combatants of the FMLN have been able to reintegrate into the society and many are participating in educational and literacy programs.

Despite these gains there are still many problems in El Salvador, most of which are related to the Armed Forces. Death squads still exist which are made up of ex-military members of the disbanded forces. The objectives of these squads are to destabilize the peace process and to terrorize the civilian population and the popular organizations that are working for peace. My group has received a number of death threats.

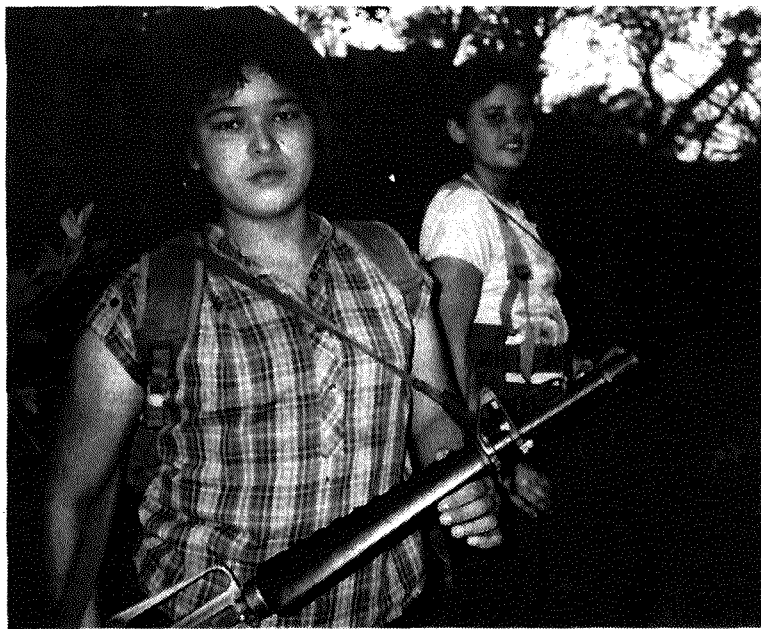
Another problem has been the emergence of criminal groups formed by members of the disbanded forces who are involved in robbery, assault, and selective assassination of leaders of unions and popular organizations. These tactics traumatize and terrorize the population and impede the effectiveness of the popular organizations. I am also concerned about the number of arms that are still circulating in the population, and are still in the hands of the disbanded military groups. The

government was supposed to collect the guns and hand them over to the United Nations by January this year. This has not happened.

There are fifteen high ranking officers in the Armed Forces who have been named as being responsible for massive massacres. As part of the peace agreement they were supposed to have been removed from their posts. This has not happened. Many of the popular groups are trying to organize international pressure to convince the UN to force the Salvadorean government to act on the agreement. (Since this interview President Christiani has agreed to remove them from their posts by June.)

The UN "Truth Commission" was supposed to investigate all the crimes committed during the war and name the parties that are responsible for the deaths. Their report (finally released in March of this year), blames the Salvadorean Armed Forces for 95% of the political assassinations and civilian massacres between 1980 and 1991.

Salvadorean President Christiani opposed the release of the report as he did not feel that the civilian population was "ready to deal with the information that dealt with who was responsible for the massacres". He lobbied to delay the release of the report until after the 1994 elections. He also opposed the release of any of the names of those responsible. The FMLN and



### Women in El Salvador

- Women make up 52% of El Salvador's population.
- 52% of women who give birth in urban areas do so at a hospital or with the assistance of a midwife; in rural areas this figure is 34%.
- Of women who give birth in hospitals, 33% die during childbirth.
- Women account for 59% of the country's illiterate; in rural areas this figure is 84%.
- Women make up 2% of El Salvador's engineers; 4% of lawyers; 1.5% of doctors.
- Unemployment among women is 61%.
- Women constitute 90% of the economy's informal sector.
- The agrarian reform laws do not consider women as land-owners, except in the case of land inherited from a deceased husband.
- In 1980, of 3000 credits, 60 were given to women; 87% of these were paid off on time.
- Only 9 representatives on the 60-member legislative assembly are women.
- In the 1989 elections, 3% of voters were women; given the high level of abstention, this is a very minimal number.
- In El Salvador, men invest an average of 45% of their income in the home; women invest an average of 95%.
- In El Salvador, there are no laws against domestic violence.
- If convicted, rapists face different sentences depending on whether or not the woman raped is a virgin, married, or a prostitute.

(Statistics supplied by the Ministry of Planning)

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# women rebuilding

an interview with Maria Isabela Morales Anaya

interview by *and*  
translation by Sara  
Torres



other popular groups put a lot of pressure on the United Nations to release the report on March 15, and demanded that nobody be exonerated for the crimes that were committed.

The report was released, and stated that the Salvadorean Armed Forces were responsible for 75,000 civilian deaths, the FMLN was responsible for 411. Since the release of the report the Salvadorean Parliament has passed an Amnesty Law forgiving the actions of all military personnel. This law has been condemned by the UN, and by many other governments, including Canada. The UN is currently pressuring Christiani to comply with the other parts of the peace agreement.

Another problem is that the foreign aid that El Salvador is receiving for reconstruction is being used to secure the current government's position for the next election. We are asking that people in Canada and other countries put pressure on their governments to demand that funds are specifically used for social reconstruction and not political purposes.

## What is happening to women and children in the country?

During the 12 years of war, mothers lost their children, wives lost their husbands, women lost their lives. Many have had to flee the country, which has caused a lot of psychological trauma for women. Our organization feels that the material reconstruction of the country will be much easier and quicker than the human reconstruction - the psychological and emotional healing.

One of the results of the war is that there are many single mothers and widows. So many of us are the head of the household and we have to take care of our children alone. We also have to look for work outside the home in order to support our children alone.

Because the underlying causes that created the war have not been resolved (ie. poverty and malnutrition), the war has ended but the problems remain. We hope that the process of reconstruction will create programs and policies to address these problems and help the children. I believe that this can happen as long as the peace agreement is followed and peace continues. There is a need for funds to be directed to caring for the children in order to avoid infant mortality and malnutrition. These problems are particularly prevalent in the countryside. Many of the peasant women are anaemic

and so their babies are born anaemic. Malnutrition is the main cause of infant mortality.

Historically women in Salvadorean society have had less opportunity for development in society. Women have a much lower level of literacy, yet the state does not have any programs to educate or train women. In this time of transition, women face the huge challenge of trying to address psychological and emotional needs, economic needs, and the discrimination and violence against women in all levels of society. The objective of MAM is to address these issues.



I started to form a feminist consciousness at the age of 11, when in my home it became time to choose which child would be able to go to school. My father decided that it would be my brother who would go instead of me. It was then that I recognized the discrimination against me as a girl, and yet it was because of our economic situation, our class, that only one child could attend school.

Because of the mentality of our community, it was the men who were supposed to go out of the home to be educated and to work, and it was the women who stayed home. I felt myself being displaced as the privilege was given to the men. Because of that rejection I wanted to prove that women were as strong and as capable as the men. It is because we were not given the opportunity that so many of us are illiterate and that women do not have technical or professional training.

At the age of 15, you were the leader of a security team of 15 men. You were put in charge of the Self Defence Team in 1979 when the repression reached even the highest members of

the Catholic Church, including Archbishop Romero and Jesuit Rutilio Grande. Did you find combat difficult as a woman?

I joined the political struggle at the age of 11. Because of my performance in the political struggle, I was given that post at fifteen. I was the only woman in the group, and I was the youngest. I was given the responsibility because I had proven myself as capable. This proved to me that women were just as capable as men in taking on these positions.

In the beginning it was a real challenge for me, and I was not

against women.

We realized that because we are women we were not given opportunity. Because we are women we were only given support tasks to do - preparing food and nursing the sick. These tasks are very important, heroic, and necessary, but they are still support tasks and they do not involve any of the decision making.

Our challenge is to begin to change our role and relationship so women become protagonists and are taken into account. We need to move to a place where we are given credit for our contribution and our work.

## How are women organizing?

There are three main women's groups in El Salvador. The MAM which was formed last year, Women's Consultation for Life, and the Co-ordination Council for Women's Organizations. These three groups work together to strategize ways to move the agenda of women forward.

We have gone together to protest at the house of the President, we have demanded the incorporation of women in the new civilian police force, and at present we are working together to develop a unique platform that can be presented from a co-ordinated group of women to the opposition in the upcoming election. We want to do this because we feel that this is the first time there will be a genuine competition in the election. It is our first real opportunity as women to present a women's platform and participate in the electoral

process in a way that will have a real impact on policy. Part of our work involves nominating women candidates and supporting them in all levels of government.

MAM advocates a democracy in which many sectors will have the opportunity to participate. We saw a strong need to form a feminist organization with these objectives. When we discussed what kind of organization we wanted to form, we knew we wanted to include all the women who would be leaving their arms and joining the civilian society. The original objective was to provide a forum for women to struggle for their own demands and developments and to express their needs in this new and transitional stage in El Salvador. We also wanted to form an organization that was really broad and would include women from many different sectors of Salvadorean society. We wanted to be a broad and pluralist movement.

Now the group is made up of ex-combatants, women from political parties, professional women, prostitutes, women from the informal sector of the economy and peasant women. All these women join MAM because they feel that it addresses their struggle as women.

cont'd on pg. 38



## SalvAide

Dedicated to the development and support of El Salvador and its people, our organization bridges the gap between Canada and El Salvador.

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# The Former Yugoslavia:

by Lepa Mladjenovic

From 1945 until 1989 the multinational state of Yugoslavia maintained its status as an independent communist nation. Ruled by Marshal Tito until 1980, Yugoslavia adopted a policy of non-alignment, establishing relations with both the East and the West, while controlled by neither. There always existed strong nationalist tensions which the Republic attempted to reconcile by dividing the state into six republics. All these republics, with the exception of Slovenia, contained significant minority groups. The cohesion of this state was reinforced by strong one-party rule under the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the repression of nationalist and political dissent.

However, in 1974 a new constitution promoted decentralization and gave considerable powers to the republic's administrations, and throughout the 1980's nationalist tensions increased as federal authority weakened. The process rapidly accelerated with the end of one-party rule in 1990 and the holding of multi-party elections in all six republics. Nationalist parties did well everywhere and in Slovenia and Croatia the new governments pressed for confederation and eventually for independence. This met with strong opposition elsewhere within Yugoslavia, particularly from Serbia, which countered with warnings that if these republics changed the state's international borders, Serbia would seek to change internal borders in order to safeguard the Serbian communities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Since this time Yugoslavia has broken at the seams and is

now in the midst of a tragic civil war based on the terrible logic of ethnic bigotry, nationalist pride, religious intolerance, and the avenging of historical injustices.

Although the vast majority of reported human rights abuses have been carried out by Serbian forces, all sides have been reported to have been involved in human rights violations. Masses of civilians face hunger, malnutrition, and starvation, as well as violent death. Thousands of women have been raped, brutalized and murdered.

Amidst this horror and turmoil, there are women in

The following article is adapted from an interview of Lepa Mladjenovic in Toronto by Maggie Helwig from the ACT for Disarmament Women's Collective and from Lepa Mladjenovic's written documents, including a statement she developed with Women in Black Against War and other feminists and pacifists in Belgrade.

From the beginning of the war in Croatia and Bosnia, testimonies show that rape occurs in thousands of cases. The victims of rape are of all nationalities, including Gypsies and Albanians who are not (yet)



each republic and ethnic community who are working to achieve change through tolerance and peaceful methods. One of these women is Lepa Mladjenovic, a clinical psychologist, a feminist, and a peace activist from Belgrade, Serbia. She is co-founder of the SOS Hotline for women and children victims of violence in Belgrade and is a member of Women in Black Against War.

in the conflict. The rape offenders belong to all military and para-military groups, as well as the civilian population. The violence hotlines in Belgrade and Zagreb are witness to the fact that since the beginning of the war, all types of male violence against women has considerably increased. Nationalist hatred has spread from the front lines to family relationships. War

rape has a devastating effect on the mental integrity of women survivors.

## Support for Women raped in war...

We have had this SOS telephone line for three years and it is a very good group with a lot of experience. Around the New Year, we formed a specific group for women raped in war. We met twice a week for this group and once for SOS. When we got together to see what we were going to do, most of us didn't know what we should do with women that were raped in war so we set up a number of long workshops to work it out. In the workshops it came out that women in the group itself feared rape, especially now. If they feared violence against women before, now they felt that what they feared before was not such a big thing. Now they are terrified because there is so much more violence against women. The war is just across the river so they fear gang rapes and rapes by men with guns.

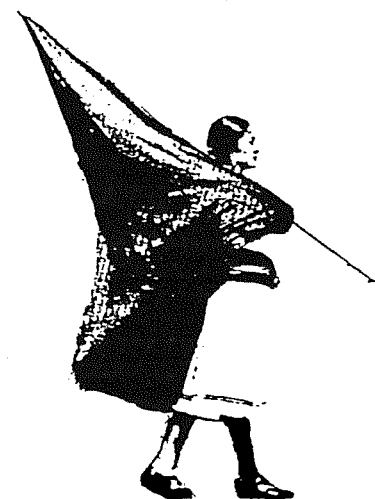
What can we do? We can't escape, because all the methods that we know as feminists and women's groups to defend ourselves will not work. We fear for our daughters. In the workshops so many fears came up. We also found that some women simply came to the group because they are isolated and want to be with other women. Many women are being harassed in the workplace if they are not nationalist. It is very difficult.

Another thing we realized is that it is extremely difficult to find the women who have been raped because in Belgrade, there are not many camps for refugees. 90% of the refugees are in families. We started by communicating with a gynecological hospital where some of the women go to have abortions. We have very few resources and little space. We have been using an institution where one of our volunteers works. The Chief there is a very sexist man who likes to have women around, so he lets us use the space. Incredible!

We started a project to try to raise money for a centre which will be like a rape crisis centre but oriented to women who have been raped in war. There will be women at the centre and women going out to smaller areas. I don't know when we will get enough money but we are planning to do a number of different things.

It is difficult because initially the women do not want to be in groups with other women who have experienced the same thing. They do not want to be with anyone else from Bosnia at all because they are afraid and they don't want people to know that they have been raped. They are terrified that someone will tell. Their main idea is that they want to forget everything and start a new life. This is impossible but, of course, we cannot start by saying that. We have to work with them very slowly. We try to start with helping them to adjust to Belgrade: finding a place to sleep, clothes, friends so that they are not alone. The main thing SOS does is to offer support to women and let them know they can trust us.

The biggest problem is the young girls who can't even talk about the rape experience at all. If there is a death in your family, it is very recognizable in a social context and you can cry. You know that people will offer support and empathy. You expect that response when you tell people. This gives you a somewhat secure feeling. If you are raped, you



## El Salvador cont'd

Our movement is now active in 13 of the 14 provinces in El Salvador. We have done work through consciousness raising and we have discussed the discrimination we have suffered as women for centuries. Our campaigns are aimed at finding and creating solutions to the problems.

We also work with men because we believe that men have to increase their level of consciousness so that they can understand that such a large part of the population can not continue to exist in such a state of underdevelopment.

The commitment to move women forward has to be everybody's commitment. It is not a 'women's problem' but

society's problem. We also argue that the struggle is not against men, but against the structures of oppression and marginalization to which we have been submitted. We advocate a very profound and transformative struggle in which we create and develop new values for women, men, and for the society as a whole. We have many struggles: the struggle of class which means changing the economic and social structures, and we have the struggle for equality of women.

Sara Torres is originally from El Salvador and is presently working at SalvAID in Ottawa.



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# a woman speaks

feel guilty and you cannot talk about it. You have to try and not talk about it. You have to try to forget it. But you cannot simply forget it. It is very complex because you feel so insecure.

Generally the women do not come in and say "It was a Muslim" or "It was a Croate". They say "It was a man", and sometimes "He was my neighbor". They do not say "I'm never going to speak to Muslims again". They say "I will not get married" because that is what is deep inside of her, that a male body has done this to her, perhaps over and over

**Women raped in war in Bosnia should not be divided nor valued differently based on their nationality. The suffering of Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and women of any other nationality has the same value.**

again.

Another tragic thing that we found out by talking to women who came from Bosnia and were raped is that the logic of dealing with rape in war is completely opposite from dealing with domestic violence. In dealing with domestic violence, the first thing that we tell women to do is resist. Hit him back. Call SOS hotline. Try to escape. Scream for help. Fight back is the main message. But you can't do that in war. The women who have been the most resistant are not alive anymore. They just kill them.

The SOS Hotline keeps a daily record of incidents of violence against women. This proves that a kind of war against women has always existed. It has simply intensified since the beginning of the war in Croatia and Bosnia. Looking at the history of women's experience worldwide, it is clear that the rape of women in wartime has

never been either socially visible or acknowledged as a war crime. It is this that we are working to change.

However, we find ourselves in a contradictory situation: on the one hand, rape in war is, for the first time in history, becoming an issue at the highest international and political levels; at the same time, the motive of those leading the discussion is not the protection of women's rights and well-being, but the use of women for war propaganda and for the intensification of ethnic and nationalist hatred. Women's suffering is being turned into an excuse for possible escalation of military action.

The reality is that rape is a military tactic used by all armies, against women of the "enemy" side in this war, as in all others. But if these "enemy" women are not available, it is used against women of the soldiers' own side as well, both on the battlefield and at home. Women raped in war in Bosnia should not be divided nor valued differently based on their nationality. The suffering of Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, and women of any other nationality has the same value. We must demand that rape in war be established as a war crime and that all soldier rapists in all armies in the world be brought to trial for committing this crime.

Women who are pregnant as a consequence of war rape must be given the right to choose whether to carry the pregnancy to term or to abort it. The right to make this choice is the right of the individual woman, not her nation, political party, government or church.

The former Yugoslavia had very good and very radical abortion laws that were set up in 1971. Abortions were legal, fully funded and the facilities were good. Women only had to pay a small token amount of money for anaesthesia. Now the amount of money for anaesthesia has been rising and rising to a point where it is about a full average salary.

A few weeks ago, a Patriarch from the Serbian church in Bosnia made a major proposal to the Serbian government that abortion should be banned completely because so many Serbs have died in the war, and because it is against the beliefs of the church. We demonstrated in front of the Patriarchy in Belgrade with lots of banners. It was our first demonstration about abortion. We thought "Are we going to be standing on the streets for years? Is this just the beginning?". We saved all our banners.

Lots of people in Belgrade did not look at abortion as killing someone. One in three women here have had an abortion and never looked at it that way. There are a lot of doctors with this same mind set from before and they still provide abortions with no problems. They do not want to stop providing that service. Even though they are very conservative on the nationalist side, some of them have opposed this mandate from the church side. The church is not so strong in Belgrade but we have heard that in the past few months, some cities in Bosnia have already stopped doing abortions.

It looks like there will be moves towards coercive birth control and abortions forced on ethnic minorities. There will be this so-called policy of selective politics on abortion and birth control.

We must demand that governments of the international community provide political asylum to women raped in war. The international community must apply pressure on all the regimes to release women from all concentration camps, private prisons, military warehouses and other institutions in which female sexual slavery is officially and unofficially perpetrated and maintained. We wish to turn the international public campaign about women raped in war in Bosnia from an argument for aggression to an argument for the protection of women's rights.

This is a terrible war, and a terrible situation for women. The good side is that for the first time in history the world is talking about rape - in general and in war. This is a great opportunity for feminists to work for change and mobilize women.

I hope that women around the world will mobilize around the issues of rape in their own countries, because you can do much more to help women in your own countries than you



Lucy Jochamowitz

can to directly help us. It is such a horrible war but if it can be used as a pretext to raise the issue of rape and violence against women globally, then that is one good thing.

You can send us books and letters of support. It gives us strength to know what you are doing, and women's solidarity and support helps us with the isolation. The small amounts of financial support help also. Sometimes the women do not realize how important the work they are doing is and I read them a few letters. It helps with the depression and gives them the strength they need to go on.

*Lepa Mladjenovic is a clinical psychologist from Belgrade, Serbia. She has published essays on violence against women, rape and war, and a feminist approach to mental health. She is also co-founder of the SOS Hotline for women and children victims of violence in Belgrade. She visited Canada in March as part of the Mother Courage Tour - a women's human rights speaking tour.*

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Serbia  
(fax: 011-38-11-635- 813)

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# Denouncing rape as a war crime

by Dorothy Q. Thomas  
and Regan E. Ralph

The horror of widespread rape in the former Yugoslavia has riveted the world's attention, but justice for women victims of rape is not yet guaranteed. International women's rights activism must intensify to ensure that rape is denounced as a war crime and that all perpetrators are held accountable.

In the past, justice has often been denied to women victims of rape in conflict. During World War II, rape was tolerated and, on occasion, explicitly sanctioned; for example, Moroccan mercenary troops fighting with Free French forces in Italy in 1943 had a "license to rape" included in their contracts. Yet rape did not figure in the Nuremberg trials, not because the Germans did not commit such abuse, but because the Allied forces did. When war crimes tribunals are held regarding the former Yugoslavia, the historic trivialization of rape must be rectified and rapists in uniform held to account.

Rape has proved a particularly fiendish tool of the Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing. Soldiers rape women in their homes, in front of their families, and in the course of interrogation. Women and girls are rounded up and taken to houses, empty schools or abandoned hotels and gang-raped night after night, sometimes by their former neighbours and

colleagues abusing the power conveyed by uniforms in war. Women and their families flee such horrors, and thus, villages are "cleansed".

Serbian and Croatian women, too, are being raped, a fact that illustrates that rape is a weapon of war deployed against women, not only



because of ethnic affiliation, but also with the political purpose to intimidate, humiliate and degrade them - as women - and others affected by their suffering.

Rape survivors everywhere also face the potential harm of forced pregnancy. Muslim women report from Bosnia-Herzegovina that rapists taunt them with the image of the Serbian babies they will be compelled to bear: "It was their aim to make a baby. They wanted to humiliate us. They would say, looking into my eyes, that they would make me

pregnant." Forcibly impregnating women or attempting to do so constitutes an abuse separate from rape itself and should be denounced, investigated and prosecuted as such.

Rape clearly constitutes a violation of international human rights standards and humanitarian law. However, given past failures to treat rape as a crime of war, it is important to denounce explicitly gender-specific abuses as the world community establishes a tribunal to try war criminals.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 808, adopted on February 22, 1993, calls for the establishment of an international tribunal to prosecute "persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991." Rape and forced pregnancy will be tried as grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and as crimes against humanity. Post-World War II military tribunals defined crimes against humanity as "[a]trocities and offences, including but not limited to murder, ... rape, or other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population ... whether or not in violation of the domestic laws of the country, were perpetrated." Prosecuting crimes against humanity will enable the

international tribunal to punish crimes committed by the parties not only against each other but also against their own citizens. The Nuremberg Tribunal, for example, prosecuted as crimes against humanity crimes committed by the Nazi government against German nationals.

In order to emphasize the gravity of rape as a war crime, the Tribunal should announce specifically in its Charter - which is currently being drafted - the intent to try rape and forced pregnancy and incorporate this commitment in its procedures. The explicit denunciation of rape and forced pregnancy will make clear that the precedent of neglect has finally been overturned.

Second, the procedures adopted by the Tribunal should demonstrate respect for the integrity of victims as well as for the rights of the accused. Rape victims hesitate to report rape because they fear for their own safety and for the well-being of relatives left behind in Bosnia. The shame associated with the nature of the abuse also deters many women from revealing what has happened to them or even seeking medical attention.

Consequently, certain measures, consistent with protecting the rights of the accused to confront and cross-examine the accuser, should be adopted to minimize further traumatization of victims living in fear of their attackers. For instance, victims should be able to choose not to be publicly identified. Evidentiary rules could be developed to curtail the use of inflammatory and irrelevant inquiry into victims' prior sexual conduct or reputation.

As with other war crimes, both perpetrators and their superiors should be held accountable for rape.

Commanders may be tried both for commission - ordering soldiers to rape, participating in the running of "rape camps" - and omission. That is, under Article 86(2) of Protocol I additional to the Geneva Convention, commanders who had information about crimes such as rape are punishable themselves if they did not do what they could to prevent or stop a grave breach.

Finally, it is important that women be involved in every level and aspect of the tribunals operations. The tribunal is presently made up of nine men and no women.

The abuse of women in the former Yugoslavia makes all too evident the need for international action to stop wartime rape. Existing international standards provide the means for denouncing and prosecuting rape and forced pregnancy as serious human rights violations. What remains is for the international community to move beyond decrying rape and make good on the promise of justice for the women of the former Yugoslavia.

*Dorothy Q. Thomas is the Director of the Women's Rights Project of Human Rights Watch. Regan E. Ralph is the staff attorney for the Women's Rights Project; her work is made possible in part by funds granted through a fellowship program sponsored by the Charles H. Revson Foundation. The statements made and views expressed, however, are solely the responsibility of the authors.*



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# Sexual assault in the media: are you worth a story?

by Jan Darby

The recent arrest of a suspect in both the "Scarborough Rapist" case, and the murders of Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffy, has sparked extensive media coverage. Much of this reporting has been sensational, focusing on the grisly details of these brutal crimes, and on the personal life of Paul Bernardo, the accused. *The Toronto Sun* even went so far as to purchase and publish Bernardo's wedding pictures, replacing the regular "Sunshine Girl" pin-up shot with a photo of the bride and groom.

The irresponsible journalism associated with this case has received intense criticism. Debbie Mahaffy, Leslie's mother, has made a public statement denouncing the media for adding to her family's pain with insensitive and misleading reports. She berated the press for attempting to profit from others' tragedies.

While the media's sensational treatment of this particular case has indeed been morbid and tasteless, it is most problematic in the way it distorts issues of violence against women. The media's coverage of this, and other high-profile cases of sexual violence, reinforces many of our society's myths about rape and womanslaughter.

For example, media reports tend to focus on sexual attacks committed by strangers, even though this type of assault accounts for a small percentage of violent crimes against women. Cases of date rape, acquaintance rape, wife battering and "domestic" murder receive much less attention, if they are covered at all. Women are thus wrongly led to believe that they are most likely to be attacked

by strangers, rather than by the men with whom they live or work.

At the time that the "Scarborough Rapist" assaults were taking place, I was working as a volunteer counsellor with a Rape Crisis Centre. Police and journalists were warning women not to venture out alone at night, and to take extra safety precautions when using public transit. During that time, I received countless calls from women wanting information about self-defence courses, deterrent sprays, and alarm gadgets. But during that time, I did not receive a single crisis



call from a woman assaulted by a stranger. The litany of women naming their attackers remained the same: my father, my husband, my boyfriend, my brother, my boss, my co-worker, my classmate, my neighbour, my doctor, even police officers - but not a single stranger.

The media's emphasis on attacks by strangers thus skews public perception of what constitutes rape. An American study found that one quarter of the college women surveyed had been forced to have sexual intercourse by a male partner, yet the

researchers noted that "such assaults tend not to be reported to any authorities and often are not defined as 'rape' by either participant."

Another closely-related myth about rape is the belief that "normal" men don't rape, that rape is a crime committed by only a few isolated monsters. By focusing on serial rapists and murderers, the media reinforces this myth.

In the Mahaffy and French murders, the press began suggesting a possible link between the cases, and the murders of other young Ontario women, even before police had found evidence of a connection. When Bernardo was arrested on suspicion of these murders, and also charged in connection with the assaults in Scarborough, the CBC Radio News emphasized the "relief" felt by women living in the area, as if this one man were the sole source of all violence against women in those communities. Indeed, the press continues to speculate that Bernardo may be responsible for countless other unsolved rapes and murder in Canada and the United States.

By demonizing particular high-profile rapists in this way, the media obscures the prevalence of male violence towards women in our society. The "Rapist" is seen as an aberration, an identifiable "weirdo," like the hypothetical "bad men" lurking in the ravines of Margaret Atwood's fiction.

Yet in studies conducted in the United States over the last three decades, one quarter of male college students consistently admitted to having attempted to force a woman to have intercourse, with five percent actually admitting having raped a woman. Contrary to the myth, violence against women is clearly a

wide-spread social phenomenon, a crime committed by apparently "normal" men.

Much of the fascination with the Bernardo case, however, centres around the accused rapist/murderer's apparent normality. Journalists express astonishment at his "boy-next-door" looks, his university degree, and his employment as an accountant, as if white, middle-class men were incapable of committing rape and murder.

Press coverage of the Mahaffy and French murders has also reinforced the myth that only young, attractive women are at risk for sexual violence. Rosi DiManno, in a *Toronto Star* article, began an eulogy for the two murdered young women with the phrase "Pretty young girls". The women assaulted by the "Scarborough Rapist" have also been described as predominantly young, with long hair. After Kristen French's body was found, a great deal of attention centred on the fact that her "flowing chestnut hair" had been cut short. Journalists also continue to report that she was last seen wearing her school uniform, even though that information was no longer necessary for purposes of identification.

The media portrayal of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French as young, innocent, and pretty, heightened public outrage over their murders. After their deaths, these young women were turned into "celebrities". Yet, this focus on youth and beauty glosses over the reality that women of all ages and appearances are subject to sexual violence.

In contrast to the Mahaffy and French murders, the murder of Donelda Moran received little media attention. The sixty year old Toronto

woman was raped and beaten to death in October 1991. She was found behind a hockey arena, naked, bleeding, and in a coma. She died two days later in hospital, without regaining consciousness. No public outcry followed her death.

The *Toronto Star's* account of her murder was brief. It stated that she had been drinking in a café on the night of her death. A friend reported to police that she had left the café with a man in his thirties, whom she had met that evening. This same source was quoted as saying that she had been flirting with the man, and had had a lot to drink. The *Star* also quoted the woman's neighbours, who said she was a heavy drinker and often took younger men back to her apartment. The tone of the article implied that the murdered woman had brought about her own death through her drinking and sexual behaviour.

Donelda Moran's murder was as brutal and horrific as those of Leslie Mahaffy and Kristen French, yet the press showed little interest. Donelda Moran was portrayed as "asking for it" - an older woman who drank too much and picked up young men. Because she was not young, pretty and "innocent," the media saw her death as being somehow less of a tragedy.

Clearly, myths about rape and womanslaughter influence the media's coverage of such crimes. By choosing to emphasize certain cases, while virtually ignoring others, and by stereotyping both the victims and the attackers, the media distorts public perceptions of violence against women.

Jan Darby is a freelance researcher/ writer in the field of women's health.

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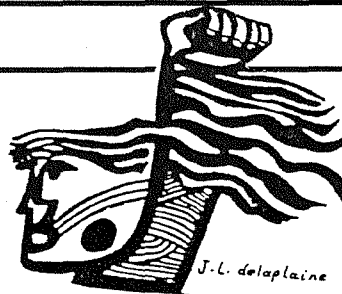
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## womenspeak cont'd from page 3



degrees be paid more than staff without degrees. Unfortunately, after more than five years, the staff members of Bryony House still do not even have their first collective agreement, nor have they resolved the controversy regarding life-skilled versus degreed counsellors. With Anita's firing there are currently no full-time staff who are ex-residents. As well, there is no representation of ex-residents on the Bryony House Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors of Bryony House has agreed to an arbitration process whereby

Anita has been given the chance to refute the charges against her. The Public Service Alliance of Canada, the union officially representing the staff at Bryony House, will be representing Anita during the appeal procedure this June. Because the case is going to arbitration we are not allowed to discuss the details of her firing.

Anita's firing is not the first instance where the Board of Bryony House has failed to consider the rights of its employees. The Board has failed to cope with the demands of a unionized staff, and it has fired staff without warning

before. In the past eight and a half years there have been six Executive Directors and a continual turnover of unpaid Board members.

The Bryony House Board continues to show a lack of organizational and managerial skills, which has had a negative impact on staff members struggling to do their very important work. Perhaps it is time to question the competency of this Board. Perhaps the problem lies in the concept of a volunteer community board which has little accountability.

Bryony House is managed

through a hierarchical structure, with the Board of Directors relying on getting information through the Executive Director and sub-committees. The structure is top heavy with little protection for employees. Usually employees working in this type of situation try to create a strong union. But Bryony House has not even allowed its employees that tool. There have been major disagreements over union issues and the fact that Anita was the Union president put her in a position where she could easily be scapegoated for

bringing up controversial issues.

Bryony House has accepted a very patriarchal structure for governing its employees while still maintaining that it is a feminist organization. Bryony House was originally a collective in the late seventies. In 1983, the Board of Directors chose to hire an Executive Director.

Anita has received tremendous support from her community - support letters have been received from the United States and across Canada. Initially Anita was told that she might not be entitled to unemployment benefits at all because of impending changes to the U.I.C. Act. She was told that she might have to wait for some time perhaps as long as twelve to fourteen weeks, at which point she would receive as little as 50% of her wages. She was also told that Social Assistance would not be available for six to eight weeks. Currently, Anita is on U.I.C., but she has had to declare bankruptcy. During her wait for assistance she was fortunate enough to receive donations from a support fund that was established for her by her community. If Anita had not been living in a cooperative housing apartment at the time of her firing, she would be homeless today. She did not have enough money saved to pay for rent and food for the approximately 2 1/2 month period she had to wait for U.I.C.

The firing of Anita Martinez from Bryony House has raised all kinds of issues such as the competency of the Board of Directors, the hierarchal structures of transition houses, the lack of feminist principles in the work environment, the need for accountability, and the issue of "professionalism" and the inherent dangers associated with transition houses becoming another branch of the social service system.

As friends of Anita we believe that enough is enough and it is time to start questioning what has been happening at Bryony House. We will be closely watching the outcome of Anita's arbitration in June.

If you would like to write letters protesting Anita's firing you can write the Board of Directors at Bryony House, Attn: Anne Beths, c/o Public Service Alliance of Canada, Parkwest Centre, Suite 301, 287 Lacewood Drive, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3M 3Y7.

Clear Anita Martinez Collective, Kathleen Tetlock, Yvonne Manzer, Debbie Mathers, Verona Singer. Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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# "Beauty" magazines and your health

by Catherine McNair

Mainstream women's magazines are often dismissed as fluffy, lightweight collections of makeup ads and fashion layouts. In her best-selling *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf argues that the magazines should be taken much more seriously, as the only representatives of women's mass culture. She goes on to praise their feminist content while criticizing their cookie-cutter approach to beauty.

I took Wolf's book and Eva Székely's *Never Too Thin* as the starting points for my own study of women's magazines. These authors looked at how today's excessively thin beauty ideal is often presented as a healthy way to look; I inverted things by focusing on the magazine's health coverage proper, including but not limited to where it intersects with beauty. I wanted to determine whether, as a minimum, the health advice magazines gave their readers was sound, and therefore likely to be beneficial if you and I follow it. I also felt that ideal health coverage should recognize the interaction between the physical, mental, and social aspects of health, instead of just looking at the physical. On both of these counts I found that the 30 magazines I looked at were, at times, lacking.

First of all, Wolf and Székely are correct in saying that the magazines overemphasize the importance of leanness and youthfulness to health. First, they always use thin, young models to illustrate their health stories - so that becomes the picture of health. Sometimes the visual analogy is reinforced by using "real" (older, heavier, minority) women as models of illness. For example, "real" women were used to illustrate an article on unsanitary meat plants, and another one about college alcoholics.

The beauty/health link also appears in some of the text. Many magazine articles simply assume that women want to lose weight. The articles offer diet and exercise as a means of doing this, and claim that

this is a healthful thing to do anyway - which it is, in moderation. However, not all articles emphasize moderation. The "celebrity profiles" meant to inspire readers, for example, are often studies of extremes: Madonna jogs 8 miles daily, followed by an hour of aerobics, weights and stretching, then dance practice. Shelley Long not only avoids pastries; she also tries not to eat too much fruit because it contains sugar. Without the professional supervision these ladies can afford, imitators risk athletic injury or malnutrition. They would become **less** healthy than before.

For the record, fat on the hips and thighs appears on women in preparation for childbirth, and usually poses no risk to the heart (unlike abdominal fat). From a health standpoint, women are better off being slightly overweight than under, and maintaining weight or gradually gaining with age is much safer than constantly losing and regaining, as most dieters do. Furthermore, wrinkles and sagging pose no health risk, and on men aren't even considered unattractive. Nonetheless, *Self* magazine refers to the "diet-resistant fat" on the hips and thighs and facial wrinkles as "medical problems", with cosmetic surgery the only "cure". Surgery is always risky and, in the short term, makes one less healthy than before - bruising, swelling, and pain are to be expected.

Things are equally uneven on the mental health front. On the positive side, I found several useful articles on body image and self-esteem in the 1991-92 magazines. They recognized the pressure of the beauty ideal and encouraged readers to accept themselves and *not* diet unless they were truly, medically, overweight. To boost self-esteem, they said to focus on body parts you like. On the negative side, *Self* continued to advise readers to scrutinize themselves for fat, flabby body parts to firm up. The best cure for low self-esteem, according to *Self*, is

losing weight. The advice doesn't seem to have helped its readers; 93% of those polled were dissatisfied with how their bodies looked.

Sometimes oppositions are evident within one magazine. *Mademoiselle* advises on one page that thinking of food as "sinful" isn't healthy, then a few pages later explains how to "select your sins" when eating out. Ascribing health activities

people thinking they are "lazy, sloppy, inert, dull, and slightly corrupt": "The choice is yours...", he says.

Social health involves looking at health from a mass instead of an individual standpoint, and it was the magazines' weakest point. They did feature well-researched stories on social issues such as rape, sexual harassment, and reproductive

population group who exercises least, eats the most sugar and fat, and has the highest obesity rates. Is this because of weak character, or because they can't afford nutritious foods and designer running shoes? How can people without shelter, education, income, and safety worry about target heart rates and fat percentages? The belief that health is controllable blames illness on those who have the least power and resources to effect change for the better.

I'm not suggesting that we all break out the Twinkies and park in front of the television as a political act. It's fine to try to boost your physical well-being by eating well and being active, so long as you are aware that others don't necessarily have the time or money for self-care, that overweight people aren't all overeating couch potatoes, that the media beauty ideal is unrealistic and unhealthy for most, and that your behaviour is no guarantee of good health.

The low self-esteem and body hatred so prevalent among North American women is not healthy, but nor is it irrational. Social prejudice against larger and older people is real, is palpable, and is largely accepted. First we have to become aware of how prevalent these attitudes are. Then we have to work at changing them.

Catherine McNair recently earned her MA in Language and Professional Writing with a much longer version of this article. She now works as a Technical Writer.



with moral values is actually fairly common in the magazines. Throughout the years *Shape* has advised readers to "use guilt as a motivator" (1985) to avoid "sinful" foods and choose "saintly" ones (1987), being boosted perhaps by "the heavenly hip workout" (1984). All of this guilt is not healthy, and cookie consumption is a very poor basis for judging a person's character or moral worth.

Science is discovering that weight is not nearly as controllable as once thought; the body fights to stay at a certain mass, whether that is a "healthy-looking" one or not. Magazines have been a little slow to pick up on this however, and sometimes suggest that those who look old and/or fat get that way through their own "misdeeds": "The skin never forgets an injury. And it pays cumulative interest on bad behaviour", says *Allure*. A 1990 *Shape* article classifies women who overeat under categories such as Miss Pig-Out, the Ostrich, and Baby Cakes. The latter is depicted in a diagram as a grown woman dressed in baby clothes crying her eyes out, and she is described as follows: "Waa! It's not my fault! Baby Cakes blames others for her overeating and considers herself a victim..." *Shape's* publisher assumes the overweight are responsible for

rights, but these weren't classified as health stories. I found no articles that dealt with the problem of poverty, nor any that mentioned the link between low income and poor health: the poor are most likely to suffer infant mortality, malnutrition, stress, cancer, mental illness, and trauma; incidence increases as income falls. Yes, they are also the

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by Sharon F. Jensen

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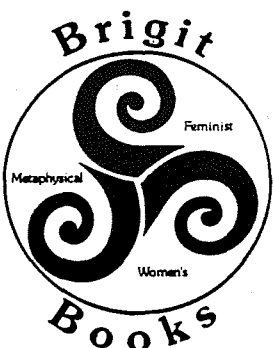
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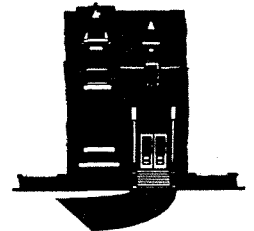
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# Women's History Explored

Review: British Columbia considered: Essays on Women

You don't have to be a history buff to appreciate *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women*. If you're interested in the role that women had in shaping Canadian history, this book will be a valuable resource. The collection of twenty-one essays (two written by men) is a mixture of archival research, First Nations culture, perspectives by women of colour, autobiography, interviews and current historical trends. There is also a very useful bibliography by Theresa Healy in the final section.

Editors Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag provide an introduction to the five major themes of the book. These themes organize the essays into four sections: Pioneering, Politics, Domestic Life, Culture and Work and Poverty. Of this approach Creese and Strong-Boag say, "We believe that our categories not only reflect the emphasis of much work in women's studies, but also provide a guide to crucial teaching areas."

For the most part these themes work in providing a practical framework for the varied styles and content of the writing. But in my opinion, the First Nations and women of colour contributors integrate a number of these themes into each essay. As non-native anthropologist Jo-Anne Fiske writes in *Career Women and the Politics of Mothering*, "In their struggle to maximize economic and political opportunities, women's political strategies and cultural constructions are mutually reinforcing. Women view their political involvements and capabilities as an extension of their domestic roles."

Still other essays explore the psychological aspects for women behind the history. Helga Jacobson and Naida Hyde write in *Still Kissing the Rod: Women and Violence in*

by Diane Rae Wazny



*British Columbia*, "Women see themselves as responsible both for what happens to them and for the caretaking of men. Sex-role socialization of women serves to underwrite the appropriateness of supportive attitudes and behaviours towards men, regardless of how misogynous men's behaviour is. Violence against women can then be minimized and normalized in the ways described..."

Altogether an ambitious editing job for Creese and Strong-Boag, the combination of writing styles from one essay to another can vary quite a lot and this may require some adjustments on the part of the reader. The strength of the book rests on the individual contributions and then how these form a volume of women's history. Sort of how feminism works.

I would recommend this book for use in history programs within Canadian colleges and universities but particularly those in the province of British Columbia. Also, it would be wonderful to see another volume of writing address the history of women in arts, women in northern communities and the life stories of women who broke ground (and still do) for women to enter traditionally male dominated careers.

Diane Rae Wazny is a Vancouver artist who was on staff for the 1991 Westwork Writing Retreat for Women and a 1992 board member for West Coast Women and Words.

## Going with the Flow: A review of Blessing of the Blood

by Yolande Bélanger Mennie

*Blessings of the Blood: A Book of Menstrual Lore and Rituals for Women*  
by Celu Amberston (Cornwoman)  
Beach Holme Publishers Limited,  
Victoria, B.C.  
197 pages

For almost twenty years now, I have had a guilty secret: I actually *enjoy* my periods; I *like* to bleed. I have rarely talked about this with other women; especially when there has been a lot of complaining going on, often about very real physical pain and discomfort.

So it was with delight that I discovered *Blessings of the Blood*, by Celu Amberston (Cornwoman), the first book that I have seen in many years which unabashedly celebrates menstruation.

My buried sense of wonder and awe came back to me as I read. Not everything in the book appealed to my interest, but enough of it did to satisfy my need and curiosity. Like water in a desert, the book quenched my thirst for positive and genuine images and perceptions about periods.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Each chapter is a collection of short pieces collected by the author from a wide variety of American and Canadian women of all ages and persuasions. They describe their experiences with menstruation (positive and negative), rituals they have organized or participated in, techniques for healing menstrual problems, insights about their bodies and sexuality, spiritual aspects of menstruation, and links between women's cycles and artistic activity. The last chapter deals with the end of menstruation, through menopause or hysterectomy.

Of Cherokee and Celtic descent, the author is a writer and ceremonialist who uses both Wiccan and Native shamanism in her work. Consequently, there is a lot of both of these traditions in the book, as well as other voices such as shiatsu practitioners, psychologists, and various stories from all walks of life: some difficult, some joyous, some funny.

From a student in her 20s in Toronto: "My brother was the youngest in a family of four girls. We were quite open about our periods around him when he was about three or four. We were expecting company one Christmas, and

he wanted to help prepare for the big event. He was so small there wasn't much he could do, but kept bugging us and getting in the way. Finally, my mother told him to set the table in the dining room and to be sure and put a napkin at each place. Later, when we brought in the food, we had to laugh because he had neatly put by each place a Kotex napkin."

**"If I could give some advice to the young girls coming along behind me, I'd tell them to be proud of who they are. Enjoy being a woman. Take each stage as you come to it and enjoy it fully while it lasts, but when it's time, let go and move on to the next stage in your life... Enjoy it all."**

For women who are already actively involved in women's spirituality groups, many of the rituals and experiences described in this book, such as "first blood rituals" for young girls, may already be familiar. For others, the book can be a springboard to a new

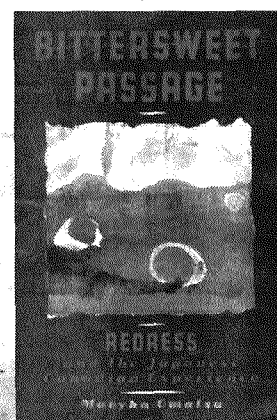


awareness of the potential power and centrality of this part of women's lives. While there is an emphasis on spirituality and ritual - which will appeal to some women but not to others - the book as a whole provides us with a multitude of women's voices and interesting information.

A grandmother in her 60s in Atlanta, Georgia, sums up neatly the spirit of the book: "If I could give some advice to the young girls coming along behind me, I'd tell them to be proud of who they are. Enjoy being a woman. Take each stage as you come to it and enjoy it fully while it lasts, but when it's time, let go and move on to the next stage in your life... Enjoy it all."

Certainly the plethora of women's voices and wisdoms in this book is something to be enjoyed, and can also inspire us to reclaim our bodies and cycles, each of us according to our personal inclinations.

Yolande Bélanger Mennie is a book lover and a writer.



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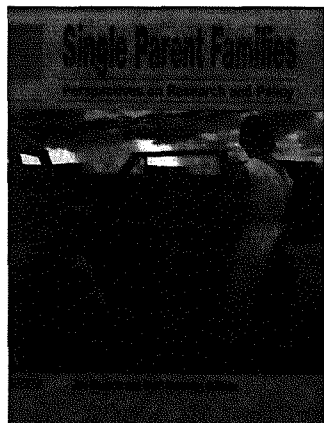




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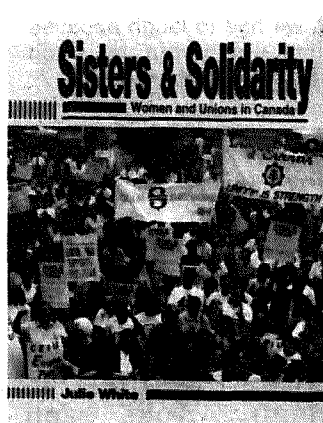
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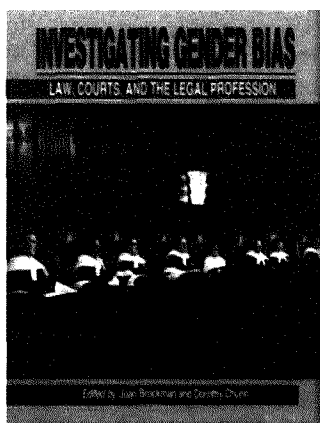


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## k.d. lang Carrying the Torch

k.d. lang  
Carrying the Torch  
by William Robertson  
ECW Press  
112 pages

reviewed by Alexandra  
Keir

I am a feminist and a k.d. lang fan. She's gorgeous, she has an amazing voice, she follows her own drums and takes personal risks in a huge public way, she's vegetarian and lesbian and I'd like to know more about her. When handed a biography written about her, I am immediately nervous and I approach cautiously. What kind of approach will this male writer take and will I feel angry? Will reading this challenge the pedestal that I have created for her? As it turns out, there was no need for concern.

The author starts us off in the recent past with his reflections on the first k.d. lang concert he attended in Saskatoon in 1985. The setting is a country dance hall with an eclectic audience which he describes in some detail. Then, in a fairly dry historical kind of way, he explains how

commitment to their brand of country.

For anyone not familiar with k.d. lang's music, videos and movies, William Robertson does give a lot of detail about what is on the album covers as well as descriptions about who wrote which songs and what some of the songs might be about. It also clarifies some of the events surrounding the rather negative response she continues to have from the beef industry.

Websters defines biography as "an account of a person's life" this book certainly is that, from birth, November 2, 1961, in Edmonton to publication in 1992. The author has researched and read many articles about k.d. lang and quotes from them generously. In fact that may be the book's strong point. It is a large collection of quotes about k.d. lang.



Kathy Dawn Lang became k.d. lang... and then when she was 12 her parents separated ... and then when she was 14 ... she probably... according to someone she ... he quotes a few childhood friends and school teachers. Perhaps there is not a lot written about her childhood and without any direct input from her or her family it's difficult to gather those entertaining tidbits that make biographies interesting reading.

The book changes its pace a bit for some detail about how k.d. broke into the music scene and nearly grinds to a stop examining the Nashville Sounds influence over country music. Following that is a review of how the country music powers that be felt about k.d.'s questionable

k.d. lang is 32 years old and I would rather read a biography that she at least participated in or preferably something she wrote herself than all the quotes from Rolling Stone or the Alberta Report. To tell you the truth, I would rather listen to her sing.

This book begins with a chronology and essentially as far as I'm concerned it could end there. For those fans who might approach this with caution, throw it to the wind. It's unlikely you'll read anything here that you don't already know and if you're looking for anything about her coming out as lesbian ... look somewhere else.

Alexandra Keir is a displaced Maritimer and writer now living in Ottawa.

# Domino: Filming the Stories of Interracial People

by Shanti Thakur

"My interracial heritage has given me the best of both worlds. The Japanese and British cultures are so opposite but so similar - you learn to bridge the similarities, while never forgetting the differences." (Elizabeth, 23, Japanese/English)

"Learning about my interracial heritage at 18 distanced me from my brothers because it was understood that we were in fact half-brothers, and then they knew why I was a light-skinned Black: my father was Chinese." (Leith, 43, Black/Chinese/European)

Three years ago, I wanted to break the sense of isolation I felt as an interracial woman and plunged into researching who my community was. This exploration pulled me towards producing and directing the one hour documentary *Domino*, which portrays the personal histories of interracial adults.

I was curious to know how other people of mixed race experienced the role of being a cultural broker within their families.

The six people in the documentary share the insights they experienced during turning points in their lives where cultural differences emerge; birth, adolescence and dating, career choice/education, partner selection, starting one's family and finally, the death of our parents. These turning points in our lives are when we refer to our most profound beliefs. When we have two or more "races" or systems of cultural beliefs to choose from in a home, our identity can oscillate throughout our lifetimes, as we go from one set of cultural beliefs to another.

I was born in Vancouver and I'm the only child of an East-

Indian father and a Danish mother. My experience crossed the borders of culture, language, religion and colour. My dad immigrated from India and my mother immigrated from Denmark. On my father's side, choosing a European wife was a reflection of other personal choices. Hindu at birth, he decided very early that religion wasn't for him. Later, while



preparing to leave for the States, his parents did everything they could to dissuade him from going to the "corrupt West". His career choice was seen as stepping down the caste hierarchy. My parents married in Vancouver.

When his parents got the news, they were furious because they had planned an arranged marriage for him. They also thought he would return to India. (The choice of an European wife symbolized embracing the "West" and rejecting his own country). On the other hand, my mother's family, from a small farming town in Denmark accepted my father with open arms.

Today, my parents are still married. But 30 years ago, they thought that their love would conquer all forms of racism.

Once in Canada and in the corporate world, my father opted for total assimilation. He wanted to be Canadian to the bone - at the expense of

forgetting his Hindi and Bengali languages. Assimilation to the dominant culture in Canada was a question of survival. Assimilating to the culture in power facilitates entry to the institutions of a society. My father believed in the myth of assimilation - that to take on the dominant culture would immunize him (and me) from racism and discrimination.

I was raised as the "Canadian" kid: my parents felt their languages and cultures weren't "useful". Being ignorant of my background did not immunize me from being the scapegoat, of being a "paki".

Growing up in Vancouver in the 70's, there was an influx of South Asian immigrants which created a "threat" to the dominant society. Violence and racist media coverage against South Asians was everywhere. Being the only brown kid in school, I was the one who "smelled" and was "stupid". The teachers were totally unaware of what was going on: my grades took a nose-dive. I couldn't understand how I was being associated with the immigrants. At ten years of age, I wasn't capable of understanding the roots of racism, I only knew that I was being identified with people I didn't know anything about.

My parents were as distressed as I was. They wanted to protect me from racism, but at the same time, I wanted to protect them from what was happening. My European mother didn't have the reference points for telling me how to deal with racism ... but she tried her best to get me to talk about it. On the other hand, my father didn't want to talk about it. I was told to ignore the comments, and that the kids were "jealous" and

"ignorant". Our family unit was everything - it was the one safe place to be. And we guarded it by remaining silent.

Survival strategy #1: keep busy reading, swimming or playing the piano. Strategy #2: do not read the newspapers because the racist coverage of immigrants only underline that it isn't only kids who are "ignorant", but society at large.

At fourteen, we moved to Montréal and my life changed radically. We weren't isolated anymore. The school I went to had 80% immigrant kids. There was a mixture of class, language, religions and visible and invisible minorities. My difference, which were so repugnant in Vancouver were considered natural, even interesting, in Montréal. For the first time in my life, my peers accepted me and I could start to accept myself.

Through the experience of speaking to a wide range of other interracial people, I'm not



ready to group such a wide range of experiences under a banner of "mixed race culture". The experiences I heard were very different from each other: some people identify with one culture, both, or neither culture. Mixed race people can experience racism from either one of their parents' backgrounds. Some mixed race people experience racism at its worst: within the family network and by society's imposed reactions onto them. Others may experience only isolated incidents in comparison.

There's no doubt: if anyone knows that race is a social construct, it's interracial people. Our very existence points to its falseness. Our experience lies in cultural flexibility. We learn very early the ways of international people, to translate their reality to the "mainstream", and to translate the "mainstream" back to them. Having learned this on such a personal level, it's only natural to continue to seek and meet people from cultures very different from our own. As "cultural brokers" in our own homes, it only feels normal to continue the tradition in the outside world.

But at the same time, we

know that the "multicultural mosaic" which we're living in is, in fact, a racial hierarchy. This hierarchy is very present in interracial families - by the reactions society imposes upon us (not to mention the different treatment family members receive in society according to their race). Whether we want to or not, we internalize the racism which seeps into our consciousness: through the media, school, the extended family, and our peers. But race is not the only issue. It's a lot more complex. Interracial families' dynamics are dependent upon many factors of their environment: demographics, political climate, language, religion, the history of slavery and the dynamic between the colonizer and the colonized.

Very often, parents who were raising us in the 50's, 60's and 70's taught their children the same survival mechanism they used: cultural assimilation. The idea of racial immunity was at the heart of their reasoning: the less you know about your culture the more immune you are against racist incidents. Yet, we became more white than our white peers and were still called "paki" "nigger" or "noodle". The more the names were hurled, the more we tried to be like them. In reality, this assimilation was a symbol of the cultural amnesia our parents had to use in order to survive. But, in rejecting these differences, they denied their children the self-esteem, pride and tools for managing racism.

My contact with so many interracial people not only inspired me to make a film - it also empowered me to understand who I am - a woman of colour and a woman of two cultures. Now I can understand that I'm not alone in this experience.

Mixed race children are the minority within the minority. But in the future, the majority of us will be more or less mixed race. Our sense of identity is linked to our sense of self esteem, which is reflected back to us by our actions. The importance of transcending our cultural boundaries is essential for knowing who we are - not as a member of a particular racial group, but as a member of a community which shares the same ideas and values.

Shanti Thakur is an independent filmmaker who concentrates on social issues in general and inter-cultural issues in particular. She was producer/director of the documentary *Crossing Borders*. Her documentary *Domino* will be a co-production between the National Film Board and her company, Lucida Films Inc.

## Black on Screen: Images of Black Canadians



**Black on Screen** is a new catalogue of collected films and videos that spans five decades of moving images around Black Canadian experiences. It includes works by women inside and outside the Black community, including almost one hundred listings, and provides short descriptions and distribution information. It is the first of its kind in Canada, and has been put together by the National Film Board's Studio D. It is a collection that provides a possible framework and historical context in which to view the growing emergence of work by Black Canadian women

and men. The listings span from the growing body of recent work including *Sisters in the Struggle* (directors: Dionne Brand and Ginny Stikeman, 1991), back to archival films which provide a store-house of information: as a record of how people within the Black Communities were seen by others, especially non-Black filmmakers, and how the Black communities were constructed on film during certain periods of time. Copies of the catalogue can be obtained from: Studio D - Marketing, National Film Board of Canada, P-43 Box 6100, Station A, Montreal, Quebec, H3C 3H5.

# "Toward Intimacy" explores issues of disability and intimacy

by Catherine Frazee  
and Patricia Seeley

All women from time to time come up against a situation which, when they look for advice or guidance, proves to have gone unresearched by the male-stream. For example, information about female sex and sexuality has only recently been readily available and is still scarce for women outside of major urban centres.

Imagine the challenges faced by women with disabilities trying to access specific information about sexuality and intimacy. It seems that no one had every made this effort of imagination before a self-help group in St. John's, Newfoundland approached the National Film Board (NFB) in an attempt to rent a film which had not yet been made. Their request sparked the interest of the NFB and St. John's filmmaker, Debbie McGee, and **Toward Intimacy** was born.

McGee worked closely with the women in the St. John's group as well as with the DisAble Women's Network of Canada (DAWN). Thanks to her own sensitivity and the wise counsel of her advisors, McGee avoids the traps of stereotype and voyeurism, and presents a serious, searching account of the lives and struggles of women with disabilities.

This excellent documentary focuses on the lives of four women with various disabilities, two of them from the original St. John's support group, one from Winnipeg, and one from Victoria. (Note, please, none from Toronto, Montréal or Vancouver!) Each has taken an enormous personal risk to be part of this documentary, in hopes of changing the world for others, whether able or disabled. With courage and grace, these women share with viewers what no one shared with them. They acknowledge and affirm to themselves and each other the desire and the right to be sexually active and to experience the joys, challenges, disappointments and comforts which are the fruits of intimacy.

This film attempts to be emotionally explicit, rather than sexually graphic. There's no actual sex in the film, but there

are moments of powerful intensity which stem from the speaking of personal truth by women who have had to confront that truth head-on. We meet Gail and her partner Roger, Helen and her husband Mike, Amethya and her lesbian partner Cory, and Barbara, a single mother of four sons.

These women are remarkable only in that the ordinariness of their plans, dreams and desires still seems so extraordinary in the context

experiences and social infrastructure around that maturation - is taken for granted as being integral to adulthood in our society. For women with disabilities, this maturation process has not been taken for granted. In fact, it has been actively oppressed in some cases or simply neglected and ignored in others. Already sidelined in so many ways, women with disabilities are told that they shouldn't be sexual, shouldn't

Although it does avoid the fate of being just another film about the joys of independent living (you know, the thrills of cooking your own dinner or doing your own laundry which are supposed to provide sufficient self-respect and fulfillment for any disabled person, more than they ever dreamt possible), it falls short of really grappling with the emotional complexities and excruciating realities of the heart which provide so much of the fuel for our culture's theater, film and fiction.

However, **Toward Intimacy** is a good film. It should be mandatory viewing for everyone who works or aspires to work in health care, counselling or rehabilitation services, because it is a film about possibilities: possibilities which will only become realities for the majority of people with disabilities when those who have the power to shape and limit our lives recognize and respect the rights and potentials of the people over whom they exert control. For everyone else whether you have a disability know and/or love someone with a disability, or know nothing at all about disability, it is highly recommended. These four women are worth taking the time to get to know.

Catherine Frazee and Patricia Seeley are partners in life and work, with firsthand experience of living with a disability. Their personal, community and professional backgrounds centre on advocacy for human rights, equality and social justice. They live and work in Toronto.



Helen Spurrell and her husband Michael. Helen speaks frankly of her sexuality and feels both amused and annoyed that this comes as a surprise to many people. She recalls the amazement of the admitting physician in a hospital when she listed birth control pills as one of her medications. When asked by the doctor why she was taking birth control pills, she responded, "Well, what do you think?"

of the knee-jerk reaction of able-bodied society to those dreams: a reaction of rejection and foreclosure. The success of the film lies in its willingness to let the women tell their own stories and define what to them are relevant topics in a film about sexuality.

Their stories include the struggle to achieve autonomy and self-expression, the difficulties of meeting one's partner on equal terms, the struggle to develop and maintain a strong sense of self-worth, coping with factors which compound the experience of oppression: lesbian identity, sexual abuse history, racism and poverty, and much more.

Maturing into intimate sexual contact - the emotional

want or expect to attract intimate relationships, shouldn't even consider bearing or raising children, etc.

One member of the St. John's group tries to place a positive value on her loneliness, choosing to think of it as "solitude", and while the attitude is respected and even honoured, her stoicism is not embraced by the rest of the group, none of whom have the desire to live ascetic, contemplative lives. They want friends, lovers and children, and they are determined to have them!

While each woman's story is unique, they share the common yet deeply personal struggle to nurture a positive sense of themselves as healthy adult women, with gifts, needs and legitimate aspirations. Underlying each story told are untold volumes of painful psychological growth-work which have gone into each woman's personal integration of the emotional, intellectual and physical aspects of her identity.

And yet, the definitive film about intimacy and disabled women remains to be made. While it attempts to cover much ground, the film loses in depth what it gains in breadth.

## Making Culture: Making Change

An easy-to-read 16-page resource on the role of Canadian artists in social change. Artists of diverse backgrounds speak about their work, their struggles to make a decent living and concrete ideas for using art within community action. Includes user's guide and list of contact groups.

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# Forbidden Love

## The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives

**Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives** is a new NFB film directed by Aerlynn Weissman and Lynne Fernie. The film documents the lives of nine lesbian women who were "out" in Canadian beer parlours, clubs and society during the 1950s and 60s. Their stories, set in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, are brought to life through a series of wonderful interview clips where the women talk about what it was like to be a lesbian in the years that history has remembered as the time of Beaver Cleaver and his perfect American, white, middle class, heterosexual family. While the 1950's ideal model for femininity was being propagated in popular culture, the actual lives and desires of a large segment of the population remained radically different. This film tells the stories of some of these women, and by presenting another side of the story, creates a space for all women who did not fit the stereotype of the time.

The stories range from being

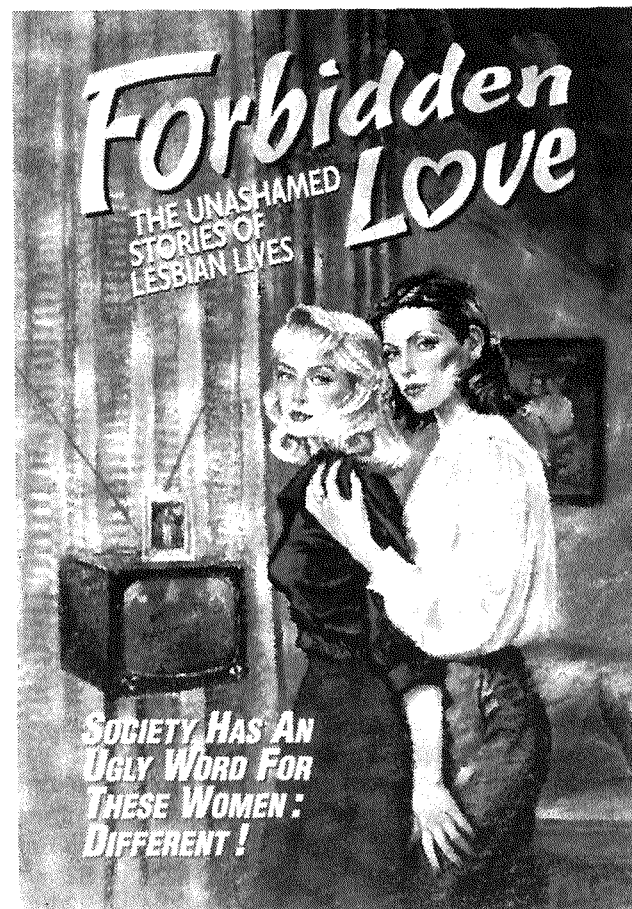
very humorous and with a strong community, to recollections of pain and isolation, but they always show a great sense of courage and resistance that is very empowering. The women are all exceptional in their openness, their individuality and their remarkable stories. They talk candidly about first love, about jaunts to Greenwich Village in quest of "The Lesbians" they had read about in books, about rivalries in the butch/femme bar scene. They share stories about partners and friends they have found, and about friends and family that they have lost because of their sexual orientation. They joke about the difficulty in finding bars "where the women are", and remember vividly the police raids.

Their stories make it clear that there was no single lesbian experience, just as there is no single heterosexual experience; rather there were individual women whose lives were affected by class, economic resources and race.

Interspersed with the interviews, a tongue-in-cheek dramatization of a 1950s

lesbian pulp novel unfolds. Girl meets girl in a shmarmy bar....they fall in love.... they live happily ever after (an unheard of positive ending for the actual novels of the time, but an exercise in artistic licence on the part of the directors). Combined with the interviews this gives a real sense of the disparity between the way that lesbians were constructed in the 1950s, and the way they actually were. It also provides the audience with a good laugh, as the portrayals and the book titles (ie. "Man Haters") seem so outrageous.

**Forbidden Love** proudly shows a community once consigned to the "twilight world" of silence and exile. In doing so, it brings lesbian history out of the closet and contributes to a valuable history of sexuality in Canada, charting a territory most often ignored in traditional accounts of the past. It is a wonderful film and is a must-see for anybody who loves women - lesbian or straight. It is a celebration of our strength, our courage, our sense of humour, and our ability to persevere.



## Adult entertainment: an interview with Aerlynn Weissman

I am sitting at Sophie's Cosmic Cafe in Vancouver. Across from me, Aerlynn Weissman, film director, dutifully chews her toast. She pauses before leaning into her coffee for emphasis. "I mean, where would you even find that word outside of a medical dictionary, the word 'lesbian'?", she asks. Weissman is talking about Canadian women in the 1950's and 60's.

"The issue of how to deal with these women's silenced pasts without patronizing those pasts was a real challenge," she says, fork in hand. "Lynne and I felt quite strongly that it was important not to overlay the experiences of these women with a vocabulary of nineties feminist discourse. We really tried to structure the film in a way that would allow the women to speak for themselves, to give their experiences as they lived them, but to provide their contexts as well."

The film, **Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives**, co-directed by Weissman with Lynne Fernie, allows ten of these women to do just this. Their recollections of lesbian life in the fifties are always frank, sometimes tragic, never compromised.

The film cuts between the stories of the women and the



Aerlynn Weissman and Lynne Fernie, directors.

storyline of one of the most entertaining ironies of the Fifties: lesbian pulp fiction. In **Forbidden Love**, Fernie and Weissman use their knowledge of this phenomenon as a backdrop for the women's stories. Viewers are treated to glimpses of dozens of steamy book covers, only to find that one of these covers comes to life with all the melo-passion of pulp-inspired drama.

"On the one hand, they were very funny; they had fabulous

pictures, lurid prose ... nobody writes like that anymore! But, on the other hand, they were very political in the way that they reflected certain things about our culture, about drugs and sexuality, and so on... They were framed to make certain things acceptable, to make other things unacceptable."

Weissman's commitment to context is in perfect balance with her respect for experience.

"Steph's story, for example, is perfectly told." Weissman's eyes tighten. "Here, she describes a very rigid set-up of roles, but after telling you all this says: 'I look back at that and think I must have been out of my mind! But that's all there was and I didn't know any better. There was is 20 year old woman who didn't have any other options.'"

"It's insidious to use a current language to imprison another experience; it's not adequate and it's not accurate ... The women in the film who talk about butch/femme relationships do so with an immediacy because they lived it. For example, there's a woman in our film who says: 'If I went out without permission and danced or talked with other butches (I was a femme), I got punched out.' But that's the critique from their mouths, not mine. Lynne and I felt very strongly that this film should not pretend these abuses never happened."

What this film demands as a consequence of the filmmaker's aggressive integrity, is that the audience watch these women without any of the squirming delight of voyeurism. From the minute the viewer consents to letting the camera become her eyes, complexity is granted the

status of explanation. These are women who were attempting to find one another in a period that preceded, but in some cases, segued into the seventies. The wave of feminism that characterized that period "was a sort of coming of age of lesbian culture, consciousness and community for various reasons having to do with the times," says Weissman. "A lot of these women in the seventies were university educated; they were not bar dykes. During this period there was a whole put-down of the butch/femme phenomenon: 'Oh, they were just aping heterosexuals; they were pretending to be heterosexual; they were oppressing one another with these horrid rigid roles' That was the pronouncement on these women and their struggle for identity, for a way to be with one another."

**Forbidden Love** does not pretend to be for everybody. "Lynne and I felt that the film should not be pitched at a general audience, that it came out of the lesbian community in Canada at that time. We've been right in that initial feeling that you can have more fun making a film if your conceived audience is your

cont'd on pg. 50

## Readers' Survey - Give us your view

We are planning some changes at **The Womanist**, and would like your views. Please take a minute to answer a few questions and mail to us at 541 Sussex Drive, Suite 201, Ottawa, Ont K1N 6Z6.

Thanks a bunch!

1. Is this the first time you have seen **The Womanist**? ☐ yes ☐ no
2. Where did you get your copy? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your general impression of the paper? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Which was your favourite article? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which was your least favourite article? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are there topics you would like to see covered? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Did you find the paper easy to read ... in terms of language? ☐ yes ☐ no  
... in terms of visual appearance? ☐ yes ☐ no
8. We are thinking of going to a magazine format, and starting to sell **The Womanist** through newsstands, as well as subscriptions. Most magazines cost from \$2.50 to \$5 on newsstands. How much would you pay for **The Womanist**? (tick as many as apply)  
... one issue at a newsstand ☐ \$5 ☐ \$3 ☐ \$2  
... 4 issues by subscription ☐ \$30 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$20 ☐ \$15
9. Would you prefer **The Womanist** to be ...  
a newspaper (as it is) ☐ or a magazine ☐
10. Where do you live? City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Your age \_\_\_\_\_
12. Gender: female ☐ male ☐
13. Occupation (what do you spend most of your time doing?)  
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☐ unpaid worker (volunteer ☐ homemaker ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_)

**Thank-you! Thank-you! Thank-you!**

### Adult Entertainment cont'd

own community. You don't end up having to explain a lot of things to the straight world; the film did not come out of that impulse. It's not a W-5 investigative reportage approach anyway. We could have our in-jokes without having to hide things like abusive relationships, role playing, and certain rigidities of the lesbian community at that time."

The conversation shifts to the film industry as a whole, and how it has changed for women. "It definitely has changed in many ways," Weissman explains, "But in very limited ways. There are no more women recording sound today then there were in 1972 when I was recording sound. Now, why is that? There's the discussion."

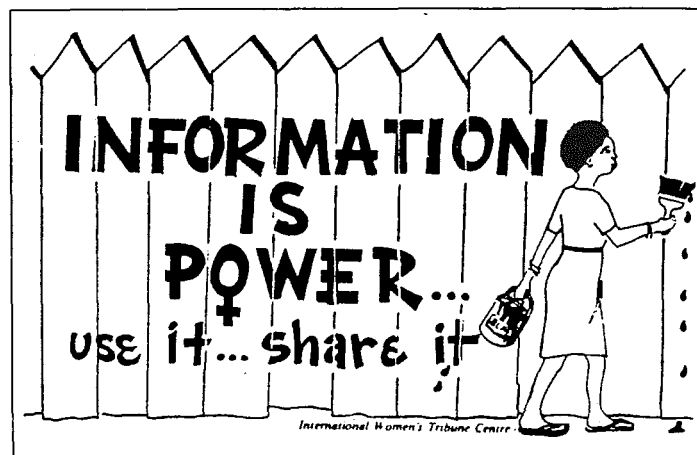
"There are certainly more women producing, and a few more directing, but only certain kinds of things. With the technical trades, there are many more women shooting. There are a lot of women working as Assistant Camera. It's like it's okay now for women to take up the support roles, but in the areas of real decision making, the glass ceiling is still very evident. There are still very limited opportunities."

"But in a way, it's misleading to talk about how many women are in a studio, how many are shooting," Weissman adjusts her green rimmed glasses, glances at her watch, slides into home. "The point is that women's values do not set the tone for our culture. Male violence sets the tone for our culture."

Weissman launches into an animated description of a satellite hookup with a group of Australian women, and a group of women filmmakers from Washington, D.C. She describes her peers with energetic respect, with the enthusiasm of a team player. "The closing question was about how things would be different if a lot of women were in the decision making roles," she recalls. "The Australian women said that they felt that the two mainstays of film - sex and violence - would be dealt with very differently if women were in charge. The difference that would exist if more women were doing big budget films is that the material would be, not more feminist, but more adult."

Adult Entertainment. Imagine it. Images that have been presented responsibly. You the audience treated with respect. Go on. Rent **Forbidden Love**.

*b.b. lives, works and watches films in Vancouver, B.C.*



### We have a plan!

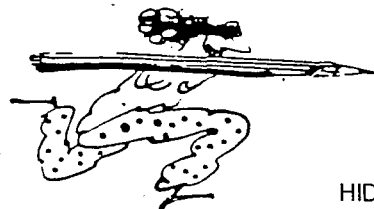
Well almost a business plan. We have been publishing **The Womanist** since the summer of 1989, theoretically four issues a year. In practice, it has usually taken us more than 12 months to put out four issues, basically because of lack of cash.

We have started to put the paper on a firmer financial footing over the last year - many thanks to those of you who responded to our request for sustaining subscribers last year - but there is still a long road ahead of us.

This summer we are further developing a business plan for **The Womanist** that will include a number of ways to finance the paper. If you have ideas you would like to contribute, if you know someone who might be interested in being a major supporter, or if you would like to help out in any other way, please contact us.

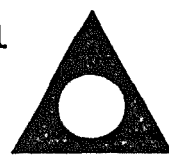
As part of our plan, we want to know what you, the readers, want, so please fill out the Readers' Survey. Send your thoughts to:

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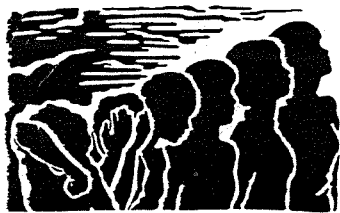
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These do not represent all the places where *The Womanist* can be picked up. If you would like to be a distributor of *The Womanist*, please write us.

# The Almost Back Page

We couldn't get you a story on the proposed stalking laws, although we tried our best. A number of women's groups have come out against the legislation, which introduces a new offence: criminal harassment. The law

is intended to stop men from following and intimidating women, often their estranged ex-partners. Women's groups are concerned that the new law will depend on the police and the judicial system to assess how terrorized the woman is. The NDP also has concerns that the legislation could be interpreted to criminalize demonstrations and picket lines. We suspect that this legislation will die well before an election is called and that it was created to give the appearance that the Conservatives really care about women's safety. • On that note, it might be good to remind ourselves just how much the Tories do care: When the Tories came into power in 1984, 400 women's groups across the country were funded for \$12 million by the federal Secretary of State, **Women's Programme**. In 1993, they were only receiving \$9 million. Clearly we are a real priority! • Last minute news that we thought you wouldn't want to miss - the Elizabeth Cull, Minister of Health in British Columbia, attended the **International Confederation of Midwives Congress** in Vancouver last week, where she made the long awaited announcement that midwifery would be legalized in B.C. More on midwifery next issue..... • Congratulations to **Rosemary Brown** who is nominated to be the next Chief Commissioner for the Ontario Human Rights Commission. • You are probably wondering why we don't have a story on **Kim Campbell**. Well, what can we say that hasn't been said before by the mass media. If she does end up being Prime Minister, and there is every indication, then we will provide you with an analysis of her positions as we move into the election campaign. • Speaking of the **federal election**, which is now being rumoured to be called in the summer to ensure low voter turnout and high visibility of the new Prime Minister, we will be bringing you an election issue. • **The election issue** will include: the positions of the Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, Reform Party and Bloc Québécois on a wide range of issues; profiles of women candidates from all major parties and an analysis of the issues we need to be looking at in the next federal election and for the future of this country. • Just to wet your appetite for the next issue, we give you the following excerpts from Linda McQuaig's new book **The Wealthy Banker's Wife: The Assault on Equality in Canada**, Penguin Books,

- Although the U.S. is among the richest countries in the world, it ranks among the worst in the industrialized world in just about any international measure of social standards.
- The gap between the rich and the poor is far more dramatic in the U.S. than in European countries.
- The U.S. poverty rate is two or three times as high as the poverty rate of the major European countries.
- The U.S. poverty rate for the most vulnerable group in society - children in single parent families - is roughly ten times higher than in Sweden.
- The maximum monthly benefit in Mississippi for a mother and two children - *with no other source of income* - is now \$120 (US).
- The U.S. has a much worse record on infant mortality - a key measure of public health - than the major European countries; it ranks twenty-second in the world, behind even developing nations like Singapore.
- The U.S. ranks nineteenth in the world in the ratio of children to teachers in its schools, placing behind Libya, Lebanon and Cuba.
- More than seventy nations worldwide provide medical care to all pregnant women; the U.S., along with South Africa, does not.
- More than sixty nations provide medical care to all workers and their dependants; the U.S., along with South Africa, does not.
- Although the U.S. spends more per capita on health care than any country in the industrialized world, more than 35 million Americans have no health insurance coverage and an additional 40 million have such inadequate coverage that serious illness would lead to financial ruin.
- Black men in Harlem are less likely to reach the age of sixty-five than men in Bangladesh.
- The notion of the U.S. as a land of opportunity is misleading; there is significantly less upward mobility in the U.S. than in the major European countries."

Do we really want to be more like the U.S.? Something to think about until next time....

**Classified**



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