

Winnipeg Women's Liberation
Newsletter

JUNE
1976



and so we helped
each other out.

The monthly Newsletter is published by Winnipeg Women's Liberation office at a WOMAN'S PLACE, 143 Walnut Street, phone 786-4581.

If you have any letters, articles, announcements, poems, literary articles to submit, send them to the above address.

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Brought to you this month by Julie, Heather, Heather, Marlyn, Debbie, Lynda and Sara.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WE'RE STAYING OPEN	p. 1
WHAT IS TO BE DONE	p. 2
ACTION COALITION ON FAMILY LAW	p. 3
RAPE PREVENTION OR HOW TO SAY NO TO STORASKA	p. 5
FINANCIAL REPORT	P. 6
HOW DOES HOUSING GET BUILT?	P. 7
LEARN AND TEACH ABOUT YOUR BODY	P. 9
CALANDER	P. 10

We're Staying Open

On May 5th, about twenty women gathered at 'A Woman's Place to make some decisions about closing or not closing the house. We decided that for the time being there was a desire to stay open.

Our priorities, for the next little while, are funding (with less than \$500 in the bank) and redistribution of work. We are planning to do some fund - raising this summer, beginning with subscription renewal and donation drive, and culminating in a women's liberation social in the fall.

The re-organization we hope will allow maximum participation in, and responsibility for decision making and work around the house by all groups who use it. We have formed a co-ordinating committee composed of at least one member from each group which uses the house, plus other women who wish to be involved in house activities but are not in a group. We hope this committee will serve the following functions: keeping all the groups informed of each other's activities (newsletter an important vehicle); co-ordinating joint activities; keeping up with the mail; providing an avenue for the entry of new women into the activities at the house.

The co-ordinating Committee is now composed of representatives from the Socialist - Feminist Collective, Women and Non-Sexist Education, Nellie McClung Theatre Group, Action Coalition on Family Law, the Rape Crisis Centre and other interested individuals. If anyone wants to participate, the next meeting will be June 8th at which time we will be concentrating on our finances. We will be meeting every second Tuesday. There is plenty of work so come and join us!!

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The Winnipeg Women's Socialist Collective formed because a group of women were interested in developing an analysis of society that combined both socialist and feminist thought. Most individuals in the group had a fair amount of experience at women's centres - organizing, working at social services, producing newsletters and initiating political action over such issues as daycare, abortion, law reform etc.

However, most of us felt we were simply reacting to problems without any long-term strategy, prioritizing or serious discussion about where our energies would be best directed for most effective change.

So we decided to begin regular study sessions in which, without the pressures of immediate action, we could hammer out our ideas about the destructiveness of the capitalist system and how we as women, workers, mothers, sex objects, property etc. fit in.

At the point of this writing we haven't had a critique of the past seven or eight sessions, so I will just briefly explain how the group worked and what we discussed.

For the March 1st meeting an outline for the sessions was presented suggesting that we study the reality of our lives in terms of how the basic necessities are produced ie. housing, food; our work; our family and community relationships; our sexuality; our culture.

At the same meeting we also had a presentation on structure which clarified how the group should function, how it should set goals for itself and what its long-term plans were.

A quote from the minutes of the March 1 meeting gives an indication of the feelings of the group:

"Assumption: That most of us are here to develop our feminist socialist "line". To contribute to and learn about our ideology.
That we want a group of like-minded people

to bounce our personal and work lives off to decide whether our lives and our actions are "productive", "progressive" or "counter-productive."

That we wish to throw some of our energies behind a feminist-socialist activity."

We prepared readings for all sessions and xeroxed articles which were sent to each member of the group. People who were naturally interested in specific topics led the discussion for those topics.

The sessions were lively and covered a wide range of perspectives. We seemed only to scratch the surface when it came to understanding the source and perpetuation of sexist and capitalist oppression. Arriving at a knowledge of how these kinds of oppressions affect us in concrete terms was complicated enough, let alone figuring out ways to strike at them.

I think a common conclusion of the group was that all the topics must be studied in greater depth before theory or strategy for action could be devised.

As a wind up to the series we held a potluck supper and enjoyed a taste of woman's culture with poetry readings, woman's music, art and creative works that members of the group brought.

The following is the reading material we used for each session:

- I. Work
 - Women, Resistance and Revolution Sheila Rowbotham
 - A Dog's Life " "
 - The Political Economy of Women's Liberation Margaret Benston Hogtown Press
 - More on the Political Economy of Women's Liberation Mickey and John Rowntree
 - Woman's Estate Juliet Mitchell. Penguin
2. Basic
 - Necessities- Highrise and Super Profits Penny and Barker, James Lorimer.
 - Politics of Food Don Mitch-

ell

-Canadian Dimension, The
Developers, Vol.9, No. 2
&3.

-Monopoly Capitalism, Baran
and Sweezy, Monthly Review.
-Prairie Dog Press, Food Price
Spiral.
-A Citizen's Guide to City Po-
litics, James Lorimer.

3. Family and Community Re-
lationships -The Origin of the Family,
Private Property & the State.
-Death of the Family Engels
David Cooper
-Capitalism, the Family and
Personal Life Eli Zaretsky.

4. Culture -Ways of Seeing John Berger
-Women in Sexist Society
Gornick.
-Women in the Arts Jean Dun-
mire.

5. Sexuality - The Politics of Adultry
Mary Mackey
- G John Berger " The Sit-
uation of Women."
- Once More with Feeling and
Rationality, Feminists in
Heterosexual Relationships
-Lesbianism and Feminism Anne
Koedt.

The original sources of many of the arti-
cles can be obtained from Pat Clubb.

PLEASE! PLEASE!
IF YOU HAVE BOOKS FROM THE
LIBRARY AT A WOMAN'S PLACE
PLEASE RETURN THEM SO OTHERS
CAN USE THEM.

WE ARE ALSO INVOLVED IN PRESSURING
FOR REFORM OF MARITAL PROPERTY LAW:

ACTION COALITION ON FAMILY LAW

Equality for both spouses in marriage
and the right of children to a secure
environment is a matter of common
justice. It is an important and funda-
mental issue which crosses all political
and economic boundaries.

Women's Place, along with women from
the Manitoba Action Committee on the
Status of Women, the Council of Self
Help and women from each of the poli-
tical parties have joined together in
a coalition to respond to the Law
Reform Commission's final report on
family law and follow through to
pressure the government for early
implementation of legislation reforming
our current obsolete laws.

Called together under the umbrella
of the Manitoba Action Committee on
the Status of Women, the group is
now an independent coalition of
women's groups and interested indi-
vidual's. Their response to the
Commission's report has been circulated
to over 100 groups for endorsement.
As a united group, they exist as a
powerful pressure for change in Manitoba.

While all involved agree that this
last report is a positive step for-
ward from the interim report on family
law, there still remain important areas
in which the government must be con-
vinced to part ways with the commission's
thinking. Perhaps the two most import-
ant issues of concern deal with '
criteria for allocation of maintenance
after separation' and the question of
who will come under the new legisla-
tion and when.

The commission has suggested a number of criteria in establishing the amount of maintenance to be awarded. What is disappointing is that 'relative fault for marriage breakdown' is still to be one among eight. Although they have de-emphasized the fault factor, nevertheless, retaining it even in part can only serve to perpetuate a confrontation and adversary system that is bound to have long lasting harmful effects on all those involved.

The commission has suggested that any new legislation apply to all existing marriages. Fine. But the report goes on to suggest that a 60 day period of grace be given in which time either spouse would have the unilateral right to refuse to apply the existing law to assets accumulated to date. The coalition has suggested that one spouse should not be able to opt out unless the other spouse consents and has had independent legal advise. The commission reasons that changing the rules in mid stream where parties have freely entered into a contract is unfair. With this kind of reasoning at work many women will risk being left in the same unjust position as Irene Murdock even after the old laws have been recognized as obsolete by society.

Once the report had been digested and evaluated, the coalition began active lobbying of MLA's for speedy passage of new legislation. The Attorney General and Both the Liberal and Conservative Caucus have been seen. A tentative meeting with the NDP Caucus is set for the end of May. On May 3 a public meeting was held at which over 200 participants expressed strong opinions on the need for reformed legislation. This loud voice of women at the public meeting was perhaps the most effective pressure to date.

While much action has up until now been concentrated in Winnipeg, the Coalition plans to sponsor public meetings in the various regions of Manitoba. The meetings will be aimed at pressuring for change but perhaps an equal or more important component will be that of providing women with information about their rights. In a time and society where women are still conditioned in a glow of romance, to believe that marriage will solve all their problems, reality is sadly out of joint. In marriage and out, women are not as secure as we have been led to believe. New legislation and the education that must accompany it would be a positive step forward.

Equality and justice will not be achieved overnight, and the reform of family law - though long overdue - will not of itself, eliminate injustice, nor will it ensure equality for women. Many other areas of change remain. Nevertheless, this reform is an important step. The Action Coalition plans to make sure that the government takes it.

DON'T MAKE PLANS FOR THE WEEK OF
JUNE 21ST!!!!!!
THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT
ELEANOR PELRINE WILL BE IN TOWN
WATCH FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF RALLY
IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOW OUR
SUPPORT. JUNE 21ST IS THE DAY
THAT MORGENTALLER'S RETRIAL BEGINS.

RAPE PREVENTION: HOW TO SAY NO TO A RAPIST

Frederick Storasha is a self proclaimed rape expert who has been touring the U.S. at \$800 to \$2000 a shot with a 2 hour "lecture-entertainment" on rape defense. Storaska in a very condensing manner filled with sexual innuendoes proclaims that if a woman follows his method she will thwart a rapist. In his presentation Storaska proclaims that 100's of women have thwarted rape attempts using his method but never documents his statements. Below is a critique of his method by the Waterloo Rape Distress Centre. His film How To Say No To A Rapist has been purchased by the St. James School Division and is shown as part of the rape defense courses in this division.

"How to Say NO to a Rapist- and Survive". With a title like that, it is hardly surprising that thousands of women are buying the book, seeing the movie and, in the U.S., flocking to college auditoriums to hear the man himself, Frederick Storaska, tell them how they can walk away from the threat of sexual assault. What is surprising then is that other women - women who have dedicated years of their lives to researching the topic more thoroughly than has ever been done before, teaching women how to defend themselves, and helping women who have been raped - these women (many of whom work at rape crisis centres in Canada and the U.S.) have denounced the book, the film, and the man. Why?

It is not because Storaska has nothing of importance to tell women. He does, in fact, make some good points in his film and book - he makes mention, for instance, of the importance of mental awareness; he stresses that rape can and does happen in the course of a date; he is aware of the unfortunate fact that most women (and men) will not take the time to become proficient in the martial arts; and he does demonstrate two good tactics that women can use to stop a rapist - squeezing his testicles and putting his eyes out with the thumbs.

Most rape crisis centres tell their audiences these same things.

No, the reason women are denouncing Storaska is that, not only is the rest of his "advice" insulting, dangerous and WRONG, but his presentation is so dynamic and apparently convincing that many women will believe it.

Storaska is an entertainer. In his stage performance he treats rape as a joke. He keeps his audience in stitches while describing our most rapidly increasing crime of violence. The reason, he says, for his humorous approach is that he doesn't want women to be afraid of the topic - his humour he says, puts them at ease. And yet a glance around his audience (if you've seen the film) shows that they look just as timid at the end of his presentation as they do at the beginning.

Women who teach self-defense, on the other hand have found that they way to put women at ease about the subject of rape is to allow them to express their fears, and then work with them, responding with concern and with facts, to build a feeling of confidence. Making women laugh at their own fear of rape does little to build their confidence, any more than laughing at one's fear of cancer or death makes one any more at ease with these topics. Rape is a real fear for women. It is made no less real by Storaska's insistence that there are other fates that are worse.

Storaska's comic approach is insulting. But there are other aspects of his performance that are both insulting and dangerous. For instance, his advice to women is that they "be humble" to the rapist and pretend to seduce him.

Now, this may work with some rapists, but every rapist is different, and many will only be further angered by such humility. It has become an accepted fact that most rapists are not looking for sex games or courtship when they choose to rape - often it is their hatred of women, of women's manipulation and pseudo-passivity that they are playing out when they choose

women as their victims. Confronted with such tactics as Storaska advocates, they may well be driven to more violence than they had originally planned.

Besides, although Storaska claims otherwise, it is NOT easy or natural for a woman to "use her feminine wiles" and overcome her by force and who is aiming to hurt and humiliate her. And, whether or not she avoids being raped, the woman who makes no attempt at resistance is likely to suffer more psychological damage afterwards, as she wonders in her own mind whether she actually did invite or consent to the experience.

Added to this is the legal problem that if there is no evidence of resistance, it is next to impossible to convict a man of rape.

There are other flaws in Storaska's basic assumptions about rape and rape prevention. Most police and psychologists agree that immediate resistance and loud noise are the best way to foil an attack - yet Storaska claims that shouting is useless.

Storaska claims that his methods work "unless you are in immediate defence of your life" - yet every woman threatened with immediate rape is in this position. She is not thinking, "This is a sexual encounter", she is thinking, "I might be killed!"

Storaska makes no mention of the psychological violence of rape, of the lingering after-effects of sexual abuse, of society's attitude toward rape victims which makes their recovery so difficult. Nor does he make any mention at all the work rape assistance groups are doing to help victims and to teach women to protect themselves.

Storaska has styled himself as the "nation's authority on rape". Yet no feminists belong to or support his organization. The National Organization For Women condemns him in their November 1974 newsletter.

Instead of supporting this man in his fraud and letting him endanger the lives and deceive the minds of women, why not phone or write to your local rape distress centre. They need your support.

Winnipeg Rape Crisis and Information Centre - 453-8777

WOMAN'S PLACE FINANCIAL REPORT

Can we count on you to keep us counting?

Revenue for A WOMAN'S PLACE is in dire need of revitalizing. As of May 5th our account showed a balance of \$533.20. Last autumn after our social the bank balance was well over the One Thousand Dollar mark. Now it has dipped dangerously low and yes, although reminders have not been sent to everyone most memberships and subscriptions have run out.

IF ALL OF US RENEWED OUR SUBSCRIPTION TO THE NEWSLETTER RIGHT NOW our account would again be over one thousand dollars and with the generous donations sent by some of you at the time of renewal we could well realize -- do I dare hope -- Two thousand dollars? That would do us beautifully until our fall social.

During the winter months we paid our bills -- rent, utilities, printing costs, etc. These expenses are just over approximately \$300.00 a month. However, our revenue has not kept pace

but it need not be because we know we can BANK on YOU to keep us banking!

HOW DOES HOUSING GET BUILT?

I was asked to give a talk on housing for our socialist feminist study session, the talk was one part of our series on monopoly capitalism and the basic necessities. I can't reproduce the whole talk here, but I can give you some indication of the enormous corporate structures that control housing production and refer you to some excellent readings.

The basic components that make up the housing industry and provide people with housing include;

1. A bundle of money to finance house building, usually obtained in the form of a MORTGAGE or loan from trust, insurance, loan companies or banks.
2. A professional team of architects, real estate agents, engineers etc. and LAND.
3. Construction workers labourers, plumbers, brick-layers, etc.
4. Building materials.

Shortly after the war these areas were all looked after separately by small firms. However, the demand for housing soared and these small concerns could not raise the capital to finance the large developments required. So began the phenomenal growth of the vertically integrated developer as larger firms gobbled up smaller ones until all the components that produced housing were combined under the umbrella of one company and you got something like BACM, the largest developer in western Canada.

For obtaining loans, BACM is partly owned by GENSTAR, a subsidiary of one of the oldest financial institutions in Belgium; it also shares directors with the Toronto Dominion Bank and Canada Trust. It uses its companies, Galt Building Holding Co. and Fort McMurray Land Development Co., for professional work and land accumulation, builds with another of its subsidiaries, Standard General Construction and buys materials from its many plants - Nelson Steel, Inland Cement, BACM building supplies, Fraser Paper, Redi-Mix, Consolidated Concrete and Con-Force.

How does BACM behave as a vertically integrated company? It can tell you housing prices have gone up due to the increase in land costs or material costs. But who supplies the land or the materials? BACM. It can decide what prices to charge all the way down the line. It can beat competition every time because it has the resources to draw on, wealth and the size. BACM owns much of the land on the outskirts of Winnipeg, the only land available for large scale housing. It bought out the land when it was for agricultural purposes and was cheap. But as soon as that land is rezoned for housing or commercial use the price automatically soars. So city council conveniently refrains from rezoning until after the land is bought by the company. And it goes up again when the land is serviced with water and sewers. Another gift from city council (our tax money). BACM has its land increase in value many times over through no effort of its own as a result of free servicing by the city.

Big developers like BACM are notorious for other practices, like blockbusting. If they want the land people own, they buy some adjacent properties and then let them deteriorate by demolishing buildings and leaving a mess or boarding them up. Or they buy houses and hire a landlord to rent them to a lot of people for a week at a time developing a transient population. They send researchers into the area to find out about they property owners and the weaknesses, financial or otherwise in their backgrounds. They use front companies (holding companies) to buy the land so no one knows what they are doing.

They avoid paying huge amounts of income tax by deferring it and then declaring it in years of loss. They also avoid paying tax by deducting deterioration percentages from their buildings when in fact

their market values are going up.

Despite such numerous concessions is housing being built in adequate amounts? Look around and see where the new construction is. Office building complexes, high rises and supermarkets. There are good reasons for this. And here is where the big finance companies come in. They are going to invest their money only where there is the chance of greatest return. And that is not in housing. Not only do financiers gain by charging high interest rates on the 50 million dollar developments, they invest in, but they can also arrange to own part of the complex and reap direct profits. So the bigger and more commercial a development is the better it is for investment. Thus the production of housing, like the production of our other basic necessities is a victim of profit-seeking and the fluctuations of the private money market.

Financiers have everyone locked into their inflationary practices. It's their high interest rates, totally unregulated by the federal government, that makes up half the cost of our housing. They also render developers acutely dependent upon them. Developers rarely have liquid capital on hand and often have to turn to finance companies for short term loans. Often developers need the finance company's involvement for prestige in order to attract a major tenant for their commercial building complexes.

All levels of government are caught up in the contradictions of the dependency of housing production on supply and demand. They have on one hand to tell the people they will build housing, but on the other hand they are loathe to interfere with the market system. So they resort to bribes, enticements and concessions to financiers and developers so if the developer defaults CMHC will make the payments. In 1971 the federal government gave a \$200 million gift to

developers to induce them to build low and middle income housing. The results were a disaster in quantity and quality of housing. Developers were allowed provision of land at less than market price, reduction of construction specifications to essentials, leniency in zoning and code rules, and acceptance of trainee labour. Home ownership was emphasized despite the fact no one making under \$6,000 could afford the housing.

And CMHC has had a very poor record in supporting alternative housing styles - like public or co-op housing.

City hall is notorious for its concessions to big developers, but that's because strong sympathizers get elected. Take Richard Wankling, ICEC and head of city council's finance committee for 1972-1974. He was comptroller for Monarch Life. Big companies who will be looking for favours contribute healthy amounts of money to their political friends' campaigns. (Why do you think Councillor Joe Zuken wants a policy of divulging all property interests. Anyway free enterprise councillors could always sign their interests over to their wives or dummy companies.)

There is a lot more to be said - about the developers, government socializing private risks, community groups fighting back, land banking, how media fits in. You can find it all in two excellent, well-written and entertaining books:

1. Highrise and Superprofits, G. Barker, Jennifer Penney and Wally secombe, Dumont Press, Distributed by James, Lewis and Samuels Publishers. A very readable article summarizes this book in the Vol. 9 No. 51 and 1 edition of Canadian Magazine.

2. A Citizen's Guide to City Policies, James Lorimer, James Lewis and Samuel. A delightful and thorough book that talks about development and dirty politics in every big city in Canada. Gives backgrounds of Winnipeg city politicians. Good photographs and diagrams.

Recently a medical student contacted me about a program at the Medical School. This program should be of interest to women concerned with learning more about their bodies and also women who would like to help educate future doctors.

Last year was the first year that the Medical School worked with the Teaching Associate plan. A team of six women were trained for four months in an in-depth study of female anatomy and gynecological practices. After the training session, the teaching associates spent another four months working with the medical students, instructing them in how to do proper internal examinations and tests. The teaching sessions always included two teaching associates and no more than three students. The setting at the St. Boniface Hospital and the structure of the sessions was very professional; the associates always being seen as teaching staff.

The sessions were designed to make medical students more aware of the psychological and physical discomfort which women may experience if the doctor is not conscious of many factors that may influence her visit to the office.

The associates were both teacher and patient and this method of teaching proved very successful. The medical students agreed that the sessions were invaluable. If you would be interested in participating in this program, which would begin in September, you should contact, Dr. A Livingstone - S105 Medical Services Building, Medical College or phone 786-3596.

There is a small salary which all teaching associates receive, but the real benefits are what you can learn from the experience and what you can teach to future medical doctors so that they can avoid the kinds of gross mistakes and insensitivity that we still hear about far too frequently.

IT'S HAPPENING IN JUNE

		TUES 1	WED 2	THURS 3	FRI. 4	SAT. 5
			GAY ♀ Grp			
SUN 6	MON ^{W.W.S.C} 7 7:30 AFFR. ACT WORSHOP 97 ASH NDP St. of ♀	TUES 8 Co-ordinating Cmttee 8:00 (Finances)	WED 9 Gay ♀ Grp	THURS 10	FRI. 11	SAT. 12
SUN 13	MON 14	TUES 15	WED 16 Gay ♀ Grp	THURS 17	FRI 18	SAT 19
SUN 20	MON 21 MAYBE ELENOR PELRINE	TUES 22 Co-ordinating cmttee 8:00 (News letter)	WED 23 Gay ♀ Grp	THURS 24	FRI 25	SAT 26
SUN 27	MON 28	TUES 29	WED 30 Gay ♀ Grp	THURS 1 JULY *	FRI 2	SAT 3
SUN 4	MON 5	TUES 6 Co-ordinating Cmttee	WED 7 Gay ♀ Grp	THURS 8	FRI 9	SAT 10

For Info re ♀ and Non-Sexist Educ.
Contact Linda Taylor - 475-4777

