

NOV. 1976

# WINNIPEG WOMEN'S LIBERATION NEWSLETTER



— Victoria Hammond

Well here we are again! The November issue is brought to you by:

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Andrea  
Susan  
Joyce  
Linda

We would like to hear from you, and see you, so please write or drop into Woman's Place, 143 Walnut Street (phone no. 786-4581)

A subscription to the Newsletter can be had by writing to us and enclosing \$3.00 for one year. Individual copies sell for 25¢.

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# EDITORIAL:

The Winnipeg Women's Liberation Newsletter has tried, since its inception to cover a broad spectrum of feminist concerns, with emphasis on radical issues, that is, ideas and struggles that are fundamental to women's oppression.

One of these struggles, lesbianism, has been discussed in many previous newsletters. In this issue, there is an article on the National Lesbian Conference, which was held in Ottawa on Thanksgiving Weekend and a report on the newly formed Winnipeg Lesbian Society. The newsletter collective thought it would be apropos at this time to discuss lesbianism and the women's movement in our editorial.

First, we will define our terms. A lesbian-feminist is a woman for whom other women are a priority, politically, socially and sexually. A "straight"-feminist is a woman whose sexual relationships are with men, but who is committed in all other respects to women and the struggle for the liberation of women. It should be noted that the newsletter collective is composed of lesbian feminists and straight feminists.)

Although both lesbian and straight feminists are working towards the same goal, the liberation of all women, the strategies employed are sometimes different. This has led particularly in the United States to splits between lesbian and straight feminists. We would like to suggest that it is necessary and important to proceed with the struggle in many ways, and that within the women's movement, straight feminist and lesbian feminist tactics are not only mutually supportive but in many cases should and do overlap.

This editorial will outline a brief analysis of women's oppression and some general directions towards attaining women's liberation. The emphasis will be on the particular tactics used by straight and lesbian feminists and their role in the overall struggle. (Note, we do not pretend to have the definitive analysis, or for that matter, the last word on any of this. If you have any comments, the Winnipeg Women's Liberation Newsletter will gladly print them.)

First, we start with the fact that all women, in this society, are oppressed. We are oppressed because we do not receive equal pay for equal work, in fact most of the time we receive no pay for the work we do; because the laws and the courts of the land are slanted against us (ie. marriage, rape, lesbian custody of children); because we are socialized to think of ourselves as inferior-mentally, physically and spiritually; because we hold virtually no political power in the public arena nor in our so-called private lives; where control over our own bodies and the power to shape our own lives is denied to us. Last, but crucially, we are oppressed as women because our sexuality has not been defined by ourselves, but defined and used by our male dominated society to manipulate us in all facets of our oppression.

Why? Why are we, as women, oppressed? Is it because men are innately oppressive, cruel, domineering fuckers? Is there something in their nature which obliges them to deny women the full status of human beings? Although it often seems so, and although we recognize that almost all men benefit from the oppression of women, we realize that (1) there are other oppressed groups ie. ethnic



minorities, the working class as a whole, gay men, etc. and (2) some people are benefiting more than others. We maintain that men learn to be oppressive in the same way that women learn to be submissive. The question is, who is benefiting from and therefore maintaining such a social system?

We suggest that the oppression of women is ultimately for the purpose of securing women's unpaid labour in servicing men—emotionally, physically, psychologically and sexually, and in reproducing labour (having children) and for maintaining a large reserve army of cheap labour. While men benefit directly from much of this, in the final analysis, it is the system of capitalism which is the ultimate beneficiary.

How does capitalism force women into this untenable position? Capitalism maintains the oppression of women through what we might call "the institution of heterosexuality". By this we do not mean heterosexuality per se, but the multitude of ideas, myths, laws and structures, mainly grouped around the nuclear family as the basic unit of society, that enforce heterosexuality as the norm, and women's place in heterosexuality as subservient. The struggle of the lesbian feminists is central around the former contention, and that of the straight feminists around the latter. If these two assumptions are successfully smashed, the women's movement will have removed the ideological and structural tools capitalism uses to oppress and thus exploit women and their labour. Since capitalism is dependent upon the unpaid or lowly paid labour of women, women's liberation will seriously weaken capitalism and along with other liberation movements, pave the way for a new liberated society.

What, then are our strategies? The institution of heterosexuality affects our lives in three major areas: production, reproduction and social relations, all of which, of course, are interrelated.

Production: Women participate in production in the "working world", as cheap labour, and in the home, as free labour. Capitalism uses the assumption that every woman is attached to a man in a nuclear family situation, where they say her primary energies lie, to justify paying her less since she is only working to earn "pin money". Capitalism also benefits from the free labour of the woman in the home who maintains men so that they are fit to work, cooking and cleaning for them servicing them sexually and calming their justifiable anger at the alienating nature of work, as well as providing the rationale and necessity for men to sell their labour to the capitalists. In a way, women produce a commodity (men) for capitalism.

How do lesbian feminists and straight feminists struggle to escape our oppression in production? All of us demand equal pay for equal work on the job market. All of us assert our right to be employed and be able to support ourselves adequately. Women working in the home are increasingly vocal about the value of our labour and are demanding recognition and remuneration for it. Lesbian and many straight feminists, are refusing to do the day-to-day maintenance for men. By affirming ourselves as women, as whole human beings, and taking control over and pride in ourselves, WE, as lesbians and WE, as feminists can no longer be bludgeoned by capitalism into working for little or nothing.

Reproduction: Reproduction under capitalism means reproducing labour within the nuclear family. Our reproductive functions are what fun-



damentally differentiates us from men. This difference is oppressive to us only because we do not have control over our own reproductive functions. The fact that we do not now have control over our bodies is amply illustrated by the fact that married women must have permission from their husbands in order to have a tubal ligation, that birth control is not easily accessible nor safe, that abortions are fiercely repressed in our society and that rape is so prevalent, etc. As feminists, we are fighting for control over our bodies, for example, by asserting our right to decide when we will have children and with whom. As lesbians, we do not participate in reproductive sex or in the nuclear family. We are all asserting that sexuality is distinct from reproduction. When that distinction is made and acted upon, capitalism and men will no longer be able to manipulate our sexuality towards their ends.

Sexuality: Sexuality under capitalism is defined in terms of power. The institution of heterosexuality creates and maintains the sexual roles we are saddled with at birth, that is, the male aggressive dominant and female passive submissive stereotypes. These give men the edge over women. This power dominance of men serves as a model for power dominance in other spheres of life, is the reward given to men for going along with the rules, denies women wholeness of personhood, defines for women their sexuality, and is finally used to keep everyone in line in production and reproduction.

WE, as lesbian and straight feminists are defining our own sexuality. As lesbians, we are defining and expressing our sexuality in terms of ourselves as women. Straight

women, too, are rejecting monogamous nuclear relationships and struggling to redefine our sexuality. All of us are discovering and rediscovering (joyously) our female sexuality. Never again will our sexuality be defined by anyone else but us! Never again will our sexuality be used to oppress, suppress and contain us! We will take our freedom, and we will be ourselves- women alive, whole and happy.

Conclusion: Lesbian and straight feminists are working toward the same goal- a society in which all women are whole persons, a society which is co-operative, rather than competitive, communal rather than jealously private, possessive and individualistic and equal, instead of hierarchical, with white, male heterosexual capitalists on the top and everyone else defined by how they relate, or don't relate to this norm.

#### IMPORTANT NOTICE

Seminar on Family Law - Saturday, Nov. 6,  
10 AM to 1 PM:

Place: 14th floor, #1 Lakeview Square  
155 Carlton Street

Everyone welcome - free of charge  
(For day care - phone 269-3723)

Sponsored by: Action Coalition on Family  
Law

This seminar is to inform people of the intentions of the government regarding family law; the recommendations made by the Manitoba Law Reform Commission; and the recommendations of the Action Coalition.

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On page 4 of the Newsletter is a tear-off sheet of statements on family law that the Action Coalition supports.

If you agree with any or all of these send this to the Law Amendments Committee

# OPEN HOUSE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5

2 pm - 5 pm 7 pm - 11 pm  
143 Walnut St.

SEE: Films

The Library (hopefully organized)  
The Wpg. Lesbian Society Closet Display

HEAR: Women's Music

DISPLAYS: Posters  
Records  
Book Tables

TALK: To women from A Woman's Place groups,  
such as the Socialist Women's Collective,  
Consciousness Raising Group, Wpg. Lesbian  
Society, Women's Theatre Group, and others.

FOOD - DRINK - GOODIES

Come and see what's going on--  
BRING YOUR FRIENDS !!

- WOMEN ONLY -

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tear  
this  
off

& MAIL TO ADDRESS BELOW

I THINK THE FAMILY LAW SHOULD BE CHANGED. I SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING REFORMS:

1. Marriage is an equal partnership.
2. The family home, if purchased during the marriage or with marriage in mind, should be owned by husband and wife.
3. All property bought during the marriage should be divided equally between the husband and wife on separation.
4. Both parents should be responsible for supporting their children and the children of the other spouse, even after separation.
5. During marriage, each person should support the other, either by providing money or by looking after the children and the home.
6. During marriage, each person has the right to know the earnings, property, and debts of the other.
7. During marriage, each person has the right to a reasonable standard of living including a private amount for clothing and personal expenses.

8. During marriage, each person has the right to help decide how the family income is to be spent.

9. On separation, maintenance should depend on who has custody of the children, the length of the marriage, how much each has received from the division of property, the financial circumstances of each, and whether each can become self-supporting.

10. Fault -should not be considered in deciding maintenance.

11. The province should assume responsibility for collecting and paying out court ordered maintenance and in cases of default, the government should ensure payment of maintenance.

12. These reforms should apply to all marriages unless both partners agree, after independent legal advice, to opt out.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: Law Amendments Committee (Family Law)  
c/o Clerk of the House Rm. 237 - Legislative Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 9Z9

WANT TO GET INVOLVED???

There is a lot happening at Woman's Place these days. This is a partial listing.

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M O N D A Y

Winnipeg Women's Socialist Collective -- is involved in writing a paper on the link between socialism and feminism. The group is presently closed to new members, but it encourages socialist-leaning women to get involved at selected time periods. Members are expected to attend regularly and participate in activities the collective undertakes, i.e. the abortion demonstration and the Women Against Wage Controls campaign.

For information call: Linda 475-4777

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T U E S D A Y

Coordinating Committee -- is made up of representatives of all groups plus any interested individuals. It makes general decisions about the house, organized the socials and the upcoming 'Open House'. It meets monthly and also puts out the newsletter every month which is time consuming but a lot of fun to do. Come and help some newsletter night.

For information call: Brigitte 247-4258

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W E D N E S D A Y

Consciousness Raising Group -- a relatively new group holding free wheeling discussion on issues of concern to its participants. A good place to get together and talk.

For information call: Heather 889-6437

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T H U R S D A Y

Winnipeg Lesbian Society -- open to all women. Its objective is to serve the needs of lesbians in Winnipeg. It orga-

nizes social activities, does counselling and educates the public.

For information call: Woman's Place  
Thursdays 7:30 p.m. 786-4581

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YOU can initiate a new group. Set up a meeting time with the coordinating committee and advertise in the newsletter, i.e. "women & divorce", "single parent".

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OTHER GROUPS (Meeting irregularly):

C.A.R.A.L.

The Canadian Association to Repeal the Abortion Law is working on a brief to present to the government to make birth control and abortion more accessible. Membership is \$10.00. It's meetings are announced in the calendar. You don't need to pay the \$10 to get involved, but it helps.

For information call: Ellen 774-5080

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ACTION COALITION ON FAMILY LAW

This group is trying to have input in how the laws on the family are changed. There is a possibility that this may happen as early as Feb/77, so the time for input is now. The proposed changes are important and substantial. Meetings are announced in the calendar. Open to all. Women's Liberation and Women's Place are officially endorsing the position of the Coalition.

For information call: Linda 475-4777

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Women's Theatre

Meet Thursdays at 8 PM at 1100 Wolseley Ave., phone Millie at 774-4180, don't think you have to be professional. We present plays, multi-media sketches and songs. Develop own material about needs and problems of women's issues, i.e. day



care, family law, rape, abortion, equal pay for work of equal value, consumerism, isolation of housewives, etc., and present a positive image of women.



### WINNIPEG LESBIAN SOCIETY

I am writing on behalf of Winnipeg Lesbian Society, a group of women who have been meeting weekly at Women's Place. As members of Winnipeg's Gay community, we feel, as women, we would like to pursue our special needs and interests, beyond that of the existing mixed Gay Club which has been running for some time now.

Firstly, we are interested in serving the social and educational needs of Winnipeg's lesbians. We are interested in creating special counselling services, such as a telephone line. We are planning a workshop to enable us to deal with the calls efficiently. Another service would be answering letters, which frequently arrive at Women's Place. We would also supply personal counselling, if possible.

Another project area we would like to work in would be "Education Information" and possibly creating a speakers bureau for the benefit of the general public.

We will have different committees responsible for the different project areas. We have already had one successful social and are planning one for November 5.

Anyone interested in participating in our group should come Thursday nights at 7:30 p.m. to Women's Place.

Debbie R.

# IN THE NEWS

### REPORT ON OCTOBER 2ND SOCIAL

It seems the number of people that attended doubled from last year's social and the good time increased proportionately. Even though the booze was 1/2 hour late in flowing, we managed to drink pretty well all of it.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation by Women's Theatre. Their material (my titles) included "Olympic Woman Gymnast of Some Renown"; "Wage Controls A Brilliant Scheme, by the A.I.B."; the wonderful voice of Alana Greenberg accompanied by Tusha Kozub; and the finale was "A Beauty Pageant Happening With a Twist" (you have to see it to believe it). The applause was deafening and the standing ovation was well deserved.

What more is to say? Food, Music and people - all were great; and besides we made nearly \$800.

Let's do it again in the Spring!

## CONFERENCE

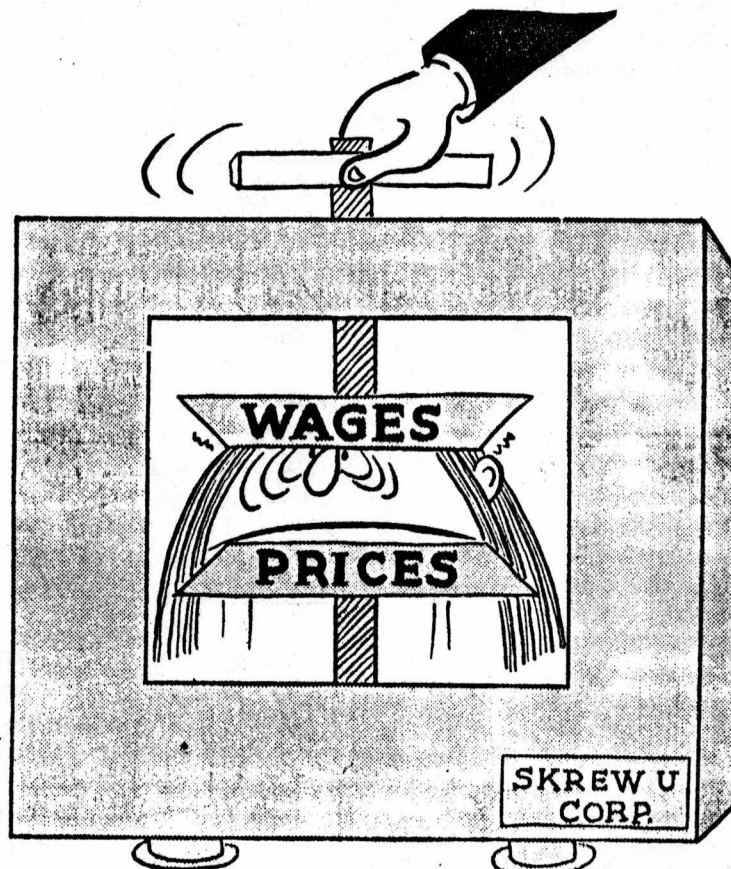
The N.D.P. Status of Women Policy Conference took place at Gimli on October 23-24. The conference opened Saturday morning with Rosemary Brown, M.L.A. Vancouver/Burrard, speaking on "The Origins of Women's Inequality". The fact that only one caucus member of the N.D.P. was in attendance (all were invited) drew a comment by Rosemary that this was indicative of the interest of our elected members in "women's issues". Her presence and deliverance were as inspiring as her message -- we have to get in there; do it ourselves; and get rid of those who do not represent us.

Another session that initiated a heated discussion was Marital Law. The panel (Hon. Howard Pawley, Attorney-General; Aleda Turnbull; Jill Oliver; Mary J. Quarry) had to field many questions. Howard Pawley noted that hearings would be held in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson in the latter part of November and that draft legislation for changes in present Family Law will be

introduced into the next session of the legislature. It was apparent that is of vital importance to the people in attendance at the conference and therefore to women everywhere. It is very important for people to attend these hearings to find out how these changes will affect us, to voice our agreement or dissent and to inform our elected representatives of our demands.

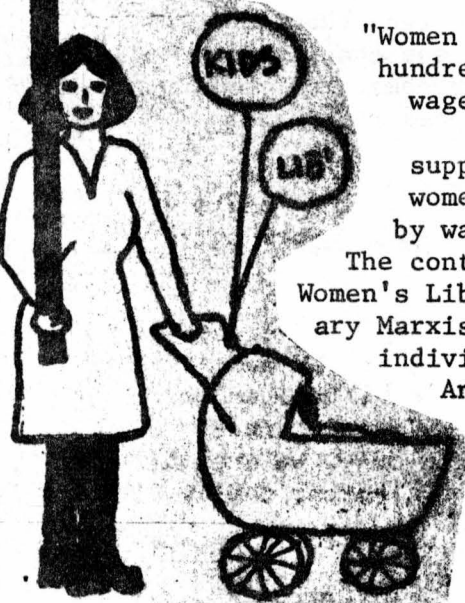


On the lighter side -- the women that attended from Women's Liberation found that the food was great; the sauna was greater; but, GREATEST of all were the players of Women's Theatre. They were made welcome and much appreciated by the audience and had to do an encore. After the theatre we turned up the music and DANCED!



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# WOMEN AGAINST WAGE CONTROLS!



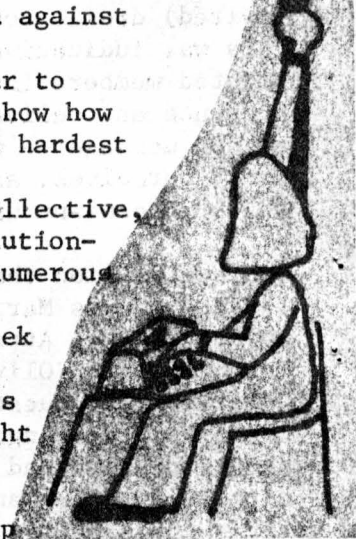
"Women Against Wage Controls", read the main banner and the hundreds of balloons at the October 14th demonstration against wage controls here in Winnipeg.

Over 100 women, men and children marched together to support the labour movement's protest, but also to show how women, both in the home and in the workplace are hit hardest by wage controls and social service cutbacks.

The contingent was supported by the Socialist Women's Collective, Women's Liberation, the Winnipeg Lesbian Society, the Revolutionary Marxist Group, and the Voice of Women, as well as by numerous individuals.

An intensive pamphletting was organized for the week prior to the 14th. This, along with good TV and radio coverage helped us to get across our ideas about the oppression women and the need to fight wage controls.

It was only a year ago in 1975 that the International Women's Year was proclaimed and lip service was paid to women along with vague pro-



promises to improve their status. To this day, the exact opposite has occurred. The wage control program is just another example of the government's attack on the right to collective bargaining and the standard of living of the working class of this country, especially on women.

Since women in the labour force are, by-and-large, in the lower income bracket, the percentage formula of the Anti-Inflation Board effectively maintains them at the bottom of the wage scale, further increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. Furthermore, as jobs become more scarce, we're told to stay at home so we won't take the jobs from the "real" breadwinners, the men. We are put in a category of "reserve labour", to be used in times of war or boom only, even if we are the only ones working or are in a single parent situation.

Then, in the home we're told it's a time of restraint - we'll just have to find more interesting ways of cooking hamburger (send away for your free booklet...). As well, the government's anti-inflation program is cutting back, either directly or indirectly, on social services important to women, such as day care, health care, job funding programs - the list

is endless.

These cutbacks in social services are a direct attack on women in the home - a group which has no strength or "bargaining power" and can easily be forced to pay for the economic crisis. As always, we women are the ones expected to do without. What better way for Trudeau to launch his campaign of "lowered expectations", than by giving women, the "symbols of self-sacrifice" the burden?

The organizers of the contingent felt that attacks had to be fought against and that not only women, but organized and unorganized men should combine to bring down the controls. October 14 was a show of force to demonstrate our refusal to bear the brunt of disorganization and lack of planning by the government and by the ruling class which the government represents.

But, as another banner and many people on the demonstration expressed, this was "just the beginning", not the end of a battle against wage controls, cutbacks, and any other measures that the government may impose to have us solve their crisis. We will not lower our expectations - we have great expectations!

Andrea Waywanko



## Ottawa Lesbian Conference

Everyone who went had a lot of fun- unfortunately there's too little space to talk about all of it. What follows is a brief summary of some of the conference highlights which only gives a small idea of the hours and hours of discussion that went on. There's a lot more room for discussion, so please - write, phone, or drop by Thursday evenings at 7:30 if you're interested in hearing more.

### WORKSHOP I: LESBIANS and THERAPY

The workshop identified some major problems: "mental" illness is often caused or contributed to by physical disorders (example: symptoms associated with depression are also caused by thyroid imbalance); society often uses the label "Mental Illness" to keep people, especially women, in roles that society wants them in (example: assertiveness and aggressiveness are symptoms of schizophrenia - but only in women); psychiatric institutions and therapists try and impose their values and beliefs on women; lesbians are punished (by the threat of or use of electroshock treatments, for example) for refusing to consider changing their lifestyles. A number of women commented on problems within the lesbian community itself: many lesbians still think of themselves as perverted and offer little support to lesbians trying to break away from this label; and the difficulties that lesbians who don't use alcohol, or want to stop, have in finding support in what is essentially still a "bar" scene.

Women in the workshop encouraged others who wanted therapy to "shop around" for a supportive, value-free therapist, suggesting that women looking for therapists should talk to other lesbians who have been or are in therapy. Therapy should not be seen as a "miracle cure", rather as a process of learning about oneself and defining what one wants and how to achieve it. It was suggested that the best way to achieve this was for lesbians to get together with lesbians experienced in counselling and form "peer counselling" groups which would be supportive, especially surrounding the problems of coming out, alcohol use and abuse, and lesbian pride.

### WORKSHOP II: LESBIAN SEXUALITY

(This workshop was honoured with the conference's "High Attendance" award.) Things started with a discussion of monogamy, polygamy, primary and secondary relationships, until it was pointed out that whatever their individual merits, lesbians were talking about these forms of relating because they still accepted the heterosexual model. The point was made that lesbians had to move away from this model and discover their own non-exploitative, non-hierarchical ideas about relationships. Other discussion centred on woman's body (how women, through societal agents such as the media, are taught that there is an "ideal body", and are encouraged to aspire to this artificial male creation, and taught to dislike their bodies if they don't "measure up"); masturbation (the

Cont.....

con census was that not only did it not make you grow hair on your palms or make you blind, it was in fact enjoyable and a great thing to become familiar and comfortable with your own body); lesbian erotica (what do we find sexually appealing, erotic? Most lesbian erotica is written by men for men- its time lesbians took control not only of their own bodies but also of their own fantasy lives).

### WORKSHOP III: LESBIAN AUTONOMY

Lesbian autonomy was defined as lesbians organising together to decide which issues are priorities for them as lesbians and which strategies would most effectively achieve success on these issues. Lesbian autonomy does not mean lesbian separation from either the women's movement or the gay liberation movement; it is meant only as a strategical alternative for lesbians. Although lesbians share common ground with both movements, they often do not recognize their own particular priorities as lesbians and although their priorities to get lost in the shuffle. A number of different viewpoints were aired at the conference. Some lesbians felt that lesbians must throw their primary allegiance to the (male-dominated) gay liberation movement, stating that lesbians could not throw energy into fighting their oppression as women until they had acquired the basic civil rights which are denied to all homosexuals, male or female. Some felt that lesbians owed allegiance to the (heterosexual dominated) feminist movement, citing the idea that although gay men may share civil rights concerns, they cannot understand the oppression of women because they are still privy to all that rights and privileges accorded all males, gay or straight; gay males also participated in the broad-based oppression of women in general. Some women felt that it was the capitalist system, because of its bases in the nuclear family and the institution of heterosexism, which must be destroyed, and that this could best be accomplished by allegiance to a widely-based anti-capitalist movement.

All of these points of view indicated that lesbians would be best served by subjugating their concerns to wider concerns. The primary goal of the movement for lesbian autonomy is to remove the need for this subjugation by encouraging lesbians, whatever their allegiances might be, to also meet together and define their needs as lesbians. Lesbians, either as individuals or as groups, were not encouraged to remove their energies from other movements. They were encouraged to define themselves as an autonomous group within other groups; to be able to identify and raise "lesbian" issues which would be supported by gay liberationists, feminists, and socialists in the same manner that lesbians support the struggles of these movements. The point was made that although lesbian womanpower has been integral to many diverse issues, lesbians have not yet recognized their collective commonalities and strengths, and have not gathered to use this energy for their own concerns. Lesbians were urged to become familiar with their communities and consider the possibilities for autonomous lesbian organisation or caucuses.

### WORKSHOP IV: STRATEGIES FOR A LESBIAN MOVEMENT

Historically, lesbian conferences have not always associated an exchange of thoughts and feelings with plans for action. Those who attended past

conferences (Montreal 74, 75) came away with a special perception of the meaning of "Sisterhood is Powerful" and only vague, amorphous ideas of what to do with that perception once they returned to their own communities. The organisers of this conference (Lesbians of Ottawa Now) readily admitted to the conference's Hidden Agenda: that the energy of 300 lesbians gathered from B.C. to Newfoundland should not once again be dissipated for a year, but should be channelled into organising. The final major workshop of the conference was therefore concerned with a discussion of strategy.

Many participants at this conference voiced the opinion that lesbian caucuses in feminist or gay liberation organisations were not enough; lesbians must also be concerned with their own collective strength; every lesbian in Canada should have the concept of a national movement or a nationally recognised concern for lesbian issues. The conference decision was that it was time to recognise our numbers and prepare to give full support to one another. To this end, there was discussion about the formation of a national lesbian organization.

Participants felt that it was not possible to bring such an organisation into immediate existence until as many lesbians and lesbian organisations across Canada had sufficient time to familiarize themselves with the idea and react to it. Participants did, however, commit themselves to a year of groundwork in preparation for a national organising conference to be held in one year's time (hopefully in the west). The conference based the organisational work in 5 regions: B.C., the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes. Participants from each region agreed to go back home to spread the news (this is it, folks) to as many lesbians as possible.

It is hoped that individuals and organisations in each region will communicate with each other and divide responsibility for contacting women. Members of the region would either meet or otherwise communicate to discuss their ideas concerning a national lesbian organisation and to voice their primary concerns as lesbians. All regions will attempt to communicate with one another through a communication "clearinghouse" which will probably be centred in a different region every few months. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL LESBIAN ORGANISATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE WINNIPEG LESBIAN SOCIETY or A WOMAN'S PLACE. The structure of the national organising conference and the organisation itself will be determined on the basis of regional input, which will be determined by INDIVIDUAL input.

#### FUN

Well - we all had a lot of fun. The Saturday night dance was like a good dream; dykes, dykes, everywhere - the collective, conservative estimate was 500. And great music. The Sunday night coffeehouse was, if possible, even more fun; entertainment was provided by 12-15 women who sang, acted, made up songs, told jokes, had everyone laughing and singing together. One woman danced and acted an extremely moving vignette about a stripper which received a long, loud, and enthusiastic standing ovation. To add to the discussion of lesbian businesses we heard about the possibilities for a lesbian funeral parlour.



# Women in Literature

by Millie Lamb

We find a similar sensitivity to the restlessness of women in the novels of Margaret Laurence. In A Jest of God Rachel at thirty-four feels that as a spinster school-teacher life has passed her by. Her profession brings her little satisfaction apart from brief episodes of vicarious mothering. Her principal humiliates her, compelling her to accede to the strapping of her favorite pupil, whose trust she loses ever afterwards.

She wonders whether people are laughing at her as an eccentric old maid; she envies the young girls their carefree youth. There is no place for her in the social life of the prairie town. Barred from the sub-culture of the young, odd woman out with her married contemporaries, and scorning the pettiness of her mother's bridge cronies, she finds herself without friends. Aloof in her relationship with Calla, a fellow teacher, whom Rachel finds somewhat ridiculous in her dowdiness and Pentecostal fervour, she recoils in shocked horror when Calla's kiss reveals her secret love for Rachel. Rachel's expectations and norms are conventional. She envies her sister Stacy in Vancouver, her marriage and her four children, her good fortune in escaping responsibility for the care of their widowed mother, who clings to Rachel with incessant demands for attention. Though Rachel has been aware of the joyless state of her parents' married relationship, and her mother's lack of inner resources to substitute for her former domestic routine, Rachel cannot escape the powerful pressures that decree marriage and motherhood as woman's highest fulfillment. (In the novel that follows, The Fire-Dwellers, Rachel's sister finds that in achieving these goals she has lost herself.) Rachel dreams of passionate embraces, of a marriage proposal, a child.

A chance meeting with a former acquaintance revives her dwindling hopes. But her summer romance with Nick ends abruptly when she hints at a more serious relationship, for which Nick, considered youthful and attractive at thirty-six, sees no need. It is different for Rachel, on the shelf at thirty-four. She believes she is pregnant; an examination reveals only a tumour; her hopes of finding solace in bearing and rearing Nick's child are dashed. However, this experience gives her the courage to shake off the tyranny her mother exercises by playing on her illness and dependency, and try a new life in Vancouver. Her expectations are ordinary, but she has ceased to drift at the whims of others; she has taken a firmer hold on life.

Hagar, who tells her story in The Stone Angel, is a fighter to the end. She has struggled all her life to find the richness and variety she is sure life holds, and to release those vital springs within herself that will enable her to gain these. At ninety-one, she clings to life, resisting the well-meaning efforts of her son and daughter-in-law to wrap her in a protective cocoon, and deny her the joys and pains of raw, vital experience. When she was a child, she was contemptuous of her mother's weakness in passively surrendering to life and death, and of the stone angel her father placed over the grave. It was a mark of his pride and respectability those traits that made him refuse to let Hagar work as a teacher. She defies her father only to fall prey to the same feelings of pride and respectability in her relations with her husband and sons. In her attempts to make them an instrument of her will, she robs herself of their love, and becomes their stone angel, trying to shield or point them upward, and succeeding only in presiding over their disintegration. Only at the point of death does she learn that self-fulfillment cannot be achieved at the expense of others, but needs responsibility, human warmth, and communion.

From the first Canadian novel, Frances Brooke's The History of Emily Montague, to the novels of Ostenso and Laurence, our literature has been enriched by the contributions of gifted women writers.

With the growing interest in Canadian literature, more of these novels should find a place in secondary English. Two of Gabrielle Roy's novels focus on women. The Tin Flute reveals the bitter experience of Rose-Anna and Florentine, working class mother and daughter, who along with the other members of the family eke out a wretched existence in the slums of Montreal. They are victims of the profit system which condemns little Danile to die of the disease of poverty, and leads inevitably to war. From the restaurant in Saint-Henri where she is a waitress Florentine watches the military parade made up of men like her father and brother who have bought security for their families by enlisting, and thinks "...she had a vague intuition that desperate poverty had found its solution in war. As in a dream she recalled the depression years when she alone of her entire family had been able to bring any money home. And even before thatn, when her mother had gone out to work by the day."<sup>1</sup>

Where Nests the Water Hen is set in Northern Manitoba and brings us Luzina Tusignant, the mother of fourteen children, who is always reaching out for new and vital experiences for herself, and manages to bring this world of wonder and challenge in the form of a school house, books, and teachers to her children in their isolated little island home.

Other suitable books by Canadian women writers are Laura Goodman Salverson "The Viking Heart"; Nellie McClung "In Times Like These"; Marie Clair Blais "The Manuscripts of Paulien Archange"; Emily Carr "Klee Wyck"; Sylvia Fraser "Pandora".

The Canadian novels I have mentioned and discussed have a special place in giving all students a sense of identity and female students models and inspiration.

<sup>1</sup>Roy, Gabrielle, The Tin Flute (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, New Canadian Library, 1969) p. 162.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH.....



RENDEZ-VOUS

by Robin Morgan

*I would like to meet you  
after our great-great-great grandchildren  
are not commemorated as the Ancient Ones.*

*I would like to meet you  
when I can no longer remember  
being charred alive as a witch,  
when you can no longer recall  
being roasted alive as a faggot.*

*I would like to meet you  
when we have both utterly forgotten  
what tears could be;  
when we will wear no  
breasts or penis or uterus,  
vagina, testicles,  
no beard, no blood.*

*I would like to meet you  
in identically muscular clitorine  
large-brained naval-less bodies,  
smooth green flesh, pale budshade,  
that takes nourishment  
only from air/sun/water,  
not from any prey.*

*I would like to meet you  
when each can recognize  
the ember of this planet  
glowing in the eye of the other.*

*Then  
we could speak.*

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## FAMILY PLANNING CONFERENCE

November 24-26 at the Winnipeg Inn.

Objectives: to create awareness & encourage discussion of family planning needs and issues in Manitoba; to promote input from a cross section of society in family planning needs, priorities and program developments for the future; to assess and evaluate current status; and to examine the obstacles to progress in this field.

Sponsored by Planned Parenthood of Manitoba (formerly Family Planning Assoc.)

For further information call Mrs. Betty Anne Hershfield at 943-6489.



FORUM ON SEXUALITY: There will be an organizing meeting to discuss the idea of having a panel discussion on sexuality with members of the gay and women's communities. Planning meeting on Sat., October 30th at 2 p.m. at the University of Winnipeg. A tentative date for the Forum is Tuesday, November 16th at Lockhart Hall, University of Winnipeg.

For more information please call 582-1580.

## DECEMBER ISSUE OF W.W. Liberation Newsletter.

We are planning a Children's Issue for December and would like your children to send in any stories, poems, drawings, jokes they would like to share.

Send to: Newsletter Collective  
143 Walnut Street, Winnipeg.

## POEM

If you are weary, Henry,  
rest  
your head in the lap  
of the Mother

She/we will speak  
tho they muzzle y/our voice  
She, who sees all  
tho her eyes are blind

She calls us:  
Raise y/our voices  
fight  
for the right  
of some of us to remain unborn

in order that we might live.

We/The Committee to Relieve  
Henry Morgentaler

Feb/76



# NOVEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
NOV.	1 SOCIALIST WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE MTS. 7:30PM	2	3 CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING GRP. 7:30 PM	4 WPG LESBIAN SOCIETY MTS. 7:30PM WOMEN'S THEATRE GRP. 8 PM. at 1100 Wolsely Ave. 774-4180	5 W.L.S. SOCIAL CONTINENTAL MOTOR HOTEL	6 10AM - 1 PM FAMILY LAW SEMINAR sponsored by: FAMILY LAW ACTION COALITION 14th FLOOR. #155 CARLTON
7	8 S.W.C. MTS. 7:30 PM	9 COORDINATING COMMITTEE MTS. 7:30 PM CARAL. 8 PM. MTS	10 7:30 PM CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING GROUP YWCA 447 WESB PLACE "EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE" N.A.C.S.W.	11 W.L.S. MTS. 7:30 PM WOMEN'S THEATRE GRP. (as above)	12	13 8:30 -OPENING PARTY - at RED BOOKS 410 ALFRED + SALTER \$1.50 DONATION
14	15 Socialist Coll. MTS. 7:30 PM	16	17 7:30 PM CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING GRP. ACTION COALITION ON FAMILY LAW MTS. 7:30 PM. at "Y" WOMEN'S CENTRE	18 W.L.S. MTS. 7:30 PM WOMEN'S THEATRE GROUP (as above)	19	20
21	22 S.W.C. MTS. 7:30 PM	23 NEWSLETTER COORDINATING COMMITTEE	24 7:30 PM CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING GRP.	25 W.L.S. MTS. 7:30 PM WOMAN'S THEATRE GRP. (as above)	26	27
28	29 S.W.C. MTS. 7:30 PM	30	NOV. 24-26 FAMILY PLANNING CONFERENCE AT WINNIPEG INN 1 DEC. 7:30 CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING GROUP	2 W.L.S. MTS. 7:30 PM WOMAN'S THEATRE GRP. (as above)	3	4

SUNDAY - DEC 5th "OPEN HOUSE" 2pm - 5pm + 7pm - 11pm

