

# Breaking the Silence

a newsletter on feminism in social welfare  
research, action, policy and practice

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## FEAR AND SILENCING

"Fear is a major stumbling block, which prevents all women from expressing ourselves openly, and challenging the status quo".

(Pamela Connolly, p. 13).

The Breaking the Silence Editorial Collective has recently been grappling with the effect that fear has on silencing women. We have a policy of acknowledging women's writing, and encouraging each other to speak out, to break silences. However, two important articles in this issue are presented anonymously, at the request of the women who wrote them. They felt, justifiably, that to write critically about their experiences in their workplaces could jeopardize their basic survival. Nevertheless, they felt compelled to speak out.

These women face a common dilemma. We are all silenced by fear, in many ways, and often end up struggling in silence and isolation against structures which oppress us.

The collective knows these women as very strong, forthright and open about their politics in most situations, and respects their courage in deciding to speak out. We also respect their decision to remain anonymous at this time. Their fear of jeopardizing their jobs, and the fact that it is an understandable fear, is an indication of how much further we still have to go.

Contributors to the Issue: Nora Sobolov, Cindy Kenny-Gilday, Joan Holmes, C.L. Moriarty, Alma Estable, Alicia Schreder, Cathy Culpepper, Pamela Connolly, Jean Fairholm, Diane Patychuk, Joan Riggs, Wendy McKeen, Marilyn Kane, Linda Archibald, Sherry Galey, Joan Gillespie, Diane Chalmers, Susan Lindsay, Emily Elliott, Brenda Elliott.

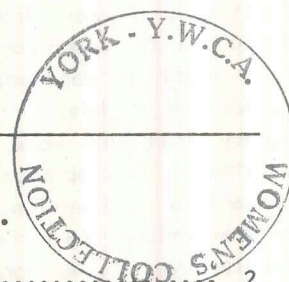
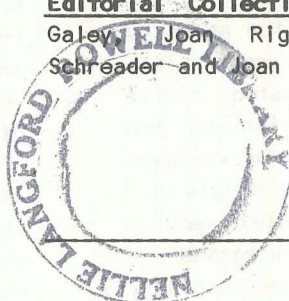
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Editorial Collective for this Issue: Sherry Galey, Joan Riggs, Alma Estable, Alicia Schreder and Joan Holmes.



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## FEAR AND SILENCING

### LIVING AT THE APEX/NADIR OF CAPITALIST PATRIARCHY

In attempting to write this article on the contradictions I face in my traditional workplace, I am struck by my near paralysis in expressing my true thoughts. I'm exploring my struggle to maintain a critical analysis in a non-supportive workplace, I had wished to express my views in theoretical and general terms. However, the contradictions and stumbling blocks I encounter can only be expressed, at this point, through an account of my personal experience. As I write these very words, I fear that my political analysis will be used against me in the workplace if this article is read by my superiors. I was unaware of this fear until I started to actually write about the agency.

Because of this experience, I now feel convinced that I live in constant danger and in constant fear, and that this colours my struggle to maintain a socialist and feminist analysis and practice in my setting. My personal experience with this feeling of paralysis and fear brings home the fact that fear, both in the public and the private sphere, is such a fundamental condition of our work that it becomes invisible. This awareness changed the material I wanted to present in this article, and, instead of a theoretical examination of contradictions, I want to start with sharing a very recent experience.

Having a firm understanding of the means by which capitalism restrains women into performing isolated and alienated social functions, I am firmly committed to the principle of women organizing, in whatever form might be appropriate, to struggle for collective rights. In the social service agency in which I work, I occupy a management position. This obviously places me in a very precarious situation, and poses many contradictions for the way I work. The female staff in my agency are not organized into any kind of bargaining unit, are not yet informed or aware collectively of their strengths and possibilities. An important part of my personal/political agenda, therefore, has been to encourage staff women to educate themselves on the issue of collective bargaining, and explore the possibility of unionization.

At one level, it is my personal goal to educate and organize the women working in my agency, and concentrate my efforts in grassroots activism. At another level, I am faced with the reality of my position, and the fact that I must financially support my family. Given the way that women are pitted against one another in our patriarchal social structure, solidarity takes a long time to develop, and my identity is not necessarily

protected. At a class level, my involvement in helping women organize, while I am part of management, would be considered inappropriate, at best.

I feel alone on an ice field. The only way I have been able to temporarily resolve this dilemma is to base my decision-making on my feminist framework. I try not to fall prey to the pitfalls of misguided class identification. I must take some risks, because I am convinced that sexism and classism lie at the root of all human suffering.

- Anonymous

### WORKING ON PARLIAMENT HILL

This article requires a preface. It was to be by one woman who wanted to reveal her working conditions on Parliament Hill. However, she quickly realized that if she interspersed the factual aspects of the job with her personal experience she would be vulnerable to being fired, ostracized from friends and the political party and being charged under the legal system. We then attempted to write the article with three women. Yet even with the three of us, we felt that to name any specific cases of exploitation, harassment and discrimination would cost us too much and we were also filled with the same fear.

As a consequence this article has also become a commentary about fear. Historically, as women we have consistently been denied our identities because we have not had the opportunities to explore and describe our realities. Today, we are still denied. We cannot articulate a description of our working conditions without fear of being cut off from our livelihood.

It is ironic when we consider that our fear is generated from revealing our experiences on Parliament Hill. On the one hand, the House of Commons is representative of all patriarchal institutions. On the other hand, the House is responsible for defining the rights and freedoms for all people in the country. Yet, if you are a female employee on the Hill you have limited rights and you do not even have the freedom of speech to discuss your working conditions.

Working on Parliament Hill is viewed as a privilege, yet for many women it becomes a privilege to be exploited. The structure of work on the Hill is such that: it is illegal to join a union, the job classifications with their corresponding salaries do not reflect the various duties in an M.P.'s office and consequently most people are underpaid, the high volume of work makes unpaid overtime an expectation and each M.P. can fire and hire at his discretion and without justifiable reasons. The bottom line is that there is no real job security on Parliament Hill. These structural conditions impede on women in



much the same way, yet women are subjected to a further exploitation as a result of their gender, specifically sexual discrimination and sexual harassment.

The demands placed on men and women are different, thus affecting one's job security differently. The hiring and firing process is structured such that the power remains solely with the employer, thus enhancing further exploitation. Each Member's office operates on a global budget and out of that comes the salaries. Many of the working conditions are defined by the House of Commons, however, the M.P. still has the final decision in what your job classification is and what will be your specific working conditions. Employees are required to negotiate on a personal basis for a suitable contract. For women they are negotiating on two disadvantaged levels, one as a worker, the other as a woman. Consequently, they often are forced to accept a contract which discriminates against them as workers: lower wages than the men in the office, different working conditions from the men. So, irregardless of your position in the office, if you are a woman, it is usually expected that you will perform personal favours related to your assumed female traditional role: hostessing, getting coffee, banking, taking care of the dry cleaning, etc..

This system also furthers more severe forms of exploitation such as sexual harassment. One example is that of Kristina Pogatzky whose case against Liberal MP Allen McBain will go before a tribunal of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

The other factor that frequently is used to exploit workers and ensure that women do not speak out against injustices is the idea that the type of work done on the Hill is for the "privileged". The emphasis on the political nature of your work creates a climate where exploitation becomes legitimate. Since we are working for a cause, we become willing to take low wages, work overtime, and most importantly, ignore the sexual harassment and discrimination within the party we are committed to. To reveal any imperfections about your M.P. would result in tarnishing the party's image. This pressure has effectively quieted women from speaking out about innumerable incidents of harassment and other forms of unfair labour practice. We are quiet not because we are committed to a party that can submit us to this type of exploitation but rather as a result of a fear of losing our jobs.

Parliament Hill is merely representative of many patriarchal institutions we work within. However, we should recognize that their responsibility as a legislative body is to create and maintain a social justice, yet at the same time they are not prepared to recognize the needs of their own workers and they are prepared to exploit their women

workers in various ways.

In ending this article we would like to return to our feelings of fear. As a final act in understanding this fear, we ask that you imagine writing an article, specifying your working conditions, relaying sexist incidents and then signing your name. Scary, isn't it?

- Anonymous

#### A PLACE THAT IS GOOD FOR US

#### WHO LIVES IN THIS VILLAGE? THE CONSEQUENCES OF PLANNING WITHOUT ASKING WOMEN

Rae-Edzo, the largest Dene community in the Northwest Territories (pop: 1,300), lies 70 miles west of Yellowknife, on Marian Lake. In the late 60's, the village of Rae, like many Indian communities in Canada, faced crisis-level health problems due to poor sanitation and housing. These conditions escalated until children died; only then did the situation become a public scandal, and a political issue. In 1970, after consulting with southern experts, the federal government decided to resolve these problems by moving the whole town 24 km. down the highway, away from the lake. The Chief and the leaders of Rae heard this decision with astonishment, and, in a quiet Dene manner, made it clear that the people had no desire to move away from the lake to the proposed town of Edzo. They repeatedly said that the people would not move. Nevertheless, the government closed the school in Rae, razed the 35-bed hospital (despite loud protests from the people), and built a school and a 6-bed cottage hospital at the new Edzo townsite. They also froze all development in Rae itself. The effects of this process, and the human cost, were especially felt by the women of the community.

Eventually, the neat rows of pre-fab houses in Edzo were complete, with running water and sewage, and all construction in Rae was stopped. Slowly, a few, mostly young, Native families from Rae who had jobs at the hospital or the school moved to Edzo. All the teachers, nurses and a doctor also lived there. But most of the people stayed in Rae, in their own community, close to the lake, their families, and the store.

As a resident of that community, I saw and experienced first-hand the difficulties encountered by the women and children as a consequence of that move.

#### School

Since the school was in Edzo now, bussing children 24 kilometres down the highway, first thing in the morning, became a major



expense and preoccupation of the village. In the North, by November, it is extremely cold, and very dark, at 9 o'clock in the morning. Buses were honking their horns at 7 o'clock. People who lived by the seasons were disoriented by the demands of the clock and a rhythm set by the Government-regulated school hours. In Rae, people did not have central heating, running water, or electricity, to ease their morning with seven or eight children in crowded houses. It was a heavy task for worn out mothers and irritable children in the dark and cold of the morning to get ready for the bus. Needless to say, attendance was a major problem at the Edzo school. At least in the old school in Rae, even if they were late in the morning, the children came for the rest of the day. The mothers also lived in fear that the bus would break down on the highway, stranding children in 40-below weather. Contact between teachers and the community was limited because all the teachers lived in Edzo. Without transportation, the mothers were removed from having any say in their children's lives at school.

#### Health

Health problems did not improve. Women are responsible for, and are expected to look after, sick people in Dene families. This task became very difficult for the women in Rae after the hospital was razed. The anxiety, amongst young mothers especially, reached incredible proportions, because there was no ambulance or public transportation to make emergency treks to the small hospital down the highway. Few people had cars, and families with young children had major difficulties trying to get to a doctor in the middle of the night.

#### Housing

In Rae, people continued to live in crowded quarters with large families, and used the lake for everything. Children and women continued carrying water from the lake in pails to wash, cook and drink, an especially hard job in the nine months of winter. It was extremely difficult for the average family with 9-10 people to keep clean under these conditions.

The new houses in Edzo had proper running water and sewage, but also had problems. After a year of being lived in by families of nine or ten people, the flimsy pre-fabs looked well-used. People who moved to Edzo had to adjust to living in a house with many small rooms, not suited to the needs of people who still made their living off the land. It was difficult to find space to tan hides, dry fish, and there were no rafters to hang dry meat and furs. Also, since the houses had no wood stove, power failures became a real fear, since it would take only two hours in the winter to freeze completely.

#### Social Patterns

The mere fact that there was no store in Edzo created a major change in the social pattern of the Native women's lifestyle. A lot of social interactions occurred around the daily trips to the local store in Rae. The Native people who moved to Edzo had to worry daily about how to get to Rae and back to get groceries, without vehicles. Hanging around the highway to catch a ride to Rae to get food or other goods became a pattern for most of the Native people in Edzo. Younger girls started staying in Rae on their own, without parental supervision, when they couldn't catch a ride back at night. They eventually started going to Yellowknife on their own, causing a lot of worry for many mothers and eventually many other problems for the girls.

I think the most damaging factor for the Dene community in Edzo was living away from the normal extended family situation. Most of the young working mothers could no longer rely on their families to help them out, as they had in Rae; some of the school-age girls therefore missed a lot of school to care for babies and younger children, and sometimes dropped out of school in frustration. There were many other disadvantages to the isolated nuclear family lifestyle. I sheltered many wives and children from their drunk fathers in those days. They had nowhere else to go. It was a lonely life for the women, away from the activities of Rae community life.

There could have been other solutions to the health problems in Rae. But the lack of participation in the planning by the people, and especially the women, created tremendous problems, and failed to solve the original ones. The whole planning effort was a regrettable mistake, and added to the hardships of a Native community who were already having problems. The women, as the backbone of the community and as a cohesive force within family units, were hit the hardest.

- Cindy Kenny-Gilday

Cindy Kenny-Gilday is a former teacher in Rae-Edzo, and a member of the Native Women's Association of NWT. The above is a condensed version of her presentation to the MATCH conference on Women and Human Settlement held in Ottawa in September (see BTS, 21).

#### STRUGGLING FOR A WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENT

Though I have often tried to escape it, I find myself constantly returning to work with women active in altering their environments. I say "environments" and not just housing because for many of the world's women access to housing is not a reality. Furthermore, for women of every country, shelter alone does not ensure individual survival or



community change. My persistent involvement in this field has forced me to examine more carefully the personal and political basis of my interest in women's environments.

Personally, my environment has always had a profound effect on my security, my ability to learn and to work. I grew up in a lower middle class, model-home suburb, an experience common to many people of my age. Our home was isolated from the public spaces of the town: work, theatre, doctors, shopping, even religious institutions. There were simply no spaces where my mother could interact with other women on a regular basis or even where she could go out, alone, and feel that it was an acceptable and comfortable thing to do. Years of being isolated in a community that lacked interaction, and was also hostile to our ethnic group, made things much more difficult as we grew older, but the full impact of isolation only became clear to me after the fact.

As a young woman I moved to Toronto and lived in a communal environment where the housework was shared and where public spaces were accessible through walking and public transportation. It was then that I began to see the isolation of the single home more clearly. Also, at this time the horrible problems of women, especially homeless women, became evident to me through my work with an alderperson at City Hall. Here, over and over, I found evidence of that best kept secret - private space was like hallowed ground and no one was willing to challenge the deity.

Housing policy, particularly Ontario government housing policy, could be summed up nicely in the words of one agency official who commented to me that I could work with homeless women all I wanted, but women didn't really need shelter because "they could always shack up with a man". Women without children or a husband might as well forget about government-sponsored housing programs; only families need apply. Women who could afford to rent were faced with the adults-only clause in many buildings. Women who wished to live in rooming houses were perceived to be "too much trouble" because male borders would be unable to control themselves. Women who wished to buy housing could rarely obtain credit or a mortgage. Indeed, before the law was changed, credit officers in North America often insisted that a woman sign a paper promising that she would have an abortion if she became pregnant while repaying the mortgage.<sup>1</sup>

Since the view of women as extensions and dependants of men has not changed significantly, emergency shelter for women who have nowhere else to go is relatively scarce, even in major cities. Even in shelters not specifically designed for battered women it is rare to find a woman who

has not, at one time or another, found refuge with a man for protection from other men or a need for shelter. Most have experienced violence as a result.

Women-only housing where living spaces are designed with the need for public transportation to jobs, proximity to schools, daycare, clinics and safe environments are relatively new on the housing scene. Co-operative and non-profit housing is an alternative for women which recognizes that shelter is not enough. Co-operative and non-profit housing programs which involve collective ownership, design and control of housing units in the project, often give women a chance to take control of their space and to learn management and work skills that can be used in public life as well. Unfortunately, these programs have been cut back to the point where it is difficult to use it to provide low cost women's housing.

We should not be surprised that these programs have been cut back, rather than revised to make housing more accessible. Private home ownership and private family arrangements, where men work in public spaces and control and oversee work by women in private spaces, are fundamental to the capitalist system. Women who have lived in co-operatives, particularly women-managed ones, comment that the confidence and power they have gained through collective ownership and management of resources has affected the way that they live, work and function publicly as well. If women design and control their living space, they may also begin to challenge traditional family structures and work roles. One official stated that "co-op housing could mean the breakdown of the family and ultimately the capitalist system as we know it". His fears may be justified.

What about the kibbutz? This is a communal experience in which women ended up doing much of the same work, only on a collective basis, and in which men still control the means of production, the land and most resources? Ruth Taplin<sup>2</sup> describes how men had already planned and controlled the land and the arrangements; women plugged in later. Though most kibbutzim began with a system of work sharing on all levels, as the traditional capitalist and patriarchal system encroached, men re-asserted their control over the means and knowledge of production. Women, left with little or no power, reached for the only area left to them - the traditional family system. Taplin's argument points out that by being excluded from original control over planning and resources, women can be oppressed in any type of living arrangement. Nevertheless, co-op design and ownership offers more potential control and change for women than most options.

Women must begin to gain control where they live and work. Only then can we, together,



gain enough power to take control over every aspect of our public and private lives.

- Nora Sobolov

1. Emily Card, "Women, Housing Access and Mortgage Credit", Signs, 1980, Vol. 5, No. 3.

2. Ruth Taplin, Discussions of Women on the Kibbutz, AWID Conference, Washington, D.C., October 1983.

#### ON THE POLICY FRONT

#### BEWARE OF THE NEWS MEDIA

News media persist in presenting girls and women in a negative and demeaning light. They contribute to the subordinate image of women by their selective presentation of "news". Most often media simply fail to report on events and issues that are of prime concern to women. When they do cover "women's stories" the presentation trivializes and distorts issues, discredits our activities and undermines our accomplishments.

#### The Numbers Game

The coverage of recent abortion rallies illustrates how biased news reporting creates a distorted understanding of important women's issues. The Globe and Mail's story on the October 1st Toronto demonstration reported that 20,000 marched in the anti-choice rally, while only 2,000 demonstrated for reproductive choice. The Toronto Star published a front page story complete with a large colour photo and lots of quotes from anti-choice people. This story reported that anti-choice marchers numbered 25,000 making up a crowd "about 50 times larger than at a pro-choice rally". In a much smaller second page story, the pro-choice demonstrators were numbered at between 350 and 2,000 people. The Ottawa Citizen's front page story inflated the anti-choice marchers to 40,000 explaining that between 25,000 and 70,000 people demonstrated against a woman's right to choose. The pro-choice rally was reported as having 2,000 demonstrators.

It is very significant that the newspapers' figures varied so widely and that they consistently overestimated some numbers while underestimating others. Since when is 25,000 people "about 50 times" 350 to 2,000 people?

#### Women as Victims

It is a sad fact that girls and women most often appear in the news as victims. All too often these news stories imply that we

somehow are responsible for our own victimization.

Rape is a very serious crime against women, which society has allowed to flourish under a conspiracy of silence. Consequently, the media coverage received by this issue has been sensationalized rather than serious. On September 23 both the Globe and Mail and the Ottawa Citizen published a story about a gang rape on Indian reserves. These articles are unusual in addressing rape as a social problem. However, they are objectionable in presenting gang rapes as a problem peculiar to only one cultural group. Rape in these articles is associated with stereotypic depictions of drunken native behaviour. No where is this particular situation related to the prevalence of violence against all Canadian women.

Most of the articles consisted of describing titillating details of gang rapes. If you manage to wade through this yellow journalism you find a brief mention of structural barriers that confront all women and which become acute in cases of sexual violence. The victim, it is reported, tends to blame herself for the assault, and is reluctant to face police interrogation. Legal authorities lend little assistance to the victim and often refuse to believe her testimony. The Globe and Mail carried a story the following day in which an O.P.P. officer cast doubt on the veracity of the women's claims.

It is a discredit to professional journalism that newspapers publish stories on a serious social problem only when it can be blamed on a subordinate ethnic group. The problem of violence against native women has its roots in the unequal power relations between men and women in our society and should never be linked to their culture or to any of the other cultures that make up Canadian society. News media play a leading role in developing our attitudes and informing us about our society. Unfortunately, they do not equally represent all segments of the population and are blatantly biased against some, including women. This is why it is so essential that we learn to be critical in our acceptance of mass media and teach our children to do the same.

- Joan Holmes

#### WOMEN, WORK & THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

At a recent Ottawa forum on unemployment, one man observed that the economic crisis is deepening, contrary to what political pundits maintain. He based this on the fact that more and more Canadians are now personally touched by the crisis. To bring his point home, he suggested we all knew of at least one unemployed person in our own community - a neighbour, cousin, father, uncle, whereas five or six years ago, we may not have known anyone who wasn't able to get paid work. I



had two thoughts while he spoke. The first was mild curiosity about where his mother, sisters, aunts, female cousins or neighbours were five or six years ago. The second was a dawning realization that unemployment and under-employment have become major national concerns only as the crisis impacts on men's relationship to paid employment... This man's female friends and relatives have always been touched by economic insecurity. Women have always experienced a precarious involvement with the paid labour force.

Although I don't wish to understate the current economic crisis, I see the big difference today (aside from numbers) is that men have joined women in the ranks of the reserve army of labour. The difference today for women is that our relationship to paid employment is even more precarious than before.

I work at a small community-based organization providing group and individual counselling to women preparing to enter or re-enter the paid labour force. We see women from all socio-economic backgrounds, and who represent the "average" statistical profile of women seeking employment in Canada (e.g., 2/3 have worked for pay only in clerical, sales or service jobs; 1/2 are widowed, separated or sole support parents).

All of the women we see have made short-term career decisions - going into jobs or training that would see them through to marriage. No woman can grow up in our society and be unaffected by the fairy tale that shaped those decisions. Today, by far the majority of women who work do so out of economic necessity. Yet we are still shaped by societal expectations. Today, women without men are still of course expected to be in the paid labour force, to support themselves and their children, and not be a burden on the state. Women with men are of course expected to be in the home, providing the emotional and physical support husbands and children need.

Growing up female in our society, we are dominated, formed and controlled by the myths, fairy tales and ideologies necessary to maintain a certain socio-economic order. This ensures that, at some point in our lives, we shall encounter lies and short comings. For some, we lose our economic security - men with paycheques leave; we live longer and in poverty because of inadequate pensions. For others, even inside the paid labour force, we can never achieve the independence we dream about. Too many barriers are placed in our way.

Women come to Women's Career Counselling when one of the myths has been shattered. These women are unorganized in the worse sense of the word. They have individualized widespread, systemic problems, and claimed them as their own. They too are part of a

group of people called the hidden unemployed. Not too many people, though, pay much attention to their brand of disillusionment, or hear the pain of being told one thing and buying into the myth, and of living out something else.

In the early stages of the women's movement, when we debated a woman's right to choose to work for pay, we were all making assumptions about what options existed. We believed we had clear considered choices available. That debate today is pretty much academic. Inflation, layoffs, divorces, all have eroded those discussions. Yet girls and young women still cling to the fairy tales. Their choices are still limited. Women who at certain points in their lives work in home and community without pay continue to do so, because the factors which determine our choices still override external reality. Women who work in the home do so, not because homemaking and motherwork are the ultimate in satisfying work, but rather because the limited paid work available to them continues to be unsatisfying, low-paying, and dead-ending.

The federal government projects that between 65 and 90% of all women will be in the paid labour force by 1990. We are not only concerned about what this means for women, we are frankly terrified. How are women going to break into this tight marketplace? Where are we going to go? What new job ghettos are emerging to replace the old ones? The work women have traditionally sought since the 40's is being decimated by technological change. The progress of women into all levels in all occupational groupings represents such a tiny fraction of working women, it is insignificant. Despite the federal government's push toward non-traditional jobs, women remain skeptical and disinterested for a variety of good reasons. What will happen to us in the next few years?.

At Women's Career Counselling, we see women competing against other women for the same limited number of available jobs, in the same limited, low-paying, job ghettos women have always gone for. We walk on a tightrope in the centre a lot of the time: acknowledging these inevitables, encouraging women to be all they can be, talking about their potential and their self-worth, and all the while trying to tell them, in some supportive way, that the reality is that there are no jobs out there, that employers don't care about motherwork, about organizing events in their community, that to employers, their work, their jobs, have no meaning because it's outside the paid labour force. Women going into, or returning to, the paid labour force get it at every point. At one time we're too young, too sexual, too likely to marry and leave to have children; at another, we're too likely to have sick kids, problems at home; and finally, we're just too old - of



what use could we possibly be?

As more billions are pumped into military buildup, social programs and policies take a back seat in government priorities. If governments and other institutions really did care about those to whom they are supposed to be responsive, they would concern themselves with massive, systemic discrimination. Policies such as affirmative action might stand a chance of making some impact on women's participation in paid labour. I am actually not too optimistic. For us, in our small office, as we face women day after day who are making painful attempts to change and adjust to whatever the current demands are for paid work, affirmative action takes on a whole different meaning. It becomes everything that impacts on women. It is holistic. Fundamental changes must be made both inside and outside the paid and unpaid work forces. A total reorganization of our thinking must take place; definitions of work, of education, of religious concepts, of government policies, of values placed on both women and men, must change. Otherwise, policies of affirmative action are nothing but yet another bandaid attempt to resolve long-standing historical injustices.

The fact that women are still forced into financial dependence on men - whether those men be husbands, a male-dominated and male-organized paid labour force, or male institutions, paints a bleak picture for all our future security. We all pay a price for being women in this society. The toll has always been high. For some of us, the cost is more, for others, less, but, in some way we all have to pay.

- Brenda Elliott

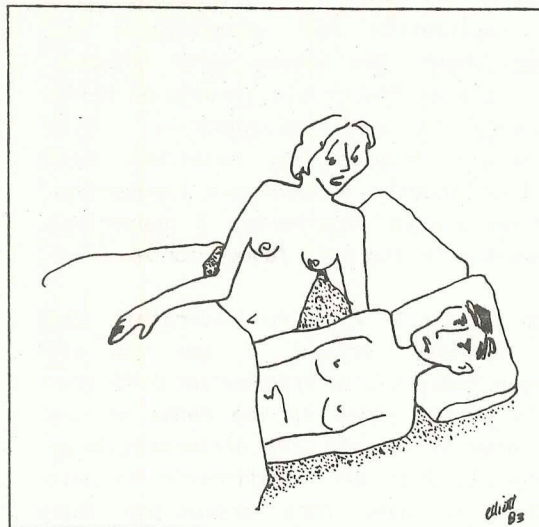
Brenda Elliott is a long-time activist in the Women's Career Counselling Service/Service D'orientation au Travail pour Femmes. This article is based in part on a presentation to the Affirmative Action Forum, sponsored by the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Coalition for Affirmative Action, held in Ottawa on November 15, 1983.

#### SUBMISSIONS ON PORNOGRAPHY AND PROSTITUTION

The Fraser Committee on Pornography and Prostitution will release its first paper on issues in November. Upon release of the paper the committee will invite public response through briefs and public meetings in several Canadian cities. The final report of the committee will be presented by December 31, 1984.

Women and groups who wish to make a submission should first request a copy of the issues paper. Further information can be obtained by contacting:

Paul Fraser  
Chair, Committee on Pornography and Prostitution  
c/o Department of Justice K1A 0H8



WHADDA YA MEAN, YOU'RE NOT ON THE PILL?

#### **FOCUS ON THE REGION**

Since the inception of the Canadian women's movement, the provision of alternative services for women has been an important task. In the early 70's, we realized that traditional patriarchal services did not provide solutions for women, but in fact were often a part of the problem. Women began to explore other ways of helping each other through crises such as sexual assault, incest, and physical abuse.

Women in the Ottawa-Hull area are fortunate to have a variety of such alternatives. The three groups of women below are working to meet the needs of women who have been sexually assaulted or traumatized by incest.

#### SERVICES OF OTTAWA RAPE CRISIS CENTRE

In December of 1974 Ottawa became the third Canadian city to open a Rape Crisis Centre. In the past nine years, the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre has provided service to past and present victims of all forms of sexual assault; sexual harassment, child molestation, incest, and the three levels of sexual assault under the new legislation.

Counsellors trained in crisis intervention are available on a 24 hour crisis line to offer immediate support and information to victims of sexual assault, their families and friends, accompaniment to the police station, hospital and court, and long term counselling.

In 1982, the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre received 540 crisis calls. It is estimated that only one out of ten women ever reports



the sexual assault. Recognizing that the calls received are only the tip of the iceberg, the need for a public education program is obvious.

The purpose of public education is twofold: to provide preventive information to the general public; and to work with other professionals in the community who deal directly with victims. In 1982, the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre's public education program reached an audience of close to 3,000.

Seminars for police officers and medical personnel in crisis intervention are an on-going component of the program. As well, workshops are provided to child care workers, health care personnel and counsellors. Speakers are available to address a variety of audiences from high schools to community businesses and service clubs.

The raison d'être of the Centre is to provide direct service to victims of sexual assault. The ultimate goal is to ensure that women regain control of their own lives. In order to help women re-establish this control the Centre will act on their behalf to support their decisions and to give them the resources necessary to see that these decisions are carried out.

Beyond these immediate individual concerns, the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre is actively involved in advocacy and lobbying on behalf of victims' rights in particular and women's rights in general. In this way, the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre serves the community. For information contact: P.O. Box 35, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6C3 or call 238-6667.

- C.L. Moriarty

#### THE SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTRE: A NEW SERVICE FOR OTTAWA WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The Sexual Assault Centre's collective is composed of women who see the need to make connections among all forms of violence against women, and who wish to offer as many choices as possible to women and children who have experienced that violence. In our basis of unity we state that "we believe that violence and fear of violence against women and children has been used to control women and children; and that working to eradicate violence against women and children is one of the ways that we can create an environment that fosters the ability of women to reach our full potential."

In our work we are coming to understand that all violence against women is interconnected. Battered women may also have been raped; incestuously assaulted children may become battered wives or rape victims; all women are subject to harassment on the street or on the job. The Sexual Assault Support Centre will offer women a safe, supportive environment in

which to begin to deal with the violence in their lives.

The development of rape crisis centres was one of the first accomplishments of the early years of the women's movement. Women recognized that violence was done to women and children in isolation, and often they had nowhere to turn. Crisis centres sprang up as a way of alleviating the worst pain at the time of most need, and they still perform this vital function.

However, we are recognizing now that crisis counselling and intervention is not the only care that women who have experienced violence need. Incest, battering, and some forms of sexual harassment, as well as rape/sexual assault, may leave lasting emotional scars that require a long-term healing process. Women in other parts of Canada and the U.S. have shown that long-term counselling, on a one-to-one basis, in support groups, or both, is an effective way for women to come to terms with their experience.

Support groups will be a major focus of the Sexual Assault Support Centre. Violence is usually done to us in isolation, and in isolation we feel fear, pain, shame, guilt, powerlessness. Hearing the similarities in the experience of other women we can learn to let go of the feelings of shame and guilt, begin to reclaim our power, and the fear and pain can begin to recede. When we open in January, we will be offering at least one support group immediately, for incest survivors, with others to follow as the need arises and our resources permit. Studies have shown that group work is the most effective way for incest survivors, especially, to come to grips with their experience, and we are anxious to fill in this gap in the services now being offered.

Because violence against women contributes to the limitation of our choices, we wish to offer as many choices as possible to women in the matter of dealing with the violence in their lives. We will therefore offer crisis counselling, intervention and advocacy around all forms of violence: rape/sexual assault, battering, incest, and sexual harassment. If a woman decides that our services or methods do not suit her needs, and we cannot devise a program that does, we are pledged to help her find whatever she needs elsewhere within the community. Finally, we recognize that public education is crucial in our fight against violence against women. We want to emphasize the connections among all forms of violence, and to deal particularly with incestuous assault and sexual abuse of children.

Our services are free to ensure their accessibility to all women. We recognize, too, that women often bear sole or primary responsibility for childrearing; therefore we offer remuneration for childcare, or will find childcare workers if necessary.



People wishing to help us can do so in several ways. Donations of money, furniture or equipment will always be appreciated and are tax deductible. Women can join our collective as volunteers, and men can offer their time as fundraisers or childcare workers. Our office space and phone lines await further fundraising. At the moment, for further information about our centre, or about joining support groups, call 232-4900 (ask for Jean) or 995-2581 (ask for Gretchen) or write P.O. Box 4441, Stn. E., Ottawa, K1S 5B4.

### LE CENTRE D'AIDE ET DE LUTTES CONTRE LES AGRESSIONS SEXUELLES DE L'OUTAOUAIS

Le Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions sexuelles de l'Outaouais est un lieu de soutien pour les femmes ayant été agressées sexuellement et un moyen de sensibilisation auprès de la population en ce qui concerne les agressions sexuelles. Il a dû fermer ses portes pendant deux ans. Depuis septembre 1982, suite à l'obtention d'une nouvelle subvention du Ministère des affaires sociales, le Centre pourra assurer une permanence et une continuité dans ses activités.

Voici un bref aperçu de notre analyse par rapport aux agressions sexuelles. L'agression sexuelle n'est pas un problème individuel, c'est un problème social. C'est un acte de domination, un rapport de force perpétré lors d'une intimité physique allant contre la volonté d'une femme. Nous reconnaissons qu'il peut atteindre n'importe qui, mais nous savons que les femmes en sont les principales victimes. Les rôles attribués aux femmes et aux hommes dans notre société, maintiennent le déséquilibre. La passivité prépare les femmes à des rôles de victimes et la domination prédispose les hommes à des rôles d'agresseurs. La société est bien nourrie pour normaliser le droit qu'un homme prend sur une femme, c'est-à-dire le droit d'imposer une forme d'esclavage. Les mythes et les préjugés font en sorte qu'on définit une agression sexuelle selon qui est la victime et non par l'agression elle-même. On s'en remet aux femmes et on libère l'agresseur de ses responsabilités. En considérant l'agression sexuelle comme étant un problème individuel, nous augmentons notre seuil de tolérance et nous gardons le silence.

En ce qui a trait aux services offerts par le Centre, celui-ci se définit par trois volets importants: l'aide directe, une sensibilisation auprès de la population et la création de liens avec des individus ou groupes concernés de près ou de loin par la violence faite aux femmes.

On peut nous rejoindre 24 heures/7 jours/semaine: 771-1773

Les femmes ayant été agressées sexuellement

peuvent nous rejoindre pour parler, pour avoir du soutien moral et/ou technique si elles désirent entreprendre des démarches (accompagnement à l'hôpital, à la police, à la cour, dans la famille, etc.) 24 heures/7 jours/semaine.

\*Nous soulignons que tous les appels que nous recevons demeurent confidentiels.

### Groupe de parole:

Pour les femmes intéressées à échanger sur un vécu par rapport à la violence faite aux femmes, nous avons créé un lieu où chaque femme peut s'exprimer de façon sécuritaire.

### Animations et Informations:

En ce qui concerne le travail de sensibilisation, nous offrons des sessions d'information aux intervenants(es) du milieu qui sont en contact direct ou indirect avec des femmes (policières, infirmières, professeurs, etc...). Nous offrons des sessions d'animation aux groupes intéressés, groupes de femmes, groupes populaires, groupes d'étudiants(es), (secondaire, CEGEP, universités).

### Appuis et alliances:

Nous collaborons avec les individus et les groupes concernés par la violence faite aux femmes.

Tout en assurant une aide directe aux femmes ayant été agressées sexuellement, il est essentiel d'agir en conséquence des préjugés et d'appuyer ceux et celles concernés par cette violence.

\*Si vous désirez plus d'information n'hésitez pas à nous appeler 771-1773 ou à nous écrire:

Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions sexuelles-Outaouais  
C.P. 1872 sec B,  
Hull, Québec J8X 3Z1

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN AT CITY HALL

The Office of Equal Opportunity for Women at the City of Ottawa is in Jeopardy. The office, which has run an affirmative action program for women since 1978, has recently filed a report with city council. The report points out that, although some small gains have been made, improving the status of women employees must remain a priority. The report concludes that:

\* Jobs with the City of Ottawa are largely segregated by sex. This is apparent from examining both the city department and the occupational categories.

\* Women are under-represented in the City of Ottawa workforce, comprising



22% of all employees.

- \* Job segregation has an adverse impact both on women's earnings and their participation rate.
- \* Women's median salary is \$696 and their median wage is \$560. Men's median salary is \$1,090 and their median wage is \$849. Thus, women earn 64% of men's salary, a notable decrease from the 1975 figure of 71%.
- \* The salary differential for the city is considerably less than for Canada as a whole (64% vs. 58%). There is, however, a broad range of variance across the departments and occupational categories.
- \* Years of service with the city, previous experience with other employers and formal education all provide a financial benefit to both women and men. However, the benefit is greater for men in all cases. Differences in these three aspects of qualifications do not account for the salary differential.

In the report, Maude Barlow, who left the job as Director of the Office in September to assume a position in the Prime Minister's Office, recommends the retention of the Office with an additional staff person to administer a program for the disabled and visible minority groups. In addition, she proposes that a comprehensive program of human resource planning be developed for the city which would include affirmative action programs for women, disabled people and members of visible minority groups. She also urges that the corporate plan for the city include a plan for improving the status of each group. Each department head should be responsible for an individual plan, including targets for each group, and be held accountable for implementing that plan.

Members of City Council have had varying responses to the report. Some Aldermen think that, despite no movement in statistics since 1978, the Office has served its purpose and should close down. Others feel that because the Office is too political, it should lose its autonomy and be placed under the direction of the Personnel Services Department. A few support the retention of a program for women only; while a couple support the expansion of the Office's mandate to include the other target groups. In a nutshell, the survival of an autonomous office, which has enough clout to effect some change, is on the line.

Council will debate and vote on the issue in early December. Prior to the council meeting, the public may make presentations to the Aldermen at an Approved Policy and Priorities Committee meeting. Call the City Clerk at 563-3396 for the dates of these two

meetings. Your involvement is needed to sway the political will of council! Let your Alderman know that you support a strong autonomous Office of Equal Opportunity.

Bonnie Diamond, the Acting Director, is leaving the position at the end of '83. Consequently, if the office survives, the City will be advertising for new staff.

- Alma Estable

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TOWARDS A RADICAL PRACTICE</b></p>
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**PROFESSIONALISM: IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN**

I began exploring the concept of professionalism and professional practices with two questions: Do professional practices incorporate our realities as women and secondly, can they begin to meet our real needs as women?

It is useful to understand professionals as part of a distinct class in society, what some critics have referred to as a "professional-managerial class". As a class, professionals have a definite relationship to the state and an important role to play in reproducing capitalist and patriarchal social relations. Indeed, this professional class performs ideological work which serves to legitimize the social order.

Professionals help produce a legitimate version of reality partly through the construction of social scientific knowledge and partly through their everyday practices with individuals. What comes to constitute real knowledge in our society is over time reformulated and served up in popular literature and the media, thereby becoming part of our "common wisdom". Generally, this is all knowledge produced within a masculine framework, and the scientific knowledge which informs professional practice does not draw upon women's experience where women are the "knowers". Women are instead the objects of inquiry. We are the studied and the 'known' in the social scientific literature, whose experience is objectified and separated from a context which would make it meaningful to us.

Helping professionals work predominantly with women and other economically marginalized groups. Within the professional's domain women encounter a whole ideology of normal womanhood against which our own inadequacies and failings will be measured. The professional retains the power to define problems and pose solutions for them. This power is maintained in large part because of the professional's monopoly on knowledge and information. Women have come to view the professional as authority. We have learned to discount our own knowledge of ourselves and come to know ourselves within the



professional's vocabulary and ideology.

In effect the social service professional legitimizes a fundamental split between women's lived experience and the ideology of womanhood. Social scientific theories are constructed about women in relation to men and children. Women also come to know themselves in relation to others, in forms produced for them by men and from a position subservient to men. If we cannot make it as wives and mothers, or learn to live vicariously by satisfying the needs of men and children, the experts decide there must be something wrong with us! Furthermore, as women we lack a language and a coherent set of ideas with which to articulate our experiences both to ourselves and to other women. Our lack of a common language reduces our ability to refute the prescriptions of professionals.

As women, the contexts of our lives are not unrelated to our ability to cope or to our overall mental condition. Many of us are economically dependent on individual men who abuse us. Others struggle with inadequate wages, lack of job security, lack of daycare and a generally narrow range of options. Feminists have documented extensively women's exclusion from highly skilled, good paying jobs. These factors continue to promote women's physical and mental vulnerability in our society.

There is an overwhelming professional tendency to package problems into dimensions which the professional can deal with. Problems are redefined to fit into the practices of organizations and to correspond to treatment strategies. Through institutional and professional practices what are essentially political and economic issues become translated into particular social, family or individual problems, seemingly devoid of political content.

Professional and scientific practices select small portions of women's lives and make these partial truths into conclusive theories about who we are. This process results in the development of artificial categories, into which we must force our complex and varied existences. It is for this reason that professional practices are dependent upon our silence. The whole institution of professionalism is built on women's silence and willingness to be compliant and passive.

Women have increasingly rejected passive compliance with social or professional prescriptions for our lives. More and more we speak our anger, we speak out as patients and clients of professionals and also as subordinate (and often underpaid) workers whose efforts prop up the whole professional enterprise.

- Alicia Schreader

### INCEST: A REDEFINITION

Incest has traditionally been under-reported or it has been ignored when reported. It occurs as a result of men using their patriarchal power within the family and is aggravated by the economic dependency of wives and daughters. As the real truth about the frequency of incest has become known, it becomes clear that there is no taboo against incest. The taboo that does operate, is a taboo against talking about incest, a silence that coincides with the traditional view of the need to keep family matters "private". Yet it is this privacy of the family that has allowed incest to take place.

The experience of incest, as related by women in their own words, has constantly been ignored or suppressed, particularly by the medical profession. The costs have been high as seen in recent research where the long-term effects of incest are found to be devastating for women. One study of run-away teenagers indicated that more than half had been victims of incest, either committed by fathers or father figures.

Beginning with Freud, who suppressed findings which indicated that a sexual trauma with a father or father figure was the basis of the "hysteria" of his patients, most research has minimized the trauma of incest. When research by social scientists provided data that validated the experiences reported by Freud, the facts were still ignored. Five surveys looking at sexuality, between 1940 and 1978, including the famous Kinsey report, revealed consistent data about women being sexually abused as children. Between four and twelve per cent of all the women reported a sexual experience with a relative, and one woman in a hundred reported a sexual experience with a father or step father. It has only been since the development of the women's movement, when women began to develop an analysis of their oppression based on the sharing of their experiences, that women have begun to understand that the experience of sexual assault within the family was a common occurrence. The fact that men use their own children for sexual enjoyment and are exonerated by society can only be understood by an analysis which shows how the family has not developed as a safe place, a place where women are protected from society. Rather the family has developed as a place where the rights of fathers have always predominated, and where men's needs are to be met.

One of the common themes used by traditional professionals in explaining the dynamics of the incestuous family is that the mother is the problem in the family. She not only has been unable to protect her daughter, but has failed to provide her husband with the nurturing he needs, thus forcing him to turn to his daughter. This "mother blaming" is based on a belief that a man should be able to have his needs for emotional and sexual nurturance met within the family. Also, it



is based on the assumption that incest occurs because of a misunderstanding on the part of the father about the difference between affection and sex. An assumption that leads fathers, almost inadvertently, to engage in a sexual relationship with their daughters. That this explanation does not fit the experiences of women who are or have been incest victims is central to a feminist analysis of incest.

The experience that many women have had is not of the father seeking nurturing, but of his offering affection and warmth to the daughter only in the context of a sexual relationship. It is the daughter then who finds, to her shock and dismay, that Daddy is not trying to give her warmth and nurturance, but that Daddy is looking for someone to own and use sexually.

Professionals also base their explanation of incest on the assumption that wives and mothers have power within the family. That this is an illusion is evidenced in several studies which profile the parents of incest victims. Fathers were found to be highly skilled and intelligent, and well thought of outside the family. Within the family they were usually the sole wage earner, and adhered to the traditional sexual division of labour. There were above average numbers of children in the family, and mothers were not only burdened by extra children, but sometimes suffered from physical disabilities or periods of prolonged illness. The fathers, considering it their prerogative to supervise and restrict the activities of the females in the family, often isolated their wives and children from the outside world. Fathers were often violent or threatening. When meeting resistance on the part of their daughters, fathers often threatened them with the responsibility for breaking up the family, especially if they wanted to go to someone outside the family for help.

In reviewing the literature of professionals on incest, it is clear that there is a difference in attitude in our society towards those accused of sexual abuse when they are fathers of the victims. While neighbours, relatives, ministers and professionals try to think of reasons to excuse the father's behaviour, the same "rational" excuses are never applied to other accused child molesters. It is time that professionals, especially social workers, begin to follow the feminist lead, and begin to challenge the prevailing literature that exonerates fathers and blames mothers.

- Cathy Culpepper

#### ISSUES FACING A FEMINIST COUNSELLOR IN A TRADITIONAL SETTING

I work in a hospital, dominated by men as are most institutions in our society, doing

social work in obstetrics and gynecology. To work with clients and maintain a feminist analysis requires patience, diligence and an ability to strategize in order to recognize which battles to focus on. My work enables me to view the powerlessness of women, both in relation to society and to this particular hospital.

Although I work with women from all social-economic levels, it is certainly the least economically advantaged who require more assistance, both to meet personal needs and to negotiate a complicated bureaucratic structure. Poor women are often referred to social work for the simple reason that they are poor, unwanted, and extremely isolated. In my work, a feminist analysis enables me to sometimes see a situation differently from the way it is perceived by other hospital workers around me. Medical workers without a feminist analysis often make quick judgements based on nothing more than the need to have someone vacate a bed and get the next "case" through. Recently, for example, I saw a young woman who was very fearful after a miscarriage. She was referred because she was seen by medical staff as a malingerer, reluctant to give up her comfortable hospital bed, go home and get on with her life. In conversation with her, she revealed that the so-called malingering was sheer terror at the thought of returning to an abusive partner. He had beaten her several times, and threatened her with more violence if she told anyone. From this perspective, we were then able to work together to begin to deal with her needs, including not returning to live with her abuser.

One important role of a feminist counsellor is to help women regain self-confidence and self-esteem, and to realize that many "personal inadequacies" are in reality problems rooted in society. The women I see as clients, like all women, are expected to bear children, and to do a good job of "parenting", in a community which allows men to negate their responsibility for the care and nurturance of these children. A feminist social worker can share her experience of this, and work towards changing structural barriers while helping women see the incredible demands that society puts on us as mothers.

It is also essential for a feminist counsellor working in a hospital setting to be totally committed to her analysis, because she must be ready to directly challenge the patriarchal assumptions of physicians and other health care personnel. And she must learn to do this without fear. Fear is a major stumbling block, which prevents all women from expressing ourselves openly, and challenging the status quo. We sometimes feel the need to be seen as "womanly" and appropriately non-threatening; but feminist ideas are indeed threatening to those who have power over us. Everything in a medical



institution mitigates against a feminist analysis of problems. And because feminism isn't status quo thought, we know we face possible criticism every time we bring up a women's issue, or point out sexism to a man. But only by overcoming fear, and speaking out, are we able to find our allies, and build a base to slowly make changes.

On two occasions, I attended some medical rounds in which the doctors, medical students and residents engaged in a rather callous name-calling of patients whom they considered obese, unintelligent, from rural areas, or anything else which did not fit the categories of articulate, middle class, and white. After the second time, I approached the one resident who had not participated in this derogatory activity. I told her my feelings about the doctors' actions, and discovered an ally. She shared my disgust at the proceedings, and explained some of her own strategies for survival as a female resident in a male-dominated world. By approaching this woman, I widened my circle of support a bit, and found someone I could approach when I needed supportive intervention for a patient. Speaking out lets us discover the few allies we have (both women and men), and continue our work without feeling we are betraying our principles.

A feminist counsellor in a traditional setting also has to learn to choose which issues to take on and when. Medical personnel tend to view a hospital in isolation from the community. This releases them from feeling responsible for what happens to people when they're discharged. But the needs of women extend beyond the medical services provided by a hospital. And there are so many women with so many unmet needs that it is impossible to intervene on everyone's behalf. However, a feminist social worker has to learn to establish priorities, and discover which battles must be urgently fought, which situations must be brought to the attention of people with power to make decisions affecting women's lives.

Young single mothers are especially vulnerable in a society which makes their economic and social survival nearly impossible. One of my clients was a capable young mother who faced the difficulty of obtaining housing in the tight Ottawa housing market. Her child was premature, and stayed in hospital two weeks after she was discharged, giving the woman the opportunity to look for housing. However, since at the end of that period she still had not found an apartment, she faced the threat of a temporary and very undesired placement of her child with CAS. Because I had worked closely with her, I was able to intervene with the pediatrician, explain the situation, and request that the baby be kept on for another week. Although medically unnecessary, this gave the young woman a chance to find an apartment. This type of negotiation of the

system, to enable people to bend rules and develop strategies in the interest of women clients, is something that a feminist social worker must learn.

Working as, and being, a feminist in a traditional institution is most of the time plain hard work. But, in the end, it is the only approach which is compatible with the values which are the very essence of my beliefs.

- Pamela Connolly

#### INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

##### GRENADA'S WOMEN - SO MUCH GAINED - SO MUCH TO LOSE

In January 1983, having heard many glowing accounts of the advances that Grenadian women were experiencing, ten representatives from various Ottawa community organizations and women's groups formed a Women's Tour Group to visit Grenada. The sad events in the past few weeks make sharing the experience of the Women's Tour all the more important. I am glad to have been a part of this group of women, and able to visit this beautiful country while the true spirit of people working together towards the common goal of "People's Participation in Their Own Development" was so visible and so dynamic. This is what the "Women Meeting Women Educational Exchange, Ottawa-Grenada" experienced, and it makes the present devastation of this spirit all the more difficult to accept.

Grenada is a tiny island (only 25 miles long and 10 miles wide, population: 110,000), but it faced many major problems at the time of the ousting of the ruling dictator, Gaity, in 1979. Unemployment was at 69% for women, 50% generally and 40% of the population was functionally illiterate. However, within four short years, there have been a number of significant changes having a significant impact on women. This has been due to the encouragement of women's active participation in the social changes taking place.

From the moment the Women's Tour arrived in Grenada, in March '83, the signs of women's participation were everywhere. Big billboards declared the need for day care, or encouraged non-traditional work by showing women on tractors working in construction. Colourful signs were painted on walls proclaiming "The N.W.O. (National Women's Organization) Points the Way Forward For All Women".

The changes that happened were not just on paper, but related to the very real living conditions of most women in the country. Many women (48% of Grenadian families) are single parents. Therefore, legislation was



passed to eliminate the concept of illegitimate children, since this had discriminated against both women and children. In keeping with the aim of reducing unemployment, women were being encouraged to enter the labour force, and thereby provide for themselves and their families. But they were not left to do this all by themselves. The restrictions on women as paid workers were being examined, and legislation was passed ensuring equal pay for equal work. A Maternity Leave Law was introduced where none had previously existed, with the right to return to work after three months paid leave.

The N.W.O., a mass organization with over 6,500 members, has taken a leading role in educating both the general public and the government itself about the need for these kinds of reforms. One main goal has been to raise the consciousness of Grenadian women about their equal value as participants in the development of their country. To this end, they were conducting in-depth leadership training and consciousness-raising sessions, bringing women from an examination of their own experience to an awareness of the "social and political context of women's unequal position and the development of strategies for positive change".

From this understanding, the N.W.O. helped women to seek better education and employment as a first step. To improve the level of education of the population, the government helped to establish the Centres for Popular Education, and the N.W.O. encouraged women to take advantage of these. A high proportion of both students and teachers in the literacy campaign are women. The N.W.O. has helped organize unemployed women into co-operatives, and has promoted women's entry into non-traditional jobs. For example, women at the St. Andrews wood-working cooperative, who make chairs and desks, were prepared to take this step into non-traditional work through training programs encouraged by the N.W.O..

Since 1979, employment had decreased significantly, dropping to 20% for women (12% overall). Once this first goal had been reached, the whole issue of paternity and financial responsibility was beginning to be raised. These are all issues which affect women's lives, and they are being dealt with now, not later, by the progressive people's revolutionary government of Grenada. It is essential at this time that all of us truly concerned with the rights of people, and the advancement of women, become aware of what is happening in Grenada, and ensure that the tremendous gains of the last four years are not lost. The U.S. government must get out of Grenada and not be allowed to install its own puppet government, which could seriously endanger the advances that the women of Grenada have made.

What Grenadian women were beginning to

achieve through their revolution is very similar to what we, as Canadian feminists, are working towards. We urge all our readers to read between the lines of media reports on the Grenada invasion, and to work with solidarity groups in Canada to ensure that the spirit of people working together towards the common goal of social justice for all, is not lost.

- Jean Fairholm

#### HEALTH CARE IN NICARAGUA - A SISTER STRUGGLE HALF WAY AROUND THE WORLD

In June of this year, Dr. Myrna Cunningham told Canadians in several Ontario cities about the health work being done in Nicaragua. A Mesquito Indian from the Atlantic Coast, Dr. Cunningham graduated from the University in Leon, Nicaragua with a medical degree and has worked as a doctor for more than 10 years. Her speaking tour was sponsored by Canadian Action for Nicaragua (CAN).

Here is a summary of her talk:

Before the revolution -

- \* seven out of ten children were malnourished
- \* the major causes of death were malaria, tuberculosis and tetanus
- \* there were only 180 clinics in the country and only 26 hospitals, all of which were private
- \* life expectancy was very low - 52-54 years, 40-45 in the rural areas but 70 among the upper class.

A new health system was formed in the first month after the revolution, with a new Ministry of Health. New clinics were opened, to bring the current total up to 420, and hospitals were made free. The principles of the new health system are -

- \* health is a right
- \* it is the government's responsibility to give health assistance to all Nicaraguans
- \* health programs should be fully accessible, regardless of geographic region, culture or economic situation
- \* the Nicaraguan people should participate in health decision-making "People are not the objects of the system but have to participate in planning, research and analysis"
- \* health programs should be conducted by a team of nurses, doctors and other health workers

In campaigns, the role of the doctors and nurses is to take responsibility for the specifics of the treatment (i.e. the dosage and route of the vaccine); councils and committees determine how care and treatment will be organized, and Brigadistas, who are often young women, are trained and given responsibility for carrying out the program.



The immunization program has been very successful. In 1982, there was not one case of polio. The incidence of measles is declining and is expected to be under control by 1985. The antimalaria campaign involved treating 75% of the population as well as draining the swamps that had collected from the floods. Unfortunately, malaria still remains a problem.

Most births are assisted by midwives - "Women don't want males to attend because the husband doesn't like it" so a program to improve the skill of community midwives has been established.

Five hospitals have been built. The motto of the hospitals is "We don't refuse a patient" but there are still not enough beds.

Medical training is free. The two schools now take in 500 students each year. The requirement that graduate doctors give two years of social service ensures that rural areas have medical care.

The National Health Council is the primary decision-making body for health policy. National councils, regional councils and village councils are composed of representatives from many popular organizations such as women's organizations, labour union centrals, peasant associations, federations of health workers, parents associations and the neighbourhood Sandinista Defence Committees.

"Most Important", says Myrna, "is the system of decision-making which encourages community participation and criticism. Besides the health planning councils, evaluation sessions are held called 'Facing the people in health'". For example, she says, "We have health workers who are still treating people bad in Nicaragua". These health workers would be confronted with the complaint and if they did not change they would have to leave their professions, "because health is important".

Nicaragua faces the same problems as other newly independent countries - a low value for its currency, little equipment and few parts to fix it and military aggression from external forces which support counter-revolutionary forces within the country. Health personnel have been targets for this aggression and they have been raped, kidnapped and killed. Many medical facilities have consequently been closed.

Myrna is one of seven plaintiffs in a class action suit against the Reagan administration. The others are survivors of a village massacre and one is a U.S. citizen. They refer to the neutrality act which states that the U.S. cannot support a war without a decision to do so by Congress. The seven plaintiffs are joined by two U.S. citizens from Michigan who want to force the

closure of the training camps in Honduras where the U.S. is supporting the training of counter-revolutionary forces. The plaintiffs are being represented by the Centre for Constitutional Rights in New York. They are seeking damages and an injunction against future raids into Nicaragua.

Medical Aid to Nicaragua (MATN) recently sponsored a tour by Canadians to Nicaragua. For more information, you can write to:

CAN  
P.O. Box 398  
Station E  
Toronto, Ontario  
M6H 4E3

- Diane Patychuk

Diane works at the Development Education Centre in Toronto and has a special interest in women and health in developing countries.

#### MARGARET RANDALL ON WOMEN IN NICARAGUA

As part of a 26-city North American tour, Margaret Randall was in Ottawa for three days in the beginning of November to educate us on the position of women in Nicaragua. With her prose, testimony, poetry and statistics, Margaret does justice to the Nicaraguan revolution by creating the "complete picture". Below are a few points, worth noting, on some of the major victories women have made in fighting male oppression in Nicaragua. It is important to note that these changes have occurred in four short years. They have come, not at the expense of women ignoring their revolutionary alliance with men in creating an economic equality but, rather as a result of all people of the revolution recognizing the need to confront the oppression of women.

\* One of the first pieces of legislation passed after the fighting in 1979 was the Communications Media Law which prohibits the exploitation of women for commercial purposes.

\* A high priority has been to establish children's services which move the main responsibility of childcare from individual women to the broader community. The number of daycare centers has increased since 1979 from none to approximately 6000 centres today. It is important to note that although Nicaragua has been forced to divert funds towards defence they have not cut any of their social service program budgets. This is an interesting contrast with the Canadian case of B.C., where social service programs are the first to go during restraint periods.

AMNLAE, the major women's organization in Nicaragua, has as its mandate to



lead the struggle for women's emancipation. It views this task as one of transforming ideological values in addition to eroding traditionally oppressive patriarchal structures, i.e. family structure, women's work, sexuality...

AMNLAE has a structure of small cells, or committees, throughout the country which can work directly and immediately on local issues. In addition, it has representatives in all the major decision-making bodies at the national level including the Council of State (their parliament).

More notes:

- \* The recent Family Nurturance Act, incorporates early legislation which recognizes women's worth. The Father-Mother-Child Act made all decisions about children a family matter and the Law of Nurturing recognized domestic labour as useful work. The F.N.A. requires fathers to pay child support, regardless of whether or not they married the mother of their child. Also, all domestic labour is deemed to be the joint responsibility of the man and woman in the home.
- \* The Agrarian Family Law Reform Act gives women the same rights to own property as men and allows women legal claim to land even after the cessation of a marriage relationship.
- \* The Nicaraguans have programs to restrain prostitutes and domestic workers. The idea is to provide women in degrading and sex-stereotyped jobs with the skills to work elsewhere. Unfortunately due to the incredible pressures from the U.S. to undermine the economy there is little to offer these women. Domestic workers, as an alternative, have organized a strong union and have won major victories in court.
- \* Birth control and all pregnancy-related medication is free and easily accessible.
- \* Abortion, except for therapeutic abortion, is illegal in Nicaragua. Yet abortions continue. In one month alone, there were 5,000 abortions performed illegally in the capital city of Managua. Many of these women may end up in hospital or die from complications. In the past month AMNLAE has launched a sex education campaign to educate women on the issue. They know that the law will only change if women fight for this

issue as their own.

Through the use of poetry, Margaret breathes life into the statistics. Below is an example, a poem written by Margaret for her daughter on her twelfth birthday.

MARCH 6, 1982

All last week you preened before the mirror  
viewing emerging breasts, then covering them  
with gauze-thin blouse  
and grinning: getting bigger, huh?  
The week before you wore army fatigues  
leveling breasts and teenage freckles,  
tawny fuzz along your legs.

A woman. Beginning.

Today you don fatigues again.  
Today you pack knapsack and canteen,  
lace boots over heavy socks  
and answer the call Reagan and Haig have  
slung  
at your 12 years.

Yours and so many others...  
kids 14, 15, 18, so many others who will go  
and some of them stay, their mothers shouting  
before the Honduran embassy: "Give us  
our sons' bodies back, give us back their  
bodies!"  
At least that.

All last week you preened before the mirror,  
moving loose to new rhythms  
long weekend nights. Junior High math.  
Sunday beach.

Today you go off to the staccato of  
continuous news dispatches  
and I, in my trench, carry your young breasts  
in my proud and lonely eyes.

- Margaret Randall

In four short years the Nicaraguan revolution has brought dramatic and concrete change to women's lives. Through the poetry, the testimonies of revolutionary women and facts and figures, Margaret expressed the eternal personal power of women and the courageous struggle Nicaraguan women engage in to achieve social and economic justice for all people. We thank Margaret for reminding us that the women of Nicaragua are our sisters and are fighting the same patriarchy that we are in Canada.

Margaret Randall is the author of many books including Sandino's Daughters and Women in Cuba. She resides in Managua, Nicaragua with her two daughters. She has recently completed a new book called Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution. Margaret is collecting all the testimony and poetry that she presented during her tour for a small booklet for publication. If you would like



to donate to this pamphlet please write:

Lynda Yanz  
Participatory Research Group  
386 Bloor St. W.  
Toronto

- Joan Riggs

#### OPINION

This article opens a dialogue on developing feminist ethics and morality.

The collective believes this to be a crucial and relatively unexplored area.

We publish one woman's thoughts to stimulate the debate and we welcome thoughtful responses on this issue.

#### THE POLITICS OF BEING A FEMINIST

This is a personal story about being a feminist who gets involved with a man who hasn't yet left a monogamous relationship.

At the same time this is an article for all women about feminism; our morality and our use of gossip.

When I first thought about writing this article there was a lot of anger within me. Anger at being maligned, betrayed and judged by other women. Anger at being defined through my relationship with a man and anger at being viewed as responsible for a man's decision. The anger has gone now and in its place has settled a weariness and a sadness for the time and energy wasted over the past year on the repercussions of getting involved with a man. Ironically enough, I'm not talking about the all too predictable problems encountered in relating intensely with a man, but rather the incredible response from feminist women over this situation.

As feminists we view our oppression as rooted in an ideological and/or materialist base. We are oppressed because we are kept down by the unjust use of power and authority perpetuated by individuals and institutions. I have always considered women as my unconditional allies in this struggle yet over the past year women have taken power from me, and used their traditional authority as mothers, married women (those in monogamous relationships), as older, more experienced women and as feminists to judge and label my behaviour.

What I experienced was oppression. I was denied my identity and instead labelled under a patriarchal moral code: man-stealer, home-wrecker, non-feminist... and the list goes on.

Out of this experience I have grappled with

many questions, most of them too overwhelmingly difficult to answer alone. And now I feel compelled to write this article for other women who I am sure are confronted with similar situations.

Added to the specific facts which makes a situation distinct, there is a basic commonality to life experiences. These circumstantial factors represent the degree of material and gender oppression an individual woman is confronted with and offers her the limitations to which her choices are bound. However, regardless of these facts, I would venture to say that we, as feminists, have developed a carte blanche response to a man leaving a woman. This response is embedded in a male morality which imputes a definitive right and wrong, defines all women in relation to men and disregards individual women's reality. It is different when a man leaves a childless, middle-class relationship with an economically independent woman in a way that is materially equitable.

#### MORALITY AND MONOGAMY

Morality or living by a moral code has been something feminists have never thoroughly investigated. At times we have critiqued traditional mores and offered fundamental principles which, in their operationalization imply a type of morality but we have never really comprehensively explored the implications of living by a patriarchal moral code. However, barring individual women's preferences, it has become clear to me that many feminists uphold particular aspects of the code as sacred, in particular monogamous relations (sexual fidelity and a forever commitment). Thus legitimizing and partaking in attacking women who become involved with men who are still in relationships.

At the core the patriarchal moral code is the family. It establishes monogamy as the definitive framework for all sexual relationships. Historically monogamy developed to ensure women's chastity, channel our sexuality, make individual women the property of individual men and to guarantee men that their children were legitimate.

For women, monogamy has provided us with a tenuous economic and emotional security. We guarantee a man our labour, sexuality and reproductive capacity for economic security. Yet we are guaranteed nothing. Men still leave and the repercussions are strikingly different from when women leave men.

Women are caught in an economic and social system that exploits our labour and places us in an overall secondary position in society. At the same time we are given the responsibility for home and children. Society is structured so that we need men, or rather their privileged position for our very survival, hence the popularity of the phrase, "a woman is one man away from welfare." By



forcing us to rely on a man economically during certain periods in our life our intimate relationships with men become distorted. Instead of a statement of love and affection, it becomes a contract for our economic security.

For many women trapped by their material conditions and/or children there is no immediate choice, but why do feminists, who have the economic means to break from such an oppressive tradition continue to glorify monogamy?

I was made to feel that monogamy is to be honoured at all times and under all conditions. When we accept that as the premise of our feminist morality then we accept an inevitable reliance on men, thus perpetuating our own oppression.

At the same time, I don't want to sound like a representative from the male camp, but what type of freedom are we fighting for? Is it a freedom exclusive to women? Will we allow women to grow, change and leave relationships but we not allow men to engage in the same process? I personally would not want to live with a man who wants to be with someone else even if he once promised me a lifetime of fidelity.

Freedom, as defined by men, has been to specify the choices, thus limiting the experience. I don't believe feminism advocates any freedom that is again going to be at the expense of another. We do not want male power, we want women empowering themselves.

I see monogamy as a choice but certainly not the best choice. Relationships inevitably end, many times against our wishes, and we as women have paid a high cost for immersing ourselves in one central relationship. These are the tenets we should operate on when we build our lives as feminists. We must learn to invest in ourselves and in other women. If we don't, then we will continue to pit woman against woman for the prize of a monogamous relationship with a man.

#### GOSSIP

In accepting a male morality we must also be prepared to trivialize very complex emotions and experiences. When a man leaves, everything quickly deteriorates into black and white with the man one day being a nice guy and the next day the devil in disguise. I, of course, became the whore, the temptress who managed to force him to succumb to my ways. Will we, as women, ever stop being held responsible for men's actions? It appears not, as was made clear to me through the gossip network.

Gossip has been, and will continue to be, a very important communication forum for women. It has often been our information

network, relaying the experiences of others and providing us with the substantive evidence to confirm and buoy our own realities.

The obvious implications of the network are great in that they provide us with an opinionated reality of personas and situations and offer us some collective support. This is fine under normal situations; when the information is favourable, when it is distorted but insignificant or when you do not define yourself through the projected image perpetrated in the gossip. When this network has become dangerous is when the reality created through the gossip is a distortion of you and you have enough of an investment in the community to care that your real identity is being denied.

Under many circumstances, and as a consequence of distorted gossip women have been denied their own reality. They have been misrepresented and consequently have been made to feel evil or bad, or much worse, insignificant.

In my circumstances, gossip was used to portray me as a man-stealing, sneaky, non-feminist woman on the one hand and on the other as a naive, romantic fool. Neither did justice to my feelings or experience as is to be expected from malicious gossip. What it did do is cost me a good part of a year in wasted time and energy. It also garnered a cost from those women who refused to stamp a moral judgement on the situation.

The factors which contributed to my being attacked through gossip relate to the power differential between the sexes. As a nice woman (much of it a product of socialization) I want to please and pacify most situations so I would listen and tolerate criticism hoping to finally reach some resolution. The man involved has a greater gender status, a higher social status and is older. In our world it is a lot easier to victimize a woman. Yet that still does not help me to understand why feminist women attacked me. Gossip produces simplistic labels which are based on defining women in relation to men: One woman 'won' and the other 'lost'. Labels also trivialize emotions in order to dissolve everything into a definitive right and wrong. Labels are oppressive because they limit the perception of any person but for feminist women they are nonsensical.

If we are committed to supporting women then we must exert some effort in attempting to understand what we are supporting. That means exploring all aspects of women's lives with a tolerance and acceptance of the many contradictions. Implicit in gossip is a morality which skews reality and often misrepresents people. We should be conscious of that when we throw our opinion out on a situation, although frankly I still question



that right. A biased vision of the world will keep us protected but it won't challenge us to understand and tolerate the many differences in us as women and certainly will not provide us with any insight into dealing with the complexities of our personal relationship. I don't think it will further or enhance our movement to subject any more women to this type of male-defined, women-administered oppression.

#### WHERE ARE WE NOW?

We, as feminists committed to radical change, have to take certain personal risks, including challenging our own traditional way of thinking. I see feminism simultaneously as a theory, a catalyst for revolution, a process and ultimately a way of life. We rest now in the evolutionary process with two primary jobs to fill. One is to educate and raise the level of consciousness of women's oppression, something that the women's movement has invested in and been successful at. The other job is to support all women and understand the conflicts and contradictions confronting us.

We, as feminists, live daily in a major contradiction. We are trapped in an unjust, corrupt and sexist world that oppresses us in every facet of our reality. At the same time we struggle to live by certain feminist principles that ensure an equality and basic justice. At this point that should be enough. If we fail, it is not appropriate to judge by whatever standard, but particularly by the patriarchal moral code.

The moral code operates on the premise that there is always a definitive good and bad. Set in marble are the appropriate gender roles, the appropriate responses to life and the appropriate retributions for not fulfilling one's scripted role.

As conscious women we are indeed suspect of these roles and are continually struggling against and rejecting the simplistic train of thought that implies/states a definitive normal and abnormal, evil and good.

Yet, as I was unfortunate enough to discover these judgements are not far from individual women's grasps when they are being threatened. Admittedly, we cannot underestimate the pressure we are under to confine ourselves to that narrow train of thought. We have spent our entire lives being indoctrinated and being made vulnerable to molding ourselves to the ideas and needs of others. Yet, it is wrong to attack another woman because she is not like us. Do we want to confine ourselves again to another narrowly scripted role under the auspices this time of feminism? And who is the sage who writes the text for the "perfect" feminist, however prescribed? I reject any lack of tolerance when looking at women's lives. We are fighting for a type of choice

and self-determination that is foreign to our very essence. Barring the fact that we're challenging a very powerful, oppressive system filling us with internal and external contradictions, we are additionally bound to err on a more personal level. We have never lived in a sharing world where we can trust anyone. We simply don't know how to do it. But we can't allow that to excuse us from not supporting women and trying to understand their experience. If we do, then it will be to the cost of the future of our movement.

- Joan Riggs

#### **HOT OFF THE PRESS**

#### THE ANTI-SOCIAL FAMILY - BY MICHELE BARRETT AND MARY MCINTOSH REVIEWED BY WENDY McKEEN

Barrett and McIntosh take issue with the popular belief that socialism and feminism have come to a consensus in calling for the abolition of the family. The lesson here is that we cannot overestimate the popularity of the family. "Familialism is not a ruling-class or patriarchal ideology repressively foisted on an unwilling population." (21) Looking at its strong appeal in both practical and theoretical terms the authors perceive the family as an easily comprehended, highly rational choice, given our present social context. In this context, the family is inevitably "more than a myth, a dream, a hope..." (29)

Barrett and McIntosh take issue with the view of family life as a private affair in contrast with 'social' institutions. "No such opposition between family and society exists. Just as the family has been socially constructed, so society has been familialized." (31) They take issue with the biological arguments which reinforce the view of the family as a 'natural' unity. "The family is no more 'biological' than the recently developed soap powder proudly claiming this tribute." (35) They warn against the fallacy of viewing the family in essentialist terms - "it is as if we recognize variation in family forms as only the surface appearance of something that, in essence, is common to all human society". (39)

In chapter two the authors present their arguments for their view of 'the family' as 'anti-social'. Some of their topics include Conservative Individualism - Familialism, Privacy as Imprisonment, and Family Gains as Social Losses. Highlighted in this last subheading is their main thesis concerning the family. "As a bastion against a bleak society it has made the society bleak. It is indeed a major agency for caring but in monopolizing care it has made it harder to undertake other forms of care. It is indeed



a unit of sharing but in demanding sharing within it has made other relations tend to become more mercenary. It is indeed a place of intimacy, but in privileging the intimacy of close kin it has made the outside world cold and friendless, and made it harder to sustain relations of security and trust except with kin. Caring, sharing and loving would be more widespread if the family did not claim them for its own." (80)

In chapter three, "Contemporary Social Analysis", Barrett and McIntosh demonstrate how 'the family', with its major significance being biological, can be deconstructed through adequate theoretical analysis. They examine two propositions which are commonly put forth with regard to 'the family'. The first is the marxist notion that 'the nuclear family is suited to the functional needs of capitalism'. Here they expose the contradictory evidence or theoretical weaknesses which they see existing in all elements of this argument. For example, regarding the extent to which home and work are separated (which is an integral assumption of this proposition) they argue the following: "The construction of 'the family' as a privatized zone with rigid barriers to prevent the intrusion of the social is an ideological process rather than a given of capitalist society... This distinction between public and private should be an object of analysis not a conceptual tool." (90)

The second proposition they address is that 'the family has declined and much of its work is now undertaken by the state'. Detailed consideration is given to Jacques Donzelot's recent work, The Policing of Families, which claims to take a neutral, objective, and non-political approach. Barrett and McIntosh reveal it to be both mystificatory and functionalist (almost conspiratorial) in orientation. "Underlying The Policing of Families is a very familiar theme. The authoritarian patriarchal family is mourned, and women are blamed for the passing of this organic basis of social order. The text is incipiently anti-feminist...". (104)

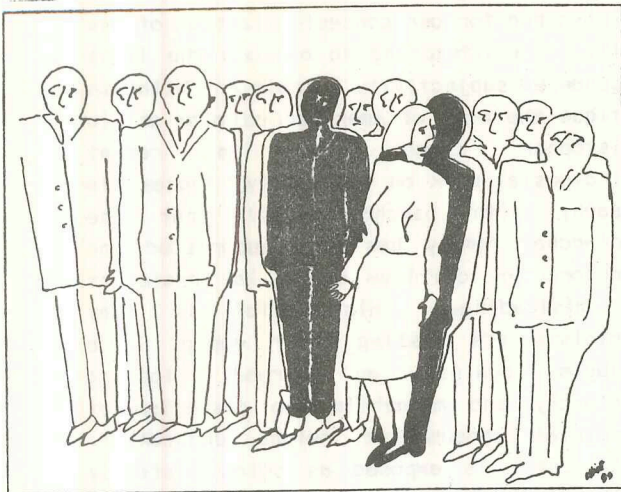
Under the heading "Subjectivity and Authority" the authors begin with a critique of the concept of socialization - the transmission of roles and beliefs from one generation to the next. The weakness of this concept lies in the assumption that every individual is the passive victim of a monolithically imposed system, which prevents our understanding of our active acceptance of stereotypic identities. They feel the concept of socialization must be complemented by a more adequate understanding of gendered subjectivity (ie. how our identities are constructed as either male or female). Several interconnected problems are raised relating to this task. Questions about the adequacy of psychoanalytic theory in describing present subjective reality, the relevance of the concept of patriarchy, and

what we mean by ideology are for Barrett and McIntosh fundamental issues for marxism and feminism and for our conceptualization of the family. In attempting to explore the issue of gendered subjectivity Barrett and McIntosh critique the work of American culture critic Christopher Lasch, who in recent controversial work on the family, argues (in sympathy with psychoanalysis) that the patriarchal family has been superseded and therefore any critique of it is irrelevant and misleading. His belief is that "Feminists are wasting their energy in a struggle against an already toppled patriarch, and meanwhile the despotism of industrial consumerism reigns unchecked". (124) Lasch is exposed as being blatantly anti-feminist in his mourning the decline of patriarchal authority, and his arguments are invalidated as being based on a universalistic and essentialist view of the family. Ultimately, Barrett and McIntosh emphasize that "... we cannot focus exclusively on processes internal to the family, as this will entirely mislead us into the blind alley of believing that 'the family' is in decline". (129) In their final view "It is irrelevant to mourn the death of the family when our society is more profoundly 'familialized' than ever before". (129)

In the spirit of opening up discussion Barrett and McIntosh, in their last chapter, outline some guiding aims and concrete principles as a basis for political and personal lifestyle strategies for change. They also suggest some practical changes to fight for in social policy affecting families. "The purpose of our critique of this 'anti-social family' is not to demonstrate the imbecility of ideologically impregnated individuals... Nor is it to remove warmth and emotional fulfillment from the lives of the politically correct. Its purpose is to demonstrate the need for social and political change so that such needs and desires can be met in a more genuinely social context." (133) The solution is then "... not to build up an alternative to the family - but to make the family less necessary, by building up all sorts of other ways of meeting people's needs, ways less volatile and inadequate than those based on the assumption that 'blood is thicker than water'". (159) The call is for political campaigns to transform not the family - but the society that needs it.

I found the level of analysis in The Anti-social Family to be profound. Barrett and McIntosh put forward a valuable new interpretation of the society - family nexus, and most importantly, they demonstrate a method of theoretical analysis for achieving this understanding, and perhaps going further. A number of theoretical issues and questions are raised which are crucial for the formation of a more adequate marxist and feminist analysis.





DAMMIT! I JUST DON'T FIT THE MOLD!

**RIGHT WING WOMEN - BY ANDREA DWORKIN**  
**REVIEWED BY - MARILYN KANEE**

In this ground-breaking book, Andrea Dworkin attempts to find out what the Right offers women and why it is that women support a movement so opposed to their own freedom. How she does this is a difficult question to answer but why she does it and why she believes it important to understand is easier to relate. As women we must come to grips with those of our sisters who hold positions which are so totally destructive and limiting.

Dworkin writes that one basic tenet lies at the foundation of feminism - "the firm, unsentimental, continuous recognition that women are a class having a common condition...it does mean that the fate of every individual woman - no matter what her politics, character, values, qualities - is tied to the fate of all women - whether she likes it or not". Therefore it is critical to understand the experiences and realities of all women, even those with whom we disagree, and perhaps, especially theirs.

Dworkin argues that "right-wing women" (a term she never clearly defines) know just what feminists know. They too have analyzed women's position in society and have arrived at the same conclusion - that men have the power. In fact, listening to "right-wing women" like Marabel Morgan (*The Total Woman*) and Phyllis Schlafly reveals that they identify many of the same problems for women that feminists do. However, they lay the blame for these injustices (desertion, men's lack of responsibility for sex, etc.) not on patriarchy or even individual men, but on the feminist movement and its effect on the family and traditional values.

The Right appears to have a great deal to

offer to women, according to Dworkin. Most women have low self-esteem and feelings of lack of worth and often feel no claim to a life with dignity or value. The Right is able to offer women a valued position, as long as they accept and commit themselves to a male vision of the way things should be. This type of value is, as Dworkin points out throughout the book, temporary, tenuous and costly to most women.

The Right also offers women form and structure in a world kept mystified; it offers women shelter as long as she has a home to care for; it offers safety - the potential violence and harassment from one man rather than many; it offers rules upon which women depend for survival; it offers love which ensures material and emotional comfort and it offers the love of Jesus. In addition, the Right offers women like Anita Bryant and Phyllis Schlafly the best of two worlds - the promises of the Right along with an opportunity to use their intellect and become public figures - both of which are usually denied to women.

Right-Wing Women is also about much more, which is its strength and its weakness. Dworkin's passionate ideas and her strong writing style are fascinating to read, but her thoughts take the reader across many spheres, not all of which appear to connect. At times, her rambling makes it difficult to follow her main themes. Yet, her agony over injustices such as "the politics of intelligence" and its consequences for women is eloquently conveyed in lines like: "traditionally and practically, the world is brought to women by men; they are the outside on which female intelligence must feed". "The food is poor, orphan's gruel" and "a girl with intellectual drive is a girl who has to be cut down to size".

Dworkin talks about the right to choose to have an abortion as one opposed both by the Right and by men on the Left. Her analysis of why the male Left has abandoned the abortion rights issue makes interesting reading. It helps to explain why many women withdrew from the male-dominated Left to join the women's liberation movement.

One of the most powerful chapters in the book is "Jews and Homosexuals". Here Dworkin traces homophobia and anti-semitism to the New Testament where she singles Paul out as particularly responsible for their institutionalization. She relates her experiences as a lesbian and a Jew while covering the National Organization of Women conference for MS. Magazine. Present at the conference were delegations from Utah and Mississippi with strongly suspected links to the Klu Klux Klan who refused to talk to her after she identified herself as a Jew in response to their questions. In fact her life was threatened by a group of women who attempted to push her over a balcony



exclaiming, "You're a Jew and probably a homosexual too".

Dworkin's chapter on anti-feminism emphasizes how critical it is for us to choose to support the struggle of women against sexual oppression; "One simply cannot be both for and against the exploitation of women". This chapter is somewhat pessimistic but realistic in posing the problem of anti-feminism as an urgent one.

Right-Wing Women is a difficult and disturbing read, but it is balanced by the originality and an excitement of its ground-breaking analysis.

#### WOMEN AND THE PSYCHIATRIC PARODY

Gillian Walker and Susan Penfold's book Women and the Psychiatric Paradox provides us with a thorough analysis of the psychiatric world from a feminist perspective. They document how psychiatry has historically provided women with assessments and interventions that have at least ill-represented women and at their worst, have undermined. The profession has systematically defined women's behaviour with psychotic implications and the result has been that at least 75% of those individuals treated by psychiatrists are women.

In arguing that traditional theories have ignored the real reasons behind women's assumed abnormal behaviour reconstruct a more viable rationale as to why women are victims of psychiatry and society, in general.

Part II of the book called Women and Psychiatry is most impressive in its attempt to recognize how women, as oppressed persons in our society have been ascribed carious derogatory labels thus legitimizing our very victimization. Simply put, women's reality has never played a large part in conceptualizing women in the field of psychiatry. The third and final part of the book provides the obvious alternative; towards feminist therapy.

This book is a must for any woman seriously considering working with women on a therapeutic level, particularly if they are going to be within a medical setting. It is also a book for anyone concerned about the oppressive nature of patriarchal society on women. After all the psychiatric system is only one of various forms through which it is augmented.

#### REPORTS

It is always a pleasure to hear an articulate and knowledgeable woman speaking about her work; Diana Ralph, author of Work and Madness - the Rise of Community Psychiatry,

gave the audience at Carleton University School of Social Work, on Oct. 19, such a pleasure.

Ms. Ralph's research explains the shift from clinical psychiatry, where only people with severe psychotic disorders or organic damage were institutionalized, to community-based psychiatry in terms of society's need to placate an increasingly alienated labour force. Community psychiatry is easily accessible and doctors, psychiatrists and social workers are trained to focus on the individual's inability to cope with stress rather than on the external conditions responsible for the stress.

For women raising children alone on inadequate incomes or housewives at home with young children 24 hours a day, community psychiatry can mean endless prescriptions of valium and other drugs. Thus the symptoms of alienation are mollified enough to allow women to cope on an individual basis while our collective oppression remains unrecognized.

Work and Madness is a valuable piece of work because it clarifies the debate surrounding deinstitutionalization and the move to community care; it clearly identifies the "enemy" as "the entire capitalist class and its State"; and finally, it advocates social action as a strategy for combatting the coercive and oppressive nature of community psychiatry. Ralph writes, "In addition to other labour organizations, workers can well cooperate with other populations which are also protesting psychiatric oppression - organized ex-mental patients, mental health workers, women, prisoners and Third World movements."

Reading Diana Ralph's book is a demystifying experience; it is highly recommended for everyone in the social welfare field.

- Linda Archibald

#### WOMEN AND THERAPY CONFERENCE

The Women and Therapy Conference, as can be expected with any gathering of about 350 women, was exhilarating. The conference, held in Toronto, November 9-11, gave women an opportunity to explore aspects of therapy as it relates specifically to women. A broad range of topics was offered, connecting inter-personal therapy skills with the broader social implications of women's oppression. Perhaps the most exciting part of the conference was a political action initiated by the women at the conference.

Angered and outraged by the prevalence of pornographic material in the Holiday Inn, a group about 200 strong gathered in the lobby on Friday, mid-afternoon, and proceeded to tear into little pieces the entire stock of pornographic magazines carried by the Holiday



Inn gift shop (previously purchased). The women linked arms, sang, and shouted their anger, made statements to the press explaining the action, and announced the beginning of a national boycott of Holiday Inn by feminists, until pornography is removed from the gift shops, and listings of pornographic films removed from the guest rooms. A longer term action will also be carried out, with a group of women committing themselves to contact the Toronto police departments Project P, and urging the laying of charges against the Holiday Inn.

It was very moving, very exciting, to see how quickly our individual reactions of outrage and disgust at being confronted with pornography during a women's conference coalesced into an organized, focused and solid action.

Other highlights were the excellent and thought-provoking key-note speech by Phyllis Chesler and the magical storytelling of Helen Porter.

At the same time, the not so positive aspects of the conference reaffirmed again the importance of working collectively. The conference was organized by the skill and energy of one woman Janet Stickney and she deserves a great deal of credit. Yet, the input of more women would have avoided the two major problems in the conference: no daycare services or subsidies, and the high cost. When women plan conferences for women we must ensure that we recognize the reality of women's experience. We cannot separate the private and public spheres, as men have so conveniently done. Women often must, or choose to, bring their children with them to public activities and we should support them in their decision, ensuring that facilities are available so that all women can participate fully in all aspects of a conference, formally and informally. This unfortunately did not happen in Toronto. The high fees also effectively limited who would be able to attend. Bursaries were provided for individual women who managed to apply and could prove their need. This form of subsidy suggests the welfare system, and women are sick of asking for that which is rightfully ours. We should make it a priority to facilitate the participation of all women at women's conferences.

Stay tuned for the next issue of Breaking the Silence where there will be a full report on the conference. We will have an interview with Phyllis Chesler as well as reports on presentations by Susan Cole on Pornography, Vicki Kelman on Incest, Sandra Pike on GenderFair Therapy, Greta Nemiroff on Empowerment, support groups by the Feminist Therapy Support Group and much more.

- Alma Estable & Joan Riggs

## RESOURCES

### FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN ONTARIO

This excellent resource publication was prepared by Community Legal Services in co-operation with the Ottawa-Carleton Immigrant Services Organization. It was designed to be used by foreign domestic workers and other individuals concerned about the status of domestics in Canada.

Divided into three main sections, the first describes Employment and Immigration Canada's new program for foreign domestics and the conditions of eligibility for immigration. The second provides information on employment rights including wages and benefits, and the third gives self-help tips and lists community services available.

It is available from:

Community Legal Services  
(Ottawa-Carleton)  
71 Daly Ave.  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K1N 6E3  
238-7008

- Sherry Galey

### MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The Multicultural Women's Association (MWA) is a volunteer group of interested women from a variety of cultural backgrounds who have come together with a social, cultural and educational focus.

The Association provides a forum for cultural exchanges as a means of publicizing individual heritages while learning about others; it also promotes intercultural understanding among communities in the Ottawa-Carleton area.

The Association serves as a link between disadvantaged ethnic women and existing services; it aims to facilitate access to services, to disseminate information and to encourage participation.

For more information, contact:

The Multicultural Women's Association  
425 Gloucester St.  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K1R 5E9  
238-4256 -- 232-1587

### WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT: A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATION AND ACTION

Only recently have efforts been made to open up dialogue and show relationships between



two parallel trends: the women and development debate and the feminist movement and the upsurge of women mobilizing for liberation from oppression and subordination. This guide is a significant contribution for the sharpening of this focus. It's a large 225 page book prepared by a collective of women associated with ISIS, the women's international information and communication service that was set up in 1974.

The guide focuses on five major areas: multi-nationals; rural development and food production; health; education and communication; and immigration and tourism.

To order: Send \$7.00 U.S. (surface) or \$10.00 U.S. (airmail) to:  
P.O. Box 50  
1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland

- Sherry Galey

#### SUPPORT GROUP FOR ABUSED WOMEN

The necessity of women supporting women through groups is one of the basic assumptions of feminist thinking. For women who have been physically or emotionally abused the need for a support group is even more critical. In a support group women are able - often for the first time in their lives - to speak openly about the violence they suffer without feeling judged and blamed. The commonalities underlying their individual experiences become readily apparent, and the contact with other women breaks down the isolation of their lives. The basic messages: "violence against women is a criminal offense", "you do not deserve to be beaten" and "you are not responsible for his behavior" - are much more powerful when delivered by the other women in the groups. All these factors together allow women to begin to feel better about themselves, and to feel empowered to make changes to end the abuse.

The support group with which I am involved began in February 1982. Since then many women have come to the group while still living with an abusive partner; others have been out of the relationship for several years but are still dealing with the effects of violence on their children and themselves.

The group is loosely structured by the group members and the co-facilitators and has three main components. Support is given to the women as they take the necessary steps to ensure that they will no longer be victims of abuse. There is discussion of topics of particular interest to the group, such as dealing with the police and legal system, children and violence, and community supports for battered women. Finally, when they are ready, women are encouraged to speak out publicly on issues of violence and to work

together for change.

This support group is offered by the Family Service Centre in conjunction with the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Service Centre. Meetings are held Wednesday afternoons and assistance is available to cover the costs of child care and transportation. Anyone who would like more information on the group should contact Pam Johnston at 725-3601 or Joan Gillespie at 820-4922.

- Joan Gillespie

#### ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

##### CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES IN EDUCATION

Secretary: Susan Hall  
Research Officer/Co-ordinator: Pat Staton  
Centre Head: Allison Prentice

The CWSE is a new OISE centre which is devoted to the promotion and facilitation of interdisciplinary feminist research within the Institute. Currently, three projects are housed in the centre: the Women's Educational Resource Centre, the Canadian Women's History Project and the periodical, Resources for Feminist Research.

Women's Educational Resource Centre: Located on the 6th floor, WERC provides a wide range of resources for the researcher and teacher in women's studies. An excellent selection of books and periodicals, bibliographies, research papers, curriculum materials, photographs, tapes and clippings, in French and English, are among the centre's holdings. Secretary: Peggy Bristow. Research Officer: Frieda Forman. Faculty: Mary O'Brien. Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, 9:15 - 4:30; Thursday, 10:00 - 8:00.

Canadian Women's History Project: CWHP is a project devoted to the development of materials in Canadian women's history, including documentary studies, bibliographies and, ultimately, two textbooks. Its offices are on the 8th floor. Secretary: Susan Hall. Research Officers: Beth Light and Paula Bourne. Faculty: Ruth Pierson and Allison Prentice. Hours: Monday - Thursday, 8:00 - 4:00.

Resources for Feminist Research/Documentation sur la Recherche Feministe: Formerly known as the Canadian Newsletter for Research on Women, RFR/DRF is a quarterly periodical of research and work in progress in Canadian and international feminist studies. Its regular features include articles, book reviews, review essays, periodicals and resource guide, and abstracts and bibliographies. Its offices are on the 8th floor. Research Officers: Frances Rooney and Joyce Skane. Faculty: Jeri Wine. Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9:00 - 4:00.



OISE faculty engaged in feminist research are in the process of becoming affiliated with CWSE and students with or without assistantships may apply to work with the centre or any of its ongoing projects. As well, short term projects may be available for students seeking experience in various educational areas related to women's studies.

#### TOUT NOUVEAU!!!

##### OU QUAND COMMENT

Comment survivre dans un monde à l'envers.

Ce livret est un guide de survie à l'attention des femmes parent unique à faible revenu. Il contient des renseignements pratiques sur tout ce qui peut aider à s'organiser au point de vue de logement, aide financière, éducation et emploi, garderies et programmes pour enfants, ses droits comme travailleuse ou récipiendaire d'aide financière, etc., etc.. En plus, des informations sur femme et violence, femme et santé, les maisons d'hébergement pour femmes battues, etc., etc..

Le livret est disponible à \$3.00 la copie (gratis pour les personnes à faible revenu) à:

SAFFRO/OCLISS  
95, rue Beech  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
Téléphone: 232-2677

- Diane Chalmessin

##### SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

The Ottawa Council for Low Income Support Services (O.C.L.I.S.S.) has recently published the second English edition of the Survival Guide for Single Parents. Written almost exclusively with women in mind, the Survival Guide brings together information concerning such topics as housing, eligibility for Welfare and Family Benefits, employment training and childcare, health and emergency services for women.

This book, is not however, solely an information source. O.C.L.I.S.S. hopes that it may also serve as a catalyst, sparking both consumers and providers of social services to the realization that poor women in Ontario are indeed under attack by the policies of the Conservative government. In this province, Drea is indeed a four letter word!!

The Survival Guide is available free of charge for all women living on low incomes. Social service agencies, or their workers, can obtain the book for \$3.00.

For more information, you can contact O.C.L.I.S.S. at 95 Beech St., 2nd Floor, Ottawa, Ontario, (613) 232-2677.

##### FRESH START: IS IT FOR YOU?

The message delivered to battered women in Fresh Start is simple and direct - "You are being victimized. You have a right to freedom from abuse. You are a worthy person." Written by Joan LeFeuvre of Peterborough, Ontario, Fresh Start provides concrete facts and information to women who find themselves in abusive situations.

This self-help booklet begins by helping women recognize their abuse, reassuring them that they are not alone and that they are not responsible for the beatings. Fresh Start encourages battered women to re-examine their roles in society and develop a new identity that values womanhood and fights for respect. Women are asked to face their fears and take responsibility for their choices in life.

Fresh Start recognizes that some women have a difficult time leaving abusive relationships and offers constructive suggestions for survival. Women are advised to plan for independent living by updating their job skills, establishing an independent source of money and creating a supportive network of family and friends.

For the battered woman who is ready to leave, Fresh Start offers a comprehensive guide through the long and difficult process. Fresh Start provides practical information to battered women faced with the harsh inadequacies of the legal, police and financial resources. By offering clear, concise directives, Fresh Start encourages battered women to explore and evaluate their short and long term options, dealing with such topics as police intervention, emergency shelters, laying charges, employment and children. Each issue is dealt with in a sensitive, straight-forward manner that considers the emotions of individual women.

Fresh Start is a valuable resource for battered women at any stage of their struggle. Although it is not a publication that provides strategies for political action, it does present useful information in such a way that women are forced to re-examine their roles in society. Copies of Fresh Start can be ordered from YWCA, Peterborough, Ontario at minimal cost.

- Susan Lindsay

#### **BITS & PIECES**

The Unemployment Committee of the Ottawa District Labour Council has recently formed to act on behalf of the many unemployed persons in the Ottawa district. They are looking for people interested in getting involved whether employed or unemployed. For



the record though, they define unemployed as being without a job and wanting one. They are presently putting a lot of energy into getting an Ottawa Unemployment Help Centre started. If you are interested, phone the Labour Council at 233-7820 or Janice at 234-5275 or just attend a meeting. Meetings are held every second and fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the O.D.L.C. offices at 280 Dalhousie Street. For anyone just wanting to be generous, donations should be mailed to the O.D.L.C. office.

#### WIFE ABUSE STUDY

A detailed study of wife abuse in an Alberta community revealed that the number of battered wives "significantly exceeds" the estimated national average of one in ten. The researchers believe that they uncovered a high incidence of abuse because of the in-depth nature of their research, and not because there are an unusually high number of abusive men in this particular town. Their findings compel us to reconsider the prevalence of wife beating in Canada.

This pioneer research, reported in Network, was conducted by Katherine Sloman and Phebe Cotterill, graduate students in social welfare administration at the University of Calgary.

#### PINECREST-QUEENSWAY COMMITTEE ON WIFE ABUSE

The summer issue of Breaking the Silence carried a report on Making Contact, a workshop on services to abused women, sponsored by the Pinecrest-Queensway Committee on Wife Abuse. This fall the Wife Abuse Committee turns its focus to community education.

We know that for many people, wife abuse is still seen as a relatively unimportant issue that happens to "other" people and is really a family matter. We hope that by speaking to community groups (schools, churches, tenant associations, etc.) people will be made aware of the links between individual instances of wife abuse and social values which encourage violence against women. Films such as "Killing Us Softly" and "Loved, Honoured and Bruised" will be used in community presentations.

Our committee is always eager to attract new members, so if you are willing to do some speaking on the topic of wife abuse you will be warmly welcomed. We meet every second Tuesday evening at the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Service Centre, 804 Grenon Avenue. For more information and a free pep talk on why you should be part of the committee phone: Joan Gillespie at 820-4922.

- Joan Gillespie

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPECIAL POLICY ON FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS

The International Coalition to End Domestic Workers' Exploitation (Intercede) has produced a very comprehensive brief which was submitted to then Minister of Employment and Immigration, Lloyd Axworthy, in March, 1983. It describes specific problems in the implementation of the policy on foreign domestic workers and puts forward 35 recommendations to reduce the inequities in the present implementation system.

The present policy allows domestic workers who have worked in Canada for at least two years to apply for landed status if they can demonstrate that they are "self-sufficient" or have the "potential to achieve self-sufficiency". The immigration officers carry out an "initial" assessment to determine eligibility to apply for permanent residence. Domestic workers who are judged to be "successfully established" in Canada are accepted for landing in Canada and their applications are processed straight away. Eleven thousand domestic workers were in Canada when the policy was announced and most of these have undergone their first assessment.

Rates of acceptance have varied widely from region to region with a low in Ottawa at 24% to 75% in the London-Windsor region.

Intercede has concluded:

"Contrary to the assurance of Immigration officials that the policy is applied uniformly, a wide range of interpretations of the policy are in evidence on a regional, local and individual basis. Differing interpretations are significant, particularly, for example, with respect to the treatment of older domestic workers with several dependents who wish to continue in the field of domestic work after landing.

Where specific problems have been identified in the implementation of the program ... the effect has been consistently to jeopardize a particular group of domestic workers, i.e. those from the Caribbean".

For more information, contact:

Intercede  
348 College Street  
2nd Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5T 1S4  
(416) 929-3240 or  
363-5238

- Sherry Galey



The Francophone Committee of The Ottawa Council for Low Income Support Services (OCLISS) is looking for new members. They meet every third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Le Patro (40 Cobourg Street in Lowertown). For more information please call Elaine or Florence at 232-2677.

#### ORGANIZING FOR DIRECT ACTION

The following excerpt from A Case Study on the Organizing of Landless Tribal Women in Maharashtra, India (Quoted in The Tribune, 16, 81), outlines the strategy one group of women used to protest violence against women.

"At a district meeting in one Asian country, discussion focussed on questions of alcoholism, wife beating and self-protection of women. One group of village women described how their husbands drank and then beat them up. Repeated pleas to the village police officers for protection against beatings had been ignored. The village women asked the women at the district meeting for assistance. Spontaneously, the women at the meeting decided to march to the nearby village. As they walked, word spread to women in villages along the route and soon their numbers grew. When they arrived, they entered the local liquor den and began breaking the liquor pots. They also surrounded the police inspector and asked why he had sanctioned the violent behaviour of the drunken men and had offered no protection to the battered women. Although these actions provided only temporary relief, the women persisted and soon active protest spread to other villages in the district."

Canadian women could learn from this kind of direct collective action.

#### DESPAIR AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

When you listen to the news, do you feel like you've been hit by a wave and pulled into an undertow? When you hear about yet another world crisis, do you feel that you're going under for the third time? Searching for hope for our future is like gasping for oxygen in the briny depths. And yet for many its an unacknowledged struggle of despair. Exhausted, from both the struggle and the silence imposed on our desperation, we become numb.

The facing of our emotions now becomes a political necessity. To be able to deal with the disturbing political information we encounter daily, we must be able to process our own emotional responses to it.

Processing our despair through validating it, feeling it, and imaging what it means, we can find a new resilience of purpose, a new strength for action, and a fresh clarity of thought. For political activists, this means

a new hope and a new priority. For those in the helping professions, it means an expanded understanding of the vital role of individual emotional work.

Jane Keeler and Elizabeth Shein are prepared to lead workshops on "Despair and Empowerment in the Nuclear Age" for groups and individuals. A workshop for teachers, health and social workers is scheduled for January. Call Elizabeth at 234-9969 or Jane at 233-7375 for more information or write:

P.O. Box 4206  
Station E  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1S 2R7

Elizabeth and Jane are the authors of "Despair - A Call to Life: The Experience of Anti-Nuclear Activists in Ottawa".

#### CONFERENCES

##### A CONFERENCE ON FEMINISM AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Is being planned for the fall of 1984, by a group of women from the Carleton School of Social Work, Ottawa.

Our basic goals are:

- \* to bring together women from a variety of front-line, policy and academic settings who share a concern for developing a feminist analysis of social welfare issues;
- \* to promote and strengthen a feminist perspective among women working in social welfare research, action, policy and practice, by providing a forum for exchanging perspectives, research, information and resources.

We are in the process of developing a more specific focus and themes for the conference, and exploring funding possibilities. A call for papers will be going out in early 1984.

If you have ideas and suggestions to share, and/or would like to be involved in the planning process, please write to:

Feminism and Social Welfare  
Conference Committee  
School of Social Work  
Carleton University  
Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario

##### IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE?

Educational Workshop on Dec. 5, 1983.

Ottawa women interested in feminism and the struggles of women in other countries are invited to participate in an educational



evening on violence against women throughout the world. We hope to explore some of the connections between the conditions and struggles of women in the Third World and in Canada, focussing on the issue of violence against women. Resource people from different cultural backgrounds will address some common questions, and a resource person from Match International Centre will present some links between this issue and development for women. Most of the evening will be spent in informal discussion. This is an opportunity to learn from each other about our perceptions, experiences and understandings in this area, and to compare strategies and ways of working to end such violence everywhere.

The workshop is being sponsored by Match International Centre; all are welcome to attend (free of charge).

Date: December 5, 1983.  
Place: Ottawa Public Library  
Meeting Room 1A & B  
Time: 7:30 p.m.

For more information, please call Alma Estable at 238-1312.

#### COMING EVENTS

#### NOT A MINORITY: WOMANSTRENGTH

This is the theme for International Women's Week 1984, which includes a wide range of activities during the week around International Women's Day, March 8, 1984.

Planning is now underway - two or three key events will be organized for the week which we hope will, as in past years, involve hundreds of women. A Fair is planned which will bring together 50 or 60 women's organizations under one roof. Your group is invited to join us. Everyone will be welcome to come to the Fair and see the booths, learn about the organizations and the issues they are involved in, engage in ad hoc debates and discussions, and generally have a good time connecting informally with other women active in the Ottawa area.

The Celebration, the grand finale of the week, is a time to dance, talk, sing, eat, drink, enjoy the great music, visit and just simply enjoy the company at Ottawa's largest women's party.

The key to the week is the many events organized by local women's groups, to mark the week's theme in their own way. Your group is invited to stage a play, host a workshop, hold a speak-out, show a film, make a film, or take on anything else that enhances the ability of women to act on the issues confronting us in these times. March

may seem like a long way off, but most groups find they have to start planning now if they want a well organized event during IWW. Give it some thought, and get in touch with the IWW Organizing Committee. For more information, come along or phone 234-7924.

#### WORKSHOP ON WRITING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The Breaking the Silence Collective is planning a workshop on writing and editing skills for women interested in improving their ability to communicate to diverse audiences. It will take place in late January or early February. If you'd like to know more or put your name on the list, please call Sherry Galey at 593-6342 (days) or 232-6042 (evenings).

A workshop titled Privilege and Oppression will be held on Feb. 18, 1984 from 10:00 to 5:00 at Friends House on Fourth Avenue. The workshop will focus on classism, anti-semitism and anti-lesbianism. For more information contact Sheila at 234-4726.

#### VICTORIES

We want to extend belated congratulations to the group of five Spanish speaking women who have recently won their case at the Ontario Human Rights Commission against Commodore Business Machines, on the basis of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment, although existing in all workplaces, can have severe consequences for women who are immigrants. They often do not speak English and are unaware of their rights, leaving them particularly vulnerable to all types of exploitation. The frequent streaming of immigrant women into low-skilled, low-paid jobs also is a structural factor which prevents women from speaking out, for fear of losing jobs and being unable to get another.

For these reasons, it is extremely important that we recognize the courage and determination it took this group of women to not only press the charge, but continue through in the face of a relative lack of support from their own communities, and, most sadly, from the feminist community in this country.

We must begin to seriously question our own networks, and work very hard to improve communications and the mobilization of support, when we can let a group of women fight such a significant struggle in relative isolation.

Congratulations again to our Spanish speaking sisters in Toronto for having persevered and having won!

Many thanks to Monica Riutort, from the Centro Para Gente De Habla Hispana, for



having brought this to our attention.

- Alma Estable

**YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY BABY???**

The P. Q. government in Quebec recently approved a Job Creation program for a small-town bar. They gave the bar \$25,000 to employ and train workers for a necessary job. The job ... working as a stripper. Another example of government policy working to give women a better future.

**BREAKING THE SILENCE  
GOES TO SUBSCRIPTIONS**

The first year of publishing Breaking the Silence is over and has been more successful than our wildest dreams.

Breaking the Silence has grown and changed since the first issue appeared in the spring of 1982. Your positive response has shown that there is a need and demand for a newsletter that focuses on feminism and social welfare.

We were lucky to be able to distribute Breaking the Silence free for this period. However, beginning with this issue, Fall 1983, we must institute a charge of \$0.50 a copy for the newsletter.

You can continue to receive Breaking the Silence by mail quarterly for the very reasonable rate of \$4.00 a year.

The institutional rate for libraries, government, women's groups, etc. is \$10.00 per year.

Breaking the Silence should be available to all those who want to read it. So if your finances are tight, please send back the form anyway. We'll make arrangements so that you continue to receive the newsletter.

If you can contribute more than \$10.00, you can be a supporter of Breaking the Silence and in so doing help make it accessible to more women.

Thank you for the encouraging response Breaking the Silence has received from across the country. We sincerely hope you continue to support us, and contribute your ideas to help make the newsletter even better.

**ABOUT BREAKING THE SILENCE ...**

Breaking the Silence is a quarterly newsletter published by the editorial collective of Ottawa feminists affiliated with the Feminist Caucus of the Carleton School of Social Work. Its aims are to

inform women about social welfare issues and to promote and strengthen a feminist perspective among those working in the field of social welfare.

We strongly feel there is much work to be done to advance the cause of women throughout the social welfare system and in social policy. We hope the newsletter provides information and analysis that will help those working on behalf of women both inside and outside the system.

We encourage all women to become involved in the newsletter to phone in information and special events, share ideas and suggestions for articles, and, especially, to write about your concerns. We feel, at this point, it is important to provide a forum for women's writing; and we call on sympathetic, progressive men who understand the need to make room for women's voices, to continue their support of Breaking the Silence by reading, distributing and talking about the newsletter.

Nous voulons faire un appel spécial à nos sœurs francophones, de nous envoyer des articles en français. Allez-y, écrivez quelques mots pour passer des renseignements, partager vos expériences, communiquez avec nous, brisez le silence!

The editorial collective

**A PERFECT GIFT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.....  
CELEBRATE THE SOLSTICE.....BREAKING THE  
SILENCE**

Give to your relatives, friends, feminist cohorts... If you're looking for the gift that will educate, entertain and not break your piggy bank...give Breaking the Silence.

Just note on your subscription form who you'd like the gift to be sent to, and we'll make sure they receive a card telling them of your thoughtfulness.



TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE Breaking the Silence, PLEASE RETURN THE FORM BELOW.

-----  
Name (individual or institution/group):

Address:

Affiliations:

Telephone: (home)

(office)

Can we add your name to our network of women interested in bringing feminism into social welfare? \_

New Subscription (for those not on the mailing list):

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but finances are tight.  
Check here to receive  
Breaking the Silence free.

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K1S 5B6

\* One year's free subscription will be sent to those  
who have contributed money during the last year  
to Breaking the Silence.

For information, call (613) 593-6342  
and ask for Sherry Galey.