

# Breaking the Silence

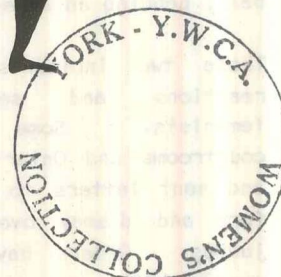
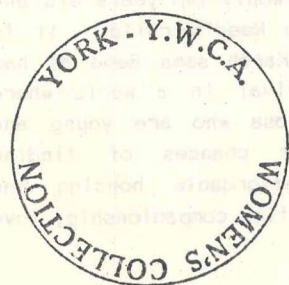
a newsletter on feminism in social welfare  
research, action, policy and practice

**Vol. 2 No. 3**

**Winter 1984**

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## International Women's Week Semaine Internationale des Femmes

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Word processed by Keyword Walkley - 521-3511.



## BEYOND CONTEMPT

### WHEN THE VICTIM GOES TO JAIL

On a night in January of 1982, an Ottawa woman named Courtney was allegedly raped repeatedly by two men. After some time, she reported the events of that night to the police. In November of that year a preliminary hearing was held. Courtney gave evidence against the two men, enough evidence to convince the judge that the case warranted a full trial. After several postponements, the trial began in December, 1983. By that time, however, Courtney decided that she would not give further testimony. She claimed that she had received threats on her own life and the lives of her mother and sister. She was afraid for their safety if she gave further evidence. The judge found her in contempt of court for refusing to testify and sentenced her to seven days in jail. The charges were dropped against the two men accused of raping her and they walked away free.

In September 1983, in Orillia, neighbours reported that Karen Mitchell, twenty-two years old and a few months pregnant, had been beaten by her fiancé. After receiving a police statement the Crown Attorney laid two assault charges against Terry Reed. In December past, a court hearing was held in which Karen refused to testify against Reed, claiming that she had never intended to lay charges in the first place. She said the police told her she would have to in order to receive medical aid and police protection. The judge cited her for contempt of court, and sentenced her to a three-month term in jail. As of this writing, Karen is free on bail, pending an appeal.

These two incidents have led to varied reactions and serious debate among feminists. Some demonstrated outside courtrooms and Ontario Parliament Buildings and sent letters to the editor proclaiming fury and dismay over the actions of the judges. Others have been less quick to condemn the use of the contempt ruling, claiming that the system must be protected so that it may be used more successfully in the future to prosecute men who commit violent acts against women.

This article will provide information behind both sides of the debate. In the end, there are not likely to be any easy answers. This is just the beginning of what promises to be a long and heated debate.

First of all, what went wrong? Why did the victims end up in jail and the accused end up going free? Chantal Tai, an Ottawa lawyer, notes that these "bizarre and unusual" events may be a result of a 1982 directive from the Attorney General of Ontario to pursue cases of violent assault against women with a new

rigour. Isn't that just what feminists have pressed for during the last ten years? Yes, and no. Feminists have indeed been outraged at the traditional attitudes held by the judiciary towards women victims of violent male crimes. Judges, lawyers and police have historically tended to view rape as a result of provocation by women, and wife abuse as a private family matter, not for public scrutiny. Feminists have indeed put pressure on the government to amend sexual assault legislation, and to view male violence as criminal, not natural.

However, at the same time, most feminists have argued that men beat and rape women because women are unequal in this society and that this will not change until women's status improves. According to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, one in every five Canadians is sexually assaulted at some point in her life and an estimated 500,000 women are beaten by the men they live with every year. A survey of transition houses in Canada done in 1978 revealed that 61% of battered women are under 30, their average family income is \$10,000 per year, their education level is grade 11, only 22% worked outside the home and the majority of them were beaten when they were pregnant. All of these statistics indicate that many, many women who are victims of male violence are in a weak position to make a living and provide the necessities of life for their children on their own.

### A Second Look at the "Facts"

Karen Mitchell has stated publicly that she still intends to marry Terry Reed. At first appearance it seems incredible that she would still want to marry a man after he beat her up, and after she spent time in jail as an indirect result of his actions. But is it so incredible? She is twenty-two years old and she is pregnant with Reed's child. It is quite possible that Karen sees Reed as her only ticket to survival in a world where women, especially those who are young and pregnant, have slim chances of finding well-paying jobs, affordable housing and daycare -- not to mention companionship, love and respect.

And maybe it is not so incredible that Courtney would not want to testify against two men who are alleged to have repeatedly raped her. One of these men is said to be a member of a motorcycle club called "The Outlaws". The club has a reputation for violence and involvement in illegal activities. Courtney claims that threats were made against her's and her family's lives. Ottawa is a relatively small city where it is almost impossible to disappear into the woodwork. Why should she want to testify? As she herself noted, she has already suffered through two years of waiting for the trial to occur. Should she be expected to jeopardize any hope for a peaceful existence by publicly denouncing



the accused?

Men have been raping and beating women for centuries. Books such as Against Our Will by Susan Brownmiller clearly document the historical patterns. Women have been viewed as chattels, prizes of war and subordinate beings and men have felt free to rape them. Finally, it appears things are beginning to change. Beginning to change perhaps, but feminist work on the issue of rape and wife abuse has only developed strength in the last twenty years. It is still considered acceptable for men to beat their wives if they have done something to incur displeasure. Many men still consider it acceptable to force women to have sex with them, rationalizing that women ask for it by looking at them a certain way, dressing a certain way or being in the right place at the right time - for instance on the street unaccompanied after dark.

And the problem doesn't stop there. Women who have been abused often come to accept the behaviour as the price of living with men. And there are women who joke about "getting lucky" and being sexually accosted by men and who perpetuate the same myth that women get raped because they ask for it.

In other words, both men and women are socialized from an early age to view rape and wife assault as "natural" phenomena and not criminal acts. The majority of women still look to men to fulfill their needs for emotional closeness, sexual satisfaction and daily companionship.

#### Using the Court System

Some feminists make the assumption that the court system can be used as a way of protecting women's right to live safely among men. Maude Barlow, president of the Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography and special advisor to the Prime Minister on women's issues, was quoted in an Ottawa newspaper as saying that she was sorry the women had to go to jail, but she felt the judges did the right thing in citing them for contempt of court. One can draw the implication from Barlow's statement that she thinks the courts should be the place where men will be punished for attacking women because the role of the criminal justice system is to provide equal protection for all Canadian citizens.

This argument makes sense in an ideal world. However, the administration of justice reflects the inequality of women in relation to men in the real world. The most notorious recent example are the comments of Ontario County Court Judge Bruce Hawkins about a rape case over which he was presiding. He said that this particular rape rated only "two" on a scale of ten. This because it was perpetrated by only one man as opposed to a gang, it was straightforward vaginal intercourse and that the victim was an exotic

dancer. Would Judge Hawkins rate the murder of one man by another on the same sort of scale? Not likely.

Unfortunately, case law proves that there are many judges sitting on the bench with similar attitudes. It seems doubtful that these judges are capable of treating women with adequate respect.

The other problem with the assumption that the courts can administer justice even-handedly to all citizens lies in the very fact that women enter the courtroom on an unequal footing with men. Because many women depend on men for financial support, love and affection and because some men use their physical strength and economic advantage to control women, women can be coerced into silence when called upon to implicate men as law-breakers. In other words, in the courtroom itself, women may be presumed to be equal, but as soon as they set foot outside the equality disappears and so does the protection of the law. How then can women be expected to participate in a fair trial and still live in safety afterwards?

Doris Anderson, president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, suggested in a column in the Toronto Star, that the legal system would be more effective for women if there were more female judges appointed to the bench. She sees the sexist attitudes of judges as a significant reason why women victims have been sent to jail and their alleged assailants have been freed. Anderson's suggestion is influenced by the fact that judges have leeway, in their own courts, to cite witnesses for contempt as they see fit.

Proponents of using the legal system to force women to testify after they have been assaulted suggest that improvements can be made within the system to make the process easier. For instance, aside from appointing women judges, victims could be offered immediate police protection - something which did not happen in the case of Courtney; waiting time for trials could be reduced, thereby reducing the amount of agony the victim suffers during the waiting period and the amount of time alleged assailants have to threaten or harass the victim; the accused could be held in custody if he is considered to be dangerous, thereby allowing the victim to walk outside in relative safety; and finally, court-sponsored support services for the victim could be increased to assist women during the ordeal of waiting for and attending a trial.

Opponents of forcing women to testify at court hearings say that it really doesn't matter if surface changes are made to the legal system, because women will still be beaten and raped. Although feminists on this side do not blame the court system for the fact that women are unequal, they look outside of the legal process for ways to



redress the inequality, and thus reduce male violence. Providing access to economic security for women through better job training and social security programs, more daycare facilities and cheaper housing, is one crucial step they say. Educating children and re-educating adults about the immorality of abusing women is another; providing support on a wide scale, services, such as refuges for battered wives, is yet another necessity and so is the control of pornography, if violence against women is to be significantly reduced.

### The Contempt Charges

A great deal of emphasis can be placed on McGuigan's proposed amendments to the Criminal Code to "codify and clarify the law on contempt and put it in a statutory form" as a solution to the situations that have befallen Courtney and Karen. However, these changes, while probably an advance of some sort, would not affect the reasons behind these cases.

In earlier days, if the woman did not want to go to court, it was standard procedure for the crown attorney to agree to withdraw charges and the judge would allow the case to be dropped. Now it seems, whether or not the woman agrees, if assault charges are laid, she will be subpoenaed into court and expected to give testimony. Codifying the law governing contempt and appointing female judges will not likely change this reality nor make it much easier for a woman to testify.

Wherein lie the answers? The arguments on both sides seem to have some relevance. Perhaps what is most important for now is that feminists realize they all share the same goals. Surely every woman recoils in horror when she reads that women victims of male violence are being sent to jail, while the alleged attackers go free. The cases of Courtney and Karen Mitchell may well happen again. What are we going to do about it when it does? It seems a timely question for each of us to ask ourselves.

- Ellen Adelberg

### **YOUR QUARTERLY CHUCKLE**

When asked why she had never married, Gloria Steinem replied, "I don't mate in captivity."

Reagan has developed a comprehensive right to life policy...it extends from conception to birth.

### **WOMEN AND THERAPY**

### FEATURE INTERVIEW WITH PHYLLIS CHESLER

Phyllis Chesler was the keynote speaker at

the Women in Therapy Conference held in Toronto. In spite of illness and a long busy day filled with interviews by the established press, Ms. Chesler agreed to speak to B.T.S.. We were intimidated and nervous at the prospect of interviewing such a prominent and accomplished woman. She quickly dispelled our fears by welcoming us as sister feminists. We share her thoughts with you.

BTS: While you were speaking, a couple of women with small children were asked to leave the room. How do you feel about this?

PC: I think that there are some activities that require attention, concentration and no interruptions. This means that no small child can be present and that's OK. What's not OK is having a conference for women that doesn't have some provision made for child-care. However, that costs money and that's not always possible. Also, there's a built-in assumption about women - one that's taken for granted - that women know and are socialized not to bring their menstrual periods and other products of their bodies (like children) with them. You keep them away from places where women think clearly, or think like men, or think like revolutionaries. We are all complicit and continue this. There were times when I would bring Ariel to do a benefit, with a babysitter to watch him, and I got looks of contempt and disgust from other women who were feminists. I think ultimately I've come to mirror that look of contempt and disgust at women who make no place for life.

This is not to say that I think children belong everywhere you go or that children should be allowed to cry or interrupt women trying to pay attention - women whose lives are already filled with interruptions. But small children cry, need to be fed and changed, and will make noises and interrupt their mothers and other adults. When I would take Ariel to a meeting, when he was six or nine months, and he began to cry I had an atavistic terror that I'd be stoned to death if I didn't get him to shut up or we didn't leave immediately. I would just reiterate the importance of - the difficulty of - making provision for child care.

BTS: I had a question for you. It's about children but comes from another angle. I was a feminist for a long time, and a very active one, before I had my first child. And it was a boy. And that did something in my head which I'm still trying to understand. I began to care for the first time ever that men should at some point catch up with us in their own way. I'm wondering about your experience of having a son - has that changed your perceptions?

PC: Of course I expected a daughter, but nature just plays these tricks. In some ways, having a son is easier, other mothers tell me. It is clear that there is a difference-a physical difference-you know



where you end and he begins. It's clear - if you're not a vicarious mother or a Mafia mother - that what he does and what happens to him, while crucial to you, is not quite the same as if he was a she. Now that I have a boy child that's of my flesh, I am more convinced than before that men are different from women. I see the helplessness, the dependence, the vulnerability - how it comes to be guarded, how emotions get repressed. (This probably happens) in a girl too, but I saw it happen in a boy. I would like him not to be afraid of women, not to need to enslave women, to be self-sufficient without the services of a woman. I'd like him to love women, I'd like him to love his mother. Now I don't know how I'm going to bring that about. I mean, everything is against my bringing just that about. That's why I'm interested in doing just that. My love for him or my recognition of our connection, certainly has not made me get soft on grown men. If anything, harder. He (my son) is not a grown man - he is at their mercy. Now he is more like me, he is a child.

BTS: Earlier today you spoke about ethics. It often seems that women get pitted against one another in a variety of ways. The last issue of Breaking the Silence carried an article on feminist morality and if we have one. Do you think a moral ethic has been developed for feminists, especially around relationships with men?

PC: Do I think that feminists don't compete for each other's boyfriends or husbands? I think that by and large that's true. Feminists do compete for each other's girlfriends, do compete for each other's jobs. Some claim that it's not competition but self-actualization. And some claim that it's revolutionary not to be monogamous. Women, like men, are mortal and limited, and like men are capable - whether we're feminists or socialists or something else - of misinterpreting an ideal, of betraying an ideal or of giving one ideal a priority over another, or even resorting to a means-ends way of thinking about ideals. So what I'm saying is that feminists betray feminism, feminists betray feminists, and feminists betray women, for any of the reasons I've mentioned.

BTS: There are very complex relationships and a lot of contradictions in living with feminist principles in a very oppressive world. But we really try to function and what happens is that we betray our principles constantly. Can't we set up a system where we don't have - at the same time as being hard on ourselves - to have other feminists judge us?

PC: To set up a system of justice and a code of ethics would take a long time. It would be the labor of a number of women who have that as their goal - just to put it down on paper, not even to make sure that everyone agrees with it or is willing to honor it or

to put it into action. It took a bunch of Jews seventy years to write something out. It couldn't take us less! It doesn't mean everyone is going to pay attention to it. So you - like me - are impatient, very impatient. But when Humpty Dumpty falls down again, one more time, you should not be totally surprised. But it's not wise. I can think of one model (of ethics) which is: how the Jews settled quarrels between one Jew and another - say a theft, a homicide or a wife beating. If they turned each other in to the Christian authorities, both Jews would have been punished. So how did they handle this, when they could own no territory and they had very few skills? They did have a system of religious laws and they had books interpreting them, as well as having access to teachers, leaders and rabbis who interpreted them. They had direct access to God, too. Well, it's one possible model. We (feminists) don't have a book of laws, we are not living in communities and we are not clear that while it is dreadful to be betrayed by our own kind, it is twice as dangerous to go to outsiders for presumed revenge or justice. We are not clear about any of this yet - we haven't put anything into practice. So it's just the beginning.

- Interview by Joan Riggs, Jane Keeler and Alma Estable

- edited by Suzanne Pilon and Joan Holmes

#### MODELS OF EMPOWERMENT

A workshop by Greta Nemiroff  
Director of the New School  
Dawson College, Montreal

Power and empowerment are central themes in the practice of feminist therapy. In a dynamic presentation, Greta Nemiroff provided a useful and thought-provoking discussion of conventional and alternative models of power and their application to feminist therapy. Nemiroff's workshop further challenged the participants to analyse their own socialization experiences with respect to power and the roles that power and powerlessness now play in their lives.

The conventional model of power has been based upon an assumption of a hierarchical order in which one individual or group has the authority to exert control over others. This model is further characterized by assumptions regarding the inevitability and necessity of oligarchies for the maintenance of order, accountability, and efficiency. A complementary notion holds that power, in good hands, will be used for the common good. Nemiroff points out that most of the mental health care system and, in particular, the doctor-patient model espoused by psychiatry, fall within the conventional model of power. Women, as the primary consumers of the mental health care system, have been made even more powerless and vulnerable by models which limit their



access to information, control, or opportunities for active participation and reciprocity.

Nemiroff threw a direct challenge to the workshop participants to examine our histories. "We have been educated in the culture of the oppressor ... we need to re-examine the education we have received." By doing feminist inventories, she argues, we can identify some of these shaping forces and we can also commence the process of identifying: 1) our own power attributes (e.g. academic degrees); 2) how willing we are to let go of this "paraphernalia of power"; 3) our obstacles and supports and 4) our own powerlessness and power.

The workshop concluded with a series of suggested themes for workshops drawing upon our understanding of where we feel powerless. These suggestions included: the politics of romantic love; dealing with the ambivalence of being feminists in relationships (any kind) with men; and relationships with institutions.

Nemiroff's presentation showed a respect for and understanding of the issues she raised. The session ended upon a hopeful and, yes, empowering chord.

- Cheryl Boon

#### TECHNIQUES FOR SEX AND GENDER FAIR THERAPY

A workshop by Sandra Pike

Sandra Pike presented an exciting and concise picture of her form of gender fair therapy - a therapy that explicitly endorses feminist thought.

She operates on the premise that most of women's distress is structurally imposed. Therefore, therapy becomes not only a way to resolve immediate problems but also involves the recognition of our specific oppression as women and the work necessary to consciously resocialize ourselves.

I found the most interesting and useful material to be the strategies for demystifying the therapy process itself. Some of the techniques she described are:

- \* treating the client as a consumer from the beginning by acknowledging the therapist as a worker being paid for service
- \* decreasing the power differential through the use of appropriate self-disclosure and by validating the client as the expert in the relationship
- \* recognizing that the support of the therapist is limited by her personal background (age, class, race, sex, life experience)
- \* recognition that support should be

relevant to the client and need not be limited to counselling. Therapy that really acknowledges structural oppression should include concrete assistance when necessary such as job contacts, personal loans, reference letters, etc..

Sandra finished her session by describing four basic therapy strategies:

- \* didactic/information sharing
- \* modelling
- \* feedback
- \* analysis

All of these are designed to sensitize a woman to the general oppression of women. A realistic basis for therapy is created by separating the structural factors in her life that are beyond her individual control from those conditions and behaviours that she can take responsibility for and change.

From the content of the workshop and Sandra's failure to discuss group work, I would suspect that she feels that individualized therapy is just as effective as group work in doing consciousness raising and in providing sustained support. I would disagree because there is a potential for control and manipulation in a one-to-one relationship as well as dependency that would mitigate against this. Real consciousness raising and true support are dependent upon a collective knowledge and strength that can only be achieved within groups.

Sandra's skill-packed workshop left little time for reflection or questions. As a result I was left wondering about many things. There seems to be a contradiction in her form of therapy which seems on the one hand to make a serious attempt to equalize power relationships while on the other acknowledging a basic structural reality which precludes any equal relationship.

- Joan Riggs

#### HOUSING ISSUES

A workshop by Peggy Burns

Perhaps my expectations of the "Housing Issues" workshop were too high. But then again, the outline did state that "the needs of immigrant women, ex-psychiatric patients, minimum wage earners and other women in conflict will be addressed" as well as the "available resources of housing and counselling".

A paper on special-needs housing was presented which emphasized statistics (the growth of the problem) and examples of innovative housing projects in the Toronto area. All that was offered was that unmet housing needs are indeed unfortunate.

The workshop leader did not offer a political analysis of the housing crisis as a woman's issue. Nor did the leader discuss actions



and strategies that community workers can undertake to effect change. The frustrated participants of this workshop left with no greater knowledge of how to resolve housing problems or how to meet their clients' housing needs.

- Claudia Currie

### INCEST

A workshop by Vicki Kelman, M.S.W. and Family Planning Community Worker with the Dept. of Public Health, City of Toronto.

Vicki Kelman's workshop on incest was given a double time slot yet, as she noted, the subject was one which could easily have occupied an entire day. Certainly the large attendance at this workshop appears to signify growing concern on the part of counsellors providing therapy for women.

With a growing body of information on this subject, it is becoming increasingly apparent that we need to confront many of the myths and misconceptions about incest and sexual abuse of children. Those who have done any reading on the subject of rape will, no doubt, notice a ring of familiarity about many of the more popular myths. A somewhat cynical summary of these myths might be as follows:

- \* The seductive child (i.e. victims are always responsible for their plight) or "what was she doing walking around in those sexy diapers at that time of night?";
- \* the domineering mother, or, "we know that all disturbances among men can be directly attributed to the failure of their mothers (or wives) to adjust to their natural role";
- \* "it" only happens in poor families, or, "let's keep this at arm's length - it couldn't be anyone I know";
- \* This kind of thing only happens with strangers, or, "you mean it isn't only the guy with the candy I should warn my kid about?";
- \* Children have a right to sex, or, "I'll support my kid's civil liberties when they conform to my pornographic fantasies; besides, who cares about informed consent?"; and
- \* Children always lie about this sort of thing, or, "the only people who can be trusted not to be categorical liars are adult males".

Kelman also provided a number of tips for those dealing with a child who has just disclosed sexual abuse:

- \* repeatedly express your belief in her

disclosure, reassure her that she isn't responsible for what happened, and assure her you will do everything you can to stop the abuse;

- \* try to determine what fears she has (e.g. family breakup, going to jail, punishment for the offender);
- \* find out why she disclosed now and what she expects will happen;
- \* don't make false promises - it is important to maintain her trust, and
- \* be realistic with her - warn her that things will be hard for awhile.

Kelman's workshop pointed to the ongoing need for information sharing among counsellors dealing with current and past victims of incest and sexual abuse. Hopefully we will see more of this in the future.

- Cheryl Boon

### IMMIGRANT WOMEN

A workshop by Monica Riutort and Ana Bodnar

"We are strong, we are committed, we are here to fight. If we find someone who can give us support, make connections, we'll go all the way". With these words, Monica Riutort, of the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, summarized the commitment of many immigrant women to joining the struggles of all women for social change. The workshop was presented jointly with Ana Bodnar of Women Working With Immigrant Women (WWIW) and brought together about 25 women interested in the specific concerns of immigrant women. Monica and Ana covered quite a few issues, ranging from the effects of sexist immigration policies (which specify, for example, that a woman can be considered head of the family only if the husband is mentally ill or handicapped) to the difficulties faced by women whose inability to communicate in English or French is exploited by employers and often, by their own husbands as well.

A significant area of the workshop addressed the varied background and needs of "immigrant women". We often forget that the only thing most immigrant groups have in common is that they are immigrants. Their culture, language, tradition and expectations are often very different. Class is also a factor. Women with very different class background, even if they immigrated from the same country and speak the same language, will have different needs, resources and expectations. In their work with immigrant women, WWIW has a feminist orientation that takes class and culture into account. If this understanding is missing, says Ana, the efforts are doomed to fail. When working with immigrant women just as with other women, we must be aware, and respect, "where they're at" in their development, and make



sure we do not punish our sisters for not moving fast enough.

The second point made by Ana and Monica is that counselling services directed to immigrant women often focus on "improving their low self-esteem". They told the story of one woman's struggle to come to Canada, find a job as a machine operator, get language training (only available to the head of household), struggle for her labour rights, and finally leave an abusive husband. At times, this woman was, indeed, depressed, and in need of services. But the services she needed had to do with the oppression of women, rather than her personal inadequacies. This is not an unusual immigrant woman. She is strong, she is ambitious, and she knows what she wants. As Monica put it, "we don't have low self-esteem. The problem is the whole society that is putting us down." For this reason, it is important to direct women who seek counselling to a group situation rather than individual counselling. Groups can develop into support and action networks.

Ana also talked about the problem of getting immigrant women involved in women's services that are not geared to their needs. Using the example of shelters for abused women, she mentioned several difficulties women experience especially in the areas of language, expectations, and understanding different ways of organizing family life and household responsibilities. It's vital that shelters establish connections with community centers and immigrant associations. The problems of abused women are aggravated if they don't speak the language or have any family or friends they can count on. Men in most immigrant communities are very reluctant to admit there's any violence against women in their community, but it is there as much as anywhere else.

Women Working With Immigrant Women publish a newsletter, which covers a wide range of issues and events of interest to all women. The newsletter is available from:

W.W.I.W.  
730 Bathurst St.  
TORONTO, Ontario  
M5S 2R4

- Alma Estable

ON PROCESS

With the completion of each issue of Breaking the Silence, we of the Editorial Collective sit around in wonderment and grin these huge "we did it again" smiles. Why are we consistently amazed at our ability to put out this publication? Perhaps it's because we work in a collective without a great deal of structure which demands a substantial amount of work from each member, has its share of

crises and yet manages to put together an interesting newsletter four times a year.

At the same time, collective members are, and have been involved in other alternative women's organizations which have had varying degrees of success. They too are committed to integrating a feminist philosophy, defining and dividing work in non-traditional ways, and practising innovative interpersonal and group communication skills. Sometimes, despite all good intentions and efforts, it just does not work. Working in a feminist organization or group may end by being painful and unproductive. Why do some groups survive and even thrive and others don't?

We have begun to ask ourselves these questions as well as many others. Why do we organize ourselves the way we do? What are the processes and structures we select, as feminists, and do they work? How do they relate to our politics and philosophy?

In their book, No Bosses Here, Karen Brandow and Jim McDonnell have a chapter on the effectiveness of alternative organizations as tools for social change. They define collectives and cooperatives, favourites of feminists, as political statements as well as instruments for individual and collective empowerment. Is this part of the answer?

In our next issue of Breaking the Silence we want to begin to explore some of these questions and we need your help. If you are or have been involved in a women's group or organization we ask you to answer some or all the questions below. Add any other comments that you feel may be pertinent. Then send your replies back by April 15, 1984 and we'll put together an issue which will focus on "Inside Feminist Organizations". If you can, gather your group together, have a party and try to figure out why your group works so well. Make it fun!

The questions are:

- \* What was the group's original purpose? Are you still doing what you originally formed to do? If not, how have you changed and grown?
- \* How is the organization structured on paper? Are you a collective? Do you have a Board? Do you have one or more administrators?
- \* How do you operate in practice? How is decision-making power divided? Do those with the most access to information or those possessing certain skills have the most power?
- \* Why did you decide on the particular structure you have? Has it changed over time and why? Is it working?
- \* Does anyone get paid for the work they do? Does this affect relationships in the



group in any way?

- \* How formal or informal are your procedures? Information-sharing, correspondence, filing, record-keeping etc.?
- \* How central is this activity in your life? Is it an ongoing commitment or an on-again-off-again activity?
- \* Do women in your group get together over things other than work? What is the nature of the friendships in the group?
- \* How does your group handle conflict - over politics, philosophy, strategy etc.? How much effect do different backgrounds or life experiences have on the level of conflict or agreement in the group? Do you make an effort to reach out to women from all walks of life?

- Joan Riggs for the editorial collective

### ON THE POLICY FRONT

#### PORNOGRAPHY AND PROSTITUTION: WHAT ARE THE REAL ISSUES?

In June of 1983, the Minister of Justice established a special committee to study the problems associated with pornography and prostitution. By November, the Fraser Committee had produced an Issues paper aimed at stimulating discussion and soliciting response.

The paper begins with a discussion of elements common to both pornography and prostitution, but limited to legal considerations, specifically: (1) the implementation of federal/provincial jurisdiction for law reform, (2) the effect of the Charter of Rights on regulation, particularly the rights to liberty, equality and freedom of expression, (3) the degree to which law should enforce morality, and (4) the appropriateness of using criminal law to deal with these problems. Each of these areas are expanded upon in the body of the paper.

Pornography and prostitution are addressed in turn by a presentation of the "facts", (although next to none are actually presented), and a description of the existing laws. In addition, they discuss the "alleged" harm to society and to providers and consumers of sexual services. Special consideration is given to the role of children in these industries. At several points throughout the paper, questions are highlighted and public input to the committee is invited. Finally, three possible options for law reform with regard to pornography and prostitution are presented: criminalization, legalization and decriminalization.

One of the most striking features of the paper is the style in which it is written. The Committee takes great pains to appear non-committal. So many arguments are presented that one gets the impression that it is useless to try to grapple with these issues due to their complexity and the impossibility of achieving consensus. The result is a confused and vague paper which includes such ridiculously cautious statements as: "the consumers of pornography appear to be predominantly male", (pg. 12, emphasis ours), and "the gagging, beating, chaining, raping and even killing of women is a standard feature of much (pornography). The image of women that is conveyed, it said, is extremely negative..." (pg. 24, emphasis ours). This vagueness, combined with the use of words such as "participants" (falsely conveying the notion of true consent on the part of sex workers), masks the fact that the issue is about male violence towards women. The passivity of the language contributes in no small way to this deception as well as allowing the Committee to abdicate responsibility for the contents of the paper.

Not only are readers diverted from the real issues through the use of language, but also by some of the questions/issues put forth for discussion: eg. input on standards of self-regulation by pornographers (pg. 47), or on the constitutionality of licensing only female prostitutes, (p.72), or on the relationship between pornography/prostitution and the spread of venereal disease. (p.33, 57) etc. Significantly, they do not ask for any feedback from Canadian women on the impact of pornography and prostitution in our lives.

Of even greater concern are the suggestions that pornography may have some redeeming artistic, literary or educational value, or that the context or method of production could render a pornographic image or message more acceptable. Furthermore, the paper fails to put the issues of pornography and prostitution into the larger context of women's lives; for example it makes no connection between women's exploitation and occupational hazards as sex workers and that of women workers in general. The paper makes no link between society's overall devaluing of women's work, and the pornographic images which degrade and glorify violence against them. So complete is the schism, that the authors would like us to believe that pornography and prostitution are isolated and unique problems rather than an integral part of a mosaic of oppression towards women. The authors ignore the fact that pornography and prostitution are products of a misogynistic society, which in turn creates and serves to reinforce these same women-hating values. Any discussion of the power of pornography as "ideology" is quickly "quelled". (pg. 37)

The paper is preoccupied with the protection of individual rights and freedoms which, it



Is becoming increasingly clear, are mainly those of men. There is no mention of the right of women to human dignity and to freedom from exploitation, degradation, humiliation, violence and false representation. There is no recognition that pornography threatens the freedom of women to be ourselves. We are bound by the pornographers' stereotypes and gagged by their lies. In effect, we are being asked to specify what level of woman-hating is acceptable. It is significant that the fundamental issue of equality between men and women is never addressed. Rather, their references to "equality" are limited to topics such as: equal treatment of the prostitute and the customer before the law, or equal treatment of high class and street prostitutes.

There is no question that the committee has a difficult task in formulating recommendations on these problems. However, as a discussion paper, we think that "it misses the boat". The paper seems more concerned with the "public visibility" of pornography and prostitution rather than with the structural causes of the problems, the effects on women's lives, or the implications of these for society as a whole.

Overall, the Committee's concerns for the personal liberties (of men) seems stronger than the sense of social responsibility (to women). Women are being asked to justify the curtailing of male privileges by appealing to male dominated institutions (eg. courts, various levels of government). In light of "off-base" papers such as this, it becomes increasingly important for women to fight back: to formulate our own definitions of the problems, to determine where we want to put the emphasis, and to suggest law reforms, etc. which will reflect our concerns, rather than taking our direction from a male-stream analysis. Currently there are many individuals and women's groups involved in education, research and social action on these issues. These activities will help to break the silence that industries such as pornography and prostitution impose on us.

- Kathy O'Connell and Suzanne Pilon

For individuals and groups interested in submitting briefs and or making oral presentations to the Fraser Committee, here is the hearing schedule for April and May:

For general information, contact: 995-2569

To appear before the Committee, write:

Ms. Robin Jamieson  
Committee Secretary  
Box 48720  
Bentall Centre  
VANCOUVER, B.C.  
V7X 1A6  
(609) 687-8670

#### Date

Monday, April 2, 1984	Victoria (pornography only)
Tuesday, April 3, 1984	Vancouver (pornography only)
Wednesday, April 4,	
Thursday, April 5, 1984	Regina (panel)
Wednesday, April 4,	
Thursday, April 5, 1984	Winnipeg (panel)
Friday, April 6, 1984	National Capital Region (Ottawa, Hull)
Monday, May 7, 1984	St. John's and Charlottetown (panel)
Tuesday, May 8, 1984	Fredericton
Wednesday, May 9,	
Thursday, May 10, 1984	Halifax

#### THE NEW DIVORCE ACT:

The gift for the New Year from the Feds to us was proposed amendments to the Divorce Act and they're not all bad. At present 40% of all first marriages end in divorce and the majority of women end up paying dearly for that statistic: lost income, sole-support of children, reduced standard of living, and the list goes on. This bill will not dramatically alter this situation but it does attempt to move from the traditional emphasis confrontation to a no-fault approach. Below is a list of the major changes to the Divorce Act:

- \* Marriage breakdown will be the only basis for divorce, instead of the present fault-based grounds.
- \* A waiting period of one year will exist from the commencement of divorce proceedings to a divorce being decreed. This is reduced from the previous 3 to 5 years.
- \* To encourage reconciliation, spouses may still remain living together for a cumulative total of 90 days during the one year separation.
- \* Formal trials will be abandoned in favor of a simple and expeditious procedure in the case of uncontested divorces. Presently divorce is treated as a breach of contract under civil law, thus requiring the complainant to sue their partner for dissolution of marriage.
- \* Maintenance awards will take into consideration:
  - a) certain disadvantages and advantages as a result of the marriage and its breakdown, and insure that they be shared,
  - b) economic burden of childcare be
  - c) shared, provisions for a dependent spouse to reach self-sufficiency in a reasonable amount of time,
  - d) dependent spouse will not be subjected to economic hardship if self-sufficiency is impossible.



- \* Guidelines have been developed to protect the rights of children.
- \* The use of conciliation and mediation services is encouraged.
- \* Defences based upon collusion, condonation and connivance have been abolished.

#### What's Missing?

- \* Pension benefits remain the sole asset of the recipient. A woman who has indirectly contributed to her husband's pension plan will not be eligible to split the benefits on the dissolution of their marriage.
- \* No details on how maintenance orders will be monitored in order to insure payments.

For women the proposed amendments to the Act are not terrible. Yet, upon the release of the reforms, the grassroots women's movement heard two of the country's most important women's organizations, both claiming to represent its voice, release quite diverse statements.

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW), while expressing some concerns over the perennial problem of making men accountable for support payments to spouses and children, were supportive of the general direction of the Bill.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) represented by Doris Anderson, on the other hand, stated that the reform would hurt women. She claimed the change from a 3-5 year waiting period to the proposed 1 year period would leave women in a weaker bargaining position when negotiating for support.

Doris is in her own way essentially making the same point as CACSW but she is also treading on dangerous ground. First, let's look at some statistics. Of the cases of divorce involving children, women gain custody 85% of the time. Two-thirds of all maintenance orders are presently in default, and of those, half have never even seen a single payment. Half of all mother-led single parent families are living below the poverty line. Is this what Doris wants women to continue to negotiate for?

For women divorce is the end of two distinct relationships; one economic, the other emotional. I suspect that Doris's real concern is that women will be left economically vulnerable and without adequate support. But, she makes the mistake of finding the solution for that by jeopardizing the other relationship. It would be the wrong move if we return to pressuring individual women into fighting alone for what is rightfully theirs; a decent settlement for themselves and their children. Furthermore, let's not pretend that our power base as individual women has been altered so dramatically that we can negotiate equally and confidently for what is fairly ours.

By attaching a woman's economic survival to a man, we not only leave her isolated in negotiation but we also continue to perpetuate dependency on him. Let's face up to another fact. Men aren't faring all that well in today's economy either and as divorced women we'll get only a percentage of what they earn, if they earn anything. Doris is mistaken this time-economic independence from men is what we want, nothing less.

On the other hand, the CACSW didn't go far enough by recommending that an agency be established to monitor maintenance payments. Unless that agency is prepared to resort to coercive or punitive actions how do they expect to extract payments from men?

A woman's work as homemaker and motherworker deserves social recognition and economic reward. The creation, sustenance and maintenance of life is worthy of economic remuneration. We should recognize that and fight for it but not only within the parameters of marriage or divorce. Maintenance and support doesn't make enough of a statement about women's work and certainly does not ensure that we will have an adequate livelihood.

Let's recognize this Act for what it is: an admirable attempt at putting a more human, compassionate face on divorce proceedings.

It's limitations are in not guaranteeing women an adequate economic base. However we have more appropriate forums in which to fight for our economic rights.

- Joan Riggs

#### RESISTANCE

#### WYMN, PEACE AND RESISTANCE

On November 14 last, over 80 wymyn took part in a demonstration at the management building of Litton systems in Rexdale, on the western edge of Toronto. Litton Systems is manufacturing the guidance system for the Cruise missile, and November 14 was an all-wymyn's day of resistance organized by Toronto's Women's Action for Peace, as part of a week of resistance at Litton, coordinated by the Alliance for Non-Violent Action.

Litton Industries, based in the U.S., is high on the Fortune 500 list of corporations. While it makes a wide range of commercial products, including Sweda cash registers, microwave ovens, and Monroe calculators, technology and products for military use account for nearly one-third of its business. It is one of the largest contractors with the U.S. military, and its contracts also include dealings with repressive regimes in Central America. It has a long record of production cost



over-runs, estimated to have cost U.S. taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, it is among the worst violators of labour law, and it has been described as engaging in "flagrant, systematic and calculated lawlessness in its aggressively anti-union policy." All of this is by way of saying that Litton's connection with the Cruise missile is only the most current and visible illustration of its solid base in the military-industrial complex, involving not just complicity in the development of technology and weapons intended to threaten and destroy life, but also immorality and illegality in its business practices and relations with its workers.

Litton has been the focus of anti-militarist resistance for three years, since shortly after its role in Cruise production became known. Since 1980, Toronto's Cruise Missile Conversion Project has conducted educationals, regularly leafletted workers (some have quit their jobs), and developed connections with the labour movement in order to facilitate the possibility of unionizing among Litton workers and converting Litton to socially-useful production. In addition, there have been a number of small non-violent civil disobedience actions, and on November 11, 1982, over 150 people participated in a blockade of Litton's plant, supported by 1500 demonstrators. On that occasion, of the many affinity groups, just one was all womyn - in fact, that was one of the first activities of Women's Action for Peace, at the time a group of womyn from mainly Ottawa and Toronto. One year later, on November 14, there were several all-womyn affinity groups, with womyn coming from a number of local peace and social change groups in Montreal, Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, London, Guelph, and New York State.

The evening prior to the action, on Nov. 14 of last year, we gathered together in a downtown Toronto church, and there was great energy and excitement in so many womyn from so many different localities joining together. The next day began with a circle of spiritual strengthening, before we set out by rented bus for the Litton site. For myself, at that time, as on other occasions as the time of civil disobedience draws close, I was surging with a powerful mixture of feelings of fear, courage, apprehension, uncertainty, clearness, anxiety and joy - but with an over-riding sense of strength and safety in being part of a group - of womyn.

We were expected at Litton, having let both Litton's President and the police know beforehand. The reason for our visit was to make a citizen's arrest of Litton's President and executives. A number of offences under the Criminal Code of Canada, ranging from conspiracy to commit murder to possession of a dangerous weapon, are being committed at Litton, through its assistance with the production of the Cruise missile. Not surprisingly, the state does not apply its

laws to such corporate activity, in fact, it has subsidized Litton's work with our taxes. The police therefore have not carried out what we regard as their duty to enforce the law at Litton, and so we were there to attempt to do this for them.

As the bus approached Litton, we caught sight of the newly-constructed fence around Litton - twelve feet high topped with barbed wire around three sides, and a not too unpleasant looking five-foot high green fence along the front facing highway traffic. A dozen or so police, a few of them on horses, were also visible. Overall, it was a relatively calm scene.

As we gathered in a nearby parking lot, we learned that over 100 womyn, all in the name of Karen Silkwood, had just scaled the fence at Pine Gap, a CIA-operated U.S. military base in the centre of Australia, and a rush of strength and excitement and connectedness with these womyn flowed among us. (A few days later, I learned that my sister had been one of those womyn). We walked to the Litton site, with banners and songs, and by the time we arrived, police numbers (a great many of them womyn) had swelled so that they were lining both sides of the front fence - with several mounted police patrolling inside the fences. At this sight, my fear heightened, although there was not the slightest shift in my determination, and almost imperceptibly we all drew closer together, and found strength in each other.

We circled in front of the main entrance, facing Litton and the police, and each affinity group read its own statement about why we were there. Each of the statements was unique, and together they were remarkably moving. We spoke of the crimes that were being committed against life, or the patriarchal 'might is right' mentality that oppresses and exploits and bases human relations on violence and intimidation, and we spoke of our vision of a world of harmony and dignity for all life, where differences are rejoiced and where conflicts are a challenge for growth, not destruction. There were many tears as our semi-circle then moved into a spiral dance, and we circled around, singing and weaving among each other and, for 29 of us, gathering our strength to cross the fence and police lines.

Over the next hour, 29 of us, with the support - emotional and physical - of others in our affinity group, crossed over on to Litton property, and were arrested. This was not done without ingenuity and patience, as we were far outnumbered by police and undercover agents blocking our way, and literally throwing some of us back. As each of us encountered police, we told them why we were there, and asked that they assist us, or stand aside. The police were often rough, but we were prepared to resist non-violently and were peaceful as we were carried to the waiting paddy wagons.



Following the last arrest, we were taken to the local station, and processed separately. For some of us, this meant a long wait in the paddy wagon, and we were able to engage in friendly, personal and political conversation with our police guards. We were then carried into a tiny room and pat searched by two female police officers. One of the many light moments of the day was being sternly asked if I had on me not potential weapons or drugs, but crayons!

A number of us had decided, during our preparation for the action, to withhold our own names from the police, and instead give names of wymyn resisters from the past. This gesture of non-cooperation was a protest against the police decision to arrest us yet allow Litton to engage in unlawful activity. It was also a continuation of the test of our courage to resist authority. In a society where fear of authority, and unquestioning obedience and conformity is learned from the earliest age, one of the greatest values to me of civil disobedience is the unlearning of some of that fear, so that it becomes less of a paralyzing factor in our political lives. The loss of fear is a great release - deepening our political consciousness and our ability to act. The ability to act will become more a challenge as the state increases its repression of political activism - as it inevitably will if our work, in its many and varied forms, is at all effective. Crossing a fence in a relatively non-threatening situation is, after all, not of itself going to disarm the world or undo the patriarchy. Its value is in making a clear statement to ourselves and the world of who the real criminals are, whose interests the police are protecting and, most importantly, unlearning our fear and strengthening our commitment and our clearness.

Those of us who withheld our identity were placed in separate cells, along with the American wymyn, across the hallway and in sight of the rest of our sisters. There was great relief and spirit among us, when late in the afternoon, sandwiches arrived from our sisters outside and were smilingly delivered under cell bars by the attending police wymyn. The mood changed though when we learned that the American wymyn were being asked to pay bail in order to secure release. In an act of solidarity, wymyn who could otherwise have been freed refused to accept release until the bail condition was dropped, and after a couple of hours of negotiation and contradictory promises and threats from the police, the bail condition was dropped and the Americans were released, along with all of the other wymyn. It was midnight by then, and the remaining six of us were taken to the West End Detention Centre, to be brought before a justice the next day. Over the next 16 hours, until we were released, we were constant witnesses to, and victims of the intimidation, deceptions, mind games and arbitrariness that are a routine

and inevitable aspect of imprisonment. We saw how these assault not only the spirit and dignity of prisoners, but of those who work under such conditions.

A joint trial for the 29 of us - on charge of Failing to Leave Premises when Directed, under the Province's Trespass to Property Act, was held in Toronto during the week of 20 February. Expressions of support, or donations to cover action, travel and court expenses, would be welcomed by:

Women's Action for Peace  
c/o 436 Lisgar Street  
OTTAWA, Ontario K1R 5H1

#### ACTIVELY RESISTING PATRIARCHAL CUSTOMS

"I will not marry a man who will demand a dowry from me" was the vow that 100 young women in New Delhi, India cried recently. Reading of their strength caused my heart to jig with joy. "Another tale of resistance!" sang my heart, as it danced around the living room.

The dowry custom in India is an age-old, very graphic example of the way women are treated as objects, all over the world. If the parents of the new bride are unable to fulfill the dowry demands, it is not uncommon for the in-laws to kill the young woman, or torment her to suicide, thus enabling the groom to seek out a new bride ... and a new dowry.

Interestingly, the protesting women are actually supporting a law, passed in 1961, which prohibits dowry demands. (The law has been sadly ineffective; an estimated 200 women died last year in New Delhi alone, in dowry-related deaths). Even though they are within the law, these women are taking quite a risk. Because a woman in India, even today, has few options outside of marriage, the women are making a statement which could well have a major impact on the rest of their lives.

How can we in Canada, whose cultures and customs are so different, learn from these women?

The world today is controlled by rich white men who have built, and are doing a marvelous job of maintaining, institutions which extol their rule. Even those men who are not rich and white partake in the spoils of power, and uphold the traditions of oppression. Women, sadly, are not exempt from the power poison, and share with men the double-pointed stinging nettle of being both oppressor and oppressed, - simultaneously, and too often unwittingly.

We do, however, have a distinct advantage over men in this regard. This advantage lies in our recognition of the universality of our experience. Wherever we live, and whatever our circumstance, we all share the nauseating





awareness that there are men who have control over our lives - whether that awareness is dim or accute, whether the men are strangers or known to us. Because of this common bond, an act of resistance done by a few of us is immediately an act of resistance done by all of us.

The most powerful act we can undertake, and in my opinion absolutely the only one which has any hope of saving our dear planet, is any act that will deny the patriarchal troglodytes our co-operation in our own oppression. For some, this may mean doing civil disobedience. For others, it could mean refusing to marry or getting a divorce or refusing to sleep with any man who is not consciously looking at his own contribution to the global mess, or refusing to make the 'boss' a cup of coffee. Anything we do that enhances our sense of who we are and what we can do is one less stitch in the apron strings of our oppression. With every act of resistance, we challenge the very power-base that men have nurtured and caressed and pounded into mutancy, and which is coming too close to reaching its logical, armageddonous conclusion.

- Deb Ellis

#### FEMINIST PEACEWORK

#### BREAKING THROUGH THE SILENCE OF NUCLEAR DESPAIR

This is the story of two dispirited feminist graduate students facing an MSW thesis requirement with less than total enthusiasm. We had each begun separately to do research on a heavy woman's issue: one on abortion, the other on equal employment opportunities. We had become disheartened from continuing our work on these subjects, feeling powerless against the obstacles we faced.

During this time of mutual discouragement, we came upon an article, Working Through Despair (Joanna Macy, Women's Healthsharing, June, 1982), which mirrored our own desperation, as well as hope for a way of transforming it. Although the article dealt with the despair of fearing the world's end, it touched us by resonating with our own emotional state. As we read of this work, we drew an immense amount of energy from within ourselves -- for the first time in months.

In reference to the threat of nuclear annihilation, Macy writes:

"The greatest danger to human survival is not nuclear holocaust or destruction of the biosphere, but our massive denial of these threats, our blind immersion in business-as-usual, and our culture's taboo against expressions of despair ... What we urgently need is to break the taboo against expressions of despair for our world - to validate these feelings of rage and grief, realize their universality, and experience in them the mutual support that can empower us to act.

(Macy, Despair Work, 1982, p. 1)

We found this concept enormously exciting, even though it dealt with the most frightening and disempowering subject that we could imagine - the end of the world. It became obvious to us that we should join our energies to research and write about what Macy suggests is vital for human survival.

Macy describes how people have become psychically numb as a result of blocking their deep feelings about the threatened world we live in. She suggests that the process of acknowledging, expressing, and working through these powerful feelings, is a prerequisite to successful political change, as well as personal resilience and vitality. This process not only reveals our individual stories but also allows for an outpouring of grief or rage, as well as the image of a different world, a different self.

After reviewing related concepts in the literature on grief and burn-out, we chose to focus our research on the existence of despair among anti-nuclear activists, and on the question of whether those activists who were more emotionally expressive would be less likely to "burn out". Our interviews with local activists did show pervasive despair and a clear need for emotional release.

Our thesis confirmed our intellectual understanding of Macy's work, previous experience in co-counselling, and our feminist beliefs. But the other consequences of doing this research were far more important and deeply unsettling. The experience of our own waves of boredom, apathy and denial of feelings, propelled us along an individual path of nightmares, emotional outbursts, and visions of



apocalypse. These turbulent changes were baffling and frightening to us, despite all our research, but they forced us to face our deep caring for the earth and for our own lives. We began creating our own ways of taking action to prevent nuclear war and we no longer saw activists as "them".

One of the ways of creating political change that we now pursue together is the facilitation of workshops aimed at coming through despair into empowerment and action. We work with a variety of people, some self-described activists, and others who are still feeling paralysed. We see these workshops as one way of healing the patriarchal split between mind and body - between action and emotion. In the next issue of Breaking the Silence, we will present a sample workshop based on Macy's excellent book: Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age, (New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, 1983).

We would love to hear about people across the country doing similar "despair and empowerment" work. We can publish the names and addresses in the next issue of Breaking the Silence, allowing you to tap into the creative resources closest to you.

- Jane Keeler and Elizabeth Shein

Write to:  
P.O. Box 4206  
Station E  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K1S 2R7

#### AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

##### BORDERS AND WOMEN - FRONTERAS Y MUJERES

Along the 3,000-mile stretch of Mexican-U.S. border, young Mexican women make up the bulk of the workforce for the electronics manufacturing industry in 14 large border cities.

The Mexican side of the border is a no man's land for workers. Labour rights and industrial health and safety concerns have been neglected by politicians, unions, and church groups that consider the area to be well assimilated by the United States.

The women electronics workers are between 15 and 25 years old and come from the towns and countryside surrounding the border cities. They understand little of labour unions or Mexican labour laws, (which on paper are some of the best in the world), and have been brought up to play a submissive role in the male-dominated work place.

Sixty per cent of the industrial plants along the border manufacture electronic parts for radio, stereo, and T.V. Ninety-five per cent of these are owned by the States, and five

per cent by Japan.

On the Pacific Coast, the Zenith radio corporation operates two plants with 11,500 employees. Last November, 11,000 of these, 85 per cent women, staged a spontaneous walk-out. They demanded the release of an imprisoned fellow worker, a salary increase, and the firing of their union representative. It was the first time women staged a mass protest. They were not politically prepared nor organized for the walk-out, and did not have a lawyer.

How did it happen?

The story comes from Luisa Rivera, who works for a Mexican, non-governmental development agency, SEDEPAC. Rivera works with women electronic workers through a program called, Fronteras y Mujeres, (Borders and Women), which began three years ago to bring women together to talk about their work problems.

In the first meetings of the group, Rivera explained that the women would sit for hours saying nothing. Gradually they began to share their experiences and realize their situations were not isolated. When the women heard their complaints echoed by co-workers, they began to analyze and eventually criticize their working conditions.

The women first talked about their fear of being fired if they didn't work the extra hours demanded and submit to sexual harassment which ranged from verbal teasing to physical aggression.

It took another year before they began to discuss work-related health problems of headaches, monthly colds, and irritated skin.

Called the "merchants of death" by Mexican workers, Rivera said that trans-national corporations operating in Mexico don't offer health and safety information to their employees. Instead, they often deliberately mislead workers about the dangers of handling certain chemicals, to keep production going.

A tour of the electronics plants gives the deceptive impression that these workers have better working conditions than in the dark, dusty textile factories. The plants are clean, well-lit and the workers wear neat uniforms so that dust and dirt cannot harm the delicate electronic components.

But the work hazards can be far more dangerous than in textile industry. Women have suffered cancer, sterility, and given birth to deformed children after working with trichlorethylene, a chemical banned in the U.S., but still used for cleaning electronic parts in Mexican factories.

Workers inhale fumes from epoxy used to glue parts. Seventeen-year old girls whose eyesight deteriorates, end up wearing glasses and leaving their jobs after three to five



years of peering through microscopes.

But what angers Rivera the most is the stress induced by an incredibly high-pressure production pace. Statistics show that Mexican women produce 30 per cent more than American workers in the same jobs.

She related the story of a 21 year old woman who spent three months in a psychiatric hospital after exploding from the stress. In their groups, the women tell of awakening in the night with cries of "I won't make it."

"They use these women; they get them while they're young, so they can squeeze everything out of them like an orange," was Rivera's angry reaction.

Rivera was in Mexico City when news of the strike reached her. The workers had learned that workers in another electronics plant were earning 4,000 pesos more for the same work.

When a male worker returned from Mexico City where he had made the workers' protest known to the president of the union, he was taken from the factory and imprisoned. The women watched his arrest, and together left the factory demanding his release.

As a result of the strike, the union has called new elections to replace the local union rep who had ignored the women's demands. A 29 year old woman candidate is representing the women workers, and has been accepted by most of the male employees.

Rivera said the strike represents the first move by the women to oppose general conditions in the plant. Until November, they had worked at individual injustices, getting 18 women reinstated for firings without reason. Now the women are facing the factories for the first time, and they are winning.

- Joanne Walton

#### OPINION

#### WOMEN AND WORK: A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES

News Item -- "Women's Network Lauds Entrepreneur" -- January 25, 1984.

The headline caught my eye. The previous night, an Ottawa entrepreneur named Betty Giddens received the first annual Businesswoman's Achievement Award from the Businesswomen's Network. The 150 member association asked the general Ottawa business community to nominate local businesswomen for this award donated by The Citizen. Giddens made her mark in the personal consulting field. She started as a sales representative with a personnel firm in 1962, and rose through the ranks of partner and

vice-president to become president of her own firm in 1980.

Somehow the whole idea of the article, accompanied by a photo of the smiling winner in a designer outfit rubbed me the wrong way. Why? Shouldn't the Betty Giddens' of this world be applauded? Certainly, if the women we want to publicly acknowledge are those who are able to compete successfully in the world of commerce. However, many feminists, myself included, don't feel that we are making a great leap forward by battering pinholes in the iron gates of male-dominated senior management.

A small number of women are becoming bosses, executives or highly paid professionals. But this does nothing to change the daily reality of life for the majority of their sisters. Most women still do women's work at women's wages. One third of all employed women still do clerical work. One fifth of all employed women do service work, in places like restaurants, hospitals, child care centres and cleaning companies. In 1981 the average wage for men was \$15,000; the average wage for women was \$7,700.

To make it in the business world, Betty Giddens and her fellow female success stories cannot afford to think about paying women enough to support a family alone; or taking extra time to train less skilled women, when there are men who can already do the job; or providing company day care facilities.

What's good for business is cutting costs, making profits, and surrounding oneself with the best and brightest. Says Giddens "I try to surround myself with the best people I can find". I'm not sure who she's talking about, but I have a strong hunch she doesn't mean the woman who can make her welfare cheque go the farthest, or the woman who is the fastest meatpacker at the local supermarket, or the woman who types the fastest in the typing pool.

When are we going to present awards to the woman who is the founder of a food cooperative; or the first one on her block to get a waitressing job and then throw out an abusive husband; or the woman who turns down a well-paying job because she'd rather work in a collective earning less money? Not every woman has the luxury to choose what she does to pay the rent. But don't those of us who have the choice owe it to ourselves to work in situations we believe might lead to a better future for all?

The issue is a thorny one for many women who consider themselves, at some level, to be feminists. The work we do for money, often consumes the best part of our waking hours. We live in an advanced capitalist state and our choices of income-earning activities are usually limited by the kinds of skills we can sell on the market. When there is a choice, it often boils down to a bigger paycheque and



job security, versus creative work which supports and nurtures other women and men.

Not all of us can, or should, take the risk of being progressive and going without a paycheque at all. But surely, we all should at least be aware of the effect our work has on others, and recognize why we do it. And surely, all of us should question a "women's network" that is formed to help women succeed in business, and which singles out for recognition the woman who shows the most entrepreneurial skill in the money-making jungle.

- Ellen Adelberg

## REPORTS

### FOR HEALTH OR FOR PROFIT?

#### **A report on the Pharmaceutical Industry in the Third World and Canada.**

There can be no doubt that in the past 150 years the drug companies have provided some extremely useful products to help combat disease. However, the real reasons for the vast improvement in health in the western world have had more to do with improved living conditions, than our modern curative medical system. Proper sanitation, uncrowded housing and good nutrition, along with the implementation of basic public health measures, have been determining factors in halting the spread of infectious diseases.

The Third World is a case in point. In areas where diets, drinking water, sanitary facilities and housing are still unsatisfactory, 20th century medical advances are having little effect, not just due to the quality of medical care. Developing nations, where government regulations are minimal or non-existent, have become the natural prey of a pharmaceutical industry that puts business before health.

Many of the drug companies claim that they are besieged by excessively stringent regulations here in Canada and would monitor their own behaviour without government interference. However, even a cursory look at the quality, advertising and price of drugs sold in the Third World exposes these claims as being patently false. Nor is the picture in western countries as rosy as some advertisements and politicians would have us believe. For example:

- \* Inadequate regulations means that half the drugs now on the Canadian market have never passed modern tests regarding safety or effectiveness.
- \* Even good regulations here in Canada do not stop sub-standard drugs being dumped overseas.

- \* In Canada, drug companies have a monopoly over the information available to doctors on drugs and their possible side-effects.
- \* In the developing world, where misleading and wildly exaggerated advertising claims commonly occur, the companies' monopoly on information has even more hazardous results.
- \* Also, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is experiencing considerable pressure from the multi-national drug companies to amend the Patent Act, which has served the public well by giving us increased competition in the drug industry and some of the lowest drug prices in the world.
- \* In the developing world, overpricing, transfer pricing to evade taxes and price-fixing are all common practices.

Although both the pharmaceutical companies and the medical profession are predominantly male domains, women are the main consumers of pharmaceutical products and the main users of the health care system. Doctors play an important role in the success of any new drug on the market, and as such, they have a lot of attention lavished on them by the pharmaceutical industry. Medical schools and drug company advertising, both tend to reinforce the attitudes of doctors towards the chemical "fix", and in particular towards women as those who need it most. Women, who traditionally had been responsible for nursing the sick and acting as midwives, have found themselves relegated to a passive role in the health care system. As consumers, women's lack of control is exemplified by the problem of tranquilizer addiction. Women are turning to drugs as the only socially accepted method of coping with their lack of power.

In the Third World, women are being used as guinea pigs to test contraceptives. They have become the victims of policies that subordinate women's health to the policies of population control. The use of Depo Provera and the Dalkon Shield, both banned in the West, illustrates this point.

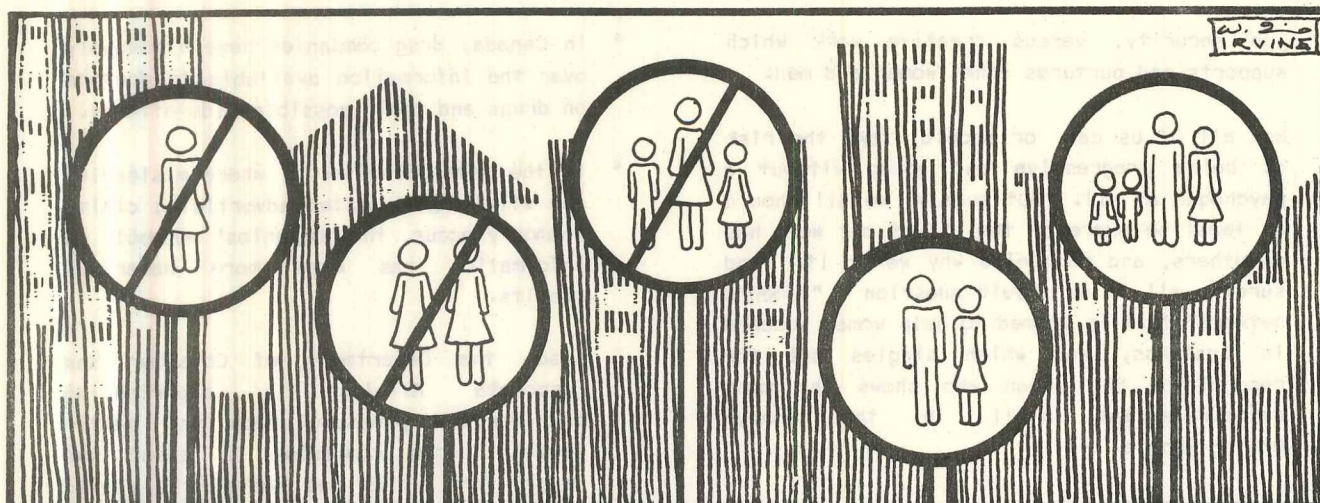
If you are interested in more information about the pharmaceutical industry and its influence on the health care system in Canada and in the Third World, please get in touch with World Inter-Action, Ottawa, 238-4659.

We have just produced an innovative resource kit in cooperation with Inter Pares. Also we are currently working with The Women's Health Interaction network organizing workshops and sharing information on related issues.

### WOMEN AND HOUSING

#### **A report on the situation in Ottawa.**





Housing in Ottawa-Carleton: A Woman's Issue, a report released in November of 1983 by the Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa, documents the alarming need for suitable, affordable accommodation for low and moderate income women. The study was initiated as a result of the great difficulty many of the agency's clients - women in conflict with the law - were encountering in finding a place to live. The report was written by Debbie Barton, a researcher with the Elizabeth Fry Society.

One of the most shocking findings of the seventy-five page study was the fact that Interval House, the only refuge for battered women in Ottawa, turned away 1,070 women and children in 1982 due to lack of space. Interviews with representatives of the thirteen other special residential facilities for women further documents the difficulties of their clients in finding either subsidized or private market housing that is affordable and liveable.

As well as providing extensive national, provincial and local statistics that show the need of low-income women for better housing, the report makes a number of recommendations to all levels of government on ways to improve the situation. It urges the federal and provincial governments to increase the stock of publicly-owned housing, fund new and existing forms of housing which meet women's needs - such as women's housing cooperatives, and to increase social assistance payments. At the local level, the report calls for the establishment of an emergency hostel in Ottawa - noting that none currently exist. It says that funds must be provided for three more shelters for battered women and their children, and to assist women's organizations establish alternative housing for women with special needs.

Response to the report has been varied. Stories based on the report by the local media have helped to publicize the findings and recommendations. Although it has been sent to elected representatives and officials at all levels of government, only local

bureaucrats and politicians have shown support. In his response to the report, the federal Minister responsible for housing, Romeo Leblanc, did not indicate that he is planning any major initiatives to deal with the housing problems of Canadian women. Claude Bennett, the provincial Minister responsible for housing, made no response at all to the report.

Perhaps the most heartening result of the report is the plan to establish a task force composed of local members of the community which will pursue some of the report's recommendations. As well, the Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton intends to host a one-day workshop on women and housing in the near future. Rod Manchee, spokesperson for the Council, describes the planned workshop as a result of the heightened interest on the part of community groups and social service agencies brought about by the publication of Barton's report.

Housing in Ottawa-Carleton: A Woman's Issue provides groups lobbying for improved housing for women with much ammunition. If community activists and lobbyists are successful in pressuring government to institute its recommendations, the quality of life for many of Ottawa's homeless and poorly-housed women may well be significantly improved.

Copies of the report can be obtained from:

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Ottawa  
195A Bank Street  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K2P 1W7  
Tel.: 238-1171

- Ellen Adelberg

#### AS THINGS STAND

**A report from the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSOW).**

This report, published in 1983, reviews selected recommendations made by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women during its



first ten years to see how closely women have come to our goal of full social equality.

For most of the topics covered in the report, a description of the situation that lead to the CACSW's recommendations is followed by an account of the major changes that have occurred. Canadian references are included on each topic.

The CACSW is a federally-funded and federally appointed body and thus addresses its recommendations to the federal level. The issues discussed in the report are only those which the CACSW has dealt with over the past decade.

In some areas, changes in the status of women over the past ten years have been dramatic and unparalleled. In others, the changes have not been significant and for still others, women's situation has actually deteriorated.

What follows is a more detailed look at the issues:

- \* Women in the Labour Force. Women have not been able to make any impressive gains in this area, except for their massive influx into the labour market itself. Some of the most disturbing aspects of female employment remain unchanged. Women are still concentrated in the same ghettos. Part time workers and immigrant women continue to experience precarious terms of employment although in some areas, immigrant women are being granted their landed status. Women face dangers from occupational hazards, such as video display terminals.

Unfortunately, because union rights have been so drastically eroded, women's increased participation in unions does not represent any real gain for women. Hopefully though, there is some potential for women to benefit here in the long term.

- \* Employment Benefits and Social Welfare. Women's overall gains in this area have been minimal. For example, while women have greater access to unemployment insurance, the benefit ceiling has been lowered from 66.6 percent to 60.0 percent of former earnings. Parental benefits increased modestly. Lack of adequate day care continues to be a problem. In the Canadian day care system, the number of available supervised spaces covers less than ten percent of the actual need.

Although some improvements have been made in the area of pensions for women, notably in the splitting of tax credits between divorcing couples, the majority of elderly women continue to live in abysmal poverty.

- \* Families. Within the context of the family, women have seen some improvement

in their condition. All provinces have reformed their family laws towards an equalizing of the responsibilities and rights of spouses. Upon divorce, women are also ensured of a more equitable settlement and a recognition of the value of the unpaid labour they have contributed to the family.

Furthermore, the battering of women in their homes has been brought into public awareness, and some measures have been taken to confront this type of violence against women.

- \* Legal Status. Women can expect to benefit from their inclusion in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Unfortunately, however, the sex equality provision will not come into effect until 1985, and can be overruled by an Act of Parliament for five year periods! Legislation concerning sexual offences has improved for women and changes in the citizenship and passport legislation have equalized the position of women vis-a-vis men.

- \* Health. Women have not made any real gains in this domain and, in fact, with the decreased number of abortion committees operating in hospitals, women's access to safe, legal abortion has been severely restricted. Ironically, this comes at a time when government is reducing its commitment to birth planning education.

- \* Volunteer Work. No notable changes in this area.

- \* Sports. Sex inequality in the field of athletics continues to be the norm, but a Women's Programme in Fitness and Amateur Sport has been established, as well as a voluntary organization, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport. Both of these programmes will work to improve women's situation here.

The overall assessment by As Things Stand is a positive affirmation of women's gains in the past decade. On the whole, this report concludes that women have made important gains especially in the legal area. Women are seen to be in a "take-off" position which is greatly improved by the development of a legal framework which encourages sex equality.

The current economic crisis is the most threatening obstacle to improvements in women's condition, and the current tendency is for women to be pushed backwards. Therefore, much work remains to be done, and As Things Stand calls upon women to find creative solutions to our problems and for society as a whole to rise to the challenge of making sex equality a reality.

- Alicia Schreder



To contact Action Day Care, or to receive their fine newsletter, write:

Action Day Care  
345 Adelaide St. W., Suite 600  
TORONTO, Ontario M5W 1R5

The FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONAL MANUAL, published by the Saskatchewan Regional Office of Secretary of State is designed as a guidebook for feminist groups who want to examine the effectiveness of their organization.

The authors acknowledge the limitations of traditional evaluation models and offer alternative methods to evaluate feminist organizations. As part of the book they include some useful guidelines that feminist organizations traditionally follow. This book is thorough, concise, and free. It is presently out of stock but if you would like to order one, call your regional Secretary of State Office and request that they print copies for distribution.

Tune in to **Off the Pedestal** at 93.1 FM every second Tuesday night at 7 p.m.

**Off the Pedestal** is produced by a collective of women for CKCU (Radio Carleton) and bears the distinction of being Ottawa's only feminist program on the broadcast media.

The show gives interested women a chance to develop radio skills while exploring a wide range of political, socio-economic and cultural issues pertaining to women.

Recent programs have focused on the struggles of Nicaraguan women, women's spirituality, the working conditions of women in the 3rd World High Tech Industries and the recent contempt-of-court citations against two Ontario women.

**Off the Pedestal** recognizes that the mainstream media provides limited and distorted reporting of important women's issues and aims to give Ottawa women an alternative.

Please support us by tuning into the show and giving us your feedback and suggestions for improvement.

**Off the Pedestal** will be aired on the following dates:

March	6
March	20
April	3
April	17
May	1
May	15
May	29

and every second Tuesday thereafter. Mark these dates on your calendar! For more information call: Deb Chapman at 234-7693, Ruth Scher at 235-7300, Sherry Galey at 232-6042.

Maternity and Child Care Leave in Canada is a booklet that describes current legislation on all forms of child care leave, including paternity and adoption leave. Free from the Women's Bureau, Labour Canada. Write:

Labour Canada, Publications  
Distributions Centre  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K1A 0T2

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday March 3

#### FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S CULTURE IN OTTAWA

As a preparation for International Women's Week, Carleton University's Institute of Canadian Studies (Women's Program area) is sponsoring a day-long series of workshops on "Feminism and Women's Culture in Ottawa". The aim of the workshops is the sharing, exploration and celebration of our work as women -- in the areas of poetry and prose writing, painting and the visual arts, crafts (quilting, pottery, weaving) and theatre. We want to begin building a network of Ottawa women working in the cultural area and interested in exploring the relation of feminism to their creative work. So if you write, draw, paint, act, take photographs etc., and see those activities as part of your growth as a woman, you are invited to come.

The workshops will take place in Carleton's Arts Tower on Saturday March 3 and will be preceded by an evening of celebration (feminist poetry and song, food and drink) at Carleton's Faculty Club on Friday, March 2. A more detailed mailing will soon be available -- call the Institute of Canadian Studies at 231-4477

Tuesday, March 6, 7 p.m.

Ottawa area NDP Women's Committee is hosting a forum for women and women's groups to present NDP candidates with their views on upcoming priority issues for the next federal election. Ottawa Public Library, 150 Metcalfe Street. For more information, call Bridget Hays, 234-9040.

Tuesday, March 13, 8 p.m.

General meeting at Gays of Ottawa Centre to discuss a brief to be submitted to the federal commission on pornography and prostitution. Open to lesbians and gay men. 175 Lisgar Street.

Monday, March 19, 8 p.m.

A meeting for lesbians and gay men in business and the professions. 175 Lisgar Street.



March 19 to 25:

Week of Solidarity with the people of El Salvador. For more information contact Don at 995-6289 or 237-5273.

Monday, March 26, 8 p.m.

Marion Foster, author of A Not So Gay World, will be speaking at the GO Centre, 175 Lisgar Street.

Monday, March 26

Carol P. Christ, author of two books on women's spirituality will give a public lecture entitled **Finitude: Death and Reverence for Life.**

Tuesday, March 27

Carlo P. Christ will present a slide-tape show entitled **Genesis/Genocide: Women for Peace** in the afternoon and a slide show in the evening **In Search of Her: Visions of the Goddess.** Please call Mary May for more information at: 237-3495.

Saturday, May 26, 6 p.m.

Planned Parenthood of Ottawa will be celebrating its 20th anniversary with a dinner at the Skyline Hotel. Lucie Pépin, president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, will be addressing the role of family planning in society. Tickets may be obtained at the Planned Parenthood office. Call 230-7797 for more information.

#### CONFERENCES

From March 16 to March 19, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) will hold their annual meeting at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa on the theme **WOMEN MOBILIZING FOR POWER.** Some of the workshop topics are: action to combat war, action against unemployment, pornography, health care and education. A special fee for Ottawa students, seniors and unemployed of \$10 a day is available. To register write to:

NAC  
Suite 306  
40 St. Clair Ave. E.  
TORONTO, Ontario  
M4T 1M9  
(416) 922-3246

**WOMEN: IMAGES, ROLE-MODELS** is the theme for the next Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) conference to be held on November 9, 10 and 11 in Montreal. The focus will be on examining the way images of women are reflected within a patriarchal society and how this affects women. For more information contact:

Isabelle Lasvegnas-Grémy  
Département de Sociologie  
Université du Québec  
MONTREAL, Québec  
H3C 3P8

#### BITS AND PIECES

##### SURVEY OF PORNOGRAPHY IN OTTAWA

Over the summer, Ottawa Women Fight Pornography asked its members and supporters to survey their local stores in order to determine the type of pornography available in Ottawa. The results are in. In Ottawa, 68 stores were surveyed and 91% were found to carry pornography. This in itself is not particularly surprising since the women set out to find the stores that did sell pornography. However, 28% of the stores stocked between one and 14 different titles, usually the most common ones such as Playboy, Penthouse, Hustler, Cheri, Forum, Variations or High Society. A full 56% of the stores carried more than 15 different titles and these tended to be the most violent and degrading. Several magazines dealt entirely with bondage or incest. Common titles included: Whipped to Cum, Peachfuzz Pussies, Playthings, Spikes, Gangbang, Spanker's Delight, Snap, Cherry Poppers, Shaved Cunts and Babyface.

In 50% of the stores the pornography was not placed higher than 1.5 metres (or four feet) as the new bylaw decrees. And in 75% of the cases the porn was openly displayed in a manner that would attract the customer's eye. The majority of the culprits seem to be smoke shops and variety stores (68% of those surveyed). However, watch out for those corner groceries and chain stores, they have pornography too. If these results disturb you, get in touch with Ottawa Women Fight Pornography which is organizing action in response to these findings:

P.O. Box 4867, Station E  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K1S 5J1  
Contact: Diane Kinnon (Days 230-7797)

- Sherry Galey

Did you know that: between 1979 and 1983, only 44 of 1,100 businesses contacted by the federal government agreed to develop affirmative action programs?

- \* Of 700 Ontario employers contacted by the provincial government, only 228 have affirmative action programs?
- \* At the Ottawa Board of Education: only one of 16 school superintendents and assistant superintendents is female?
- \* One of 21 high school principals and 8 of 54 elementary school principals are women?
- \* Eighty-eight percent of those in the Ontario public service earning under \$9,000 a year are women, while women make



up only 11% of those earning over \$40,000 a year?

- (Source: The Ottawa Citizen)

#### UPDATE

The booklet entitled Fresh Start, a resource for abused women, is no longer available from the Peterborough YWCA as indicated in the last issue of Breaking the Silence. But you can get it for \$2.00 from the YWCA of Canada by writing:

Resource Centre  
YWCA of Canada  
1901 Yonge Street  
TORONTO, Ontario M4S 2Z5

#### RANTS AND RAVES

##### A SOCIAL COMMENTARY? "BLAME IT ON RIO"

This movie is offensive and degrading on so many levels, it is difficult to know where to begin. It is a frightening film, another round in the escalating war on women. "Blame it on Rio" tries to tell us that:

- \* Little girls actively seduce old men.
- \* It is O.K. for old men to fuck little girls.
- \* It is also O.K. for fathers (thinly disguised as father-substitutes) to fuck their daughters.
- \* Fucking your daughter will lead to improved family relations, happy marriages, and well-adjusted teenage sexuality.

Twenty-five percent of the girls who watch this movie will be victims of sexual assault by the time they're 18. What kind of message about sexual assault and incest is being conveyed to them?

"Blame it on Rio" is a cruel exploitation of every male myth justifying fucking girl children by adult men in caregiving positions. It is an ugly, dangerous, hateful, exploitative movie. Let's do something about it!

- Alma Estable

##### THUMBS DOWN TO:

- \* Barbara Amiel, editor of the Toronto Sun, who revealed that, "My basic philosophy in life is to nuke everything." Truly words to live by.
- \* Ontario Minister of Education Bette Stephenson who remarked that, "The difference between women moving and women being stuck in certain types of jobs can only be eliminated by women themselves."

It's reassuring to know our government representatives have got a handle on the real problems...

- \* In a similar vein, Barbara Amiel said in a recent television interview, "I think this is the best of all possible times to be a woman. You've got everything going for you... This is definitely a time when there are absolutely no restrictions on a woman getting anywhere and I get... extremely irritated when (women) today think that there are... For most women today, you can be almost anything... The corridors of power are open to us." Barbara, Bette. Bette, Barbara.

The courts have long been recognized by feminists as bastions of sexism and racism. A few recent examples:

- \* In London, England, Criminal Court Judge Brian Gibbens expressed compassion for a 35 year old man he was convicting, stating, "It strikes me as being one of the kinds of accidents that could almost happen to anyone." The crime? Sexual intercourse with a seven year old girl.
- \* In Michigan, a 44 year old white man was convicted of manslaughter in the axing death of his wife. Initially charged with murder, the judge reduced the charge upon learning that the woman's partner in infidelity had been a black man.

##### KUDOS TO:

- \* The Women of Greenham Common who, citing contempt for the patriarchal establishment, turned down a nomination for a Nobel Peace Prize. This from the same patriarchy which is working hard to initiate global annihilation and which only recently threatened to begin shooting at Greenham Women.
- \* Secretary of State, who have increased funding for the Women's Program from \$3.4 million to \$10.3 million for 1984-85. In addition, endowment grants of \$500,000 each have been earmarked for creating five chairs of Women's Studies in five Canadian universities over the next five years. If you have a project you would like funded or expanded now is the time to apply!
- \* A group of nurses and X-ray technicians employed by Canadian National Railways who recently won an equal pay for work of equal value suit against the company. Congratulations!
- \* The Ontario Federation of Labour for speaking out in favor of legislating mandatory affirmative action, equal pay for work of equal value and other measures designed to improve women's position in the paid work force. The OFL has also made it official policy that women are guaranteed a voice in the federation's



leadership, although the proposed amendment will still mean only 6 women on an executive body of 23. Definitely a step in the right direction, though.

Know of anyone you'd like to receive a pat on the back or a rap on the knuckles that might be of interest to our readers? Send contributions to "Rants and Raves", c/o the Breaking the Silence mailing address. (I can't wait for the day when we have more raves to choose from than rants!)

- Suzanne Pilon

**HELP**

**A LABOUR CODE FOR WOMEN**

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women has organized a postcard campaign to protest the fact that women's needs were totally ignored in the proposed and amended Labour Code. The demands that we are asking for are not new but the government has again chosen to ignore our requests. Clip out the card below and send to André Ouellet to voice your anger at being overlooked again!

**THE SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTRE**

This collectively-based feminist group (see last issue of Breaking the Silence) needs funds. The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton has refused our application for funding, and seed money is not forthcoming.

If you can help, please make donations payable to:

Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC)  
P.O. Box 441  
Station E  
OTTAWA, Ontario K1S 5B4

All donations are tax deductible.

For information on our activities, call 234-2266.

**WOMEN'S ACTION FOR PEACE**

Women's Action for Peace is a non-profit, non-hierarchical, feminist peace organization. These women are making the connections between violence and the various types of oppression faced by women in our everyday lives. This oppression is an expression of the same mentality that exploits and oppresses the Third World, that destroys our planet through the poison of pollution and the ravages of war. They believe that women have not only a very special role to play in the search for a saner world, but the key role. W.A.P. is dedicated to exploring and acting upon this role, and encourages other women to be able to see the strength and joy to be found in women working together for a world of peace, justice and dignity for all.

W.A.P. needs to raise money for upcoming activities. Although they could put a lot of money, time and energy into a benefit, they prefer to put their resources into political action. So they ask you to pretend you are at a benefit for W.A.P., and you are about to drop your donation into the money jar, only instead of dropping it into a jar, drop it into an envelope, and send it to:

Women's Action for Peace  
c/o 152 First Ave.  
Apt. 11  
OTTAWA, Ontario  
K1S 2G4

Dear Mr. Ouellet;

I insist that the federal government move to introduce the following changes to the Canada Labour Code:

1. **EQUAL WAGE RATES AND PROPORTIONAL BENEFITS FOR PART-TIME WORKERS.**
2. **MORE FREQUENT REST PERIODS FOR EMPLOYEES WORKING ON VIDEO DISPLAY TERMINALS.**

75% of part-time workers are women and the majority of workers using V.D.T.'s are also women. Canadian women want action **now**.

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

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



Even a few dollars will be deeply appreciated. If you wish to become involved in Women's Action for Peace, you may be interested in:

- \* working on the war toys campaign
- \* working on feminism and non-violence magazine
- \* participating in regular discussion groups on feminism and non-violence
- \* being part of a street theatre troupe
- \* non-violence preparation and education
- \* helping to set up the Web, a centre for feminism and non-violence.
- \* learning more about civil disobedience
- \* exploring a non-violent approach to ... anything.

### 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 a period of time. However, beginning with last issue, Fall 1983, we have instituted 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 FOR ANY OCCASIONS- 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.

The symbol below appears on the cards and were designed by Suzanne Pilon.





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):

**Multiple Copies:**

Individual rate (\$4.00) \_\_\_\_\_

Number desired: \_\_\_\_\_

Institutional rate (\$10.00) \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose: \_\_\_\_\_

Supporter rate (\$10.00 or more) \_\_\_\_\_

\$0.25 per copy (over 5) X 4 \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to subscribe,  
but finances are tight.

☐

eg. 10 copies = \$10.00

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