

Breaking the Silence

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

Vol. 2 No. 4

Spring/Summer 1984



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FEATURE

inside
feminist
organizations
part 1

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FROM THE COLLECTIVE

Come one, come all to the Breaking the Silence summer bash! This issue is out and the next is about to begin. The collective needs a party time to recharge our batteries, nourish our spirits and just relax among other women. We would be very happy if you could join us. We're anxious to hear what you think of this publication after two years and glean ideas for the future. For those of you who would like to write for Breaking the Silence, or join the collective, this is a golden opportunity for you to get involved.

The party will be held the evening of Saturday, July 14.

For more information on the party and for the location, please call the Carleton Women's Centre at 231-3779.

Watch for the next issue of Breaking the Silence. You may not recognize us. For some time, we have recognized the limitations of our present format and look. We're now working towards making Breaking the Silence more visually appealing and accessible. The next issue will be a more manageable size, have more readable type and include more graphics. We're always on the lookout for women with skills in graphic design or illustration to help us. We would very much welcome your input.

And on the subject of Input, please keep it coming! We thank you for sending articles, book reviews and items to Breaking the Silence. We encourage you to send us your response to our articles so that we can foster a lively dialogue in our letters column. The deadline for all contributions to the next issue is July 10.



**WHY DID YOU PAY SO LITTLE FOR THIS COPY OF
BREAKING THE SILENCE?**

No, it is not because we are a fully subsidized publication, a crown corporation, or supported by any institution. It is because we are committed to making BTS available to women at a very affordable price, and contribute overwhelming amounts of volunteer labour, equipment, and resources to make this possible. Our funding is very limited, sporadic, sometimes unreliable. We receive some donations "in kind" for mailing, printing, but even taking these into account, every issue actually costs \$1.25 to put out.

People who are fortunate enough to live in the Ottawa region can buy BTS at the Women's Bookstore, at Octopus Books, at the Women's Centre of Carleton University, for 50 cents a copy. Those of you who receive mailed subscriptions pay slightly more, because of the cost of stamps and envelopes. Nevertheless, none of you pays very much, and we would like to keep it that way. Therefore, we are suggesting that those women/other people who can afford to contribute a bit more, please do not hesitate to do so.

If you like what you read here:

- If it makes you think, laugh, cry, or get mad;
- If you have ever used any of the information in your work, your personal life;
- If you have ever sent a copy to your sister, lover, mother, daughter;
- please support us now with a bit more money.

We need it, if we are to keep our overall price low enough and still be able to offer it free to women who can't afford to pay at this time.

In the next few months, we will be starting our first-ever subscription drive. Please help us make it a success. Send a donation and subscribe for yourself and for a friend, if you can. We need you.

In sisterhood, the (impooverished but ever hopeful) collective.

FOCUS ON THE REGION

THESE ARE OUR CHILDREN: SERVICE CUTBACKS AT THE CHILDREN'S AID

It was an unusual meeting. An information picket was mounted outside the Skyline Hotel, with community and union members protesting recently announced cutbacks in service; inside, there was widespread concern and dissatisfaction being voiced by people who had seldom spoken out before, including foster parents, social and childcare workers, clients, and members of the community at large. It was the Annual General Meeting of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa-Carleton, held on March 27, 1984.

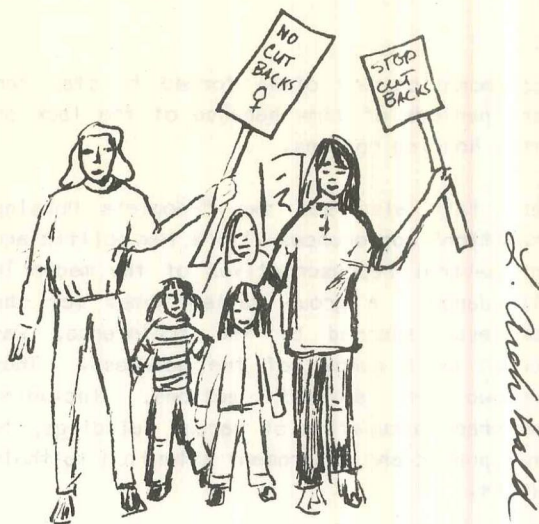
Why all the furor? The main concern was the 1984 Service Plan, presented by the Board of the CAS in response to provincial government budgetary restraints. This document detailed extensive reduction in the services the Children's Aid would in future provide to its clients. Preventive services were especially hard hit. Programs such as play therapy, foster parents' support, family life education, and community outreach were eliminated, and many others were greatly reduced.

What does this mean for women? Those who are most affected include:

- *Mothers, who provide 24-hour care for children;
- Natural mothers often may rely on preventive and parent assistance programs to enable them to keep their children at home, and the support of a women's discussion group, or a way of "sharing the parenting" of an adolescent may make all the difference;
- Foster mothers also require assistance and advocacy within the agency, as well as training and support. The children they care for are often involved in services such as play therapy;
- All mothers will have to face the distress experienced by their children when such services are cut, with no special support from the agency, since the foster parents' support worker position has been eliminated.

*Protection workers at the agency will also experience these cutbacks directly; as there is less preventive work done, the need for protection work increases. These workers will inevitably be facing greatly expanded caseloads in the future, at a time when they are already overloaded.

*Our community as a whole will suffer. We must never forget that these are our children. We are the mothers, the foster



mothers, the adolescents, the workers, who are affected by these draconian measures.

Why was this allowed to happen? The Annual General Meeting revealed a general lack of confidence by members of the Children's Aid Society in the Board's plan, and some serious communication problems between Agency management and the community it is supposed to serve.

The Board will, it is hoped, be able to review the proposed plan, as requested by the membership, and make some changes before it is too late.

However, whenever resources appear to be limited, some sort of juggling act seems inevitable. It becomes a question of who, what will be cut, or how inevitable cuts will be implemented; the question of why resources are limited is never directly addressed. The Government of Ontario has more than enough money to adequately fund essential social services to the children of this province. They also have the financial and managerial expertise to devise ways of making money readily available when necessary. Therefore, we must begin to question this government's priorities and values; to ask who it protects, who it exploits, and who it ignores. Perhaps those of us who are genuinely concerned with services to children and women in our community need to begin to work - not only as we usually do, to figure out how best to serve our clients within increasingly limited budgets, but also towards unseating this arrogant and self-serving Tory administration.

- Alma Estable

HOUSING FOR WOMEN IN OTTAWA-CARLETON: THE CRISIS LINGERS ON

The lack of housing and emergency shelters for women in Ottawa became an embarrassing issue for the government last fall. A report by Debbie Barton, researcher for the Elizabeth Fry Society, documented the lack of emergency shelters and permanent housing facilities for women in the area. Furthermore, existing facilities are overburdened and staff have been forced to turn people away. The situation is made worse by the fact that women in emergency

accommodation are often forced to stay for long periods of time because of the lack of other housing options.

Last fall also saw two "People's Housing Coalition" conferences with a few politicians and several representatives of the media in attendance. A group called Homes for the Homeless, spurred by the conference, was formed by a number of the homeless. They engaged in several actions, including temporary occupation of vacant buildings, to call public and government attention to their plight.

Regional Government's Reaction

Because of media attention and growing public pressure, the government was forced to respond. The regional government asked the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa to establish a temporary shelter for single women. In addition, cots were set up in the basement of St. Brigid's Church for up to 100 people, an abandoned police station was put into use as a family shelter, and Homes for the Homeless were permitted to use two houses on a temporary basis.

The regional government's response, however, was sorely inadequate. In many ways, the so-called "solutions" to the housing problem seemed to be set up to fail. As a result of insufficient funding, the women's emergency shelter in All Saints Anglican Church was forced to operate all winter in a church hall, with space for only 9 women, no paid coordinator, and staff who were underpaid and often inexperienced. Insufficient staffing created unsafe working conditions, and a number of staff quit in fear for their safety.

Those who undertook to establish shelters to respond to the problem were expected to manage for themselves, despite their relative inexperience. The region provided little or no consultation or resources to assist in their efforts. Once again the voluntary sector had to assume responsibility for problems the government failed to recognize as a priority.

Now that the furor has died away, these facilities have been forced to deal with a series of new crises. The women's emergency shelter funding was to end at the end of April, and was then extended for one month to the end of May. Summer is arriving and the female residents could presumably be expected to resort once again to their previous options - the streets, the jails, prostitution, or dependence on relationships with men which were often abusive or destructive. The region eventually asked the provincial government to extend the women's shelter's funding on a month to month basis while the need remains. Eighty percent of the shelter's funding has come from the provincial government. Homes for the Homeless is homeless again; they were evicted

at the beginning of May, ironically because the homes are to be demolished. In addition, the future of the St. Brigid's hostel is tenuous.

What Needs To Be Done?

We must now ask why the region has failed to seriously address this issue and why they persist in viewing this problem as a "temporary crisis". Regional officials are ignoring the evidence which shows that the housing crisis for women is in fact a structural problem which must be dealt with on a permanent basis. Could their tendency to ignore the problem have anything to do with the fact that as a traditionally powerless and invisible group, homeless people have lacked political clout?

The situation remains unresolved and the numbers of homeless, which always increases in the summer, can be expected to mushroom this year, as rooming houses continue to fall victim to the recent renovation boom. As was pointed out in Barton's housing report, the number of rooming houses in Ottawa-Carleton has decreased by 60% since 1977.

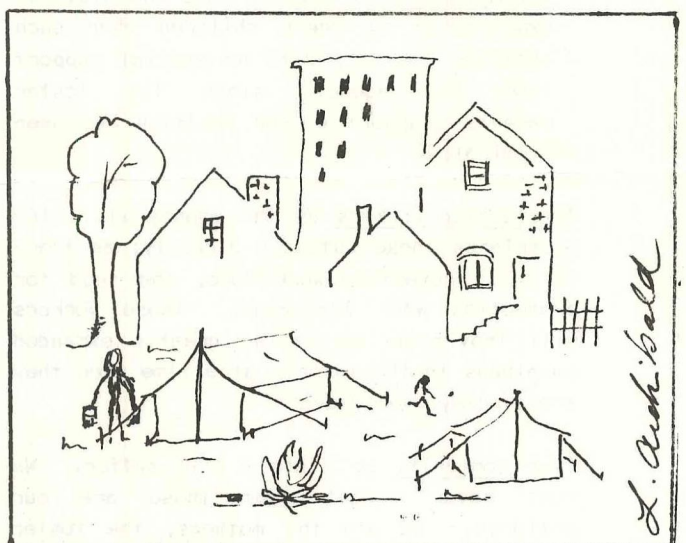
Women deserve to be assured of adequate, ongoing facilities to meet their emergency and long-term housing needs. It is important that the response fit within a comprehensive framework to address the broader issue of housing for low-income women in Ottawa. We urge people to get involved in any activities which may be planned around this and related issues this summer. We must make this issue once again a public issue and force the government to respond adequately.

- Carol Whitehead
- Cheryl Boon

Letters of concern may be written to:

Arthur Pope, Commissioner of Social Services
Regional Government of Ottawa-Carleton
495 Richmond Road, Ottawa, K2A 0G3

Interested individuals may also contact Michelle Lachance at OCLISS for information on events being planned.



YOUR QUARTERLY CHUCKLE

OH BOY!

March 24, 1984

9:30 a.m.; phone rings and wakes me up.

♀ Hello?

♂ Hello.

♀ Yes?

♂ Who is this?

♀ Who do you want to speak to?

♂ Well, who am I speaking to? (insistent)

♀ Who are you?

♂ Is this the number for International Woman's Week?

♀ (Coldly) It was. The Week is over.

♂ So who am I speaking to now? (bothered)

♀ Would you please identify yourself.

♂ Sure, I'm Joe Blow from the _____
_____ (Federal Dept.). I'm working on a project to help organize women in the third world.

♀ Why on earth do they get a man to organize women?

At this point there is a knock at my door and as I lean forward to see who it is, I kick the phone extension and it disconnects. Dial tone. I answer the door. The phone rings again.

♀ Hello Joe, we got cut off.

♂ Hi. Can we start this off on a better foot? (charming...)

♀ I'm willing.

♂ Boy, you sure were defensive before.

♀ (Pissed off) I think that's standard feminist procedure--wise procedure for any woman to ask for an unknown man's identification before giving her own.

♂ I never had that response before and I know some adamant feminists in _____, _____, _____. (Names 4 government departments that deal with women's issues).

♀ I didn't know there were any adamant feminists in those Departments - you didn't name any grassroots women's organizations where "adamant" is not a word but a lifestyle.

♂ Listen, I don't want to argue, I just want to know
I give him the information.

♂ Thanks. (Patronizing) Don't worry about the way you answered the phone. I understand; I lived in New York city for 5 years.

♀ I'm not worried, (with contempt) and you don't understand. I've lived inside a female body for 33 years.
I hang up.

- Joanie Flynt



ON THE POLICY FRONT

"FAMILY MONTH" - COURTESY OF BILL DAVIS

In case you didn't know, May is officially "Family Unity Month" in Ontario. This is not a spoof. The Premier of the Conservative Government of Ontario personally sponsored an Order-In-Council declaring May to be a "time to be thankful for the family as the foundation of our society and a time to recommit ourselves to the concept of the family, a concept that must withstand the trends of lifestyle and social transition."

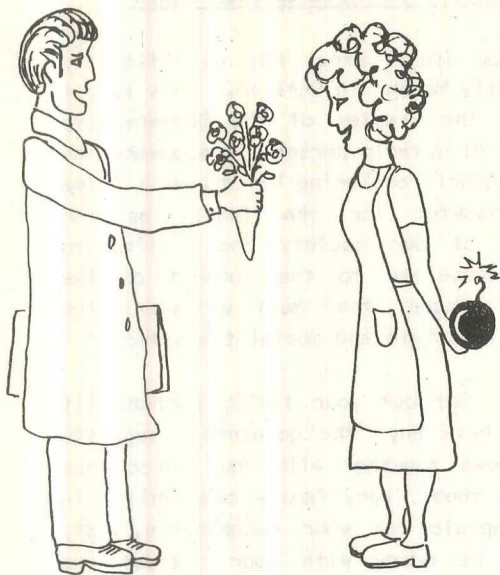
So there. Get out your family banners (if you don't have any, the government suggests you sit down together with your loved ones and design them), bury family memorabilia in a time capsule for your descendants, eat, drink and be merry with your nearest and dearest. If you need a little visual stimulation to further enjoy these activities, you can send for a free poster from the province with the slogan "Rediscover Each Other". If you enjoy reading, keep your eyes out for the feature stories in your local paper on "the changing role of the family", written by government public relations experts. Even your children will be encouraged to participate. Schools will be advised on how to focus attention on the family, by devoting English classes to essays by students on family life.

How many single mothers struggling to raise 2 kids on \$600/month do you know who want to celebrate the existence of the nuclear family? How many mothers working outside the home want to celebrate traditional family roles in which mother cooks, cleans and nurtures while daddy relaxes after a hard day at the office? Not too many, I suspect.

The Globe and Mail reports that "Family Unity Month" is a result of the government's "increased concern over factors that are eroding the modern family - working mothers, divorce, geographical distances, and family violence". However, there's more behind "Family Unity Month" than simply fighting these four apparently equal evils.

Robert Harris, Executive Director of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party is quoted as saying: "There is no question that, from a budget standpoint, the Government can't take an increased role in service aspects. Mr. Davis is saying more onus has to fall on the family...The whole theme (of Family Unity Month) is an extension of our restraint program." Aha! Now it becomes more clear: family picnics have another purpose besides getting all the folks together to agree on how special they are to each other. Families are also supposed to feel like taking on more responsibilities for members' welfare. Because the Davis government is not going to increase funding

HAPPY
"FAMILY UNITY MONTH",
DEAR...



for social programs to take care of basic human needs (such as daycare, senior citizens programs, services to handicapped, interval houses). According to The Globe & Mail, "Premier Davis is making it clear that the government wishes to pass much of the burden of coping back to the family, communities and volunteer groups" and this means back to women in families, communities, and volunteer groups.

Apparently Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher are making similar appeals to old virtues and finding sympathetic audiences. According to Mr. Harris, the unsophisticated activities suggested as part of "Family Unity Month" have a broad appeal. He is amazed by the emotional response to the subject of the family from audiences all over Ontario. "Suddenly people are frightened of the future". People see what is being shown on the video and find it scary. This is a message that wasn't being listened to three or four years ago, but now it has wide appeal". The Tory government is attempting to cash in on people's fear of the future by promoting a return to the "good old days" of traditional family life - when everybody knew where they stood. Women were first and foremost mothers; divorce was something almost sacrilegious and the only mothers who worked outside the home were oddballs or pathetically poor.

Well Mr. Davis, the world has changed. Even for Progressive Conservatives. Forty percent of marriages now end in divorce, and nine percent of children are born to unmarried mothers. Forty-nine per cent of all working-age women work; forty-seven percent of all married women work outside the home. Most of them do not work for 'pin money'. They work because they don't want to be poor. Celebrating "Family Unity Month" is a bit like pretending you are an ostrich and sticking your head in the sand when you sense danger.

The Tory ostrich is reacting to certain real changes. One is women's economic independence and the stress it is causing on traditional roles within the family. Another is the emergence of feminism and the growing resistance by women to physical and mental abuse by our "dear ones", double duty in the home and at work, poor wages and unequal opportunity. The third is the current economic recession which, despite statisticians' reports, continues to press heavily upon us and upon the budgets of public social services.

Surely even the Tories could have come up with a more productive response to today's economic and social reality than "Family Unity Month". If only they had asked a few feminists for some help. I'm sure we could have suggested all kinds of good ideas. "Build a Daycare Centre Month" for example. That would employ people and reduce the stress at home for families without affordable child care. Or how about "Train Your Husband Month", designed to reduce family tension by sharing the household work load; or "Tax the Big Corporations Month" - a quick way to replenish government coffers and finance social services. The possibilities seem endless.

They probably never will ask us. So maybe we had better start telling them. A letter to an MPP or the editor about "Family Unity Month", especially during the month of May, might be an appropriate way to start.

- Ellen Adelberg





FEATURE



INSIDE FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS: PART I

In our last issue we asked some questions about how feminist organizations work and invited women's groups to respond. A number of groups wrote to us describing how they organize and about their difficulties and triumphs. We interviewed other groups and the B.T.S. collective got together to examine our own process. We ended up with masses of information on how ten Ottawa groups operate. We would like to thank all the women who participated and certainly hope that we have not misrepresented anyone in our summary. In our attempts to be as accurate as possible we have either quoted or paraphrased the groups' responses.

As women working together, we have all struggled with the challenge of organizing ourselves in non-traditional ways. Some groups have been very successful at making alternative structures work, while others have found it necessary to adopt traditional hierarchical systems. In all cases the questions of structure and process have been integral to women's personal and political philosophies. The decisions have not come easily or without careful consideration.

In this issue we summarize the basic information given by the groups. In the next issue of B.T.S. we will rely on this material to present a more thorough analysis of feminist organizations.



What Was The Group's Original Purpose? Have You Changed and Grown?

AMETHYST HOUSE (AH)

- to operate a treatment centre for women with addictions; to provide services that are needed by this population; and to do research on women with addictions;
- still provide these services but there is less emphasis on research.

ANGLICAN CHURCH WOMEN, OTTAWA (ACW)

- to maintain momentum which began at a national conference in Winnipeg and to "nurture and support individuals and parish groups concerned with women's issues."

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK (IWW)

- "bring women together; educate ourselves; gain recognition, develop solidarity with all women; also to offer a time between Christmas and Mothers' Day to celebrate women;"
- now also working towards having March 8th recognized as a national holiday.

INTERVAL HOUSE (IH)

- to provide temporary shelter and support services to women who are victims of abuse, and their children; to work towards ending abuse;
- services have become more varied and sophisticated, I.H. now owns a house which is used as both a shelter and office.

LA NOUVEAU TABLIER DEPOSE (nTd)

- to publish a magazine for and by Francophone women in Eastern Ontario;
- has become more explicitly feminist in its perspective.

RAPE CRISIS CENTRE (RCC)

- came out of the Women's Centre in 1972 as a crisis line;
- provides direct service and intervention for sexual assault victims;
- today services also include public education, lobbying and law reform.

SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTRE (SASC)

- offers support to women and children who have been assaulted e.g. individual counselling, telephone counselling, support groups, alternative action, accompaniment to police, hospital or courts, and referral;
- works actively towards the eradication of violence against women.

WOMEN'S ACTION FOR PEACE (WAP)

- came out of a Women and Militarism conference in July '82;
- Initially, focused on a feminist analysis

of war;

- expanded analysis and action to include other forms of violence, e.g. pornography.

WOMEN FOR JUSTICE (WJ)

- to bring together women working with or concerned about the justice system and its effect on women; to bring a feminist perspective and analysis to the issue; to initiate action; and also to give support to members;
- the decision to file a complaint under the Canadian Human Rights Act affected the ability of the group to work as planned. This complaint monopolized the group's time and energy, and changed its working structure;

- original group is defunct, a splinter group under the same name is now concerned with the "man in the house" rule;

Note: this article only deals with the experience of the original group.

BREAKING THE SILENCE (BTS)

- started off as an information sheet within Carleton's School of Social Work to provide women with information on feminist resources;
- expanded in size and content over two years to become a quarterly publication providing a feminist analysis of social issues;
- now attempts to include issues of national as well as local interest.



How do you operate in practice? What is your present structure? Do those with the most access to information or those possessing certain skills have the most power?

AH - Hierarchy

They have a fifteen member Board of Directors and an executive director. All staff under the Director are paid equally and are given "decision-making power under their own area of responsibility." The Executive Director takes responsibility "if all else fails."

Possession of power is dependent on personalities - "each person has power in their own area and this is respected."

ACW - Collective

They have monthly meetings led by a chairperson and recorded by a secretary. These positions are rotated every meeting. "Access to information and possession of skills dictate responsibilities but not decision-making power."

IWW - Collective

They have a coordinating committee and seven subcommittees (4 focus on organizing tasks and 3 on the content of the week's events) which all operate under consensus. The group reports that those with more information are used as resource people, so this does not give them more power in the group.

IH - Collective

There are several layers, or collectives within the larger collective. The inner circle is made up of the 7 staff who work at the house.

The board (a legal requirement for funding) is made up of staff and 16 other members who meet monthly. The larger collective consists of staff, board members, support workers (volunteers) and residents. They come together to make decisions at house meetings, board meetings and general meetings. The staff members share the administrative duties with the help of support workers.

The staff recognize that they are closest to the daily operation of the collective, have more information, more daily responsibilities and are therefore aware of the danger that they will have more power. At times they are challenged by support workers and residents and see this as a positive force. They have learned that everyone involved must understand what a collective is and be willing to work within that structure.

nTd - Collective

All members discuss issues as they arise, and using consensus they come to decisions that everyone can live with. The group believes they all have the same influence and power.

RCC - Collective

In principle and theory they try to operate as a collective and strive for consensus.

There is a 9-member steering committee which is legally the Board of Directors. There is a General Assembly which is comprised of all active members (about 30 members including the staff and steering committee). There are 2 full-time and 2 part-time staff. These women automatically become members of the Steering Committee. Committees have been set up to deal with various issues, i.e. fundraising.

Everyone tries to work under consensus but

under the by-laws the Steering Committee and General Assembly can vote, if necessary, to reach a decision.

The immediacy and the nature of the problem dictates who makes decisions. Normally Steering Committee makes decisions which then go to the General Assembly for approval. Staff have been given guidelines regarding what decisions they can make. "Collective input may not necessarily be there, but there is accountability."

The Director feels that the people with the most information and skills have "most responsibility instead of power." "They are better able to make decisions and they do make a lot of daily decisions." "Collective" is an ideal; not every member can do everything as "certain work can be done by certain women depending on their individual fortes." "We may have overlooked the advantages of traditional male structures."

SASC - Collective

They have established tools which they use to work with: check-ins, constructive criticism and the use of a facilitator.

□□□□□□□□□□□□

They work under consensus because they "reject the use of majority rule because of the risk of alienating women in minority positions by overruling them with a vote before we have clearly explored all approaches to a problem. Consensus decisions-making reflects our belief that the opinions of all members are equally valid and valuable." By using consensus "we knew that we would risk missing out on some events due to a failure to quickly reach a decision," but that was alright.

□□□□□□□□□□□□

To reach consensus they use constructive criticism which is a tool that allows "problems and disagreements to be aired within a safe context and without 'thrashing' the recipient of criticism." Also a facilitator can be used as a mediator to resolve any problem.

Check-ins are at the beginning and end of each meeting. Each member tells briefly, "how she is feeling and if she has any preoccupations or needs support from the group." The end check-in is to insure that "no one carries away problems or feelings that she would have liked to have dealt with in the group."

They share power and tasks with the intent that an opportunity is provided "for women to both use their particular skills and to have an opportunity to learn new skills." "By rotating tasks we wish to allow skill sharing and to increase general knowledge rather than concentrate power in the hands of a few."

WAP - Collective

They have recently devised a collective structure called a tapestry.

In the centre is a coordinating committee called the loom, which rotates every 3 or 4 months. The loom does communication and liaison, organizes a newsletter and calls monthly meetings. Around the loom are thread groups which deal with specific issues. Women enter thread groups and put their ideas and energy to work. Since the thread groups act as affinity groups, no one has to go to the centre for guidance. They make decisions as a group by consensus. The group makes a concerted effort to equalize power.



WJ - Collective

Originally, they had a rotating chair and then moved to a format in which there was no chair and any member could raise issues and lead discussion. The requirements imposed by the Human Rights procedure forced W.J. to appoint a member to be spokeswoman for the group. This meant that she became central to the operation of the group. Members felt that this undermined their collective.

BTS - Collective

We have five sub-committees (financial, editorial, production, subscriptions, distribution). Members rotate tasks within these committees. At the first meeting of each issue we discuss what we want to include in that issue. Tasks are divided according to the interests and inclinations of each individual. At these meetings we also volunteer to undertake the continuous work of administering the newsletter.

A woman who has taken on responsibility for a particular task shares the information with the group and advises on action. Decisions are then made by the group; everyone has equal power in decision-making.

We try to be aware that personal power varies between our members. In making decisions we ensure that every member has an equal voice. Because we trust each others' motives and judgements this makes power a positive rather than divisive force.

Some Thoughts on Collectives

One of the things we have learned from doing this article is that many groups consider themselves collectives, yet they are organized and work in different ways. Still there are common threads that join us all.

A collective is usually task-oriented; women join together to do something. The philosophies that direct and shape the way we accomplish our goals are a very basic bonding force. These philosophies include our common values, the way we understand ourselves as women and what we see as the root of the problems we are tackling.

A collective arises out of self-identity; it is created by its members. It grows and evolves as the members come and go; as we share and teach each other. Working together we develop a spirit of sisterhood in an atmosphere of closeness and support.

Working by consensus is the hallmark of collective groups. Everyone contributes and everyone is responsible. There is no ultimate boss lady to make decisions and take responsibility. Each woman is responsible for speaking up and letting her opinion be known. Each woman is responsible for encouraging everyone else and taking each one seriously. We must all work at reaching decisions that every member is comfortable with. This is a difficult process. It doesn't always work.

Each collective finds ways to deal with problems and resolve conflicts. Each finds its own balance between acting expediently to get the job done and remaining faithful to consensual and collective process.

It is difficult to work within a collective and to operate by consensus. When a collective begins to fall apart or finds it can't accomplish its tasks the problem is often rooted in differences in fundamental values and beliefs of its members.

Another difficult area for collectives is integrating new members. When a new member joins she has to sit back, see and feel the group working together, and then ease herself in to it. Established groups have to be conscious of this difficulty and help each new woman find her voice in the group.

To operate as a collective we must battle against our upbringing and all of the structures in the world around us. We live in a hierarchical world and have been taught hierarchical values and work patterns. We are constantly fighting against the current. It is the sisterhood and support we gain from working together which gives us the power to persevere.

- J.H. & J.R.

Why Did You Decide On The Particular Structure You Have?

AH - Originally they operated as a type of collective. They "had a co-ordinator who was paid more than other staff and made final decisions, and a board with final veto power," but they did "operate under consensus." At the next stage they retained their board and equalized staff salaries, responsibilities and decision-making power. This structure became unworkable because of people's different definitions of collective and because those hired weren't always committed to working as a collective.

They moved to a structure in which one person was paid more than the others and assumed more responsibility. The spokeswoman for the group said they "have found this works since a lot less time is spent on dealing with group problems and a lot more on treatment of clients." "Being a collective didn't allow us to do this."

ACW - "The structure was chosen to accommodate the women who wanted to join the undertaking but who were already thoroughly committed."



IWW - The structure is "essential to our goals." In order to avoid rigid structure and as a result of experience the structure has become streamlined. "The women's groups participating in the week are assuming more responsibility in keeping with our original long term goals."

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IH - A collective structure was chosen out of their specific philosophy. "The most basic principle is that there is no hierarchy, no boss, no director. Decisions are made as a group through discussion, all participants are ideally part of that process. Why? We believe oppression is a situation in which people don't have control over their lives - for example, men have control, women don't; within the nuclear family, the individual man has control over the individual woman and in the case of wife-beating, this imbalance of power erupts into violence. Shared decision-making is a materialization of an ideal that says 'people should have control over their lives'."

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nTd - "The absence of hierarchy and power was a deliberate choice, and we maintained it, because we wanted to avoid the traps of masculine models." (translated from French)

RCC - The center was set up as a collective in 1972 in accordance with the feminist analysis that "structure really dictates how you approach feminist issues."

In 1975 the group established a formal Board of Directors comprised of men and women from the community. It dissolved shortly after and was replaced by the current structure.

The RCC comments that a collective structure may be "too idealistic and the organization would be crippled. In the past, things have come back on agendas for years and new members with lack of information and no experience have been allowed to vote."

SASC - The group reported that the choice of a collective structure is an essential part of their political philosophy. As they are a new group they haven't yet felt the need to change their structure in any way.

WAP - WAP started as a loose group of about 10 women who strongly identified with WAP's goals and philosophy. The lack of structure did not allow women to enter easily so they attempted to formalize the structure a bit after recognizing the "tyranny of structurelessness." They called an open meeting of women where a new structure was devised. The group "wanted a structure that any woman could feel comfortable with; those with a lot of energy and those with little time."

WJ - They "fell into" a collective format which was never challenged.

BTS - Our structure evolved as the newsletter and collective grew, making it necessary for members to take a more equal share in work and decision-making. To avoid burn out and to develop our skills in new areas, we decided to rotate tasks on a more formalized basis.

Does Anyone Get Paid? Does This Affect Relationships In The Group?

nTd -

SASC -

WAP -

WJ -



AH - The organization is run by paid staff and a more highly paid director who takes major responsibility for operations and decisions.

ACW - The group reports that some of their members do work for pay. They comment that "there are some rough spots in the area between work and volunteering."

IWW - There are 4 paid co-ordinators responsible for finance, evaluation, information and publicity. They try to give honoraria to women who have made a substantial volunteer contribution and are in financial need. They don't feel this causes any difficulties in the group.

IH - The collective has seven paid staff and all others are volunteers. As a collective, they are conscious of the tendency for paid workers to have a stronger voice at meetings and in making decisions. They work towards minimizing this problem.

RCC - The organization has both paid staff (2 full-time, 2 part-time) and volunteer workers. A year ago there was a split in the group because some members wanted to return to a grassroots level collective with no paid staff. Those members committed to that idea were eventually forced to leave the Center.

BTS - Presently all the work is done on a volunteer basis but we are considering hiring a woman or some women for specific jobs.

How Central Is This Activity In Your Life?

AH - "It is an ongoing activity. It is our full-time jobs!"

ACW - "The activity is central in so far as it is ongoing and of basic interest but it is clearly only part of the picture."

IWW - "Very (central). We are women! That's more than a lifestyle - when we (women) attain all our goals, we'll be dead. The work is forever ongoing. Our sisters/daughters/lovers will carry on. Since the week occurs annually in March there are obviously on and off periods of activity from devoted frenzy to fond memories however it has become an important part of many women's lives - some join for a year or 5, some only for an event as volunteers, the week generates much activity between good women and women's groups."

IH - Being connected to the House contributes to a woman's own personal development and evolution. For the staff it is very important. "The work I do here is an extension of my personal politics."

nTd - Since the members are dedicated to the work, the group is very central to their lives. "It permits us to meet women who have the same ideas and it allows us to express ourselves." (translated from French)

RCC - For the organization's director "it is my life."

SASC - It varies from woman to woman but it is pretty important to just about every woman. They meet every week in addition to doing other work for SASC so it takes a lot of time and commitment to be part of the group.

WAP - The collective is central for a few women although they expect that it's importance will increase for more women with the new changes. "More women are seeing the analytical connections between war and violence in general and WAP gives them the opportunity to explore those connections."

BTS - "It's very central and that's the way it has to be. It's a good thing it's only a quarterly! Every woman is very committed but some women have to choose to control how much time they spend on each issue and that is O.K. The only woman who is a mother in our group finds she especially has to partition her life (we happily anticipate another baby within the collective this year). To make this project work we need to have a fairly dedicated core group that is centrally committed. But there is also room to shift one's level of commitment. People can join or take a leave of absence for a period of time, or for an issue."

Should Any Of Us Be Paid?

Since the inception of the women's movement we have had to deal with the consequences of government funding. One of the dilemmas that has arisen is how to deal with paid work within egalitarian structures? By chance or malicious design government funds have never been enough for every member of the group or have been attached to specific tasks that only make up part of the group's work.

B.T.S., which has been built upon and continues to prosper at the hands of women's volunteer labour, has been seriously debating the question of paid work. After much discussion we have identified some pros and cons of paying workers within a collective structure.

PROS

- guarantees that the work will get done;
- ensures that someone is accountable;
- allows specialized work to be done under paid contract;
- frees volunteers from less exciting work;
- financially assists a woman in the group;
- rewards women's work with pay.

CONS

- paying for some tasks to be done and not others may imply that some types of work are more valuable than others;
- paid staff must be hired and supervised. A woman assigned to the supervisory role is likely to have more power since she must relay the collective's instructions to the staff. This is more of a problem if staff are not collective members;
- paid staff often have greater access to information and develop essential skills. If these skills and information are not shared within the collective, the staff can become more powerful in the organization;

- paid staff may feel pressured or be inclined to act independently and this takes power away from the collective;
- along with accountability comes the possibility of scapegoating.

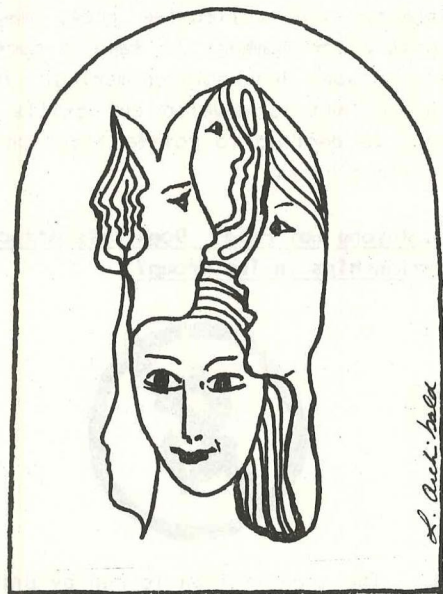
The disadvantages have one consistent theme - they disrupt the balance of power and thus jeopardize the very structure and process of a collective.

Some of the groups we surveyed have paid staff that carry on the bulk of the group's work. In some cases this has led to a breakdown of a collective and consensual process. Others, like Interval House, retain a collective structure and continue to operate by consensus.

- J.H. & J.R.

How Do You Relate To The Women In Your Group? Are They Your Friends?

AH - "Don't socialize together; really a working relationship. This is partly due to the personalities of the staff who are independent people and who have their own lives apart from work."



ACW - "Women in the group are members of the Anglican Church of Canada so their paths cross in many ways."

IWW - "Women who play together, stay together! We've developed over time and struggle to have very positive and joyous relationships despite our very different backgrounds and daily realities. We eat, drink and go out together. We share resources, support each other. We are wonderful! Openness, tolerance, growth, loving, understanding, sharing burdens and good books... We had the best year yet in 1984!"

IH - The women feel that there are strong, longlasting friendships within the group, and that they are a real source of support to one another.

nTd - Many friendships have formed within the group. There is some socializing but they would like to have "more fun together." The work however consumes much of the group's common time.

RCC - Friendship and work is combined a lot (ie. meetings over lunch).

SASC - Some of the women see a great deal of each other. They have attempted to have social events but the focus has been primarily work. "Out of the work, bonds have developed that have been part of the bonus resulting from how we work together as a collective."

WAP - The core group has a real overlap of personal and political friendships. "Really there is no other way."

BTS - "We are primarily task-oriented and don't have many occasions which are solely social although we are attempting to remedy that. There are a lot of overlapping networks so many of us see each other in other activities in our lives. "Basically the secret of our success is that we all like each other."

Do You Have People From Different Backgrounds In Your Group?

AH - "While staff have a wide variety of experience they all more or less come from middle-income backgrounds."

ACW - "The group is theoretically open to any women within reach of the group's reporting but in practise, once having become operative membership tends to remain static."

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IWW - "From the beginning there have been consistent efforts to contact women of all classes and colors, special efforts to minorities/third world women. We have had very little success in this area - very disproportionate to our efforts, perhaps because minority groups focus on their minority oppression and are hesitant to join with women of the dominant culture. The female bond has not yet cut across the forms of oppression, maybe because these women are unsure of their welcome (on common goals) with us. They often have other priorities and limited energies. New strategies of outreach are sought. All women are welcome."

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IH - They have representation from many different backgrounds. Realistically, though, the kinds of women who have the time to help out are middle-class. They do try



some concrete things to ensure that a wide range of women can participate (ie. provide babysitting and taxi money).

nTd - "The women of the collective have different levels of education, some work in different professions, some are housewives and some are unemployed. The important thing we have in common is that we are all feminists." (translated from French)

RCC - Everyone is accepted on the basis of an interview. They don't solicit members but they do consider whoever comes in. All members have to have good communication skills.

SASC - "Most of us are white and middle class." The group works towards recognizing and acknowledging their advantages and privileges. "We do try to reach out to all different women."

WAP - "Like most feminist groups we are white and middle-class. We have been conscious of that and have wanted to be different. One of the things that is a present priority is to build the links with women of different backgrounds." They feel it is important for them as individuals to recognize their privilege as white/middle class women.

BTS - Our group is very homogeneous. We don't represent all walks of life within the collective and we haven't attempted to...it would be wrong to pretend to. As a newsletter we have the advantage of being able to print diverse points of view without having those points of view represented within the collective. We are open to having new women join but we don't actively seek out people.

How Does Your Group Handle Conflict?

AH - "Conflict is dealt with in a hierarchical way, i.e., the director looks after it. If it is a conflict between two staff members, they will be encouraged to work it out together. Some philosophical differences may not be resolved."

ACH - "We handle conflict by discussion, patience and perhaps most effectively by joint activity." Background and life experiences have considerable effect on the level of agreement.

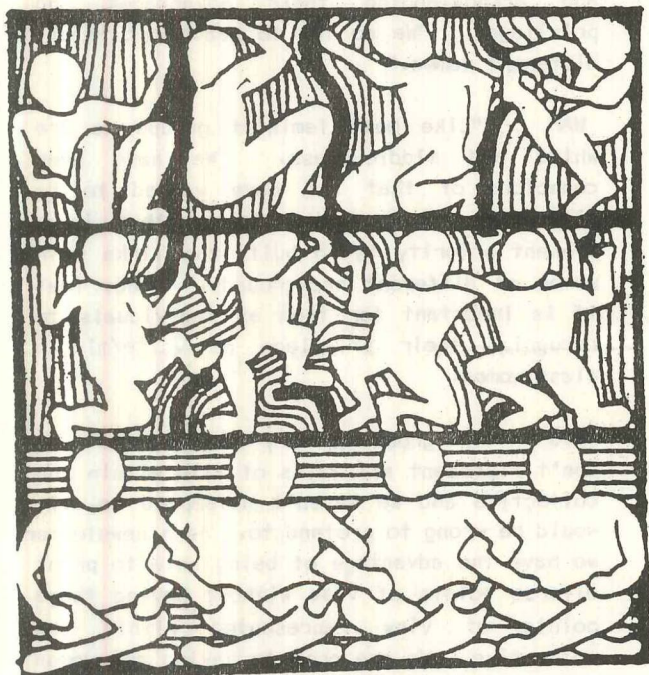
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IWW - "When conflicts arise (and there have been a few...) we try to hear all the women's feelings. On political differences or screening policies, etc. (i.e. Middle East issue) we seek out appropriate resource women to give internal workshops so we can have more knowledge on which to base decisions." One of the collective, comments, "We are all ignorant and we have a responsibility to educate ourselves. We consciously try to work through our differences (there are many) by highlighting commonalities and expressing our visions for the future. Confrontations are dealt with as they arise (long meetings...). We have developed a strong sense of achievement through loose structure plus adherence to philosophical guidelines. This year, meetings often served to recharge the collective batteries ... by nurturing we become nurtured. Diversity is our source of creativity."

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IH - "We just keep talking." It is their policy to take no action on issues until agreement is reached through consensus. In the past issues have come to a vote.

nTd - When a feminist perspective was declared and the content of the newsletter was changed from "feminine" to "feminist" some women left the group.



LNS/cpf

CONFLICT

Why is it that some women's groups can glide through potentially dangerous waters when discussing their process, structure, philosophy and internal relationships while others plunge into it creating dissension, hurt feelings and much damage to both individual women and the women's community?

On top of our vulnerability as women in a patriarchal world, we are very vulnerable as women fighting for alternative structures and processes in just about every facet of our lives. This vulnerability can be reduced by the forms of work and play we create with other women. Once these become open to attack, there is little we can do to defend ourselves without undermining our own personal political goals of constructive, non-coercive resolution of problems.

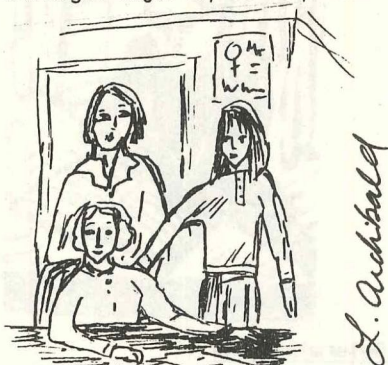
In many ways, the feminist movement has come a long way from the combative, adversarial approach characteristic of patriarchal society. But every now and again we hear of, or are part of, conflict that degenerates into vicious, manipulative, power-seeking warfare. Good, and dedicated women are being hurt and for no sensible reason. True, we are continually being pitted against other women for many of our basic needs and rights but is it necessary to bring this form of male destruction into women's organizations? We aren't saying that conflict isn't a legitimate activity but it does require some positive thought.

We have developed powerful and useful tools for working through conflict: consensus, using a facilitator and constructive criticism, are a few. The underlying philosophy in all of these is that every woman's viewpoint is important; that part of the resolution is that everyone can live with the final decision; that the time and energy used to resolve the conflict is worth investing in, and that compromise is not negative (you aren't losing personal points) but shows a willingness to accept others and be flexible about your own agenda. So why then do some women and women's organizations feel compelled to continue to rely on male tools of conflict?

In the next issue of BTS we will continue our section on feminist organizations by looking at conflict and change from within. So, stay tuned!

- J.R. and J.H.

RCC - They have "inborn mechanisms to deal with conflict - have established procedures and mechanisms." Most conflicts are sorted out in a fairly informal way. If it is a major decision then it goes to Steering Committee or General Assembly for vote - where a straight majority is required.



SASC - They have formalized tools within their "Basis of Unity" to deal with conflict including constructive criticism and using a facilitator. A lot of time is spent talking out the problem. They haven't been together for a long time so major conflict hasn't yet arisen. Two women did leave the collective because they weren't committed to using the formalized tools for resolution of the problem.

WAP - "There has been a low level of conflict over different styles of working and kinds of work to be done." So far they feel they haven't developed a good open process for dealing with conflict. "Conflict has been talked out but not as productively as it could have been."

WJ - The group felt that the collective make-up of the group had been undermined as the result of focusing on one issue. Some women were frustrated by the inability of the group to reach their initial goals and achieve change. The group finally splintered.

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BTS - "We deal with conflict with humour. There is a lot of respect for women when they are upfront about what they feel/need/think. There is an expectation that everyone is honest, responsible for themselves and says what is on her mind, and that no one is playing games."

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To date there have been no major conflicts in the group. We do anticipate some conflict about the content of some articles and the future direction of the newsletter but we are already talking about potentially contentious issues. We expect that some women may leave over differences which we see as part of the evolution of the group. As the focus and direction changes so do some of the members.

- Joan Holmes and Joan Riggs

INSIDE FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS: PART II

When we opened the doors to look inside women's groups we did it partly out of the realization that women have made a commitment to work together in new ways and we wanted to see if they were reaching their goals, and partly out of a more selfish reason. BTS wanted to develop and nurture our collective by learning from the experiences of other women's groups.

When we took this project on it was in a mood of celebration for women working together. We started, maybe in a naive way, hoping that all women were working harmoniously together in both practice and thought. It soon became obvious that in reality women are constantly being challenged by struggles within women's organizations.

These thoughts have inspired us to further our discussion on feminist organizations at a more analytical level. Some of the questions that arose for us and that we may pursue in Part II are:

1. Is there a true definition of a feminist collective?
2. How much compromise is there when you call yourself a collective but you have other structures and processes that infringe on your definition?
3. For some groups, expediency and collective action were viewed as two opposing things, are they?
4. The power of information and skills: Is it essential that they be acknowledged and equalized in order for a collective to exist?
5. How does a group define its own success? What is more important to success: the process or the end-product?
6. How does a basic philosophy affect the way one deals with conflict?

- J.H. & J.R.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

WOMEN AT WORK: WRITING

I live and work alone for reasons which are at once personal and political: i.e. rooted in my particular place in, experience of and response to a class-gender hierarchy of power and opportunity which is itself universal in our culture.

Gender Determinations

In the first place, I have great difficulty concentrating when there is someone else around. Their every move and their very presence distract me. They make me nervous for two reasons. 1. I expect them to interrupt me at any moment. 2. I feel responsible towards others and therefore "guilty" for ignoring them and getting on with my own work. Or I worry that they feel hurt and rejected because they think I am ignoring them. I think this inability to ignore others is one of the consequences of growing up female: female-being is being-for-others; male-being is being-for-yourself, and never more so than when at home (a man's home is, after all, his castle--a woman's home is her work-place). I know many women who have the same difficulty concentrating on their own work in a shared household and I know no men who feel this way. When men work--in this case, read, write, think--they are fulfilling their prescription for masculinity: they are doing what they were brought up to do--produce. It is understandable, therefore, that they might feel even better about it if they can have their masculinity further confirmed by a witness, particularly one who will consider their personal (male) needs, protect their private space--answer the telephone, make the tea--and be there to entertain them when work gets boring or difficult. When women do the same work--reading, writing, thinking--they actually defy their gender prescription. They are not just working, therefore, but also fighting their personal and collective history as women. They are going up-stream. For femininity consists in tending to others--answering the telephone, making the tea, anticipating needs--not getting on with your "own" work regardless of others. Women's work is reproductive, not productive. It is understandably difficult, therefore, for women to reverse their gender identity and personal praxis and convince themselves that their own work is now more important than another's personal well-being or the emotional and social harmony of a household. We were all brought up to take men and men's work (even men's leisure) seriously and to trivialize women and their occupations. Mummy could always be disturbed (that, in fact, is what she is there for: for-others), daddy rarely. These historical structures of male and female being are constitutive of our personal identities and social interactions and cannot be overcome by individual acts of will or determination, or by social fiat. They require hard up-stream work (struggle) of refusal, deconstruction and reconstruction of both persons and social structures by everyone concerned, and that work can take away a lot of the energy and creativity that could be going into the writing, thinking and intellectual production of women for women.



Class Determinations

Perhaps I am particularly sensitive to the potentially disruptive presence of others and particularly committed to having my own place to work in because of my class background. I grew up in a working-class family in England and although I was encouraged to do my homework, I was at the same time made to feel very uncomfortable and guilty about it. In the first place, there was no place to do it. I shared a bedroom with my little brother so when he went to bed I had to move somewhere else. Besides, there was no heat in the bedroom, no table and no chair. So, I did a lot of studying on my knees, in a hurry, using the bed as a desk, and feeling very cold. As I got older I would work in the "front-room" (parlour). Again there was no table, but I used a piece of wood across the arms of an arm-chair as a desk. It was still very cold, however. My father would bring in an oil heater to warm me up and make sure I had a good light to read by. But this caused family feuds. My mother, responsible for paying the bills from the money my father gave her each week, would resent the heat and the light, as well as the special attention I was getting from my father; and she would constantly interrupt me to see if I "hadn't finished yet?" This would not happen to my brother; it being more crucial that he succeed in school than I. If I tried to read in the family room where there was heat my mother would insist on talking to me, and since I knew she needed (and deserved) the company I could not ignore her. If I read while she watched T.V. she still felt insulted and excluded. So I would spend long hours reading on the toilet (shivering, of course); or go to bed early to read (shivering again); or on week-ends pretend I had "research" to do at the public library in order to get a good three-hour stretch of uninterrupted time with heat, light and good working conditions. In my last years at school I stayed at school until 6.30 pm, using an empty class-room as a quiet place to study. All of these strategies left me feeling guilty, for I felt like I was defying my mother, even betraying her. For, in addition to her personal and economic concerns about my studying, she also feared

for my femininity. She worried that I would get "too clever" and educate myself out of the marriage market (or the family). And in this, of course, she was correct. She was much less disturbed by my high-heels and tight skirts, and my late nights at the local dance-hall and jazz-club or with boy-friends, than she was by my "bloody library books". The former were "normal" activities for an adolescent girl, the latter "not normal" at all.

When I finally left home and went to University the thing I appreciated most there was my own room in residence: with heat, light, a desk and a chair, a door I could close, and no-one on the other side being resentful and confused. This room, far away from family obligations and feminine pre-occupations, was, and remains, my idea of heaven. I have lived with other people since then but I am always more relaxed, more creative and much happier on my own. Communal living is not so attractive if you grow up as a working-class girl with no privacy, no room of your own and no way of escaping communal space and your share of financial, domestic and emotional responsibility for the family.

Class and Gender Working Together

I have always, however, shared and sought to share my intellectual work, and I am never so depressed as when this has not been possible. In school and university my girl friends were also my intellectual comrades-in-arms; always more thoughtful, more energetic and more rebellious in their analyses than the men I knew, who were always too respectful of intellectual authorities, whether that be Marx, Macchiavelli or Manfred Mann.

My work is in Philosophy. This last bastion of male academia is even more respectful of authority than most disciplines. Almost all of the very few women doing philosophy work in isolation.

Academia, in addition, is a bourgeois institution, and feminism, at this stage, a bourgeois women's movement. These are not meant as critical statements but as indicators of why I, coming from a working-class background, have difficulty sharing a perspective within the world within which my work is situated. For I do not share a past with most of the people in that world: We do not take the same things for granted (values, goals, sources of personal pain and pleasure) and I think we are often actually engaged in different struggles, even though we are struggling against the same power structures, roughly identifiable as patriarchy and capitalism.

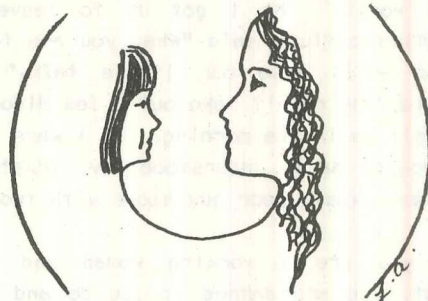
Oppression has been differentially experienced and mediated in our lives through our different class positions: we have internalized it somewhat differently and

consequently the focus of our struggle is often different too.

Finally, if you work for a living outside your specific field of research as I have done for the last fourteen years it is not only very difficult to locate like-minded souls but even if you find them the mechanics of shared work are just not available to you. For, unless you work in the same place, and/or work part-time you just do not have the time or the occasion for working together. And this is complicated for women by the presence of children and family commitments, especially as we get older. In the last two years, however, I have worked (for money) only part-time and I have been lucky enough to find a like-minded soul who does not live 1000 miles away in another country and is not tied into a strict work and domestic régime with whom I have, therefore, been able to enjoy the pleasures and rewards of shared research. But not yet shared writing. For the politics of class and gender once again rear their ugly heads: This particular ally is both an undergraduate and male. More food for thought for feminist theory and practice.

- Geraldine Finn

MOTHERHOOD ISSUES



I WOULD HAVE BEEN A BETTER MOTHER IF I'D BEEN A MAN

As I look back on the last 16 years of my life, raising two boys alone, I've come to the conclusion that I would have been a better Mother if I'd been a man.

It's not because I think men make better mothers, but with all the day-to-day problems that come with raising children on your own in a country mostly run by men, I think it would have been to my advantage to have been a man.

For example, if I were a man and was having difficulty coping with the children, everyone would feel sorry for me and try to help me out. But I'm a woman, and in most people's minds if you can't cope, it's your fault and you should have thought about that before you got pregnant. (Did you know that women get pregnant all by themselves?)

Why is it that when a woman stands up for the rights of her children in the school system, legal system, etc., the men who are making

decisions think you are taking something out on them (because you are alone or frustrated or maybe its the wrong time of the month)?

The System Works For Me?

Last year my youngest son got in trouble with the law and ended up in court. Of course, being the parent, I was expected to be there too. The judge said he wanted a family history before he made any decision. We were taken out into the lobby. There, with my son, his lawyer and the court-appointed probation officer, we discussed the family history.

After talking about normal pregnancy and proper diet, my sex life and income, we finally got down to the daily routine. I said that during the week I didn't spend much time with my children as the job I have requires me to attend night meetings, but on the weekends I more than make up for time lost. At that point the probation officer said that I didn't care much about my children if I was so involved in my job. (At that point I reminded him that I was a single parent working to put food on the table and a roof over our heads.) I was getting very upset with all of this and before I knew it I was talking so loud that the whole room heard me. I gave him the lecture of the year. I know I gave him a better picture of what it was like being a female single parent in a man's world. As I got up to leave, the probation officer said "When you are feeling better we'll have our little talk." I'm surprised he didn't take out a few Midols and say call me in the morning. If I were a man, he would have understood my frustration because I was a poor guy alone with two kids.

When you are a working woman and single parent, you are damned if you do and damned if you don't. If you stay at home to raise your children and receive assistance you are told by Frank Drea, Minister of Community and Social Services, that you are lazy, "you are able-bodied and should be out working". If you get a job and work all day...and then all night at home, Joe Messner from Children's Aid Society says you are running away from your parental responsibilities.

I Got A Job!

In 1975 I had been on Mother's Allowance for approximately seven years. The Ministry of Community and Social Services was putting pressure on me to find a job and support myself. Oh, they used every trick in the book, short of threatening to cut me off assistance. They praised me, offered me education grants, daycare, etc.. After giving it considerable thought I took the big step. I wasn't ready to go back to school so I took a full-time job in a hospital, scraping trays in the cafeteria. I was going to do this only as an experiment to see if I could make it in the outside world. If it worked, I would go back to school. Well, one thing led

to another; I got a raise, got moved out of the tray department, and landed a job in the main cafeteria. I'd hit the big time! I had more money than I'd ever had in my life, which made it very difficult to quit and go back to school. The kids were happy, saying things like "Isn't it great we're not on welfare any more."

It Sure Isn't Easy

Then things began to happen, things I wouldn't wish on anyone. Without me around to see the kids off to school and encourage them, my oldest boy started skipping school, running the streets and getting into trouble with the law. I tried everything to help him, and when I'd reached my wit's end and asked for help from Children's Aid Society, the bottom line was: stay home and raise your kids.

No, if I were a man they would think I was a hero no matter what I did. Oh, to think that just once someone would think that I was a hero for just being a Mom.

- Maxine Stata

Maxine Stata works as a community organizer at the Ottawa Council for Low-Income Support Services. She is also President of its Board.

WITCHHUNT

THE GRANGE COMMISSION ENQUIRY - A MODERN WITCH HUNT?

Background

- Thirty-six unexplained baby deaths take place at the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children between June 1980 and March 1981.
- Police investigate and charge nurse Susan Nelles with first-degree murder. At a preliminary hearing, the charges are later dropped for lack of evidence.
- Justice Samuel Grange is named to head a commission of inquiry into the causes of the baby deaths and the conduct of the police investigation that led to the arrest of Nelles.

Grounds for Feminist Concern

Why should feminists be concerned about what's happening at the Grange Inquiry?

- Nurses (women) are being unfairly victimized and the integrity of nursing (a women's profession) is under attack.
- Nurses (a female-dominated group) are being singled out for blame while doctors and hospital administrators (both male-dominated groups) escape scrutiny.

- The Grange Inquiry brings into sharp relief the contradiction between nurses' constant responsibility for human life and their lack of power in making key decisions related to patient care.

Grange Commission Probes Baby Deaths

The purpose of Phase 1 of the Inquiry is to piece together an explanation for the baby deaths. The police investigation drew a blank. It couldn't come up with enough evidence to make murder charges stick. The witnesses called before the Grange are there to further a fact-finding investigation. Nobody is supposed to be on trial.

The medical evidence to date has been conflicting and inconclusive. One explanation for the high death rate on the



wards was that these babies were unusually sick. There is still some question as to whether most of the high levels of digoxin found in the babies resulted from external administration or the internal production of digoxin-like substances by the babies themselves. And even if it was clear that the overdoses were given to the babies, we still don't know if this was done by accident or by design. Justice Grange's unenviable job is to sift through the testimony and make a finding as to how and by what means the babies died, without naming the person or persons responsible.

Nurses on Trial

It is clear to all those following the hearings that even though there is no proof that a crime has been committed, a group of criminals - the nurses - has already been singled out by implication. Frances Kitely, a lawyer for the nurses, charged that the Grange was being turned into a "non-murder, murder inquiry" and that "everyone is assuming that there were 36 murders and it had to be a nurse". Allie Lehmann, liaison officer with the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, said on CBC radio that the "nurses were sacrificial lambs in this entire process" and that "lawyers for the Attorney-General and the police are trying to blame the nurses for their own inept investigation". (Judge Grange did not take kindly to this criticism of the Commission and threatened to cite Kitely with contempt of court if she persisted.)

The loose frame of reference of the Inquiry has allowed nurses to be set up as scapegoats without specific charges being laid or due process followed. Even though the Ontario Court of Appeal has denied the Commission the power to "name names", it's already too late for the nurses implicated so far.

Despite the lack of incriminating evidence, the proceedings are being conducted like a trial, the only difference being that the rules that protect the accused in regular courts of law do not apply here. Consequently, hearsay and innuendo have not only been admitted but encouraged by the police and attorney-general lawyers. Fingers have been pointed, accusations have been made and reputations tarnished, if not ruined. The nurses have been aggressively and unfairly treated on the stand, grilled mercilessly, and forced to defend their behaviour, their actions and their demeanor of more than three years ago. Counsel for the Attorney-General, Doug Hunt, even went so far as to suggest that nurse Phyllis Traynor be given truth serum to help her remember details surrounding the baby deaths.

The basic right of these nurses to be considered innocent until proven guilty has been seriously violated. Regardless of Grange's findings, the trauma and hardship suffered by these nurses will always remain. Their lives have been marred forever yet they will never really have the opportunity to clear their names.

Media Complicity

Biased and sensational media coverage has stacked the deck against the nurses from the beginning. Groundless allegations and trial balloons have made headlines while the nurses' rebuttals have been downplayed or ignored altogether. Reports have emphasized seemingly "suspicious" activities. But the public never hears the less exciting explanations for the nurses' actions. In many instances, this has led to unwarranted attention being focussed on practices that are not unusual at all in the nursing profession. The exclusive media focus on the nurses has effectively exonerated all other parties from potential blame in the public mind.

The Questions Emerge

Key facts have not come forward during the Inquiry. What is needed are questions that would widen the investigative spotlight to include larger administrative systems within the hospital system itself. Questions should be asked about overall operations of the Sick Children's Hospital; the responsibilities of doctors, the administration and other health workers; and the effect that policies like understaffing have on the work of the nurses. Could it not be that the baby deaths were related more to complex structural and systemic problems affecting the operations of

the hospital than to a deliberate action of a malevolent individual? Why is it so much easier to scapegoat the nurses than to question entrenched institutions like hospitals and the medical profession?

The Answers Have to do With Power

The nurses are easy targets because they're a powerless group and they can't fight back for reasons built into the sexually-stratified health care system. A mystique surrounds the predominantly male medical profession that insulates doctors and encourages respect and even reverence. As the investigation has already shown, nurses who are mainly women, enjoy no such privilege and protection. They are regarded as the doctors' handmaidens, not as professionals in their own right. Physicians would never be subjected to nor stand for the line of abuse nurses have had to endure at the Grange.

The Grange Inquiry, if nothing else, has certainly served to reveal nurses' position at the bottom of hospital hierarchy and highlighted the tragic irony of responsibility without power. While nurses bear the brunt of the day-to-day responsibility for patient care, it is the doctors and administrators who have control over the decisions that really matter - on medical treatments and policies and procedures that govern the quality of care the hospital delivers. Nurses follow orders, implement policies and generally do the very best they can under difficult conditions they are powerless to change. Their status prevents them from directly challenging the authority of those above them. And yet when something goes wrong, those who call the shots are nowhere to be found.

Also, the actions of the nurses have been the easiest to pin down of any group within the hospital. The nature of their work and their continual presence on the ward makes them the easiest to investigate. No other group of health care professionals in the hospital has been subject to the same intense scrutiny. The detailed record-keeping that is part of good nursing practice is readily available to trace the whereabouts of nurses and provide information about all their actions around the care of the babies. Other groups cannot be implicated in the way that nurses have because no comparable records exist on their comings and goings. In fact, accountability decreases the higher you go in the system.

What Can Feminists Do?

First, we can morally and financially support the nurses' efforts to defend themselves and their profession. We can write to them, send money and speak out against this modern witch hunt. The Grange Inquiry has united and politicized nurses as never before. We can encourage their political action and their attempt to increase their power within the health care system.

Second, we must begin to make the connections between the vulnerability of women in the helping professions (eg. nursing, teaching and social work) and the vulnerability women experience generally as powerless members of society. What's happening to nurses at the Grange is not happening in isolation. It's happening to women, albeit on a smaller stage, all the time. We must redirect changes of accountability to those with the power. Over the long term, we must work to change the sexist systems that allow these injustices.

You can send messages of support or a donation to the defence fund to:

The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario
33 Price Street
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 1Z2

- Sherry Galey
- Dianne Patychuh



OPINION

PORN AND OUR EROTIC LIVES

This article is about the way pornography affects women and women's sexual desire. Instead of taking the mainstream approach to analyzing porn - i.e. looking at the way it affects men's behaviour, I would like to raise some new questions about the control porn has on our erotic lives.

I had intended to write about the NAC pornography workshop held in March at Ottawa's Chateau Laurier Hotel. But strangely enough, I found myself, more than ever before, unable to watch the video presentation of pornography taken from U.S. television, First Choice, and Red Hot Video. Somewhere in me, on a sexual level, I felt a deep rooted, uncontrollable "collaboration" with those sickening images. And, of course, as Susan Cole pointed out at the workshop, they were not just images - they were real things being done to real women.

We are familiar with the messages which pornography conveys. They are: women are submissive, "easy", "sluts", men's instruments or possessions, not human beings; our only reason for being is to pleasure men; we have a secret desire to be subjugated and forced to submit; we are willing victims, who sooner or later, just lie back and enjoy it.

Although men are the "official consumers" of pornography, most women are willingly or unwillingly exposed to pornography at some time or other. Even if we manage to avoid hard core pornography, we can not avoid the "soft" pornography used to promote consumer goods which portray women themselves as consumer goods. "Soft" pornography, i.e. clothed, semi-clothed or naked pictures of

women, conveys essentially the same messages as "hard" pornography - that women are things, available for men's use and pleasure.

Annabel Faraday (1983) describes this fundamental connection between "soft" and "hard" pornography: "... It is on the other side of the billboards, in the realm of so-called 'hardcore', that the game is really given away" (p. 30). Almost certainly, women and girls are confronted with pornography and cannot help being personally influenced by it. This may seem like an obvious point to some, but it has important implications which have barely been noticed.

Gaps In The Research

The great bulk of research and discussion on pornography has centred on how it affects men. Many recent studies have been concerned with proving or disproving the link between male aggressiveness and pornography. The current arguments used by feminists against porn reflect this research orientation: exposure to porn increases the aggression level in males; men want women to replicate the same sex as in pornography; and porn makes men believe that women like to be raped.

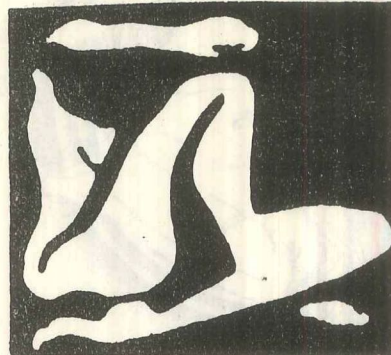
Only a few researchers have been concerned with the consequences of pornography for women. Questions have been asked such as whether women have ever been upset by someone who wanted them to do something seen in pornographic books, pictures or films or how women are affected when they compare themselves to the magazine models. But, in all, very little attention has been given to how pornography affects women's conceptions of themselves, and inadequate attention has been given to the way porn affects women's conceptions of sexuality and our own sexual desire.

A Personal View

Having said this, I would like to express the way I felt during and after the pornographic video shown at the NAC workshop. My first feelings were disgust, fear, pain, and hatred for men. Secondly, on some deeper level, I felt titillated and slightly aroused by some of the scenes - something which seemed beyond my control. I wondered how many other women in the room felt these same contradictory feelings, and how many, like me, felt terribly guilty, confused, and "bad" about themselves because of them.

Women's Sexual Fantasies

I have discovered, mainly through reading material, that many other women are affected in the same way. In her new book entitled Woman's Experience of Sex, Sheila Kitzinger (1983) describes some general types of sexual fantasies common to women. These fantasies typically involve women acting submissive with men in control. She says these



fantasies make sense given our sexist and pornographic society.

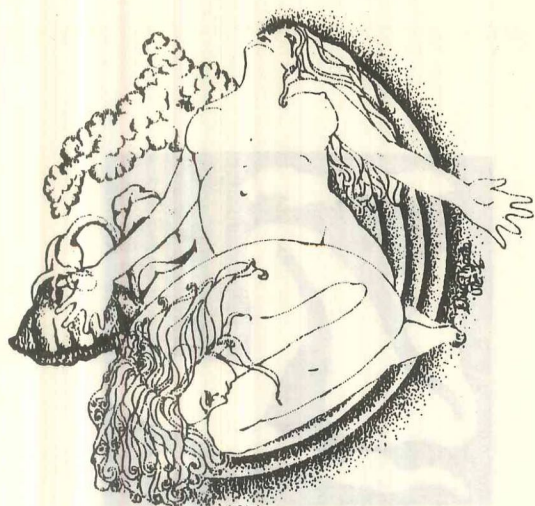
Lynn Segal, in her article entitled "Sensual Uncertainty, or Why the Clitoris Is Not Enough" (1982) tells us that in order for her to come to orgasm she needs fantasies in which she is, in her words, "passive, objectified, humiliated and whatever abuse I can imagine to be happening at the time also contains the threat of even worse to follow." (p.42). The Hite Report (1976) contains further evidence that many women desire sex where they can be passive and feel overpowered. Nancy Friday's books My Secret Garden (1973) and Forbidden Flowers (1975) in which women describe their sexual fantasies, also testify to this.

Many women's sexual fantasies parallel the women-hating fantasies found in pornography. This confirms what we already know but generally think of only in relation to men: "pornography has a sort of monopoly over mass education" (p. 26) in the area of sexuality for women as well as men (Richard Poulin and Cécile Coderre, 1983). Understandably, "modern" women, and feminists in particular (myself included) are experiencing a painful gap between our beliefs and view of the world and our sources of sexual desire. Lynn Segal (1983) describes this contrast as being "puzzling and frightening" for women, making sex a "difficult and disturbing area of life" (p. 36). These "masochistic" sexual fantasies often persist despite the pursuit of strength and autonomy in our daily lives, and despite lovers who are most gentle, caring, and stimulating. My own struggle to bridge this gap has involved much self-directed anger, self-depreciation, and frustration.

The Simple Solution

To what extent has this gap been analyzed, or even been seen as a problem for women? Most feminist authors on female sexuality recognize that many women are aroused through "masochistic" fantasy. However, it seems most of these authors do not perceive this as being a problem for women, or else they see it as a problem which is easily solved by women acting individually.

Lonnle Barbach, in For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality (1975) advises us to "stop psychoanalyzing our fantasies"



NATIONAL ACTION COMMITTEE

REPORT BACK FROM NAC - THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, MARCH 16-19, 1984, OTTAWA

Every March for the past twelve years, the National Action Committee on the status of women (NAC) has been meeting in Ottawa to elect an executive, pass resolutions and strategize on lobbying for government changes. The last day of the conference is traditionally reserved for a formal lobbying session on Parliament Hill.

One should not confuse NAC with the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW). NAC is primarily an organization that lobbies and serves as a national network for women. The CACSW is primarily a research organization that publishes studies and fact sheets and advises the government as a "internal" organization. NAC receives money from the Women's Programme at Secretary of State but it is run by a volunteer executive elected by its members. The CACSW, also federally funded, is run by a board of directors appointed by the Liberal Government. NAC produces mini-studies in the form of position papers on women's issues and publishes a quarterly magazine called Status of Women News. Essentially though, it is an action-oriented group.

My first experience at a NAC annual meeting was in 1979. It was not a auspicious beginning. At that time, I was part of a delegation of poor women who could not afford the \$50 registration fee. Because we had not registered, all of us were barred from attending any part of the conference. I had made a special trip to the Chateau Laurier Hotel on a Sunday morning to hear a panel discussion which, as best as I can recall, was about women and the economy. One of the panelists was Dorothy O'Connell, president of the Ottawa Tenants' Council - a group which represented public housing tenants (most of whom are female).



L. Archibald

and try enjoying them "fully and freely". Sheila Kitzinger's new book tells women that we are in control of our fantasies, and we can shape them at will. Other feminist authors see it simply as a matter of women rejecting male-defined sexuality and getting in touch with our "real needs" and our "natural" and "authentic" sexuality.

For the most part, the analyses given to us by these authors and sexologists imply that women's fantasies, in which women are objectified and degraded, are natural reflections of our misogynist culture and conditioning. They advise us that we can, by a simple act of will, wish these thoughts away, and we are encouraged to replace them with nice fantasies in which no one is demeaned.

Changing Our Eroticism

I think women deserve a more sophisticated analysis. In reality it is extremely difficult to change our erotic life, even though we consciously desire to do so. It is suggested that we can individually, through will power, wish away the politically "incorrect" elements of our consciousness. However, this only reinforces the notion that the problem lies in women. It does not provide any understanding of the social and political conditions that constructed our consciousness, or the conditions that would be necessary for its deconstruction.

It is time we stop avoiding or making light of the painful contradiction which pornography and our pornographic culture generally creates for women. We should recognize that this contradiction is something we cannot change easily. Personal therapy and will power are not enough, although both of these must be used.

We have to develop our understanding of sexual desire in order to make its connections with pornography and sexism clear. We now recognize and think we understand the way in which pornography influences men to despise and act violently towards women and we should continue to fight pornography on these grounds. But we must also begin to research and talk about the extent to which women's sexual desire is shaped by pornography. We can begin by starting to talk to each other about it.

While many women from the group Dorothy represented and a few students like myself stomped up and down outside the room, NAC members debated over what to do about us. One faction, led by the then-president of NAC, suggested we be ignored. Another faction, aided by a motion from social work professor Helen Levine, suggested we be invited in. Finally, a vote was taken and a majority of NAC members agreed to open up the back wall of the room and let us hear the panel discussion. I remember that I appreciated the opportunity to hear the panel speakers, but I also made a vow that I wouldn't waste any more time with a group that called itself feminist, yet refused to include poor women in its ranks. Once the back wall came down and I was able to observe the well-dressed women in attendance, I concluded that most of those present were women who thought poverty was something that happened to other people, not themselves.

Five years later, with slightly more maturity and less idealism, I decided to venture back to a NAC annual meeting. Much to my delight, there was nobody checking registration tags at the doors and all of the events, except the banquets, were apparently open to all women. There was an official charge of \$10 a day to register as an observer, though, or \$25 if you wanted lunch - which was still far beyond the means of any poor woman. Nonetheless, this time I decided to remain throughout the weekend as I was curious to observe the proceedings.

NAC is composed of 290 women's groups across the country. Members range from the IODE and the Anglican Church of Canada to the women's committees of all of the major political parties, to direct service providers such as rape crisis centres and interval houses. Individuals may join as "Friends of NAC" but they are not accorded voting status. The theme of this year's meeting was "Women mobilizing for power" and much discussion was heard throughout the weekend about preparing a NAC attack for the upcoming election. NAC does not represent or formally endorse any political candidates, but members are planning to prepare questions for use by women who attend candidate's meetings.

The meeting opened on Friday night with a panel discussion on "Women mobilizing for power". Margaret Mitchell, an NDP Member of Parliament, Jean Pigott, a former Conservative Member of Parliament, Maude Barlow, special advisor to the Prime Minister on women's issues and Greta Nemiroff, who calls herself an "independent front-liner", were the panelists. Saturday's workshops covered topics such as divorce, employment, health, social services, Native People, pornography, survival in the nuclear age, the Charter of Rights, pensions, and organizing in the political sphere. Sunday was a "business day" largely devoted to passing resolutions on such topics as peace, midwifery, abortion, pornography and day care.

The weekend's entertainment included a performance by "Sticks and Stones", a Sudbury women's theatre group which presented a skit entitled "Ladies Versus Women" - a delightful poke at the Phyllis Schafly's and R.E.A.L. women on the world. Other events included a wine and tea social hosted by the 15 women Members of Parliament.

Much effort during the weekend was spent on preparing questions for Monday's lobby session on Parliament Hill. Amazingly enough, this seemingly unwieldy coalition of women agreed to pressure the government from the same point of view on several contentious issues, including reform of the abortion laws and universal day care. According to one NAC observer, because of the intensive committee work during the year, NAC members are presented with clearly articulated positions on issues to study and ratify at the annual meetings.

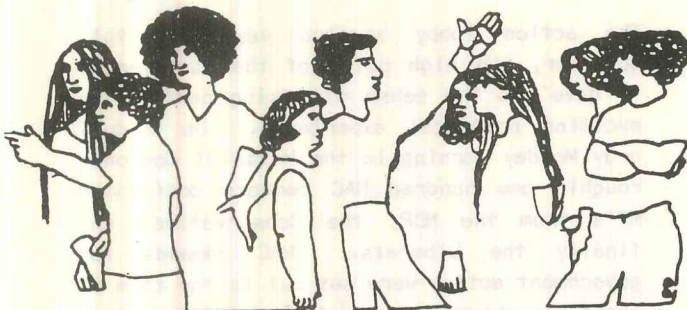
The action lobby session was, for this observer, the high point of the conference. It gave one the sense of taking part in an exciting political experience. On a dull gray Monday morning in the House of Commons, roughly one hundred NAC members confronted MP's from the NDP, the Conservatives and finally the Liberals. NAC demands for government action were set out in the form of questions which were carefully worded so that politicians were generally forced to provide "yes" or "no" responses. Issues covered included the possibility of federally-funded day care, reform of the abortion laws, new employment initiatives specifically for women and amendments to the Indian Act to allow Native women to regain their status.

The atmosphere in the room was often charged with emotion, especially when topics such as abortion and day care were raised and politicians - most notably Mark McGulgan (on abortion law reform) and Brian Mulroney (on federal funding of day care) - appeared less than willing to agree to the demands of NAC. Spontaneous applause often followed the questions of NAC members. Hisses were occasionally heard when politicians waffled on their responses or revealed themselves to be unaware of the concerns of women. In all, there was a heady feeling of power in the room when the lobby session finally ended. How much of that sense of power was illusory and how much was real remains to be seen.

At a press conference following the lobby, NAC president Chaviva Hosek stated that in her opinion NAC's lobbying style is forcing the politicians "to take us seriously". She also noted an increase in the number and stature of Liberals and Conservatives attending the session compared to earlier years. Hosek feels that this year's lobby session will help to convince the government to amend the Indian Act to allow native women to regain their status. Louise Dulude, a NAC executive member, added that Marc Lalonde indicated a new turn in government policy at

the lobby by stating the federal government would support the inclusion of homemakers in the Canada Pension Plan in future discussions with the provinces. These are both major accomplishments for NAC members, and evidence that hours of homework and strategizing can pay off.

In other areas though, it was obvious after the lobby that much work remains to be done. The Liberals did not appear willing to make any major changes to assist women in employment programs, or in the laws governing divorce, abortion or day care. Of the three parties, the NDP was most supportive of NAC's demands and the PC's seemed the least willing to commit themselves to any clear positions. Given the unlikely possibility that the NDP will form the next government, it is obvious that NAC has its future lobbying work cut out with the Liberals and Conservatives if it wants to see more changes in government policy.



After the dust settled from the conference, I had some final thoughts about NAC. It was a fascinating experience to be surrounded for a whole weekend by 300 to 400 women who all seemed to be articulate, aware, assertive and extremely active. Whether or not the organization has made up for its earlier sins against poor women is a difficult question to answer. Although there were still very few women in evidence at the conference whom one might classify as "poor", or even working class, I had the sense that the experience of five years ago had left its mark and that NAC members would not allow it to be repeated. I also noticed that a number of speakers and workshop participants were at least talking about their awareness and concern for policy changes that will benefit the poor.

Perhaps the single word that best describes my feelings after the conference is POWER - the power of women, articulate, educated, well-dressed, well-bred, white, largely Anglo-Saxon women who have decided to get in the ring with the boys to play politics. NAC, I discovered, is not a "touchy-feely" women's group. Decisions are made by majority rule, not consensus. Robert's Rules of Order are followed religiously. No attempt is made to alter them to fit into a new feminist approach to organizations. Consciousness-raising is not NAC's primary activity. The women who participate get right down to the nuts and bolts of working towards legislative change. It seems that as far as they are concerned, their consciousnesses have already been raised.

Attending the NAC conference resembled what I imagined a large-scale suffragette meeting would have been like fifty years ago. Women now have the vote, so NAC concentrates its energies on pressing for other changes which will equalize the rights of women and men. As an organization of that nature, NAC seems to be developing a sense of sophistication and style that is impressive. One hopes though, that it will not evolve right out of the league that it came from; that is to say, that it will not forget that in order to be effective, it must not become too sophisticated. For if it does, NAC runs the risk of alienating the thousands of less articulate and assertive women whom it initially intended to represent - and that includes women who are poor.

- Ellen Adelberg

Footnote:

It is possible to obtain a copy of all of the resolutions that were passed at the NAC conference by contacting:

National Action Committee on the
Status of Women
40 St. Clair Avenue, East
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 1M9

REPORTS

ON THE LINE

Making changes within and outside political structures seemed to be the common theme at the latest On The Line Workgroup workshop and dinner meeting, held April 5, 1984. Over 80 front-line human service workers, all interested in social issues and action, heard a moving keynote speech by Marion Dewar, in which she called for the active participation of front line workers in the political process, by speaking out, getting angry, pressuring politicians, and using the power which we collectively have. She reminded the audience that we do have a lot of power, although at times it is difficult to feel it, through the case overload, the frustration, the burnout. As human service workers, we are privy to our client's private lives; we have the responsibility to represent their needs in the most effective ways possible. This representation must include social and political advocacy on behalf of those for whose welfare we work.

Three workshops were held: Connections Between Political Parties and Social Work Demands, presented by representatives from the three political parties; Changing Organizations From Within, by Joan Guillen, Pat Badlet and Aline Akeson and Building Coalitions, by Hilarie McMurray.

Hilarie, a researcher with Margaret Mitchell's office (MP - Vancouver East), briefly traced the history of the Solidarity Coalition in B.C., focussing on the relationship between the trade union movement and the more grassroots women's organizations, which together made up the coalition. Organizations, such as Women Against The Budget, were the original moving force behind organized active resistance to the provincial government cutbacks in social services and other areas. (See B.T.S., Vol. 1, No. 5.)

Hilarie suggested that, despite some common concerns and dissatisfactions with the government, specific analyses, styles of operating, and relationship to the government differed significantly between organized labour and many of the social action and women's groups. This was one important factor which contributed to the erosion of the general goal and effectiveness of the Solidarity coalition. Ultimately, it became unclear as to who was making decisions, how they should be made, who reported to whom, and what were the lines of communication. The sheer numerical size of the organized labour faction also created potential disbalance and power inequalities in the coalition.

The government's insistence on negotiating only on labour issues, and with trade union leaders, created an enormous gap between the coordinating committee of the coalition and the thousands of women who were actively organizing for Solidarity. This gap was so great that women were still organizing door to door the day after the leadership reached an agreement with the government. The coalition seemed to have fallen apart without a clear victory or resolution to the wider problem of government dismantling the welfare state bit by bit.

Hilarie suggested that the important thing to learn out of the B.C. experience was that clarification of goals, methods, and lines of authority/communication/action is absolutely essential. Especially when women's groups are working with allies who are not of our own choosing and who have significantly different agendas, backgrounds and processes. The question remains for those of us who want and need to mobilize with diverse allies on various issues: how do we coordinate everyone's agenda, how do we make assumptions explicit, how do we balance unequal power relations?

The discussion that followed Hilarie's presentation evolved around the possibility of coalescing against the Children's Aid

Society's recently announced cutbacks to prevention programs (see this issue). It is clear that existing definitions of "prevention" are limited, and that present services are limited in scope and being continuously eroded. Various workshop participants had noticed greatly increased and escalating types of violent abuse in their recent caseloads. Some discussion arose about the best way to present demands and needs for action, focussing on the appropriate use of language to convey both the immediacy of the need and the urgency of the demand, without betraying the perception of the people experiencing the problem, and recognizing the political and social context within which demands are presented.

The group seemed unanimous in its feeling that adequate income for all people in our society was the most significant factor in prevention, which had to be addressed concurrently with any other preventive program. For many workshop members, fighting for social and economic justice was seen as the only real form of prevention. The workshop recommended that the On The Line Workgroup as a whole begin to develop a coalition to resist the CAS cutbacks and support CAS workers, clients and foster parents in their struggle to maintain an adequate level of service.

Reports on the other two workshops were unfortunately not available at this time.

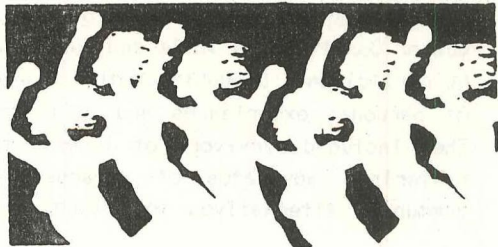
What is the potential for a group such as On The Line? Members appear to be open to new ideas, flexible, and committed to social justice. At this stage, however, the group seems to be meeting to provide one another with encouragement, and support; to share the stress; and exchange skills developed in the hard and largely unrecognized jobs performed in front line work. There is perhaps potential for the group to become an active political lobby, or to develop in other directions which bring it more into an open, public advocacy role. A commitment to work largely within the system may make this option a more difficult one to embrace.

The group is a very loose coalition of workers from many different settings, and encourages participation, new and committed members, and fresh ideas. If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Joan Auden, at 235-1716 for more information.

- Based on report by Joan Riggs, Alma Estable, and Diane Chalmers.

THE FRASER COMMITTEE REVISTED

When the Fraser committee on Prostitution and Pornography breezed into town this March I caught their act and frankly I was not impressed. Yes, they did seem concerned, and they did ask insightful questions especially if the recommendations related to the



legalities of the issues and not the degradation of women and children. But I did note that men were disproportionately represented: It was mostly men who made presentations and male organizations espousing men's rights over women's bodies (and anything else they can lay claim to) which were given the most time and treated with the most respect. Many of these groups felt further compelled to exploit women by bringing one along to sit alongside them or even present their male doctrine. (Of course those women really were coming out of choice because there really isn't a power differential between men and women).

After two days spent at the hearings, here are some highlights and impressions:

- The Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography's distinction between porn and erotica...erotica being a representation of relationships based upon "mutual pleasure" between individuals who are there by "positive, equal choice."

Some sensitive and thoughtful quotes from the Catholic Bishops...

...that true sexual pleasure celebrates the joy of life and is an expression of creative growth while with porn the human communication and love are perverted in destructive, imbalanced power relationship...

...porn exploits and dehumanizes sex, porn is anti-life, anti-sex and anti-social, porn promotes attitudes of submission and domination, sexual aggression.

The Bishops favour censorship which is seen as a lesser evil than the exploitation of people and the promotion of hate towards women and children.

Some of you may ask why are we recognizing the Catholic church's statements. After all, has it not played a key role in maintaining and supporting women's oppression? One of the committee members, Mary Eberts, asked the Bishops just such a question. It was never really answered.

Gays of Ottawa introduced an interesting angle to the debate: the suggestion that for gay men, porn (erotica) and prostitution may play a positive role in helping some men to establish their sexual orientation. My reaction was discomfort. After some discussion with a few gay friends the feeling was that men and especially boys can and are exploited by gay porn and that much of it (especially from the States) depicts not positive, equal relationships between men but relationships of dominance and submission.

And to remind us again just who the enemy is I introduce the Civil Liberties Association. Don't be misled by the title, the only civil rights they are concerned about are those of the men who consume porn. Note their response

to the censorship issue and an eloquent question by John MacLaren on the problem of choosing between freedom of expression for some members of society and the dignity and self-worth of others. They argue that restrictions and banning aren't worth the risk as something fundamental will be lost...someone's (read some man's) freedom of speech. An interesting note is that later in the day the Video Retailers Association aligned themselves with the Civil Liberties Association - just clarifying the lines of battle.

The only group to really go into any depth concerning the issue of prostitution was the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women who recommended that bawdy houses be legalized with a maximum of 5 women in each house. This would protect prostitutes from organized crime, pimps, street harassment and police.

And finally, a huge thanks to Rose Potvin and Cindy Wiggins of the Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography for a hard-hitting presentation that reminded all of us that the issue is about women and children (real people) being degraded, exploited and abused and not male rights, liberties and privileges.

After all, which is the fundamental right? "That women and children be allowed to feel and be safe or that a small group of men be allowed to reach sexual arousal from porn."

Many women question why we should bother with these government circuses. I argue that it offers an opportunity for women in their workplace, their town, union or friendship network to talk and think about an issue that furthers their understanding of the exploitation we are confronted with in this world. It's just another step toward a feminist world and that's not too bad a reason.

- Joan Riggs



TOWARD COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Feminist and prison abolition politics came together at a conference in Toronto during the weekend of 11-12 May, organized by the Quaker Committee on Jails and Justice. About 60 participants brought together a wide range of personal experiences and political work. They included survivors of incest, rape and battering, advocates of prisoners rights, community alternatives to prison, and legal

reform, community health and social workers, and facilitators of self-help therapy groups for violent men.

The opening panel set the tone and the issues, with presentations by Faye Honey Knopp, a longtime Quaker, author of 'Instead of Prisons' (a pioneering reference for prison abolitionists), feminist, and coordinator of New York State's Prison Research Education Action Project, Lorenne Clark, a leading feminist researcher on rape, co-author of 'Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality' and one of the strongest voices behind the recent change in Canada's sexual assault laws, and Jerl Wine, professor of Applied Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and founding member of the Women's Caucus. Their presentations were unusually stimulating and courageous, in their honest and searching consideration of how to combine the absolute immediate and longterm safety of women and children with humane and effective responses to sexual abuse and violence. Each of them emphasized the need to change both the social attitudes and processes which produce and nurture male sexual behaviour as an expression of power, and to develop social response that does not compromise the protection, rights, freedom or dignity of those upon whom male sexual violence is acted out.



The conference seemed to be over just as we were beginning to deal with these fundamental and complex issues in a day of workshops. That the gathering took place at all was a rare and exciting event. Even the most cursory look at who is in prison and why reveals that prisons are the state's receptacle for this society's racist, classist and sexist structures - an uncreative and desperate last resort and method of social control. In this context, the primacy of brutal and oppressive practices inside prison is inevitable, despite the 'good intentions' of many individual prison staff. Once these facts become apparent, it is abundantly clear that the principles of feminism and prison abolition must and do go hand in hand.

For further information and enquiries about conference papers, write to the Quaker Committee on Jails and Justice, 60 Lowther Avenue, Toronto, M5R 1C7.

- Helen Durie

FEMINIST MOVIE REVIEW

OTTAWA FEMINISTS EXPOSE BLAME IT ON RIO

It took one powerfully-worded movie review by one individual to spur Ottawa feminists into action. In the last issue of Breaking the Silence, Alma Estable presented a brief but biting critique of the box-office hit, Blame It on Rio. After viewing the film, Ottawa feminists joined together to organize a protest. The group, dubbing themselves the Feminist Film Review Board proceeded to produce a leaflet entitled "A Viewer's Guide to Blame It on Rio" which was distributed to film-goers at several locations in town.

Blame It on Rio, which stars Michael Caine, features no explicit violence against women or degrading depictions of sexuality. However, in the guise of a "thoroughly American comedy" it promotes father-daughter incest and exploitive relationships between older men and young girls. The viewer's guide to the movie counters the film's propaganda - by helping the audience to decipher the film's more subtle messages and by encouraging people to think and talk about what they have seen. It is available from the Incest Healing Centre for Women, P.O. Box 4841, Station E, Ottawa, K1S 5J1 or call 684-4161.

In the future the group, which has received financial support from the Student Union, Carleton School of Social Work, hopes to expose other mainstream films harmful to women in the same way.

- Wendy McKeen

BORN IN FLAMES...

A FEMINIST SCIENCE FICTION

More than 250 supporters of Breaking the Silence showed up at Ottawa U on April 19 for our first benefit - the Ottawa premiere of the powerful feminist film, Born in Flames.

A special mention must go to Kim Nash, The Carleton Women's Centre, Rosanne Lepine and the University of Ottawa's Women's Centre for their help and financial support and thanks to all the women in and around the collective who worked hard to make the evening both memorable and profitable. For those of you who missed the film, Joanie Flynt's review helps to convey its incredible energy, texture, and message. Born in Flames will be shown again in Ottawa on June 20th as a benefit for Youth Action for Peace. Don't miss it again!

New York City. 10 years after the socialist revolution in America. Nothing has changed for women.

Images

Real women's faces, women we can recognize, alive, concerned, comfortable in their bodies, dealing with the shit; cool black faces, serenity & smarts, eyes that meet, mouths that speak. /contrast/ Media make-up men & women talking the hypnotic rhetoric of a post-revolutionary socialist state that now denies struggle & change.

Radio Ragazza: Isabel, finely-honed intensity, rapid fire rhymes that bend the mind; Radio Phoenix: Honey, strong & focused, telling it like it is, delivering up the music that connects souls with reality. /contrast/ CBS National News - slick computer graphics, co-opted women and blacks, white male politicians and experts who can't look the camera in the eye.

Black lesbian whistle-blowing anti-rape bicycle squad. /contrast/ White male police violence, club swinging, head bashing, blood splashing.

Presidential special bulletin - wages for housework. Puffy white president drawing pre-written speech, offering crumbs in crisis. /contrast/ Zella Wylie, black & angry, straight-talking defiance of a murdered sister's coverup, making the connections to the nation on taxpayers' T.V. time.

Voices from the underground torched, New Phoenix & Ragazza Radio rising from the flames, funk & punk unite for spunk, wild women on wheels, louder & surer because all is at risk. /contrast/ World Trade Center, turgid transmission tower; sterile media male fills screen, spews flat repressive words. /finale/ Long awaited women's justice, in our hands at last; tower deflates, man melts away; dynamite!

Feminist Science Fiction

The United States of America is celebrating the 10th anniversary of the War of Liberation.

We are introduced to 4 groups of women; all dissatisfied with the position of women in the present socialist democracy, all for different reasons, all with different solutions.

The Women's Army is a grassroots organization racially mixed though predominately Black & lesbian. The Army agitates for change through personal outreach & support, demonstrations, leafletting and vigilante protection. Children and the aged are seen only in association with the Army. The F.B.I. helps introductions with the aid of slides: "Adelaide Norris, 24, she seems to be the founder of the Women's Army. Hilary Hurst, 26, we figure she must be the acting

leader of the Army though she doesn't seem to be responsible to Norris".

The three other groups are media associated: 2 underground radio stations & the mainstream Party paper.

Both the women's underground radio stations verbally dissent, though from different headspaces:

Honey of Phoenix Radio, "a station not only for the liberation of women but for the liberation of all for the freedom of life. We are here because we have fought in the war for liberation & we all bear witness to what has happened since that war. We still see the depression & oppression that exists both day & night. For we are the children of the land & we will continue to fight - not against the flesh & blood but against the system...For we have stood on the promises far too long now, that we can all be equal under the cover of social democracy where the rich get richer and the poor just wait on their dreams." Music. Woman singing soul "I'll take you there"...

Isobel. "This is Radio Ragazza bringing you the latest news observation. Angry unemployed people are rioting in the streets...what do you think the government plans to do about this situation?...The same bloody tactic they pulled before the revolution...all the poor & unemployed will be shoved economically into the ghetto....our government is going to flood the streets with the best smack imaginable & it's gonna send everybody into a deep narcotic sleep where they will not weep or cry out anymore."

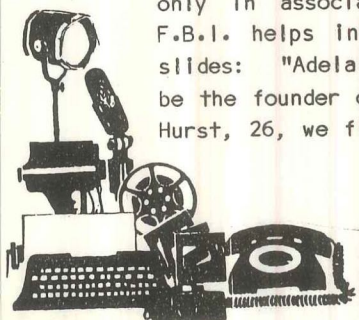
Surveillance

It's enough to make you paranoid! Snapshots, slides, movies of intimacy where bedroom cameras are implied; bugging devices in telephones and houses; break-in and search; Zella is shadowed by an agent; even satellite shots of Adelaide training in the western Sahara! When the Party women join forces with the Women's Army, Pat Crosby reveals "they have a file on every one of us...the idea that each woman is working alone is a false one...they can pick each one of us up at anytime."

The Making of a Radical

On the Belle Gayle talk show we get our first in-depth introduction to "three enterprising young women who, as part of their work on the Socialist News have developed the Socialist Youth Review." Pat Crosby, Becky Dunlop & Cathy Martin; homogeneous in colour, class, age & ideology.

The editors' interview weaves in & out of street scene image & dialogue. The subtle juxtaposing of phrases such as "revolution of the mind" against the background shots of Honey & Isobel being approached to join the women's Army - revolution in the streets - effectively positions the three as intellectuals; self important, yet removed. Their personal compromise as women for the



good of the party is demonstrated by this same method as we see prostitutes soliciting & earning their wages with the interviewee's voice overlay "statistics will show that the percentage of prostitution & rape are significantly lower...it's impossible to ever have complete abolition..."

Adelaide Norris meets with the 3 Party women in a restaurant to ask them to cover the Woman's Army demonstration in their paper.

Pat: "Look, if we support a single demonstration by one pressure group it's separatist. We would be splitting the party after major progress.

Adelaide: I don't understand how you women can say that women's groups are separatist. You can't even see how it's affecting you. You know you're oppressed too, it's pathetic, but you can't even see it.

Becky: Look, we know there are problems but things are so much better now than they were before. It's not going to happen overnight. It's important that the Party remains strong so that progress can be made.

Adelaide: Better now? Ya know when my Mum brought us up there were 8 of us & she took care of us by domestic work all by herself and abortions, she didn't even think about abortions and daycare, hunh, we took care of ourselves. And there are plenty of women now living in that same manner, black women, latin women, young women living that same lifestyle.

Pat: But if we remove the only structure that exists for progress we stand to lose everything, it'll be worse than it was before.

Adelaide: I knew you wouldn't understand. Look, if you're not going to write about it, at least come out of class guilt."

After the death of Adelaide Norris and Zella Wylie's attack on their inaction, ("I don't know where the hell you are coming from that you can sit there and let this thing get glossed over...") the women put out this statement: "As editors of the Socialist Youth Review we have been puzzled by the official reports on the death of Adelaide Norris, the founder of the Women's Army. Grave inconsistencies in the police records have led us to believe that Norris did not commit suicide but was murdered for political reasons. As party members & editors of this paper we have objections to Norris' idealistic & separatist views however we respected her commitment as a community organizer. It was alleged by the government that Norris was involved in arms deals...if that was so why wasn't she allowed a fair trial..."

Pat Crosby, with her proper British accent, becomes the spokeswoman for the 3.

The Women's Army, dubbed "Girl Gang" by the media, hijacks the CBS presidential address to expose the murder of Adelaide Norris. The Party women put out an even stronger statement:

"As editors of the Socialist Youth Review, we would like to comment on the CSB break-in

last week by the Women's Army. In a videotape by Zella Wylie the Army exposed government duplicity...we extend our support to the Army as a legitimate revolutionary group because we also believe that the Party has been undermining the economic and social position of women...Women fought the war of liberation with the expectation that the government would work for a true egalitarian society. Then and now the Party has argued that social transformation must wait until there is economic stability; but unless we struggle now for our rights we will always be oppressed..."

They lose their jobs.

Zella Wylie is arrested.

The 2 women's underground radio stations are destroyed by "vandals".

The National News, with its male oriented introduction graphics, is wiped off the screen and who should appear but Pat Crosby! "We interrupt this program to bring you a special message from the Women's Army. We will continue to make this kind of direct action until everyone understands and is prepared to do something about the way the government has betrayed women. Look at the reality of your lives; you live in a fake socialist state, one which exists in name only.... There can be no true socialism until we are all represented in government. We demand a quota system that is truly expressive of our numbers and we will not stop fighting until we get proportional representation in government..."

Background music: women singing "No woman, no cry".

Honey & Isobel set up a joint station in stolen U-Haul trucks and start making the connections. "This is Isobel of the New Phoenix & Ragazza Radio with a statement on behalf of Adelaide Norris and the Women's Army. Her murder serves as a warning for women everywhere of the struggle we face...and the story must & shall be told. It is not only the story of women's oppression but it is the story of sexism, racism, bigotry, nationalism, false religion & the blasphemy of the state controlled church. It is the story of environmental poisoning & nuclear warfare, of the powerful & the powerless... It is all our responsibility as individuals & together to examine & re-examine everything... The fight will not end in terrorism & violence...it is the transformation of shit into gold, the illumination of dark chaotic night into light. This is the time of sweet sweet change for us all".

The media is the message...

HATS OFF TO LIZZIE

If you passed her on the street, you might never notice her. An ordinary looking white woman with a high voice, she physically



contrasts with the characters in her film. However, the underlying message that "ordinary women", if unified in purpose, "can do a lot of damage" brings Lizzie Borden out from behind her camera. The vision of the woman who produced, directed and edited Born in Flames is easily woven into those of Adelaide, Hilary, Zella, Honey, Isobel and Pat. These lives, and the effect the film has on the lives of the women who see it, are all threads in what is becoming a very strong rope that we will use to tug at the foundations of patriarchy.

PLUMES DE FEMMES



FEMINISM AND CANADIAN POOR WOMEN

The week of "INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY" a group of low-income women and I were looking for an event that would interest us and help us celebrate "OUR DAY" among the middle class women.

Of course there was no event that spoke to these single parent poor women. I have run head-on into a truth that bothers me constantly and that I, like many others I am sure, bury for awhile until it confronts me again. As it did this week.

I understand all the reasons for not including under-educated and low-income women in most feminist events but that doesn't make it any easier to live with.

Women who are under-educated, can't write as easily, and often are not as articulate as most feminists, women who have been stigmatized and blamed for their situation...these are women without a voice in our society...even among other women. Women who are emotionally and physically exhausted from raising children on an inadequate income, facing discrimination and hatred from everyone including the courts of our land are not always the most exciting and intellectually-stimulating women to invite to meetings. Any extra energy these women have, they need to survive and try to keep their children from dead-ending before they are 16. If they have energy they need it to escape their lives of lousy husbands, being beaten, the Children's Aid, teachers, social workers, probationary officers, housing authorities, landlords, the police and all other people in authority in their lives. These professionals tell them in a variety of ways that they are failures as parents, and of course as women. Not only are these women

exhausted, they look it. So escape it is...many in the only way available to them...out to a bar with the girls...total oblivion...for an hour or two and, blissfully, a little sleep.

Why are we able to look at the hardships of women in 3rd world countries but not our own? There are 2.5 million poor women in our country.

We changed the constitution, why not the horrible existence of our "women" and their 1 million children who live far below the poverty line.

Why does it continue to be easier to compete with men than help our own women...why is it so difficult for young well-educated women, some single, many without children of their own, to reach out and help their sisters. I hope that it is because we don't know how, and not because down deep, we also hate these women, that we also blame the victim, that we also hate the look of poverty in this rich society rather than realizing how lucky we have been. Because it is the luck of the draw...who your parents were...who you socialized with at school...who you fell in love with...whether you had handicapped children...whether you stayed healthy...whether you had learning disabilities...whether you are a woman.

It does not depend on how hard you work...because single parent poor women, are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year with no holidays...no time off for good behaviour...no union to cry that this is inhuman. If we asked a doorman to be on call for these hours and with this pay, human rights would be pounding down our door. By not recognizing the exhaustion and stress we expect these women to work under, we are condemning them to illness and depression for the rest of their lives and many to death in their 40's and 50's.

I am assuming that we DO care and want to help, but don't know how. Let's start having workshops and seminars about and for Canada's poor single parents, let's lobby politicians about their plight, let's reach out to the women themselves. Let's advocate on their behalf so that they know they are not alone, but that other women, luckier women, more privileged women are trying to help them. The bottom line is that we are sisters after all. LET'S MAKE A COMMITMENT IN 1984 TO ERADICATE THE POVERTY THAT IS SO OPPRESSIVE TO OUR SISTERS AND IN 1985 AND IN 1986 AND 1987 UNTIL WE HAVE A GUARANTEED ANNUAL INCOME TO ENSURE SOME ECONOMIC SAFETY TO THESE WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN.

- Aline Akeson

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE FRASER COMMITTEE

I wish to express appreciation for your analysis and article in the most recent issue of Breaking The Silence--Pornography and Prostitution: What Are The Real Issues?

When I read the preliminary "issues" paper from the Fraser Committee, I was enraged by the various messages which were blatantly or indirectly contained in the "objective" and objectifying pages of bureaucratic rhetoric. Instead of responding directly to the Issues Paper, I chose to submit a brief to the Committee, since they were visiting Edmonton first, in January. But, I felt so helpless and without energy in dealing with their document. I had to select where to put my energy and time and felt unfinished regarding their public, written statements.

Thank-you for your work. I now feel more comfortable that the document has been addressed and hope you plan to submit your analysis to the Committee.

I have enclosed a copy of my brief, for your information.

Carry it on!!

Sincerely and In Spirit,

Ardelle Dudley
Women's Counselling Services of Edmonton

Unfortunately, we could not reprint Ardelle Dudley's brief in its entirety but this excerpt gives us a powerful sense of her pain and frustration. Please write to her at: Women's Counselling Services of Edmonton R.R. 1, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, Canada T8L 2N7, if you'd like a complete copy.

Thanks Ardelle.

"PLAY IT AGAIN SAM"

I wish I could submit a well-documented and well-researched "full, written brief" to the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution. I wish I could do a good "critical analysis" concerning pornography and prostitution for the Committee. I wish I could satisfy Mr. Paul Fraser's interest in "fairness" by understanding those who make money from killing us; understanding their need to make their livelihood by killing us...

I wish I could, I really do!
But I can't, I really can't!...

I ask you to do a visualization with me. I ask you to experience that violence with me. The violence against us which the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution represents...

I imagine the words I will speak, each one a symbol, a cold symbol of acts which I have

experienced in "real life", acts which the women in the room have experienced in "real life", acts which the men in this hearings room have perpetrated upon women, some of whom will be sitting together in this hearings room (we will have had these experiences in real life, will we have not?). I imagine trying to stay calm, trying to remain "objective" in order to talk about the horrifying process of objectification, the terrorist activity of objectifying (we must remain objective, must we not?)...

I imagine the long painful day coming to a choking close. I hear the hearings officers dismissing us and expressing their appreciation for our obedience, telling us how grateful we are that we have all been such a significant part of this historically and morally uplifting and hopeful event. They invite us to write them somewhere in Ottawa sometime in the next five years (or just prior to a change in the Government, whichever comes first) to obtain an absolutely free copy of the document which outlines their findings and recommendations. As a last reminder, they welcome us to attend tomorrow's hearings in this very room, when they will be hearing from the city's pimps, whose financial livelihood depends upon their stables of women, and also from Edmonton's well-heeled businessmen who will present arguments supporting the licensing of city prostitutes as a solution to our "Dirty Street Problem" (clean streets is a top priority, is it not? Keeping the dirt in the cars and the city core motels/hotels is the preferred solution, is it not?). Another hard day of gathering evidence to prove there is a problem, coming up!!!

WHAT'S NEW AT THE OTTAWA WOMEN'S BOOKSTORE

After a busy and satisfying spring, the Women's Bookstore is gearing down - slightly. During most of May, a "book-buyer's delight" sale is on. Come browse for some great deals. June may prove to be almost as hectic as March, with conferences and special events. On June 13th, Bella Absug, well-known American political feminist/activist will be guest speaker at the opening dinner for the Women's Caucus of the Liberal party. She will be coming to the store to meet women and promote her new book Gender-Gap - '84. More details on time will be forthcoming shortly.

In between holiday (much needed), work continues on the Bookstore catalogue, improving the inventory system, preparing for the 1984-85 school year and dreaming up new and future schemes. Also, Christine Nielsen, has been hired recently as a part-time employee.

Our second year ends on June 30th. We have expanded financially and our inventory has grown. For the support and suggestions from

the ever growing women's community, we extend our thanks. A celebration is being planned for September 11th - our second anniversary. Have a wonderful summer.

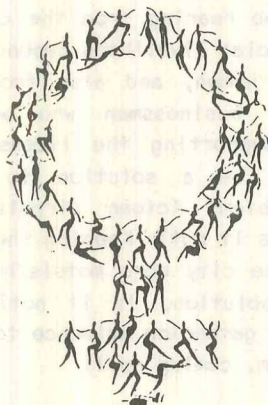
In Sisterhood - Lee And Peg

At The Bookstore

PURE LUST: ELEMENTAL FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY - Mary Daly "Continuing the journey begun in Gyn/Ecology, Daly reclaims the passion and creativity within women. Hags, Crones, Harpies, Fairies, and Amazons carry on the quest for the ecstasy of a new sphere of pure happiness." \$25.95

SEX AND DESTINY - Germaine Greer
"A brilliantly written, humorous and insightful piece of writing. A challenge to the ethos of the nuclear family." \$18.95

MAKING WAVES: THE GRINDSTONE STORY - The Grindstone Island Collective
A brief pictorial and verbal history of the beginnings of Grindstone Island - how it became a centre for peace, education and social change.



RESOURCES

SEULES EN GRAND NOMBRE - New Francophone Women's Group

Over 15 women heads of families met last April at an Information day held at the St-Pierre Community Centre, in Ottawa. After very moving discussion and sharing about their situation as sole-support parents, they have decided to continue meeting. They will address their specific needs and develop ways to offer each other mutual support.

Among the many issues covered in the initial meeting were:

- Women's economic difficulties when raising families alone;
- our society's need to better respond to the urgent financial and personal needs of single mothers;
- what political actions can be taken by women themselves to address these injustices;
- the need for men as well as women to discuss relations between the sexes.

The group is approaching the Federation des femmes canadienne-françaises for support. The women who participated in this first meeting are in the centre of the struggle to obtain a better quality of life for women. Feminists, social workers, community developers, government officials and lobby groups should be listening to them.

For more information, contact Diane Vachon, Information Officer, FFCC, 232-5791.

- Alma Estable

REPORT FROM RENFREW COUNTY

Renfrew County, with an area of 309,000 square miles, is the largest county in Ontario. The population of 80,414 is largely rural, with high rates of poverty, unemployment, alcoholism and social isolation.

Concern about the issue of abused women continues to grow here, and a small network of services is beginning to fall into place. At the core are the two county shelters, AVOCA House in Eganville and Bernadette McCann House in Pembroke. Since 1978 they have provided the emergency shelter and support so critical for battered women.

In 1983 the Renfrew County Committee on Abused Women was formed. The committee is composed of concerned individuals from local health, mental health and social services, and the two shelters. The purpose of the committee is to develop a programme of public education and action on the issue of abused women. We hope this will strengthen and enhance the important educational work that our two shelters have already been doing. At the present time (April 1984), we have hired a short-term worker to begin this educational process in the county. In the future we hope this will develop into a permanent position.

In June 1984, the first group of men who batter will get underway. Three local men have been hard at work over the past several months to put together this essential service. We are pleased and optimistic that they have committed themselves to this important work.

If you would like to know more about our efforts to address this issue in a rural area, or would like to share your ideas with us, please get in touch.

Candace Wooley,
Social Worker
Pembroke General Hospital
705 Mackay Street
Pembroke, Ontario
K8A 1G8
(613) 732-2811, Ext. 257

FEMINIST MUSIC

Arlene Mantle, "On the Line". A songbook and tape of music for social change. Songs are written by Arlene Mantle with help from trade unionists and concerned working people. The cost is \$3 for the songbook (64 pages) or \$10 for the tape and book together, plus 50 cents postage per book, or \$1 for the tape package. More information and copies can be obtained by writing to "On the Line" Publishing at 18 The Lindens, 100 Bain Ave. Toronto, Ont. M4K 1E8 c/o Jayne Walker

DES ACTION/CANADA

"DES...The wonder drug you should wonder about if you were born between 1941 and 1971." This is the slogan of DES Action/Canada. DES, whose chemical name is diethylstilbestrol, is a hormone drug that was given to many pregnant women between 1941 and 1971. It was sold under many different brand names. DES mothers and their female children may develop health problems such as changes to the vagina or cervix, cancer and difficult pregnancies. Male children may be affected by changes in the sex organs and low sperm counts. All DES daughters should be examined by their doctors once every six months. If you would like more information about DES, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

DES Action/Canada,
P.O. Box 233, Snowdon,
Montreal, P.Q.
H3X 3T4
(514) 482-3204

UPCOMING EVENTS

Grindstone Island, Summer Programs, For more information & to register, contact: Grindstone Co-op, P.O. Box 564, Station P, Toronto, Ont., M5S 2T1, Phone - 416-923-4215.

Women and Spirit, May 31 - June 3rd,
Third Annual Weekend

A gathering of women of all ages to explore and experience personal and collective energies. Areas shared may include massage, music making, healing circles, spiritual herstory, meditation, story telling, body awareness, colour and auras.

Cost ranges from \$95 to \$125, according to income. A non-refundable deposit of \$35 is required to reserve a space.

Celebration - A Women's Retreat,
June 29 - July 2nd

A time to relax, talk and be as active or quiet as you wish. Possible activities include sunbathing, canoeing, meditation, group discussions, volleyball, swimming. Children are not encouraged to come. Alternative childcare arrangements are encouraged. Cost is \$115-125, according to income, subsidies are available. A non-refundable deposit of \$40 is required to

reserve a space. For more information contact: Catherine Drew, Toronto, 416-463-1662 (h), 416-966-8331 (w) or Peggy Large, Ottawa, 613-232-0553.

Women and Militarism: Feminist Analysis and Choices for Resistance,

August 30 - September 3rd

A conference which will bring women together to share a feminist analysis of the links between women's struggles, militarism and imperialism. There will also be skill-building sessions on topics such as agenda-building, meeting facilitation, consensus decision-making, group conflict resolution and non-violent action.

Cost ranges from \$145 to \$170 according to income. Children are welcome and childcare will be provided.



CONFERENCES

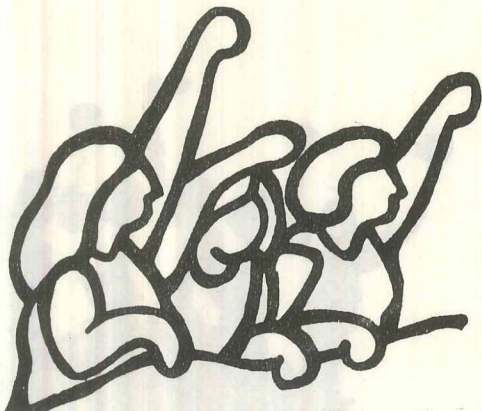
OCLOW'S Annual Conference, Toronto, August 19, 20, 21, 1984. "Education for Change: Women in the Next Decade" is the theme of the upcoming conference of the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women. It is designed to encourage discussions about current issues in the education of women and to focus on the role, content and format of education for women in the future. The conference is for educators, social workers, guidance counsellors, teachers, health and fitness educators, consultants, programmers, administrators and managers.

The conference is co-sponsored by CCLOW and The Department of Adult Education at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Principal sessions will be simultaneously translated. Some presentations and workshops will be conducted in English and others will be conducted in French.

For further information, write or telephone:
Eleanor Christopherson, Conference
Co-ordinator, C.C.L.O.W., 692 Coxwell Ave.,
Toronto, Ont. M4C 2B6

Lesbian Sexuality Conference, June 8-10,
O.I.S.E., Toronto. For more information
write:

Branching Out Conference,
Box 141,
2 Bloor St. W.,
Suite 100-99,
Toronto, Ont.
M4W 3E2



RANTS AND RAVES

Applause to:

- * Mr. Justice Robert Reid of the Ontario Supreme Court, who decided that a father of an unborn child had no legal status to prevent it from being aborted. The woman had already been given approval by a therapeutic abortion clinic on the basis of medical and mental grounds. Nice to see the law recognize at least our rights over our own bodies.

A big hug to:

- * Charity Grant, a 10 year old girl in Iowa, who was awarded the Optimist Club's award for reading but turned it down because the group does not admit women as members. "I wanted the prize badly but I thought it would be a bigger prize to help stop discrimination against women," Charity said. "I'm a female and this kind of thing shouldn't be going on."

Thumbs down to:

- * The Public Service Commission, in a press release entitled "Strengthening of Programmes for Women," recently announced

the closure of its Equal Opportunities for Women Office.

- * Judge Michael Bourassa of the Northwest Territories who gave three men a sentence of one week each for having sex with a 13 year old girl. The Criminal Code provides a maximum life sentence for anyone convicted of sex with a female under 14 years of age.

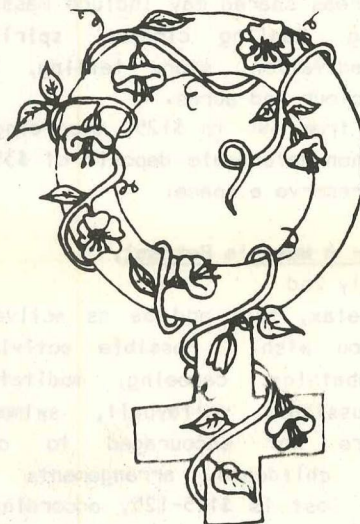
His rationale for the sentence was that intercourse with young girls is a part of life in the North. "These men were living their lives the way people live in the eastern Arctic...there is not necessarily an age restriction on sexual relations. The young girl, who is described by the judge as "slow," has been left a legacy from this experience...no justice and a baby.

- * Alberta Chief Justice William McGillivray, representing a three member appeal panel, reduced the sentence of a man convicted of assaulting his wife because the wife acted like a "complete shrew." After all, as one judge put it, the woman "would have provoked a saint." Of course, no one asked whether the man might have been mature enough to take responsibility for his actions. Just another example of scapegoating a woman for a man's "uncontrollable" action.

- * Judge James Byrd of Orange County Circuit (Florida) who told a 13 year old girl who had been missing classes because she was being sexually harassed at school that she "asked for it." Byrd stated that generally "girls who are treated that way ask for it."

This pinnacle of justice is the same Judge who gave a man probation for second degree murder. After all his victim was only a prostitute...and therefore one of the lowest elements of society.

Thanks to our reader Marie Patrick of Women at Work in Fredericton, New Brunswick who found this rant for us.



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