

PRIORITIES



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SOCIALIST
PERSPECTIVE

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Pride of Bearing

*The women walk
bodies balancing
each day's measure
of history's weight.*

— by Michelle Gibbs
Grenada, W.I., 1980

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"The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."

— NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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Thanks to all the workers who have made the production and distribution of this magazine possible.

On the road to feminism

"... feminism without any political engagement, any political clout, any socialist emphasis, becomes just an exercise. It doesn't challenge any institutions. We have our fate in our hands. All we have to do is seize it."

— Kate Millett

The Women's Rights Committee draft statement of purpose, *Halfway to Feminism*, presented for discussion with women candidates running in the next provincial election, is published on page 13 of this issue.

This statement represents the work done by the Committee to provide the NDP with a comprehensive body of policy on women's rights and a definition of the centrality of women's liberation to the achievement of socialism. This has come about through feminists working in the NDP to find political solutions to the oppression of women and to work towards a government dedicated to the liberation of women.

We have thirteen women running for election; nearly all of them have expressed their commitment to feminism. The Women's Rights Committee has emphasized the necessity for women parliamentary representatives to work collectively, among themselves, and with women organized in the NDP and the women's movement. It is going to require the collective organized strength of all feminists, their elected NDP representatives, and their social allies acting in concert to defend gains women have made as well as achieve all the goals of women's liberation.

A lot of the battles we have to fight now are purely defensive—to stop the cutbacks and takebacks being imposed by a ruling class united as never before. Women hired under affirmative action programs have been laid off; wage cuts and unemployment hit women hardest; limited abortion rights are under attack by Borowski and at Lions Gate and other hospitals; technological change threaten women's jobs—the list expands every day.

These battles are part of the war we must win for the ultimate achievement of a socialist society based on production for need not private profit, the only kind of society which can provide and guarantee the rights of women.

The rulers of this country are now united in their determination to orchestrate the revival of the capitalist system at the expense of the exploited layers of society. It will need a similar unity of the organizations of their victims—the NDP, the trade unions, the organizations of women and other socially disadvantaged sectors of the population—to defeat them and to take everyone along the whole road to socialism.

About this issue...

We owe an apology to readers who missed receiving our usual May/June issue.

What with hard-pressed support workers on summer breaks and problems in scheduling coverage of important events including our May conference and the June meeting with women candidates, we decided to combine the May/June and July/August issues into one summer issue.

This special summer publication has 24 pages instead of the usual 16. Happy summer reading!

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT



by
Shelley Rivkin

Women's Conference

With the May 1 successful conference behind us, we have another example of how positive and necessary it is for feminists within the party to get together to discuss and solidify our policy.

The dynamics of reviewing, analyzing and debating what will become the substance of our election platform was an invigorating and expiring experience. The strategies for implementation were well thought out and creative, clearly reflecting the skills and knowledge of the women delegates.

Those of us who had an opportunity to act as resource people to the skill-building sessions were impressed by the experience and commitment of the participants and are confident that these delegates will play a substantive role during an election.

At the May 2 Steering Committee meeting the question of presenting our election platform to women candidates and enlisting their support was discussed at length as it has been our policy to work actively in election campaigns for those women candidates who have made a commitment to feminist/socialist principles. As a result, a decision was made to invite all women candidates running provincially to the June 27 Steering Committee meeting.

Seven candidates and forty women turned out to review the election platform and discuss how the candidates would campaign on the principles contained in the program.

The two and a half hour meeting gave us time only to touch briefly on issues. It was apparent, however, that those in attendance were concerned about ensuring that topics such as technological change, Repeal 251, non-traditional jobs, equal pay for work of equal value, and quality child care would be raised during an election.

It is hoped that this meeting is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue between the Women's Rights Committee and women candidates that will ultimately lead to the election of feminist socialists in B.C.

Working together - Women' Rights Committee meets women candidates

by Jo Dunaway Lazenby

Childcare, pensions, abortion, technological change and older women were among the issues discussed when provincial NDP women candidates met with members of the Women's Rights Committee Sunday, June 26.

The objectives of the meeting were to discuss policy issues and establish a basis for collective action so that all NDP

women candidates can work together and with the Women's Rights Committee for the implementation of NDP policy on women's rights.

In order to present as accurate a report as possible for those women who were unable to attend the meeting the following report is presented as a set of chronological notes rather than a "write-up."

Welcome

Shelley Rivkin, Women's Rights Committee Chairwoman, welcomed the approximately 40 women and introduced Mercia Stickney and Joyce Meissenheimer, representatives on Federal Council; Hilda Thomas, Participation of Women representative from B.C.; Elaine Bernard, Provincial Executive representative and Margaret Birrell, Women's Organizer.

Shelley reminded the gathering that recent polls have shown that women voters are indicating strong support for the NDP based on our position on issues such as childcare and abortion.

Women candidates present at the meeting were: Eileen Dailly, MLA Burnaby North; Olga Kempo, North Vancouver Capilano; Sophie Werenchuk, Dewdney; Carol Langford, Surrey; Jean Swanson, Vancouver-Little Mountain; Hilda Thomas and Pat Marchak, Vancouver-Point Grey and Joyce Whitman, Vancouver-South.

Regrets were received from MLA's Rosemary Brown, Burnaby-Edmonds; Barbara Wallace, Cowichan-Malahat and Karen Sanford, Comox, and from candidate Muriel Overgaard, Oak Bay-Gordon Head.

Each candidate spoke briefly and this was followed by a question and discussion period.

Eileen Dailly, one of the women responsible for re-activating the Women's Rights Committee in the early 70's, congratulated the Committee for its work over the years and assured it of the full support of the women in the provincial caucus.

Dailly stated her "unequivocal support" of the right of a woman to make the choice in the matter of abortion.

She was pleased with the policy passed at the last convention placing

childcare under the Ministry of Education "as learning begins the day a child is born." She had examined this step when serving as Minister of Education. Also, as Minister, she had created the first woman advisor to the Ministry on sex discrimination and moves were made towards eliminating sexism in school texts.

Dailly is the NDP Provincial Secretary critic and told the meeting that pensions are an area of critical concern for women today. The federal government will be releasing a white paper on pensions soon and she urged everyone to study it carefully.

Sophie Werenchuk, a party member since 1963, said she had attended meetings of the women's committee in its early days. She stressed that it is important for women to support each other and work together.

Werenchuk said that she supports party policy on women's rights issues. Her prime interests in the area of policy are health, human resources and education. She works with an infant development program.

Hilda Thomas has been an active member of the Women's Rights Committee since its founding days. She expressed her concern that as a woman candidate she be able to put forward the party's policy on vital issues in the strongest and most positive way. It is not enough, she said, to just pay lip service to issues such as a woman's right to choice in abortion—the candidates must assume leadership roles. The same holds true of other vital issues such as equal pay for work of equal value, technological change and the situation of older women.

Women are under attack, stated Thomas. Cutbacks in services affect the most vulnerable people in society. Job layoffs affect women first. And women are being subjected to a public media campaign that objectifies and victimizes women and is eroding and undermining the small gains of the last decade or so. The victimization of women is universal and has been present throughout history. We must move on every possible front to overcome it, said Thomas, and the NDP must take the leadership in this struggle. "No society can call itself truly human until it has achieved equality for women." →

A woman's place is in the Legislature

13 WOMEN NOMINATED

In preparation for the next provincial election, thirteen women candidates have been nominated to represent their constituencies.

While not all of them are running in what are considered winnable seats, a majority of them *can* be elected if enough hard work is put into their campaigns.

The candidates are:

Rosemary Brown, Burnaby-Edmonds
Eileen Dailly, Burnaby North
Olga Kempo, North Vancouver Capilano
Carol Langford, Surrey
Pat Marchak, Vancouver Pt. Grey
Muriel Overgaard, Oak Bay-Gordon Head
Karen Sanford, Comox
Yvonne Storey, Okanagan N.
Jean Swanson, Vancouver-Little Mountain
Hilda Thomas, Vancouver Pt. Grey
Barbara Wallace, Cowichan Malahat
Sophie Werenchuk, Dewdney
Joyce Whitman, Vancouver South



Eileen Dailly



Hilda Thomas



Carol Langford



Joyce Whitman



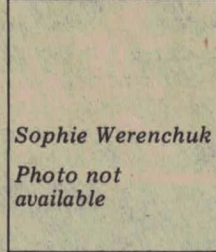
Jean Swanson



Olga Kempo



Pat Marchak



Sophie Werenchuk
Photo not available

Carol Langford said that it was because of the work and determination of the Women's Rights Committee during the past 10 years that candidates have a body of policy that they can be proud to stand for. It is important that the NDP candidates work to ensure equal status for all members of society because, until then, we will not have achieved the social and economic justice that we have fought for since the days of the CCF.

She emphasized that "we can't achieve social equality without political equality—as witnessed by the defeat of ERA in the U.S." So it is important to have women candidates in winning ridings and to work to get them elected. We must have the power to put our policy into action.

Economic equality is essential, said Langford, and we must work on areas such as access to non-traditional jobs, equal pay for work of equal value, older women's access to work, maternity leave and childcare.

Langford said that she and other candidates look to the Women's Rights Committee to translate these broad policy areas into concrete details for candidates to use during the campaign.

Jean Swanson outlined the Sacred attack on women and the poor and emphasized the urgency of the NDP forming the next government. She reported that in her canvassing, she ran into issues such as low wages for women, women laid off, poor working conditions, lack of affordable housing and childcare, over and over again.

She reported that her areas of emphasis at this time are equal pay for work of equal value, tech change "which

can wipe out whole categories of women's jobs," and the cutbacks in health that are jeopardizing home care and long term care.

Joyce Whitman, a family lawyer, said that she had been involved in the struggle to bring in and protect the Family Relations Act during the past 10 years. She is concerned about women's income which is drastically affected by marriage break-up. We must look at family law reform, she said, and "find a way of diverting mothers and children from the court system into a more caring way of handling family problems."

Whitman raised the issue of prostitution and pointed to the need for policy clarification on this issue. Other areas of importance are health care, older women and women and jobs. She said that she would like to see a pamphlet on child care that could be used by candidates.

Olga Kempo outlined how cutbacks in funds for education affect women now and in the future. She first became politically aware around the abortion issue and would like to see more support for family planning and sex education. She described pornography as "the most blatant form of put-down of women in our society and one we must fight."

Referring to the "devastating sense of isolation I encounter in women when I am canvassing," Kempo expressed her own need for support from other women fighting for the same causes. "I don't want to come out of this campaign a battered person," she said.

Pat Marchak said she supported the party's policy on women's rights and

had been directing her own skills into the areas she thought she could best serve. Her research in economics and the labour force in resource towns in the forest industry shows that women receive only token employment in this industry, there is little work for them in single industry towns, no childcare, and although they frequently have more education and training than the men they are dependent on, they have no choice of employment but a handful of service jobs. Their lives are unstable and frustrating. In the fishing industry, jobs in the canneries and fish processing sectors are segregated into men's jobs and women's jobs and this is reflected in the pay. Everywhere women are used as a reserve labour force.

It is important, says Marchak, that we develop strong arguments about the nature of "value" in "equal pay for work of equal value"—a slogan is not good enough. "We must make a strong argument for the skills of these people."

Most research, says Marchak, has been done on middle class women and middle class jobs. We must come to grips with the problems experienced by working class women too.

Discussion: In the discussion period that followed candidates and members of the Women's Rights Committee exchanged views on technological change, abortion, cutbacks to accessibility to training for non-traditional jobs, the necessity for non-sexist schoolbooks and a non-sexist education system.

Finally, the importance of working collectively was stressed. It was generally agreed that it is essential that we not only identify with women but that we take the lead in offering positive alternatives to meet the needs of women. The Women's Rights Committee can provide support for NDP women candidates in giving prominence to our women's rights policy in the campaign.

Margaret Birrell, Women's Organizer, closed the meeting by reminding all that the Women's Rights Committee is not merely a small policy committee. Every woman in the party is a member of the committee, and by acting together we can give one another strength. We must not leave individual women out on their own to be "picked off." She pointed out that our strength lies in solidarity, and suggested that in their campaigns feminist candidates should follow the model of collective decision-making developed by the Committee and the Women's Caucus.

This initial exchange among women candidates and members of the Women's Rights Committee was both stimulating and productive. We hope that it will be the first of many such meetings. ♀

Joyous celebration - Women of Grenada

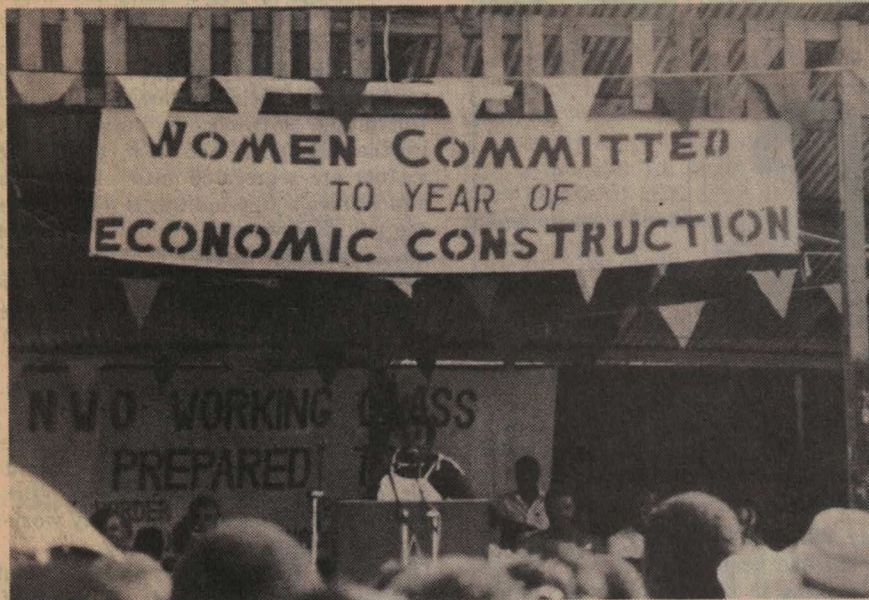


PHOTO BARB HORST

— An eyewitness account of International Women's Day in Grenada
by Barb Horst

"When we hear the news of the Revolution that morning, it was joy come out in the morning! Joy come out in the morning! As I lifted up that morning! I lifted up above the sky that morning!"

— Catherine Ventour, great-grandmother, Birchgrove, Grenada.

International Women's Day on the tiny island of Grenada, in the Caribbean, is a joyous celebration of the tremendous gains women have made in the past three years, since the overthrow of the dictator, Eric Gairy.

During Gairy's rule (1951-1979), the unemployment level in Grenada rose to over 50%, 69% among women. Women routinely earned less than men for doing the same work. Women workers often suffered severe sexual exploitation, both by government officials and private employers.

Functional illiteracy was 40%; large numbers of children did not attend school, particularly young women forced to stay home to care for siblings so their mothers could go out to work to keep the family alive (48% of Grenadian households are headed by single women).

Police brutality was a daily fact of life for people of all ages. In November 1970 thirty nurses demonstrating peacefully to protest the appalling conditions of the St. Georges hospital were tear-gassed, beaten and arrested by Geary's police.

Women supported the revolution

On the morning of March 13, 1979, when the leaders of the New Jewel Movement announced that the Gairy regime had been ousted, women formed part of the massive support. A 26-year old woman in Byelands recalls: "On March 13, following the radio message when the revolution took over the radio station, we marched to our local police station at Birchgrove—about 200 of us, mostly women— and told the police to put up the white flag. Then we took up positions in different areas, cooking for our soldiers, running messages and keeping guard—and also listening out for any counter-revolutionary plans."

Since the revolution, the new People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) has made consistent efforts to reverse the cycle of economic and human under-

development created by centuries of colonialism and years of corrupt dictatorship, and to integrate women into the process of development. The number of women actively participating in various community and mass organizations increased by 1,100% between March 1979 and September 1980.

Claudette Pitt, Vice-Minister for Community Development who chaired the March 7 IWD rally, summed up the feelings of thousands of women when she stated:

"Sisters, we have come forward, come forward from a period of time in which we did not see ourselves (as) anything but wives and mothers, who didn't have any other role to play in the building of our country. But today we see ourselves as active women, side by side with our men, building our country. For this, we love our revolution, and we will die for our revolution."

National Women's Organization

The structural expression of the women's movement in Grenada is the National Women's Organization (NWO). Founded in December 1977 as the women's arm of the New Jewel Movement, it was initially small, with six groups totalling about 120 members. These women were very active in the underground struggle against the dictatorship, publishing illegal pamphlets attacking the high cost of living and calling for equal pay for equal work; doing house-to-house underground work to speak to people about how women would benefit from a change.

After March 1977, the new government passed a number of laws benefiting women, and established a Women's Desk in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Social Affairs, to coordinate national programs for women and advise the PRG on matters which affect women.

The NOW has now grown to over 161 groups in Grenada's 135 villages with a membership of over 7,100—nearly one-third of the women of the country.

One of the main aims of the NOW is to encourage all women to take advantage of their new rights to equal education, training and work, and to participate actively in the organizations which take decisions and carry out social actions, in order to play a full part in the process of people's democracy which is being built in Grenada.

As the NWO has matured, emphasis has been placed on education, skills, and leadership training. Grenada now has one Minister, two Vice-Ministers, and two ambassadors who are women. The number of women directors of public

WOMEN OF GRENADA



PHOTO INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

agencies, commissions and statutory bodies, and senior civil servants, advisors and technical officers has increased from two to twenty-five.

Women technical officers currently head the Economic Planning Ministry, the Health Ministry, the Housing Ministry and the mass literacy campaign; and are playing leading roles in areas as diverse as the development of the tourism sector, the curriculum development program for the primary schools, the National Importing and Marketing Board, and the Information and Foreign Ministries.

Rights for women workers

In the months immediately following the revolution the PRG put an immediate and complete stop to sex-exploitation by government officials and passed a law prohibiting all forms of sexual discrimination.

In May 1979, a Trade Union Recognition Law was passed, requiring employers to recognize the union which the workers have democratically chosen. As a result of this law, favouring women especially, the percentage of unionized workers jumped from 30% to over 80% between May 1979 and May 1980.

The government has also committed itself to a policy of equal pay for equal work, which has been implemented for male and female labourers on the road crews and state farms. Where different types of work are being done, the Women's Desk is presently conducting a study of the problem to determine which types of work are of equal value.

The Women's Desk has also commissioned a study by the Ministry of Legal Affairs of all the criminal and civil laws of Grenada to determine what legislation must be amended and/or created in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

Changes in the law are brought about through discussions by all the people affected. In October 1980, the government passed a Maternity Leave Law which guarantees all women workers three months maternity leave (2 months with pay), and a guarantee of her job on return to work. This law was passed after extensive consultation with women's groups, unions and employers' associations throughout the entire country.

Progress in health and education

Before the revolution, health care was a privilege reserved for those who could pay. Public hospitals lacked medicine, equipment or even bed linen. Women gave birth on cold concrete floors as cockroaches scurried across filthy wards. Even these services cost more than most could afford, and many rural Grenadians received no health care at all.

Within a few months of the revolution, the PRG brought in a team of Cuban volunteer health workers—doctors, dentists and specialists. There is now a health centre in each of the six parishes, as well as 28 smaller clinics on the island. Health is now seen as a basic right, based on the concept of preventive medicine and primary care. Mass organizations such as the NWO and National

Youth Organization, through health education at the grassroots level, are making health a community responsibility.

Giant billboards in Grenada proclaim "Education — A Right Not A Privilege" and "Education is Production Too." Secondary education under Gairy was out of reach for the mass of the population due to the high cost of fees, transportation and uniforms. Gairy allowed the primary school system to collapse and thousands of dollars were siphoned off and squandered. Children drifted out of school at the third or fourth grade because of schooling costs and the need to make a contribution to family income.

In September 1980, a mass literacy campaign was undertaken under the direction of the Centre for Popular Education. The first phase of the campaign brought literacy to about one-third of the estimated 2,738 illiterates in the country within six months. Phase 2 is a post-literacy program for working adults. A high proportion of both students and teachers in the literacy campaign are women.

Other measures taken by the PRG with the co-operation and involvement of the NWO include in-service teacher-training; enforcement of compulsory primary education with a national "Back to School" campaign; a school meals program with subsidized lunches and free milk for all primary and pre-primary school children and free secondary education as of September 1981. In August 1980 a special fund was set up to assist low-income mothers with the purchase



Flax Hermes/IP

WOMEN OF GRENADA



Catherine Ventour, 72 year-old greatgrandmother, quoted in the opening paragraph of this article.

of school books and uniforms.

The PRG has adopted a policy of teaching technical subjects equally to girls and boys, especially agricultural science, carpentry, metalwork and domestic science. Women are also enrolled in the fisheries training school. One-third of all students at the National Agricultural College enrolled in 1980-81 were female as compared to less than a quarter in 1979.

Expanded childcare

The Women's Desk and the NWO have led the campaigns to expand the number of daycare centres and pre-primary schools through the renovation of existing premises and the building of new ones.

Expansion of pre-schools and nurseries is seen as essential for working mothers and for older daughters to return to school, as well as ensuring the total healthy development of children.

These nurseries are free for the working women of the community.

One of the people we spoke with in Grenada, Joseph Neckles, 2nd Vice-President of the Productive Farmers Union, expressed surprise and shock that Canada does not provide free daycare centres.

"If Canada wanted to do it, they could do *much* more than that. They got wealth, they got wages, they got riches, they got everything. And if they wanted to they could do much more than Grenada could.

"But the fact is, we [Canada] have one particular obstacle in the way, which by now everybody should realize [i.e. capitalism], and that is what cause the

hindrance of everything now. Once we get rid of this obstacle in the way, I believe that every country could do that for the women folks.

"Because it is very tough, when once a woman have a baby, and she turn out to work and get her bread, and she got to turn back and pay, for the baby, for transportation—pay for everything—so she end up nought. . .

"But I believe if she got those assistance, in those countries as America and Canada and other places, I believe that it could really make something and save something for the future."

Women in economic construction

1982 is the Year of Economic Construction in Grenada. At the IWD rally, Phyllis Coard, NWO President and Secretary for Women's Affairs, outlined ways in which women will help to build the economy. To help reduce the extremely high consumption of imported

food, the NWO will spearhead a campaign to encourage Grenadians to "grow local, buy local, and eat local." Expansion of the backyard gardening done by women is part of this campaign.

Working women will be encouraged to take part in workers' productivity and grievance committees, to help increase productivity in the workplace. As well, unemployed women will be encouraged and assisted to form more agricultural, agro-industrial and craft co-operatives.

Defending the revolution's gains

Women are also playing a central part in the defence of Grenada against threats made by the United States. Following the attempted assassination of the PRG leadership at a rally on June 19, 1980 in which a bomb killed three schoolgirls and injured hundreds, thousands of people volunteered to join the militia, particularly women. Women now make up 35% of the militia.

Solidarity with the revolutions of Cuba and Nicaragua and support for the struggling people of the world marks another aspect of the defence of the Grenadian revolution. A gift of \$8,000 was presented to Sylvia Martinez, the El Salvador representative at the IWD rally. This money was raised by the NWO for the people of El Salvador.

In her speech to the rally, Phyllis Coard summed up: "We know that we have much more to achieve. We still have to move towards the full implementation of equal pay. . . We still need more nurseries—many, many more nurseries for the children of our working women. We have much more to achieve.

"But today we have confidence, because we know that as women we, and all the working people of our country, now have power. We have the power to build our society along the lines that *we*, the working people of Grenada, decide to build it. And therefore we are confident that the future will be what we want, and what we want to make it." ♀

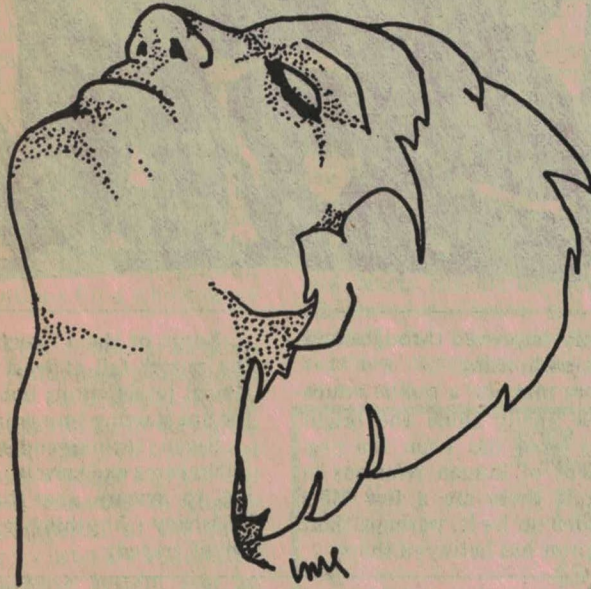
WOMEN IN TRADES ASSOCIATION OF B.C.

W.I.T. is a non-profit society which was founded by a group of Trades women in 1979 with the aim of providing mutual support and of establishing a focus for the promotion of women's entry into non-traditional employment.

Since then, the Association has expanded its membership and has linked with other Women in Trades Associations across Canada to become a strong voice for women who currently work in the trades and for those who are seeking entry into non-traditional fields of employment.

W.I.T. has contributed to information meetings and workshops throughout the province, and presented briefs to government and educational institutes detailing women's needs and proposing training improvements.

W.I.T. of B.C. now share office space with the Vancouver Status of Women. 400a West 5th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1J8. Phone 876-0922



Wife Battering is no joke

by Margaret Mitchell MP, Vancouver East

Margaret Mitchell is a member of a House of Commons Standing Committee on Health and Welfare. The Committee investigated, and prepared a report on, Wife Battering.

When the Committee report was presented to the House of Commons, it was greeted with laughter by certain male MP's.

This article on the report and its reception was written by Margaret for the federal NDP Caucus *Ottawa Report* from which it is reprinted.

Why did some male members of Parliament guffaw when the House of Commons was told that one out of 10 men regularly beats his wife?

The most charitable answer would be that it was a defensive reaction to hard and cruel facts.

The report by the standing committee on health and welfare, entitled *Wife Battering*, can be a shocking affront to those who believe they represent the happy traditional family model of breadwinner father, homemaker mother and 2.2 well-adjusted children.

As the New Democratic Party representative on the standing committee, I saw these traditional values challenged repeatedly by well-qualified witnesses who told us:

- Wife battering knows no geographic, economic or cultural boundaries. Any woman can find herself a battered spouse.
- Wife battering is rarely a one-time occurrence. One-third of the women interviewed in one survey conducted for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women were beaten weekly or even daily.
- Wife battering often results in serious injury. Fully 20 per cent of Canadian homicidal deaths are the result of one spouse killing the other.

Biggest cover-up

Wife battering is one of Canada's biggest cover-ups. It is dutifully obscured on police occurrence sheets and social worker case reports as a "domestic dispute" or "family violence."

The legal, medical and social institutions which daily come into contact with wife battering are traditionally dedicated to preserving family values, not to ensure the health and safety of the victims. In our society, reconciliation is given priority over separation and the report tells the cost in human suffering.

The committee members heard the sorry details: Police officers ignore domestic calls or quickly conciliate and leave; doctors treat the bruises but don't ask questions; hospitals do not respond to battering cases or document the injuries as evidence as they would for an assault or a rape case; lawyers who could obtain restraining orders, interim custody and possession of the family home often delay any action; courts rarely convicce, effectively condoning the husband's violent behaviour.

The end result is another wife added to the 500,000 Canadian women who go battered, without help.

Of course, the question often asked is, "Why don't these women do something to help themselves?"

Our committee learned that battered wives often have no place to go, no protection from their husbands, little money to live on and little access to professional help.

Half of the Canadian population lives in areas not served by a transition house or shelter. In 1980, there were only 63 for all of Canada, and they are often run down, overcrowded and underfunded.

Once a woman makes the break she encounters many more difficulties. The simple task of renting an apartment becomes a Catch-22 ordeal when the woman must try to raise the money for the rent deposit while attempting to convince the social welfare agency she has an independent address.

A woman who leaves will more likely than not become one of the single-parent families headed by a woman who lives below the poverty line.

Why women give up

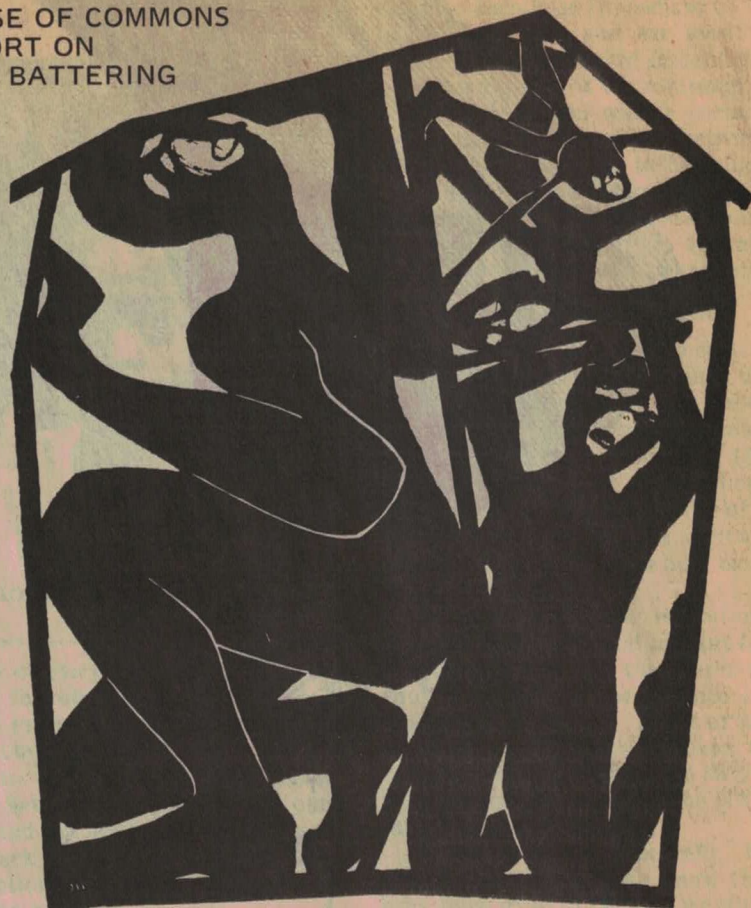
Given these barriers to a new start in life, the committee members began to see why many women just give up. The struggle looks hopeless, the outcome appears to be certain defeat.

As members of Parliament we must begin a very long and arduous task of reversing this deeply-felt sense of defeatism. Obviously, it is essential that we have more than 14 women in the House of Commons.

The primary finding of our report was the fact of law enforcement and the ineffectiveness of the courts in wife battering cases. Parliament is responsible for the criminal law in Canada; we must make it plain that all who commit assault will be charged and dealt with in court.

Second, we must also recognize that the support for women who leave home

HOUSE OF COMMONS REPORT ON WIFE BATTERING



must be greatly improved through funding for transition housing.

Third, there must be a public education that will finally shine the bright spotlight into what has been the neglected basement of human relations in this country. If there are a few MP's down there then so be it, perhaps their defensive laughter has betrayed them.

Some of the 17 recommendations in the report fall at least partly into provincial jurisdictions but this is no excuse for not starting immediately.

Seven recommendations are in the federal area exclusively. We will be pressing to ensure that the ministers act decisively. Anything less sustains a national tragedy. ♀



College cutbacks hit women

by Margaretha Hoek
Coordinator, Programs for Women, Douglas College, New Westminster, B.C.

Women must be made aware of the situation facing community colleges in B.C. Federal and provincial government policies are undermining the college system by massive funding cutbacks and other attempts to alter the nature of comprehensive community education.

As women students make up well over half the college population in almost every institution in B.C., this issue deserves attention from women's

groups. Mature women in particular use the college system to resume their education, to regain confidence in their abilities, and to prepare themselves for life-changes.

Budget cuts already in place have substantially reduced many services and programs essential to women's successful re-entry—reading and study skills, counselling availability, and career programs

CUTBACKS IN WOMEN'S STUDIES

have been reduced in many institutions. Academic and Continuing Education courses are available at far fewer locations and times, reducing the options and flexibility so critical to many potential female learners.

Fees are rising in all institutions, while jobs and financial aid remain scarce, especially for mature women. In addition, budget cuts lead to an unwillingness by the institution to make creative and non-traditional responses to its students' needs, and will discourage special programs or services being extended to community women; instead, traditional populations will be served with traditional offerings.

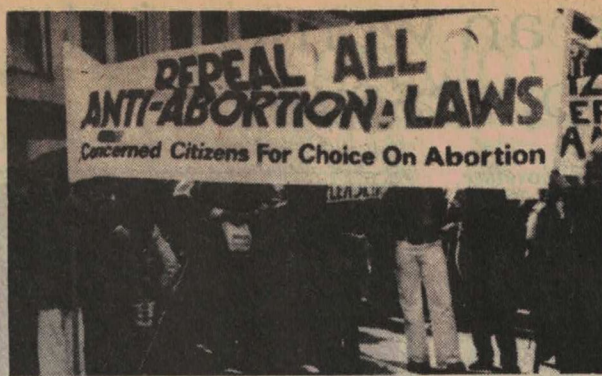
College value to women jeopardized

Reductions in the comprehensive offerings of the colleges would jeopardize their value to mature women. Women have had little exposure to a full range of career and educational options, due to social blinders, and restrictions of distance, responsibilities, and finances. Familiarity with the offerings of the local college, while building academic competence and confidence, has also been an important source of growth, dreams and ambitions for a whole range of life choices.

The colleges were created as an alternative to the youth-male-professional orientation of the universities, striving instead for a democratic and accessible facility that served the non-traditional student. As cutbacks reduce services and programming and threaten to change the character and thrust of the community colleges, we who are committed to the comprehensive system feel an urgent need to alert community members of the dangers underlying these developments. As a women's advocate in my own institution, I urge you to keep a close watch on your local colleges, and be prepared to comment loudly and firmly if you notice that services essential to women are being phased out or reduced. We have struggled for a decade to make the educational system more responsive to women—let's not lose the progress we have achieved.

For up-to-date local information, I suggest you contact your college's Women's Access Coordinator and the Faculty Association. ♀

Since this article was written, all non-credit courses for women at Douglas College. Only one such course survives at Langara. — Ed.



600 rally for choice

by Nancy Walsh

Six hundred men and women gathered at Queen Elizabeth Plaza on May 8 to march for choice on abortion and to rally against the Borowski challenge. Many feminist and trade union groups were represented, including the NDP Women's Rights Committee. Chanting and singing, the marchers made their way to the Hotel Vancouver Pacific Ballroom.

Make it legal, make it safe!

Several speakers, representing women and labour, addressed the rally chaired by Kathleen Eddy, CCCA. Speaker after speaker pointed to the threat posed by the Borowski challenge and questioned Borowski's mandate. Debby Holland from Women's Health Collective, Linda Rolufs from B.C. Federation of Labour, and Marva Blackmore from Concerned Citizens for Choice on Abortion all stressed the consequences of present abortion legislation and repeated our

demand to make it legal, make it safe, and make it a real choice,

Sha-na-na-na, sha-na-na-na, my body, my choice!

Dr. Carol Herbert from REACH Clinic added a physician's voice, stressing the medical consequences of backstreet abortions, and called for equal access to quality health care. Megan Ellis brought us an update on abortion legislation around the world.

Give us a choice that's real! We demand REPEAL!

Margaret Mitchell, MP for Vancouver East, repeated the NDP's promise to work for repeal, for safe legal access to medical abortion, and reminded us of the importance of choice in a democracy. A fund-raising speech by Hilda Thomas of the NDP Women's Rights Committee and one of two women candidates in Point Grey raised \$1600 towards the fight against the Borowski challenge. ♀

FILM & PUB NIGHT

Friday, August 13 7:30 p.m.

Rio Hall, 3325 Kingsway

\$3 unemployed, \$5 employed

Somewhere Between

Somewhere Between looks at the history of Canadian government legislation affecting Indian women and their traditional role in Indian society.

A film about separation, Somewhere Between reveals the alienation experienced by Indian women forced to live apart from their communities due to change in their legal status as Indians.

The controversy surrounding laws which discriminate against Indian women unfolds against the background of the personal experiences of five Indian women.

"I was so happy with the approach taken in the film. It should reach audiences of all kinds."

MARGARET MITCHELL, M.P.

This film screening is part of an ongoing fund-raising project by the Margaret Livingstone Memorial Fund Committee.

Salvadorean women fight double oppression

by Debra Lewis

Reprinted from 'Kinesis'

Despite inadequate media coverage, most of us are becoming aware of the situation in El Salvador. The continuing murder to Salvadoreans (over 20,000 in 1981), the massive military aid by the U.S. to the ruling junta, and the March elections are all indications of the crisis facing the Salvadorean people.

The governing junta of El Salvador represents the interests of a tiny elite. 2% of the population controls 60% of the land; 8% of the population receives 50% of the national income. The per capita calorie intake is the lowest in Latin America, and in San Salvador over 200,000 people live in paper and cardboard huts.

What do we know about the specific situation of Salvadorean women?

While most of the population lives in poverty, women face even more severe economic problems. Women in the countryside are employed only two to three months of the year (primarily during the coffee harvest) and their wages are a third less than those of men. Many women migrate to the cities, where a substantial number end up in domestic service for families of the upper classes. These women become virtual slaves, earning only about \$30 - \$60 per month. Women in factories are equally exploited and many are now unemployed due to the closing of factories during the government of the junta.

In times of such severe economic hardship and unemployment, women often carry the major part of the load. It is women who are ultimately responsible for the survival of their families.

Women multiply oppressed

Some women turn to illegal street vending as a way to bring some income into the family. The government claims that the women are an eyesore and discourage tourists. However, the marketplaces have no room for stalls for these women. Instead, they are hunted down by the police, often beaten and jailed, and their merchandise is confiscated.

Other problems also specifically affect women. 50% of Salvadoreans are illiterate, but it is the condition of twice as many women as men. 75% of Salvadorean children suffer diseases related to malnutrition.

Birth control education is controlled by the Salvadorean Population Association. Here, programs developed by North Americans reflect the goal of lowering



the birth rate in an attempt to stop social unrest, rather than in the interests of Salvadorean women.

Finally, Salvadorean women suffer particular forms of direct violence and repression from the junta. Most refugees who try to escape the bombing of rural areas by fleeing to the cities or across the Honduran border are women and children. For women, torture almost always includes gang rape and other forms of sexual abuse.

As was the case in Nicaragua (and is documented in Margaret Randall's excellent book, *Sandino's Daughters*) Salvadorean women are integrally involved in the struggle against repression in their country. Women play a crucial role in both the FDR (Democratic Revolutionary Front) and the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front—an umbrella group of political/military forces and the people's armed forces).

In addition, on International Women's Day in 1980 AMES (Association de Mujeres de El Salvador/Salvadorean Women's Association) was formed. This group has two goals: to provide an organization through which women can participate in the liberation struggle, and to provide women with an organization which will fight for the specific rights of women.

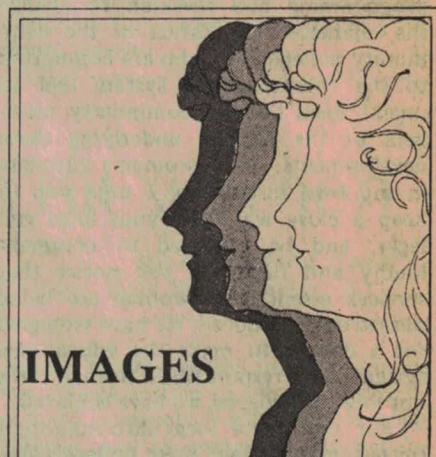
El Salvador Women's Support Group

The El Salvador Women's Support Group has been formed in Vancouver to

aid and promote solidarity with AMES. Its most immediate project has been the organizing of a tour for a representative of AMES.

This group needs financial support. Donations should be sent to Debra Lewis, B.C. El Salvador Women's Support Group, 400A West 5th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1J8 ♀

Subscribe

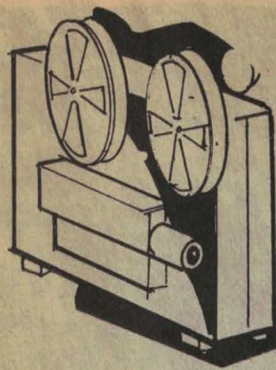


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Campaign on film

by Debbie McCall



The Boag Foundation refused outright—said it was 'too political.' Yet the National Film Board is assisting us—they see it as an educational film that will be of interest to many Canadians."

All the production personnel for this film are women and the main support coming from the National Film Board is coming from Studio D, the women's unit.

So will the film be made? "It all depends on how much money we can raise

before the election is called," says McGee. "We still need about \$15,000. Right now we're trying to find 30 groups or individuals to give \$500 each—but all we can offer back is acknowledgment of their support in the film credits."

Anyone interested in the film, or in helping to fund it, is asked to contact E-Day Productions, 302-1419 Harwood Street, Vancouver, V6G 1X7 ♀

Think of every election campaign you have worked on. Think of the number of times you have discussed and analysed those campaigns. Remember the fun, the hard work, the commitment. Now imagine capturing the excitement and tension of that experience on film, and the effect such a film would have on a non-political audience. Does it sound like a good idea?

Right now such a film is being planned—a behind-the-scenes documentary of the NDP campaign in the riding of Vancouver-Little Mountain.

"It won't be a film on how to run an election campaign," says producer Debbie McGee. "The focus of the film will be on the campaign workers—how they first got involved, why they give their time and energy to political work."

Nonetheless, the half-hour film will follow the structure of the campaign, from the time the writs are dropped, right through to the time the committee rooms are packed up. "But by focussing on the volunteers, and not on the candidates or the issues specific to that riding, the film will have a more lasting impact, one that will be relevant to every riding. And also, I hope, to all the other progressive groups who depend on the work and commitment of volunteers."

Hard project to get going

McGee, who has worked as an organizer in several campaigns, finds this has been a hard project to get off the ground. "Most people not involved in the NDP can't believe that a film on the famous NDP campaign hasn't been made long ago. But, of course, winning a campaign takes priority—it isn't till after the election that we have time to think about these things—and then of course it is too late."

It may be too late for this film too. "This is not an easy time to raise money, especially for something as expensive as film, and one that takes six weeks to complete." But there is no predicting who will help in funding such a film."

How we regard women's struggles in El Salvador

by Carolina Castillo

Member of General Association of Salvadorean Students



Refugees from El Salvador in a camp in Nicaragua

We believe that women's demands go hand in hand with the demands of all our people, because the problems of women can have no true solution within the framework of the system of dependent capital which dominates us. So we can see the need to liberate not solely women, but men and women both, and to build a new society. The myriad problems of Salvadorean women. . . will find their solution only in the downfall of the present system and in the building of true democracy in our country.

Every democratic and revolutionary organization's unavoidable historical task is to actively inte-

grate women at every level. Within our organization, we are already creating new human relations and, of course, overcoming the old ideological structures that dominate and oppress women. We try to divide among all comrades those tasks which have traditionally fallen to women, so as to make possible the participation of all, regardless of sex.

Salvadorean women have not begged for a role in the revolution, they have, through struggle, won it. Only through the implementation of the Program of the Democratic Revolutionary Government will the full participation of women in every sphere of social life become possible. ♀

Strategies and discussions

by Margaret Klassen

On May 1, I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the Spring Conference of the NDP Women's Rights Committee. As a newcomer to the Women's Rights group, I felt especially privileged to be part of this great day of strategies and discussion. Also, as an out-of-towner from Cranbrook, it was exciting to be able to add to the energy of these committed feminists.

Mercia Stickney welcomed us all to the conference, and then we moved on to the Plenary, chaired by Hilda Thomas. The Adoption of Agenda and Rules of Order were handled in a bantering, light-hearted manner, which made these parliamentary procedures much less threatening and awesome for us newcomers than it might otherwise have been. For instance, a motion was made to move "Coffee and Muffins" to a new time in the agenda and this was hotly debated back and forth with good humour, using the required procedures. This was an excellent opportunity to become familiar with the procedures and to practise speaking before the microphone in a non-threatening atmosphere.

Workshops

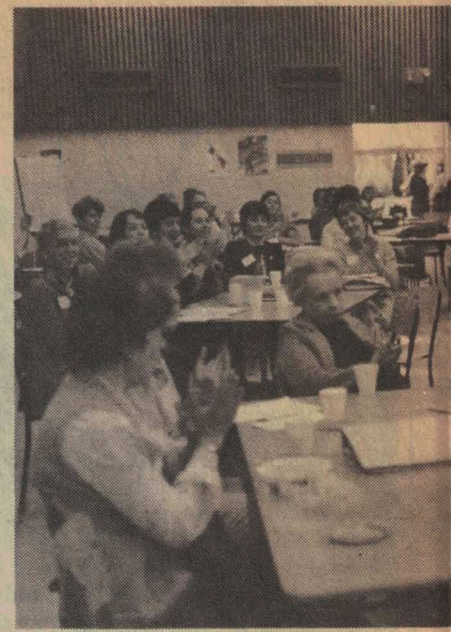
After the "Coffee and Muffins," we moved right into the Workshops. At the time of registration, kits were made available to us in each of these areas: Repeal 251, Technological Change, Older Women, Child Care and Job Opportunities. We were able to choose that area which held most interest for us personally and where we felt we would have some valuable input. Several of the workshops drew my attention, but I settled on the one addressing the concerns of older women. As a Public Health Nurse, I am acutely aware of the health needs and financial problems of many older women and I was pleased to see the emphasis that health care was given by the members participating in this workshop. The facilitators were Gloria Levi and Mercia Stickney and their expertise in the issues affecting older women was evident.

Following the workshops, we enjoyed a beautiful lunch prepared by Silvia Bergersen and her committee and took time to meet with other women and share views and feelings.

Election skills

For the first half of the afternoon we broke up into groups to discuss various aspects of campaign skills. Again it was difficult to decide which group to join, but I sat in on Shelley Rivkin and Margaret Beardsley's "All You Ever Wanted to Know About an NDP Campaign" and found out about the very professional approach used by the party to plan and execute a successful canvassing campaign.

After coffee, we came back together to hear reports from each of the morning workshops and to debate the recommendations put forth by each of the groups. My feelings at the close of



NDP Women's Conference Spring Conference

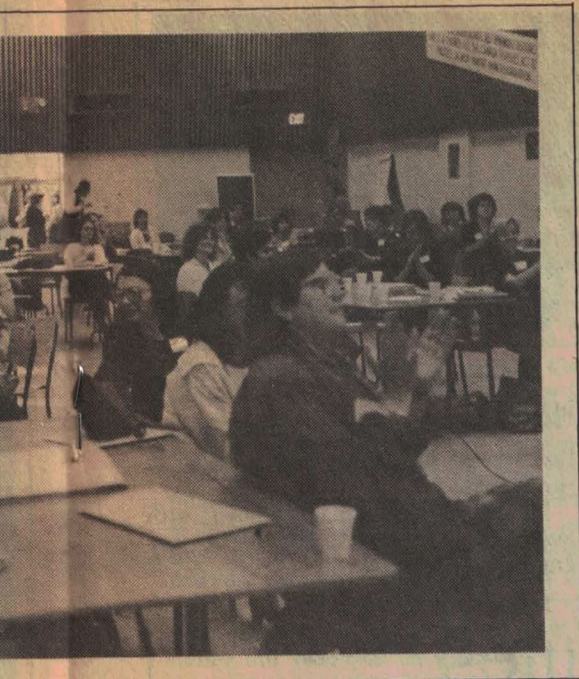
these debates were amazement at the incredible amount of work that had been accomplished in one day and the yet greater work which would be required to see these recommendations incorporated into NDP policy.

We met again for a delectable East Indian Dinner (ate everything in sight!) and enjoyed brief speeches by Margaret Mitchell, MP, and Mary Humphrey, Federal Women's Organizer.

At the close of the evening we sang feminist songs led by Hilda Thomas, Sharon Hazelwood and Rikke Rubesaat. The day ended with a tremendous feeling of sisterhood... and resolve. ♀

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM
CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS
ON PAGES 14 AND 15.





Committee Conference



WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Halfway to feminism

The women's liberation movement has succeeded in establishing the simple fact that, in our society, women are not equal. Our inferiority has been manifested in politics, in the workplace, in the family. The persistent and courageous approach of the feminist movement that this state of inferiority is intolerable has resulted in positive changes in attitudes towards women, towards the recognition that this state of inequality is neither desirable nor defensible.

Translation of such new-found attitudes into action to eliminate inequality has been slow and sporadic. The organized women's movement has had its hands full organizing actions to bring its demands to public attention. The union movement has helped some women make some gains, such as entry into non-traditional jobs, maternity leave and equal pay for work of equal value.

As the economic recession deepens, however, an all out attack on the standard of living of working people has been launched and women are among the first to feel the brunt of this attack. The small gains are being lost. Inequalities are being entrenched and deepened in the job ghettos, as are exploitive wages and working conditions, unemployment and poverty. Women are confronted with increasing violence while funding for services to women and children in crisis are cut back or withdrawn. They are the targets of a reactionary campaign aimed at reviving the demeaning stereotype of passivity and dependence, at a time when economic necessity demands that most women have to have paid work in order to survive.

In the face of this attack, the B.C. NDP Women's Rights Committee affirms its belief that the issues and demands raised by the women's movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society.

Our goal is not the achievement of power for the purpose of administering existing institutions and relationships in a more benevolent fashion.

Our goal is not the attainment of equality for a few women who can then join the ranks of the privileged while their sisters continue to be exploited and oppressed.

Our goal is not the attainment of equality with oppressed men. We seek rather to provide a foundation within the NDP for the creation of a new society defined by the codes of feminism and socialism; a society which is democratic, non-repressive, free of sex and class stereotypes, and devoted to the achievement of personal and social liberation for all women and men.

Our strategy in the coming months must ensure that urgent priority is given by the B.C. NDP to the demands of women. The Women's Rights Committee accepts the double obligation of combining critical analysis with concrete action. Our NDP women's rights policies binds the party to share responsibility for the continual re-examination and renewal of our commitment to women's equality so that our vision of a truly liberated society does not become distorted or lost in the struggle for power.

We call for steps to ensure that the goals and concerns of feminism are accepted as an integral part of all our policies and programs.

We call for a positive campaign to recruit and elect feminist candidates to office.

We call for the defense of the women's movement against attack, and for opposition to the introduction, in the name of restraint, of economic measures which are depriving women of their right to equal wages and jobs.

Older women

Working from the background of information gathered by the Task Force on Older Women, the workshop recommended that community involvement be continued through networking at the local level and bringing interested people together around tasks to be done. And because interested women often hold back from initiating group activity through feeling the lack of leadership skills, the workshop asked for a simple manual on group organizing to be available from provincial office.

The initial task for the local group in each community would be to survey the community and to discover the gaps that exist in meeting the needs of older women. The second task would be to prioritize the resources required to meet the needs. And the third step would be to develop an advocacy role to promote resolution of the issues.

The workshop proposed that the B.C. NDP make Health Care a target area of its election campaign as this issue is of vital importance to middle and senior women. Finances, Transportation and Housing were ranked in descending order of priority. The Social Credit government's cut-backs in the health services are creating fear amongst older women.

Specific recommendations

Specific recommendations on Health Care:

1. Do not add more long-term care beds.
2. Convert as much as possible long-term care to intermediate care.
3. Expand day-hospital/community daycare, using the free-standing social model.
4. Expand substantially homecare services and upgrade quality control of those services.
5. Provide quality care, encouraging independence and ensuring the dignity of the individual.
6. Improve medical training and services by:
 - (i) increased training in geriatrics.
 - (ii) elimination of sexism in medical textbooks.
 - (iii) promoting the expansion of clinics (modelled on that of James Bay, Victoria) on a graduated scale throughout the province.

Finance recommendations

Specific recommendations on Finance:

1. Expand the criteria of Women's Resource Centres to include a "Displaced



Homemakers' Program."

2. Give priority to a job creation strategy for women in their middle years.

3. Provide consultative resources for women re money management and business administration, working from skills that women have.

Specific recommendations on Transportation;

1. Develop a system of subsidized taxi service for elderly and disabled in rural areas.

2. Familiarize urban women with availability of DART and other programs. ♀

Job opportunities

The Job Opportunities workshop discussed the existing policy—some of it dating back to 1965. The workshop decided that the policy is outdated and needs to be consolidated and revised.

It was recommended that the following be provided:

1. A consolidated policy statement.
 2. A cross-reference system for policies that interrelate concerning Education, Academic and Vocational Training, Health, Childcare and Labour.
 3. An updating of policy.
- The major policy areas were defined as:
1. Affirmative Action
 2. Job creation and training
 3. Sexual harassment
 4. The right to the choice of work in fields other than those defined in the existing policy.

Recommendations on the areas of Women and Employment and Affirma-

tive Action were:

1. The mandatory Affirmative Action policy be extended; the existing policy refers to the Forest Industry and government employees and must be expanded to include the entire work force.

2. The NDP Women's Rights Committee Steering Committee recommend to Caucus that a standing committee on Women and Employment be struck:

(i) to obtain current information regarding women and employment;

(ii) to educate both party members and the general public;

(iii) to obtain input at the community level;

(iv) to have at least one woman from the Caucus on the standing committee as well as a representative from the Women's Rights Committee;

(v) that the Women's Rights Committee assign top priority to the issue of women and employment at the 1982/83 convention. ♀

HALFWAY TO FEMINISM (continued from page 13)

We call for a vigorous campaign in support of the right to choice on abortion.

We call for universal childcare.

We call for implementation of programs giving women access to non-traditional jobs and training.

We call for the introduction of technological change in a way that puts human benefit ahead of profit.

We call for programs to end the impoverishment and marginalization of older women.

We call on the next NDP government to implement NDP policy on women's rights without delay. ♀

Childcare

The workshop on childcare identified two major areas of concern:

1. In order to make childcare a major priority of the party when it becomes government, we first need to flesh out party policy regarding childcare to the point that there can be basic agreement on fundamental issues.

For example, there is a need to elaborate on the 1981 Provincial Convention resolution that responsibility for childcare be placed under the Ministry of Education. Participants in the workshop felt it vital to examine how community input can be assured if childcare is placed in the Education Ministry and how the sexist, individualistic socialization which currently takes place in the public schools can be avoided in the child care system. In general, we need to define our vision of the kind of society we want as feminist socialists.

Secondly, participants expressed the need to educate the party and the public on the need for child care. They noted that people whose children no longer needed child care and those who are senior citizens often do not support paying taxes to childcare.

Recommended strategies to deal with these concerns:

1. The Childcare Sub-Committee of the Women's Rights Committee will



sponsor a one-day workshop in an attempt to define the WRC's educational policy on childcare.

2. This statement will then be used to approach the Education Committee for further action.

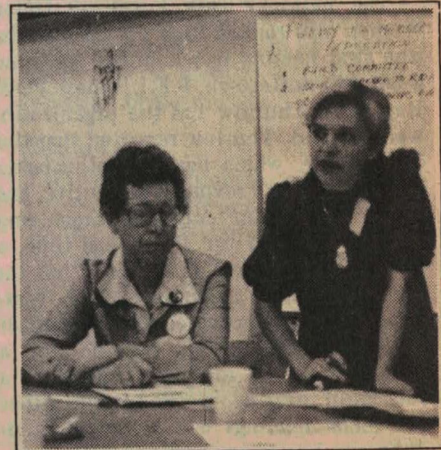
The conference adopted a recommendation that the Women's Rights Committee and the Education Committee co-host a workshop for the purpose of breaking down the demand for childcare into its component parts, e.g. programs for children under three years, latchkey programs, emergency childcare, teenage programs, etc. This will provide a basis for working out details of each service. ♀

Technological change

The Technological Change workshop differed from the other workshops in that it did not have a body of party policy to discuss. The workshop was strictly informational and was led by resource people Elaine Bernard and Joan Smallwood.

The workshop recommended that the following party policy be implemented:

"Therefore be it resolved that the B.C. NDP through the Women's Rights Committee of the B.C. NDP establish a working group to undertake an in-depth study of the social, political and economic implications of technological change, in particular as it relates to the present and future situation of women in the workforce, and to report to the 1982 convention with proposals for political action to resolve these problems. ♀



Repeal 251

The Repeal 251 workshop was asked to bring forth recommendations on each of the following questions: How do we promote our position in the constituencies? How do we promote our position during an election campaign? How will we ensure that our policy is implemented when the NDP forms the next government?

Recommendations on promoting our positions in the constituencies:

1. Preparation of an educational package which would include a multi-media presentation on the abortion issue in a positive and informative manner, a speaker from the 251 committee and a kit of reading material explaining party policy and the current situation regarding abortion. The workshop felt the involvement of the constituencies in the abortion issue is vital.

2. The following resolution be put forward at the next provincial convention:

"A provincially funded hospital cannot refuse to provide medical services

for non-medical reasons."

Recommendations on promoting our position during an election campaign:

1. Because the workshop felt that the reluctance of candidates to speak on the abortion issue is a result of the limited knowledge of the facts, a special candidate's kit should be prepared to provide candidates with in-depth information on the pro-choice position and the methods through which the party's policy would be implemented after election.

Recommendations on implementation of policy after the formation of an NDP government:

1. Clinics with daycare surgery be established.

2. Sex education and contraception be taught in schools.

3. B.C. and Manitoba Premiers and Health Ministers, work towards decriminalization of abortion and that the NDP government publicly campaign for choice on abortion. ♀

Federal NDP Women's Committee meets

by Hilda L. Thomas
Chairwoman of POW

A major part of the Participation of Women Committee of the NDP meeting in Ottawa May 14-16 was devoted to the preparation of a brief to the federal NDP caucus. Although only eight MP's attended the joint POW-Caucus session, there was a lively and frank exchange, lasting for three hours, and covering a wide range of issues from pensions and employment, sexual assault and wife battering, to affirmative action in the party. Another joint meeting is planned for October.

National Task Force on Older Women

The national Task Force on Older Women also ranked high on the agenda. The first hearing is scheduled for June 4-5 in Charlottetown, P.E.I., where POW Rep. Ann Thurlow has the organization well in hand. Thurlow reported that the Task Force, which has the enthusiastic support of the Provincial Executive, has proved to be an excellent organizing tool. In spite of the short lead time, a problem aggravated by the fact that the federal Women's Organizer, Mary Humphrey, was fully occupied as an organizer in the Saskatchewan election for a month, P.E.I. is looking forward to a successful hearing. Dates for the other provincial hearings will be set by mid-June.

A press conference held on Monday at the national press centre, with Ed Broadbent, Margaret Mitchell, Margaret Thompson (Chairwoman of the Task Force Committee) and myself was well attended by the media, and the Task Force received some coverage across the country.

POW to join NAC

POW also decided to renew its membership in the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. A majority of the committee members feels that the official presence of the federal NDP women's committee will help to ensure that progressive stands are taken on major issues, and will enable us to keep in touch with the women's movement across Canada.

Abortion rights actions

The committee was encouraged to hear from Dorothy Inglis, POW rep. from Newfoundland, of the decision in a defamation action brought by Planned Parenthood against a member of the anti-choice faction. The individual named in the suit, Vera Fedorik, a former Executive Director of the National Alliance for Life, was judged to have made false and defamatory statements. However, her links with the St. John's "Right to Life" Association was not considered proved, and the action against the association was dismissed.

The committee received a letter signed by Canadian novelist Margaret Laurence, an honorary director of CARAL in its fight against Joe Borowski, who has been given standing by the Supreme Court to argue for the complete elimination of all access to abortion on the ground that the foetus is entitled to the legal status of a person and is protected by human rights legislation. This challenge places women in the appalling position of having to defend the very legislation they wish to repeal—Section 251—in order that they not be faced with an even worse situation that presently exists. The POW committee is a member of CARAL, and is supporting their campaign against Borowski. We urge provincial women's committees and Provincial Councils to offer their assistance.

The committee was also informed that the Chief Electoral Officer has given notice of registration of a national "Right to Life" party.

Women candidates

Two members of the committee received warm commendation for their

recent electoral activities—Chris Banman, who ran in the Saskatchewan riding of Rosthern, and Lynn MacDonald, recently nominated in the federal riding vacated by Bob Rae. Chris made a very creditable showing in the face of the monstrous Conservative sweep. We look forward to seeing Lynn in the House after the next election. Margaret Thompson reported that there are two women candidates running in the Yukon.

Thanks to Margaret Mitchell

This report would not be complete without a special word of thanks to Margaret Mitchell. Margaret's strong presence in the House on women's issues such as her recent stand on wife battering, which exposed the crude chauvinism of many of the opposition members, is much appreciated by all feminists. In addition, she attended the full session of the POW committee as well as the press conference for the Task Force on Older Women. More than that, her warm and generous welcome to all the members of the committee contributed immeasurably to the success of the POW meeting in Ottawa.



Barbara Levy
Secretary, Federal NDP Participation of
Women Committee

Barbara is the POW representative for Nova Scotia and serves on the Nova Scotia NDP Executive. She has recently collaborated on a submission to the Nova Scotia Royal Commission on Pensions, in particular the inadequacy of pensions for women. She is also active in the fields of mental health and legal aid and is presently serving on the Board of Directors of Family and Children Services of Kings County, Nova Scotia.

♀

Repeal all anti-abortion laws

Defend a woman's right too choose

Since 1969, when Section 251 of the Criminal Code was amended somewhat to permit legal abortions under specific and limiting conditions, Canadian feminists have fought against the travesty of that reform.

Today, the battle is joined in special earnest because the anti-abortion movement, led by Joseph Borowski, is seeking a Supreme Court ruling that fetuses are human beings and are guaranteed the 'right to life' under the Bill or the Charter of Rights in the Constitution.

What demands will win abortion rights?

In this article I want to explain why Concerned Citizens for Choice on Abortion, a Vancouver-based group that I have worked with since 1978, calls for 'Repeal of All Anti-Abortion Laws.'

In this demand CCCA does not focus on Section 251 of the Criminal Code alone. There are a number of reasons for this.

The first is that there are other laws, and regulations that are enforced as laws, that deal with abortion. In the federal Criminal Code, there are two such laws in addition to section 251.

These are sections 159(2)(c), and 252 (see box). These sections deal with backstreet and self-administered abortions, and they must be repealed as well as section 251 if women's right to control our own bodies is to become fully legal. Notice that in these sections women seeking abortions are defined as equally as criminal as the backstreet abortionist and are subject to harsh punishment.

The appropriate law for the curbing of backstreet abortionists is the Medical Practices Act, which already prohibits medical treatment by unlicensed persons outside the health care system.

In addition the various provincial health ministries have set out further restrictions on abortion, requiring doctors' certificates, setting age limits, or limiting the allowable reasons for approving abortions. Often, hospitals add their own list of restrictions such as residency requirements, or spousal or parental permission. While these restrictions are not laws, since abortion is legally a federal matter governed by the Criminal Code, they are rigorously enforced and have the effect of law.

Section 251

Section 251 is worthy of close scrutiny



by Ann Thomson

Concerned Citizens for Choice on Abortion

because it exposes the true intentions of the federal government towards women. It plainly states in sub-sections 1, 2, 3 that abortion is basically illegal in Canada. It specifies imprisonment for life for those who perform abortions and imprisonment for two years for women who undergo abortions.

Those sub-sections were left intact when the much-heralded amendments were added in 1969. While intoning that "the state had no business in the bedrooms of the nation," the Trudeau government added sub-sections 4 - 7, which actually reinforce the state's presence in our bedrooms. These spell out in detail the bureaucratic procedures that must be established and followed to permit abortions that are exempt from the punishments above. These sub-sections confer legality on abortions performed in those large, urban hospitals that have voluntarily conformed to the difficult and restricting amendments.

However, as the Badgeley Report shows in 1977, fewer than 20% of the 1,348 publicly-funded general hospitals in Canada has therapeutic abortion committees. The Badgeley Report is the latest comprehensive study of the availability of 'legal' abortions.

Since then, the anti-abortion movement has campaigned hard to halt the performance of hospital abortions, and they've had an impact. In B.C., hospitals

in Surrey, Victoria, Richmond, and New Westminster have either ceased or reduced the performance of abortions recently. A CCCA survey of B.C. hospitals is reported in the April 1982 CCCA newsletter. It shows which have therapeutic abortion committees, the number of applications for abortion made in 1981, and the number of abortions performed. Copies of this issue are still available. (Write to CCCA, P.O. Box 24617, Station C, Vancouver V5T 4E1).

Canada's shoddy record

These statistics show only one aspect of the inequitable character of the Canadian law on abortion. Indeed, as Christopher Tietze of Planned Parenthood World Population Council has stated, that of all the western countries, Canada has the most restrictive abortion laws and the most cumbersome authorization procedures. One result quoted by Tietze is that Canada shares with India the "dubious honour" of having the highest rate of second trimester (after 12 weeks gestation) abortions in the world. In India, this is due to poor medical care. In Canada, it is directly due to the bureaucratic restrictions in our abortion laws.

The fundamental 'official' interpretation of section 251 is that abortion is a crime in Canada. This was made clear most recently in the Supreme Court's

CRIMINAL CODE OF CANADA

Section 159(2)(c):

Everyone commits an offense who knowingly, without lawful justification or excuse. . . offers to sell, advertises, publishes an advertisement of, or has for sale or disposal any means, instructions, medicine, drug or article intended or represented as a method of causing abortion or miscarriage. . .

Section 252:

Everyone who unlawfully supplies or procures a drug or other noxious thing or an instrument or thing, knowing that it is intended to be used or employed to procure the miscarriage of a female person, whether or not she is pregnant, is guilty of an indictable offense and is liable to imprisonment for two years.

**REPEAL ALL
ANTI-ABORTION LAWS**
(continued from page 17)

ruling that will allow Borowski to challenge the constitutionality of the 1969 amendments. Written in December 1981, the ruling states:

The legislation under attack here. . . provides that in certain specified circumstances conduct which would otherwise be criminal is permissible.

Borowski's suit aims only at the amendments to section 251. He wants the first three sections which state that abortion is a serious crime, to remain in the law.

Clearly, the demand for repeal must apply to all these existing sections of the Criminal Code and to other restrictive regulations on the right to choose abortion. The blanket demand for Repeal of All Anti-Abortion Laws arms women to fight them.

What function is served by a 'demand?'

In CCCA, we see three roles for the demands we put forward for abortion rights. They are to *educate* on the issue of abortion, to *mobilize* growing support for choice and repeal, and to *pressure* government and other regulatory bodies. The two demands CCCA has campaigned around over the past four years are broad ones, because we believe they are best suited to these roles:

Repeal All Anti Abortion Laws.
Defend a Woman's Right to Choose.

Let's examine the repeal demand further. This demand for repeal of *all anti-abortion laws* educates people who either do not have the facts or are confused about them. Many Canadians are under the misapprehension that the 1969 amendments established abortion as legal. They do not realize that feminists are not satisfied with them, or why. They are only dimly aware of the reasons why the fight for abortion rights must be carried simultaneously against the anti-abortionists and the various levels of government. The formulation of CCCA's demand educates people about the continued existence of anti-abortion laws, making it clear that legality has not yet been won.

The demand for *repeal* aims our campaign against the federal government, first of all. It makes it clear that we hold the government responsible for meeting the needs and demands of women, and that the present abortion laws are unacceptable to us. Taking every occasion to explain this further, we can make it clear that the Criminal Code, especially section 251, makes abortion both legal and illegal at the same time. This legal ambiguity serves to withhold the full rights of women and also provides a foundation in law for the campaigns of the organized anti-abortion movement. Almost everything the anti-abortionists want is already part of the law, and this

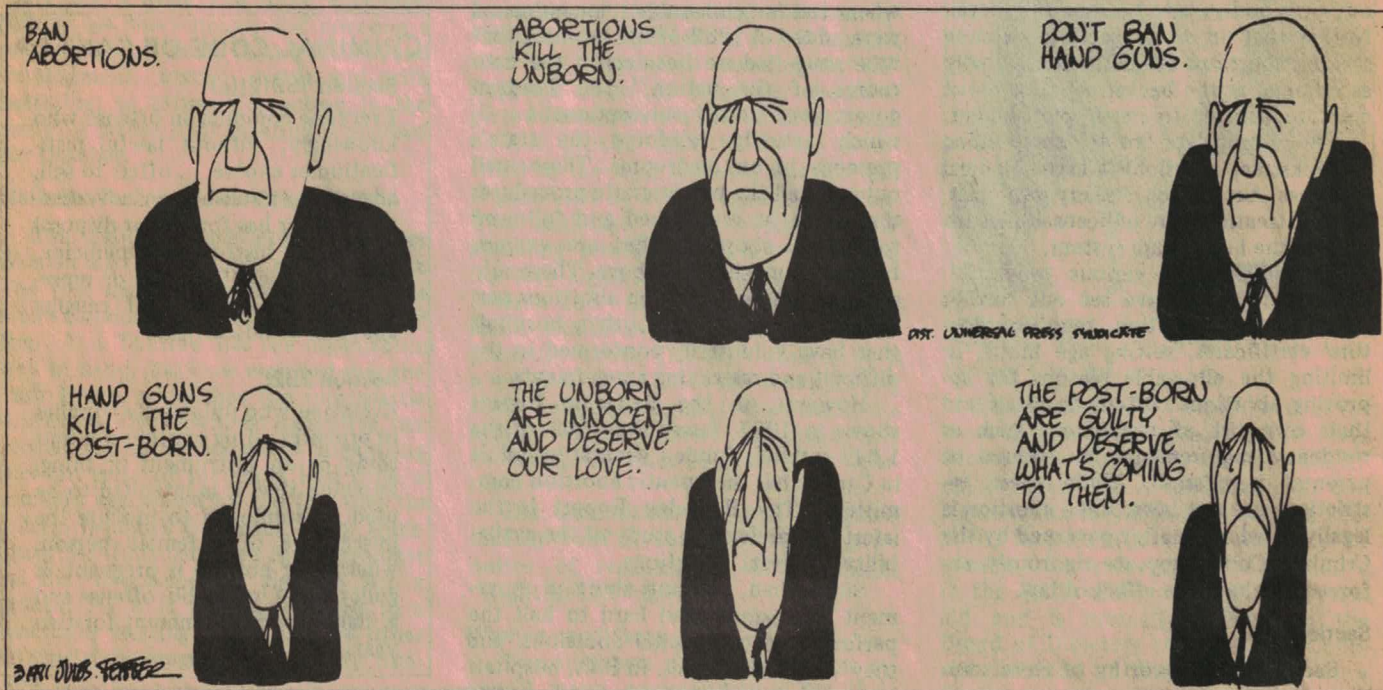
confers a legitimacy on them as well as auguring well for Borowski's possible victory.

The need for an action campaign

Coupled with the call to defend *A Woman's Right to Choose*, the demand for repeal is also a call to action. CCCA has carried its campaign by repeatedly organizing public meetings, conferences, rallies and demonstrations that bring our supporters into active participation in the fight for our demands. Our concept of the way to pressure the government is to mobilize ever-increasing numbers of pro-choice supporters.

When people come out to a public event, such as the rally on May 8, 1982, their visible presence is a powerful statement. As the list of endorsing organizations and individuals continues to grow and as demonstrations repeatedly draw out vocal and informed crowds, very strong messages are sent out to the government — and also to the anti-abortionists and to our potential supporters — that we are a serious force and must be reckoned with.

CCCA has also provided a platform for the NDP at its rallies. At least six times over the past four years, NDPers who have campaigned for repeal in Ottawa or Victoria have spoken to large audiences through CCCA. There is, of



Hospital Scoreboard

by Melinda Suto

Reprinted from
CCCA Newsletter
April, 1982

The anti-abortionists have frequently chosen the hospital board elections as their battleground to deny women choice on abortion. Each board may decide to appoint a Therapeutic Abortion Committee (TAC) which has the power to decide whether a woman can have an abortion. The following update on the "Hospital Scoreboard" was done to update women with accurate information regarding the availability of abortion in B.C. hospitals.

Eighty-seven questionnaires were sent to hospitals that were likely to have medical-surgical facilities, and thirty-six replies were received. If a particular hospital board decides not to appoint a TAC, the consequences to women in that area are serious, especially if she is many miles from the closest hospital with a TAC, a situation not uncommon in B.C. ♀

REPEAL ALL ANTI-ABORTION LAWS (concluded)

course, no other major party that is prepared to fight with and for women. And although the often valiant efforts of Margaret Mitchell, Svend Robinson, Pauline Jewett, and Rosemary Brown, to name a few, are greatly appreciated, this handful of elected leaders is not enough against the enemies we face.

Numbers are what count. The pro-choice movement must show that we are the majority, that we outnumber and can out-mobilize the anti-abortion movement, and that we will not be deterred by the stonewalling of the Trudeaus, Bennetts, etc. To do that requires the most accurate demands and a sustained campaign of action. ♀

Location	Hospital	TAC	# of Appl.	Abortions
Ashcroft	Ashcroft & Dist. Gen.	No	—	—
Bella Coola	Bella Coola Gen.	No	—	—
Burnaby	Burnaby General	Yes	419	394
Burns Lake	Burns Lake & Dist.	No	—	—
Campbell River	Campbell R. & Dist.	Yes	139	128
Chemainus	Chemainus Gen.	No	—	—
Ganges	Lady Minto Gulf Is.	Yes	19	19
Gold River	Gold R. Helath Clinic	No	—	—
Hazelton	Wrinch Memorial	Yes	1	0
Kelowna	Kelowna General	Yes	218	199
Kitimat	Kitimat General	Yes	unknown	28
Langley	Langley Memorial	Yes	unknown	unknown
Mackenzie	Mackenzie & Dist.	No	—	—
100 Mile House	100 Mile District	Yes	1	0
Nelson	Kootenay Lake Dist.	Yes	99	91
New Westminster	Royal Columbian	Yes	unknown	unknown
North Vancouver	Lions Gate	Yes ¹	750	750
Oliver	S. Okanagan Gen.	Yes	0	0
Penticton	Penticton General	Yes ²	167	154
Port Alberni	West Coast Gen.	Yes	53	38
Port Hardy	Port Hardy	No ³	—	—
Powell River	Powell R. General	Yes	35	30
Queen Charlottes	Q. Charl. Is. Gen.	Yes	unknown	unknown
Quesnel	G.R. Baker Memorial	Yes	108	101
Richmond	Richmond General	Yes ⁴	414	395
Surrey	Surrey Memorial	Yes ⁵	unknown	unknown
Tahsis	Tahsis	No	—	—
Tofino	Tofino General	No ⁶	unknown	unknown
Vancouver	Children's	No	—	—
Vancouver	Grace	No	—	—
Vancouver	Shaughnessy	Yes	796	796
Vancouver	Vancouver Gen.	Yes	unknown	unknown
Vanderhoof	St. Vincent's	No	—	—
Victoria	Victoria General	No ⁷	132	121
Victoria	Royal Jubilee	Yes	920	823
Williams Lake	Cariboo Memorial	Yes	unknown	89

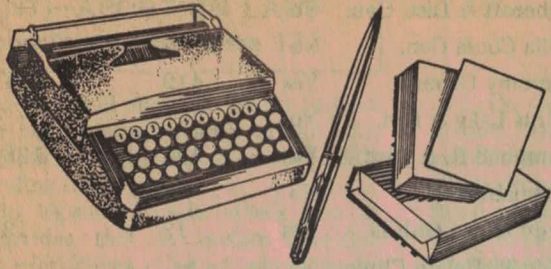
HOSPITAL SCOREBOARD

1. For fiscal year ending March 31, 1981
2. 13 applications cancelled
3. No surgery done at this hospital
4. More restrictive guidelines commenced March 5, 1982
5. TAC reinstated February 5, 1982 with more restrictive guidelines
6. Does not qualify under Criminal Code of Canada; patients referred to West Coast General or Nanaimo Regional
7. TAC disbanded in March, 1982

HOSPITAL BOARD ELECTIONS COMING UP

Most hospital board elections take place in early fall. Now is the time for pro-choice supporters to sign up for membership in their local hospital societies in order to be able to vote for choice at the board elections.

DON'T DELAY!



Letters to 'Priorities'

From a hotel worker

Dear *Priorities*:

Sorry! I let *Priorities* go. Thanks for the reminder. I have just been so busy working and trying to keep my head above water. As a hotel worker I sure wonder what will happen. "Hotel man talking" wages should be cut. Meanwhile gas is up, my apartment rent keeps going up, etc. Where will it end? Hope the NDP has a chance and can find a way for labour people.

Just seen on TV our union Local 40 of the Bartenders, Culinary & Beverage Employees is not going for wage cuts. Thank heavens!!

Looking forward to hear from you again. I'm 51, self-supporting, divorced. And sure hope I can keep making it on my own. Keep fighting for us small, hard-working people!!!

Joan de Gloppe
Chilliwack, B.C.

dimwits in the media? Would you like to see the real-life strengths and struggles of men and women reflected in all media, instead of unreal stereotypes?

We want to insure that the final recommendations of the Appelbaum-Hebert Committee address the disparity of work opportunities for women in the arts and the cultural image of Canadian women. The Committee must be persuaded not only to expose the problems, but also to make recommendations in their final report that will have a positive influence for change.

We are writing to ask you and the members of your organization to express concern about this issue which affects all Canadian women, especially those working in the arts. It is essential that we have a voice in the decisions that will affect our lives and livelihood for the next twenty years!

The Appelbaum-Hebert Committee will be making final recommendations almost immediately. We urge you to

write *now* to each of the following:
Mr. Louis Appelbaum Chairman
Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee,

365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0C8

Mr. Pierre Juneau
Deputy Minister
Department of Communications
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa Ont. K1A 0C8

Mr. Leo Dorais, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Arts and Culture Division
Department of Communications
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa Ont. K1A 0C8

If possible, send a copy to your local MP.

Thank you for your support.
The Appelbaum-Hebert Sub-Committee of the ACTRA Women's Caucus
105 Carlton Street
Toronto Ont. M5B 1M2

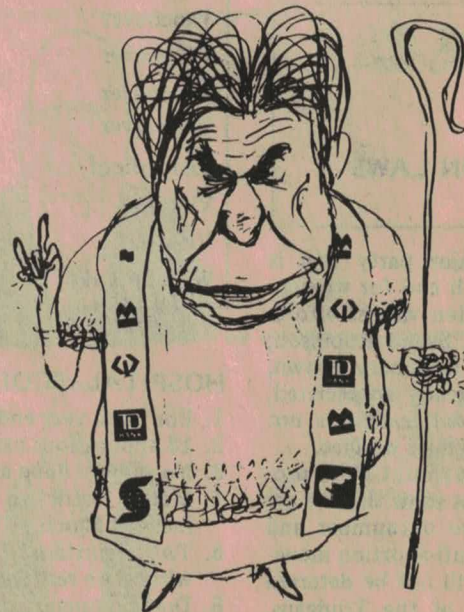
Government cultural policy ignores women —ACTRA Women's Caucus

Dear Colleague:

The federal government recently set up the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (Appelbaum-Hebert) to review the state of the arts in Canada. The Committee was asked to seek advice from the public and from artists concerning cultural policy.

They have recently published a preliminary report of their findings which is shockingly deficient in its coverage of the issues affecting women in the arts. For every woman artist, the implications are frightening, as government cultural policies will be based on this Committee's recommendations—possibly for the next twenty years.

Are you and the members of your organization concerned about the lack of work opportunities for women in your field? Are women in your field earning the same salaries as men? Are you tired of seeing women portrayed as



MAC EACHEN PREACHING
RESTRAINT

CANADIAN DIMENSION

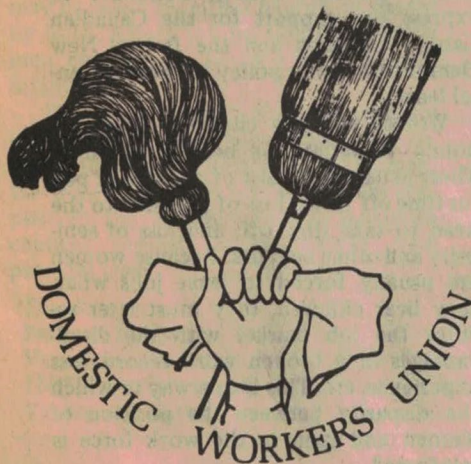


Letters to 'Priorities'

Domestic workers' plight

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We are writing to you because we need your help. The Domestic Workers Union is a newly formed union. This Union is trying to reach one of the most forgotten sectors of Canada's unorganized work force—domestic workers. Although we are aware that the area of domestic labour is much broader, we have started with those domestic workers who are the most oppressed, foreign domestics working in Canada on temporary work visas.



Wages, hours of work and working conditions facing these domestic workers are similar to the conditions faced by most Canadians in the pre-union 30's. Some of these conditions are:

- wages as low as \$150.00 per month
- an 80 hour work week
- no overtime pay
- no unemployment insurance benefits
- no Workers Compensation
- no medical benefits
- no sick leave
- no right to change employers

Like all new organizations or unions, the initial organizing work is the most difficult. Due to the fact that they must reside in their work place, many domestics are isolated and unable to find out their legal rights. The fear of deportation and being fired is strong. As wages are low, it is unrealistic to expect domestic workers to carry the full economic weight that effective organizing requires.

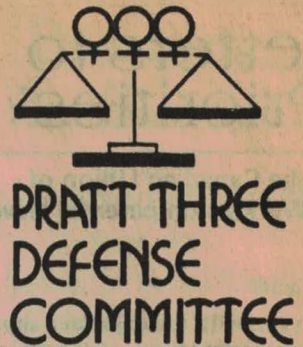
In order to have a strong beginning, money is crucial. As you are no doubt aware, the union has been waging a campaign to keep three of our members in Canada. Daphne Williams, President of the Domestic Workers Union, left Canada on Thursday, May 6, 1982. Ms. Williams was forced to leave "voluntarily"(!) in order to avoid deportation.

As you can imagine, our Union is shocked and saddened at the loss of Daphne Williams. As our President, she has always been a strong and consistent fighter. The arrogant way she was treated by the Canadian government only strengthens our resolve to continue organizing. We are even more determined to win in the cases of Maria Elena Solis and Prudence Cummings.

Despite the fact that we have received strong support from trade unions, community groups and individuals, the cost of this work has been enormous. The Domestic Workers Union has run this campaign without paid staff or office space, and with very limited resources. We are asking you for whatever you can manage. A fixed donation, a monthly donation, or a donation in kind. Our need is great, we've already spent in excess of \$2,000.00.

We thank you for considering this letter, and we hope to hear from you in the future.

In Solidarity,
DOMESTIC WORKERS UNION
Teresita Racal
Acting President
c/o 1992 West 1st Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1G6
Phone 733-8764



Pratt 3 struggle continues

Dear Friends:

It's been over two years since Katy, Suzanne and Wendy were fired by Pratt and Whitney. It has been well over a year since the Quebec Human Rights Commission found Pratt guilty of political discrimination. Pratt has used every legal maneuver in the book to prevent the actual case of discrimination being argued in court.

In the latest maneuver, three judges of the Quebec Court of Appeal presided over a one-day hearing on February 17 to hear the company argue why the legal suit of the Human Rights Commission should not be allowed to proceed. The judges' ruling will take from one to six months.

Recent supporters of the Pratt Three include the federal convention of the NDP (July 1981), the Vancouver local of the IWA, and the Surrey-White Rock constituency of the NDP. As well, financial and moral support continues to arrive from individuals like yourselves.

However, although we succeeded in raising \$3,423.39 in 1981, our costs totalled \$5,295.85. Legal fees alone amounted to \$3,685.73, about four times the amount we had to spend in the previous year. We expect they will be even higher in 1982.

Some of you have already received an appeal similar to this letter from the Montreal Office of the Pratt Three Defense Committee. To those who haven't, we are asking you, our constant supporters, to give again and give as generously as you can. The defense of democratic rights against an opponent as rich and powerful as Pratt and Whitney can only be maintained with your help.

With your continued support, justice for the Pratt Three will be won.

In solidarity,
Monica Jones
Pratt 3 Defense Committee
3-2095 Stainsbury Ave.
Vancouver, B.C.

Letters to 'Priorities'

From the Canadian Union of Postal Workers on parental leave

Dear Friends:

Last year, with the expressed support of many representatives of the women's movement, postal workers achieved a breakthrough in the federal public sector for 17 weeks paid maternity leave. I wish to again express my thanks and appreciation to those who responded to our call for support and whose hearts were with us in our determination to fight for equal rights for women workers.

Now, paid maternity leave is on the list of demands for other unions. Some have won similar benefits to ours—federal government clerical workers and translators and the letter carriers in the post office, as examples.

The momentum for paid leave for other bargaining groups is building now. The government and employers alike are aware of this trend and they know it is going to be difficult to resist. That is why I believe federal government Cabinet Ministers, namely Judy Erola and Lloyd Axworthy, have begun to work on legislative changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act to improve maternity benefits.

This is a positive sign. However, I fear that their objective will be to deflate the pressure for fully paid leave by bringing forth minimal changes to the Act which will marginally improve the eligibility requirements and level of benefits. This, in effect, would be a token gesture towards the full equality of women workers.

It is the position of this Union, and something I truly believe, that equality for women workers will not be achieved until the task of childbearing and caring is recognized as something to be shared between both parents and that the financial penalty of lost wages be abolished. To this effect, the CUPW supports the Canadian Labour Congress policy and the policy of the federal New Democratic Party, which calls for:

- 9 months of fully paid parental leave, for either parent, to be shared if they wish, upon birth or adoption of a child;

- 10 days paid parental leave for the sickness and/or special needs of a child;

- benefits to be covered by expanding the Unemployment Insurance Act;



Photo Monica Jones

Canadian Union of Postal Workers on strike for maternity leave in 1981

— Amendments to federal and provincial labour codes to protect the health, job security and accumulation of benefits for workers taking such leave.

I feel very strongly that this is a critical step for the full equality of women workers and that all workers must be covered, not just those in unions. Already in other countries, notably in Sweden, this is recognized in law. In Canada, there is a broad issue of support for paid maternity leave, as witnessed by a recent Gallup Poll on this topic (published on February 26, 1982).

To win this right for all working people, I believe we must forge a broad alliance between the labour movement, our political allies and the women's movement to push the federal and provincial governments to make the legislative changes as proposed in the CLC/NDP policy.

We again solicit your support in this most significant struggle. You can contribute in many ways, such as communicating your support for the CLC/NDP position to the Canadian Labour Congress, to the New Democratic Party, to the federal Cabinet Ministers involved, to the President of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, to Provincial Premiers and women's lobby groups, and to those unions who have taken up the struggle by emphasizing this demand at the bargaining table.

As witnessed by our success last year, *together we can do it.*

Thank you.

Jean-Claude Parrot
National President
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
280 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, Ont.

Vancouver Women's Health Collective support for CLC/Federal NDP policy on parental leave

Dear Priorities:

I am writing on behalf of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective to express our support for the Canadian Labour Congress and the federal New Democratic Party policy on paid parental leave.

Women workers currently face economic penalties for bearing children. These penalties consist of the loss of pay for time off work, loss of jobs due to the need to take time off, and loss of seniority and other benefits. Because women are usually forced to leave jobs when they bear children, they must later re-enter the job market with the disadvantages of a broken work record, less experience, etc. This is one way in which the disparity between the position of women and men in the work force is reinforced.

The Unemployment Insurance Maternity benefits which are currently available are inadequate. They do not provide sufficient compensation for a long enough period of time, and they do not address problems such as a lack of job security and loss of seniority. Furthermore, because maternity benefits are available only to women workers, they reinforce traditional sex roles in which childbearing and infant care are solely the women's responsibility.

The CLC/federal NDP policy on paid parental leave calls for nine months of fully paid parental leave for either

Letters to 'Priorities'

parent, to be shared if they wish, upon birth or adoption of a child, and 10 days paid parental leave for the sickness and/or special needs of a child. These benefits are to be covered by expanding the Unemployment Insurance Act. In addition, the CLC/federal NDP policy demands amendments to federal and provincial labour codes to protect the health, job security, and accumulation of benefits for workers taking such leave.

We support this policy because it recognizes that childbearing and infant care are social tasks from which society as a whole benefits. Therefore the responsibility for the payment of parental leave is not left to union contract negotiations and to individual employers. The importance of making these benefits available to all workers cannot be stressed enough.

A nine-month period of paid leave provides a realistic assessment of the period of time needed by a parent to devote to full-time care of an infant. Additionally, the stipulation that leave may be taken by either parent, or shared by both, allows the possibility for both men and women to take part in early infant care.

The existence of fully paid parental leave would be an important step towards the economic equality of women. We would therefore like to add our support to the struggle for the legislative changes needed to implement paid parental leave.

Thank you,
Barbara Mintzes
Vancouver Women's Health Collective
1501 West Broadway
Vancouver, B.C.

Lesbian Information Line (LIL)

Dear *Priorities*:

The Lesbian Information Line is a feminist collective offering a service to lesbians such as resource information, referrals and peer counselling via the telephone on Sundays and Thursdays, 7 - 10 p.m.

We aim to offer support and information to women on any aspect of lesbianism and to provide affirmation of lesbianism as a positive life choice. To accomplish this we try to be as honest as we can and to be realistic about what it is to be a lesbian, the limitations and

the joys around this choice.

LIL is a service that is generally used by women who are isolated, either geographically and/or socially from other lesbians.

In order to serve our callers and visitors, we keep an updated file on women's resources such as groups, counsellors, feminist as well as traditional, and social events.

LIL operates on a small budget, at present under \$1400 a year. We would like to supplement our budget from donations. If you or your organization would like to support us please send cheques to the address below.

Thank you for your kind support to the lesbian community.

Susan Harris
Lesbian Information Line
1501 West Broadway
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1W6
Tel. 734-1016
Thurs./Sun. 7-10 p.m.

Women and the Environment in the 80's

Dear *Priorities*,

Women and the Environment in the 80's is a summer research project co-sponsored by the National Survival Institute and Environment Canada. In this project we intend to identify and investigate issues of mutual interest to both women and environmentalists. We have extended the traditional concept of environment beyond the natural world to include the built environment so that we can approach physical, economic, social and cultural issues from a holistic point of view. We hope to:

1. Develop a network of people and groups interested in women and the environment.
2. Compile a list of information and contacts for use by this network.
3. Produce fact sheets on several topical issues.
4. Encourage the participation of women in the decision-making and planning processes which shape the environment.

If you have any suggestions, or information to offer please contact us at the address below. We look forward to hearing from you.

Susan Cornish, L.K. Fraser,
M.R. Lindsay, Lynnette French,
Kim Walker
Project Workers

712-402 West Pender Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1T6
(604) 681-8872

Breaking the Silence

A NEW
FEMINIST NEWSLETTER

from the
School of Social Work
Carleton University
Ottawa K1S 5B6

New subscriber wants to help

Dear *Priorities*:

Enclosed is my cheque for \$5.00 for a subscription to *Priorities*.

I bought a copy of this magazine at the International Women's Day meet, and have thoroughly enjoyed it, but at the same time was so appalled by some of the information and statistics, that are all a reality. I guess too many times, too many of us bury our heads in the sand and hope all of this isn't really true.

I think you people who are so involved and so dedicated to what you believe in are truly remarkable, and could never be thanked enough, except the thanks that all our dreams come true that rape will stop, that our homes are loving places to be again, and safe and all the rest that women all work so hard for and want so much. Funny, it seems so little to ask.

I have been giving all my spare time to dentistry for so many years, I think I might have forgotten to look around and see what's really going on out there, yet in my childhood, I was definitely in the same position as many of the kids, and women you are talking about. Now I've decided, after reading your *Priorities*, that best I get my priorities in order. I want to get involved, but I'm not sure where or to what degree.

Could you kindly send me information on Transition House and let me know if you still need help especially as in labour, as I realize funding is needed and hope to get that one together very shortly. I shall always keep the Transition House in mind when it comes to furniture and other household necessities too now I'm aware of it.

Linda H. Olsen
Vancouver

The above reader should contact the Society of Transition Houses in B.C. at Munro House, Box 33904, Station D, Vancouver. Phone 681-9126/7/8 - Ed.

Letters to 'Priorities'

Sisterhood is alive and well in Manitoba — faithful reader from Brandon, Man. reports

Dear *Priorities*:

I have just been shocked into realizing that I missed renewing my subscription to *Priorities*. My friend in Dauphin got her copy and I didn't receive mine. Enclosed is my renewal and I would appreciate it if I could have a copy of the last issue which I missed.

My friend Helen Warner and I are still working to make women aware of women's issues. We attended a Rural Women's Conference in Winnipeg last October which was organized by MAC/SW. It was very interesting. Then in January we went to Brandon to a workshop put on by the Manitoba Department of Agriculture. This was "Learning Experiences for Rural Women." We were invited by Bev Peters and Carol Potter, outreach workers for MAC/SW in Brandon. I also stayed on an extra day and attended a "Women Together" meeting at the University of Brandon. This is a series of supper meetings that have been held once a month in Brandon this winter. The idea came from MAC/SW Brandon and has certainly been a success. It is sponsored by Continuing Education, Brandon U, MAC/SW and Brandon Women's Organizations. 150 women attended. Supper was served by cafeteria staff. There was a charge of \$8 for supper. After supper, a panel of women spoke on their experiences in returning back to work. Guest speaker was Myrna Phillips, newly-elected NDP MLA. She spoke on Women and Work. It was a very interesting evening and great to see so many women attend. Carol and Bev have worked hard and they have really put MAC/SW on the map in Brandon. From 2 people who attended their first meeting two years ago, to 150 women at the supper, besides all the other projects they have going.

I was at the NDP Convention in Winnipeg in January. We had two Status of Women meetings. It was great to see Mary Humphries, our new Federal Women's Organizer from Ottawa, at the convention. We remembered old friends from the time we were both part of the Kamloops Women's Committee. At our Sunday meeting, she spoke to us about the Task Force on Older Women which

is being planned to be held across Canada. We made some plans and will hear more after a meeting of the Winnipeg Status of Women.

Helen and I have also joined Manitoba Mental Health and we are training as Mental Health Volunteers. This is six weekends of training in Brandon. We take one hundred hours training and they ask in return that we give 100 hours of our time in our communities in whatever way we can, having information available on Mental Health, talking to people on a one-to-one basis, and in groups or in workshops. The training is excellent. We stayed in a unit at Camp Shilo where we enjoyed making friends and talking as well as study time. Our first session was becoming aware of ourselves, our strengths and expectations. There were eleven women and two instructors. I think this is just an excellent program to train volunteers to help others to learn about stress and other problems we have to cope with today.

A committee has been formed in Dauphin to put on some workshops. Thanks to MAC/SW and the Women's Bureau in Brandon for their guidance and help.

So sisterhood is alive and growing in Manitoba. I believe our problem now is to reach out from the larger centres to the smaller areas. This is not easy as most women are too busy with curling and Bingo, taking their children to hockey, dancing class, etc., or working on

fund-raising teas which leave no time to attend meetings. But there are always some in small communities who are looking for more and we hope to reach more and more of them.

Joyce Harrison
Winnipegosis, Manitoba

Anthology of Lesbian writings planned

Dear *Priorities*:

Working class lesbians please send oral history (interviews and tapes), personal narratives, journal excerpts, poetry, analyses or short fiction for consideration in an anthology of Canadian working class lesbians.

I want to explore the experiences and perspectives of lesbians from working class backgrounds — coming out stories, our awareness of how class background influences our lives, our relationships, our self-image and our liaison (if any) with the women's movement.

Submissions from Canadian raised, as well as Canadian born lesbians are welcome. Please forward your ideas, suggestions, work outlines and completed work to:

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