

HORIZONS

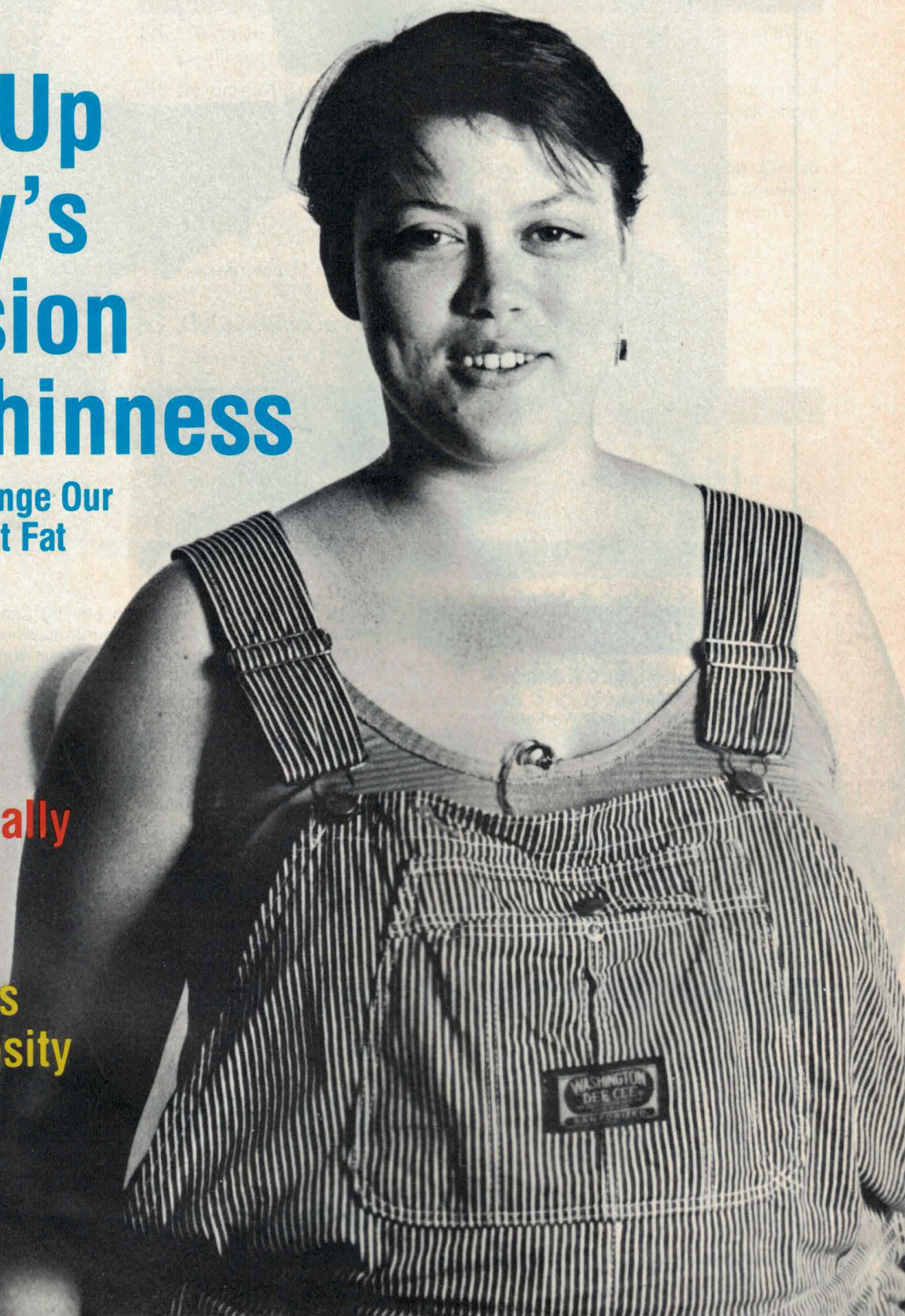
WOMEN'S NEWS AND FEMINIST VIEWS

Sizing Up Society's Obsession With Thinness

Six Women Challenge Our
Assumptions About Fat

► **Housewives Tally
Their Talents**

► **Deflating
Irving Layton's
Poetic Pomposity**



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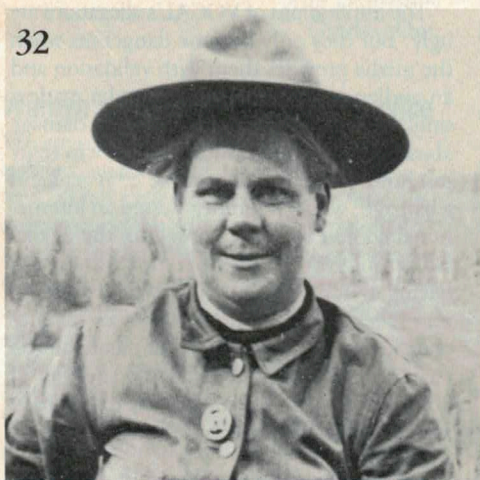
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OCT / NOV 1986

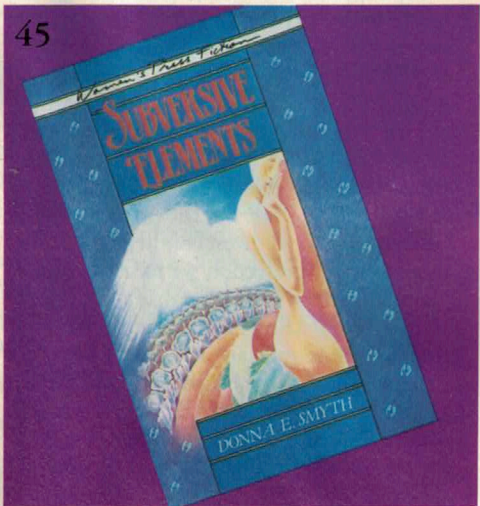
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VOCAL sounds a discordant note

HEIDI MUENCH



On Saturday, August 9th, the *Winnipeg Free Press* set my alarm bells ringing. It ran a front page article reporting the formation of a Manitoba Chapter of VOCAL (Victims of Child Abuse Laws), a

Minneapolis-based organisation that began in 1984 as a support group for people who had faced false allegations of child abuse. Since then, VOCAL has expanded its goals to include lobbying efforts to 'refine' existing child protection procedures which VOCAL alleges focus only on children and ignore the plight of falsely accused adults. VOCAL also maintains that U.S. lawmakers have gone 'overboard' to protect children and that cases of unfounded allegations now outnumber actual abuse cases. A Minneapolis VOCAL director is quoted as expressing concern over abuse prevention programs that 'hammer home' to children all aspects of abuse. The article cites statistics compiled by an organisation calling itself the American Enterprise Institute stating that 65 to 80 per cent of child abuse allegations turn out to be unfounded. VOCAL's claim and A.E.I.'s statistics might sound absurd, but they are no laughing matter. Neither is the prominent placement of the VOCAL article, nor the paper's decision to feature a three quarter page follow-up article highlighting the horror of a false allegation case in the same edition. A dangerous and all too familiar shift of focus is being advocated by VOCAL, one that misidentifies children as victimizers, and thus negates the reality of child abuse.

This falsification process is nothing new. One of the best historical examples is Freud's about face regarding his own seduction theory which, based on accounts of incest disclosed to him by nearly all of his female patients, drew a direct connection between childhood sexual abuse and adult female neurosis. He conveniently decided that his patients' accounts were the result of fantasies fed by what he named the Female Oedipus Complex: the imagined unconscious desire of daughters to have intercourse with their fathers. Freud thus exonerated the fathers by proclaiming them the victims.

This expedient tactic of protecting the victimizer by blaming the victim is still with us.

It continues in pornographic portrayals of

female children and women as powerful seductresses who entice, if not drive men to abuse them. It continues in current efforts of men to protect their Father-right in custody cases, efforts that negate the power imbalance between men and women in this society. In fact, these lobbying efforts attest to the tenacious nature of the belief that men own their children.

It is only recently and after much effort, that feminists have begun to convince the legal system that men actually do rape women and children, that it is wrong of them to do so, and that women and children do not lie about abuse. It is only very recently that legal procedures less destructive to abuse victims have been adopted and this adoption is as yet far from consistent or universal. To read allegations that current child protection procedures have gone overboard and that the majority of abuse allegations are lies enrages me.

According to the chairperson of the Winnipeg Abuse Committee, two U.S. studies have found that only five per cent of children under 18 make false abuse allegations. The percentage for unfounded rape charges is similar. Women and children do not lie about the crimes committed against them any more than men do, as five per cent is in the range of generally cited statistics for false allegations of any kind. VOCAL's claims to the contrary, there is no epidemic of false abuse allegations. The fact that many such allegations are ultimately declared unfounded says more about the conditions under which children are forced to sustain testimony than it does about the truthfulness or confusion of children. It is possible that some of the falsely accused are also the falsely acquitted. Well publicised, generally accepted studies have shown that at least one out of every four women and one out of every ten men are sexually abused before reaching adulthood. These statistics, which refer only to identified abuse, are not reflected in the relatively low number of abuse allegations made by children, and the discrepancy between statistically acknowledged abuse and actual abuser convictions is even greater. Although the number of abuse allegations made continues to increase, like rape, most child abuse is still unreported. Like most rapists, most child abusers are never convicted. The fact that most rapists are still free men in no way refutes the reality that men rape women. Similarly, the fact that most child abusers never face charges does not necessarily mean they are innocent, or

that children lie about being abused.

The discounting and disproving of testimony is only one means by which patriarchy protects itself. The withholding of information is a more subtle and an even more successful method. Children who are kept ignorant of the facts of abuse are effectively silenced. It is only within the last 10 to 15 years that information regarding rape, child abuse and wife battering has been made accessible to the public. Incest survivors of my generation can attest to the near impossibility of a child being able to seek help for something she has no name for. All of us remember all too well society's mute corroboration of our abusers' lies that what they were doing to us was natural and was their right. Most of us had no words with which to describe the ways in which we were violated. As a result, we kept quiet, sometimes for decades.

The implications of VOCAL's allegations are ugly. But they only become dangerous when the media provides them with validation and an audience. Why hasn't the media made a similar effort to publicise the pain and damage abuse does to a child's emotional life or to verify just how widespread such abuse is? A year and a half ago, when Winnipeg hosted an international conference on Counselling the Sexual Abuse Survivor, I remember my frustration at having to hunt through the newspaper to find only a few, modest interviews of conference participants. I also remember numerous articles recounting in graphic detail the specifics of abuse cases: articles that blatantly disregarded any consideration of the privacy of the children involved.

My experience of being female in an androcentric society has taught me to never forget just who the real victims are. And in the case of child abuse, those in need of protection and support are always children. I have nothing against support groups for adults, even for adults labelling themselves Victims of Child Abuse Laws. However, I cannot give credence to any group that, in the name of self-protection seeks to divest children of what little power and protection we have so recently granted them. It strikes me that adults falsely accused of any crime, and who thus have felt some of the terror, rage and helplessness experienced daily by abused children, would more naturally support procedures instituted to convict real child abusers, than they would advocate refinements that only further endanger children. ▼

Direct approach appreciated

Thank you very much for your excellent and timely article on the subject of REAL women.

I had been at a meeting at which the topic was raised the very day I came home to find my July/Aug. *Herizons*. Your direct & rational approach helped to clarify my thinking.

I also like the comment by Alethea LaHofer "If her sisters are behind her, she'll have the strength."

I am talking about *Herizons* more & more as each issue comes with such an interesting abundance of ideas. And I use the ads. My daughter has a baby matey & 2 nursing dresses.

With best wishes to you & *Herizons* sincerely,

Ann Darbyshire
Ottawa, Ont.

Womyn's Braille Press offers service

We are six blind women. Some of us are lesbians, and all of us are feminists. We have all felt extreme frustration because we cannot read feminist and lesbian material which is so readily available to those who read print, and we have all committed most of our leisure time to making more of this material accessible to us.

Womyn's Braille Press (WBP) offers 150 feminist literature books on tape which can be borrowed or purchased as well as resource guides on womyn's health issues, books in Braille including volumes of poetry and a complete catalogue of all taped and Brailled literature available, periodicals on tape as well as providing advice to publishers who would like to make their periodicals accessible, a quarterly newsletter that offers a unique forum for disabled women and our issues to which non-disabled womyn are encouraged to subscribe, and are committed to the education of non-disabled women to the abilities and needs of disabled women through workshops and consultations on providing written materials in Braille and on tape.

For more information contact:

Womyn's Braille Press, Inc.
P.O. Box 8475
Minneapolis, Minnesota
U.S.A. 55408
ph. (612) 872-4352

Native counsellor quits YWCA

The following is a copy of a letter sent to the Winnipeg Free Press.

As a white feminist, I felt ashamed when I read of the racist incidents reported at the YWCA (WFP, August 2.) I am sorry that it has taken a blatant crisis like this to motivate me to seriously prioritize dealing with my own racism as well as the racism still existing in white feminist organisations that I participate in.

White women have waited far too long to do the hard work it takes to make women's organisations places in which Native women can feel safe from racism. It is time for us to pledge to Native women that we will no longer accept the presence of racism in women's organizations I feel that a serious commitment would be demonstrated by asking for the resignations of all persons involved in the racist campaign at the YWCA. This incident was no "joke". There was no difference between the racist tactics imposed on the Native members of the affirmative action program and the sexual harassment that has been used to drive women out of organizations where they were not welcome. It all has the same root. One group is different and has less power. Instead of dealing with their racism and sexism; those who have more power, use it to drive the "other" out. This practice must stop and our focus should never comfortably stop at the YWCA. The time has come to set up a coalition of white women's organizations to deal with the racism in our own backyard.

Carie Winslow
Winnipeg, Man.

Letter from a friend

Your magazine has become a real highlight in our household. It is as welcome as a letter from an old friend, I only wish it was monthly. Keep up the great work!

Belinda Oliver



Feminist homemaker speaks out

July/Aug. came this week — the articles all seem good, especially the editorial by Penni Mitchell — glad she said it — so well (though it was "wordy").

On the subject, may I say that many feminists, especially grandmothers, such as I am, have never held anything against homemakers; I'd be glad to see that attitude die, if it still exists. I've been a contented (?) homemaker/feminist for over 30 years — and not a particularly good one. Another attitude that should die, in my opinion, is that it's reasonable, wise or prudent to have a full-time job and raise children simultaneously. It ain't easy — ever!

Helen Hansen
Toronto, Ont.

Loved Lauri Conger

Congratulations to Joan Baril on the inspiring interview with Lauri Conger. The whole July/August issue was excellent, in fact, and I'm renewing my subscription.

The extensive boycott list concerning South African goods is extremely welcome and any future information on boycotts would be appreciated.

Madeline McDonald
Calgary, Alta.

Prisoner defends P4W movie

It's true it would take a lifetime to show all the horrors contained in the Prison for Women (*Herizons* June '86) but to say the film *P4W* is only a superficial glimpse is to rob the inmates who were in the film of something they are very proud of. The first time the public was made aware of our situation was in *P4W* the movie. Women in *P4W* who had never spoken out before came forward and trusted the filmmakers enough to tell what was really going on ie; suicides, slashings, emotional torment and upheavals. Being in the prison before & after the film was made I saw a definite interest grow as a result of people seeing the film. It's naive to think that one film can say it all or change the world but of all the prison documentaries I've seen *P4W* comes the closest and I'm grateful.

Janise
Inmate P4W

Umbrage taken with PMS article

I must take umbrage with much of the article on PMS that appeared in the April/May issue, in particular with the last paragraph. I found the review of the issues to be rather superficial throughout the article. Of much greater concern is the lack of comprehension of the powerful impact PMS can have on one's life.

For many years I have suffered many of the symptoms mentioned in the article, and others as well. I have tried to deal with dizziness, nausea, skin problems, blurred vision, feeling faint, severe depression and explosive mood changes. These symptoms have slowly increased in severity over time. Often it has been unsafe for me to try to walk down stairs, or drive a car. My responses have been irrational and unpredictable. Depression would cause me to doubt my most basic abilities. My lover has borne the brunt of these symptoms, being as helpless to assist me as I was to control myself.

Recently I read Lauersen and Stukane's book, *PMS: Premenstrual Symptoms and You*, in one sitting — I recognised myself on every page. Their suggestions on diet and exercise have had an enormous impact on my life. The relief is enormous. Indeed, my mood swings are not as energetic, nor as high-flying as they were. My sexual energy is more even. I have a sense of having some control over myself and do not live in fear of completely losing control and hurting myself or someone else.

If living life in a mellower ideal is a loss, as suggested by the author, then she is welcome to my symptoms.

For *Herizons* to print such an essentially anti-woman paragraph causes me dismay. I recognise the need to combat unrealistic beliefs about women wherever we confront them. This article has I believe created yet another false impression of many women's experience: it is amazing that it appears in a feminist magazine.

Elizabeth Massiah, M.S.W., R.S.W.
Edmonton, Alberta

Debra Pilon responds . . .

Elizabeth Massiah accuses me of creating "yet another false impression of many women's experience." How have I done that? She doesn't say.

Elizabeth Massiah describes the last paragraph of my article as anti-woman. How have I been anti-woman? Again, she doesn't say.

Elizabeth Massiah tells me I am welcome to her symptoms. Thanks but no thanks. I have my own. In fact, my interest in the politics of PMS comes from personal experience with the malady.

But back to that offensive last paragraph. In it, I was trying to get women thinking

about the positive aspects of PMS. Some creative women whose work is essentially solitary — artists, writers, poets and musicians — find the pre-menstrual time stimulating as they dive psychologically deeper than at other times of the month. For some reason, many of us feel more open to ourselves at PMS time. (We don't necessarily feel open to other people which can be unfortunate). Many women are more sexually responsive just before menstruation. For all these reasons, conforming to a mellower ideal — and isn't it true that patriarchal society encourages women to be mellow, if not comatose — might mean relinquishing powers that are *essentially* womanly. It just might.

I wanted to suggest two things: that most womanly power is acceptable to me and that women whose PMS symptoms are not on the debilitating end of the PMS spectrum think about ways in which PMS, when managed as one chooses, could provide insights into our psychic and spiritual selves.

PMS is controversial and complex. My intention in writing the article was to enlighten women about ways to cope with this particular physiological manifestation of womanhood. I don't believe anything I wrote was anti-woman.

Not a T.O. mag

One of the main reasons I decided to subscribe is because you are NOT Toronto-based.

Please do not succumb to the temptation to become a slick, glossy magazine for Toronto Women.

That is why I'm not going to subscribe to *Chatelaine* again, & why I have quit buying *Ms.* & *New Woman*. Too much of the same . . . pages of models (too thin), cosmetics & clothes (too expensive).

I want a magazine that's real for all women & that addresses current issues of the country & world.

Good luck!!!

(Ms) Van M. Buchanan
Saanichton, B.C.

Herizons Editors

Heather Spears "Drawings from the Newborn" are delicate, sensitive and precious. They brought to me in my busy world moments in a quiet nursery where babies sleep, rest, nourish & grow in an atmosphere of warm gentle caring.

Thank you Heather. Let me know if you and/or your drawings are coming to Edmonton.

Thanks

Muffy Mathewson

P.S. Good article by Heidi Muench, Survivors. Also loved hearing about Gail Buente's Vacations from the Patriarchy.

HERIZONS

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The aim of this magazine is to provide an alternative means of communication with a feminist perspective in order to stimulate, to inform, to effect change, and to unify women's strengths, serving as a forum for women.

Herizons magazine is located at 200 - 478 River Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3L 0C8. Phone (204) 477-1730. Herizons is published 8 times per year. Subscriptions \$20 per year; outside Canada add \$6. Low income: \$9 per year. Stripping by Litho-strip, Winnipeg, Man. Printing by Michalski Printing Service Ltd., Winnipeg, Man. Herizons is a member of the Canadian Periodical Publishers' Association and is listed in the Alternative Press Index. Submissions are welcome. Editing rights reserved and submission does not guarantee publication. A self-addressed, stamped envelope will ensure submissions are returned to author. Views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect Herizons policy. Second Class Mail Registration No. 5899. ISSN 0711-7485

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WESTERN REGION

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUNGER in Canada will be held **October 30 - November 1, 1986** at Toronto's Park Plaza. One of the speakers will be welfare advocate Dorothy O'Connell who has authored **Chicklet Gomez and Cockeyed Optimists**. Registration fee is \$70 (includes meals); for information: Robert Doyle, Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto, 950 Young St., Ste. 1000, Toronto M4W 2J4 (416) 961-9831.

SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON IMMIGRANT WOMEN will be held at the International Inn in Winnipeg on **November 6-8, 1986** with the theme "Immigrant Women in Action-Forward Looking Strategies for the 1990s." Registration fee is \$25, please contact Linda Thompson or Sandra Damiani at Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba, 290 Garry St., Winnipeg R3C 1H3 (204) 943-8612.

THE TRUE NORTH STRONG AND FREE? A Public Inquiry Into Canadian Defence Policy and Nuclear Arms to be conducted in the Convention Centre, Edmonton, **November 8 and 9, 1986**. Panelists for this public debate include Shirley Carr, David Suzuki, Gwynne Dyer and Maj. Gen. Leonard Johnson (Ret.). For information: Irene or Lorna at (403) 486-3277, or write Physicians for Social Responsibility, #401 14727 - 87 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5R 4E5.

SEXUALITY AND HEALTH — A New Look at an Old Subject is a conference to be held in Edmonton from **November 12-14, 1986** and is aimed at those offering services related to reproductive health and sexuality. Contact: Kathleen O'Malley, Chairperson, Conference Planning Centre, Health Education and Promotion, 5th Floor, 7th Street Plaza 100300 - 107 Street, Edmonton T5J 3E4 (403) 427-4579.

CANADIAN TEACHERS' FEDERATION STATUS OF WOMEN CONFERENCE will be held at The Delta, Winnipeg from **November 13-15, 1986** with keynote speakers Paula Caplan (*The Myth of Women's Masochism*) and Maureen McTeer (lawyer, activist and feminist). For information call Donna Stephania at the Manitoba Teachers Society office (204) 888-7961 or 1-800-262-8803.

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE MAKING OF MANITOBA is the topic of a lecture/discussion on **November 21, 1986** from 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. in Room 201, (2nd floor), 185 Smith St., Winnipeg. For information on a large number of programs for retirees over 50 contact Creative Retirement Manitoba (204) 942-8618.

TIME OFF FOR WOMEN The Second International Day of Recognition of All Women's Work is on **October 24, 1986**. Join us to organise on October 24th in Vancouver and across Canada. Contact: Wages For Housework: Nancy McRitchie or Ellen Woodsworth at (604) 255-3395, or write to 1426 Napier Street, Vancouver B.C. V5L 2M5.

EASTERN REGION

CHILDBIRTH ASSISTANT TRAINING is a weekend workshop on **November 7, 8, 9, 1986** in Kitchener, Ontario. Learn how to correctly assist the primary caregiver and the birthing woman by becoming a childbirth assistant. For more information contact Anne Maranta at (519) 742-7581, 87 Markwood Drive, Kitchener, Ontario N2M 2H3.

THE USE OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS is a UNESCO experts' meeting in Quebec City on **December 8-12, 1986** which will focus on specific groups such as the economically disadvantaged, women, the elderly and the differently-abled. Contact: Women's Program, Secretary of State, 15 Eddy St., Hull, Quebec K1A 0M5 (819) 994-3190.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY PEOPLE OF COLOUR CONFERENCE will take place **November 27-30, 1986** in Los Angeles. The conference will include arts festival, caucuses, speakers, tours of L.A., and workshops. For information: People of Colour Conference/GLLU, 2565 Robertson Blvd., Beverly Hills, CA 90211.

WOMEN AND THE MILITARY SYSTEM is a symposium which will take place on **January 22-25, 1987** at Siuntio Baths in Finland. The cost is \$150 U.S. all inclusive; deadline for final registration is **October 31, 1986**. Contact: Symposium on "Women and the Military System," c/o Peace Union of Finland, Sähkötajankatu 6, 00520 Helsinki, Finland.

PAST PRESENCE: A CIRCLE OF WOMEN'S VISIONS is a show exploring the influence of women's personal and collective past (from prehistory to present) on contemporary women's art. Scheduled from **March 4-29, 1987** in Corvallis, Oregon. Deadline for slides is **November 15, 1986**; open to all women artists working in any medium; variety of interpretations welcome. Prospectus/entry form from: "PAST PRESENCE, Corvallis Arts Center, 700 SW Madison, Corvallis, OR 97333.

SUBMISSIONS

PICTORIAL HISTORY OF WESTERN CANADIAN WOMEN is being organised by The Western Canada Pictorial Index (W.C.P.I.) located at the University of Winnipeg. W.C.P.I. would like to add to their collection of over 50,000 images to include those from Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories in conjunction with the proposed Prairie Chair in Women's Studies. They are soliciting photographs portraying women in agriculture, politics, community groups, domestic service, office and factory work. Of particular interest are previously unpublished pictures from private collections. Contact: W.C.P.I., University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg R3B 2E9 (204) 786-9830.

LOOKING FOR NON-SEXIST FITNESS PROGRAMS AND ADVERTISEMENTS This national search is being organised by Mediawatch to target the unrealistic portrayals of women and girls. Contact: Mediawatch, 209-636 West Broadway, Vancouver B.C. V5Z 1G2 (604) 873-8511.

RETORTS, QUIPS AND ONE-LINERS FOR WOMEN is the working title of a book in the planning stages. Send your own, anonymous or creditable quotes. The best comebacks for the street, the office, the bar or the board room you've ever heard or said. Send them to Retorts, #167, 253 College St., Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R5.

WOMEN'S DREAMS is an anthology being compiled to discover and validate our concerns — to explore this intuitive aspect of our experience. Send dreams with or without commentary. All submissions will remain confidential and your real name will not be published. Send by **November 1, 1986** to: Dreams, Elizabeth Good, 2912 Daubenbiss Avenue #73, Soquel CA 95073

Magazine editor relates struggles in India's Women's Movement

Early this summer, students and professors at Concordia University and members of Montreal's Indian community met for a few hours. They came to hear Madhu Kishwar, feminist and activist and co-founder of *Manushi*, India's first feminist magazine.

Manushi began when Kishwar and some friends at a New Delhi university decided to take advantage of a growing press freedom in India in the late 70s. Although many alternative magazines and papers started at that time, *Manushi* was the only one to take a women's perspective.

"When we began, we had not a table, not a typewriter," Kishwar said of the group that published its first issue in January, 1979. In those early months, both funding and legitimacy were in short supply, so they often carried the magazine proofs and copy in their bags to meet and work in houses or parks.

"We called ourselves a collective because we had no other word to deal with our constant state of flux," said Kishwar. Besides the conflicts we are all familiar with when juggling paid work, volunteer work and family, *Manushi's* collective also had to contend with husbands and fathers who would use beatings or move their families to the other end of town to stop women from working on the magazine.

Early decisions meant that no funding from organisations or the government would be accepted. Later, the option of raising money through ads was also dropped. So few advertisers had acceptable copy, that the effort to solicit ads and keep advertisers happy proved to be more trouble than it was worth. Funding comes solely through

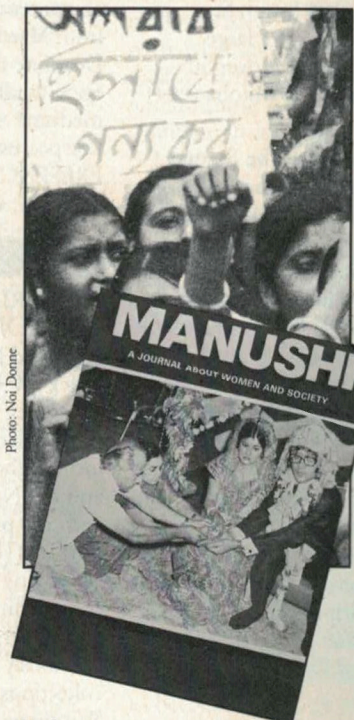


Photo: Nait Deyne

Indian women protest against marriage dowry system — one of the events Manushi reports on.

individual donations and subscriptions. While the collective started out waiting for enough money to print the next issue, they now usually have enough for the next few. A core staff of five includes three who are paid and two who have teaching jobs.

The name *Manushi* derives from the feminine equivalent of the Hindi word for human being. The bimonthly magazine alternates between Hindi and English issues.

As well as publishing, the women of *Manushi* also work as a lobbying group and an activist network. Free legal information is offered through their offices.

As the women of *Manushi* began to travel around India for themselves, they found that arguments that might work with a particular community in

the city, just were not valid for another area of the country. A woman separated from her own village and isolated in her husband's where she is expected to gather water and fuel daily, with barely a rest for illness has very different needs from an urban woman trying to find adequate health care.

A typical issue of *Manushi* might focus on prostitutes in Calcutta, a drought in the north and a land claims battle elsewhere. By doing this, they often find themselves in different positions with different groups. "We avoid a finger-pointing approach," Kishwar declares. "If someone wants to walk two steps forward, we'll be there to walk with them. If they go backward, we find someone else who's going forward."

Manushi works on a very practical level. For Kishwar, what people do is more important than what they say. Legislation is not very important to her, one way or the other; "what husbands will do, judges will do worse. Laws don't do much in practice," she maintains.

Because the sectors of Indian society are often separated by large chasms of religion and caste, power is easily abused. Although the problems of women are real enough and often horrifying, Kishwar believes that they are part of a larger picture. "For the last five or six years there's been an attempt to build a coalition of groups struggling for basic human rights. Our focus is women," she affirms, "but if you gather the tribals, the landless poor, the Muslims, the Sikhs and the women, you have an overwhelming majority."

The process is slow and Kishwar admits that it does

occasionally mean making difficult compromises.

It also means unpopular decisions. One such decision was made around the anti-Sikh riots in India in 1984. "We felt that we were dealing with a 'minority in the making'," she explains. They defended the Sikhs, both the men who were being beaten by the police and the women who were raped and kidnapped.

"People protested by saying 'but Sikhs treat their women badly' — as if all other communities worshipped theirs." Kishwar calls the process the "justification of a massacre" not unlike the ideology that suggests that raped and beaten women 'asked for it,' and emphasises 'we have a commitment to protect the lives and dignity of all oppressed groups, no matter what they did in the past.'

Kishwar stresses that there are no trade-offs made in this kind of help: "We did not use this as a bargaining tool (we'll help you now if you do this or that for women) but we did not let it shut us up either."

Kishwar suggests that we try to keep informed of what goes on in India and other developing nations any way we can. She also asks that we use letter campaigns to protest major atrocities. "If you hear that I got hit on the head," she advises, "don't worry about it, but if something big happens, protest."

Subscriptions to *Manushi* are available for \$18 on a money order or \$19 by personal cheque c/o Esther Jantzen, 5008 Erringer Place, Philadelphia PA, 19144. Institutional subscriptions are \$24 US.

—Karen Herland

Housewives tally their talents; translate jobs into real wages

The housewife trying to return to paid work faces a dilemma. Anjum, a homemaker and mother of two school-age children, describes the situation succinctly, "I spent 10 years making sandwiches for my children, and I couldn't even get a job making sandwiches."

Anjum is one of six participants in Housewives in Training and Research (HITAR), a project combining job training with research into women's lives. The goals of the program are twofold: to produce a study of the value of housework and, in the process, to provide the participants with marketable job skills. The project started in February, 1986, and is, appropriately enough, nine months long, finishing at the end of October.

The new skills acquired by participants have numerous possible uses in future employment: market research, work with labour unions or community groups, as well as word processing and other office work.

The group's modest office at South Vancouver Family Place buzzes with activity. One woman sits at a computer terminal, adding the latest interview results to the data base. Another is on the telephone talking to Statistics Canada. Three others huddle around the nine-page questionnaire the group has compiled. Their discussion is being videotaped by another woman as she learns hands-on how to operate the video camera. On the wall behind them hangs a huge, hand-printed chart tallying the financial worth of Canada's housewives, with a breakdown of how this amount could be fitted into the federal budget.

The chart holds some intriguing facts. For example, if we took the Canadian military budget plus the federal "pre-budget splurge", we could afford to pay each of Canada's 6.5 million housewives a salary of \$22,000 per year, an amount equal to the average industrial wage. Just a dream? Possibly, but small victories are being

won, such as the recently instituted pension for homemakers in Saskatchewan.

A resolution, passed unanimously by the 1985 United Nations Decade of Women Conference in Nairobi, recommends that "The remunerated and, in particular, the unremunerated contribution of women to all aspects and sectors of development should be made to measure and reflect these contributions in national accounts and economic statistics, and in the gross national product. Concrete

the training in a job situation.

As part of their training, the project participants study the role of housewives, the value of housework and the training housework provides for jobs in the paid labour force outside the home. The researchers compiled an in-depth questionnaire and interviewed 1,000 homemakers in an urban neighbourhood to determine the amount and value of work housewives do. The questionnaire consists of 89 questions designed to gather both factual information and feelings the women have about

HITAR are as diverse as the neighbourhood they're studying. They come from ethnic backgrounds that include Native Indian, South African and Pakistani. They are natives of Alberta and Nova Scotia as well as British Columbia. Their ages range from early 20s to late 40s; their work experience is equally varied. One common thread binds them: they are all mothers, and they all manage households. They understand the problem they are studying and are not simply "objective observers."

In another part of this ambitious undertaking, the group organised a series of general meetings, held every two weeks and open to housewives from the neighbourhood. The meetings are designed to be informal conversations about issues of concern to homemakers. The situation of housewives in Canada; resources such as day care and family places; how to set up support groups; ways to reduce feelings of isolation; and ways to include wages for housework in the federal budget, are some of the topics they have discussed.

The project's research findings are scheduled to be compiled and printed by the end of October. If you would like a copy of the report, have any questions, comments or information you'd like to pass along, or are interested in organising a similar research program, they would love to hear from you. Write to Housewives in Training and Research, c/o South Vancouver Family Place, 4932 Victoria Drive, Vancouver, B.C. V5P 3T6 or phone (604) 325-5213.



Housewives in Training and Research from left to right (standing) Dinah, Ellen, Janice, Seanna. (Sitting) Raylene, Anjam, Jaime.

steps should be taken to quantify the unremunerated contribution of women to agricultural food production, reproduction and household activities."

Housewives in Training and Research is one concrete step being taken toward inclusion of housework in the Canadian Gross National Product. Conceived in the fall of 1985 by Ellen Woodsworth, now project coordinator, HITAR is funded by a Job Development Grant from the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. Fifty per cent of the grant goes to fund training, and the other 50 per cent to use

their work. Some of the questions asked were: Do you consider housework a job? If homemakers were paid, would more men be homemakers? What type of job would you like your daughters to pursue? Do you have a bank account in your name? They also asked for a percentage breakdown of the time spent on individual housekeeping activities. The area they are studying is South Vancouver, a multi-cultural, working class community. In general, the family structures in the area are the traditional ones of the various ethnic groups.

The six women who make up

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Socialist decade for women declared at Lima conference

If your only memory of the recent Socialist International (SI) meeting in Lima, Peru is a vague recollection of a terrorist attack, you may be forgiven. Even the most devoted western newspaper reader and television news viewer would have had difficulty knowing that the Socialist International Women's (SIW) Bureau also met in Lima in June, let alone that Canadian women were represented. Despite the absence of the world media, socialist women from 30 countries peacefully shared information and arrived at consensus about their goals for the next 10 years, an era they describe as "a socialist decade for women."

Tessa Hebb of Halifax was chosen as the North American nominee for Vice-President of the Socialist International Women's Bureau by virtue of her participation on the executive of the federal New Democratic Party, where she represents Nova Scotia. Hebb has 15 years of experience behind her as an early childhood educator; she is now the director of a non-profit pre-school program in Halifax. She has run for public office twice: in the 1984 federal election, as the NDP candidate for Halifax,



Tessa Hebb, delegate to the Socialist International Women's Bureau strives to make women's voices heard.

and in the 1985 municipal election for Halifax City Council.

Socialist International is an organisation of social democratic parties working to expand the influence of social democratic policies throughout the world. The Women's Bureau of SI considers issues of special relevance to women and strives to make women's voices heard at the male-dominated SI Congress.

Hebb was asked to address the SIW Congress on the broad topic of women under

oppression. To her dismay, she was scheduled to speak after a recently-released political prisoner from Chile, a delegate from the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, and a member of a persecuted native group from Ecuador. Hebb was decidedly nervous. She wondered what she could tell women from the developing world about oppression that they hadn't already lived through themselves. Despite the widely differing experiences of the delegates, Hebb found a common denominator.

Choosing to speak about sexual oppression, she told delegates, "We are all at different places in the same fight."

In the midst of the many different worlds represented at the SIW Congress, Hebb feels she managed to communicate something of Canadian women's daily lives.

Highlighting the issues of pay equity and sexual harassment, Hebb worked hard to combat the myth, prevalent in Latin America, that Canadian women's battles have already been fought and won. She drew a roar of laughter from the delegates — the laughter of recognition — when she said that most Canadian men who

are accused of sexual harassment claim that the complainant has no sense of humour.

On the last day of the SIW meeting, delegates endorsed an omnibus resolution which focusses on the world economic crisis as a major cause of women's suffering. In part, the resolution calls for radical but peaceful change aimed at eliminating oppression and inequality, ends to be accomplished "by democratic means and by political negotiation."

As a result of the Lima meeting, Hebb sees that Canada's role in the North-South dialogue is critical. She said that due to the United States' way of intervening in Latin America, the South is sceptical about the sincerity of the U.S. in any North-South talks. Canada's reputation, however, is quite different in Latin America. Hebb said that delegates to the Congress think of Canada "as an extremely powerful nation and as a humane power, capable of dealing fairly with the crises of developing nations." Their respect for Canada gives us an opportunity to bring about meaningful dialogue and real change.

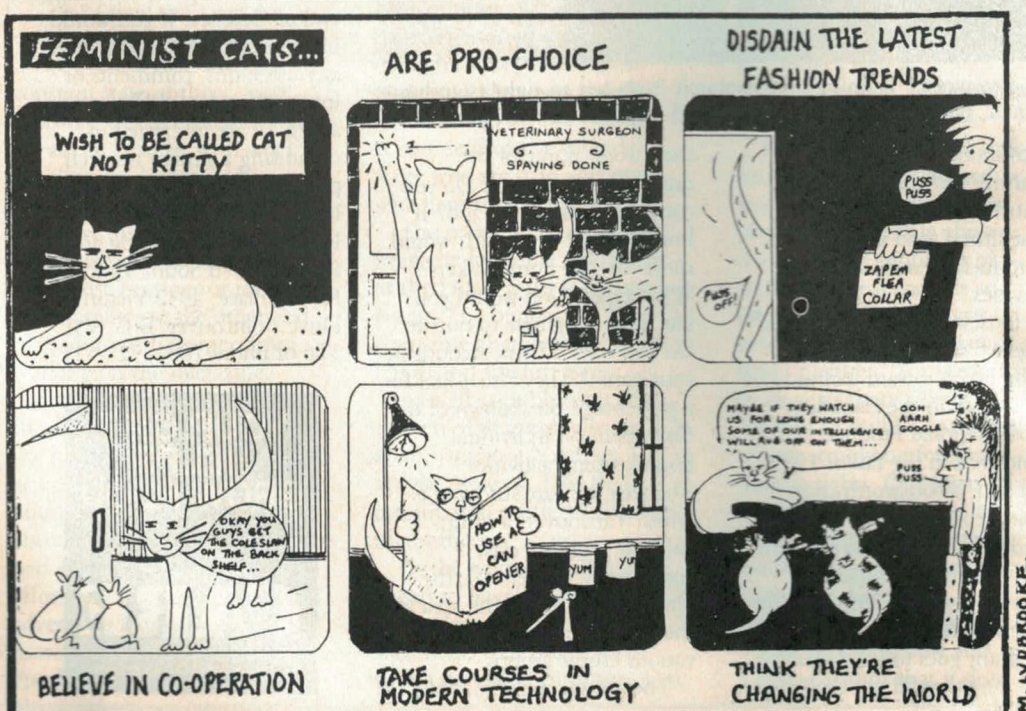
— Nancy Bowes

Nancy Bowes is a freelance writer in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

More health risks

Researchers in Helsinki, Finland report that 10 per cent of studied IUD users had anemia after one year of use, and another 10 per cent showed signs of iron deficiency.

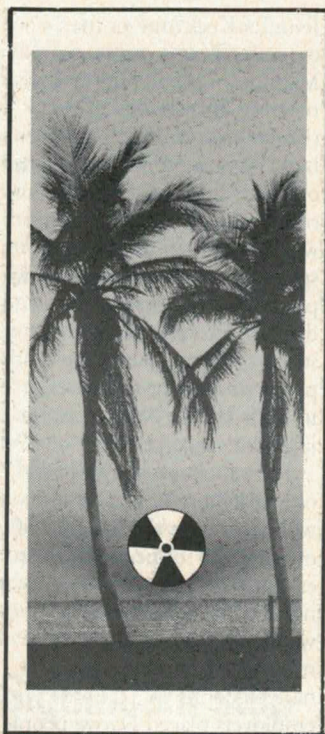
The researchers were unable to explain how the presence of an IUD seems to affect the blood's levels of ferritin, a blood protein, and they cautioned that frequent fatigue was a common symptom of those affected. They recommend that hemoglobin levels be checked before and after IUD insertion, and monitored thereafter to see whether iron supplements, or removal of the IUD is necessary.



Nuclear testing leaves islands and local population in peril

"And so we married, mostly because we were so in love, but also because he promised to take me to a South Sea Island." Thirty-three years later Marie Therese Danielsson still lives with her anthropologist husband Bengt on Tahiti. This French Polynesian island has been referred to as the paradigm of paradise, and indeed the coral reefs, blue lagoons and white sandy beaches are still there. But Marie Therese spends much more time fighting the continuing French nuclear tests than letting the tropical breezes ruffle her dark hair.

I spoke to Danielsson recently at an international women's conference where she reminded me that atmospheric testing in the South Pacific began in the Marshall Islands in 1946 when the U.S. tested bombs in the infamous Bikini Atoll. Dozens of tests later, in 1963, both the U.S. and Russia decided to go underground with their nuclear weapons: the Americans to Nevada, the Russians to Siberia. It was not an end to the radioactive fallout in the South Pacific, however, merely a brief lull. That same year General Charles de Gaulle made the decision to test nuclear weapons in French Polynesia, and three years later,



on September 11, 1966, the first French bomb was detonated. Over the next eight years a further 41 devices were exploded, five of them the even more deadly hydrogen models. The fallout was monitored by New Zealand and denied by the French. When Australia and New Zealand took France to the World Court in an attempt to stop the bombing, the French ignored the

unfavourable ruling and continued. It was a Canadian, David MacTaggart of Greenpeace, who directed the glare of publicity onto the atmospheric tests, finally forcing France underground in 1974. Danielsson does not see this decision as a substantial improvement.

Situated on a brittle basalt base, the coral atolls are fragile and porous, surely the worst place for bomb testing. The effects on environment and people are less than well documented, however. France stopped publishing health statistics for the islands in 1966. Death certificates merely state the cause of death, natural or unnatural, and do not even give the age of the deceased. A French nun runs a centre in Papeete for mentally and physically handicapped children, and those requiring operations are often sent to France. Marie Therese Danielsson contends that the number of affected children and miscarriages is alarmingly high, but it is difficult to prove a correlation between health risks and nuclear testing in the absence of statistics. The French establishment is united in its plan to continue the tests — all political parties agree on the need for them, and unlike the

Catholic bishops of Canada, the bishop in Tahiti supports the government.

Marches protesting the tests are now banned in Papeete and must disperse on the outskirts of the city. Nonetheless, Marie Therese is optimistic. "There are two new local parties very much against the tests and for independence," she says. The issues are naturally intertwined. Furthermore, she is president of the Polynesian chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, an organisation she discovered while she was in Copenhagen with four Tahitian women. "This allows us to participate in international meetings," Marie Therese explains, "and since France usually speaks for French Polynesia, WILPF gives the world another perspective."

While we march in Canada for peace and worry about what might happen as a result of a declared or accidental war, or even nuclear reactor accident, people in the South Pacific are suffering the effects of radiation now. Their numbers are small and their international political voice muted, but their message, carried by such vibrant and determined women as Danielsson, must be heard.

— C. Heather Allen

Women's peace flotilla in hot water

(VANCOUVER ISLAND) — Eight women in four small dinghies were arrested in August when they entered a restricted zone to stage a women's peace action against a controversial military base on Vancouver Island in British Columbia.

The women were part of the 45-member Nanoose Mother Peace Flotilla whose target was the highly sensitive command centre for the Canadian Forces Maritime Experimental and Test Ranges (CFMETR).

For 20 years the base, which houses a sophisticated, underwater torpedo tracking system, has been used by both Canadian and American forces to test torpedo guidance

systems.

The protesters' greatest concern surrounds the frequent visits by U.S. nuclear-powered submarines which peace activists say are carrying nuclear weapons arsenals.

Military personnel stood at the shoreline as the 8-woman landing party rowed in to "symbolically reclaim the island for peaceful purposes."

The women were allowed to come ashore and proceed with their peace ritual which involved joining hands in a circle, singing, and having a brief picnic. Breaking bread together signified the "bread not bombs" conversion focus on this armed site.

Military police on shore

summoned two patrol boats waiting on standby and the eight women were arrested for trespassing.

The women were not taken

into custody, but each faces a maximum fine of \$1,000 or 12 months in jail.

— Kim Goldberg

WOMEN'S SPEAK:

A Gala Celebration of Canadian Women Poets/Le gala de la parole des femmes canadiennes on the occasion of the launch of *SP/ELLES: Poetry by Canadian Women/Poesie de femmes canadiennes* (ed. Judith Fitzgerald, Black Moss Press).

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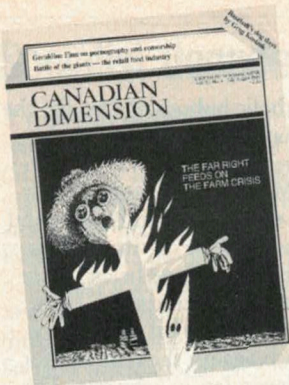
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Women begin building a multi-racial movement

(SUDBURY) — "Hold our hands," Native Canadian Susan Hare said. It was a request to the mainly white women's movement to reach out to Native Canadian women. Hare, key-note speaker along with educator Dorothy Smith, made her plea at the Northern Ontario Women's Conference held recently in Sudbury.

It was obvious that reaching out had already been on the minds of conference organisers. The conference was notable for its mix of participants — young women, older women, single mothers, Native women, anglophones, francophones. And it was a friendly gathering. As one woman, a francophone mother raising 13 children on her own, described it, "No one here is stuck-up at all."

"I wouldn't have been part of this conference," Susan Hare told the 300 participants, "but

Jennifer Keck (one of the organisers) came out to Manitoulin Island and we had a meeting of the ladies of the (Native) communities and we had a discussion if it was worth our time to come to the conference." The community women told her to go and to speak about discrimination and prejudice. "White people don't like to talk about this subject," she said. "They prefer to think it doesn't exist in Canada. But Native people just come up against it."

Hare spoke of her four year old daughter. "I'm sure she will never have the freedom of opportunity or be accepted as easily or get jobs as easily as non-Native children." She went on to describe studies made of white attitudes to native people. In Toronto, employers placed Native people last in the list of those they would hire. In Winnipeg, teen-

agers chose Natives as the most disliked group.

Hare has had her own experiences with racism; she described an incident that occurred when she asked for the key to a service station "ladies room." She was told, "You're no lady. You're a squaw. Go piss in the field."

Racism inhabits the larger society. "I have to teach my children differently than you," she said. "I have to teach them that the things they go through are not necessarily true. I have to teach them not to be hurt by it. I think there is discrimination in the women's movement because the women's movement is part of the larger society. If Native women are to become part of the women's movement, the movement has to look at its attitudes. And try. And hold our hands."

— Joan Baril

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Native women report their concerns

Proud, quiet, friendly, honest, artistic; this is how Native women describe themselves in a recent paper written by Laureen Cote for the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women. Cote interviewed 75 status, non-status and metis women between the ages of 18 and 65 living in urban areas and reserves in southwestern Manitoba.

Their concerns are documented in tables and statistics in this information paper, but their hope, anger, pain and strengths are also revealed, giving this important research a human element. In the section on child welfare for example, a woman expresses her resentment at the children's aid society's former policy of adopting native children out-of-province and to non-native families: "There are so many lost children," she reflects. A young woman adopted out to a family in the United States and recently returned home comments, "Now at the age of 23, I'm just starting to meet and am getting to know some of my relatives, though I don't know anything about my cultural background."

Almost half of the women interviewed attended residential schools decades ago, a system which Cote says still affects them. The report cites lingering criticism of this school system "because of the cultural genocide which was practiced at the time. Native students were prohibited from and punished for using their language."

Violence against women and reproductive choice are other issues of concern for those interviewed, and the issues were explored as they relate to native women's lives. Wife abuse committees are perceived as being hesitant to get involved with the reserves, and many said they were uncomfortable talking about abuse in workshops or group settings. The abortion issue is viewed differently by many Native women, who explain that their views stem in part from the traditional Native perception of children and babies as a gift —

the legal "ownership" of children is seen as a White concept.

On issues of cultural awareness, discrimination and the Indian Act the women are cautiously optimistic. Even though they experienced rampant racism in the schools, job market, health care system, prisons and housing, the women can see hope for their children's future, providing they have the opportunity to learn about the richness and fullness of their Native culture. "I feel very fortunate that I knew my great-grandmother and I try to be like her, raising my children in Native traditional ways and teaching them to be proud of their heritage." — Charlynn Toews

Significant step for women

(WINNIPEG) — The position of a Prairie Chair in Women's Studies, established by the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, is a significant step on the academic front for the status of prairie women.

Half a million dollars was awarded last year by the Women's Program of the Secretary of State as seed money to endow the Chair in Women's Studies for the Prairie Region and the Northwest Territories. To ensure the permanence of the position, the universities initiated a fundraising campaign as part of the agreement.

The fundraising committee has set a five year target of an additional \$1 million, which would ensure that the position would be permanent and would allow for involvement in the whole Prairie region. The Government of Manitoba is committing approximately one third of the funds and other provincial governments are expected to contribute. The committee is also seeking individual contributions in order to reach their target.

The appointment of this Chair will be used as a springboard for raising the

consciousness of other academics, as well as a way of increasing research into women's issues in all disciplines and encouraging the use of non-sexist research methodology. A strong "outreach" component is unique to the Prairie Chair position, adding to the traditional activities of teaching and research.

Anyone donating a minimum of \$1000 on or before December 1, 1986 will be recognized as a Leader and will have their name embossed on brass plaques at each university. Leaders of the Chair in Women's Studies will be hosted by the Honorable Myna Phillips, Speaker of the House, at a Person's Day Celebration on October 17, 1986 in the Manitoba

Legislative Buildings.

Presentations, regarding the significance of the Chair position and the fundraising campaign, will be made to women's groups throughout this year, and to corporate organisations next year.

Prairie women have the reputation of being leaders in the struggle for sexual equality in Canada. Their activities have led to country-wide changes in legislation, family law and pay equity being examples. The Chair in Women's Studies will enable further strides for equality through teaching and research.

Send your donation to the Fund Raising Committee for the Chair in Women's Studies, #201 Allen Building, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg R3T 2N2.

— Elaine Adam

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Judgements

IS WELFARE A CRIME?

In Quebec, special government agents are using information received from citizen reports to search for welfare fraud. Under scrutiny are women's closets and cupboards, the food in their refrigerators, anything that might point to an illegal man in the house or other ill gotten gains. In one summer month, social affairs department inspectors made 9,529 visits to welfare recipients' homes.

Aline Laforest, a widow on welfare, is challenging these policing activities under Quebec's Charter of Rights. Laforest claims these official fishing expeditions violate five sections of the Charter of Rights and she expects her right to refuse entry to the special investigators will be upheld by the court.

**Feminist ACTION and
Globe and Mail**

PROVOCATION

In 1985, in Britain, Nicholas Boyce was convicted of the manslaughter of his wife, Christabel. He was found not guilty of murder on the grounds of provocation. His defence claimed, 'She nagged him beyond endurance'.

Often there have been no witnesses to this 'provocation'. There is only the word of the accused.

After strangling and dismembering Christabel, Nicholas Boyce was dealt with on the basis of 'what any reasonable man would do when being similarly provoked so as to lose his self-control'. Judge Miskin, summing up at the Old Bailey stated, 'You were a hardworking man, of excellent character, simply unable to get on with your wife'.

In another case, James Birch, who was jailed for 18 months in November 1985 for killing his wife, was described by Judge Sir Hugh Park as a 'most caring husband, goaded beyond endurance'. He had had to do the shopping, feed the baby at night and cook the

meals because his wife had been unwell and receiving psychiatric treatment. If women counted such chores as 'provocation', the majority of husbands would be dead.

'Provocation' is held as sufficient cause to reduce the crime of murder to manslaughter. Because 'the provocation must have immediately preceded the killing — there must be no cooling off period', it is frequently accessible to men, who have the strength and power to lash out and murder their partners, but less likely to be used by the wife who waits until her abusing husband is asleep or incapacitated through drink before killing him...

Outwrite

A CRIME IS A CRIME

A new state law will go into effect in Connecticut in October which assures battered spouses the same rights as other crime victims.

The law provides for the education of police, judges, and court staff members on domestic violence issues and states that police are not to consider the relationship of the victim to the suspect or whether the victim agrees that the suspect should be arrested when intervening in domestic disturbances.

Batterers charged only with a misdemeanor will have the option of participating in an educational program in order to have the charges dropped for one incident.

In addition to dealing with the criminal aspects of domestic violence, the law provides state funding for shelters for battered women.

The law was developed partly in response to a court case in which a woman sued the police for failing to protect her from her husband and thus denying her constitutional right to protection. Tracey Thurmond was scarred and partially paralyzed by her husband in June 1983 in the last of a series of assaults. A jury found in her

favor and she settled for \$1.9 million out of court. She watched as Gov. O'Neill signed the bill into law on June 10, three years after her husband's assault.

Hartford Courant

BATTERED WOMAN JAILED

Three months in the Portage-la Prairie jail was the fate of a battered woman after refusing to testify against her common-law batterer. Despite the fact that there were three witnesses to the assault with a steel pole, as well as the woman's mother and sister, all willing to testify, Judge B. P. McDonald discharged the charges against the man and found the woman in contempt of court. The woman was denied bail but planned to appeal. Her mother says the batterer should be locked up instead as he beat her repeatedly and has served a previous jail term for assaulting his former wife. She feels her daughter needs counselling and is scared to testify.

Crown Attorney Linda Giesbrecht was quoted in the *Winnipeg Free Press* as saying: "This has been dragging on for a year. One day she'll say she's going to testify, the next day she's going to marry him. This may sound callous, but as long as she's in jail she's not getting beat up." Should this attitude prevail in Manitoba's justice system and given one in 10 women are battered, the province will soon be dotted with prisons for battered women.

A few weeks later, the woman's sentence was changed to time served and one day in prison.

JUDGE OK'S RAPE

A recent court ruling in Pasadena, USA, has elicited an explosive response from a community which has condemned the acquittal of a man who was found not guilty of raping a prostitute.

Rhonda DaCosta had agreed to perform oral sex with Daniel Zabuski for \$30. The accused, not satisfied with her

performance, forced her into intercourse and sodomy, and then robbed her of \$150.

The Superior Court Judge, GC Alston, found Zabuski not guilty of charges of rape and sodomy on the grounds that a working prostitute is not protected by law against rape; 'a woman who goes out on the streets and makes a whore out of herself opens herself up to anybody. She steps outside the protection of the law... the only thing she is protected against is physical injury.'

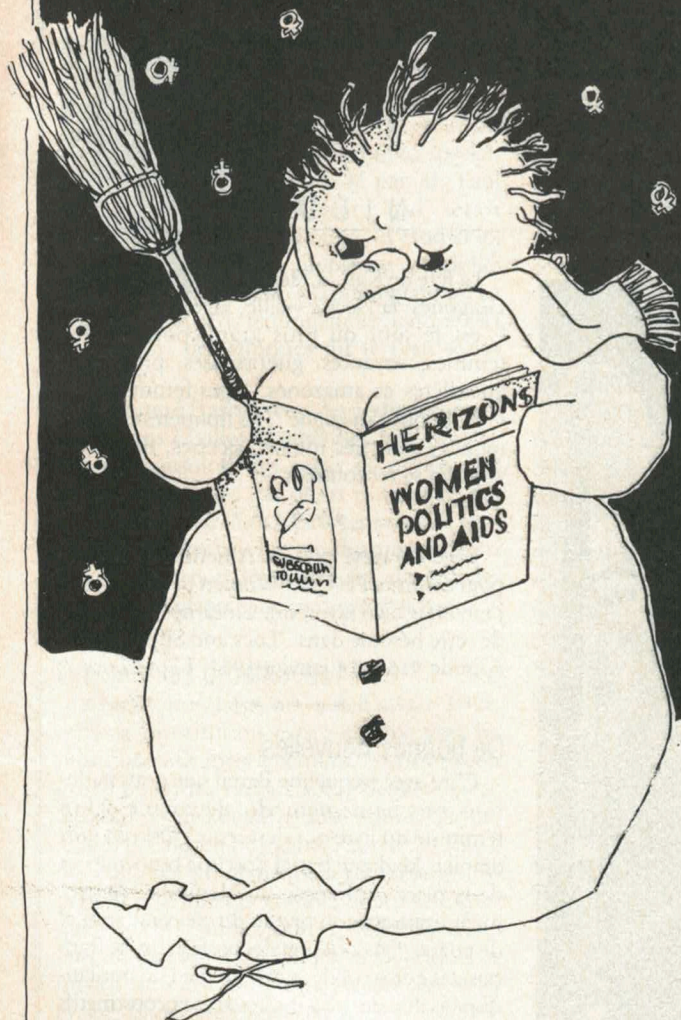
Off Our Backs

ONE THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY

In July, James Harley was arrested in Philadelphia shortly after the crime in which he raped and stabbed 19 times a 30-year-old woman who had been his Sunday School teacher six years before. During the attack, the woman screamed for neighbors to come to her aid, calling them by name, and at one point threw her keys out the window to ease access by possible rescuers. The police were called by the elderly couple who lived next door, but no one interrupted the crime. When the accused was leaving the scene, though, he was chased by the victim's nephew, apprehended and beaten by several neighborhood residents, and held for the police. The day after the attack, people in the area expressed remorse that they had not acted earlier, possibly stopping the attack before the victim had been raped or stabbed so severely.

Harley faces charges of rape, aggravated assault, terroristic threats, simple assault, indecent exposure, indecent assault and possession of a criminal weapon. Charges dropped against him were those of burglary and criminal trespassing. Harley is also charged with the rape and beating of a 19-year-old woman in March. His bail is set at one million dollars.

Philadelphia Inquirer



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Ouverture d'une nouvelle librairie

NICOLE MORIN



Saviez-vous que depuis le 22 juillet dernier une nouvelle librairie a vu le jour au 180 Boul. Provencher, à St-Boniface? Dictionnaires, littérature canadienne-française disponible en livre de poche,

biographies, quelques livres en anglais ainsi que Le français-langue seconde, niveau 1 à 4, des cartes d'anniversaires aux papiers d'emballage, la collection Feu Vert pour enfants, et un peu du reste de l'ancienne librairie d'avant, "A la Page" saura vous procurer à bon compte des romans, de la poésie, et si le cœur vous en dit, pourquoi ne pas plonger dans un bon livre de théâtre! Les heures d'ouverture sont de 9:00 a.m. à 6:00 p.m. et certains soirs aussi cet automne pour satisfaire la clientèle travaillant le jour et ne pouvant bouquiner que le soir; téléphonez donc au 233-7223 pour les soirs durant la semaine. Gérald Boily, l'un des deux propriétaires m'a confirmé son intention d'avoir une section concernant spécifiquement différents sujets sur les femmes.

Suggestions de livres:

Jeanne D'Arc de Régine Pernoud et Marie-Véronique Clin chez Fayard.

Mariaagélas d'Antonine Maillet chez Marabout.

Promenade familière, recherches sur l'écriture féminine d'Irma Garcia aux Editions des femmes; un livre conçu en deux tomes dont un carnet à pages blanches, le féminaire, tout ça dans la même pochette, pour toutes celles qui veulent commencer à écrire leur histoire!

J'ai beaucoup apprécié l'accueil chaleureux de Lynne Boily qui m'a dirigé dans ma visite et mes achats. De l'économie, du cinéma ou pour prendre le temps de bouquiner un peu, une bande dessinée peut vous transmettre le syndrome de la lecture, une contagion des plus heureuses.

31 octobre — HALLOWEEN

Selon la légende irlandaise, l'origine du feu follet remonte à un escroc du nom de Jack qui était si avare que, ne pouvant être admis ni au ciel ni en enfer à sa mort, il fut condamné à errer éternellement sur la terre avec sa lanterne. La citrouille éclairée à la chandelle, ou feu



follet, ainsi que la coutume de célébrer l'Halloween en organisant des fêtes, des mascarades et des visites de maison en maison pour recueillir des sous et des friandises, ont été introduites en Amérique du Nord par les immigrants irlandais.

La fête de Kali, d'Hécate, de Méduse et des Gorgones: la Déesse vieille, sage et puissante. C'est le jour du plus grand pouvoir des femmes; voyantes, guérisseuses, prêtresses, guérillères et amazones, sages-femmes... C'est le jour "magique", les frontières entre les mondes sont très minces: déesses, mortes et vivantes se rencontrent...²

Reçu en carte postale American Postcard, pour continuer le Quiz Women in the Movies, j'aimerais bien savoir qui a incarné le rôle-titre de cette héroïne dans "Lucy and Superman", épisode #166, 14 janvier 1957. I Love Lucy.

De bonnes nouvelles...

C'est avec Jacqueline Barral que nous parlerons prochainement du deuxième salon féministe du livre qui s'est tenu à Oslo en juin dernier. Madame Barral s'occupe beaucoup ici de la place du français au Manitoba. Actuellement impliquée au niveau du concours annuel de poésie, l'Association des professeurs de français, langue seconde, a mis sur pied un outil indispensable des plus intéressants et constructifs qui fait connaître aux jeunes la richesse des auteurs: du Canada, de la France et du Manitoba. Le niveau de langue est différent, la douzaine d'écoles ainsi touchées se compose de la série française, anglaise et celle d'immersion. La valeur du travail jugée parallèlement avec le quotient de difficulté, les jeunes sont amenés à la lecture, à la découverte d'auteurs et surtout à développer leurs ressources; deux anciens lauréats sont juges dans les finales provinciales. Depuis cinq années le concours annuel de poésie s'applique à rendre vivante notre langue me dira celle qui en est aussi la présidente tout en donnant une base de très bon français. De son côté, Jacqueline Barral a publié le charmant livre pour enfants *Solévent*, aux Editions du Blé. Côté l'imaginaire, s'initier au monde des enfants, "les toucher sans faire de sexisme", elle a vraiment consciemment renforcé le pouvoir d'identification de chaque enfant. Une expérience sur le bagage des mots, des jeux où j'ai traversé de nouveau les sentiments de magie et de rires, son écriture pareille à l'espièglerie retrouvée. Illustrations bien appropriées de Judy Bilenki.

1 1986 calendrier mural UNICEF

2 1982 calendrier lunaire les Editions du 7e Ciel inc.

Qu'advientra la prostitution

RENEE M. LEGAL



En 1983, le Ministre de la Justice, Mark MacGuigan, a annoncé la création d'un comité spécial, présidé par M. Paul Fraser, qui serait chargé "d'étudier les problèmes actuels liés à la pornographie et à

la prostitution et de recommander, lorsque cela le justifiait, des réformes sur le plan socio-juridique."

Le Comité Fraser a tenu des audiences publiques dans 22 villes canadiennes. Entre autres, ont été consultés des corps de police, des avocats, des ligues des droits et libertés, des groupements féminins, des organismes de services sociaux, des psychiatres, des groupements pour la protection des prostituées, des groupements de résidents et de commerçants contre la prostitution.

Qui sont les prostituées?

Avant toute chose, on voulait savoir: Pourquoi la prostitution existe et Qui sont les prostituées. D'après les études, la prostitution existe pour des raisons socio-économiques: d'abord ce métier offre aux femmes et aux jeunes un moyen de gagner leur vie, et, il y a des hommes qui demandent cet échange impersonnel. Plusieurs groupes et études expliquent que les femmes sont, en majorité, tenues loin du pouvoir économique et politique: le travail qu'elles font reste largement sous-évalué. Les femmes sont traitées comme des objets sexuels que l'on peut violenter — c'est du moins le message évoqué dans la pornographie, par exemple. D'autres cas seraient le harcèlement sexuel au travail, la violence dans les rues et même dans les foyers. Somme toute, la prostitution est la conséquence du rabaissement généralisé des femmes dans notre société.

Plus d'une étude ont décrit QUI sont les prostituées: la plupart des prostituées sont jeunes (l'âge moyen est de 19 à 25 ans) et au moins 40% d'entre elles n'ont pas les 18 ans; elles sont, en majorité, sans éducation (75 pour cent ont une instruction inférieure à la neuvième année); elles viennent surtout de milieux socio-économiques défavorisés, donc de la classe ouvrière. Quatre-vingt pour cent, dans leur enfance, ont été victimes d'inceste, de viol ou d'autres formes d'abus physiques ou sexuels. Jusqu'à 70 pour cent des prostituées sont violentées par des clients, en moyenne de huit à dix fois par année. Aux États-Unis, des rapports de police révèlent qu'au moins quatre prostituées sont tuées chaque jour.

Les drogues rendent le travail moins pénible

Parmi les adultes qui se prostituent, la plupart sont des femmes, tandis que parmi les

jeunes, on retrouve aussi des garçons. De plus, une étude menée à Winnipeg montre que 46 per cent des prostituées interviewées ont des enfants; 94 pour cent utilisent des drogues ou de l'alcool pour rendre leur travail moins pénible; et toutes se sont livrées à la prostitution pour des raisons économiques.

Les prostituées ne roulent donc pas sur l'or comme on le pense souvent: un salaire annuel de moins de \$12,000 ou \$13,000 n'est pas rare. Si les prostituées exercent un tel métier, c'est qu'elles sont pauvres.

La violence infligée

On soupçonne que plus de la moitié des prostituées adultes ont un souteneur. Bien que cela ne soit pas toujours le cas, les proxénètes vont forcer les prostituées à travailler de longues heures pour ensuite confisquer tout l'argent qu'elles gagnent; certains souteneurs vont maintenir le contrôle sur les prostituées en les terrorisant. Et si les prostituées devaient rapporter la violence qui leur est infligée (par un souteneur ou un client), la police est connue pour être sourde à ces plaintes: ces "protecteurs" de citoyens ayant plus d'une fois affirmé que les prostituées méritaient les mauvais traitements.

Les prostituées ont raison de dire qu'elles sont rejetées par la Société; même ceux qui achètent leur service traitent ces femmes d'objet méprisable. Plusieurs d'entre elles réclament de l'aide, mais on ne les entend pas. Elles se retrouvent dans un métier qu'elles n'aiment pas, mais n'ont pas les moyens ni les connaissances pour pouvoir s'en sortir. Contrairement aux autres citoyens, aucun service ne leur est offert pas la Société.

Sollicitation embête les autres citoyens

Le Comité Fraser a également entendu les plaintes des commerçants et des résidents dont les quartiers sont envahis par le marchandage de la prostitution. Les commerçants perdent leur clientèle à cause du harcèlement et de l'intimidation résultant de la sollicitation dans les rues; cette faune entraîne aussi une baisse de la valeur des propriétés.

Les habitants des quartiers résidentiels sont, de plus, embêtés par la sollicitation publique qui occasionne du bruit et de la violence.

D'autres groupements veulent abolir la prostitution pour des raisons d'ordre moral; selon eux, "il est répréhensible d'avoir des activités sexuelles en dehors du mariage et contre rétribution."

Les ligues des droits et libertés sont contre ces conceptions paternalistes. Quant à ces groupements, il n'y a pas lieu de criminaliser un comportement qui n'est pas gravement nuisible à autrui. Ainsi, les problèmes de harcèlement et de bruit dans les rues provoqués par la sollicitation devraient être considérés comme des problèmes relevant de l'ordre public, et non d'ordre moral ni criminel.

Recommandations du comité fraser

Après avoir consulté des centaines de groupes et d'études, le Comité Fraser a rédigé un rapport comportant des recommandations pratiques et humanistes. Les membres du Comité ont constaté que l'interdiction ne parvenait pas à supprimer la prostitution ni à venir en aide aux prostituées (effectivement, aucun pays à l'étranger n'y avait réussi). Il faudrait donc protéger les prostituées contre la violence tout en respectant les besoins des autres citoyens. En bref, la prostitution pourrait s'éteindre, petit à petit, si (dans la mesure du possible) on décriminalisait d'abord celle exercée en privé, tout en créant des programmes pour éliminer les inégalités économiques et sociales entre les sexes. Le Comité spécial a recommandé que soient mis sur pied, entre autres, des programmes sociaux destinés aux femmes et aux jeunes; des programmes d'éducation sur la sexualité; des services sociaux pour venir en aide aux prostituées; des programmes de création d'emploi pour les femmes et les jeunes.

Les proxénètes et les clients qui maltraitent et violentent les prostituées seraient poursuivis. Les prostituées adultes pourraient travailler dans leur propre résidence; la sollicitation dans les rues serait illégale, ceci pour mettre fin aux préoccupations des autres citoyens.

Etant donné que certaines prostituées voulaient avoir un souteneur, ce dernier pourrait travailler en collaboration avec la prostituée si elle demandait ses services. En d'autres mots, le proxénétisme ne serait pas illégal dans certaines circonstances.

Pour ce qui est des jeunes moins de 18 ans exerçant ce métier, on les placerait entre les mains de sociétés pour la protection de l'enfance. Ainsi, ils et elles ne seraient pas traités comme criminels.

Mettre fin à la prostitution

Le 20 décembre 1985, le Ministre de la Justice, John Crosbie, a réussi à faire adopter le Projet de loi C-49: dorénavant il serait illégal au Canada de solliciter des clients dans des endroits publics pour des fins de prostitution. Ainsi, le gouvernement est venu en aide aux commerçants et aux résidents qui s'étaient plaints de la prostitution dans les rues.

Effectivement, des centaines de prostituées et clients ont été arrêtés à travers le Canada depuis décembre dernier. Mais, ceux qui se préoccupent du sort des prostituées se méfient du Projet de loi C-49. Combien de femmes, de filles et de garçons seraient forcés, par conséquent, de travailler davantage dans la clandestinité, entre les mains des proxénètes et du crime organisé — là où règne la violence, la peur, le terrorisme?

Jusqu'à un certain point, le gouvernement semble se diriger vers la bonne voie: en juin 1986, John Crosbie a déposé, au parlement,

suite à la page 31

"Women make men Debunking

KS: You once said that women's poetry in Canada is nothing more than the whines that accompany menstruation, and it is evident from your work that you believe there is something hormonal in women that prevents them from the creativity you attribute to males. On what evidence do you base such an opinion?

IL: Well the evidence is for one thing that women have never come up with the great poets of the stature of a Milton, or a Homer, or a Dante, and a Shakespeare and I can go on rattling off some other names to show my prejudice or my erudition. I don't think that women's creativity lies in the field of art, except to a limited degree. Theirs is a biological creativity and I realize that I am making the classic male chauvinist remark. But the women artists that have achieved fame and greatness have done so in a very limited way, whether it's a Colette, or a Gertrude Stein, or an Emily Dickinson, or in our own time, Doris Lessing: if you examine their work, what strikes me anyway — it may not strike anyone else — is the limited nature of their achievement and within that limitation, of course, it is important. But I have the feeling that they will never give us a kind of all comprehending, all embracing achievement that we have so far had from the great male artists. It may be due to cultural factors and not biological factors. But if I'm pinned down I have to say that I belong with those who believe that there are inherited physiological, biological, hormonal differences between the male and female and that the female's achievement is of a different kind, no less great, no less important, but it's of a different kind from that of the male's.

Honest. That is verbatim text from a longer (taped) interview which appeared in the Spring, 1978, issue of *Essays On Canadian Writing*. Both men are poets and teachers, one is famous, widely acclaimed for his literary excellence, and the other, a young, upwardly-mobile version of the elder with whom he speaks. Because they are indulging in the age-old sport of literary sexual harassment, I have designated them FOP (famous old poet) and YUP (young upwardly-mobile poet) as

representative appellations of their type.

When YUP reminds FOP of his dictum that "women's poetry in Canada is nothing more than the whines that accompany menstruation," FOP provides evidence: The Greats are all male and their greatness is indisputable even if thousands of students every year fall asleep over that Miltonic masterpiece of patriarchal misogyny: *Paradise Lost*. As for Dante, does anyone read him save under duress? And who knows what was under Homer's toga? Shakespeare might have had a gifted younger sister, muses Virginia Woolf, in *A Room Of One's Own*, and this is what would have happened to her had she run away to London to act and write:

"She stood at the stage door, she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager — a fat, loose-lipped man — guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting — no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted — you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last, for she was very young . . . the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so — who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body? — killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some crossroads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle."

Many masterpieces may have been lost in this way, but many survived, so there are ignorant lapses in this evidence by name-waving. What does not get mentioned is the fact that in spite of the chains, chastity belts, abject slavery under the law, rape, rack and burning, women have managed nevertheless to produce Christine De Pisan, Marguerite de Navarre, Anna Comnena, Aphra Behn and Sappho, female counterparts to the male "greats."

Once FOP finally names a few of the limited women writers (Colette, Gertrude Stein, Emily Dickinson, Doris Lessing), he has already asserted on no evidence that women's real creativity is in their wombs, not in their brains. Given this bias, FOP has "examined" women's writing and found them to lack "a kind of all comprehending, all embracing achievement that we have so far had from the great male ar-

tists." Thus we are to believe on FOP's word that Gertrude Stein is more limited than Ernest Hemingway, that Emily Dickinson was more limited than Walt Whitman, that Doris Lessing is more limited than Robertson Davies. On biological grounds. Anyone who listened to Doris Lessing's Massey Lecture (1985) "Prisons We Choose To Live Inside" would scoff at the idea that she is limited by anything approaching the blindness of her detractors. Would Ms. Lessing be taken seriously if she were to assert that men are incapable of artistic creativity because they cannot give birth, so they should stick to what they're really good at, meant for: War. Brutality. History will bear this out: Theirs is a savage technology and they keep mistaking what they want for the truth.

YUP has been listening to FOP's bull, tapping it, casting it in bronze, as it were. Perhaps it is the price of his initiation. He has to believe one impossible thing before breakfast. Therefore, he cannot challenge FOP's silliness. And he has a stake in it, too. As a young poet seeking fame, fortune and a wider audience, better agent, what you will, who is he to challenge the famous, the influential, the listened-to? Maybe he believes it. What male writer wouldn't like to think that 52 per cent of the competition is limited, inferior in ability to produce great art by "inherited physiological, biological, hormonal differences?" I'm not talking about Jews, just women, although the same arguments might have been used to exterminate "lesser" breeds at some time.

It is not dangerous to be sexist because the company is so good. Napoleon said that "Women are machines for producing children". So did Martin Luther. So did Dr. Spock: "Biologically and temperamentally . . . women were made to be concerned first and foremost with childcare, husband care and home care." (1979)²

Why is it (mostly) men who make these assertions and prescriptions they mistake for natural law?³ Imagine the furor if a Famous Woman Writer like Margaret Laurence argued in a taped interview that on biological grounds, men were obviously made for dragging heavy burdens when oxen weren't available, and that any poetry they might write would be nothing more than the grunts which accompany masturbation. Why is FOP's "typical male chauvinist" remark any more believable than would be its female counterpart? Marilyn French (*Beyond Power*) believes that "people

; men make art... ”

the Bards

in general approach men's work with greater respect than women's, and often the work of the two sexes is judged in separate categories. Lists of the best writers of a period are likely to include only men's names, whereas women writers of excellence are referred to as the best WOMEN writers . . . Critics show the same proclivities as people in general, and treat men's work with greater seriousness than women's'.

And there's the rub: The seriousness of the credulous. How can Napoleon, Martin Luther, Dr. Spock and Irving Layton all be wrong about women? The obvious answer is because they're men, but the obvious answer does not always leap to those minds still enslaved by patriarchal propaganda. If someone who is on the waiting list for a Nobel Prize in literature says women should make babies not books, how many people are going to wonder whether "the Greats" have the same bias as those upon whom they bestow greatness? More likely people (mostly male) would simply accept it. This is why women make more babies than books.

When YUP asks FOP for his evidence that "women's poetry in Canada is nothing more than the whines that accompany menstruation," he has already made his leap of faith into male superiority in the arts. Let's face it. The prejudices of influential people have more influence than those of the powerless or the newly-empowered. If a sexist can win literary laurels, why not a racist? If the man who invented nefarious uses for gunpowder can endow a Peace Prize, anything is possible, but if peace was so important to Mr. N., why didn't he burn the formula? For the same reason YUP didn't see fit to challenge or edit FOP's biological ravings. A list of Great Misogynists would include: God (Jehovah), Adam, Tertullian, St. Paul, Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, John Milton, all the Popes (except Pope Joan), Napoleon, King James I, Freud, Schopenhauer, Jean-Paul Sartre.⁵ What male would mind being in such revered company?

YUP will no doubt carry the myth of women's limited creativity into his marriage, his poetry, his classroom, and he may say to his students: "Do what they will, women are better making babies than books," because Famous Old Poets and Philosophers said so. That this ill-disguised misogyny parades as the special knowledge of the great and famous can be easily seen on examining FOP's Love Poetry⁶

cont'd on page 31



by
tsigane

"Three years ago I would have sooner pulled a 'B and E' than filled out a job application form. Now I'm running a literacy program," says Tracy LeQuere of Beat the Street. "In three years I'll be a school trustee."

LeQuere is one of the between 20 and 25 per cent of Canadians who don't fulfil the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) standard of literacy for a developed country. People who can read magazines are often flabbergasted by the sheer numbers of illiterate people; one in four or five Canadians is a difficult statistic to believe. People who can't read and write learn to cope, and to hide their lack of reading skills. While working for a moving company, a friend of mine knew a truck driver who couldn't read a street sign, let alone a map. He had memorized the entire city of Montreal.

We tend to think of literacy as a third world problem, and it is certainly true that literacy levels are higher in developed countries, but the literacy level necessary to function effectively in a developed, highly urban society like Canada is also higher. Ours is a literate society in which a significant minority of people are trapped, confined by their inability to read.

I met Cindy Tindale at the learning centre of a Toronto literacy program. She was diligently working at her math; she is teaching herself basic arithmetic. I asked her, why at 20 she was still learning basic math and she explained that she'd always had trouble in school and had been kicked out at 16 because she was pregnant. She hopes that her renewed commitment to learning will help her get her child back from Children's Aid.

Reading and writing means belonging. It means not running a mile when someone wants to play Monopoly, going to the bank without shaking, understanding your paycheck, not refusing a promotion which would involve order sheets, asking directions and not being told, "What are ya, stupid, can't you read?" Literacy means self-respect.

Literacy and illiteracy are complex social and political issues. Millions of Canadians will remain effectively powerless, as long as they cannot read and write. Non-readers cannot organise and lobby because they lack the necessary skills; an illiterate person cannot write a letter to a newspaper, to a politician, or to a corporation which has ripped her off; she cannot read political commentary, notices of union meetings, or even ballots. Literacy is part of a cycle of poverty because illiterate people cannot hold most well paid jobs. To make the cycle complete, statistics indicate that an illiterate family is more likely to produce non-readers than a household with parents who are able to read to their kids and who themselves read for enjoyment.

Literacy is also a women's issue, because although illiteracy is spread fairly evenly between men and women in Canada, the effects

of literacy are not. On average an illiterate man earns just less than half the wages of a literate man; an illiterate woman can expect to earn 80 per cent less than her literate sister. Illiterate men can make \$15 an hour doing construction work, but what kind of work can illiterate women expect? Well, there's housework, paid and unpaid, and the needle trades — and not much else.

Nancy Martin is a homeless woman who was doing the rounds of Toronto shelters when I met her. She had to fill out a form showing that she had gone to 10 different places during that day looking for a place to live. If she didn't fill out the form she wouldn't have a place to sleep that night and it was getting cold. Nancy is lucky because she is involved in Beat the Street, a literacy program sponsored by Frontier College. Her tutor helped her fill out the form. This is from a poem called "Beat the Street", the first poem she has ever written:

*Why do people wander aimlessly
When this is their chance to see
To turn their life right around.
And get their feet back on the ground.*

ed better jobs, wanted to be able to help their kids with homework, or just wanted to cope more easily in a world full of signs. These goals are all still in sight, but they also report on the confidence they have gained, how much better they feel about themselves.

By rights, in this country where there is and has been a public education system, all adults should be able to read, write and do basic arithmetic. Those who are non-readers either left school early, did not attend school at all, or fell through the cracks in the system. Thirty per cent of the illiterate population was not born in Canada and thus may not have had access to a public education system.

Being literate often has very little to do with one's capabilities. I asked literacy teacher after literacy teacher whether she thought that reading was a skill that certain people simply could not master. Again and again I was told no, everyone, except for the severely mentally handicapped can learn to read . . . given the right program and a real effort.

Marguerite Godbout is a gentle, charming woman of 48 who has been involved with East

READ

A Requisite for Ev

Learning to read as an adult is hard work and it is difficult to ask for help, especially when asking requires admitting that you lack what most Canadians consider to be a basic life skill. Many adults are learning how to read. In the words of literacy student Micheline Gratton: Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire ECRIRE? Cela veut dire pour moi que plus on apprend, plus on est moins idiot auprès des plus instruits. Quelle est l'importance de l'écriture? Pour moi ce n'est pas important, c'est obligatoire.

If you're like most English-speaking Canadians, reading that paragraph was either a slow, painful labour — or you just blipped over it and didn't try. Imagine, if all print was that difficult to read. Imagine trying to puzzle out the instructions written on a drug prescription, or trying to figure out the emergency instructions on a bottle of Drano if your four-year-old had just ingested some.

At the various literacy programs I visited, almost all of the students I met had originally decided to take the plunge to try to learn to read and write for practical reasons. They want-

End Literacy for the past four years. Marguerite is disabled, with her two canes she can walk slowly. She grew up in small towns in northern New Brunswick and Quebec and she never went to school. There simply wasn't any transportation.

Quietly, Marguerite told me, "I think it bothers me more not having gone to school than being handicapped." It hurts her now to see the buses going around picking up children, "I guess I was just born too soon." Until a year and a half ago Marguerite lived with her family. She is now living alone in an apartment specially designed for disabled people, and she loves it.

Mazie left school when she was 13; she'd only reached about grade 4, but she couldn't stand it any more. She says that she was constantly made to feel stupid and was often insulted. Years later she watched her son Terry go through the same treatment at school and eventually drop out. Mazie decided to volunteer at Beat the Street because she was impressed with the help they were giving her son;

cont'd on page 22

What's success? What's failure?

Born in England, Michael Apted originally studied law and history at Cambridge University. In 1963 he began working at Granada Television as a researcher and within three years had become a director. Apted came to prominence following his American feature *Coal Miner's Daughter*, which he received an Academy Award nomination. Other such films as *Squads* and *On the Beach*.

DICTIONARY

It also produced *Seven Up*. Born out of, in English terms, quite a substantial political rage, *Seven Up* was made with an idea to raise questions like, "What will happen to the children you see here before they are 7?" "Do we live in a world where all have equal talents?" "What is the reason for success?" "Why has it been so successful in North America that it succeeded, to a certain extent, in transcending our original political intentions. It was the and understanding of the audiences, people complet the English educational sys English class system, which re-evaluate the film, and see it more universal and human had originally conceived it to

Michael Apted in a special project which in 1963 as a short black and white television documentary called *Seven Up*. It was followed every seven years with a sequel, comprising *Seven Plus Seven*, *Twenty One*, and now *28 Up*. Over 21 years this project has followed the lives of 14 people from a variety of class backgrounds, from East End London Cockneys and orphans to the upper class members of private schools, as they passed through their childhood and adolescence to become adults. Russell Stephens spoke with Michael Apted during his visit to the Vancouver International Film Festival.

Stephens: Who provided you with the financial backing to make this film?

Apted: Granada Television financed everything—all the films. I mean it don't cost very much. I think *28 Up* about eighty thousand pounds. Granada has bankrolled the project all way through from the begin suppose that's a tribute to the and the quality of English te

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NG ryday Life



by Nancy Worsfold



Apted: I only spent a day with Neil, a small amount of time when compared to what I wish say the Australian or the... But Neil likes to talk; he's a bit of a chatterbox. And he's always been a bit of a chatterbox, which in many ways is a joy because he is so imaginative. I mean he's a bit of a chatterbox. So, I had to be a bit of a chatterbox. However, I still had 24 hours with him. I was very close with Neil, because of his mind. I spoke with his doctor before we did the interview to be sure that the experience wouldn't damage him in any sense. But of all the people in the film I would say he's the one who possesses the most imagination.

Stephens: I find that somehow ironic.

Apted: Well it is. I mean he's in fact someone who has been very shabbily treated by society. Of all the people in the film he's the most outside society. He really hasn't had an active role in society

back at Seven Up, you think you have done differently?

Apted: Yes, sure. I mean the two that occur to me immediately—first—there are not enough women in it but I missed the feminist revolution that took place the life span of this film. That none of the four women I chose were confronted with the major feminist issue

60s, 70s and now, this sort of career family choice, is obviously sort of which in hindsight I would try to cl

Stephens: Yes. But to be fair, you never have anticipated the revolution.

Apted: Of course, but you as would I have done things differer not blaming myself. It was the live in. I always say to people that observation—If in 196 have posed the question; from now will a woman country?—You w

cont'd from page 20

she was quickly matched with a tutor and is learning herself, as well as helping out.

Mazie wants to read to her grandchildren, read crochet patterns and broaden her experience. Beat the Street suits her in a way that the school system didn't because there is no pressure, and because everyone is accepted. She complains that the school system passes kids into higher grades, no matter how little they'd progressed, so they feel dumber and dumber as they understand less and less. Although there are lots of great teachers, she found the prevailing attitude of "if you don't want to learn, get out of my class" very destructive. No one seemed to say to her, or her son, "if you don't understand, come and talk to me."

Mazie's theories are echoed by John Brown, vice-principal of Bickford Park High School. He argues that by creating a homogeneous system through which all children must pass, we only cater to a certain segment of the population. At grade nine, many of the students entering Bickford, a basic level school, cannot read adequately, but they must fulfill credit requirements for a diploma when they should be spending a year concentrating on literacy.

Vivian Stalmeyer, a tutor at East End Literacy, describes an educational system which is failing because the socio-cultural basis of the system is so removed from the bulk of the population it serves. In her native Trinidad, the late 50's brought both negotiations towards independence from Britain and the discovery of oil. Suddenly, this emerging country had the money to create a fully accessible educational system. The system was based on the British system — right down to imported exams. "I was in high school before I learned anything about Trinidad, before that it was Britain, Britain, Britain." For a while, Vivian claims, all was well and the population was very happy with the new schools, but now it is failing. More and more students, says Vivian, are just not learning.

On a smaller scale a similar problem occurs in Canadian schools. According to John Brown, the curriculum, the structures, and sometimes even the teachers, assume that all students have the same comfortable middle class homelife. Anything from money worries to poor nutrition can add to a student's difficulties in school, but there is no compensation for that. And little support. So, kids who don't come from a middle-class background are almost programmed to fail.

Gerry Kee, Head of Learning Disabilities at Toronto's Central Technical high school, is concerned about the way students get labeled "learning disabled" and pushed aside in school. Learning disabled students are those who do well in most areas but have trouble with certain tasks. One educator told me that learning disabilities are biological and permanent, but Gerry is not convinced. She told me that very little is known about the subject, and she questions the biological model.



People like Jill Jones (left) are working to reduce Canada's 20 per cent illiteracy rate by sharing their skills. Marguerite Godbout (right) never went to school because a physical disability prevented her from walking.

Boys are more likely than girls to be identified as learning disabled. Being identified as learning disabled does not mean that a student cannot learn to read. At best it means they'll need extra help and that they've got an explanation for their difficulties. At worst it means that the kid feels stigmatised and just gives up.

Although non-readers are not stupid, their knowledge and their thinking are necessarily curtailed. Helene Blais, who runs the Centre de Resource Education Populaire in Montreal, is quite blunt; she realises that most of her students are not really able to understand the news on television. The vocabulary, the concepts, the

rect their spelling quickly and print out a professional looking final product. Perhaps the best thing about using computers is the pride and satisfaction of mastering the technology. Helene claims that they all find basic word processing easy to learn, and the class enjoys using the computers.

Toronto's East End Literacy is a community based program which relies on a mixture of class work and one to one tutoring with volunteers. East End has five staff members and an army of tutors. Some students only visit the friendly, cluttered office once, where they would have a talk with one of the staff and later be paired

We tend to think of illiteracy as a third world problem, but one in five Canadians lives with the low wages and low self-esteem that are part and parcel of illiteracy.

formation of arguments is just too complex for someone who lives without reading. "They understand very well their own lives, but not the outside world."

Helene has held weekly classes since 1983. It is a miniature literacy program for which she is paid by the government. Most of her students are recommended by social agencies and she has come to see literacy as a way out of the welfare cycle. Mixing teaching with a little bit of psychology and social work, her classes blend reading and writing with lifeskills like landlord and tenant relations, job hunting and basic self respect.

Computers are mixed in with Helene's commonsense style. She focuses on writing and her students wordprocess their stories. This has been very successful. It is easier to write when all 26 letters are laid out for you, and rather than arduously rewriting, the students can cor-

rect their spelling quickly and print out a professional looking final product. Perhaps the best thing about using computers is the pride and satisfaction of mastering the technology. Helene claims that they all find basic word processing easy to learn, and the class enjoys using the computers.

The Writer's Voice is the student publication of East End literacy. This, and publications of other programs are central to the spirit of community based adult literacy. The Writer's Voice is about the students' lives, their community and their ideas. It is the object of great pride, and is a project that seems to sustain many students through the long difficult task of learning to read and write.

Mary Anne Williams is the co-ordinator of language programs at the St. Christopher House community centre in the Kensington market area of downtown Toronto. She speaks with great enthusiasm about their bilingual

literacy work with Portuguese women. Although lack of English skills (English as a Second Language) is a completely different problem from literacy, many of their students are doubly tied. Many Portuguese immigrants cannot read or write Portuguese. Similarly, even if they have lived here for years and can speak fluent English, it is very difficult to first learn to read and write in one's second language.

In stark contrast to the little offices of community literacy programs is Toronto's 1000 student City Adult Learning Centre (CALC). Here adults can enroll in classes from basic literacy right up to grade 13, and can supplement that with English as a Second Language classes. It is a regular high school building with regular high school hours. Since their students are full time, they serve quite a different group of people than a place like East End.



Photo: Leon Williams

At community-based literacy centres like Beat the Street, the classroom is the street, signs serve as textbooks and license plates function as math primers.

Most of their students lead hard lives; from a student publication *Our Lives*:

"We are housewives. We care for our children, take care of our homes and, in addition, we work outside our homes, many of us are cleaners. Our lives are more difficult here in Canada. We have more responsibilities. Most of our husbands are doing the same work as they did in Portugal. Their responsibilities remain the same."

Much of the work of St. Christopher House is geared toward empowering students, helping them understand the unionization process, allowing them to identify wife battery as a crime, and just simple things like feeling part of a new life.

Frontier College helped set up the "Beat the Street" literacy program in Toronto. Continuing the tradition of labourer-teachers and equals teaching equals, characteristic of the first Frontier College programs, Beat the Street tries to match people with similar interests — punks with punks, hookers with hookers, so that there is truly learning between equals. Often one will teach the other reading and roles will reverse when it comes to basic math. The classroom is the street, signs serve as textbooks and license plates as math primers.

Literacy is not only a problem which touches illiterate people. Janet Turnbull of the Business Task Force on Literacy is trying to alert the business community to the lost productivity, and expensive mistakes caused by illiteracy. She wants the business community to lend their names and give their dollars to efforts to eradicate illiteracy.

In the short run, 100 per cent literacy would probably be bad for business; it would make cheap, non-union labour even harder to find. But, in the long run, our society would certainly be better off; fairer, and some would maintain, freer of crime. Unquestionably, the heavy burden of ignorance and the weight of needless pain caused by illiteracy could disappear.

Learning to read is not a charitable gift, it is a right of all Canadians. As our society becomes more and more complex the level of literacy required to operate will get higher. The literacy problem will not solve itself. Even in times of government cut backs, it is obvious that literacy is a cost-efficient investment. More and more community projects are needed to help adults reach a level of literacy adequate to make informed choices about their lives.


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by Sheila Nopper and Joyce Harley

How society's obsession with thinness is consuming women

Joyce Harley: Rape Crisis Counsellor (46 years old, 5'4", 270 lbs.) I am fat and I am a woman. I weigh 270 pounds. There is no doubt in my mind that I am expected to be thin, to conform to current standards of beauty. The clothing industry and the health care system cater to the needs of thin people who, in turn, stare at my body in disgust. As Vivian Mayer notes in *Shadow on a Tightrope: Writings by Women on Fat Oppression*, women's magazines are rife with articles on how to lose weight. She points out that women are "locked into a belief system that is promulgated by an 11 billion dollar sexist industry that has made (their) lives a living hell."

I have spent most of my life dieting. I have banana and yogurt, egg and grapefruit, "high protein" and "eat all you want and get thin" schemes coming out of my ears and still nothing has ever really come off my body. No one believes that I have seriously dieted. Why should they? Doctors don't; it is in their best interests not to. Their bigotry keeps them in collusion with the weight loss industry. More conservative people don't believe I have dieted because they buy myths about everything. And leftists don't either; they use my body to symbolise the oppressors (fat cats, fat pigs).

Twenty years ago I became pregnant. Be-
cont'd on page 26



Joyce Harley: No one believes that I have seriously dieted.



Christine Donald (left) and Dini: We have to stop conforming to mainstream ideas.

cause I am fat, I was promised a very large unwieldy baby, a very long labour that would probably result in a Caesarian section and various other difficulties. The doctors even suggested that my fat might smother the fetus. Strangely enough, I gave birth to a seven pound three ounce very healthy, very beautiful baby girl through natural childbirth. My labour was only 11 hours long, which I understand is average for a first child. Were the doctors wrong? Were they wrong when they prescribed amphetamines for me and put me on an 800 calorie diet that made me so sick I had to be hospitalised?

Clothing manufacturers seem to have a similar disregard for the health of fat women. I spent half of last winter freezing in a fall jacket, going between three cities looking for a coat that would fit me. Finally, I bought a poncho, although it really isn't warm enough for a Canadian winter.

I have been fat for 46 years. I have just had a physical exam and I'm happy to report that I am in top physical condition; every part of my anatomy is in good working order. Still, my physician tells me that I should attend a self-help group for fat people. It includes a diet program that requires a three week food supplement costing \$40 a week. The doctor who tells me I am physically fit also tells me I am unhealthy because I am fat. Needless to say, I am confused by this double message.

My friends say they like me because I'm funny or I'm nurturing or both. The truth is that I've learned to be funny because I'm not seen as decorative; and I've learned to be nurturing because I'm expected to compensate for being fat in a thin world. I want simply to be accepted as a balance of all that I am.

Two years ago I met a wonderful woman who had already come to grips with her privilege as a thin woman. As time goes by, I have begun to trust that she truly does love "all" of who I am. It feels good not to have to hide my body from my lover and to trust that she will support me day to day when my pain in being fat is not heard in the world.

Beware: dieting can be dangerous to your health

During the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, doctors prescribed amphetamines to women for weight reduction. For many the end result of this treatment was permanent neurological damage, emotional breakdown and malnutrition. In attempts to deal with these "side effects," women were often put into psychiatric wards, only to be further abused by the mental health system.

In the late 60s new and progressive medicine began treating "the whole patient." A healthy body and a healthy mind were seen as synonymous. A fat body (considered unhealthy) meant an unhealthy mind and therapy became the most natural way to treat the fat patient. If it was found to be ineffective, as it often was, the patient was to blame.

Contrary to popular belief, dieting is danger-



Dini and son Aaron, 18 months: Despite anti-fat prejudices, Dini gave birth to a healthy baby

ous to our health. Statistics indicate that within five years, 95 per cent of all diets end in failure (people gain back all the weight they lost). Yet people, both fat and thin, continue to believe that they must diet — and that the next diet will work.

Dr. Janet Polivy, associate professor in psychology at the University of Toronto and a psychotherapist at Toronto General Hospital, agrees. "Too many people are not helped but rather are hurt by dieting," she says. "If a person is 150 pounds more than the 'normal' weight, you have to recognise that something (about them) is different. For this person to reduce their body to a more normal size they will endure suffering and their sacrifice may be permanent — they may have to starve themselves indefinitely.

"Society fosters the idea of individual willpower, that there must be something wrong with you if you are not thin. But there are wide individual differences in what is normal, so you are often fighting biology when you diet," she says.

Dr. Polivy confirms that "joint and bone problems are more likely to occur in fat people; however heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure, once directly attributed to a person being overweight, may be more associated with the frequency and extent of fluctuations in body weight."

Absolutely opposed to dieting, Polivy believes society's "obsession with slimness" has led people to accept the false notion that dieting is beneficial for anyone who is not thin.

Sheila Nopper: Writer/researcher (32 years old, 5'2", 145-150 lbs.)

I first questioned the obesity paradigm when my mother said to me, "Well, you know one good thing about having cancer is that I lost

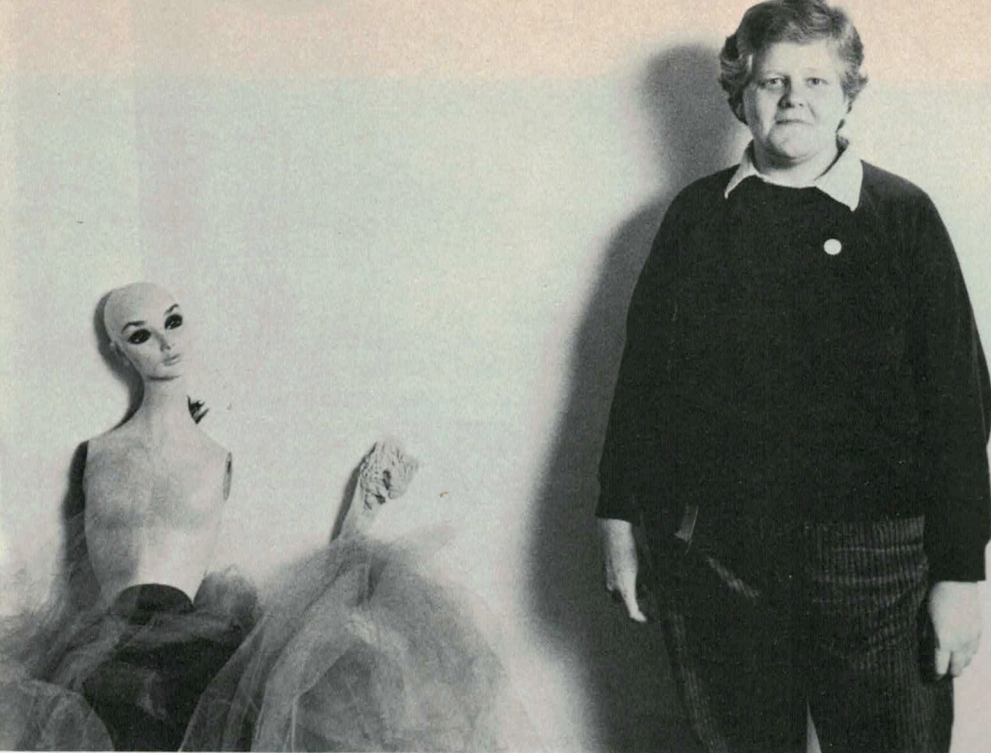
weight and kept it off." Lost weight . . . Is it so rewarding, so uplifting that cobalt radiation treatments, chemotherapy, operations and all their consequences are preferable to the suffering experienced by fat people? What, I asked, are we doing to fat people, to ourselves?

I'm still thinking about this. I think about it when I hear my skinny friends talk about how fat they're getting when they gain a pound or two, when I hear people say how they ate too much and feel fat — yucky feeling, fat — how they will diet to take it off or perhaps how they are already on a diet, resisting sweet temptations. They make an extra special effort to say these things in front of people who are fatter than they are (like me), flaunting their feelings of control and superiority.

I have not always been "overweight". I was even a cheerleader in high school, complete with steady boyfriend. Indeed, I was a popular girl until I gained weight. After that I felt ugly, unwanted — yes, inferior. I was a failure. A nice, sexy teenager like me had failed to maintain her image. I didn't go out as much because I saw and felt people looking at me, confirming my failure. I stopped wearing shorts, going to beaches, getting the healthy physical exercise that was so much a part of my previous life.

It wasn't until my mother said cancer was okay because she could live again without persecution (she'd once had an "acceptable image" too) that I began to wonder: What are the roots of fat oppression?

Anonymous (23 years old, 5'4", 165-170 lbs.) I'm a fat person with brains and wit. I like the word "fat" more than "big" because it is fat — fat is all over my body. I want to be thin because I'm sick of presenting myself as a fat person. I'm sick of the harassment: my friends saying



RUBBISH

*"Rubbish"
Cried the fat woman
As she dismissed the knight
And leapt onto the charger herself.*

*And
"Rubbish"
She cried later as she
Pensioned off the charger to a benevolent home
And took to her bicycle.*

*And then
"What?"
She enquired
As she wandered through daisy-filled fields
Apparently alone.*

C.M. Donald, from
The Fat Woman Measures Up
Ragweed Press

Christine Donald's poems challenge our assumptions about fat women

"women aren't beautiful if they're five pounds overweight"; their comments about *other* fat women "looking like beached whales," people looking in my basket at the grocery store; or some stranger's comment, "It must have been her big ass" when I bumped into a table at a bar. All the people around him snickered. It hurts.

I am the youngest child in a family of thin people. My parents put me on all kinds of diets: Metrical, tuna fish, Weight Watchers and diets prescribed by doctors. I always lost weight and I always gained it back. My mother would make a double layer chocolate cake and, as she put it in the cupboard, she would say to me, "I'm putting this in the cupboard to keep it away from you," implying that I was a bad kid. When we went shopping she'd make me try on maternity clothes. I've always been a good swimmer but no one ever acknowledged that. They'd say it was because of my fat belly. *Everything* was related to my fat.

Because I'm fat my choices are limited. I'm interested in TV journalism but they would never put me on the TV screen. And getting involved sexually with someone really scares me. Taking my clothes off in front of someone is terrifying because it makes me very vulnerable; they might want to use it against me.

I still want to lose weight even though I know it won't change everything. I think we have to stop conforming to mainstream ideals. Who are these people who dictate to us what is acceptable? If we are short or fat or have only one eye or leg, it shouldn't matter. But it does. My life would be a lot more tolerable if I was not a fat woman.

Wonders of modern medicine

For women who feel they "can't control" their weight through dieting, doctors are developing

radical methods of "controlling their weight" for them. Jaw wiring has become a popular method of keeping fat women from eating and consequently from maintaining nutritionally fit bodies. The process ensures that only liquids can be taken through the mouth; this in turn causes serious stomach problems that are linked to cancer and intestinal damage.

An experimental technique called the intestinal by-pass operation is even more dangerous than jaw wiring. In this procedure the stomach is linked almost directly to the anus. Food passes so quickly through the system that it is hardly digested. The small intestine is cut and sewn back together so that instead of food going through the full 23 feet of intestine, it goes through only about three feet. As a result the body absorbs just a little bit of nourishment.

After the bypass, some women lose up to 100 pounds; post surgery diets are recommended to those who "need to lose" more than 100 pounds. But five per cent of the women who have the operation don't lose any weight at all and some have died. The bypass also causes permanent damage to the liver. Mineral supplements and blood tests must be taken for the rest of the patient's life. Intense and extremely painful diarrhea can be expected for a full year after the operation. Five thousand bypass operations are performed in the United States every year at a cost of approximately \$10,000 each.

Because of the grave repercussions of the intestinal bypass, gastric stapling is becoming more popular alternative. The most common experimental surgery being performed today, it involves the opening of the abdomen where a surgical staple is planted through the stomach, blocking off most of the stomach's capacity to hold food. This new smaller stomach holds only three to 10 ounces of food per meal.

Any attempt to eat more than a tiny amount results in vomiting and pain. Complications have in some instances led to death and those who survive experience a variety of health problems. A 250 pound woman might lose 50 pounds after the procedure only to be told by her doctor that she still has to lose more through dieting.

Researchers have also developed a fabric sheath which limits how far the stomach will stretch, reducing the amount of food a person can ingest without feeling pain. Doctors are very excited about this method; even though 10 per cent of their patients have complained.

Terry Spier: Feminist Counsellor (34 years old, 5'10", 230 lbs.)

I was fairly thin until age 11. It was at this time that my family moved from California to Montreal. I was a tall child and at a height of five feet 10 inches was placed in a grade five class. I had been in grade seven in California. Add to this the fact that everyone in my family was "standardly attractive," a model family. I felt that I didn't fit in anywhere. The messages from my family were that if I would only lose weight, I would be so pretty.

As a teenager I began attending Montreal's Health Clinic for fat people. In six months my weight loss totalled 66 pounds. I was prescribed amphetamines and rarely ate. Consequently I ruined my stomach, fainted a lot and suffered terrible bouts of diarrhea. The doctor then prescribed 222s with codeine to counteract the diarrhea.

At 175 pounds I managed to "get" a boyfriend much to my family's delight. My weight shifted according to my love life. I had no need for food when I was in love. As relationships ended, my weight increased. I never weigh myself anymore and carry my weight

cont'd on page 29

Ten myths about women and weight

Patricia Rawson of *Herizons* spoke to Catrina Brown, facilitator of the "Preoccupied with Weight" program at the Women's Health Clinic in Winnipeg. Brown is exploring women's preoccupation with weight as a reflection of women's changing roles in patriarchal society for her MA in sociology.

P.R.: In the August 1986 issue of *Prevention Magazine*, there is an article called "Are You a Safe or Unsafe Drinker?" It includes this statement: "Spotting the unsafe eaters in a crowd is easy — just count paunches." Could you comment?

C.B.: Unsafe eating would be somebody who constantly ate processed foods, constantly ate chemicals — that's unsafe eating. Basic, unhealthy eating. That's the only way eating would be unsafe. My reaction is that inherent in this statement are a number of myths. One is that somehow, fat people eat more. Unsafe eating implies that fat people eat poorly. There is also an assumption that fatness is caused by eating too much.

1. Myth: Fat people eat more than thin people

C.B.: We know in fact that fat people do not eat more, or eat differently than thin people do. However, some people can eat a certain amount of food and not gain weight. Typically, these people do not become concerned about weight. Therefore, they do not see eating as a weight-concern issue.

2. Myth: Fat people are unhealthy

C.B.: It is false to assume that just because someone is fat, they are unhealthy. It is certainly the most controversial area of fat liberation — is fat unhealthy? But I think you have to go by individuals. There are certainly many fat people who are healthy and there are certainly many thin people who are unhealthy. Studies on longevity show that the people at the thin end of the spectrum are likely to have a shorter life span than people who are fat. People who are at the very far end of the fat spectrum as well have a shorter life span. But for the most part, people actually live a little longer if they are fat. For some diseases, such as cancer or osteoporosis, you may be better off if you are fat.

Certainly for some people, there are going to be instances where being fat is unhealthy. But I don't think that this piece of information should be allowed to legitimise the kind of cultural obsession we have with weight.

It appears as though the medical profession has adopted the social ideology that fat is ugly and bad. They, too, are laden with all the cultural stereotypes and it is this that motivates them to get people to lose weight. Why do the



photo: Lany Glawson

medical professional weight loss clinics and nutritionists continually encourage dieting behaviour that is singularly unsuccessful? As you know, 95 per cent of people who are on diets regain weight. They would never continually prescribe a drug that was shown over and over again to be unsuccessful. So why are they prescribing diets?

3. Myth: Women diet to be healthier

C.B.: Most women don't diet for health. Eighty per cent of women diet because they want to be more attractive, according to present social standards. Why then do we need to even discuss whether fat is unhealthy when it isn't for health reasons people are motivated to diet.

The other thing that has to be looked at is: Are people actually dieting to lose weight to such extremes that it ends up being in itself unhealthy?

Women are willing to risk their health to be thin. Many women virtually starve themselves to maintain the "ideal" body. They are willing to smoke incessantly, with the rationalisation that 'at least I'm not fat' and fat is more unhealthy, which in fact it isn't.

The effects of continually losing and gaining weight have a tremendously negative effect on health. Cyclical dieting can result in hypoglycemia, malnutrition, hormonal imbalances, slowed metabolic rate and menstrual problems. In terms of emotional health, women who chronically diet are always in a state of deprivation and denial of their appetites. Frustration with losing and gaining weight sometimes encourages more extreme dieting measures and can lead to additional health risks. Many women involved in this cyclical dieting mirror the behaviour of bulimic women. It becomes difficult to distinguish between these women.

4. Myth: With radical weight loss methods like stomach stapling, you will lose all the weight you want

C.B.: As a method to improve women's health, these procedures are an absolute paradox because they are in fact so unhealthy they create nothing but physical problems — everything from constant diarrhea to electrolyte imbalances, to irregular heart beats, dehydration, fatigue, depression, lack of concentration. Another sad thing about this is that many women do not lose a significant amount of weight. I know a woman who had a stomach stapling operation and then developed bulimia because her stomach could hold so little food, she always felt she needed to vomit after eating and got into the habit of making herself vomit to relieve the discomfort. She never did reach her goal weight.

5. Myth: Fat people use food as a substitute for love

C.B.: Both thin and fat people eat for emotional reasons; it's not an issue for the thin person whose body type resists weight gain. The fat person cannot take for granted their emotional connectedness to food. They have to question

eating all the time and they have to deny their appetite for food. Therefore, it is fat women who are struggling with the conflict between their desire to eat and a desire to be thin.

6. Myth: All you need is sufficient will-power to lose weight

C.B.: The person who doesn't get fat doesn't ever have to question this because they can simply eat. They don't have to deal with calling themselves down or saying they don't have will-power and nobody else is going to do it either. I think it is a positive statement when women do not deny themselves food. A woman who has a strong sense of her own needs — maybe not even a conscious sense of her needs — is unwilling to deny herself the things she desires.

7. Myth: Women who become anorexic or bulimic are different from other women

C.B.: Marilyn Lawrence's work in *The Anorexic Experience* has been a critical piece of work for me. The experience of the anorexic is simply an extension of the experience of the average woman preoccupied with weight in our society. Many of us are preoccupied with weight in a way that men seldom are. We are taught to judge our entire value on the basis of our appearance, so that it has become a critical aspect of our identity.

8. Myth: Fat people are lazy

C.B.: This statement is prejudicial and oppressive to fat people. There is a belief system about fat people. The belief system itself seems to be a social control mechanism — a way which fosters attitudes about fat people and discourages fatness.

9. Myth: Fat people do not try to lose weight

C.B.: Of course, they are always trying to lose weight. Fat people probably have been on every single diet and been to every weight control organisation possible. Some women try to follow the Canada Food Guide, which advocates a 1,200-calorie-a-day diet. Women's constant dieting reduces their metabolic rate so they often cannot lose weight on 1,200 calories a day. Some women can't lose weight on 800 calories a day and in fact will gain weight if they eat more than this.

10. Myth: Fat people should lose weight

C.B.: I believe we should learn to accept our bodies as they are and that we should challenge the unrealistic body ideal for women today. One of the central philosophical threads that has been at the basis of this program (Self-Help Program for Getting Beyond Weight, provided by Catrina at the Women's Health Clinic), is the idea of women controlling their own bodies. The philosophy of our program is a feminist one which really emphasises women's active involvement. We are working towards encouraging greater self esteem and exploring identity issues. The goal is to feel good about oneself without weight being an issue. We encourage women to question current attitudes about fatness.▼

cont'd from page 27

quite well. I'm okay with being fat. My lovers are all thin and what that means for the way in which I really see myself disturbs me a little. At 230 pounds I am somewhat uncomfortable. I would like to play sports more than I am able to at this weight.

I recently discovered that I have Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome which means that I don't ovulate. A symptom of this condition is obesity. Instead of making it easier for me to accept myself, this discovery served only to take away my sense of control. Before learning of my condition I had always felt that I could lose weight if I really wanted to. Now I know that option is out of my hands.

I have mixed feelings about fat oppression. I believe the way you take yourself into the world affects how you'll be seen. I know that when I feel grounded, positive about myself, the reactions of those around me are more positive. I have learned to empower myself as a fat woman to alleviate ways in which the world oppresses me.

Fat liberation

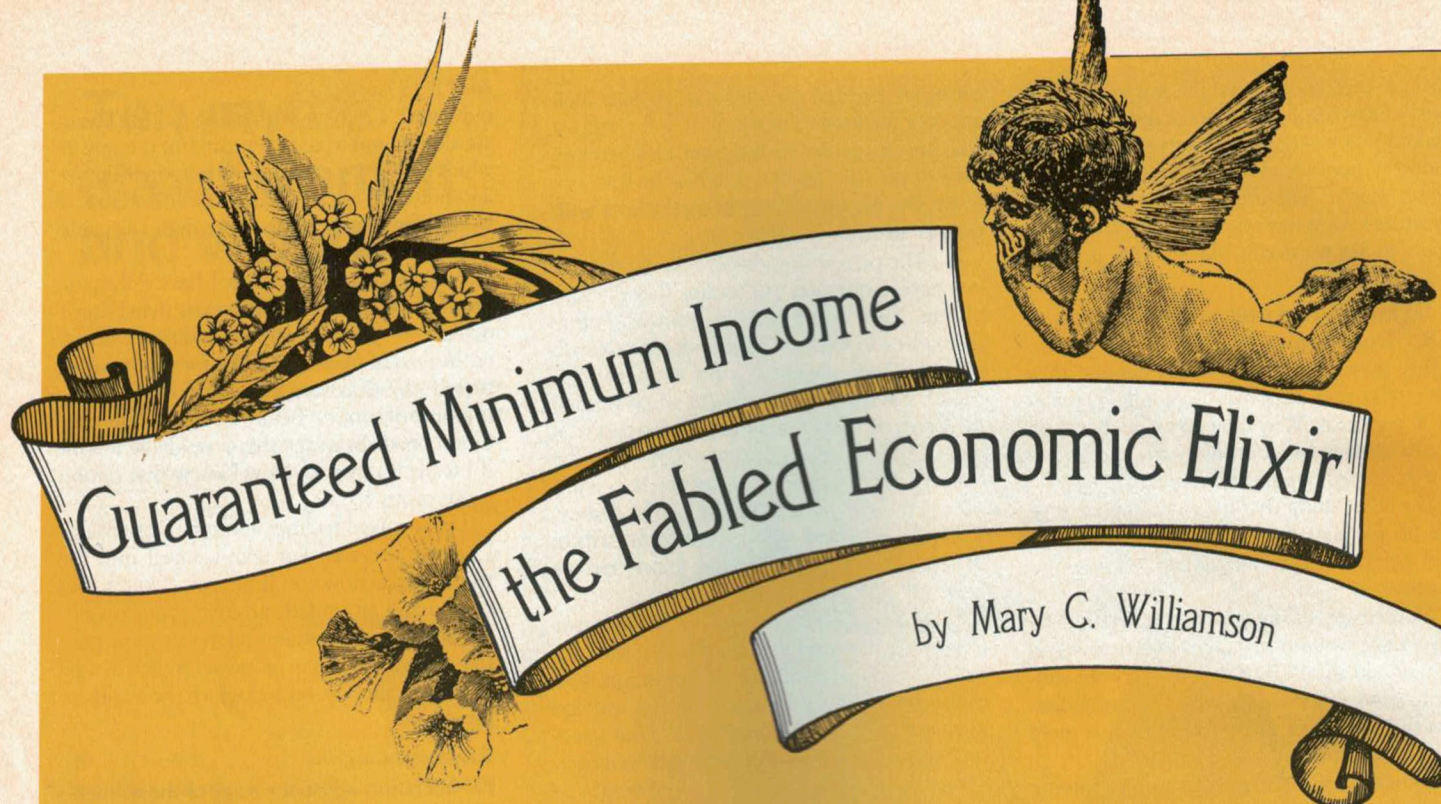
Fat liberation is just one stage of the women's liberation process. Ideally the fat liberation movement (like other liberation movements) will be based upon the reality of oppressed fat people, our lifetime spent living the contradictions that no one dares admit exist: skipping foods like any beauty, contemplating suicide as we gain back weight after every diet. And from that reality will come an analysis. As Vivian Mayer says, "Fat and thin, medical and radical, we are all as a culture caught in the Fat Illusion. We believe that our body sizes are chosen and reflect personal control and we ignore or reject all evidence that contradicts this belief. What powerful forces of social control make this illusion so dazzling that we cling to it through starvation, pain, absurdity and failure of hopes?"

Mandy Bonisteel is a registered nurse and a feminist who practises psychotherapy in Peterborough, Ontario. She maintains that, "the preoccupation with fat being related to the amount of food we eat is absurd. It has nothing to do with food. It has everything to do with social control. . . . Eating is not life threatening. It is nurturing. I do not condone any kind of weight loss that has to do with calories because it has missed the point." What needs to change, she says, is what, how and why we eat. Dini: Rape Crisis Counsellor (25 years old, 5'7", 220 lbs.)

I have been fat since puberty. Because of pressure I felt from my family I consulted a doctor about dieting at the age of 15. I was humiliated and embarrassed by his attitude towards me. His diet didn't work; I enjoyed eating as much as other kids my age did.

The next step on my crusade for weight loss was to join Weight Watchers where I lost around 10 pounds. From there on my crusade was all down hill.

cont'd on page 42



Westville, B.C.
May 15, 199__

Dearest Aunt Trudi

You asked me to write and tell you what effect the Guaranteed Minimum Income is having on our lives in Canada. It's been in force just over two years now, so I think I can give you some general impressions.

First of all, I must tell you the initial costs were horrendous. A new census was necessary, and although it served the dual purpose of also being used for the next elections, these things don't come cheap! Then there was the cost of resettling civil servants who were found redundant when Welfare, Unemployment Insurance, Family Allowances, Pensions and GAIN programs were superseded by the G.M.I. The only other program which was retained was the handicapped pension. However, they were able to computerise the process right from the start, so administration costs are now pretty minimal.

They decided to start part payments at the age of 12 (that's when we pay full fare on public transport) so they issued the kids in junior, middle and senior high schools with Social Insurance Numbers. One side benefit is that it cut down on teenagers being kidnapped by estranged parents — they are so much easier to trace! Makes us wish they'd do the same for all children, as it's usually the toddlers who are snatched!

Another big hurdle was income qualification. Until tax legislation can be introduced which ensures fair taxation at all income levels, they adopted the old poverty guidelines as a cut-off point, so there's a discrepancy between town and country, single and married. It is ad-

justed annually, in accordance with the cost of living. Some folk are allowed to opt out of salaried positions and qualify for G.M.I. The Minister at our United Church was one, and it's certainly changed his life! He doesn't worry any more about upsetting the rich members of his flock, and he told me it's been a truly "freeing-up" experience!

Some private school teachers have done likewise. With accommodation and food provided, they feel they can afford to live on the G.M.I. Needless to say, the public school teachers' associations are watching the situation closely! Dick's sister Florrie has two kids in private school in Vancouver and they're having a ball. They went on several ski trips last winter, and are on a sailing ship right now, learning about the thousand islands off the West Coast of B.C. They enjoy being able to pay their own way, and there are no more complaints about the time they waste raising funds for various school projects.

You probably remember that I've been volunteering at the local mental health centre for some years. Well, now I'm redundant! Statistics are slow, but we can see with our own eyes what's happening. With the improvement in mental and emotional health, hospital beds are increasingly available for physical ailments, and even they are on the wane. Cigarette and alcohol consumption are down, for instance, so many diseases of the respiratory system and liver (to quote a few) are on the decrease also.

Unemployment is still pretty high, with automation and soft world markets. However, people are not as desperate as they were. They turn more and more to creative arts and crafts, with time and money to spare for sports, concerts and other entertainments. With atten-

dance up, ticket prices are mercifully down.

Our hospitals and nursing homes report a full slate of volunteers for the first time in history. They also have many more visitors than ever before. People can afford the time and gas to take out the old folk, or ambulatory patients, for shopping trips or just for a drink around and a cup of tea. It's a treat to see an elderly blossom with the extra attention they are receiving.

Those right-wing economists who were bitterly opposed to the G.M.I. had told us years that inflation was caused by high wages. They were wrong, of course, and each time bank and interest rates rose, we could see ourselves what was the cause. Interesting since G.M.I. wage demands have moderated as there's not the fear and uncertainty in the labour force. But guess who were the last people to reduce their prices (and profits)? Yes, food chains! So, although costs decreased, food continued to rise in price, with "seasonal fluctuations." Now, finally, consumer associations have got together and by threatening boycotts and starting up co-operatives, we've managed to get them to toe the line.

Farmers are feeling the benefits. They are being forced off their land by the banks, so we're agitating for quotas to be lifted. I figure if there is a surplus, someone in Asia or Africa will be glad of it. We'd rather give it away than burn or bury it!

Because many more consumers have money to spend, manufacturers and retailers are reaping benefits. I know of families who have new furniture and carpets for the first time ever, and they've worked hard all their lives to deserve it! It's certainly been easier for us to get new clothes, and we even got rid of our 10-

old wringer washer last year. It was like saying good-bye to an old friend!

Dick's brother Ralph (the one in the R.C.M.P.) says crime is way down. Theft, vandalism and all kinds of "offences against the person" are decreasing. He says it goes along with less drinking to excess and less use of drugs. And that's because of the new feeling of security.

Dick and I are thankful that the kids will be able to pay their own way through college or training school, whichever they decide on, and we are actually looking forward to a real holiday for the first time since our three-day honeymoon 20 years ago! Who knows, one of these days we might even be able to spend a few days with you and Uncle Avram! It's taken us a while to clear up the debts we accumulated when Dick lost his fulltime teaching job (I couldn't nurse any more because of a back injury). Restraint was directed principally at the 'soft underbelly' of our society — women, kids, the sick and the old — until the Federal Government saw the light! But we're getting ahead of the game now. We're both picking up part-time work as employers find it possible to pay for more help.

Of course the rich people weren't too happy: but they've always screamed about their taxes subsidising the poor, when it's really been the other way around! And it's actually to their advantage, because now there aren't so many appeals for funds for all the good causes which were perennially short of money. I've not noticed much gratitude yet, but perhaps they'll change their minds when they retire, or fall on "hard times," or when their coupon clipping becomes too much like hard work.

Sorry if I sound bitter — it's because I am! All the time we've been struggling to make ends meet, the rich rubbed our noses in it. Business executives earning \$200,000 a year telling us they couldn't afford to give us a 2 per cent raise! Watching our kids go without, when there was so much waste of money, food and natural resources. At last it seems there's a little more justice coming our way.

It's astonishing how our individual security has kept pace with a world easing of tensions. Our neighbours to the south recovered very quickly from their Reagan-paranoia, and with the increasing movement to convert nuclear and conventional weapons to peaceful and productive uses, the whole atmosphere, domestic and foreign, is conducive to our better health!

I hope it will soon spread your way, if indeed it hasn't already.

Please give our love to Uncle Avram. Tell him if he gets a chance to introduce G.M.I. in the Knesset he should go for it! It's a sure-fire cure for inflation, poverty, hunger and crime. Who knows — in time it may even cure the common cold!

Your loving niece,
Jane

cont'd from page 19

from which I have plucked these pearls.

FOP:

1. *First he knocks her down
by assaulting her soul;
telling her she's vain, superficial,
and adding — to drive the point home —
that she's frivolous
and terribly, terribly selfish.
She takes the bait
like the blonde fish she is . . .*
(The Seduction, p.72)

2. *Between her legs, in her perfumed hole
You'll find there my twisted heart and
soul,
All for love my friends, all for love
I stuffed them in with a single shove.*

*To leave them in her moist orifice
Nothing I deemed as sheltering as this.
It gave her steps a peculiar walk
But all whispered they improved her talk*
(To Blow A Man Down, 126)

3. *I picture you stretched out,
a stiffened corpse
and your cold vagina
extruding
a solitary pink
worm.*
(The Worm, 71)

For comparison, here are a few lines from a sonnet by A. Rich:

*Your traveled, generous thighs
between which my whole face has come and
come —
the innocence and wisdom of the place my tongue
has found there —
the live, insatiate dance of your nipples in my
mouth —
your touch on me, firm, protective, searching
me out, your strong tongue and slender fingers
reaching where I have been waiting years for
you
in my rose-wet cave — whatever happens, this
is.*

(Dream of a Common Language, p32)

A comparison taste test

1. With which of these two lovers would you feel more comfortable?
2. Which poet's views are more widely held to be valid?
3. Why?

The best answer I have found is this: "The only way man can possess female power is through woman, and so he colonises her, suppressing her sexuality so that it serves him rather than being the source of her power."⁸ That's what all their psychological, biological, hormonal, tragi-comical mumbo-jumbo is in aid of anyway, isn't it? To keep bright the lie of women's limited gifts from generation to generation by honouring the perpetrators of the

lie, so that Art will remain a Male Preserve, and FOP and YUP will get their babies and dinners on time. Otherwise, they would have to face the mighty obvious fact that the only thing that has ever limited women was and is the blatant or covert prejudices of men.

Footnotes:

1. This phrase is from Lynne Spender's book *Intruders On the Rights of Men (Women's Unpublished Heritage)*, (Pandora Press, London, 1983) and Ms. Spender got it from Anne Finch (17th C) who discovered a tradition of literary harassment when she made her work public.
2. Doctor Spock et al: Sources for this idiocy are various, but most came from the entry under "Sexism" in *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, Barbara Walker, (Harper and Row, 1983, pps. 921-927).
3. "Possibly when the Professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their inferiority, but with his own superiority." *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf, 1929 (Grafton, London, p.34-5)
4. Marilyn French, *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals*, (Ballantine, New York, 1985, p.295)
5. Based on information in *The Woman's Encyclopedia*. (Quotes from these men are on record).
6. *The Love Poems of Irving Layton*, (McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., Toronto, 1980).
7. *The Dream of a Common Language*, Adrienne Rich, (Norton, New York, London, 1978.)
8. *Women's Encyclopedia*, p.927. Quoting Charlene Spretnak, *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, New York, 1982.

suite de la page 17

diverses mesures visant à protéger les enfants contre l'agression et l'exploitation sexuelles. Le Code criminel serait modifié afin de prévoir des peines sévères pour ceux qui "se livrent au proxénétisme avec des mineurs, les entraînent à la prostitution, ou vivent des fruits de la prostitution des mineurs."

Et le rapport Fraser?

Par contre, ces mesures, ces pénalités, ces projets de loi . . . ne sont-ils pas que des "réactions" à la prostitution? Où sont les mesures de "prévention" telles que proposées dans le Rapport Fraser? Alors que des milliers de vies humaines se gâchent dans le monde de la prostitution, le Rapport Fraser (dont la raison d'être était de recommander des réformes sur le plan socio-économique/juridique) sera-t-il flanqué dans le fond du placard au Ministère de la Justice, pour devenir poussière?

Pour de plus amples informations, adressez-vous au Conseil canadien consultatif sur la situation de la femme, (204) 949-3140.

The Intrepid *Miss Cameron* & *The Kid*

by
Gail Buente

The year was 1908. Isadora Duncan was at the height of her popularity; Simone deBeauvoir was a newborn infant. Gertrude Stein and Colette both published books that year, and in Canada Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote *Anne of Green Gables*. It was the year that the first Model T Ford was produced and Wilbur Wright made a pioneering airplane flight of 30 miles.

In June of 1908, 44-year-old Canadian journalist and former teacher Agnes Deans Cameron, accompanied by her niece Jessie Cameron Brown, set out on a journey. Starting from Chicago, they made the 10,000-mile round trip up the MacKenzie River to the Arctic Ocean, arriving back six months later with quite a tale to tell.

Before this grand adventure, Agnes Deans Cameron was already a prominent figure known for her colourful and controversial personality. Even as a child in Victoria, B.C. she was a strong-willed individualist, to the consternation — and the pride — of her family. Duncan Cameron and his wife Jessie

Anderson Cameron were themselves independent souls who had met and married in the goldfields of California, come to British Columbia in their quest for gold, and finally settled in the staid little city of Victoria. There they raised their daughter "Aggie" and her five older brothers and sisters. It's likely that Agnes inherited at least some of her spirit of adventure from her parents. Her father was the first white man to cross Vancouver Island, and her mother came out from Scotland alone, crossing the Isthmus of Panama by horseback before joining her brother in California.

Young Aggie was a scholar and a voracious reader, and by the age of 18 was teaching school — first in Victoria, then Comox, then Vancouver, and back in Victoria. She was British Columbia's first female high school teacher and went on to become the first woman principal in the province. Her progressive teaching methods often got her into confrontations with the school board, though she was very popular with the parents and students.

After one well-publicized controversy with the school board, she was eventually discharged. Her response was to run for school trustee herself, and she was elected with more votes than any other candidate. To their dismay, the trustees who had voted for her dismissal were forced to serve alongside her.

In spite of her public popularity, her teaching certificate was suspended for three years. This cloud did have a silver lining, though. When she was forced to abandon her career in education, she took the opportunity to expand her part-time avocation of journalism into a full-time career. Her writing specialty became promotion of immigration to Canada's wheat belt. In 1906 she took a job writing and lecturing for the Western Canadian Immigration Association in Chicago.

It was there that an idea came to her of an enterprise worthy of her sense of independence and adventure. She would take a heroic voyage, and ask the Kid (as Agnes called her niece) to come along as a companion and secretary. They would travel as the great wave of immigration was travelling — westward and northward — up the MacKenzie toward the Arctic.

Cameron always claimed she made the trip just for the adventure of it, and it must have been quite an adventure — at age 44 she had not done a great deal of travelling in her life. They navigated dangerous white-water rapids, portaged, fought off killer mosquitos, fished and hunted — all in their ankle-length dresses. They stopped at many isolated settlements.

But, as a journalist, she knew the value of the trip as subject matter, and went to the trouble of carting along a dinosaur of a typewriter and a load of awkward camera equipment. After the trip, she was much in demand as a lecturer and wrote pieces for the Canadian government extolling the attributes of the Canadian North for immigration. She also wrote a number of magazine articles from the data she had gathered on the trip, as well as a book, which she illustrated with her own photographs.



The kid (left) and Agnes Cameron navigated white water rapids, fished, hunted — all in their ankle-length dresses.

The book, *The New North*, carries the tantalising sub-title, "Being Some Account of a Woman's Journey through Canada to the Arctic." The book's frontispiece is a photo portrait of Miss Cameron, in full-length skirt and RCMP jacket and hat, proudly displaying the head of "My Premier Moose."

They were outfitted, aided in planning their itinerary, and given letters of credit by the Hudson's Bay Company. They carried with them two small steamer trunks, a tent, two cameras, a mattress, blankets, their "Underwood," and a flour sack containing a hatchet, raincoats, toiletries, and a biscuit tin to hold their irreplaceable supply of film, carefully wrapped in oilcloth.

The map that the intrepid pair used is marked with Hudson's Bay outposts from Athabasca Landing to Fort MacPherson; but Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Inuvik are nowhere to be found.

On the Athabasca River, Agnes described her feelings after her first experience of shooting the rapids: "For all we own in the world we wouldn't be anywhere but just where we sit. If it is going to be our last minute, well, Kismet! Let it come. At least it will not be a tame way of going out."

At Ft. McMurray they visited the solitary cabin of Scottish trapper Christine Gordon, "the only white woman on a 500-mile stretch of the Athabasca," a free-trader operating in competition with the Hudson's Bay Company.

The typewriter was an item of curiosity to many of the people they met along the way. One of the curious was old Mrs. Loutit, who Agnes described as someone who "shoots moose, smokes the hide . . . works upon it silk embroidery . . . (and) weaves fantastic belts of beads." She watched the operation of the Underwood with fascination commenting, "Much hard that, I think, harder than bead-work, eh?"

Cameron was particularly interested in the lives of the native Indians and Inuit they met on the journey. Much of *The New North* is taken up with descriptions of their homes, families, and communities.

One incident gives some insight into the character of Agnes Deans Cameron. At Fort McMurray, Agnes and Jessie met a Cree woman trying to collect her annual treaty payments of \$5.00 each for herself and her four children. The government officials had refused to give her the \$5.00 owed for her youngest baby because she was an illegitimate child and "had no name." Someone had to give the baby a name — since the father had refused to — or no "treaty" would be paid to the mother. Agnes, sympathetic to the mother's plight, offered her name. The baby was christened "Agnes Deans Cameron," and the mother collected her treaty money.

Through all their adventures, Jessie seemed the devoted silent partner, smiling shyly as she stood by, typewriter in hand.

Soon after their return, Agnes and the Kid toured Canada, lecturing about their journey. In 1909, the two went to Britain to write and lecture about Canadian affairs and to encourage immigration. Two years and more than a hundred lectures later, Agnes returned as a celebrity to her hometown. She was at the height of her career and had ambitious plans for her future, with more lectures and several book ideas among them. But her plans were tragically cut short when, in 1912, she fell ill with appendicitis and died of complications, at the age of 48.

All her life Agnes Deans Cameron was a woman who knew her own mind. She was outspoken as a writer, rebellious as a teacher, dauntless as a traveller. She was also a staunch supporter of suffrage for women and equality for all people. She is indeed a fascinating figure in Canada's history. ▼

Stone Cold Dead

FICTION BY DIANA ASPIN

I tried to leave him once. Kate was four then, Fiona two. Looking back, I can see that if I'd persisted I might have made it. That was 25 years ago though, and no one talked about wife beating, I don't think it even had a name.

I did try to leave him. I did.

"Mum." I approached her one afternoon, blurted it all out. I began to sob, a small child, sitting on the edge of the old, familiar kitchen chair, twisting the hem of my dress around my finger, again and again.

"He hits me so hard, mum. He punches me. Sometimes I can't go out for days. I can hardly move! He calls me names — words you wouldn't even know!" I wanted to be small again, cared for. I wanted back the times when a cookie, a kiss, and a band-aid made everything all right. Roller skating, bike rides, and being tucked in at the end of the day. She was quiet, still, standing with her back to me by the kitchen sink.

"I have to get out, mum, I just have to! He does it in front of Kate now. She gets really scared! If I could just stay here for a few months, time to get on my feet, find a job, that's all I need! I'll be no bother, honestly. I'd

even . . ." She cut me off, turned to face me. I remember noticing how neat she was, neat and trim, everything in order, her face reflected in the shining fridge door, not a fingerprint in sight. The smell of pine cleaner and fresh coffee.

"Now, Addie." I recognised the look. Martyred, hurt; why are you doing this to me? Why did I always feel as if I were the one who'd done something wrong?

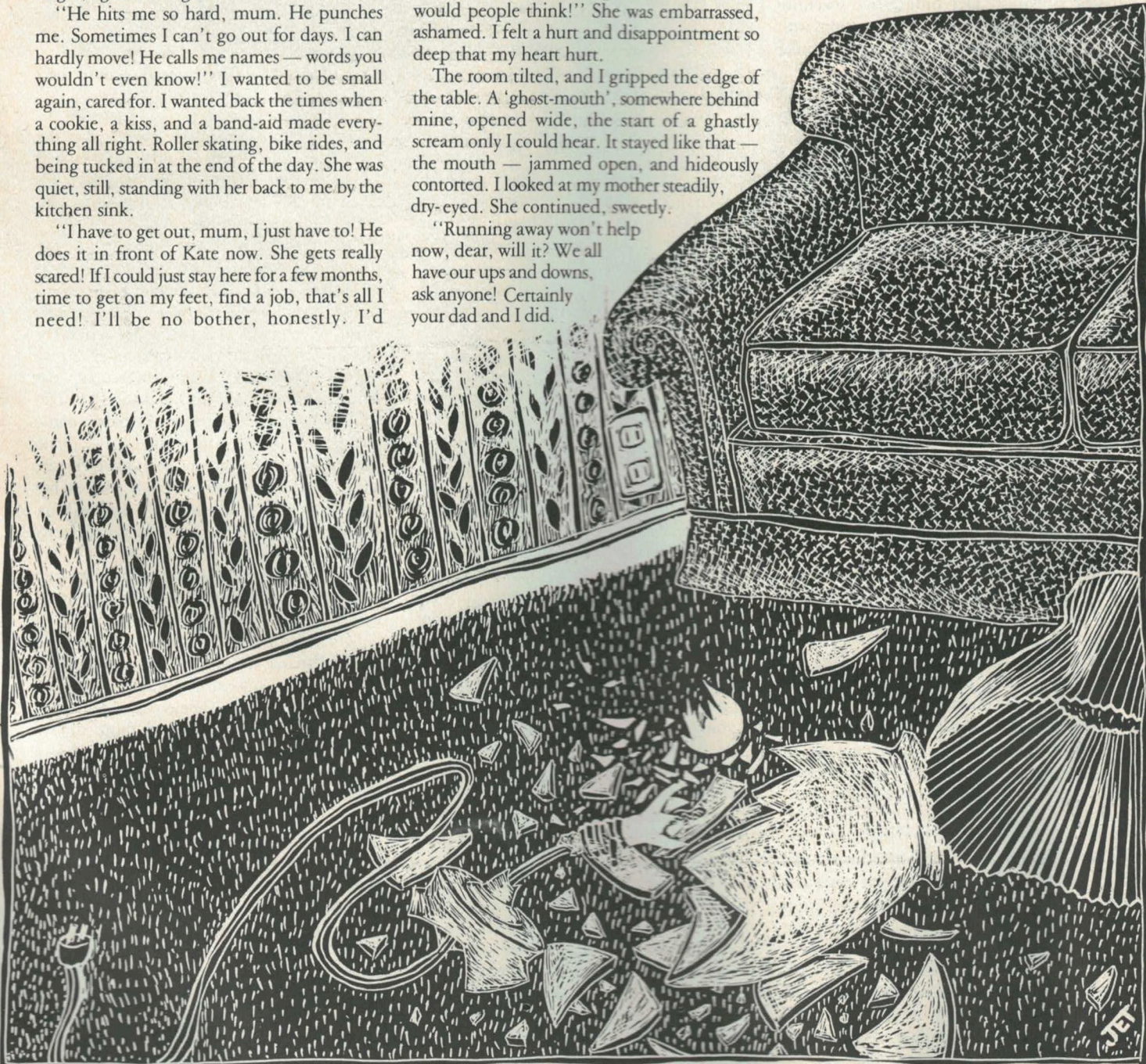
"You know that's not possible, dear. What would people think!" She was embarrassed, ashamed. I felt a hurt and disappointment so deep that my heart hurt.

The room tilted, and I gripped the edge of the table. A 'ghost-mouth', somewhere behind mine, opened wide, the start of a ghastly scream only I could hear. It stayed like that — the mouth — jammed open, and hideously contorted. I looked at my mother steadily, dry-eyed. She continued, sweetly.

"Running away won't help now, dear, will it? We all have our ups and downs, ask anyone! Certainly your dad and I did.

Did I leave him? Of course not! I'm sure it's just that Norm is overworked right now. Such a hard working boy, your dad and I have always admired that in him. Look at your lovely home, Addie! You have so much more than we had at your age. You should be grateful! Perhaps if you were a little more understanding, dear. Try not to annoy him. A man likes some peace and quiet after a day's work!"

I felt sick. She poured the coffee. Coffee, in tiny, ladylike cups, with matching frilly sauc-



Graphic: Jon Thornhill

ers, and shiny, silver spoons. She did most of the talking: neighbourhood gossip, new recipes, her aching back. You know, not once, in all the remaining 15 years of her life, did she ask how it was between Norm and me. I suppose she couldn't handle it. I wonder now if she cared about me, ever really cared about me. I wonder whether I'll find it in my heart to forgive her.

So, here I am, 45 years old — three children, and one hell of a lonely and wasted life later. Here at the kitchen table, warming my hands on a cup of tea, and assuring myself that I'm making the right move. Here in the room where I've spent most of my married life — most of my whole life actually — watching the world drift by outside my kitchen window.

I can see them now, the kids, first on their tricycles, free of all care, then as teenagers. All those girls, silky heads on beefy shoulders. Oodles of eye contact and giggling. Bridled passion. They think it will always be that way — I did.

Sometimes, I want to hurtle out there, hair dishevelled, hands matted with vegetable peelings, and yell — Stop! Don't do it! He's not really like that, he'll change. He'll not stay like that. There's more to life! Years of conditioning, fairy tales, that persistent throbbing between your thighs — don't be led astray by it! Get an education! It does matter, it truly does! Look at me! I couldn't get away!

The truth is that I didn't want to get away, not at first anyway. They were good days, the 'courting' days, as my mum used to call them. She thought he was wonderful. Sit down, Norm, make yourself comfortable, plumping up the cushions behind him, straightening her dress, fast look around the room to see if everything's in place. Do excuse the mess, Norm, dear! God, mum, the only thing a mess was you. Addie, get Norm a cup of tea will you? And like a good girl, I did. He must've thought he'd died and gone to heaven!

And he continued to impress us with that smooth and easy way of his. Not once did I get a glimpse — mind you, I wasn't looking for it — of that other person. The easily frustrated one, the one who couldn't say 'I love you' if his life depended on it. The one who never learned the fine art of being gentle. The one who secretly hated himself, and everyone else in the world.

Yes, I was a good girl. It came easily to me, being good. I'm suddenly there again — there I am on the maple lined street where I grew up, with its wooden verandahed, freshly painted houses. I'm sitting on the grass, on the old quilt my grandma made, plucking the grass. I snatch fistfuls of it, then hold my plump hand waaaaay high. Mesmerised, I watch it drift and blow in the soft breeze. Mrs. Brown from next door is there too. Her large face looms over me — fat, painted lips, little hairs all over her chin.

"My, my, what a pretty little girl you are! What messy green hands! Mummy will have to clean them all up for you, won't she!" Her

breath smells sour. It always did. My mother is standing there, chest puffed out, a self-satisfied smile on her face.

I finger my smocked dress, grin a tiny-toothed grin. How I could manipulate the world back then! I never envisioned it could be any other way. One day I would conquer a nice young man with my winning smile, and lady-like ways. Then I'd marry him — or rather he'd marry me. We'd have two children, and live happily ever after. Presumably on a maple lined street, with wooden verandahed, freshly painted houses. It was part of the natural order of things. Confirmed daily by everything I saw or heard.

Kids. I think of Kate. She's 23 now. Kate the daddy's girl. She could get anything out of him just by batting her eyelids — that's all she had

He needed me. Love and understanding would change him

to do. Oh, Kate, Kate, I wanted it all to be so different for you, I truly did! You, the teenager, taking his side every time, thinking me weak and silly. I don't blame you, after all he held the purse strings. I remember you as a little girl, six years old. Those hellish nights Norm and I fought. You'd crouch, sobbing, in the corner of that room you shared with Fiona, nightdress soaked with tears, waiting for me to come and gather you up, slip you back between the sheets, tell you everything will be all right. Shhhhh, darling, mummy's here. You're O.K. now.

And Fiona, tiny Fee. Four years old. Apparently made of sterner stuff, our Fee, or so she'd have us believe. Fee, lying on her bed, listening to the yelling and screaming, the crashing of furniture, Kate's sobbing. Eyes dry and expressionless, staring at the ceiling. White-knuckled hand gripping the bedcovers to her throat. Are you all right, Fee? Mmmmmmm.

There's only Paul left now, and he'll be gone tomorrow. He's shared my sorrow more than any of them. Gentle Paul. Sir Galahad, with the wet cloth, the cup of tea, whispered words of encouragement. He should have been out playing, climbing trees, kids things. Free of care. So unfair to all of them, so damned unfair. Such a stupid decision, the one to stick it out for their sake. The years of beatings and insults, the damaged children. Wasted. All those precious years wasted.

Sometimes, when I pretended to be occupied, I watched him. I saw the jowls, balding head, paunch, and I asked myself, what I ever saw in him. What did I? He was the

charmer, I the charmed. I was such easy prey, so readily impressed. Flowers, chocolates, promises to conquer the world. I thought he would too, I did. I loved him. Sometimes too, I ask myself when they began — the beatings.

I think it was just after Fee was born. She'd wake in the night, and if I didn't get up straight away — bang! — there he was, punching me, breaking things: lamps, phones, tables, and all the time with that crazy look on his face. Completely out of control, ugly veins bulging from his neck and forehead, face lobster red. I thought he was going to kill me, I really did. I'd lie in bed afterwards, bruised and bleeding, hardly daring to breathe, because if I disturbed him he'd start over again. And the next day the insults, always the insults. To tell you the truth they hurt more than the punches — at least initially they did. I couldn't do anything right. The dinner was too hot or too cold. The kids were making too much noise, which was my fault because I didn't know how to control them. A button missing from one of his shirts. Such insults. Brainless cow. Ugly toad. Fat pig. Some four letter words I can't even bring myself to say. I began to believe them after a while. Now, when I do something particularly stupid, I say those things to myself. I've even said them to the kids. I must be sick in the head to have stayed with him all this time. Really sick.

So, like I said, I told myself that it was for their sake I stuck it out. How else would they get their piano lessons, hockey equipment, nice clothes? Three kids. Two of them conceived on nights he'd been remorseful, begged forgiveness, promised to stop. And I, brainless cow that I was, believed him, and loved him. Once more — without feeling.

Part of it was that I thought he'd change. I didn't realise that men like Norm don't change — the insults and beatings get worse, not better. At first I was convinced that he was sick, that there was something terribly wrong with him. He needed me. Love and understanding would change him. And even if I couldn't change him — what sort of wife would walk out on a sick husband? For better or for worse, that's what mom said. He wasn't sick of course, and the years just flew by. He wasn't really sick at all. He'd just never learned to behave in any other way. No one told Norm that it wasn't acceptable to beat and insult people just because they annoyed him, or because he'd had a bad day. Anyway, a man's home is his castle — Norm, he truly believed all that stuff. Still does.

So the years fly by. And all the while, all the while you grow to feel worse and worse about yourself, get sicker and sicker, more and more alienated from family and friends. Soon you haven't the energy, the courage, self-confidence, or whatever it is you need, to leave him. You've learned to be helpless. Some days I can't swallow, can't eat. I haven't felt anything for years — you know the kind of thing I mean — sunsets, anthems, new born babies.

cont'd on page 41

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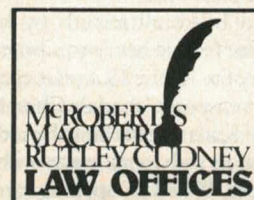
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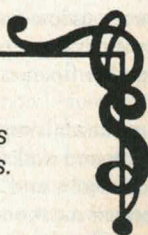
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Breaking all records

BEATRICE WATSON

It's 7:30 a.m., Karen Jungkind, a 30 year old, five-foot-two-inch, 112-pound woman walks in Transport Canada's St. Andrews Airport garage wearing faded blue jeans and a blue corduroy shirt. She glances in the assignment book, puts on grease-stained overalls, chats briefly with two six-foot, 200 pound men, her co-workers, then she climbs onto the hood of a snow plough and checks the engine. Satisfied that all is well, she covers it, puts on a navy blue winter coat, gets behind the wheel and smoothly steers the vehicle out of the garage and towards the runway.

Jungkind broke all records by becoming Canada's first female heavy equipment operator/auxiliary fire-fighter four years ago. She was a clerk at Transport Canada's Churchill office at the time. Karen recalls how she used to look at the operators with longing eyes wishing to be in their shoes. When an opening came up she applied and got the job over 14 other men.

Holder of a Class 3 license with air brake endorsement, Jungkind says her initial excitement for the job soon wore off. Her life changed overnight. From the peace and calm of her clerical environment she was thrown into a turbulent sea of intense resentment and abuse by the men she worked with. First it was the washroom. The men used two washrooms before but because of Karen one had to be assigned to women, which the men promptly called "Karen's Washroom."

"Can you imagine the fuss they made all because of a washroom?" Karen laughs now.

She couldn't make mistakes reasonable for any newcomer to a job, and she was chided for being Transport Canada's token woman. It was frustrating for her. She wanted to learn the job quickly and to work with people who were willing to teach her. She was ill prepared for the reception she got. On top of the lack of co-operation there was the mental and physical harassment. "I used to go home and cry to my former husband and say I wasn't going back. I used to wonder if something was wrong with me, why was I suffering to keep that job, if it was because I didn't want to use my mind."

Her husband, though he sympathised with her, wasn't keen on her working with an all male crew. He preferred her doing something more "becoming of a woman." Karen felt that if she were physically bigger she would have commanded more respect. To boost her self-confidence she took up judo and got as far as the brown belt. She soon found out she need-



Even judo lessons couldn't protect Jungkind from the sexist remarks first hurled her way by co-workers. Now, she says "It's their problem if they can't accept me."

ed more than physical strength. What she needed most was the mental strength to survive the insults.

Though tempted to give up, Jungkind was determined to show the men she could do the work just as well if not better. She also loved the fat paychecks she collected, the likes of which she had never seen in her previous low-paying clerical job. She developed a survival instinct to keep the job that had given her financial independence.

"I began using Transport Canada's support services. I attended conferences and workshops on women in non-traditional jobs and they were really positive and boosted my morale. I didn't have to explain myself, they just knew. When a woman truck driver got up and spoke I knew exactly what she meant." Karen was so moved that she wrote a poem about the women she met at the conferences.

Two years ago she was transferred to St. Andrews Airport, just north of Winnipeg. The reception was similar but Karen was older and wiser. "I realised that they had never worked with a woman before and didn't know what to expect from me," she says.

After she had proven herself, the men accepted her and now treat her like her co-workers in Churchill did. "When I left there some of the men cried. I cried too. They took me out on the town and bought me presents," she recalls.

Ralph Haines, Jungkind's immediate supervisor says she is a good worker and "she respects the vehicles and is very good about servicing the vehicles before taking them out. She does everything the men do: she isn't given any special treatment and I have no complaints. I enjoy working with her and would like to see her go as far as she could, maybe one day managing an airport."

Karen doesn't mince words about her job: "It's hard work. There's a lot of lifting of heavy materials which puts a lot of stress on my back but it's something I can do. I love my work."

Being a heavy equipment operator is not the first break in traditions for Jungkind. She was one of the first female flag persons on road construction. She even chucked oil drums for Shell Oil wearing hockey gear to ward off the bruises.

She remembers that while working on the road construction she first had a chance to putter around on the DC Cat and believes that is the root of her desire to be a heavy equipment operator.

She feels quite settled at St. Andrews Airport and gets along well with everyone but every now and then someone comes into the garage and tries to make fun of her: "It hurts but I keep telling myself it's their problem if they can't accept me."

Her job has cost her 10 years of marriage and family life, friends — both male and female: "my last boyfriend used to literally cringe whenever I mentioned what I did for a living in public." She says many women don't understand what is involved in her work and she feels they think of her as "strange and different."

Karen admits that it's lonely for her but she adds: "I hope as more and more women get into non-traditional jobs, it won't be so strange anymore. I wish more women would get into these non-traditional jobs because the pay is a lot better. I plan to keep my job for as long as I can." ▼

Are you an askable parent?

Questions

1. Your neighbour is on the phone, upset. She's just sent your five-year-old son home, after discovering him, along with her daughter, playing with no clothes on. She plans to punish her child, and advises you to do the same.
2. Your 15-year-old daughter has just returned from a party where a couple of her classmates started "making out" on the couch, then moved to a bedroom, where she suspects they were having sex. She's not sure how she feels about that.

At a very early age, almost every child wonders about bodies — theirs and everyone else's. The first questions are fairly simple, but they soon lead to curiosity about where babies come from, how they are made, what sex is all about, what happens during puberty, and more. How parents respond to the early questions can determine whether or not their children ask more questions later, and will affect their children's feelings about sexuality and themselves.

Open communication about many topics, including sexuality, is the best way of sharing parental values and of raising children to be responsible and caring adults. Parents should be the primary sex educators of their children because the issue is a sensitive one that is intertwined with personal and religious beliefs.

Parents also feel they should be the primary source of information on the facts of life for their children. A May 1984 Gallup Poll conducted for Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada (PPFC) showed 94 per cent of Canadians think parents should discuss sex and sexual behaviour with their children. These results are reinforced by a recent survey, which showed 80 per cent of parents say they talk to their children about sex.

The reality, however, is that children and youths do not get enough information from their parents. In June 1985, PPFC commissioned Gallup to survey 14-19 year-old Canadians on their sources of information about sex.

While 91 per cent of the teens surveyed said parents should discuss the facts of life with their children, only 71 per cent reported their own parents have discussed the topic with them, and only a third considered their parents a primary source of information on the topic.

Researchers in a 1980 survey of Quebec students 17 and older concluded a mere three per cent of students were "well-informed," while 84 per cent had "inadequate sexual

knowledge." Students cited reading, school courses, friends, and the media as common sources, while less than one-third talked with their parents.

To reverse this trend, parents often need help finding the words with which to talk to their kids. There is a wide gap between what they believe is necessary, and what they feel comfortable talking about.

Sex 'Taboo'

By avoiding the subject, parents give a very powerful negative message. Karen Nielsen, a social worker with Planned Parenthood Fredericton who runs workshops to help parents provide sex education, explains "what you say to the child is that this is something so taboo we aren't going to talk about it. I wonder then just how many difficulties adolescents have trying to deal with their own sexuality, and their own sex drive . . . They end up with a mass of misinformation, and have to work out their own value system without anything really clear having come from their parents except this big taboo . . ."

Children desperately want information, asserts Planned Parenthood Saskatchewan president Sheila Brandick, who has worked in the field of human sexuality for 20 years. When parents try to talk to their kids about sex, "you can't be put off by their initial reaction — 'oh don't gross me out', and things like that. They want to know. It's part of their life and nobody's talking to them about it," she maintains.

Parents should start talking to their children about that aspect of their lives when they are still young, because children are sexual beings from birth. "As soon as you know they can begin to comprehend, tell them the differences in anatomy between boys and girls," Brandick advises.

Some parents are reluctant to talk to adolescents because they think teens know more about sex than most adults — after all, aren't kids experimenting at younger and younger ages now? More kids may in fact be "doing it," but they aren't very knowledgeable about just what "it" entails. While the average age for first intercourse for Canadian teenagers is 16, the fact that over 40,000 teenagers got pregnant in 1983 shows they are not well-informed about reproduction and sexuality.

Ignorance is not bliss

Misinformation about sexuality can lead to experimentation for all the wrong reasons —

because of peer pressure, or in order to keep a relationship intact. Inadequate knowledge can also lead to teenage pregnancy — many adolescents believe they are too young to get pregnant, it won't happen the first time, or they're protected if the girl takes one of her mother's birth control pills.

Parents can dispel the myths and help adolescents realise the complexity of the decision to have sex. Yet some hesitate to teach their children because they think knowledge leads to experimentation.

Children need information, and reassurance that they can talk about their concerns. But they may feel awkward, too. Parents should ask themselves how they have reacted to their children's questions in the past — whether they brushed them off, or whether they showed they are 'askable parents.'

Askable parents are "attune to their relationship with their child," says Joy Fodden, who teaches a human sexuality course in Hamilton, and works with the Mental Health Association there. "They foster open communication about all things, not just sexuality." She advises parents to be "as informative as possible, but also be honest about your own difficulties. Say 'I don't know' when you don't know, and be willing to say 'I have some trouble talking about this but I want you to feel more comfortable with it.'" Recognizing this, and striving to answer questions matter-of-factly, is the first step in establishing good communication.

Answers

1. How should parents react if they find their five-year-old daughter and the neighbour's son naked? Punishment is not the answer. The most important advice is to stay calm. Don't over-react by sending your child's friend home. Instead, talk about the differences between little boys and girls and explain appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

2. For the 15-year-old who returns home from a party uneasy about her feelings about teenage sex, it's important that she know she can talk to her parents. Parents should help her understand the problem of peer pressure. They should assure her that it's OK to say "No" if she's not ready for sex and explain their feelings on the issue. This might also be a good opportunity to talk about contraception and offer resource material.

Planned Parenthood of Canada

When your ladyship is sinking

PATRICIA KUZAK

I'm sitting here trying to remember when they started . . . the lies, I mean. When did they first start lying to me and why? I suppose the first one of any consequence was the tale of the omnipotent, all powerful heavenly father who watched over me and kept me from all harm, provided of course that I was good.

My god but I tried. I really tried to be good. This meant absolute obedience to adults, particularly those assigned leadership roles. I never sass'd my mom and dad, or school teachers and most certainly not my Sunday School teacher or minister. I was most respectful of police officers as well. I sat up straight in chairs, with my knees together, studied hard, said my prayers and tried not to learn any dirty words. The harm arrived anyway.

I don't know where god was when my mother was repeatedly hospitalised and I endured inadequate fostering. Nor do I know where he was when the kids at school taunted me about my painful shyness and fear of contact sports.

As I struggled with this first possible betrayal, more gems of wisdom were loaded on this little girl. Some that my father contributed, very nearly destroyed me. He was really big on "ladies" and what constituted such a being. I adored this tall, handsome, protective man and listened with rapt attention. I always wore a hat and gloves to church, smiled a lot, spoke softly and seldom . . . and betrayed no intelligence

at all.

You see, it was also made very clear to me, that men did not like women who were too smart and for some reason, it was male opinion that I should be most concerned about. After all, the goal of any successful woman was to get a man and decorate his arm with her lady-ness.

Mother, unfortunately, offered no resistance, as she was totally dependent and, I suppose, a victim of her own socialisation.

Well now, this was getting pretty heavy. Being good all the time was quite enough to cope with for a little girl, let alone being a lady so that I could get a man. At that time, I wasn't even sure that I wanted a man and I certainly wasn't thinking of leaving home.

Such confusion, the teacher wants good grades and dad seems proud of them too. Why then is it that ladies shouldn't be too smart? Maybe it was okay, as long as you kept it to yourself.

Then there was the inevitable arrival of puberty and sex education. I got a Kotex film in grade six. I think it was titled *You Are Now A Young Lady*. This of course reinforced my faith in my father's good judgement. He must really know what he's talking about. Human sexuality and reproduction wasn't taught or even talked about by respectable adults, unless in hushed tones, out of the reach of young ears.

I noticed a change in my parents though. Dad blushed and pushed me away when I tried to hug him and mom looked worried a lot. She finally did give me some motherly advice. I think it went something like this: "Don't let any man do it to you honey, unless he marries you first. Don't let a man hurt you."

Well I wasn't too sure what "it" was and the hurting part sounded pretty scary. I found out what "it" was by watching the local dogs, combined with information I got from listening in on conversations of more knowledgeable young ladies.

I was also discovering new feelings when I held hands with boys and tried kissing. I quite liked that feeling. Eventually the feeling became a raging desire. I desperately wanted to do it! Now this would be wrong, unless I were married and there certainly wasn't much chance of arranging that, at 14 years old. Well here it is, 30 years later and I'm still trying to deal with the guilt feelings around that one. Getting drunk first sometimes helps.

I graduated from high school with mediocre marks because I was pretty busy pursuing boys.

No one was offering marriage yet, so I decided I'd better do something while I waited. I decided on nursing. That seemed pretty lady-like and good, too. Perhaps I wanted to atone for my sexual sins. I don't know. Dad wasn't impressed. He thought education for a girl a terrible waste of money, considering girls just marry and raise babies anyway.

When I argued the point, he suggested I join the army, because I was becoming increasingly opinionated and sometimes outright aggressive, despite his careful instruction on ladyship. This made me mad, for the first time, really mad. I dove in head first with a vigor and determination that would intimidate a shark. I graduated, of course, with excellent marks, though I didn't particularly like nursing. There! I damn well am a lady, I smiled smugly as I held my roses and gave the valedictorian's address.

Dad was right of course. I did marry shortly after graduation, and proceeded to raise four daughters. I didn't have the energy to work out of the home and fill the demands of one husband and four children, so nursing flew out the window. I tried once, but with not being able to arrange adequate child care and all the guilt trips, I just gave up. Eventually, I broke. The terrible isolation, combined with 24-hour days and no vacations finally took its toll.

What the hell did I do wrong? I was good. I was a lady. I got a man. I raised babies and tried to do a real good job of it too. Why did I fall apart?

I would have to conclude that the information and guidance given me in my formative years was not totally reliable. In fact, it was a lot of outright lies. Why do they do that? Why do they tell children these lies? Do they really believe them?

Perhaps people are afraid of changes, particularly when our own images of ourselves and others are threatened. God forbid you raise a revolutionary child. I once heard a woman say "I dressed him so cute when he was a baby and look at him now, a 'beatnik' he looks like."

It takes courage to change and intelligence to recognise the need for change. I'm not sure I have that intelligence and courage, I only know I have to survive and teach my children to survive. I guess you start with sorting out the bullshit. ▼

Patricia Kuzak works as a driving instructor and enjoys cooking, gardening, and the company of her four daughters.



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I don't feel a thing. I'm stone cold dead inside. Better off dead, perhaps.

Norm didn't look at all bad when he left this morning. Three piece suit, the whole bit. He'd be home late he said. He had a committee meeting, then a drink with the staff. I can see it now. Jovial, easygoing Norm. Hail fellow well met! Manager of the best hardware store in town, member of the town council. Upstanding, outstanding, shit-faced pillar of the community.

I asked him for the keys to my car. He keeps them in the pocket of whichever jacket he's wearing — hasn't missed a day yet. He broke the living room lamps last month, and I just about have enough money to replace them. Thought I'd go out today and get them.

God, there's a story — the lamps! Each time I want to replace them, I go to a different store than the time before. We only have three in this town. When I get around to the same store again, I try a different time of day, so it's not the same person. Or I try Saturday when they use part-time staff. If it's the person that served me the last time my heart sinks. I try to look confident — as if it's perfectly normal to buy a set of lamps each month, year after year. I hold my head high, and I look the girl or guy straight in the eye, so they won't be suspicious or anything. I dread it, replacing all the broken stuff.

Sometimes though, I feel as if the whole town knows. There she goes, they whisper, there goes Addie. Husband beats her black and blue. And she stays! If my husband hit me once just once, I'd be out of there like a shot! No one would hit *me* and get away with it! Silly, scarlet-nailed cow!

So I asked him for the keys to my car. I don't ask for them often, hardly at all. No need. Norm does most of the shopping with me. Makes him look good — makes sure I don't stop to talk to anyone. That's a sure fire way to annoy him! I lost any friends I had a long time ago. He'd go nuts if anyone was in the house when he got home from work. He'd be so rude to them they wouldn't come back.

"Norm, I need the car." He turned from where he stood at the front door. Looked at me. Hostile. He began to walk toward me, and that's when I got that feeling again. You'll think this is silly, too, but when he's going to hit me the air is charged with something. It's hard to explain. A bit like the creepy feeling you get when you think there's someone in the room with you, when there isn't. A bit like being on a roller coaster when you plummet down that first steep drop.

He wasn't going to hit me then of course, he hadn't the time. He plans to beat me tonight though, I can tell. The alcohol will give him a good excuse. You know the kind of thing I mean — had a drink, couldn't help myself.

I'll let you into a secret. I've never told a soul this before, and it doesn't matter now anyway. If I sense it building up — this feeling I've told

you about — I have a few stiff drinks. So that I don't feel anything, physically. Then I provoke him, make him hit me. I do, honestly. I get it all over with. It's better than waiting for it to happen. You wouldn't understand though, not if you've never been beaten. You wouldn't understand at all.

He fished into his pocket, felt around for the key. He avoided my eyes — actually he hasn't looked at me properly for years now, not really looked at me. I watched his shiny black foot tap, tap, tap tapping on the tiled floor. He was in a hurry. I remembered that he said he'd kill me if I ever tried to leave him. He'd kill me, the children, and then himself. He's capable of it too. You'd never know it to look at him, but he is.

So, here I am. My suitcase packed. Mostly clothes, a few books, photos, things the kids made for me at school. There's a napkin holder — the tube from a roll of toilet tissue — covered in red felt and sparkly things, the glue showing through in parts now. I've always loved it, so glittering and magical somehow. There's a table mat Paul made when he was four. Coloured strips of paper woven in and out of each other, and my name — mom — in felt letters on top of it. Funny how kids bring home gifts like that — all to do with the kitchen. Sparkling confirmation of your role in life, the world's expectations of you.

I'm waiting for Paul. He'll be in soon, and I'll say goodbye. It'll be tough. I've written notes to Kate and Fee. They'll understand. I'll write again when I get to my sister's place. I'll be staying there until I find work. Any work will do.

As for Norm, when he rolls in smelling bar sour, ready for a fight, I'll be gone. No dinner, no note, nothing. There should be some satisfaction in that, but there's none. I'm denied even that it seems. I'm not sure I'll ever feel anything again. ▼

Diana Aspin is a freelance writer and casual staff counsellor at a shelter for battered women in Mississauga, Ont.

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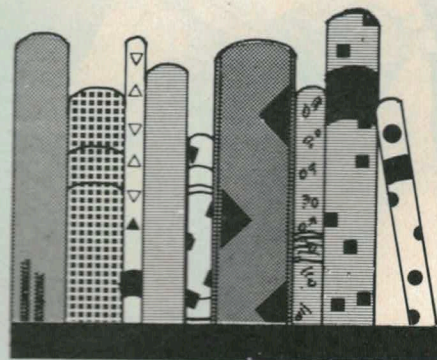
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cont'd from page 29

I have been on many diets and have only ever lost 10 pounds and then gained it all back. There was one exception to the pattern. At age 19 I made a decision to lose 100 pounds. I did this by eating only one apple a day for six months. I reached my goal, developed a heart condition as a result and have gained all of the weight back.

Social situations are difficult for me due to 'looksist' attitudes (biases that lead to valuing people based on body size and conformity to stereotypes) in the women's community. Many women, still hold male defined stereotypes of how women should look. When I was thin I had more dates and got asked to dance much more often.

It's hard for me when I feel lonely in a group of lesbians where my expectations are higher than they are in heterosexual situations. Casual lovers are afraid to touch any part of my body that they can avoid. Long term lovers treat me differently however, and have a deeper appreciation of my body and of me as a woman.

I want all women to rethink what we've been given. I want them to stop buying into the anti fat industry. It's killing us.

Anti-fat prejudices

Fear of fat is so pervasive within our psyches that

even those of us who like to believe we are open-minded rarely challenge the "obesity" paradigm. In writing this article, we expose our internalized struggles because we know that the fear of fat (and by implication, the superiority of thin) is a collective problem that stems from a prejudice and reeks of privilege. It is an attitude we all need to confront, to share and to overcome.

In *Shadow on a Tightrope*, Vivian Mayer writes "the therapeutic responsibility that social activists assume toward fat people is a form of elitism fed by the elitism of the scientific profession. It is part of an historical view of 'deviants' in Western Society. The questions people ask about fat people have implications for the liberation of all minorities. Thinking people must take pains to be sure that their questions reflect their real political values."

So all self-proclaimed open-minded people out there, all "superior" people, all "radicals", it is time for us to reflect and question our own prejudices, our looksist attitudes. It is time to transcend them because "passive action", says Mandy Bonisteel, "means we must adjust to other people's standards. And things never do change out of passivity." She explains that "We all have an inner wisdom and it is important to pay attention to that little voice in our gut — if we can still hear it." She believes our

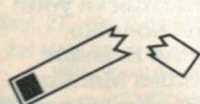
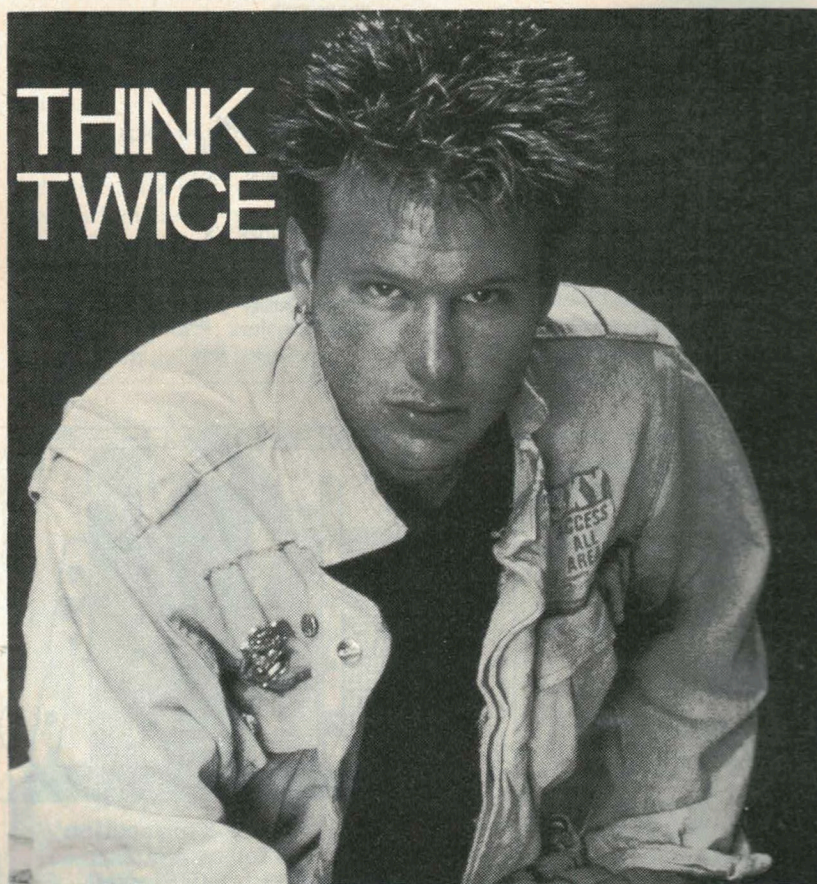
"gut wisdom" needs to be in balance with our rational thought, not silenced by it.


The dichotomy between these two processes is revealed in the too commonly heard phrase "if only I lost 20 (or 10 or 100 pounds) my problems would be solved and I would no longer be lonely." Although we expect such thoughts will motivate us to diet, our "gut wisdom" tells us they are simply not true; they're a myth. Losing weight is not going to the root of the problem.

"If we choose to mistrust our inner voice," Mandy says, "we give that trust to the powers that be — to social control. So listen inside yourself," she advises, "and make your own choice." ▼

During her third year at Trent University, Sheila Nopper began writing on women's issues for The Arthur, the student newspaper. Last year, following her graduation in Environmental studies, she was co-editor of the same newspaper.

Joyce Harley has been involved in Feminist activities since the late 60s. Her experience working with women include 10 years in the anti-rape movement. She had led workshops on a variety of women's issues and facilitated self-help groups.



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Plaintext

Essays, by Nancy Mairs; University of Arizona Press, 1986.

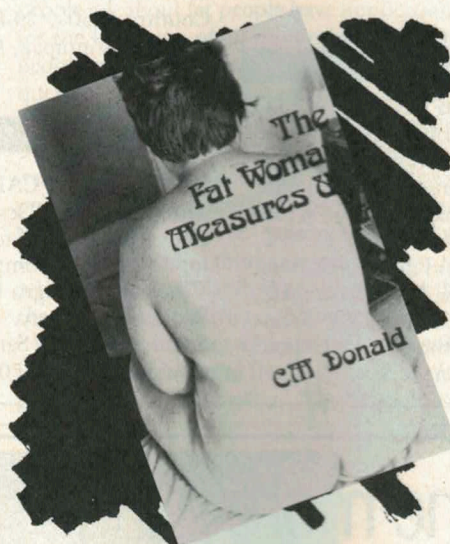
Reviewed by CY-THEA SAND

The tally of medical facts about Nancy Mairs may well send readers scurrying for psychic shelter: she is agoraphobic and suffers with multiple sclerosis and unipolar depression. But wait. Before reaching for a less challenging book, be aware that Nancy Mairs says of herself that: "As a cripple, I swagger." She is the type of writer who invites you into her kitchen, her study and yes, even into her bedroom, with an unforgettable combination of vulnerability and power. She writes poetry and essays to critical acclaim: *In All The Rooms Of The Yellow House*, a collection of poems, won the 1983 first Western States Book Award and this work, *Plaintext*, won an honorable mention in the creative non-fiction category by the same panel of judges. She is as funny as she is deadly serious and this collection of essays comprises some of the most powerful feminist writing I have had the pleasure to read in some time. The work is an unusual and provocative testament to the potency of creative thought in helping women survive.

In one essay entitled "On Keeping Women In/Out" Mairs writes that "something is common in these elements — womanness, poetry, depression, agoraphobia — but the connection lies deep, deeper perhaps than I dare to dive." She does in fact embrace the adventure of writing about the nature and consequences of her ill-health and their relevance to her position as a woman in an androcentric culture. She examines herself and that culture with ruthless precision, honesty and courage. Her work evoked Québécoise poet Nicole Brossard's description of the writing process as not only a way of expressing herself but also as "a way to produce a new territory, a new space, a new environment for her body as a skin able to transform and be transformed by language." Nancy Mairs' essays approach the subjects of mental and physical illness, parenting, heterosexism, women's sexuality, psychiatric incarceration and writing itself with a poet's love of language and a survivor's clarity. Without histrionics or self-pity she welcomes the reader into her fascinating world defined in large part by her need to write: "I have to write. If I avoid that mandate, I wind up trying to kill myself. It's as simple as that."

Nancy Mairs writes about sickness and disease with an everyday down to earth humour and dread. She talks about collapsing on the street while talking to a friend or in her living room when her children have friends over. Suicide attempts and the cycles of depression are interwoven with observations and analysis of

the mother/daughter relationship (the best I've read since Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*), the nuances of women's oppression in Moslem culture compared to her own American middle class one, mental illness in women as a reaction to psychic imprisonment (a non-fiction version of *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman), and her complex relationships with men, including her son. I'm sure women around the country — of whatever feminist stripe — will be photocopying her essays and sending them to mothers, daughters, sons and friends. Nancy Mairs makes thinking feel good: I finished the book encouraged and enlightened, a rare enough event.



The Fat Woman Measures Up

The Fat Woman Measures Up, by C. M. Donald (Ragweed Press), 1986
Reviewed by HEIDI MUENCH

What first drew me to this collection of poems by C. M. Donald was its cover: a photograph of the author, backview, nude. A portrait in which her body is highlighted by a bar of light on her left shoulder, in which her skinfolds are echoed in the folds of the bed linen on which she sits. A portrait that begs no-one's pardon, that asserts the truth of the collection's title: *The Fat Woman Measures Up*.

And C. M. Donald's poems are no less assertive, no less mind-catching. Not each one of them, in isolation; but all of them, together. This collection is not a series of set pieces but a dialogue. One that gains in resonance with every poem read, that refers back and encourages rereading, that examines assumptions and attitudes until their every nuance is revealed. A dialogue that disquiets as it informs.

For these poems do confront their reader, in my case, a medium-sized woman who was once larger. I found it difficult to read poems that express the Fat Woman's anger in the presence of thin women who berate the imagined heftiness of their bodies. These poems demand that we

take responsibility for our self-distortions in terms of how they hurt and negate those who inhabit the images we project onto ourselves. There are poems in which the attitudes of friends and lovers are explored: poems that expose evasion, condescension and indirect judgment. These too are hard reading.

But there are also love poems to this body so often shunned and punished, poems which celebrate the presence of a lover who harbours no unspoken condemnations, who sleeps soundly with her hand on the Fat Woman's stomach. And there is wit and laughter. And undeniable strength.

The Fat Woman Measures Up is both accessible and involving. C. M. Donald leads us to question by what standards we measure ourselves and others. And that is no small thing.

The Words To Say It

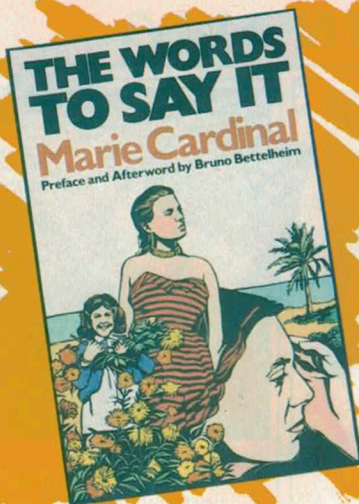
The Words To Say It, by Marie Cardinal, translated by Pat Goodheart, published by Van Victor & Goodheart, Inc. 1984 (\$11.95 pb).

Reviewed by HEIDI MUENCH

In *The Words To Say It*, Marie Cardinal explores the dark and arduous terrain of the madness her mother bequeathed her and the seven year analysis she undertook to free herself of this legacy. She writes of her journey in words that make real the intensity of her determination to both survive her beginnings and move beyond them. The result is a work that is often painful to read, but once read, unforgettable. Cardinal's struggles to liberate herself from the forces that defeated her mother — the suffocating dictates of middle class life and the system of rewards and punishments meted out to women — is a compelling record of one woman's successful battle to win back her self. As such, it is a celebration of the resilience of all our spirits and of the healing that occurs when our efforts to regain our lives are encouraged and supported.

To read *The Words To Say It* is to experience a process of rebirth and the emotions that attend it; pain, terror, an unrelenting need to live fully, sorrow, and the exhilaration of a growing sense of independence from the past. The rebirthing of a once segmented self is hard work and the accompanying feelings intense. All of us who have struggled to free ourselves from the holds of dark beginnings; who have wrestled with inner voices counselling us to despair, surrender, continue our self-loathing; all of us who have endured a wasteland of years that once seemed an irrecoverable loss will find a mirror in Cardinal's life. The value of her journey is also an affirmation of our travels, seldom shared with others in favour of more acceptable and public achievements.

Perhaps the most difficult part of *The Words To Say It* involves Cardinal's exploration of "the dark cavern" that was her mother. The passages in which she describes the child she once was are vivid depictions of loneliness and longing. Her



memories of her mother portray a woman whose life was deathridden and whose presence was almost unrelentingly destructive to her daughter's emotional existence. Most shattering was her mother's dispassionate disclosure to the 14-year-old Cardinal of how for six months she repeatedly attempted to abort the fetus that became her only surviving daughter. This was meant to teach her maturing daughter a lesson in female entrapment. It also instilled a sense of being forever unworthy of motherly love and a self-disgust that grew into madness.

Only by coming to understand her mother's "beastliness," only by unlocking the doors she had closed long ago against further hurt, does Cardinal escape her entrapment. The pathway to this understanding is a dream, in which she and other women, among them her mother, are threatened with male violence. The dream leads Cardinal to an awareness that lies outside the reach of her therapy. It reveals to her a society that denies women choice and condemns them to nurture without any hope of being nurtured in return.

At the end of her journey, Cardinal can mourn a mother she no longer views as only monstrous. The positive images she reclaims of the woman whose love she longed for mark the fulness of her healing and the limit of the mutual antagonism patriarchy strives to foster in its women.

The Words To Say It is not an easy book to read. It confronts us with experiences we would rather wish away, with feelings we would rather disown. But it also contains a joy that eclipses the darkness that once held Cardinal in its grip. Her victory is one we can all celebrate.

Subversive Elements

Subversive Elements, by Donna E. Smyth; The Women's Press, Toronto, 1986..

Reviewed by ANN WIESER

Donna Smyth's new book *Subversive Elements* dissolves barriers. It is a warm and sensitive chronicle of rural Nova Scotia life, a compelling document of an anti-nuclear struggle, and a romantic novel. More importantly, it is all three

of these strands skillfully woven together to create an unusual and highly-readable story.

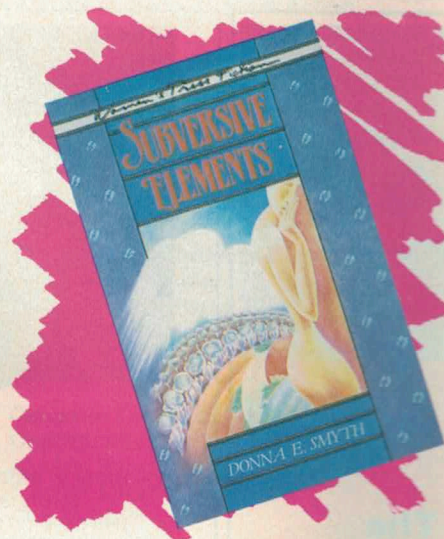
Smyth tells of settling in to the toils and pleasures of the farm — planning to raise goats and a garden, with love and a healthy respect for the precious Earth which nurtures and supports us all.

Then the monolith which is the nuclear industry swaggers on to the scene and the peaceful pattern of rural existence is rudely interrupted by the trappings of uranium exploration — helicopters, "experts" and public relations personnel.

Smyth paints a vivid and moving picture of the bewilderment, confusion, and anger experienced by herself and her neighbours in the face of this threat. She tells how anger is translated into the action necessary to confront the unwanted intruder.

Anyone who has questioned the status-quo will instantly recognise the struggle which ensues between the industry and government on one hand and the citizen groups/environmentalists on the other. The industry side holds all the cards: the money, the "science," the credibility. Even their accusations of their opponents have a familiar ring: "Irrational . . . Too emotional . . ." Even "Subversive!" And "subversive," according to Smyth, is the right term. At least in the true sense of the word:

Subvert: from L. sub vers-: the turning (of a thing) upside down (or uprooting it from its position).



The Nova Scotia environmentalists, like so many others before them, discover through their self-education process, that the issue they are working on is only the tip of the iceberg. That uranium mining, for example, is rooted in a corrupt and fundamentally unjust system, which is linked to many aspects of day to day life world-wide. Smyth's criticism of the rigid hierarchical structure of the system is unrelenting. The reader can feel her occasional despair and frustration as the true nature of the struggle becomes apparent.

At the same time one can sense her increasing personal commitment and confidence in the knowledge that the path she is treading is the right one. Smyth and her colleagues refuse to passively accept the model of reality being doled out by the powers-that-be. They refuse to be confined by the artificial barriers erected and perpetuated by that model: barriers between "subjective" and "objective", between humans and "nature", between "intellect" and "emotion." In fact, they work hard to break down these barriers. In this way, they are able to get a much more holistic and therefore, realistic, view of the uranium issue. What they see convinces them that uranium mining would not happen in Nova Scotia if they had any say in the matter.

In spite of the intrusion, and the seemingly endless round of meetings, press releases and hearings that go with it, the cycles of country living must continue. There are gardens to be planted, goat kids to be assisted into the world, pickles to be made . . .

Out of this hub of activity, and perhaps because of it, the novel grows. Its plot and characters are worlds apart from the uranium saga and the job at hand but they were born of it, and unfold parallel to it. The art is not separate from the politics, is not separate from the living.

This integrating message is a central theme throughout the book. *Subversive Elements* is a bold and original attempt to put this idea into practice. It at once informs, entertains and involves the reader. It is a great success. ▼

in the feminine: women and words/les femmes et les mots

Reviewed by JEANNE PERREAULT

Longspoon Press's fine collection *in the feminine: women and words/les femmes et les mots: conference proceedings 1983* makes me very sorry I didn't hear these voices in the warmth of their original exchanges. From the conference's 49 panel discussions, readings, workshops and theatre events, the editors, Ann Dybikowski, Victoria Freeman, Daphne Marlatt, Barbara Pulling and Betsy Warland, have prepared over 30 pieces for inclusion here, balancing social, practical and theoretical concerns.

The first section addresses the issues that recur in feminist contexts, the ethical and experiential roots of our lives as women/writers: motherhood; violence; class consciousness (Sara Diamond says that "power and meaning are expressed in class terms" and that working class women are often represented as "other" even in the writings of feminists.) The unit "Writing Against Double Colonisation," is especially important because it offers essays by Native and Black writers, both groups wretchedly underrepresented in most publications. In her es-

say Jeannette C. Armstrong describes her frustration at the arrogance of non-Indians who try to speak on behalf of Indians without listening to the "true understanding that we as Indian people have."

Essays by Lillian Allen and Make-da Silvera raise the issues of racism against Black women writers both in the mainstream of Canadian culture and in the women's movement. Through these individual women's voices our diversity and the belief that we are willing to learn from each other are clear.

For me, the discussions of literary theory, language and form were particularly exciting. The later essays convey the intensity of discovery, of possibility, of creativity, of argument, and of the evolution of yet another cycle of feminist consciousness. Some of the essays here are solidly informative: Shirley Neuman on the literary canon; Henriette Major on sexism in children's lit; Barbara Godard on Quebec and English Canadian writers; others focus on conventional issues in feminist lit. crit. (ie, the uses of myth). All demonstrate an acute sensitivity to language. *in the feminine* is a terrific introduction to the issues current in literary theory, much dominated at the moment by the psychoanalytic/philosophical analyses of French feminists.

The editors obviously find in the writings of Quebec feminists, nicely represented here, a source of passionate transformations wherein the patriarchal patterns of language are recognised (this "inventions of a language is inhospitable to women" says Louky Bersianik) and recreated "in the feminine." And indeed, the pieces that most richly embody the analytic, the theoretical, the experiential and the 'poetic' are found in a form that hasn't yet been named. It is these works by Bersianik, Daphne Marlatt ("like the mother's body, language is larger than us and carries us along") Betsy Warland (whose recovery of "surrender" shows us "our skin's syntax, our desire's etymologies") and Nicole Brossard (urgently committed to "rethink the world" as lesbian), give the collection its spirit and distinguish it from other collections of dutifully feminist assertions. This book makes us feel, once again, how exciting it is to be reading in the feminine. ▼



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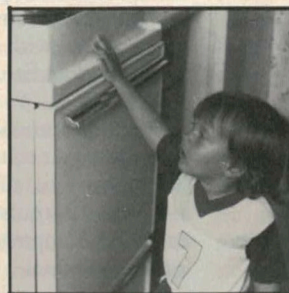


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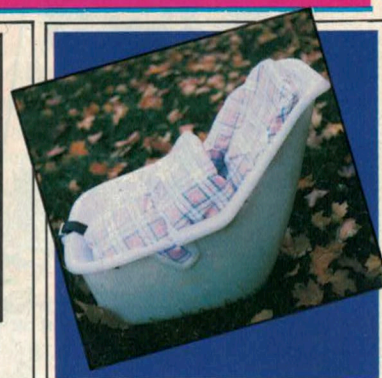
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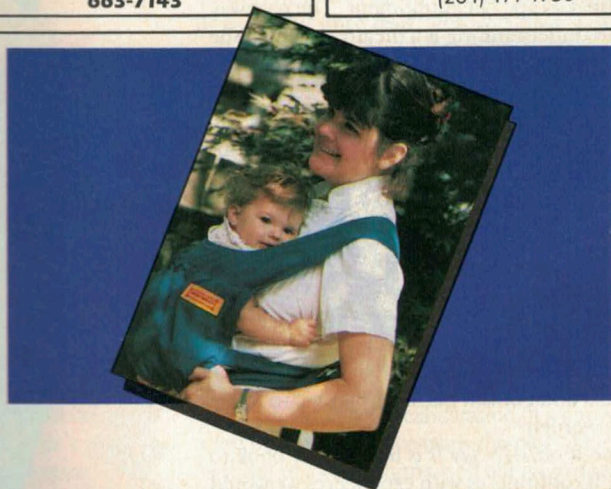


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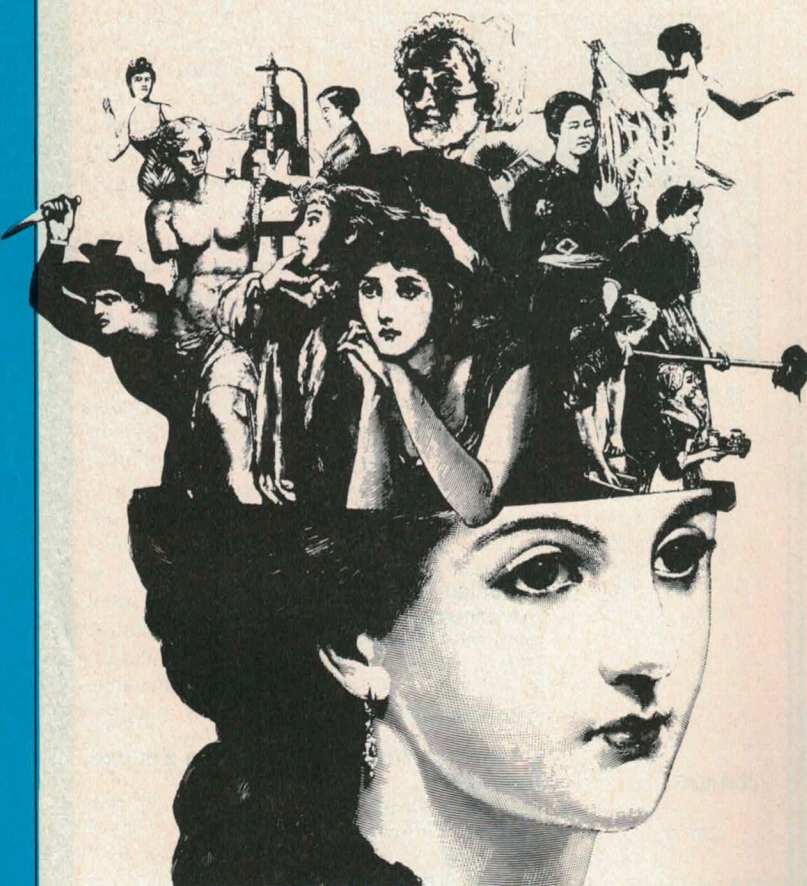
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