

PRIORITIES

A
FEMINIST
SOCIALIST
PERSPECTIVE

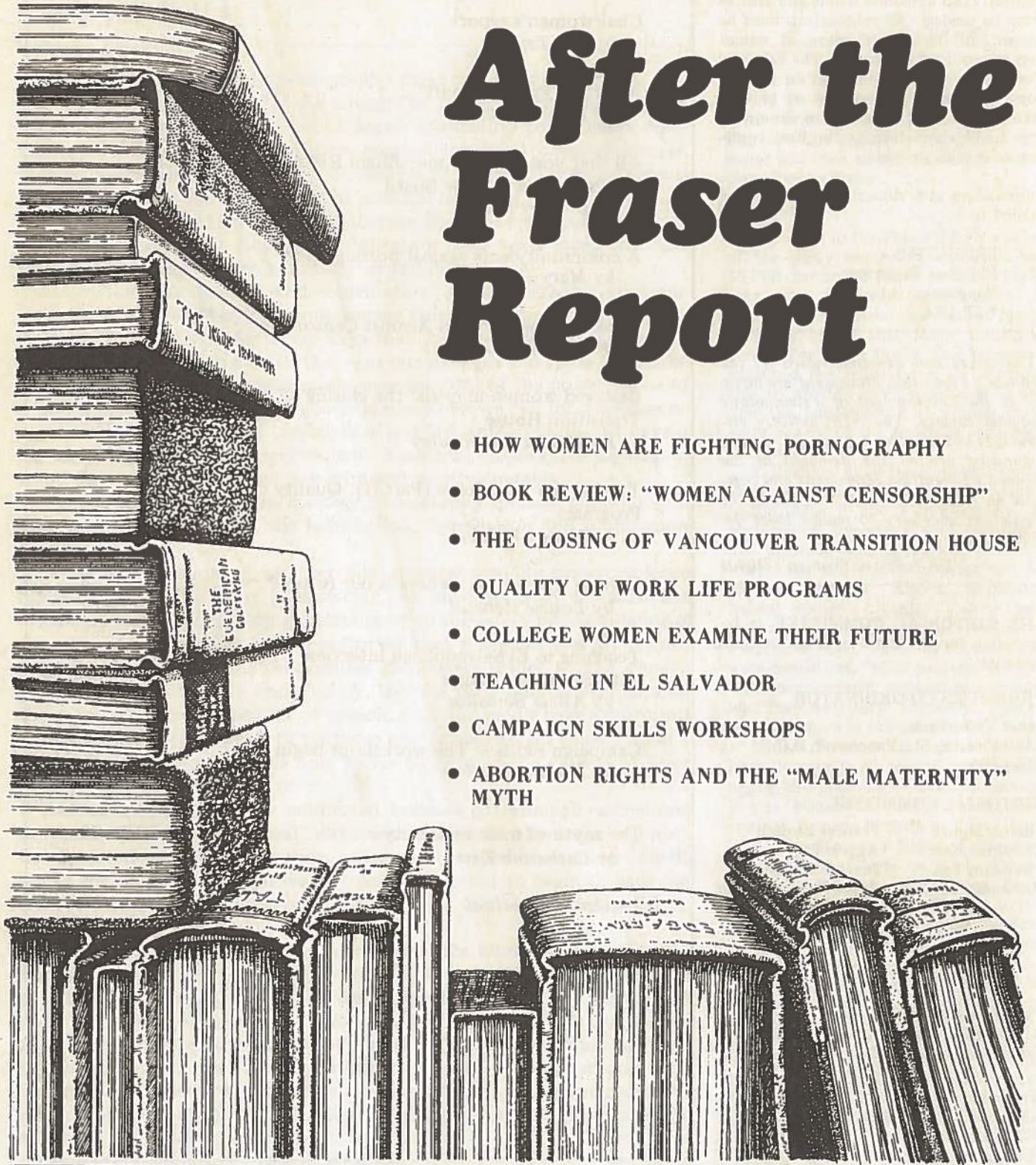
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After the Fraser Report

- HOW WOMEN ARE FIGHTING PORNOGRAPHY
- BOOK REVIEW: "WOMEN AGAINST CENSORSHIP"
- THE CLOSING OF VANCOUVER TRANSITION HOUSE
- QUALITY OF WORK LIFE PROGRAMS
- COLLEGE WOMEN EXAMINE THEIR FUTURE
- TEACHING IN EL SALVADOR
- CAMPAIGN SKILLS WORKSHOPS
- ABORTION RIGHTS AND THE "MALE MATERNITY" MYTH



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

— NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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Pornography: working towards a feminist solution

The debate surrounding pornography rages on. Both within and outside the feminist community the struggle to find an answer has created angry and passionate argument. Women advocating government regulation speak eloquently of the harm created by these offensive images. Women urging the maintenance of freedom of speech conjure up visions of book burnings and suppression of political materials.

With the advent of the Periodical Review Board and the publication of the Fraser Committee Report, feminists are once again faced with the task of trying to map out a strategy in response.

Meanwhile the makers and distributors of pornography continue virtually unhampered by the controversy swirling around them.

Is there a solution? Are there risks that we must take or are we going to remain embroiled in a battle that saps our strength and splits our ranks?

Clearly, we must be cautious and ever mindful of the power we hand over to conservative and sexist governments when we call for government regulation. We know that law makers and law enforcers do not have a history of protecting minorities and dissidents. Restrictive legislation usually goes against the least powerful and most vulnerable.

Yet we cannot ignore the message pornography spreads; condoning at best, promoting at worst, the humiliation, degradation and subjugation of women.

While the question of whether pornography actually causes violence against women may never be answered, we must not deny or defuse the argument that pornography is detrimental to the safety and well-being of women. Several studies have confirmed that a regular diet of pornography desensitizes and anaesthetizes the viewer/reader to the cruelty and pain depicted. More importantly, there is little quarrel even among those who advocate freedom of speech, that the media have a profound impact on the development of attitudes and values. To get caught up in a "cause vs symptom" debate only serves to devalue the violent realities many women experience.

Pornography will not be eradicated because government restrictions are introduced. This "cultural" expression of hatred of women will not be alleviated by public education programs. Censorship, in and of itself, is not the remedy. Nor can we rely on government to begin to pave the path to our ultimate goal of a society that is free of violence and based on equality.

Yet, as socialist feminists and members of the Women's Rights Committee, we must seek solutions to rid our society of this woman-hating propaganda. We must take action and support initiatives that reflect this goal. We need to consistently challenge images of abuse and cruelty. We must search out positive images of sexual expression. We must add our voices to the calls for restrictive displays and video classifications. And we must continue to struggle for a feminist definition of pornography to be incorporated into government legislation and a feminist standard to be reflected in the implementation.

We have no choice. We cannot be silent.

♀

Plans and activities

by Jan Taylor

The table officers of the Women's Rights Committee have been very busy since our election at the convention in May. In this report I will discuss our major activities as well as outline some plans for the future.

Activities

1. I wrote to the Provincial Executive of the party requesting an additional \$5,000 for travel funds in this budget year. The increased participation of women from outside the Lower Mainland has meant that more money is needed for travel funds. The Executive approved the request and we are now able to provide travel assistance to ensure the participation of women from every region of the province continues and, indeed, expands.

2. Regional Skills Development workshops were held in Nanaimo and Kelowna on June 8 and 9 respectively. A phenomenal amount of work went into the planning and execution of these workshops and our thanks are due to Miriam Sobrino, Eileen Robinson, federal women's organizer Valerie Preston, and provincial women's organizer Frances Birdsell. These two workshops were considered "pilot projects" by the skills development workshops committee. They were very successful. (See report elsewhere in this issue — Ed.)

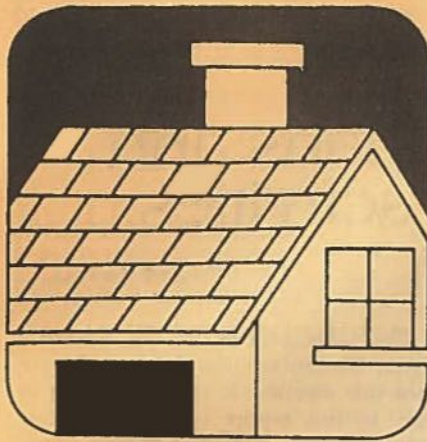
Miriam Sobrino has now written to New Democrats all around the province urging the planning of more workshops. If you would like further information contact Frances Birdsell at 734-7761.

3. The Women's Rights Committee (through the efforts of Anne Fraser, Adrienne Peacock, and Soren Bech) issued a press release in response to the funding and sponsorship crisis of Vancouver Transition House. The press release reads in part:

"British Columbians do not want to see their government add to the pain of women who have been beaten.

"A service as important as this should not have to beg for funds. There should be continuous, long-term government funding for transition houses and similar services to women throughout the province.

Continued on page 2



"At the recent B.C. NDP convention, we called on the Ministry of Human Resources to immediately resume responsibility for the Vancouver Transition House."

WRC brief to Equality Rights Committee

On May 27 Candace Parker and I presented a brief (prepared by Miriam Sobrino to the parliamentary Equal Rights Committee (which was touring the country to hear presentations on issues related to the equality provisions of the Charter). The brief focussed on a number of issues of concern: the lengthy delay in beginning the consultation process; the lack of commitment by the Liberal or Conservative governments to provide funds for litigation or challenges to the equality section of the Charter; and the government's failure either to implement earlier recommendations (e.g. the Royal Commission on the Status of Women) or set timelines for the implementation of recommendations from the Equality Rights Committee.

We received some local media coverage as a result of our presentation and I believe the presentation was a useful and productive undertaking.

YND representation on WRC

5. The Women's Caucus at the convention voted to add representation from the Young New Democrats Women's Rights Committee to the table officers of our WRC. I have contacted the YND and their representative will begin attending our meetings this summer. I think the working and political relationship between our two groups will be well served by this initiative.

Election Planning Committee

6. I have been asked (as Chair of the Women's Rights Committee) to sit on the Provincial Election Planning Com-

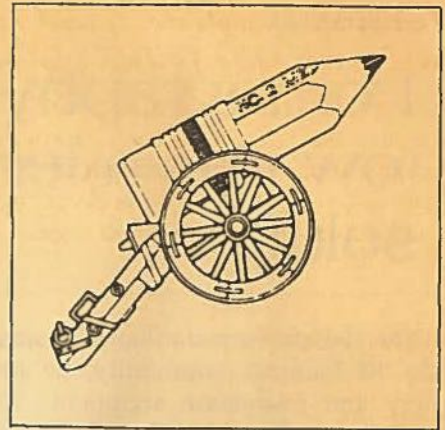
mittee. This committee will plan the central organization, communication, policy platform, etc. for the next provincial election campaign. I believe that it is crucial that the concerns of women (as New Democrats and British Columbians) form an integral part of this planning process. I will be reporting in detail on the work of this committee as it progresses.

Plans

1. We have set aside the last Monday of each month for table officers' meetings. *All women are invited to join us.* We meet at 7:30 p.m. The location is subject to change from meeting to meeting; contact Frances Birdsell for the location of any specific meeting.

2. We have tentatively set the weekend of September 13 - 15 for our first fall Steering Committee meeting. We have not yet determined which combination of Friday night/Saturday, Saturday/Saturday night, Saturday night/Sunday is the most convenient for the largest number of women. Please let us know your preference. "Official" notices will be mailed well in advance.

3. Many of you will remember the confusion at the Women's Caucus at convention around the issue of regional representation to the WRC. We have grappled with this problem, as have



women from all over the province, and have decided to circulate a questionnaire for suggestions and direction. We will be asking you to consider various structures, formats and approaches to the work of the Committee. We will also be asking you to suggest other options. We hope to have received enough responses to make some preliminary suggestions to the Steering Committee in September.

Please take some time when you receive the questionnaire to assess your needs, the needs of your region, the needs of the provincial Women's Rights Committee and, last but not least, the reality of our travel budget.

Have a restful summer.

♀

B.C. NDP WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE 1985 - 86 STEERING COMMITTEE

Chairwoman: Jan Taylor, Coquitlam Past Chair: Marilyn Parliament, Vancouver
Vice-Chair: Adrienne Peacock, Van. Organizer: Frances Birdsell, Vancouver
P.O.W. Rep: Eileen Robinson, Kelowna Treasurer: Hannah Hadikin
Priorities Chair: Janet Vesterback, Van. Democrat rep.: Miriam Sobrino, Van.
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Valerie Cain, Vancouver
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Anne Fraser, Vancouver
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Marg Mahan, Grand Forks
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Shelley Rivkin, Vancouver
Sharon Shniad, Surrey
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Gloria Atamanenko, Victoria
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Fran Darling, Duncan
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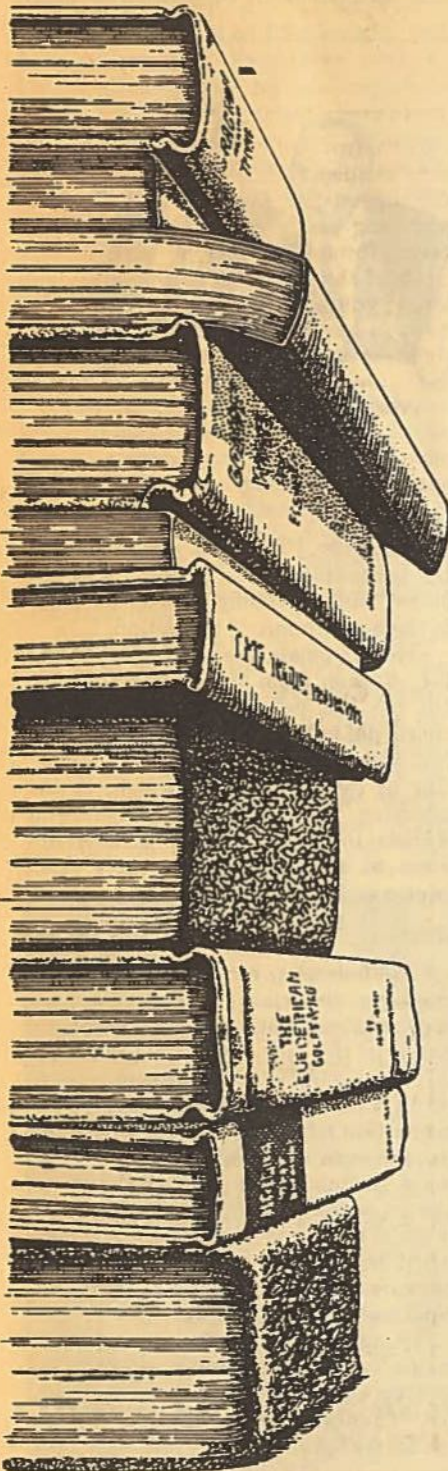
"Pornography equals profit," says a popular button.

"Who pays?" asked a speaker at a White Rock community forum.

"Everyone," said the majority of Canadians who presented briefs to the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution, popularly known as the Fraser Committee. Control of pornography has become a political issue which unifies groups from all segments of society.

After the Fraser Report

by Donna Stewart



When the Vancouver Coalition Against Pornography (VCAP) was formed a year ago, it included representatives from six feminist groups, the president of the British Columbia Provincial Council of Women and a delegate from the Anglican Task Force on Pornography. When VCAP called a meeting on "After the Fraser Report," women from 21 groups, ranging from the Catholic Women's League to the Working Group on Sexual Violence, attended to hear Joan Wallace and to evaluate progress on the issue.

Where is the consensus

There appears to be widespread recognition of the nature of the problem. Activists are not concerned about bare breasts, as Regional Crown Counsel Sean Madigan reportedly alleged, but about the sexualizing of violence, about pornography as a tool in the social and economic oppression of women.

There is also consensus that "something needs to be done" about the pornography spewing into the country. Most groups agree that some legal remedies are necessary, although none argue that legal measures are the ultimate solution.

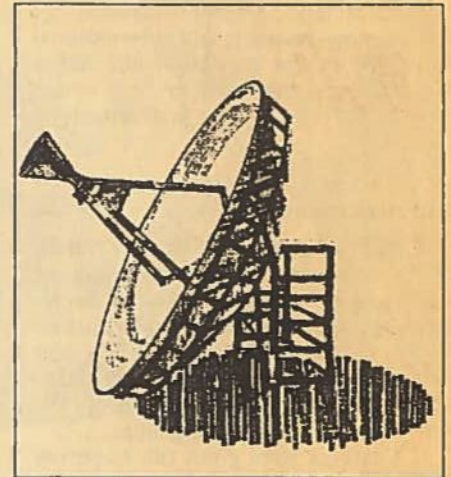
Summary of recommendations

The Fraser Report suggests that all levels of government have responsibility. At the federal level, consistency of definition should be sought in four areas: customs, post office, broadcasting, and the Criminal Code.

The Report recommends repeal of the "obscenity" sections of the Criminal Code. New sections defining three levels of pornography offences would include more accurate definitions.

As it presently stands, the Criminal Code defines as obscene anything that contains undue exploitation of sex, or that combines sex with crime, horror, cruelty, or violence.

When obscenity charges are laid, the central question asked in court tends to be, "Does it exceed the accepted standards of community tolerance?"



These community standards are set mainly by the pornographers, the publishers, retailers, and customers who point to the fact that the material is selling well so it must be acceptable to the community. The judge then decides what is allowable, often without the benefit of expert evidence.

The Fraser Report therefore recommends dividing pornography into three tiers as follows:

First tier — to be completely prohibited:

a) written or visual sexual abuse of children. (A child is anyone under the age of 18).

b) the visual depiction of physical harm to participants.

Second tier — prohibited with two exceptions: artistic merit and educational or scientific use.

a) sexual violence.

b) bestiality.

c) incest.

d) necrophilia.

Third tier — allowable, but must be displayed in a separate section of the store with a sign announcing its presence.

a) erotica.

b) consensual sex between adults.

Because the mere existence of the material is evidence of child abuse, very heavy penalties for mere possession of that kind of thing were recommended by the Badgley Report. The Fraser

Report also included child pornography in the worst category of material, but the penalties proposed for possession, dissemination or production of such material range from fines of \$500 to prison terms of up to 10 years.

The Fraser Committee recognized pornography as an equality issue and therefore recommended the strengthening of hate literature sections of the Criminal Code which do not presently include gender hate.

Interestingly, recommendations 32 and 33 urge research and international initiatives on the regulation of satellite broadcasting, the medium by which some of the most violent material enters Canada.

Civil Rights issue

Recognizing that pornography is basically a social problem, the Fraser Report recommends an interministerial Secretariat of the federal Departments of Justice, Solicitor-General, Health and Welfare to stimulate and co-ordinate federal efforts and to liaise with the provinces and community groups.

If Customs were given the resources to do a thorough job of inspection provincial responsibility might be limited to film and video classification as well as enforcement of the Criminal Code. In the meantime, there still appears to be a need for stronger Human Rights legislation and a civil remedy, perhaps modelled on British Columbia's Civil Rights Protection Act. This would make it possible for women to sue for damages.

Opposition to Censorship

Four groups opposed regulation



VANCOUVER SUN

Joan Wallace

during the Fraser hearings: businessmen who profit directly from the industry, some artists' groups, gay rights groups who expect regulation to be used against them, and civil liberties organizations. Even some of those groups recognized the necessity of regulation for sexually violent material; some supported restricted display, classification systems, codes for TV, or penalties in relation to pornography which "involved the actual abuse of real people."

*Jillian Ridington,
Chair of the
[Periodical Review]
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"Since the Report has been made public," laughed Ms Wallace, "I haven't heard from a single civil libertarian." Her listeners speculated that the male civil libertarians now have a group of feminists carrying their banner. These women recognize that pornography is the result of sexism, not the cause. They argue against suppression of the evidence of discrimination, urging a massive attack on the causes instead.

The majority of groups, however, argue that pornography may be a symptom, but it is also a symptom which aggravates the disease. They want to break the vicious cycle.

The B.C. Report Card

Assessing progress over the last three years, participants recognized the Periodical Review Board as the only bright spot in British Columbia. Jillian Ridington, Chair of the Board, reported that they have rejected all or parts of almost half the magazines submitted, and the distributors have kept their promise to respect the recommendations.

"Sex involving pain, sex with violence, bondage, rape, incest, sex with children, urination and defecation on a person as a sexual act"—these were the commonest reasons for rejection.

Ridington was very frank about the limitations of the Board, citing examples

of sophisticated layout: explicit sex on one page, violence on the next. The association of sex with violence was complete, but present laws might not apply.

She was also frank about the value of the Board to the distributors. In British Columbia the only court cases have involved small retailers, whereas in other provinces distributors have been charged. In St. Johns, Newfoundland the distributors were held responsible for a magazine advertisement of a video of child

pornography. "The State has no place in the bedrooms of the nation," said the judge, "but it certainly does have a place in the boardrooms of the nation."

Video regulation was promised in the B.C. Speech from the Throne this year but has not yet been introduced. The courts did uphold the conviction of Red Hot Video but the fines were miniscule. One of the first videos brought to the attention of former Attorney-General Williams in 1982 was finally declared obscene in an Alberta court three years later, no charge having been laid in B.C.

What next?

The federal government will be producing a discussion paper and seeking provincial reactions this summer for legislation in the fall. Women at the VCAP meeting wondered if the present government, committed to deregulation and the promotion of business, might ignore the recommendations of the previous government. Participants identified some strategies to prevent the issue dying down as it did in 1978 and 1983. Citizens should write and talk to their MPs and bring pressure to bear on provincial and municipal governments.

"People will be watching their governments," said Karen Phillips of Port Coquitlam Community Standards Committee. The Badgley and Fraser Reports cannot be ignored." ♀

All that you mean to me

Jillian Ridington talks about the Periodical Review Board.

by Shelley Rivkin

Over the past year a number of articles have been written in feminist newsletters debating the advisability of supporting the work of the B.C. Periodical Review Board. The purpose of this article is not to comment nor judge but to report on the history and current operation of the Board.

The history of the Board

In April 1984, during the Fraser Committee hearings on Pornography and Prostitution, two Vancouver women, Donna Stewart, the regional representative of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and Catherine Stevenson of the University Women's Club, made a startling revelation. Jim Pattison, well known businessman and chairman of B.C. Place and Expo 86, was distributing pornography through his company Mainland Distributors. The news caused shock waves as women's groups and church people spoke out against Pattison's involvement.

Pattison quickly called a meeting to try to discuss solutions. His initial action was to declare that he would sell the company. Later he claimed he had received no offers. When it became apparent he was only interested in divesting himself of the business if he could make a profit, he quickly sought other solutions.

While the decision to attend these meetings were hotly debated in the women's community, several women's organizations did attend, including the Vancouver Coalition Against Pornography, to see what Pattison would propose.

Jillian Ridington, one of the women who attended, states that part of the rationale for her attendance was "that



Shelley Rivkin (right) presides over a panel discussion on pornography featuring (l. to r.) Sylvia Spring, Wendy Frost, Debra Lewis, February 1983.

if women wanted to have some control over this issue, we had to be part of the decision-making process.

Periodical Review Board idea

During subsequent meetings the idea of developing a Periodical Review Board along similar lines to the one operating in Ontario was proposed. A steering committee was set up, composed of representatives of women's groups, churches, Ministry of Attorney-General staff, and two members of the B.C. Periodical Distributors Association. The group hammered out objectives, terms of reference and operating practices.

A hiring committee was formed and three members and one alternate were selected. Jillian Ridington, a researcher and long-time activist around women's issues, was appointed chair. Two further members were named: Grahame Weymark, a former school trustee and businessman and Gwen Ingham, a member of the Anglican Church's Task Force on Pornography. Karen Phillips, an anti-pornography activist and member of the Port Coquitlam Women's Centre, was appointed an alternate.

Current operation

In November 1984, the board began its work. While participation from the B.C. Periodical Distributors Association (the mainstream distributors) was strictly voluntary, the ten members agreed to

abide by the decisions made by the board. In order for a decision to stand, two of the three board members must agree.

Up to 27 magazines reviewed weekly

Every week the board receives between six and twenty-seven magazines that fall within the "adult entertainment" category. A few of the magazines are received direct from the publisher still at the printer's proof (blue-line) stage, but most are received through the distributors after they have been scrutinized by Canada Customs.

The board's review criteria are the guidelines for prosecution furnished by the criminal justice branch, Ministry of the Attorney-General. Subject to prosecution are any:

- 1) sexually oriented material involving violence, coercion, compulsion, force, bodily harm or threats or fear of bodily harm, or other similar acts.
- 2) sexually oriented material involving young persons.
- 3) materials involving bestiality.
- 4) sexually explicit materials in which one person is represented as the parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent or grandchild of the other person.
- 5) sexually explicit material involving excreta.
- 6) materials representing acts of necrophilia.



Jillian Ridington

The board reads everything — advertisements, classified ads, the text and cartoons — and then determines if any aspect of the magazine violates the guidelines. As of the beginning of June, the board reviewed 350 magazines. It completely rejected 100, accepted with modifications 115, and approved 135.

Ridington says that when they review the magazines, they look at not only at what is being presented, but also at what the images are saying. "The most difficult part of making a decision is when the material doesn't violate the guidelines, but violates our personal, feminist standards." She gives the example of "menstrual humour" which is often depicted in cartoons. "This material is particularly woman-hating, but not considered a violation of the criminal code definition of obscenity."

Fine balance

Ridington believes that the board has to maintain a fine balance between rejecting material that is subtly degrading and material that is clearly offensive. "It hurts me to do that but we can't control the whole pornographic continuum. There is always the danger of becoming too strict," cautions Ridington. Feminist distinctions between erotica and degradation aren't always clear to the public at large. That is why it is so important for feminists to be involved."

A community acts against pornography

by Mary Carlisle

In December 1983 a number of us who live in the geographic area of South Surrey and White Rock responded to a request to support a picket line at the Langley Red Hot Video outlet. It was a crisp winter day and people of all ages had travelled from Port Moody, Port Coquitlam and Chilliwack to join us.

With that experience fresh in our minds, a group of us, initially both men and women, met in January 1984 to discuss our concern with the visible increase in pornographic materials around our own community. We agreed that we needed more information about pornography before we could take any political action locally.

We organized a phoning tree to include anyone in the community who

A list of the rejected or amended magazines is sent to the Ministry of the Attorney-General who forwards it to vice squads around the province.

Interested women can obtain these reports from their police department and monitor the availability of these magazines in their own community. They can use this information to strengthen their lobby for restrictive display bylaws by letting the public know what material is still accessible to all.

Ridington says the structure of the Periodical Review Board could easily be translated into a video classification board. "It's important to have community based boards with feminists involved. You need to have people share your perceptions." The same criminal justice guidelines would apply.

Hard on board members

Regular exposure has taken its toll on members. Ridington says that she found that she began to have difficulty breathing and experienced pain in her shoulders and neck. "This material is harmful and corrosive and it's bound to have an effect on all of us. We've become very supportive of each other."

Despite the difficulties of the job and the criticism she has received for accepting the position, Ridington is very positive. "We have been effective and have made a contribution. I'm glad I did it." ♀

was also interested in the topic and began an informal survey of magazine outlets in the area to see what kinds of materials were readily available. We also purchased copies of several magazines for our own information.

Political action begins

Within a month our group participated in a delegation to White Rock Council to support a motion from the mayor regarding pornography and a community standard. Representatives of our group, the White Rock Women's Place and the Council of Women spoke at the council meeting—to no avail. The mayor's motion could not get a second. Undaunted by the negative reaction from White Rock Council, we carried on



with our educational activities.

As a result of our survey of stores, we focused on the Ocean Park neighbourhood and requested that merchants remove pornographic magazines from their shelves or, at least, move them up out of the easy sight and reach of potential customers. No one responded.

We continued to educate ourselves on the issues and we received several invitations to speak to other groups who wanted to know more about pornography. We invited White Rock Council to a showing of *Not A Love Story*, prepared a brief for the Fraser Commission, viewed a tape of excerpts from *Red Hot Video*, and participated in more pickets.

Public forum planned

In June several members of our group, now called People Against Pornography, two representatives of Women's Place,



Lucy Alderson, Media Watch

the President of the Council of Women, and other interested women formed the Ad Hoc Committee for a Public Forum on Pornography. By now we had become a committee of women. Over the summer, organizing for the forum continued in a low key manner.

After lengthy negotiations with the Sea festival organizers in White Rock, we were given permission to participate in the annual Sea Festival parade. In September, publicity and planning for the forum got into high gear as the October 27 date approached. We used the successful Coquitlam forum as a model for ours, always keenly aware of the fact that Coquitlam's forum had been supported by Coquitlam Council from the start.

The forum drew a crowd of over one hundred people with a number of local politicians in the audience. Following the keynote speakers, Frances Wasserman of Battered Women's Support Services and Lucy Alderson of Media Watch, representatives of local community groups made presentations. Members of the audience were invited to ask questions or make brief statements.

Petition on pornography

A petition supporting the Criminal Code (section 159) definition of obscenity was presented to the forum. According to this section anything that

contains undue exploitation of sex or that combines sex with crime, horror, cruelty or violence is considered obscene. The petition was subsequently circulated in the community and approximately 2200 signatures were obtained.

Because our community includes the South Surrey peninsula and the city of White Rock, we planned to present the petition to both Surrey and White Rock councils. Surrey had already instituted Operation Discretion which calls on merchants voluntarily to display pornographic magazines out of the reach of children and with a plastic binder across the front of the magazines.

Several Surrey aldermen had also expressed interest in our group's activity during the previous year.

Women pressure for a referendum

In February 1985 we presented a brief to Surrey Council. We requested that a referendum to establish a community standard be held in the coming November elections. We were hoping that such a referendum would be modelled on the one held in Coquitlam which essentially asked if one agreed with adopting as a basis for a community standard the definition of obscenity as outlined in the Criminal Code. Council referred the issue to their legal and administrative staff for further research

and about a month later passed a unanimous motion to hold a referendum on pornography.

Meanwhile, the social planning committee of White Rock Council had held meetings with representatives of the Ad Hoc committee to discuss our request for a referendum in White Rock. The social planning committee had received our petition with its 800 White Rock signatures. The chairman presented a motion to Council requesting a referendum, but Council rejected the motion and referred the matter back to their committee.

Discussions between the social planning committee and our representatives continue and we understand that the issue will be brought to another Council meeting later this summer.

Meanwhile we plan an enthusiastic public education campaign prior to the November municipal elections when we hope there will be referenda in both municipalities. Even if the referenda fail to pass the process, so far, has raised public awareness of the proliferation of pornographic images. We know from the positive response to the forum and petition that people of our community are concerned. We suspect that the much-discussed difficulty in determining community standards may be a myth to enable those in power to avoid action. ♀

BOOK REVIEW

Women Against Censorship

reviewed by Marg Nelson

Women Against Censorship, edited by Varda Burstyn. Douglas & McIntyre, 1985. 210 pages.

This collection of eleven essays is one of the most exciting feminist publications to appear in a long time. Not since the 1970's has feminism produced such stirring rhetoric as is contained in these "documents of struggle" as Burstyn terms them. Reminiscent of Shulamith Firestone's *Dialectic of Sex* (1972), this book presents far more than a discussion of censorship; it offers a stunningly honest dissection of the catch-all term "pornographic," and it provides a political blueprint for eradicating the sexual ills of our misogynist society. It accomplishes the latter by ripping our attention away from the "tip of the iceberg" which it says is the censorship of pornography, and regluing it firmly to what it claims is still the fundamental feminist issue, the creation of a truly egalitarian society in which exploitative sexual imagery will have no place. This is radical feminism at its inspirational best.

The collection begins with a brief attempt by Burstyn to place the current debate over pornography into its historical perspective, from the rise of patriarchy "many millenia ago" to the birth of first-wave feminism in the mid-19th century. Burstyn documents the way in which early attempts on the part of feminists to deal with sexual issues backfired by causing unfortunate alliances between feminists and religious groups whose goals matched those of the feminists, but whose motives were profoundly different.

She cites the example of the early feminists' battle to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act of 1866, enacted ostensibly to control venereal disease, but effectively blaming women for prostitution and harassing them at the same time.

Religious and other groups also opposed the Acts because they sanctioned "female vice" and "male licentiousness."

An alliance among the groups in the 1870's and 80's led to decades of new legislation to "improve" sexual practices, resulting in increased control over women's bodies and sexual rights, and leaving untouched the underlying question of gender inequality which created female poverty and prostitution in the

... this book ... offers a stunningly honest dissection of the catch-all term "pornography" ...

first place. It is this kind of co-optation that Burstyn wants modern-day feminism to avoid.

Ontario Censor Board experience

Other writers in the collection take on the task of drawing parallels between feminism's early experience with sexual matters and its present over-concern with censoring pornography. A prime target is the Ontario Board of Censors

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these differences. As Ann Snitow points out, "Feminists on all sides of this debate share the desire to 'take back the night;' to our own sexual selves; to express these selves in images of our own choosing. We share a feminist anger about women's sexual exploitation and a desire to leave the impress of these feelings . . . upon the consciousness of the world." (p. 114).

What we need to do, the book suggests, is to decide whether censorship is really the most effective target for feminist energies.

Two appendices at the end of the book shed further light on some of the discussions in the book. The first offers the text from *Making Sense of the Research on Pornography*, commissioned from York University's Thelma McCormack by members of the Metropolitan Task force on Violence Against Toronto Women in 1983 and subsequently ignored by that body in its final report, according to Burstyn.

The second offers excerpts from the Minneapolis ordinance against pornography, drafted by feminists Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, and passed in 1983. McCormack's paper provides support for the book's claims against pornography leading to violent

behaviour.

Women Against Censorship is a highly readable, nuggety book, one which not only points out the problems involved with censoring pornography, but which also offers alternatives. It claims that feminists must fight not only against new censorship laws, but against existing obscenity laws. We must break down the barriers between "education" and "entertainment," expanding sex education programs to make them fun, creative and innovative. We must substitute a "plurality" of sexual images for mass media stereotypes; we must support decriminalization of prostitution.

Most important, we must continue to work toward economic independence of women and youth, so as to prevent their sexual exploitation through poverty and inequality. The book also advocates reproductive and erotic rights for women and sexual rights for children and adolescents: Not all of us will agree with all these measures. This book will, however, make us examine our own views on pornography and reassess our positions on all sexually-related issues—no small feat for any book.

Battered women in crisis: the closing of Vancouver Transition House

by Donna Lea Hawley

Wife battering in Canada is a hidden epidemic. Its epidemic nature can be seen in the statistics that every year in Canada one in ten wives are beaten by their husbands. It also is apparent when considering that in twenty percent of all homicides the victim is killed by their spouse. The greatest majority of these victims are wives killed by their husbands. The few husbands that are killed by wives are almost always killed by a wife who has been beaten.

The epidemic is hidden when all levels of health care practitioners fail or refuse to identify battered women, treating only the obvious physical injuries or prescribing tranquilizers to keep the woman subdued in her home. The legal system keeps the epidemic hidden by the reluctance of police and prosecutors to charge and prosecute men for wife battering, by denying women the right to sue their husbands for assault (except in Ontario), and by the general difficulty in obtaining peace bonds or restraining orders and their ineffectiveness. Lack of legal protection keeps women hidden and at home with a batterer.



SWEET-SIM TAN

THE CLOSING OF VANCOUVER TRANSITION HOUSE

The media keep this serious problem hidden by their failure to report the issue as a continuing serious crisis for women. Society keeps the crisis hidden by the general attitude that a man can do whatever he wants to in his own home, and no one should interfere in the "sanctity of his home and family." Too many people also still believe that a man has the right to control, including physical control, over his wife.

The isolation of battered women

Battered women are isolated, not only by their husbands who keep them physically and mentally confined to their homes, but also by social institutions including the health services, legal system, media and the community in general. When a battered woman decides to seek help she often finds that she is not believed about the urgency of her need to get out of the home to safety, that the social service agencies do not provide the specialized service that she needs, or that the service is not available in the middle of the night or on weekends when she is most frequently in urgent physical danger.

Vancouver Transition House provided all the services needed by battered women. It provided safe, comfortable housing for battered women and their children, with trained staff in residence 24 hours a day. It had a 24-hour crisis line always staffed by a trained woman. It had a child care program. It provided a community outreach program to battered women. It had a follow-up program for former residents. It referred women to other services they required and provided a worker to drive and accompany their residents to court hearings and other agencies.

Vancouver Transition House provided the best service to battered women in British Columbia and was among the best of similar houses anywhere in Canada. But Transition House was forced to evacuate its residents and close its doors on June 28, 1985.

Transition House record

Formed in 1973 by a group of concerned Vancouver women, the House joined with the Ministry of Human Resources in 1978. In 1983 the provincial government decided to privatize the service and a contract was awarded to the YWCA in April 1984. After only one year the YWCA decided it could not continue the contract because it was an unusually high drain on its staff.

The House provided service to over 300 women and their children and had to turn away over 1300 others during

this time. Despite the demonstrated need and the quality of service provided by the House, the MHR has refused to allow Transition House to continue to operate during the interim period until a new group can be awarded the contract. Where last month Vancouver had a service of the highest quality for battered women, it now has none. There may also never be one again since the government tender for the new contract does not specify that it will be for a service for battered women but to provide a "pro-

gram supportive to the integrity of the family unit." This could mean forcing or coercing battered women back with violent men for the appearance of family maintenance and unity.

The crisis for battered women has doubled by this outrageous action. Not only will battering of women continue but now there is no place to go; their most important escape route is gone and may never reappear. Battered women are now even more effectively hidden in homes of horror. ♀



Taming the work force: Quality of Work Life programs

This is the second and concluding section of a study on Quality of Work Life Programs; the first section was published in the May issue of Priorities.

by Nancy Walsh

QWL at Air Canada

(Reference: Canadian Airline Employees Association Policy on Quality of Working Life and conversation with CALEA official Susan Stout).

During the economic crisis of 1976 and soon after the introduction of wage and price controls, Air Canada introduced a Work Improvement Program (WIP) in its reservations and ticket offices. The union representing those employees, the Canadian Airline Employees Association (CALEA) agreed to become involved and to waive some provisions of the collective agreement.

The union hoped that company promises of job enrichment and input into decisions would reduce job monotony. Only a year later, a management memo revealed that since its possibly unrealistic production quotas were not being met, electronic monitoring of the work of passenger agents was required.

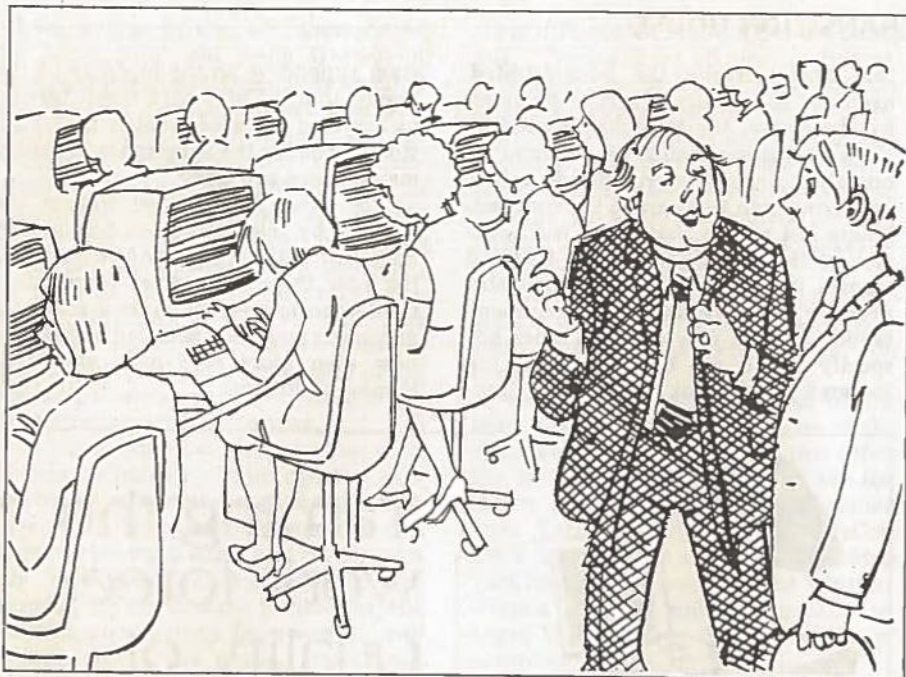
The adverse health effects of such objective performance measurements are well known. Stress on the job has become

one of the major health and safety issues of the last several years. And yet the company introduced electronic monitoring under the guise of QWL. The Work Improvement Program was cancelled in May 1978. Surveillance remains.

In 1982 Air Canada launched another such program, this time unilaterally. Cargo agents' jobs were to be enriched and an aggressive sales program for reservations agents was implemented. The company has always denied that its Passenger Sales Effectiveness (PSE) program is QWL but the program, whatever it is, has not improved working conditions and has existed entirely outside union structures.

Susan Stout, a CALEA officer, describes the program introduced in Vancouver.

"Everybody got three days' training. They can't afford to give us training in fares and how to do our job properly in the sense of knowledge, but they can afford to give us training in how to sound



"We let them rotate jobs every 45 minutes."

TWU TRANSMITTER

pleasant on the telephone . . . and how to do things fast so we can get through more calls.

Other reports claim that the program encourages workers to monitor one another. Workers at one location even suggested replacing the first step of the grievance procedure with an employee (not union) - management committee.

In contrast, union-management committees, the result of collective bargaining, are faced with continual struggles, especially around health and safety. It took six months to replace kitchen-type chairs in the Vancouver reservations office with ergonomic chairs suitable for sitting at a VDT for an eight-hour shift. It took two years to get glare screens for the video display terminals.

Tech change everywhere

Technological changes are everywhere in Air Canada's operations. Telephone system and software improvements have increased electronic monitoring. Other software changes have speeded up processing, allowing the company to lay off and eliminate jobs. A good tech change clause does not help because Labour Relations Boards do not recognize software change as tech change.

The company can always blame "the economy." As Susan Stout explains, "If you don't see a direct relationship then they can say it's something else. The lack of hiring at the moment has supposedly nothing to do with tech change. It's simply the economic situation."

A company decision to close the Saskatchewan reservation offices in October

1986 was announced in December 1984. New telephone system technology made that possible.

The company planned to terminate all married women employees; all other employees were slated for transfer or layoff with recall rights. The two office closures will save the company \$250,000 per year. "It's absolute peanuts for the amount of money they get out of Saskatchewan, and they're taking jobs out too," was Susan Stout's comment.

"There's never a seat sale into Saskatchewan. Because there are so few flights they can always fill them with business travellers."

Interest lost in QWL

With its most recent efforts directed at turning its reservations and ticket offices into part-time, low-wage ghettos, Air Canada seems to have lost interest in QWL. The company's demands for unlimited part-time hiring at lower wages were only (partially) turned back because CALEA members were willing to strike and were discussing merger with the United Auto Workers (UAW).

QWL at the Shell Sarnia chemical plant

The Shell Sarnia chemical plant at Corunna, Ontario was built in the 1970s at a cost of two million dollars per job created. It is a complex, highly automated continuous operation organized on socio-technical principles. Only 150 employees, grouped in teams of 18 per shift, cover all phases of plant operation.

Late in the plant design process the company realized that the union (now

A good tech change clause does not help because Labour Relations Boards do not recognize software change as tech change.

the Energy and Chemical Workers Union [ECWU]) would represent the employees at the new plant. The union was invited to help develop the QWL program.

One of the conditions for union participation was that the company agree to compulsory dues checkoff, the Rand formula—a minimal union security clause the union had fought to win for over thirty years.

The union participated in development of every aspect of the organizational design: structure, jobs, training, rewards and controls. A flat organizational structure evolved which eliminated one level of supervision. Each shift team of eighteen employees, with the Team Coordinator as a resource and training person, was made responsible for assigning the work of the entire plant on that shift. Day shift work was maximized.

Training and rewards were based on an open job progression system, with all workers having equal access to knowledge and skill modules that allowed progression to higher pay grades. Pay was determined only by skills and knowledge acquired.

New type of collective agreement

A new type of collective agreement was negotiated which allowed that brief, vaguely worded contract to function as an enabling document during the period needed to work out the new organizational roles and structures. It contains very few of the usual clauses. Those it does contain are worded so differently that they would be difficult to recognize as part of a collective agreement.

For example, for dealing with grievances, "there has been developed, documented and will be maintained a system to ensure the prompt and equitable resolution of problems at the chemical plant. In any event, to augment the system, the appropriate provisions of the Ontario Labour Relations Act are available to the parties."

A joint union-management Team Norm Review Board ... is ... where union members are drawn into decisions regarding behaviour and discipline ...

Those provisions are similar to unjust dismissal provisions of the B.C. Code.

Two clauses omitted from the collective agreement represent a unique and significant gain for the union. There is no probation period for an employee and, more important, there is no management rights clause. These omissions work to supplement a very informal grievance procedure

Health and Safety

"The company agrees that the Union, in consultation with team representatives, may appoint two representatives on the Health and Safety Committee and that those representatives shall be notified in advance of meetings of the committee which have been called for the purpose of Health and Safety or to investigate accidents involved in injury to employees."

There appears to be no negotiated process to allow changes for safety reasons.

Most familiar contract provisions are set out in the *Employee 'Good Work Practices' Guidebook*. The job progression system, shift scheduling, overtime distribution rules, problem resolution procedures (with no time limits on stages), safety, security and the role of the shop steward are all set out in the guidebook.

Only the terms of the collective agreement may be negotiated without the agreement of both parties. It appears that undated documents, such as the guidebook, are negotiated only if both parties agree to negotiate, and at whatever times are convenient.

Therefore, many important issues remain un negotiated. Workers are unprotected and reliant upon the "good

will" of the employer to abide by the guidebook.

"Team norms"

An extensive list of "team norms" is offered to guide on-the-job behaviour:

- "Open and honest communication,"
- "Utilize constructive feedback,"
- "Ensure safety equipment is used,"
- "Don't hold grudges,"
- "Support team decisions, even if not in total agreement,"
- "The team will perform a checkout of individuals in their weak areas,"
- "Clarify all team rumours immediately."

The above are but a few of the many norms established.

A joint union-management Team Norm Review Board is responsible for second-stage grievance resolution, receiving and recommending behavioural norms expected of employees, recommending alterations to the guidebook and discipline recommendations if requested by teams.

This is where union members are drawn into decisions regarding behaviour and discipline of other union members.

Workers seem satisfied

The chemical plant employees seem satisfied with their work arrangements. There are few grievances and, according to Stu Sullivan, ECWU Ontario Coordinator, "... under QWL, we can give our members a lot more tools and opportunities to deal with problems ... the shop stewards have a lot more authority."

There appears to be more rather than less interest in the union. As Sullivan explains, "If we ask management to open up ... and let workers participate in decision-making, those same members will expect the same from the union ... Local 800 ... has had more special meetings on policy than all the other locals I service put together."

The above examples, although not representative, do show several important trends.

• QWL cannot be separated from technological change. The new processes and equipment introduced by tech change allow management an opportunity to look at and experiment with ways of restructuring the workplace. QWL programs are brought in to facilitate not only the introduction of new technology but also the inevitable elimination of jobs that follow. Then, when jobs become more deskilled as a result of tech change, QWL is used to deflect worker dissatisfaction.

All discussions of tech change must include strategies to deal with these programs, especially as new technologies

take over the office environment where mainly unorganized workers have no contract protection against job loss and no hope of job retraining.

• QWL programs rarely improve working conditions. In Japan's auto industry quality control circles worsened conditions. Air Canada's first program, not accidentally, introduced electronic monitoring. Implementation of the Passenger Sales Effectiveness program did nothing to change the company's negligent attitude to health and safety conditions, useful on-the-job training, equality for women (or, at least, for married women) or its preferential hiring of Caucasians.

The experience of workers at Ocelot Industries (see May issue *Priorities*) shows how easily QWL programs can coexist with poor working conditions.

One leading critic of QWL, Donald Swartz, points out that in some QWL programs there is only an "essentially superficial departure of these reforms from the principles of scientific management and hence they are ineffective in humanizing work."

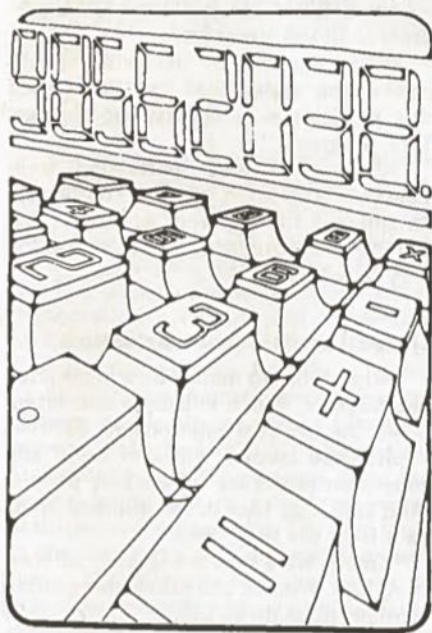
Promised benefits of small value

The many promises made on behalf of QWL, especially those offering training and advancement, are very attractive to unorganized workers, especially women. Unfortunately, workers are often too willing to trade off wages and working conditions for training, responsibility and advancement. The training under a QWL program often never materializes or, if it does, it is usually narrow and of use only to the company providing it. It allows no job mobility. Any responsibilities gained are gained without the necessary authority and, unless job progression is guaranteed, it is unlikely that advancement opportunities will be any different than if there were no QWL program.

• QWL programs can weaken union influence and can be used to prevent workers from organizing. Air Canada's first program was targeted at those least interested in the union, usually people hoping to get into management.

The training under a QWL program often never materializes or, if it does, it is usually narrow and of use only to the company providing it.

B.C. Tel's employees report the same experience. Air Canada's present efforts to create a part-time ghetto only reinforce CALEA's claim that Air Canada is out to destroy the union.



Two unions have tried to organize Ocelot. At the Shell Sarnia plant, if ECWU remains strong, it is only because of a process, insisted upon by the union, that has not been duplicated elsewhere.

When Hyundai announced that its new parts plant in Ontario will have such good labour relations that workers won't want a union, that should signal not only a QWL program, but also a QWL program with a specific purpose beyond productivity gains and good working conditions.

By using QWL to circumvent the union, to destroy its influence or to prevent unionization altogether, employers believe they can create a more docile and fully co-operative work force. That's often more important than productivity.

Monitoring and selective hiring

• QWL programs are notorious for encouraging all forms of monitoring: selective hiring, electronic monitoring, workers monitoring and reporting on each other, more detailed evaluations by supervisors. Although QWL advocates claim selective hiring is unnecessary, most employers, faced with 10 to 20 applicants for every job, will choose those who appear least interested in union membership.

Electronic monitoring comes about with only minor software changes. When workers begin to monitor and report the work of others then individuals—their work and their careers—as well as their union, will be destroyed.

Only a fight for enforceable legislation can prevent employers from continuing such practices.

Outlook for women

• The gains women might hope to make with QWL programs, such as opportunities to move into non-traditional work with on-the-job training, are not usually guaranteed. As mentioned before, the open progression system is extremely attractive, especially to those who have not benefitted from union protection through job classification and supervised apprenticeship programs.

There are so few training opportunities and most company-sponsored training is insufficient to allow for job mobility. For example, electrical instrumentation training at Shell will not equip a worker for employment in, say, a pulp mill. It does not lead to trades qualification.

Our experience shows that we get jobs in mills, in mines, in engineering and on construction sites only after extensive deskilling or during an extreme labour shortage. And since most of us (75% across Canada) have little union experience, we risk going in and spend-

ing valuable time "participating" instead of building or organizing a union to protect us and to insist that female employees receive all possible training opportunities.

Union circumvention

• Of all union-negotiated structures, the grievance procedure and its shop steward system are most likely to be undermined by a QWL program. Management encourages problem-solving outside the shop steward structure—informally and directly in the first stage and, by second stage, typically through a special union-management committee which also deals with discipline.

Circumstances around the informal first stage process often work to exclude the steward. Employees are encouraged to take the matter up right away and the steward might not be around.

Quality circles often offer to discuss workers' grievances. At B.C. Tel the company did not want shop stewards in these groups.

... we risk going in and "participating" instead of building or organizing a union to protect us and to insist that female employees receive all possible training opportunities.

The strength of the negotiated grievance procedure lies in three features. First, grievances are handled by someone on the worker's side—another worker who is legally required, by duty of fair representation, to deal with the matter on the employee's behalf.

Second, grievances settled outside the collective agreement do not create a precedent and hence often lead to inconsistent discipline and discrimination. The negotiated process, while more time-consuming and costly, was set up to defeat inconsistency and unfairness.

Third, the grievance procedure sets the agenda: it is to deal with the grievance. Grievances handled under QWL, especially when there is no union, are subject to a management-dominated process where the matter can receive a low priority.

An employee, disciplined for tardiness, or passed over for promotion, may be forced to raise that at a weekly meeting where ways of increasing productivity are the main topics of discussion.

QWL philosophy that problem-solving is site-specific cannot match the grievance procedure for consistency and

fairness. It is in workers' best interests to prevent grievance procedures being undermined or replaced.

Collective bargaining undermined

• QWL is an attempt to replace collective bargaining. The agreement between Shell and ECWU is one of the obvious examples. Most provisions around wages, hours and conditions are outside the collective agreement.

Certainly, the system is based on trust and certainly, no problems have arisen thus far. ECWU officials believe that the remaining legal protection, based on custom and seven years of practice under guidebook arrangements, is sufficient. Courts and labour relations boards recognize past practice. That, together with the absence of a management rights clause in the contract, allows the union to grieve any unilateral decision by the company to change a guidebook provision.

Elsewhere, employees are told that many issues are better discussed away from the bargaining table, that collective bargaining is too "limiting." Why? Who sets these limits? If collective bargaining is "limiting" it is because employers have forced workers to struggle to bargain every new item. Union efforts to expand the bargaining agenda and to get women's rights issues into contracts have been long and difficult. If we accept QWL as a shortcut, our workplace equality will never be guaranteed.

BCFL outlaws participation in QWL

In November 1983, a special committee on the Quality of Work Life reported to the convention of the B.C. Federation of Labour. This excellent report detailed the problems QWL presents to union members.

Policy adopted by delegates to that convention states that "affiliates shall not participate in Quality of Working Life programs."

All workers want interesting, well-paid jobs with good working conditions. In spite of the apparent success of the Shell Sarnia program, QWL is not the way to achieve this.

Unequal capital-labour relationship

No system, no matter how egalitarian the disguise, which enhances and intensifies the unequal relationship between capital and labour, will ever be of any long-term assistance to working people. And this is as true in the political arena as it is on the shop floor.

Unions have rejected Quality of Working Life. Women and other unorganized workers must do so too. ♀

College women ask: Where is our future?

Report of a conference, "Women and College Education in British Columbia," organized by the College-Institute Educators' Association of B.C., Status of Women Committee and held at Douglas College, New Westminster May 3 to 5, 1985.

by Louise Renaud



Since 1982, the Social Credit government's "restraint program" has brought fundamental changes to the funding and governance of colleges and institutes and has made the provision of quality education a constant struggle.

Between 1982 and 1985, provincial funding to the colleges and institutes decreased by 12 percent while student enrolment increased by 11 percent. As a result, 498 instructors (11 percent of college-institute faculty) have been laid off and tuition fees have increased as much as 35 percent.

In this context, "Where Is Our Future?" was an apt question to title the conference *Women and College Education in British Columbia* that was held May 3 to 5 by the College-Institute Educators' Association of B.C., Status of Women Committee.

One hundred and seventy-five women representing community groups as well as college students, faculty and staff from across B.C. came together at Douglas College in New Westminster to exchange experiences and to devise regional strategies.

Loss of democracy

The government facilitated its attack on college-institute education by restructuring and taking control of the bodies that govern the colleges and institutes. For instance, from 1963 to 1977 College Board members were democratically elected and answerable to their communities. In July 1983 the College and Institute Act was amended to disband the Councils responsible for colleges and institutes and to turn their power over to the Ministry of Education.

Similarly, the Minister was given the power to initiate or cancel programs, activities and courses. For the first time in the history of B.C. colleges and institutes, the Minister had the power to intervene directly in college-institute curricula. Finally, the amendment to the

College and Institute Act allowed for all college board members to be appointed by the provincial government.

By now, readers of *Priorities* recognize that these measures, although taken in the name of restraint, are not solutions to the current economic crisis. The takeover of the democratically elected college boards is simply ideological. It reflects the commitment of this Social Credit government to megaprojects at the sacrifice of people's jobs—especially in the social services—and to centralize control at the sacrifice of democratic local autonomy.

Status of college women

The Sacred assault, having adversely affected everyone within the college system—students, instructors and staff—has been a constant theme of discussion at C-IEA Status of Women Committee meetings since the committee's inception in 1983. Committee members' colleges have been enduring staff lay-offs, an increase in class size, a decline in the number of mature women students, a decrease in the number of women enrolled full-time, a reduction in Women's Studies courses, etc. The committee has demonstrated its distress visibly: over time it has shrunk in size as its members received lay-off notices.

The committee resolved to fight back in the fairest and most effective way possible—with information and mutual support. The conference in May was planned as a focus for the research that was needed to establish facts. What was the state of women's access to education in B.C. before "restraint," say from 1980 to 1983? How does it compare now?

A victory to seize

The conference opened with an address by June Evans, then Vice-President of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women on "Women's

Studies as a Political Tool." She voiced an eloquent defence of the need for a feminist perspective in education and of the profound changes that such a perspective makes possible. The participants left with a stronger sense of the triumph implicit in feminist effort—a victory often difficult to imagine in reactionary times.

The workshops and speakers on Saturday, May 4 offered information and analysis on issues relevant to women and college education as well as sessions on organizing, lobbying, and media skills.

Conference findings

In brief, the research of conference participants discloses that current economic policies are making women's struggle for equality more difficult. Moreover, these policies are forcing us to defend the few gains we have made. Women's access to education, which was already limited prior to restraint, is under serious threat. Since 1982, when colleges and institutes suffered their first decrease in funding:

- Women's Studies courses are seen as a "frill" and have been cut. Only three colleges taught any academic Women's Studies courses in 1985-85.

- Women's Access Co-ordinators have been eliminated from almost every college. Between 1979 and 1981 every college, at some point, had a Women's Access Co-ordinator. In 1984-85 only Douglas College and Capilano College had a Women's Access Co-ordinator. In 1985-86 the post will exist only at Douglas College.

- Courses that are traditionally taken by women, such as Office Administration and Hairdressing have, in some cases, been privatized. Students taking the privatized courses are paying tuition

fees as high as \$4000.00 for a ten-month course as opposed to the \$500.00 to \$600.00 paid at community colleges.

- Women with dependents will find it more difficult to continue their education. For example, the Vernon campus of Okanagan College has cut all its second-year courses for 1985-86. This means students must travel to the main campus 53 km away in Kelowna to complete their education. Consequently, education becomes less accessible and less affordable.

- Increased tuition fees and an elimination of the provincial government student grant have made education in B.C. unaffordable. A single student living alone and enrolled in a two-year Nursing program would receive approximately \$15,000.00 in federal and provincial loans over the two-year period. If the student were to repay the loan at 12.25 percent interest, her monthly payments would be \$226.00 for 114 months. Her education would cost her \$25,764.00. Women are, for the most part, concentrated in low-paying jobs; therefore, taking on such a financial burden is almost impossible.

- As of 1983, provincial government student grants have been eliminated and replaced by provincial government loans. Similarly, students must now take 80% of a full course load, an increase from 60%, to qualify for a provincial government student loan. For many women with dependants this is an unmanageable workload. Consequently, they cannot attend colleges or institutes if they require financial assistance.

- Bridging programs were developed to achieve equal access for women under programs under the National Training Act. Women continue to be under-represented in training and upgrading programs and, since 1979, their numbers have declined in both institutional and industrial training. In 1978-79 women represented 33 percent of students in full-time institutional training programs. In 1982 there were 23 bridging programs at B.C. colleges. In 1985 there are 5.

- When times are tough, women are expected to limit their options even further. Mature women students, immigrant women, single parents, and women with fewer financial resources are disappearing from the colleges. Since 1980 there has been a decrease in the numbers of part-time and full-time female students in every program area except career-technical.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING WOMEN'S ACCESS

In the Sunday sessions, participants formed small groups according to their region and college jurisdiction so that they could focus on building networks, pooling resources and tailoring plans to suit the needs of their own communities and colleges.

The conference planners were assuming that any effective movement for change to women's access would have to enlist support from both the college and the community. Participants aimed at producing action plans that could be carried out at three levels—community, college and government. By focussing on the community as a starting point, participants were able to assess their own needs and then to determine the role of their group and college in working toward meeting those needs.

As one participant observed, "the ideas put forward will be as good as the people who put them to work in their communities."

It might also be said that people working in a cause remain as "good"—as effective—as the intellectual, moral and practical support available to them. The conference has bolstered that support.

The College-Institute Educators' Association of B.C. has sent a follow-up package to participants. For more information contact the Association at: 101-545 East Tenth Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1K9.

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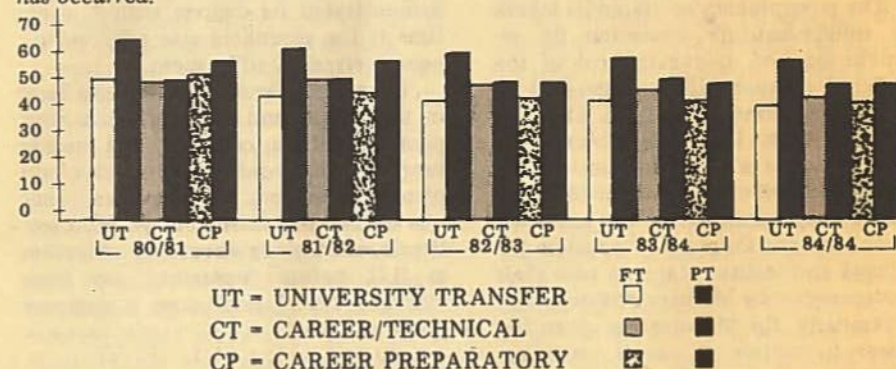
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Political Lobbying: Covering Your Base. Gaining Public Support: Building Your Base.

Planning Strategy; Accessing Media.

A look at the major program areas reveals that, in every area, the percentage of women in full-time attendance is significantly less than the percentage of women in part-time attendance. Also, there has been a decrease in the number of women students in all programs, except Career/Technical, in both full-time and part-time attendance. Over the five-year period the percentage of women in University Transfer courses has decreased by 5.6% in full-time and 6.2% in part-time. In the Career/Technical programs the percentage has decreased by 3.2% in full-time and increased by 1.2% in part-time. In Career Preparatory a decrease of 7% in full-time and 3.8% in part-time has occurred.



FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME ATTENDANCE OF WOMEN STUDENTS BY MAJOR PROGRAM AREA 1980-85

Teaching in El Salvador

Elizabeth Vargas, spokesperson for ANDES, the National Association of Salvadoran Educators and a teacher for ten years, visited Vancouver from May 20 to May 24 as part of a cross-country tour. She was interviewed for Priorities by Alicia Barsallo.

At a variety of events put on by the B.C. Teachers Federation Status of Women and an ad-hoc committee of teachers, Elizabeth was able to meet and talk with well over 100 teachers from the Lower Mainland and Victoria.

She spoke movingly of the desperate situation of teachers and students in El Salvador and of the difficulties ANDES faces when fighting for improvements in the context of the ongoing civil war.

The war in El Salvador

The war arose out of an unjust socio-economic system which, through exploitation, social injustice and oppression perpetrated by a privileged minority on broad sectors of the people, has resulted in sub-human living conditions for the majority of Salvadoran citizens. More than 50,000 people have suffered violent death at the hands of the National Guard, the repressive instrument of the state. Successive unpopular right-wing governments have maintained power through economic, political and military aid from the United States.

In the following interview, Elizabeth describes the situation today for people in general and teachers in particular.

Q.: Elizabeth, why are you touring Canada at this time?

E.V.: In June we are holding the ninth annual conference of ANDES in San Salvador. We are trying to publicize our demands as broadly as possible in order to bring international pressure to bear on the Duarte government to negotiate with us. So far, this government has shown no political will to resolve the serious problems teachers are facing.

Q.: What are the important demands of teachers in El Salvador?

E.V.: Some of the specific demands are:

- freedom for teachers who have been captured or who have disappeared.
- an end to repression against the profession.
- freedom of association.
- a permanent program of aid to families of disappeared teachers.
- the return of the university campus to the legitimate authorities and approval of the budget of the University of El

Salvador.

- the reconstruction of schools in areas where they have been destroyed.
- provision of more equipment and materials for schools.
- a 50% increase in teachers' salaries.
- the payment of overdue salaries.
- improvement of medical care and construction of three hospitals.
- control of and reduction in price of public utilities.
- an increase in retired teachers' pensions.

There are other demands but these are the most essential.

Q.: Your demands for improved medical services and reduced prices seem unrelated to education issues. Is there a link between the teachers' struggle and that of other workers in El Salvador?

E.V.: The teachers' struggle is linked to that of the other sectors at the national level since the economic crisis falls on the shoulders of all workers. Each public sector has its specific needs, but each also puts forward general demands which would affect everyone.

Q.: I understand that ANDES is a member of the FDR. Would you please explain what this organization is and how it differs from the FMLN?

E.V.: The FMLN is the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. It is the political-military organization presently fighting to liberate El Salvador from its legacy of oppression and exploitation. The FDR is the Democratic Revolutionary Front which consists of progressive, democratic organizations, political parties, church groups, and so on. It is a broad-based coalition of opposition groups to the present U.S.-backed regime. The two organizations work closely together to further the aims of the revolution.

Q.: How much of El Salvador is under the control of the FMLN/FDR?

E.V.: About one-third.

Q.: What is life like in the liberated zones?

E.V.: Life is run collectively. The people are organized in PPL's (regions of



Local Popular Power) and they elect representatives to carry out plans towards production, defence, education, and other matters.

Q.: Is there hunger in the liberated zones as in other parts of El Salvador?

E.V.: The El Salvadoran people have suffered from hunger for hundreds of years. El Salvador is one of the most malnourished countries in the Americas, and in these times there is quite a serious situation of hunger in the national (Duarte government) zones.

In the liberated zones there is sufficient production for basic needs. However, because of military operations directed at the destruction of plantations and silos of beans and corn, the situation is not as good as it could be. Special efforts are made to distribute food to old people, children, and pregnant women.

Literacy campaign

Q.: Can you tell us about the literacy campaign in the liberated zones?

E.V.: This campaign is being run by ANDES which organizes and assists volunteers who do the actual teaching. Members of ANDES also contribute to post-literacy work. In the non-liberated zones, teachers use the content of the programs to help students think about and interpret the reality of their lives.

Q.: What can you tell us about conditions in the rest of El Salvador?

E.V.: In the countryside, there is a 65% illiteracy rate and a 48% unemployment rate. Only 8% of the population control 50% of the national revenue. There are only 3 doctors and 17 hospital beds for every 10,000 people. The average yearly income of a Salvadoran worker is \$1200 U.S. while some rich people make \$2700 U.S. per day. There is a 97% inflation rate and, at the same time, there

EL SALVADOR
TEACHER INTERVIEWED

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Jose Alberto Buendia Flores, San
San Salvador, El Salvador,
Central America.

Sr. José Napoleón Duarte,
Casa Presidencial, San Salvador,
El Salvador, Central America.

Send letters or telegrams of support
to: ANDES 21 de Junio,
4a C.O. No. 620, San Salvador,
El Salvador, Central America.

Groups which may be contacted for
further information on El Salvador:

Seeds for El Salvador:

P.O. Box 65689, Station F
Vancouver V5M 5K8 Ph. 251-4949

Central America Support Committee
2524 Cypress St., Vancouver, B.C.
Ph. 738-8815 (IDERA)

is an edict which does not permit salary increases. Understandably it is difficult for people to satisfy their basic needs and this places a great strain on family life.

Q.: What is the situation of children in El Salvador?

E.V.: Their plight is truly sad. Many have no access to education. They have to work with their parents who cannot afford to pay for schooling. The children suffer from malnutrition when their parents' crops are destroyed and thousands die from diarrhea, curable diseases or indiscriminate bombings. Many others are burned and mutilated by white phosphorus and napalm.

Q.: What can Canadians do to help the people of El Salvador?

E.V.: There is much that you can do. Send letters and telegrams to the Minister of Education and President Duarte, requesting that they listen to and accept the demands of ANDES 21 de Junio. Get involved in the different activities of the solidarity committees that exist here in Canada. Join together to mount campaigns against the violations of human rights in Central America. We, our association and our educators, are asking you for your moral, material and/or political support. On behalf of ANDES and the Salvadoran people, I would like to express my great appreciation for your solidarity. ♀

Campaign skills - the workshops begin

by Miriam Sobrino

The weekend of June 8 and 9 this year marked the historical kickoff of Skills Development Workshops for women interested in running for the NDP in local, provincial and federal elections. The workshops were funded by the party, reflecting a new commitment to ensure that more women represent the NDP in government.

The Skills Development Workshops originated at a meeting of the Women's Rights Committee this spring. Following extensive discussions of empanelling, and how to react to policy passed at Provincial Council, the Steering Committee opted to leave the responsibility of empanelling up to the party and to begin serious work on recruiting, training and encouraging women to run for office. The Steering Committee formed a sub-committee to set up small, regional and economical workshops to help women gain the skills and confidence they need to become candidates in their constituencies.

Workshops in Nanaimo and Kelowna

The workshops held last month in Nanaimo and Kelowna were the result of planning and experimentation. The sub-committee agreed that the format of the workshops should be that they should be portable and easily put on in any region by local people and talent. The resource kit and follow-up information currently being generated as a result of the initial workshops will make the continued success of the workshops possible.

The Nanaimo and Kelowna workshops were attended by a total of over 60 women, both declared and potential candidates, as well as supporters of other women interested in running for office. In Nanaimo, ten women stood to identify themselves as candidates for nomination and political office while in Kelowna, three women were ready to accept this challenge.

NDP women share their expertise

Valerie Preston, the federal women's organizer, and Frances Birdsell, the provincial women's organizer, were both on hand for the two workshops in order to

facilitate the sessions. In Nanaimo, Carol Pickup, an experienced NDP candidate from Victoria, related her experiences both as a candidate for nomination and for election.

In Kelowna, Eileen Robinson contributed by sharing her story of running as a candidate in the last federal election. Both women emphasized the need for personal support networks for all aspects of political campaigning—from having somebody to rant and rave at, to having somebody tell them what to wear from day to day.

Following their presentations, the speakers were questioned at length by the other participants. This portion of the workshop alone could have been extended into the entire day, as the potential candidates attending were particularly eager to hear from real experiences.

Support networks

Valerie Preston followed the speakers in leading a session on support networks for women candidates. Her ability to involve an entire room of over thirty women in discussion of personal weaknesses and strengths ensured a full discussion of questions which are usually left unasked and unanswered. In building the image of a perfect candidate, participants found themselves asking the impossible of women—and asking for a little less than the impossible of men.

Problems and possible solutions

In the last federal election, judging from questionnaires returned to the federal women's organizer, many women who were candidates in the 1984 federal election emphasized family and personal needs as requiring attention. In fact, we know that family needs are often cited as reasons for women deciding not to run for office.

Many women with families were able to provide input both in their capacity as spouses of politicians and as politicians who are also spouses and parents. The eventual consensus was that time management and qualitative use of time are crucial for both candidates or elected



officials.

In the Kelowna workshop, the participants were greeted with a different twist on the questions of personal support. What about those women who are alone and have nobody to keep them sane throughout their periods of candidacy? The subject was a very tender one and discussion was most nervous around this issue. There was no resolution to this question, but those who asked it of others were able to discuss (in smaller and more intimate groups) ideas of possible support.

Myrna Phillips campaign

The workshops were not geared to answer questions definitively, but to offer ideas of what kind of support women candidates need and what kind of support women can offer other women. An example which Valerie Preston cited at both workshops was that of Myrna Phillips, MLA in Manitoba.

Myrna Phillips' campaign for nomination involved one year of hard work and full support from a strong complement of assistants. She had a friend who ensured that she ate properly, another who bought her clothes, another who ensured that her children were well taken care of. As a result, she was able to devote a great part of herself to her nomination, the subsequent election and her victory.

Workshop flexibility

In both towns, the afternoons were slated for a coverage of more traditional skills for candidates for political office.

In Nanaimo, the participants opted to continue the discussion of personal

support networks, letting the material in the resource kit cover the speech writing, media and public speaking tips. In Kelowna, local women led workshops on Media Relations and Women and Power.

The format of the workshops, while perhaps somewhat ambitious, inspired much positive reaction. Structurally, the one-day workshops were too short to allow for all the training women were interested in but, on the other hand, they were accessible and well-attended.

While there are some wrinkles to be ironed out for future workshops, participants went away feeling vitalized and ready to take on nomination and electoral contests in their areas, with a little help from their friends.

Resource kits available

Resource kits will soon be available for workshops in other areas of the province. The kits contain information on personal support networks, possible formats for the workshops and a checklist of what needs to be done if you are interested in organizing a workshop for your area. ♀

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ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
WORKSHOPS FOR WOMEN
contact**

FRANCES BIRSELL - 879-4601

OR

MIRIAM SOBRINO - 689-2622

OPINION

The myth of male maternity

by Catherine Kerr

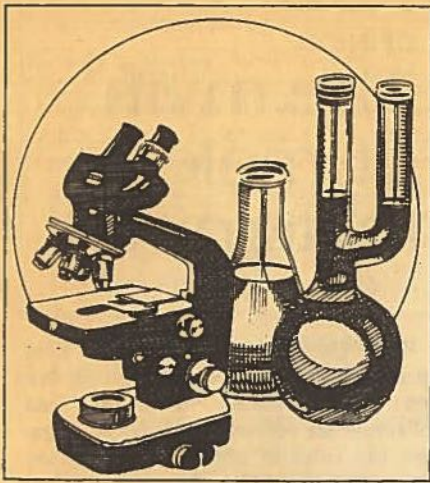
With Canadians in a furore over reproductive rights, sloppy rhetoric can feed the anti-choice mentality. Last November an editorial in *Interim* magazine, the voice of organized opposition to abortion in this country, called Canadians "ghoulish." Why? Because we immunize against rubella—a known cause of birth defects—with a serum derived long ago from a human fetus.

Fifty years ago, in Sweden, one fetus afflicted with rubella was aborted. Through tremendous skill and care, its cells have been put to perpetual use in worldwide immunization programs. The result is that thousands and thousands of families have been spared the disaster of deformity in their newborns.



Interim's statement struck me as a perfect demonstration that hard-line anti-abortionists hold fetuses, living or dead, to be more sacred than health. There is an unwholesome obsession, and one must wonder why it continues to seize new people and grab headlines in Canada. Every new concert represents another person whose human and financial resources might be put to truly constructive social use, and this waste is a tragedy.

Labelling the anti-abortion obsession a mere personal quirk—an excess of scrupulous zeal—is too easy. That label places it with the preoccupations of



marginal fanatics—the dishevelled ranters who carry biblical slogans around our cities on sandwich boards and battered vehicles. But scruffy sloganeers do not win mention in the national press, whereas the *Globe and Mail* quoted the editorial from *Interim* in a front-page story. The *Vancouver Sun* covered it prominently, too, as doubtlessly did many such newspapers across Canada.

Mythology

No, the “fetus defence” phenomenon has earmarks of a mythology: a belief system that supports the whole culture. And the weirdness of the abortion debate points to a failure of mythology. Our European-derived society has a particular way of thinking about birth and fertility and everything that surrounds these fundamental aspects of being human animals. But this belief system jars with the actual state of sexual politics.

Throughout written history, childbirth has dictated a division of labour, hence a division of power between the sexes. Over the history of most cultures, that division has been disadvantageous to women. The male role has been coterminous with reputation, accomplishment and reward.

And, of course, the winner takes all. Given credit for everything other than childbirth, the male group has ended up taking special credit for that, too.

This process is most transparent in a society lacking scientific method. Consider the idea of fertilization that pertained in China before modern medicine. Kinship and descent were reckoned by the male line, and the culture rested solidly on the male-dominated family. So did its myths. An anthropologist writing in Wolf and Witkes’ *Women in Chinese Society* describes the predictable Chinese myth of conception:

Menstrual blood is . . . directly powerful in that, in the villagers’ understanding,

it creates babies . . . Accumulated menstrual blood becomes the body of the child; “it creates flesh and bones.” . . . To be sure, menstrual blood alone cannot produce a child. For that you need both the mother’s blood and the father’s semen. The semen has thang in it, which makes the child start to grow . . .

One accomplishment of this folk explanation was that it accorded to the father the miraculous power of creating his child. Women were not assumed to share this magical power. True, the purpose of this explanation was to account for the barrenness of solitary women. But the folk theory of fertility could have focused on a common adult capacity—both male and female—rather than a male capacity. Fertility could have been thought to reside at least partly in the mutual aspects of sexual communion itself. Instead this theory followed the pattern of preference that the culture itself followed. And it was a culture that withheld from women its highest honours and firmest rewards.

Something similar in Canada

Something similar is evident now in the popular culture of Canada, and the rubella vaccine protest points directly to it. It seems that the historically vexed business of fertility is getting no better despite the growing sophistication of our culture. In fact, it may be getting

worse.

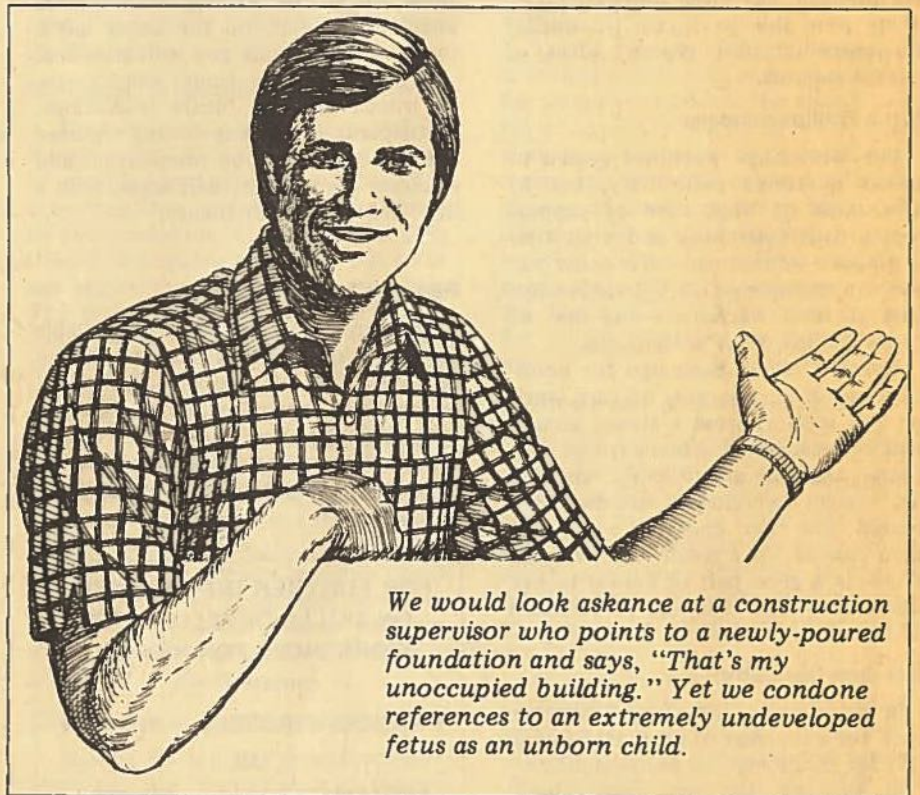
It was pretty strange even when science was rapidly on the rise in the late industrial revolution. Then—a mere century ago—Freud managed to convince well-educated Europeans that men have nothing to envy in women. Ignoring the perfect probability of womb envy, he invented and sold the preposterous converse. And the male-dominated society was pleased to believe that the phallus is more enviable than the capacity to form a new human being inside one’s body.

Fertilization the sacred event

Today, another flip-flop is being attempted, on this assumption: “Fertilization is the sacred event in childbearing. Every other aspect is mere house-keeping.” When you think about it, this is nothing less than a myth of male maternity.

Carrying and giving birth to a baby used to be regarded as the major labours of reproduction. Now, fertilization is being treated as the end-all: once that is done, the child is done. I have heard no mythmaker admit that moreover the child is ungestated, yet gestation is a long and patient and often conscious collaboration. A strictly female one.

We would look askance at a construction supervisor who points to a newly poured foundation and says:



We would look askance at a construction supervisor who points to a newly-poured foundation and says, “That’s my unoccupied building.” Yet we condone references to an extremely undeveloped fetus as an unborn child.

"That's my unoccupied building." Yet we condone references to an extremely undeveloped fetus as an unborn child.

Laughter or embarrassment should have greeted words used on CBC television in announcing that Mila Mulroney was three months pregnant with her fourth child. The words I mean are "Mother and baby are doing well" — the stock phrases of a birth announcement. The statement was ridiculous. No baby existed. The early condition of pregnancy existed in the body of a woman. But most listeners, inured to the idea that baby and fertilized egg are one and the same, probably accepted this inanity.

Language of the Big Lie

The people who publish *Interim* magazine use such language. Like the language of the anti-semitic Big Lie, it strengthens a myth by pandering to an unconscious wish of the listeners — in this case, obviously a wish that the male group and its comfy institutions (notably the papal hierarchy) might control childbearing as they control everything else.

This wish is not held by males alone, nor by all males. It is held by those of authoritarian character for whom domination is essential to a moral order. Domination by males—the familiar form—is an indispensable crutch to these individuals. So, whether male or female, they promote the male claim to children. It is familiar; it gives them security. In a patriarchal world, they know where they belong.

But social change has altered that world. The male claim to children may be staking out new territory because it has had to yield the old. For example, our society has ceased to support the myth of the "legitimate child" and "illegitimate child," which made us stigmatize a child and its mother unless the child had been claimed at birth by a man. An unwed mother is no longer an outcast.

In fact, StatsCanada figures reported May 23 show a tripling over ten years in the number of Canadian children born to unmarried women. The slur "illegitimate" is rarely heard today. We have abandoned the implication that offspring can only be real, authentic children if men take credit for them after they emerge from the womb.

Before-birth property

Now, however, men may appropriate children before they emerge from the womb. Womb envy has become valid to the extreme where we let people speak of fertilized human eggs as if they were their best friends. The imagined toddler

in utero, the "baby doing well"—being a child in potential only and therefore idealized—is popular far beyond the small group (usually the expectant grandparents) who once endowed it with importance before its birth. It now inspires hundreds of ideologues to picket in the streets and yatter self-righteously on anonymous opinion broadcasts.

With enough such busybodies at work, the reproductive role of a pregnant woman becomes that of a mere vessel. A vessel of dubious dependability, closed with a time-lock.

Women must defend each other

We women ought to defend each other against the lie that Pregnancy equals Public Property. Until a fetus is viable outside the womb, it is indivisible from the body of the woman nourishing it. Her body is the human body that has a public life and a public discourse. Her pregnancy means that she has a choice to make. I, for one, am pleased if any woman chooses a collaboration with a fetus that will produce a wanted baby. I do not have the right to make pre-

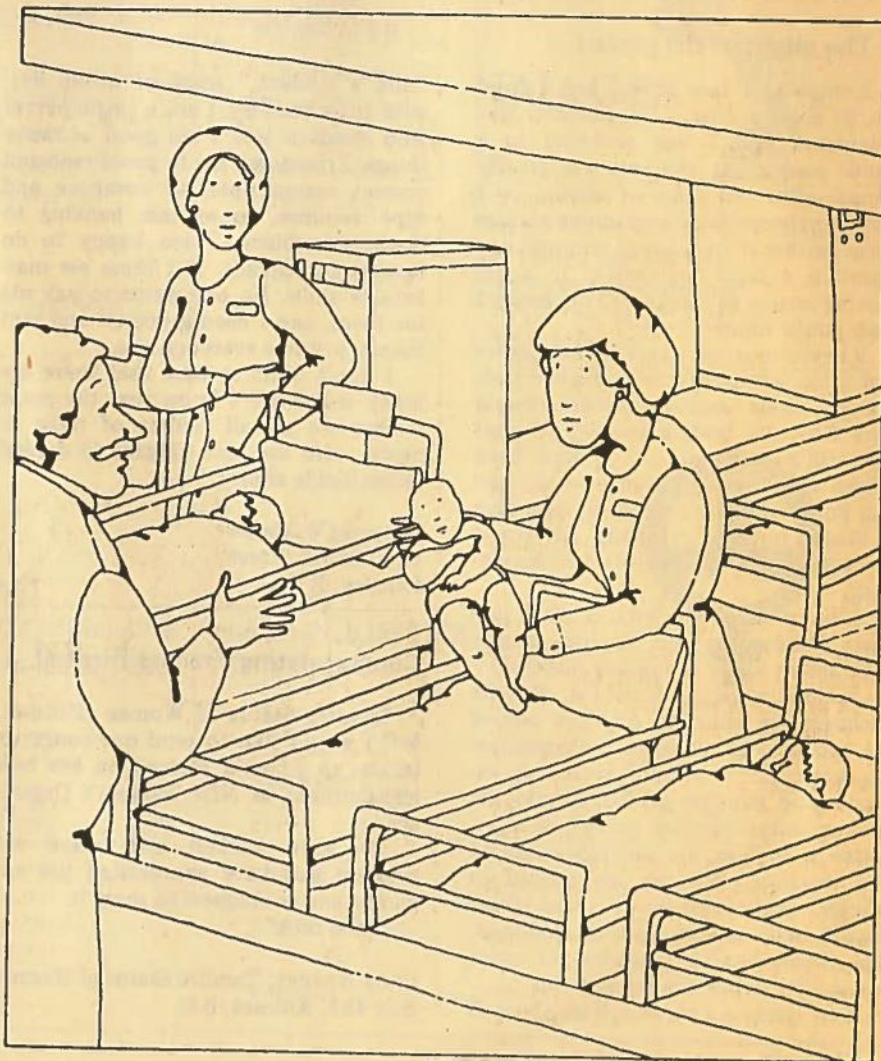
sumptions about her choice.

Canadian women have long had the electoral power to assert the female right to choose. If united in resolve, women could control human reproduction unilaterally. But a powerful obstacle has prevented us. The obstacle is not the small minority of anti-abortion obsessives. It is an excess of fair-mindedness among the rest, who have figured that men should have an equal say in human reproduction.

The trouble with such fairness is that the power of the male group is more than equal to the sum of its parts. Grant it an iota of control and, having disproportionate power already, it takes over the whole show—the language, the laws, everything.

The language of the male experience belittles reproductive labour, but even worse are the laws designed by men to regulate that labour. Anti-abortion laws reduce childbearing to a civic duty. What an insult to the motivations that actually inspire a woman to have a child!

It's high time for us women to take charge of fertility without apologizing



to anybody, even the most worthy of men. Worthy men already acknowledge that biologically, women meet high costs to fulfil their unique part in fertility—the risks and discomforts of pregnancy; menstrual pain and dysfunction; complications and even death in childbirth.

Such men seek no veto over a woman's decision to conceive or bear a child. They don't have to. Most deservedly win the opportunity of becoming fathers without coercing anybody. Meanwhile, the Criminal Code, by limi-

ting a woman's right to an abortion, gives coercive rights to all the citizens of Canada.

Well, let the men disclaim their part entirely and insist that reproductive rights be in the hands of women citizens alone. Women pay uniquely for the responsibility; women should have the authority. Here is an issue where lack of sexual discrimination is an injustice.

If the female sex were left to legislate such matters by itself, the majority would surely prevail over the women who support male tyranny so as to

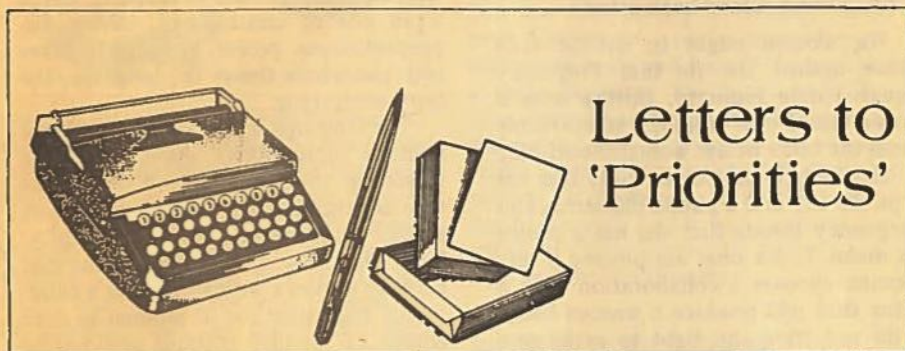
guarantee for themselves a snug place for their phobias.

But we need not wait for a revolutionary constitutional change before weeding out the everyday language that belittles women's role in childbearing.

We can give the word "gestation" a place in the vocabulary of reproductive rights.

We can restore the meaning of the term "unborn child."

By stopping the lie in small places, we could start to eliminate the myth of male maternity. ♀



Letters to 'Priorities'

The plight of the jobless

I am angry. Last year, I had a good job at a good salary. My position was eliminated and I was demoted to a junior position. I felt this was grossly unjust, after ten years of service, so I resigned. Because of legal technicalities I was unable to sue. Large corporations maintain a legal department to avoid making costly mistakes and to protect their public image.

It never occurred to me that a mature and articulate person with higher than average skills and experience would have difficulty finding another job, but I am still unemployed. I have been passed over, in one instance to my certain knowledge, because of my age. This is illegal, but the company advertised through an agency to protect its anonymity.

After many interviews, I see a pattern: companies want to hire people with senior skills for junior positions—at junior salaries, of course. Benefit packages are minimal. And the unions are excluded at all costs. Companies are using the "recession" to recoup expenses and increase profits. Employees who are unrepresented, and whose alternative is welfare, are powerless against this injustice. Pensions are related to salaries, so those of us who earn junior salaries will receive smaller pensions. The overwhelming majority of older women live below the poverty line.

Now there is a big campaign afoot to

"hire a student," most of whom live with their families. I am a single parent who needs a job. I am good at many things. Friends ask me to proof-read and correct manuscripts, to compose and type resumes, to explain banking to them. Of course, I am happy to do favours for friends. But these are marketable skills. No one wants to pay me for them, and I need groceries and rent money just like everyone else.

I don't want to hear that there are many worse off. I know that the point is that we are all victims of those in power who use such slogans to defend unjustifiable abuses.

Margaret W. Carew
5380 206th Street
Langley, B.C.

Congratulating Frances Birdsell

Tamitik Status of Women (Kitimat, B.C.) would like to send our congratulations to Frances Birdsell on her new appointment as NDP Women's Organizer.

We have worked and talked with Frances and have appreciated her expertise and willingness to share it.

Good luck!

Chris Wozney, Tamitik Status of Women
Box 453, Kitimat, B.C.

"Let's Talk About Sexual Assault"

On behalf of the Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre, I am writing to inform you and your readers of the availability of our current resources. With the increasing awareness, media attention and shocking statistics regarding sexual assault, I am sure numerous individuals who read your publication would find these materials helpful.

"... one in four girls and one in ten boys will be sexually abused or harrassed in some way by age 18."

"... in 75-80% of reported sexual assault cases, the offender was someone the victim already knew."

Disclosures of sexual abuse, past and present, are being reported at such an alarming rate that it is imperative that:

1. Those working with victims have access to the resources available.
2. Those who are taking the initiative in setting up prevention programs have materials specific to the group to whom they are speaking.

How can we protect ourselves? What do we say to our children? Where do we go to get help? What will happen if I make a report? In talking with groups of women and teens, these kinds of questions often come up and we feel everyone should have this kind of practical information available to them.

Trace Porteous
Women's Sexual Assault Centre
1045 Linden Ave., Victoria V8V 4H3

Send for: "Let's Talk About Sexual Assault." The cost of each pamphlet, plus postage and handling:

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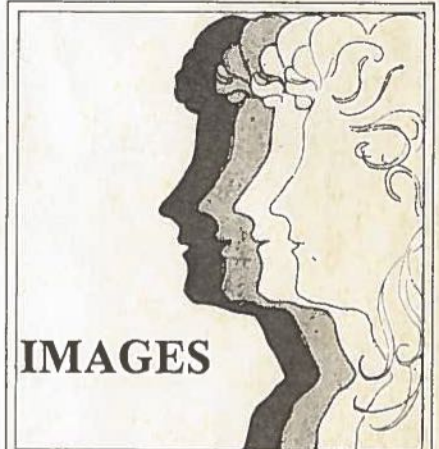
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