

PRIORITIES

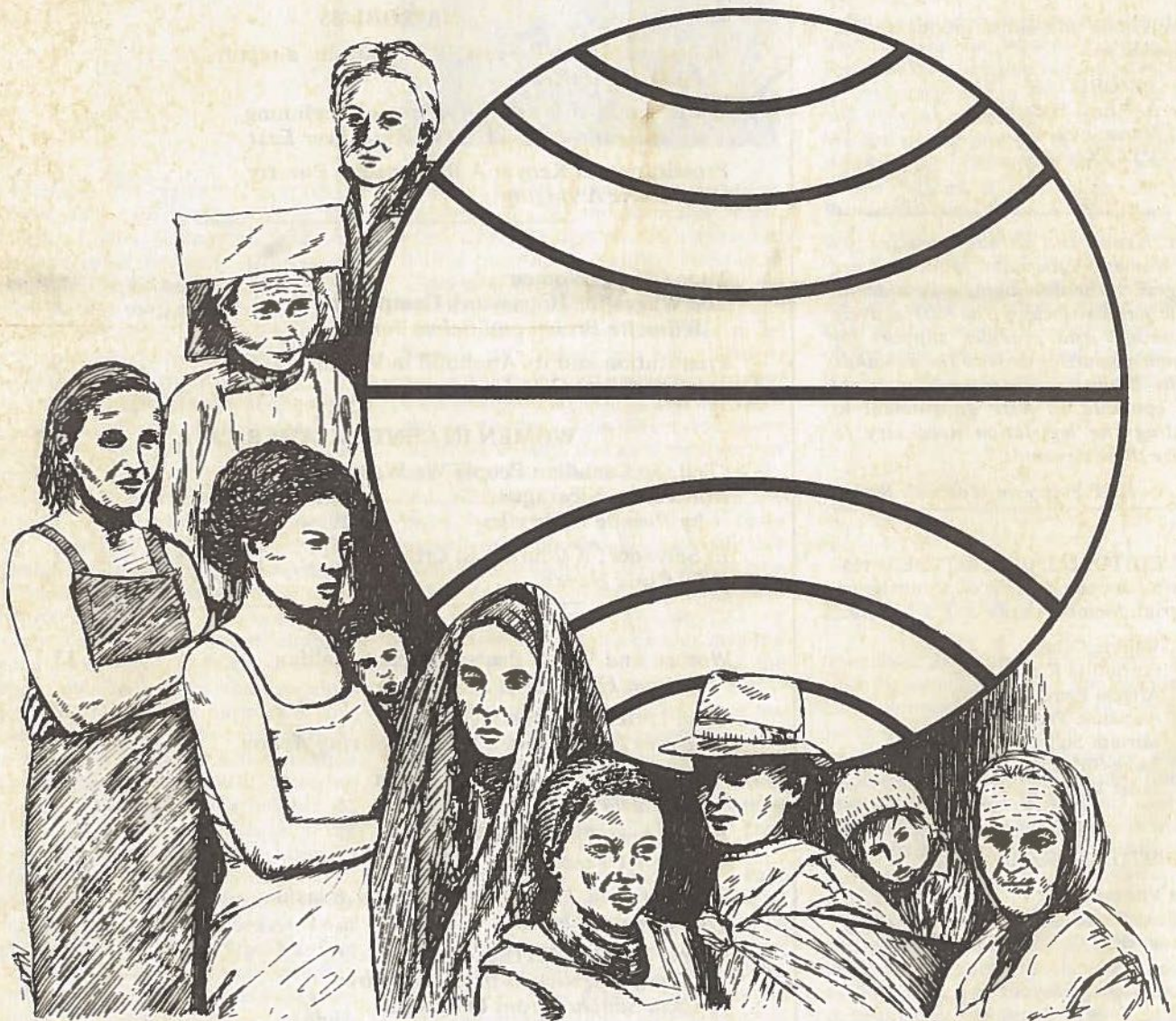
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The World's Women 1985:



“In building new societies, we create the new woman.”

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

—NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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

Chairwoman's Report

by Jan Taylor

I intend in this report to *Priorities* to address only two issues. While the Women's Rights Committee is active and there could be many activities to cover, I feel that the issue of regional representation to the Committee, and the issue of finding a replacement for our Women's Organizer are major priorities for the WRC right now.

At the Women's Caucus at the 1985 B.C. NDP Convention a discussion took place on the question of regional representation and the incoming Table Officers made a commitment to work to increase the input from our sisters outside the Lower Mainland region. Accordingly, following the Convention a questionnaire was mailed to approximately 500 party activists around the province in an attempt to determine what changes needed to be made to WRC structure, format, etc. to ensure that regional representation really happened and wasn't just rhetoric. We have received less than 20 responses. This situation was discussed at the WRC Steering Committee Meeting on September 22 but the issue was referred back to the Table Officers as little concrete information was available at the meeting.

We did decide to hold WRC Steering Committee Meetings on Saturdays (from approximately 10 am to 5 pm) and to have a social/educational on Saturday nights. Women from outside the Lower Mainland indicated that this was a much more convenient schedule for them than had previously been in place. The dates for the next two Steering Committee meetings were set (well in advance to

STEPHEN BREWER, THE DEMOCRAT



allow for lots of planning) for *Saturday, December 7, 1985* and *Saturday, February 8, 1986*. We also passed a motion to hold a Steering Committee meeting in Victoria in the next year (probably the February meeting).

The major problem continues to be funding. We simply can not afford to pay expenses for every regional member-at-large to attend every Steering Committee meeting. This has made some members-at-large feel as if they are not making a valuable contribution to the committee and also that they are not being heard. One of the ways some regions have decided to deal with this problem is to establish Regional Women's Caucuses. So that when a woman comes to a WRC meeting she can say, "At our Lower Island Women's Caucus meeting (for example), we voted to bring the following motion to the Provincial WRC." One woman—many voices. In some regions, however, the geographic distances are just too great to allow for regular women's caucuses. In those regions women have to communicate in writing or by phone (which can be very expensive).

The suggestion has been made that some of the funds of the Provincial WRC be allocated to regions to assist in travel within the region and that a "delegated" system would then apply in the WRC. This raises questions of regional designation, assessment of regional needs, etc. etc. As you can see, there are lots of questions, and not very many definitive answers. It is, therefore, critical that regional members-at-large

communicate with each other and give some direction to the Table Officers and Provincial WRC Steering Committee: write; call—collect; send your regional member-at-large to the next Steering Committee meeting with a specific motion(s) or instructions; try to get funding from other sources (e.g. your club or constituency) to send a delegation to the next Steering Committee meeting.

It is important to note that the Provincial Council has approved postponing the 1986 Convention until the fall of 1986 (probably October). That means the regional representation question is going to be with us for another year—it's not too late now and waiting until the next convention to do something is too far away.

On a related matter, Frances Birdsell has resigned as Women's Organizer. Frances did much to establish a "regional" presence within the WRC and we will miss her advocacy of regional rights. We are in the process of looking for a replacement. The WRC Steering Committee passed a motion to ask the Provincial Secretary to advertise the vacancy nationally. Ads will also appear in the *Democrat* and in various labour publications. We very much hope that we will have a Women's Organizer on staff at the provincial office by the end of the year. Please spread the word—the more good applications, the better.

Correction

Two false statements found their way into the article "Taming the Workforce . . ." starting on page 11 of the July issue of *Priorities*.

The first of these, "Therefore, many important issues remain unnegotiated," does not follow from statements made in the preceding two paragraphs. It would have been correct if it had read ". . . remain outside the collective agreement."

The second is "Workers are unprotected and reliant upon the "good will" of the employer to abide by the guidebook," which is incorrect. Statements contradicting it appear under "collective bargaining undermined" on page 12.

Priorities apologizes for these errors and for any embarrassment they may have caused.

New Headquarters for an Old Foe of Apartheid: a *Priorities* Founder Leaves Us

by Nancy Walsh with Catherine Kerr

This issue of *Priorities* is the first in a long time to have been produced without the immense contributions of one of its founding members. This summer Joyce Meissenheimer took down her shingle as a typesetter and made plans to leave British Columbia for a new home.

Among *Priorities* workers, Joyce's political knowledge has kept the editorial kettle simmering; her professional skills have put the magazine into publishable format and the irrefragable good health of her mentality has refreshed our energies. To Jo Dunaway Lazenby, the editor of many *Priorities* issues, she once said, "a sense of humour and a capacity for enjoying life are among the most important weapons you can bring to the fight against oppression and injustice."

Joyce had a proper respect for the blessings of buoyancy; she once cautioned, "It is meaningless and foolish to sacrifice your personal life, because then you deny yourself the solid base you need for long-term ongoing work." Former women's organizer Margaret Birrell, who credits Joyce with having taught her everything she knows about floor-managing convention resolutions, remembers some ethical advice that has the same kind of practical view: "Always tell people what you are doing. Even if they don't agree with you, they'll respect you."

Joyce Meissenheimer has met many enemies of her political vision, a cause which she has summed up as "a mobilization of working and disadvantaged (nationally, racially and sexually) people to get rid of the capitalist system which has become an imperialist monster." Her opponents find her quite simply unstoppable. Her friends enjoy her clean-burning style of confrontation—"straight-forward," as Ruth Bullock describes it; "She never held a grudge."

Helen Hawthorne, longtime North Vancouver Seymour activist, refers to this ebullience when she describes Joyce as "the most sensible proponent of the right to choice on abortion. She has made an extremely valuable contribution in that respect alone."

continued opposite



PHOTO: HILDA THOMAS

Joyce Meissenheimer at NDP-B.C. Convention, 1979

A Tribute to Joyce

by Hilda Thomas

The first commandment of the women's movement is to replace hierarchical and authoritarian structures with collective and democratic ways of working. That does not mean that there are no structures, or that there is no need for leaders. It does mean structures that are open and flexible, and leaders who share their experience, their knowledge, and their skills, who face problems squarely and honestly, and who are accountable for their actions. If there is anyone who has remained faithful to these principles—easy to state but hard to follow—it is Joyce Meissenheimer.

It was Joyce who moved the motion in Provincial Council establishing the Women's Rights Committee as a standing committee of the B.C. NDP. It was Joyce who led the floor fight at the 1973 federal convention which brought women's issues to the forefront of the party, rolling over the party establishment in high style and high good humour. It was Joyce who drafted the resolution on affirmative action in the forest

industry, who fought (and is still fighting) an unremitting battle for choice on abortion. It is Joyce who has kept the production side of *Priorities* going through thick and thin. For almost a generation she has been fundraiser, speaker, advocate, defender, teacher and friend to the Women's Rights Committee. And it is to Joyce that I have most often turned for clarity when the pain of personal defeat and rejection have clouded my political vision. She will leave a gap.

Eulogies often have an air of hypocrisy about them; the nose wrinkles, detecting a faint whiff of grave mould beneath the high sounding phrases. There is nothing of that in my praise for Joyce Meissenheimer. I will miss her. But I know that wherever she goes Joyce will continue to share the hard-won lessons of a life of political commitment and struggle, and that others will benefit from her humour, her clarity, and above all her dedication to principle. Bon voyage, Joyce, in love and sisterhood. The struggle continues.

Continued from page 2

Many women in the NDP have worked with Joyce, or have heard her speak, without having learned a great deal about her political background. There is much to tell. Joyce Meissenheimer began her political career forty-eight years ago as a high school student in Capetown, South Africa, joining a mobilization against the pre WW II segregation laws. She went on to become, in 1951, editor of the *Torch*, a left-wing weekly fighting for full democratic rights for all.

For the next thirteen years she and her co-workers lived under constant

police surveillance. By 1961, the "banning axe" had fallen. Then in 1964, an amendment to the "Suppression of Communism Act" prohibited publication of the utterances of any banned person. She was forced to give up her editing position.

Joyce arrived in Canada in 1965, stateless. The South Africans had lifted her passport.

She immediately joined the NDP, became active around NDP support for the anti-Vietnam war movement and fought for labour and women's rights within the NDP. Along with Eileen Dailly, Gwen Dowding, June Dunlop, Hilda

Thomas and several others, she was one of the founding members of the WRC.

She was North Vancouver-Seymour provincial council delegate for several years, was elected to the B.C. NDP provincial executive in 1972 and 1973 and was co-opted to federal council for the term 1981 to 1983.

Her future plans will bring a remarkable political career full circle. She will likely divide her time between Toronto and Britain, where she will join relatives and political associates in the anti-apartheid mobilization. She may even find time to visit Cuba and Nicaragua.

♀

Letter from Ottawa

Dear Friends:

Last spring, Brian Mulroney and the Conservatives tried to take money out of the pockets of pensioners. Together with seniors all across the country, New Democrat MPs fought this measure and won! Now, we need your help to fight for families, children and women. On September 13, 1985, Bill C-70 was introduced in Parliament. The Bill calls for the reduction of family allowances by 3%, every year taking away money necessary for raising children. Bill C-70 is an attack on children, families and especially women who receive the monthly family allowance cheque.

In the coming months further measures will be introduced to change the Child Tax Credit, the Child Tax Exemption and to impose unfair taxes on families. The combined effect of these measures will take over \$1,000 annually out of the pockets of two-child families by 1990. The impact will be greatest on poor families.



PHOTO: HILDA THOMAS

Lynn McDonald, MP

The Government, in proposing this change, argues that we have to cut back spending because of the deficit. Yet the Conservatives gave a half a million dollars capital gains tax holiday to the wealthy in the last budget and just recently bailed out the banks for over a billion dollars. New Democrats are fighting these unfair tax measures which will hurt families, women and children. In fact, we have proposed tax reforms that will more than pay for improved family benefits.

We urge concerned organizations and individuals to take action now. Here's what you can do:

- Write to your MP and the Prime Minister. Send us a copy.
- Circulate petitions. (Contact *Priorities* for a copy.) Send them to us care of the House of Commons. No postage is necessary.
- Take the issue up at meetings and media events. Invite MPs.
- Ask to appear as a witness or send a brief to the Clerk of the Legislative Committee on Bill C-70, Committee & Private Legislation Directorate, Rm 500, House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6.

Please act quickly to convince the Government that Family Allowance must not be cut by de-indexation.

Margaret Mitchell, MP
Vancouver East

Lynn McDonald, MP
Broadview-Greenwood

House of Commons, Ottawa
K1A 0A6 992-6030

Abortion Tribunal

On January 25, 1986 CCCA is sponsoring the first of a series of tribunals to be held across Canada. They will hear women testifying about the difficulties they have experienced in obtaining abortions. The current laws, which make it almost impossible for many women to obtain an abortion, will be "put on trial."

By hearing women speak out about real-life experiences, we can demonstrate to the government that its anti-abortion laws have hurt and killed enough women. The tribunals will find the government guilty of denying the women of Canada reproductive choice.

CALL FOR TESTIMONY

The Vancouver Tribunal requires the participation of women who will speak out about their abortion experiences. Please consider sending us a submission. It may be anonymous or one you can help us document. You can send your submission to CCCA, or phone us at 876-9920 for more information.

CCCA

Concerned Citizens for
Choice on Abortion
P.O. Box 24617, Station C
Vancouver, B.C. V5T 4E1

Vancouver Council Feminist at Nairobi: a Report

by Alderman Libby Davies,
Committee of Progressive Electors
(COPE)

More than 13,000 women gathered last month in Nairobi, Kenya, at Forum '85 to discuss and review the progress made by women during the United Nations Decade for Women. The forum was convened by non-governmental organizations and held in conjunction with the official UN Conference attended by government delegations. Both events marked the culmination of the United Nations Decade for Women, 1976-85, and examined the progress that had been made in achieving the decade's goals of equality, development and peace. It brought together, for ten days, women from different social and political systems, national liberation movements, women from industrialized countries and impoverished countries, women of every colour and language and of every age. Many Canadian women participated, including myself as a representative of the Canadian Congress of Women of B.C. Despite all this diversity we still found much in common.

Over 1000 workshops were held, as well as an International Women's Film Forum and numerous informal gatherings. The central focus and key unifying activity during the forum was provided

by a unique meeting place, a blue and white tent located on the campus of the University of Nairobi known as the Peace Tent. Lively discussions took place every day in the Peace Tent, zeroing in on important and sometimes contentious issues. There were dialogues between women from the USA and the USSR, discussions about the need for peace in the Middle East and the plight of women living in occupied territories. There was a peace concert and a solemn witness to the 40th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and there were discussions about politics and peace and the new threat posed by Reagan's Star Wars.

What emerged from the Peace Tent and the workshops was a deep understanding that equality, development and peace are inseparably linked. Equality for women will never be realized until we have defeated the threat and costs of military and nuclear conflict. Women everywhere echoed the feeling that growing military budgets, particularly in the U.S., have become main barriers to the objective of the decade of women. Participants in many workshops spoke of the necessity to divert the enormous cost of armaments towards social and peaceful development, for health, education and jobs. The needs of women in the Third World countries are particularly

urgent. Their struggles for equality and development are strangled by huge foreign debts and the exploitive practices of multi-national companies.

In one workshop I attended a young woman from Costa Rica carefully explained how women in her country are denied basic economic rights by foreign companies that dominate the economy. She described how the multi-national corporations deliberately set out to hire inexperienced but highly productive young women aged 16 to 25 as apprentices. After nine months of working for less than 50 percent of wages paid to men, who are also economically exploited, the women are laid off with little prospect of future advancement. She told us they end up in financial desperation as prostitutes. Always intent on gaining maximum profit, these same foreign multi-nationals often hire women to work in their own homes, where they are exempt from all labour laws, receiving only a third of the minimum wage with no benefits and no pensions. Hiring women at home to do piece work is an added bonus for the companies who can avoid any investments in a plant infrastructure.

Contrasted with this type of practice common in developing countries, a trade union official from India described in a different workshop how women see the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) as a necessary step in overcoming the discrimination and inequality they face. The NIEO is based on 20 principles adopted by the United Nations that recognize that all states are equal and have a right to self-determination and development of their own economic and social systems.

For many of us from western industrialized countries, Forum '85 was a unique opportunity to hear first hand from women actively involved in national liberation movements to free themselves from oppressive systems like apartheid and foreign intervention and occupation of their lands. We learned and understood that equality for women in South Africa is inconceivable until they, along with their men, have defeated the apartheid system which denies black and coloured people even the most basic rights.

There was also much discussion in workshops about women's equality gained in countries like Canada and the United States, where women have made many significant gains. This included free and open discussion about how women in the U.S. and Canada, particularly poor women, are just as much victims and casualties of the military-industrial complex and also suffer

The Peace Tent, Nairobi



PHOTO: EMMA KISIVILD



Forum participants join hands

economic exploitation like women in Africa and Asia. We know that women in Canada are still paid about 60 percent of the wages that men are paid. American delegates gave evidence of how women of colour receive even lower wages. Many of us realized that true equality will only be realized when we have changed the economic and political system to ensure equality not only for women, but for all working people and people of all races and nationalities.

As can be seen, every conceivable issue came up for debate and examination. This, despite great pressure leading up to the forum from the Reagan administration and its think-tank, the Heritage Foundation, to make sure that these political issues were kept off the agenda. They wanted women to confine themselves to so-called "women's issues." Well, the vast majority of women at Forum '85 made it very clear that all issues are women's issues. Delegates at the forum were able to influence the official government delegations attending the UN Conference and establish that when dealing with the theme of equality, development and peace it is essential to discuss the role of economic systems that serve to defeat equality, and identify the obstacles that threaten world peace.

Obviously the UN Decade for Women is not adequate to find solutions to the inequality of women. But clearly the decade heightened women's awareness and unified women around the globe to continue the struggle for equality, development and peace. Although the decade has officially ended, the movement of women around the world to gain full equality, development and peace has become a mighty and growing force.

For the 13,000 women at Forum '85 representing millions of women, Nairobi served as a rallying point and a source of renewed energy and commitment to work for the full realization of the decade's goals.

♀

United Nations Decade of Women: A Second Beginning

by Margaret Mitchell, MP, Vancouver East

The UN Decade of Women's Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in July 1985 marked a second beginning rather than a culmination of the struggle of women around the world to achieve equality.

Thousands of women attended this world conference as official government delegates or advisors. Delegates presented in plenary sessions progress reports on increased participation of women and on health, education and economic initiatives in their country. In committees delegates worked on the wording of Forward Looking Strategies for the year 2000 and on resolutions to go to the UN General Assembly.

Although the political participation of women has increased over the past decade, our benefits are not increasing proportionally. Chronic injustices, exploitation and oppression remain at all levels of national and international society. The critical international economic situation has prevented the achievement of equality and development for most women. Threats to international peace are threats to the survival of women and their families. Structural complaints keep women as second-class persons in most countries. Women's productive and reproductive roles continue to be devalued. The double burden of women who carry domestic tasks while participating in the work force without necessary support is common. Mass poverty, drought and famine have surpassed all other considerations for third-world women as they struggle to survive.



Margaret Mitchell, MP

Representatives at the UN conference in Nairobi had difficulty in overcoming their own political obstacles that must be achieved for women by the year 2000. References in the strategies to zionism, apartheid and the future establishment of a new international economic order were the most controversial issues. For African women, who were present in large numbers for the first time, we all knew this conference must not fail. Fortunately in the last minutes of the final meeting, the last hold-out—United States—agreed to support the general consensus.

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Speaker at Forum rally





PHOTO: EMMA KISVILD

Decade of Women

Continued from page 5

There were many frustrations for the official Canadian government delegates. Unlike the earlier informal N.G.O Forum where women of many cultures shared experiences and took action together, the official inter-governmental conference was a highly structured UN meeting where delegates could speak only on official government positions. Advisors (many of them men) were in control. Polarized political positions of the eastern block and western block (chaired by

Canada) could only be broken by the third world "Group of 77 Plus." There were other frustrations. The U.S. demand for consensus almost terminated the conference before it began. Iranian representatives continued to accuse Israeli delegates of racism. Much of the process required changes to language to modify militant positions so that recommendations would be acceptable to all.

Issues recurred throughout the conference: Women and power; women and technology; women's economic contributions; statistics on women; women

without men; violence against women; family planning. Canada presented resolutions on responsibilities of governments ("national machinery"), women and development; women in the UN; indigenous women; and strengthening the international systems for advancement of women.

Despite the many limitations, I came home convinced that the UN is essential as a forum to promote the principles and practices of equality, and to ensure greater participation of women in development: both as agents and beneficiaries and as workers for international peace and security.

Profound social and economic changes are needed which can only be achieved by political will in each country and in the UN. I, like thousands of dedicated women who came to Nairobi, returned home with new determination and a network of new allies to fight for improvements for women on the international front as well as in our home communities.

One of the most moving moments of the conference was the speech by Margaret Papandreou of Greece. She insisted that women must master political power. "Feminism and democratic socialism are inextricably linked because the struggle for women's equality is a struggle for women's economic equality and political freedom." ♀

Prostitution in Kenya: A Response to Poverty

by Marie Arrington

Marie Arrington is a member of The Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes in Vancouver. She attended the U.N. Forum For Women in Nairobi, Kenya in July.

My participation in the End of the Decade conference on women was made possible by funding through the Anglican church of Canada, the same church whose building A.S.P. occupied in July 1984 to bring to light the increase in violence perpetrated against prostitutes since the passing of the injunction against prostitution in Vancouver.

I arrived in Nairobi a week before the conference began because I wanted to see something of the country and I wanted to make contact with women who worked in the sex industry.

First impressions: contrasts between rich and poor

I stayed with relatives of a friend who arranged the accommodation and was extremely surprised at the wealth of the family. I thought that Kenya was a rather poor country. I discovered that indeed Kenya is a poor country, but the only people that are poor are the black Kenyans.

The house in which I stayed was surrounded by an electric fence and there was a servant doing nothing but watching and opening the gate. I was given a car and a driver the first two days I was in Nairobi, but it was impossible to go anywhere because I had this black shadow who was ordered to protect me.

In the house, a maid looked after my every want. I was not allowed to make even my own tea, and I could not take my plate from the dining table. It was really incredible. I was only able to stand it for

two days, although my hosts were very nice people.

During my first days in Nairobi, I went downtown several times where I met many prostitutes who worked in and near some tourist hotels. In Nairobi, as in Vancouver, there are different classes of prostitutes: the better dressed women and the extremely poor women. The well dressed women are the young and childless. The extremely poor women are from the slums. They work all day trying to earn enough money to feed their children, and work as prostitutes at night because it is impossible to make enough money in a job.

Prostitution— a major source of income

All the prostitutes I saw in Kenya were black. The poorer women come from the shantytowns. Mathare alone has a population of over 90,000, a third

of those being women. Most of the women from Mathare village work as prostitutes. Many of the children also work as prostitutes, especially the girls. The boys do other service work. They follow you around downtown and offer to wash your car, find a parking spot, and in fact, one young boy said he would do anything for me, I only had to name it, as long as I would give him money.

In Mathare village there are no streets, no addresses, one or two water spouts and very little water. There are no houses, only shacks or mud huts with metal roofs and rocks on top to hold the roofs down. Some huts have only thatched roofs and no walls. The children are dirty and hungry. I have never seen so many flies. In Mathare village the main source of income is from prostitution. Many families have no other means of surviving.

I also visited Kijiji village. If it is possible for any village to be in worse circumstances than Mathare, this one is. Kijiji is literally a city of destitution. But the worst irony is that over the ridge is the suburb of the wonderful neighbourhood where I stayed.

One of the young women I met in the downtown area of Nairobi and who was hiding from the police, is from Kijiji village. She is 17 years old and has 3 children. She supports her mother and grandmother and when she is incarcerated by the police, her children are abandoned. When she is released, she has to search for her children because there is no welfare system in Kenya. No one takes the children and looks after them. She said her oldest child takes care of the other two as best she can.

Organizing against the harassment of prostitutes

At a workshop called *Prostitution — A Response to Poverty*, we were told that prostitutes were ordered to leave Nairobi or be detained by the police. A participant brought a letter written by prostitute women and asked that we do something.

A group of women from the workshop met with Dame Nita Barrow, the Forum Convenor, and asked that she support our action. She declined but stated that she could not stop us.

We then had the letter published in the forum newspaper and wrote a letter to the Kenyan government asking it to release all the women held so they could continue to work and feed their children. We drew up a petition and asked women who came to our information table to sign it. We received over 500 signatures in just two days.

We asked a young woman who was

with the Canadian delegation to take the petition to her hotel to get signatures from the delegates there. She later told us that she was unable to get any of the Canadian delegation to sign. They either said it was not their business, or thought it was a joke of some sort. We wondered what the reasons were for this seeming lack of concern.

As we lobbied on the issues of prostitution and counting women's work, the Canadian delegation's position on the former became clear. They wanted passed, without argument or delay, the resolution prohibiting prostitutes from crossing international borders for the purpose of prostitution. We received a message from Margaret Mitchell that

organizing for prostitute rights recruited lawyers and para-legals to go out on the street nightly and monitor the police. For Expo '86 in Vancouver, police are already beginning their clean-up campaign. You can hear, daily, people saying that it will not be a good image for the world to see the amount of prostitution in the city. Where will they put the women in 1986? Will they be incarcerated? Maybe not in the army barracks to keep the soldiers happy, as in Nairobi, but we have little doubt that they will be incarcerated.

While looking for prostitutes during the conference, we found several in the poorer part of Nairobi, a section where no tourist would go. There we met a young woman who talked freely about

PHOTO: EMMA KISVILD



Mural on Nairobi wall.

she would help on the issues as best she could, but we met the rest of the Canadian team and knew she was but one woman with very little power. The delegation was headed by a man.

It is hard to come to terms with the fact that, while at the N.G.O. most of the delegates were women, at the U.N. Conference, out of 3,000 delegates, so many of those delegates were men. Men were making decisions about our lives.

Kenya is not alone in its repression of prostitutes

The western influence is very visible in Kenya. the treatment of prostitutes is similar to that used in Vancouver, only it is more open.


In the U.S.A. at the Democratic convention in San Francisco, women

working as a prostitute. We asked about the working conditions and she said they had greatly worsened since the opening of the conference. She told us police harassment had always been high, but it was not impossible to work.

Prostitutes had to pay off the police if they wanted to stay out of prison. The normal payoff is 200 shillings, about \$18.00 Canadian currency. The women make 5 shillings for a blow job, 45¢ Canadian, and 20 shillings for a lay, \$1.80 Canadian.

In Mombasa, the prices are slightly higher because it's a port city and there are more white male tourists. The prostitutes there also spoke the most understandable English, which shows just who their tricks are.

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Wages for Housework: Time Off for Women

The Enemy Within

by Wilmette Brown and Selma James

Women from the Wages for Housework Campaign have returned from the World Conference of the U.N. Decade for Women.

In 1980 at the Mid Decade Conference in Copenhagen, the U.N. agreed that women do 2/3 of the world's work. After 5 years of campaigning for governments to acknowledge and count all of this work, we won a major victory when the 1985 Nairobi Conference agreed to amended paragraph 120 from "Housewives in Dialogue":

"The remunerated and, in particular, the unremunerated contribution of women to all aspects and sectors of development should be recognized and appropriate efforts should be made to measure and reflect these contributions in national accounts and economic statistics, and in the Gross National Product. Concrete steps should be taken to quantify the unremunerated contribution of women to food and agricultural production, reproduction and household activities."

Many women besides ourselves agreed that this was the central victory of Nairobi '85. If this paragraph is implemented by governments and all our work, waged and unwaged, appears in the G.N.P. at its real value, this is bound to change the power of women's demands. It will be harder to deny our rights in the face of our enormous acknowledged contribution.

In Nairobi, the Campaign called for "Time Off for Women" on October 24 to press the U.N. General Assembly to agree to paragraph 120 in November, and to press governments to implement it.

We chose October 24 to mark the 10th anniversary of the 1st general strike of women in Iceland in 1975. Their slogan was "When women stop, everything stops." Icelandic women are planning actions on October 24, and our international call has been taken up by women from a number of countries: self-employed women in India, rural women in Holland, factory women in Trinidad, journalists in Ghana.

The response to the "Women Count—Count Women's Work" petition was enthusiastic before Nairobi, but didn't prepare us for the overwhelming response of Kenyan and other Third World women at Forum '85. It was obvious that counting women's work is a unifying demand which can bring together Third World and metropolitan women despite the many divisions among us.



Speaker at Peace Tent microphone, Nairobi

For information about the Wages for Housework Campaign in Vancouver, phone Ellen Woodsworth at 253-3395 or Marie Arrington at 875-1050.

by Angela Page

Headline Theatre's new play is looking for sponsors for a provincial tour beginning in January '86.

The Enemy Within is about the Premier, his cleaning woman, restraint, and you. The style of the piece ranges from very broad and comic to intimate and serious. It looks at how restraint/renewal is being used to prepare the province for Pacific Rim Development by exploring what the cutbacks mean to everyday people in B.C., and then making the leap to the "economic miracle" in places like the Philippines. After all, as Pat McGeer says, "B.C. has the potential to become an intellectual Philippines."

I saw the play in a church hall in Surrey during its summer tour of the Lower Mainland, sponsored by a local NDP riding association. It was cheerful and noisy; the audience was encouraged to chant anti-Socred slogans on cue. Each time the Premier quoted from Bill Bennett's actual speeches and interviews there was a loud beep. The cleaning woman, a devotee of Bennett, loses her job to restraint and this is the story of her struggles to find another. She encounters sexual harassment, overworked welfare workers, foodlines, would-be Expo profiteers; the B.C. we know and love. Afterwards there was a discussion of the issues raised: what could Claire the cleaning woman have done differently? What could we do? How could we reach the people like Claire who are most affected? How do we raise political awareness, get our message across?

This is political theatre; its aim is to rekindle energies that were put out after the collapse of the General Strike in '83. Headlines Theatre is looking for sponsors who will support the show in their own communities. It is a worthwhile project for NDP associations or women's groups. It also reminds us that there is more than one kind of B.C. spirit.

For more information, contact Headlines Theatre, 2524 Cypress St., Vancouver B.C. V6J 3N2. (604) 738-2283.

Prostitution and Its Abolition in Vietnam

"Prostitution only exists where there is exploitation and oppression. . ."

—Tomas Borge, Minister, FSLN Government in Nicaragua.

by Kathleen Gough

Kathleen Gough is an anthropologist at the University of British Columbia who was invited to tour Indochina in 1982 by the Committee of Social Sciences in Vietnam and the Kampuchean Foreign Ministry. She is the author of Ten Times More Beautiful: The Rebuilding of Vietnam. In this article, she examines the causes and consequences of prostitution during the U.S. invasion of Vietnam. She also discusses the ways in which the current Vietnamese government is trying to eradicate prostitution.

I am opposed to prostitution because sexual relations are our most intimate expression of the human longings for love and ecstasy. If we have sex for reasons other than desire and at least some degree of tenderness, I think we harm ourselves spiritually, quite apart from any damage we may offer physically over a long period. The "other reasons" for which women usually have sex include money, job or career enhancement, a need for love and regard from the partner, security, peace and quiet in the home, and subjection to violence. The "other reasons" for which men usually have sex include lust separated from tenderness, the wish to prove their potency, the desire to control and conquer, and violent aggression. Of course, not all these reasons are equally harmful, but I think that none is desirable.

Under capitalism, the worst abuses of prostitution have occurred in colonial and neo-colonial states, especially during wars of conquest or counter-revolution. South Vietnam in 1965-75 provided, it seems, the most vile example since World War II, revealing the depths of brutality of which North American society is capable. For we must be clear that this brutality was North American, not Vietnamese, in origin; it resulted from occupation, at any one time, by more than half a million U.S. troops engaged in the most callous forms of modern counter-revolutionary warfare. Prostitution in neo-colonial South Vietnam has to be seen in the context of economic and political dominance, and of mass slaughter, racism, and rape by foreign forces.

A ditty that accompanied training exercises in the U.S. army typified the

ideology taught to GIs in Vietnam. Soldiers would chant:

This is my rifle (holding up an M16)

This is my gun (puts hand at crotch)

One is for killing

The other for fun.¹

Rape and murder in rural areas

In the countryside, especially when troops sought out revolutionary guerillas, prostitution was unnecessary: rape was the order of the day. Peasants and National Liberation Forces reported thousands of instances, many of them gang rapes of individuals, or public rapes of several dozen women. Most people know that at My Lai in 1968, US troops killed about five hundred civilians within a few hours. What is less often reported is that before the massacre, troops of the Third Airborne Brigade raped several hundred women. GI testimonies bear out the frequency of rape. Joe Galbally of the American Division reported:

"We went through the village; it was about an 8 man patrol. We entered a hootch (peasant home). These people were aware of what American soldiers do to them, so naturally they tried to hide the young girls. We found one hiding in a bomb shelter in a sort of basement of her house. She was taken out, raped by six or seven people in front of her family, in front of us and the villagers. This isn't just one incident; this was just the first one I remember. I know of ten or fifteen such incidents at least."²

All too often rape preceded murder as a standard means of terrorizing peasants suspected of insurgency. A GI told Jane Fonda:

"I saw one case where a woman was shot by a sniper, one of our snipers. When we got up to her she was asking for water. And the lieutenant said to kill her. So he ripped off her clothes, they stabbed her in both breasts, then spread-eagled her and shoved an entrenching tool up her vagina. She was still asking for water. And then they took that out and used a tree limb and she was shot."³

Prostitution in the cities

In the cities and the barracks, rape was less acceptable and both GI's and

puppet troops resorted to prostitution. Together with drug peddling, it was South Vietnam's biggest business and source of profit. The population provided an endless supply of prostitutes because millions of peasants had come to town when their villages were destroyed and their lands defoliated. The population of Saigon, in particular, increased from 400,000 to 4 million during the US occupation. Other thousands were marched from their villages and herded as prisoners in strategic hamlets to separate them from the revolutionary forces.

Prostitutes were kidnapped by Vietnamese panderers, sold by starving families or beguiled with promises of American consumer goods. Every rank and type was available. The highest, employed as concubines or call-girls by officers, often underwent cosmetic surgery to have their eyes rounded, cheeks and chins dimpled, hips padded, and breasts stuffed with silicone. Lower down were the women whom GI's rented by the month from pimps to serve as domestic servants, laundresses and sexual slaves. Liberty Street, the red light district of Saigon, had more than two thousand agencies recruiting or kidnapping girls from the provinces to serve in the twenty-one thousand bars, hotels and whore houses.

Both male and female prostitutes crowded every street corner before curfew hour; pimps drove around hundreds of them on the backs of motorcycles, offering them at bargain rates.⁴ Some facilities provided multiple services, for example garages with signs saying "Car Wash and Get Screwed."⁵ "Sin City," just outside of Pleiku base, was made up of tents each with 15 or 20 beds. Prostitutes worked in shifts, receiving the equivalent of one dollar per customer.

In each major city, pimps maintained hundreds of prostitutes, who were sometimes imprisoned in underground cells policed by thugs. Each evening helicopters took scores of them to the camps of troops on operations. Officers were allowed one prostitute apiece; five to seven soldiers shared one girl per night. The women were ferried back next morning, broken and bruised in body and spirit.⁶

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The legacy of the Vietnam war

If anything the plight of prostitutes grew worse in 1973-75 after the US troops pulled out but the puppet government remained. As their employment disappeared and US imports dried up, thousands of people starved or had to resort to theft or low-grade whoring. Girls of ten to twelve were often sold by their families to the highest bidder.

The GIs also paid their price. Out of 2.8 million troops who went to Vietnam, 56,690 died there. Some were killed by prostitutes while in bed with them. Since the rest came home, another 57,000 have committed suicide. A known 110,000 have died of cancer, no doubt from defoliants and other chemical weapons they were forced to use. A further three-quarters to one million are in psychiatric treatment in VA hospitals.⁷ Many more are unable to adjust to civilian life, continually reliving the nightmares of slaughter and sexual brutality to which they were inured.

Centres for the rehabilitation of prostitutes

When South Vietnam was liberated in April, 1975, the country had at least half

a million prostitutes. Most were drug addicts; all of them were reported to have one or another venereal disease. Immediately, the Women's Union, which has branches in every district, began the work of rescue and rehabilitation. With the help of neighbourhood committees and security police, they reported the pimps and brothel owners, who were arrested and placed in re-education camps for three years of political and social re-education and of training in useful forms of work. Mobile teams from the Women's Union sought out prostitutes and brought them for medical treatment and job training.

Those prostitutes who recovered quickly were allowed to go home to their villages, volunteered for the New Economic Zones in which agriculture is being developed in virgin or defoliated lands, or were restored to their urban families when they could find jobs. Those more seriously corrupted or diseased were kept for longer in centres called "Homes for the Restoration of Human Dignity." By 1976, a year after liberation, only 50,000 prostitutes out of half a million were thought to remain; by 1981, about 30,000. In 1982, I was told by authorities in Ho Chi Minh city that only a few hundred were still in the city, to be

redeemed as soon as possible.

Prostitution still exists in Vietnam. The western press has discovered a few women who turned to prostitution in Hanoi during the food shortages since 1977, to the glee of some male reporters. But prostitution is now rare and marginal and the Government of Vietnam is doing all it can to abolish the trade, along with pornography and drug addiction. As far as possible, prostitution is being wiped out by medical treatment, work training, and ideals based on love and reason. With the abolition of these evils, all women in Vietnam retrieve their dignity.

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Quotes were taken from the following books or periodicals:

1, 2, 3 & 5—Arlene Eisen-Bergman, *Women of Vietnam*, People's Press, San Francisco, 1974.

4—*New Yorker*, April 15, 1972, pp. 52-54.

6—"Giving Back Their Dignity to Fallen Women", *Women Of Vietnam*, Journal of the Women's Union, Hanoi, No. 3, 1976, p. 12.

7—Brian Day, "Problems of Vietnam Veterans", *Vietnam Today*, No. 27, 1983, Australian Vietnam Society, P.O. Box 53, O'Conner, Australia, p. 7.

Notes from Nicaragua:

"Tell the Canadian People We Want Peace."

by Rosalie Hawrylko

Rosalie Hawrylko is a psychologist teaching women's studies and psychology at various community colleges in the Lower Mainland. This is the first of two articles that *Priorities* has asked her to write about her experience in Nicaragua in August as a member of the B.C. Nicaragua Support Committee. The second article, focusing on women in Nicaragua, will appear in the coming issue of *Priorities*.

As a feminist activist, I was curious to see first-hand the position of women and the nature of the overall political struggle. My enduring impression is that first of all, and colouring all other considerations, Nicaragua is a country at war. It is a

revolutionary country whose people measure time by the overthrow of the Somoza dynasty in 1979. In my note taking I developed the shorthand "BT" and "AT" to mean "before the triumph" and "after the triumph." These expressions occurred over and over in the testimony of individuals and organizations who are gaining control of their own lives and beginning to live in safety and optimism. Their experiences at times moved us to tears. I had never before witnessed the solidarity among men and women of diverse backgrounds, nor the continuous daily life-and-death commitment, which the continued success of the revolution requires.

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PHOTO: JUDITH SNIDER

Fruit vendor at an AMNLAE event.

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The immensity of the Nicaraguan struggle confirms for me a lesson learned elsewhere: that the will of a united people is insurmountable.

What this war means is that everyone can name a friend or relative that has been killed. It means continued disruption of the economy and of normal life. It means bridges blown up, schools and hospitals destroyed. It means that instead of rebuilding the country, the government must spend 40% of the budget on defense. It means not having material necessities, let alone comforts. One companera told us that you don't just give your extra possessions or food to those at the front who are fighting to protect your lives; you give your own necessities. Companeros go on armed patrols, or work in the fields with rifles slung over their shoulders, always on the alert for a surprise attack.

This war is strategic in the sense that Sandinista programs are specifically targeted. Because advances in health and education are a strength of the revolution, these buildings are blown up and doctors and literacy crusade teachers (some of them only children) are killed.

What this war means to Nicaraguan women is grief. It is their husbands and sons who are dying at the front. Twelve thousand Nicaraguans have been wounded, kidnapped or killed since the contra war began. Because of the urgency of the situation, there are huge military mobilizations. Since 50% of the population is under fifteen years of age, many of the soldiers, of necessity, are teenagers.

The repeated message from everyone we spoke with, including young soldiers, was "Tell the Canadian people we want

peace." Even in remote areas, people usually were aware of exactly how much money the American congress had just voted to send in aid to the contras (\$28 million) since the effect of that aid is palpable, the death and destruction inevitable. Their hope was that, while they would fight to defend their revolution "to the last consequences", perhaps with the help of international solidarity they could avoid a prolonged war.

There is much debate inside the country over the development of the revolution and the Sandinistas have made widely discussed errors. But, as Fernando Cardinal, Minister of Education stated, not one village has organized a military action against the Sandinista government. There is no doubt that support for the government is widespread.

Contra attacks in Nicaragua seem to come from outside the country. These attacks are localized around the borders and are "hit and run." Sometimes the FSLN (Sandinista Liberation Front of Nicaragua) is called in but frequently the defense is organized locally by the militia or vigilance groups.

It is clearly in the interests of the American government to misrepresent this war of aggression as a civil war. If the U.S. supported contras could establish a base inside the country, for example in some culturally distinct Indian or Black Creole communities along the east coast, then the U.S. government could fabricate a justification for direct military intervention, claiming that they are supporting indigenous people's struggle for "freedom". So far, they have been unable to do so, and we heard reports that the indigenous populations are developing closer links with the rest of the country.

Women are vital to the revolution

AMNLAE, the women's organization in Nicaragua, claims with credibility that the Somocistas believed women were worth nothing. Today, women feel they stand out in pride and valour. While they perform rearguard activities for the Front, they also carry arms and participate actively in the Territorial Militias and in the Reserve Battalions. Women comprise 80% of vigilance participants, 70% of Civil Defense brigadistas, 70% of health brigadistas, 60% of literacy campaign workers, 80% of Sandinista Defense Committees, and almost half of the promoters of the Centers for Popular Education. AMNLAE's slogan about the value of women's contribution is, "Without the Rearguard, there is no victory. Without us women, there is no Rearguard!"

I visited the Psychiatric Hospital in Managua and as a psychologist, I became interested in organizing contributions for this facility. Women wash all the laundry by hand for 200 patients, some of whom are incontinent. There are no spare parts for their ancient machines. They have no material for occupational therapy. They need fabric, patterns, thread, buttons, decorative items, crepe paper, ceramic glazes, wood-working equipment, sports items, etc. Nor do they have office supplies—duplicating machine, fluid and paper, pencils and pens, etc. They especially need 1/2" cassette tapes for their Sony Betamat NTSC Home Unit Video machine, plus drugs for therapeutic use. If you can make material or cash contributions, or would like to help organize aid, please call me at 732-0953. We plan to send as many of these items as we can on the next Tools For Peace shipment.



PHOTO: JUDITH SNIDER

Nicaraguan mural: "In building a new society, we create the new woman."

El Salvador: A Country in Crisis

by Chris Hayes

Chris Hayes returned recently from El Salvador where she attended the 19th Congress of ANDES 21st of June, the National Association of Salvadorean Educators. Hayes is a member of the B.C.T.F. (British Columbia Teachers Federation) and was one of 45 international delegates attending the conference.

Upon arriving in El Salvador, I and several other delegates met with Buendia Flores, Minister of Education, and he announced that ANDES would not be able to hold its conference because it was a "subversive" activity.

The conference took place as planned thanks to international pressure. ANDES called this reversal a "resounding victory" for teachers.

Today, ANDES teachers work in the two El Salvadors: the areas under the control of the Duarte government, and the zones of popular control, which are directed by the forces of the FDR/FMLN. (Democratic Revolutionary Front/Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front)

Education under Duarte

I was shocked by the horrendous working and learning conditions in El Salvador. The majority of teachers, about 30,000, have not received their salaries since February of this year.

The student-teacher ratios in the schools I visited were between 50 and 60 children to one teacher in the morning and another group of children for the same teacher in the afternoon.

Malnutrition is a big problem. Almost every child that I met had a swollen belly. These are the children that are able to go to school. 45% of all children in El Salvador die before the age of five.

Of six schools which I visited, only one had received any supplies from the Ministry of Education. They had been given 6 sheets of paper and one box of chalk.

Despite the limited supply of materials, teachers use the resources at hand to educate their students. Dirt floors are used to write on with sticks. Pebbles,



Salvadorans taking refuge from bombs. In foreground, her back to camera, is a militia woman.

rocks and seeds are used for counting. Newspapers are collected from friends in private schools, along with paper and pencils. However, if the government were to find out, teachers would face severe reprisals.

Doctors refuse to treat teachers and their families because the government won't reimburse them for their services. One teacher told us in tears how her 5 month old baby had died in April because she couldn't find a doctor who would treat her.

Education in the control zones

In the zones of popular control, the education system is very different. Education is a high priority. As a result, illiteracy in PLPs (areas of Popular Local Power) has decreased to 25% from rates of 45% to 65%. Many ANDES teachers have either chosen to work in the PLP zones themselves, or have taught others to teach. These trainees range in age upwards from 12 years. They share their knowledge with other people in their area.

Schools are set up in bomb shelters, under trees, and so on, because there are no designated buildings. They teach an integrated type of curriculum. Students learn to read and write and to understand the political reality of their country. They do physical work such as construction of buildings and bomb shelters. They also learn defense tactics such as evaluating people during bombings.

Canadian complicity

Canadian Minister of External Rela-

tions, Monique Vezina, was also in El Salvador at this time. Vezina said that Canada will resume sending aid to the Duarte government in the form of 18 million dollars in credit. To justify the aid, Vezina refers to marginal drop in death squad activity. She does not mention the increase in aerial bombing which has forced 700,000 Salvadoreans to flee the country and has created another 600,000 internal refugees.

Human rights violations

Human rights abuses have not significantly decreased under Duarte nor will the "humanitarian aid" ever reach the people who so desperately need it. A report in 1984 stated that the Salvadorean Air Force conducted 331 bombardments on unarmed civilian populations, compared with 227 in 1983 and 111 in 1982. Death squad activity, as reported by Americas Watch, a U.S. human rights group, was rising. In the last four months of 1984, 22 people disappeared, while 42 disappeared in the first four months of 1985. Similarly, in the last trimester of 1984, 281 assassinations were verified. This figure almost doubled to 501 in 1985's first trimester.

The meagrely equipped schools I visited were among the schools the U.S. deputy of Aid for International Development said had received material support. He said that 37 million U.S. dollars had been invested in education through aid in 1985. If this is true, there is precious little evidence of it in El Salvador. Although there is no concrete proof, I believe that aid money is being diverted

into military spending. There was an enormous military presence there, and weapons and personnel take a lot of money.

A visit to a women's prison

I was able to visit Illopongo Women's Prison while in El Salvador. The women in this prison demonstrate the very real commitment of women in their struggle against injustice. Maria, one of the prisoners, was tortured by the National Guard. The Guard discovered that she was giving food to members of the FMLN. They captured her, raped her repeatedly, burned her with acid, and cut off her right leg.

Torture is not an occasional accidental occurrence but rather a systematic approach by the U.S. backed regime to silence the Salvadorean people.

Life in a refugee camp

One afternoon I visited Doms Maria Refugee Camp, which shelters about 1500 people—mostly women and children. A woman I spoke to described her situation to me:

"I've been here one and a half months and came from the countryside. I have four children and don't know where my husband is.

"He was planting in the fields when the airplanes came. The bombs started exploding and everyone was running. A helicopter came and took us away.

"They forced me to work in a factory and when I was no good for them anymore they sent me here. The planes fly over all day long. There is never any rest from the bombings. They have no pity. If they see a child, they murder her.

"We want to work but on the land, not for the army. We can't stand to see the horrible things they do. The army burns everything. They leave signs saying we're no good, we're pigs. Our children ask for food and we have nothing to give them. My children are dying and I am dying."

Mothers of the disappeared

Another day we visited the offices of the Human Rights Commission and the Mothers of the Disappeared. Both offices had been ransacked the night before. Testimonies, photographs, records of human rights abuses and \$10,000 were stolen. The money was part of the \$30,000 Kennedy Award presented to the Mother's Committee for their outstanding work in defending human rights.

One woman told us her reasons for working with the Mothers of the Disappeared.

"My son was captured early one morning by the armed forces. I tried to

follow them but they beat me up. I went to look for him in funeral homes, cemeteries, and in the ditches. In one ditch I went through 32 dead bodies, and 10 of them were decapitated. Last month (May 1985) they killed my 13 year old son. In all, 8 of my children have disappeared or been killed. I tell you this not because I want pity but because the world must know of the situation here for the Salvadorean people. They must know what the Duarte government, backed by the Reagan administration, is doing."

Being in El Salvador was very nerve-racking at times. There was a strong presence of plain clothes policemen wearing machine guns in our hotel. In the three and one half weeks we were there, death threats were delivered to our rooms. Though many of the teachers I met had been arrested, tortured, imprisoned or were missing family members, they were still at the forefront of the struggle, always willing to make personal sacrifices.

I am now in the safety of my own home, somewhat overwhelmed by what I experienced, but feeling compelled to do something concrete for the people of El Salvador.

If you are interested in seeing a new reality for the Salvadorean people and would like to be a part of that change, please contact me, Chris Hayes, at 2061 Venables St., Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2J1, or telephone me at 251-8637.

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Dateline Halifax— Women and World Peace

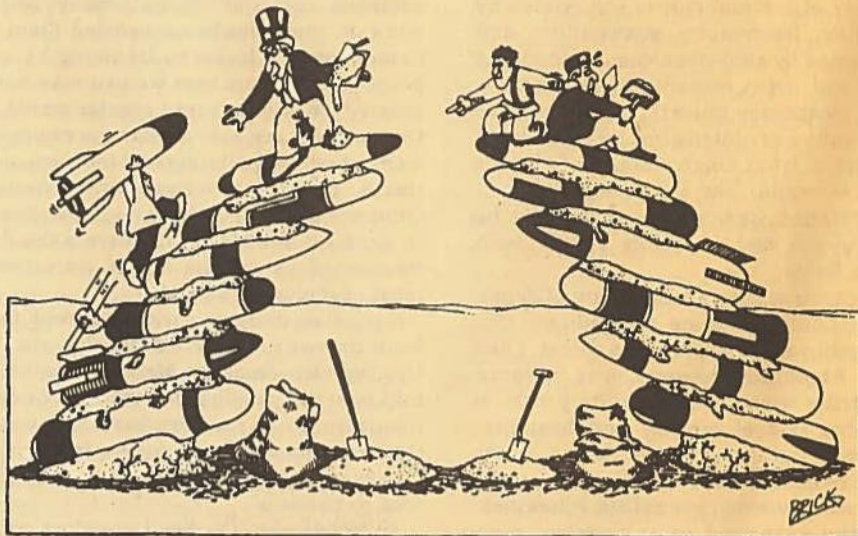
by Viva Flood

The Women's International Peace Conference was sponsored by the 25-year-old Voice of Women, endorsed by a coalition of over 40 national women's organizations and funded in part by the disarmament division of the federal external affairs department. For five days in June, Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax played host to the gathering of 350 women from 33 countries. There were 55 delegates from outside Canada, plus some with addresses in Toronto and New York who had fled such places as South Africa and the Philippines.

Canadian delegates represented the ten provinces and two territories, most churches and political parties, University Women, YWCA, United Nations Associations, trade unions and charitable groups like OXFAM. Ages ranged from 13 to the 80s.

Among eminent Canadians were physicists Ursula Franklin and Rosalie Bertell, Order of Canada members Muriel Duckworth and Kay MacPherson, New Democrats Alexa McDonough, Pauline Jewett and Rosemary Brown, as well as Joe Clark's emissary, MP Barbara Sparrow and Ottawa mayor Marion Dewar. But no one person was spotlighted, and rank-and-filers had ample opportunity

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BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

to speak. Simultaneous translation in French, Spanish and English enhanced communication, and day care enabled mothers to attend.

What does security mean to women? As women from everywhere told their diverse stories, it became evident that it means different things according to one's circumstances: a job, food every day for the children, getting rid of a nuclear waste dump near one's home, freedom from apartheid, an end to the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Women around the world speak out

An impressive part of the conference was a series of accounts given by women from underdeveloped countries. A Sri Lankan woman told of civil war terrorizing people for the last three years. Fighting rages between Sinhalese and Tamil immigrants from southern India. Women from both sides formed a mothers' front and appealed to the government to end hostilities; some were jailed for this "treasonous act."

"We must look to the causes of wars large and small," commented Ursula Franklin. "Violence in Sri Lanka was not spontaneous; it was engineered by politicians with detailed hit lists."

An impassioned plea for national liberation came from a woman of French Melanesia. The Kanaky people are fisher folk, and nuclear testing in the South Pacific has wiped out their livelihood. The fish, contaminated by radioactivity, are no longer edible or salable, and pregnant women dread to bear "jellyfish babies" with no limbs or faces.

Belize, formerly British Honduras, gained independence in 1981, only to be claimed by Guatemala and reoccupied by British troops for the emergency. The legacy of colonial rule is soil eroded by logging, leached by monoculture and poisoned by agro-chemicals, an immense national debt, massive unemployment and desperate poverty. The country's difficulties are intensified by an influx of refugees from Guatemala, El Salvador and Grenada. The U.S. sends ships to hover near, sprays crops that might be marijuana and terrorizes people with drug busts.

Argentina enjoys a modicum of democracy since deposing the military dictatorship after the Malvinas defeat. Thus the Argentine delegate was able to describe twenty years' military rule, a chilling tale of poverty and brutality. Human rights were nonexistent. In its anticommunist paranoia the government arrested students, journalists, minorities, anyone suspected of subversion, even children. Thousands disappeared. Vic-

tims suffered hideous tortures, and for women jail meant permanent rape. "Every night we cowered in our cells," she said, "praying the guards would not come."

Fifty thousand pages of testimony of atrocities have been collected. She praised Amnesty International, which has saved many lives.

Similar accounts came from Brazil, where 80 million are starving and from Chile, where Pinochet's military junta rules since 1973 after deposing a people's government in a bloody coup. A woman doctor from Laos had suffered from Chinese repression in a concentration camp in Cambodia.



Effects of the arms race in Canada

First-hand accounts made people's suffering come alive, and many had tears on their cheeks on hearing them. Canadians felt lucky to be living in a peaceful country where we can take for granted flush toilets and regular meals. Our worries are less direct: unemployment, chemical pollution and the nuclear threat, but not imminent death from famine or war. But we felt a responsibility to work for a just world, where a small fraction of us can no longer consume most of the world's goods.

Canadian delegates were shocked to learn that we too have our "third world." Vye Bouvier, eloquent Metis journalist, told how her people suffer directly from the arms race. In northern Saskatchewan the immediate danger comes from uranium mining, which exposes the whole area to radiation.

In Nitassinan (Quebec-Labrador) our government has leased vast tracts of

hunting lands to NATO for air training and weapons testing. Low-level high-speed Luftwaffe and British jets buzz villages, seriously disrupting the life of the Inuit population. The caribou, on which the Inuit depend for 60% of their food, have fled, and stragglers that have been taken are found to have ruptured eardrums from the noise. The raids come day and night, causing earache and deafness, as well as terrifying people. The defoliant *picloram* sprayed on forests gets into the rivers polluting waters and fish. With the presence of soldiers come alcohol, drugs and prostitution. Answering objections, former defence minister Robert Coates was quoted as saying NATO activity is great for business in Goose Bay. NATO use of native lands is also slated for northern Saskatchewan, Bouvier fears.

We must disarm

The jigsaw puzzle pieces of the world fit together showing the effects of the arms race. The military-industrial complex dominates the economy of the resource-extracting countries without calling them colonies, but as soon as the people show signs of rebellion they are threatened with gunboats and invasion. Didn't the US Senate and House last June vote \$28 million in military aid to the "contras" against the duly elected government of Nicaragua? The links between third-world destitution and the arms race become clear.

Although the conference found both the USA and the USSR guilty in the arms race, the lone Soviet delegate (delayed till the third day by visa problems) defended her country's policies. They did not want the arms race, and could not afford it, she said, citing over 22 million dead in World War II. But they were forced into it by hostility in the West. She reminded us that the Soviet Union has made a no-first-strike pledge and many other peace overtures which have been ignored. It has unilaterally ceased deploying and testing anti-satellite weapons for five months (until November) in hopes the West would respond.

What's wrong with present negotiations? Delegations from NATO and the Warsaw bloc confront each other from opposite sides of the table, each armed with its phalanx of experts, briefcases stuffed with accusations to hurl at the enemy. Deterrence leads to threats, espionage and escalation. Militaristic thinking dominates, and talks break down in hostility.

What do women suggest? Humanize negotiations! Spokesmen must approach bargaining sessions with a sincere intent

to disarm. They must listen to each other, work to build mutual trust, and seek consensus. The people of all countries must be more truly represented. Women, youth, minorities and the poor of all races must be heard.

Ecological studies show that all human beings are related and the world is an indivisible living entity. Suffering anywhere hurts us all. The technology and resources exist now to feed, clothe, house and educate every person on earth, if we can develop a collective will to convert arms production to peaceful purposes.

What can women do?

In Canada, the USA, Britain and the Nordic countries, our advantage is our

democratic tradition. We can write letters to our politicians and newspapers, petition our governments, hold marches and vigils. Women can run for public office, as Marion Dewar has done, and expand our influence immeasurably. Much can be done at the civic level, where more and more cities are declaring themselves nuclear-free zones. Largely a symbolic act, it nevertheless demonstrates public opinion.

We can refuse to be enemies, as the women tried to do in Sri Lanka, as British and Argentine women did in the Malvinas war, as Bernadette Devlin did in working with poor women, both Catholic and Protestant, in North Ireland. At the conference, Israeli, Palestinian and Lebanese women, whose troops are

killing each other, wept as they voiced their griefs and fears, but sat and listened to each other with tolerance. They did not resolve their differences, but they probably came closer to it than truce talks have come. We can expose our own government's participation in the arms race; for example, Canada is the world's largest exporter of uranium, and fifth largest producer of arms.

In the end we can lay our bodies on the line in acts of civil disobedience, emulating the supreme courage of British women resisting the cruise at Greenham Common. Canadian women have done this at Cold Lake, Alta., Nanoose Bay, B.C., and Bangor, Wash. "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way."

♀

An Open Letter to Grace McCarthy

Mrs. Grace McCarthy
Minister of Human Resources
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1X4

Mrs. McCarthy:

We are writing to dispute statements made by you in a letter you sent to those who expressed their concern regarding the closure of Vancouver Transition House. We believe the information in your letter merely contributes to the confusion created by your Ministry with regard to services for battered women and their children.

You suggested that despite your failure to make interim arrangements to keep the house open, your Ministry provides adequate alternatives to the women who would normally stay at Vancouver Transition House. If that is the case, why are women choosing to stay at an occupied house, offering only basic service, rather than availing themselves of your "alternatives"? How do you explain the fact that your Ministry's social workers were referring women to the occupied house, and that at least one woman we know of was encouraged to stay another night with the man who beat her, because all the other transition houses were full? Clearly your "alternatives" are inadequate at best, and negligent at worst.

You also suggested the proposed new services would be an improvement over those offered by Vancouver Transition House previous to its closure. If so, why all the secrecy about the nature of these



new services? While research indicates that the transition house model is widely respected by both those who work in the field and by battered women, you have no documentation which suggests your expensive new experiment will meet, let alone surpass, those standards. The service offered by Vancouver Transition House was twelve years in the making. The new services have been developed in less than eight weeks, without consultation of those experienced in this work. Our understanding is that the staff which have been hired for the new services do not have experience working with battered women. That they are also without the protection of a union will not have escaped your notice.

Undermining union protection has, of course, been a theme of your privatization scheme. Dumping essential services on already overburdened community organizations place responsibility for these services at arm's length from government. The "private operators" are then faced with the task of implementing the cuts you make. It is of course both the workers and those needing the service who get caught in the squeeze. The quality of service and wages are eroded and you then say that it is not your responsibility.

Given the above, it can come as no surprise that many people are questioning your government's commitment to services for battered women and their children. While your government has burdened the people of British Columbia with hundreds of millions of dollars in debts incurred from spending on highways and mega-projects, workers in services for battered women are forced to hold bake-sales to raise operating costs for the facilities. While Expo 86 stands out as a monument to extravagance, you have cut child abuse teams and human rights, and have pared down welfare rates to below-subsistence levels. Clearly, the Social Credit government's policies are the policies of neglect.

You accuse those of us who are fighting to maintain Vancouver Transition House of serving our own ends. That is true. Our goal is to see services for battered women and their children which meet their needs. Vancouver Transition House did that. Your government closed it.

Yours truly,

Megan Ellis
for the Women's House
Saving Action

The Birth Project

by Janet Vesterback

(All quotes are taken from Judy Chicago's book entitled *The Birth Project*, published by Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York, 1985)

When I saw *The Birth Project* at the Vancouver Museum this summer my immediate reaction was positive. How wonderful to see a large show of technically excellent art work done by women on a female theme, the act of giving birth.

The Birth Project successfully disproves two assumptions of the male-dominated art world: that women's artistic forms are fringe techniques and cannot be considered art, and that themes based on women's life experiences are unworthy as artistic subjects. If only for smashing these two myths, most women would agree that *The Birth Project* is a landmark accomplishment. It must also be evaluated as art, however, both in terms of its imagery and the process by which it was made. How successful were Judy Chicago and the needleworkers in depicting the act of giving birth? And did the process by which *The Birth Project* was created truly "democratize" art as Judy Chicago would have us believe?

The imagery

There are so few images of birth in the history of art that Chicago went directly to women and asked them to describe their birthing experiences. She also studied ancient creation myths and decided to use birth as a "metaphor for creation" (p. 6). Her goal was to present "the mythical, the celebratory, and the painful" (p. 7) sides of the birth experience.

Birth Tear is a particularly graphic depiction of the violence of birth. A woman's powerful body seems to be splitting in half and her face, thrown back, is contorted with anguish. Jagged lines emphasize the tearing while the dominant colour, red, suggests blood. *Birth* presents a similar image. We see the same splitting of the body, much use of red and pulsating concentric lines radiating outward from the uterus and the body of the woman.

Certainly pain is one aspect of birth that many women can attest to. These images are very strong and successfully render this side of the birthing process.

Most of the images suggest the strength and endurance that women must possess in order to give birth. *Captured by the Species Burden* depicts a strong woman nourishing her offspring with her breast milk. The beautifully coloured liquid coils about her limbs like umbilical cords, binding her to her children. And yet she can obviously withstand this draining of her body. In *Birth Power* and *The Crowning*, we see again powerful female figures in the act of birthing, heads down, feet firmly planted, concentrating on the important and miraculous task at hand.



The Crowning

It is interesting to read the testimony of the needleworkers on the subject of Chicago's imagery. Gerry Melot, needlepoint worker, expresses the difference between soft porn and Judy Chicago's art: "There is absolutely nothing submissive about Judy's images. . . . This is woman in her natural state, using her tremendous capability for creation. . . . women are really the more powerful of the species by virtue of their ability to give life." (p. 83)

When I spoke with some feminist artists here in Vancouver, most of them had mixed reactions to the imagery. Colette French wondered where the baby was. Surely the ecstasy of birthing is a

result of having produced a baby! I think that this criticism is justified. The baby is almost absent from Chicago's vision of the birthing process. Even in the piece entitled *Birth*, instead of a baby we are presented with a large uterus and a small fetus.

In both *Birth Trinity* and *Thou Art the Mother Womb*, the babies are represented by grown figures well past the baby stage. In the former, a figure represents both the child being born and the midwife who is helping and supporting the mother. In *Birth Certificate*, a highly symbolic work, we see "potato babies" standing for both babies and the staple food in the German Pennsylvania culture. These are caricatures rather than real evocations of babies. The relationship between mother and baby is not adequately dealt with.

Colette French also criticizes *The Birth Project* for failing to show how childbirth

should be, but rather concentrating on the pain and the smothering or draining aspects of it. This is evident in pieces like *Swaddled Figure*, a featureless, mummy-like pregnant woman, and *Captured by the Species Burden*.

Another side of Chicago's imagery that personally bothers me is the romanticizing of motherhood through Goddess and Mother Earth imagery. Although I realize that Chicago is trying to show the mythical and celebratory nature of birth, I believe that depicting women primarily as nurturers or as super-beings is saying they are something they are not.

Referring to *Earth Birth*, Chicago writes: "For a long time I struggled to

portray the landscape as I perceived it—as female in form. In this piece, women, nature, and power are fused” (p. 99). Personally, I reject the idea of the land as female. For me it is no more female than male. The gigantic *Creation of the Universe* needlepoint piece with its fish, birds, turtles and bugs flying or crawling about a woman’s body struck me as cartoon-like. Its bright, clashing colours recalled some of the ghastly “psychedelic” art of the ’60s.

Very similar is *Creation of the World* with its primordial scenes and small animals. The only thing that saves this piece, in my opinion, is the incredible beauty of the needlework by Jane Gaddie Thompson. By quilting in delicate colours and embroidering in silk and metallic thread, Thompson transforms an inferior image into a work of art.

In fact, all of the exquisite needlework on display is what obviously makes this artistic endeavor a success. Each work of art is utterly breathtaking, not so much by virtue of the imagery but because of the virtuosity of the artist doing the work. Chicago, herself, in her book on *The Birth Project* writes about the superb skill of the needleworkers and of how the various techniques they use soften her stark images and bring them to life. The techniques include weaving, quilting, needlepoint, crocheting, appliqué, batique, embroidery, macramé, smocking, and many others.

The process

I was very glad to see that Chicago corrected one of the criticisms of *The Dinner Party*, the anonymity of the artists who interpreted her ideas, by including in the exhibition extensive documentation of the stitchers. There were pictures of these artists, short biographies, and some analysis of the process each one went through in doing the work.

Many women who view *The Birth Project* are bothered by certain aspects of the process by which it was produced. One problem is summarized by the Teaneck Seven, a group of needleworkers from New Jersey:

“We all feel that there’s an element of exploitation involved in this project; there’s no way for Judy to get it done without volunteers. No stitchers are paid and many aren’t even having their materials paid for” (p. 13).

At first, Chicago offered the needleworkers a contract ensuring that the works would be jointly owned and they would split the profits if any were sold. A few months later, Chicago decided to put the whole project into *Through the Flower*, a nonprofit organization, in order to be

eligible for grants and donations. This meant that no one would be paid, a change which initially upset some of the needleworkers. The Teaneck Seven expressed this concern but also felt that the rewards outweighed the sacrifices.

“Ultimately we determined that it was exploitation for a good cause... We decided that any personality differences we might have with the artist were less important than the art work itself and the goal of bringing images of birth to the public” (p. 113).

Most of the needleworkers were thrilled to have their work recognized as art, to have a forum for using their skills creatively. They were excited by the opportunity to share with and learn from other women.

This art-making process reminds me of the Renaissance apprentice system in that the apprentices worked simply for the privilege of learning from a renowned artist. However, the women who were chosen for *The Birth Project* were already accomplished stitchers and were in fact selected on that basis.

Work was reviewed at two or three month intervals, and many of the needleworkers criticized Chicago’s insensitive behaviour when pointing out flaws in the work. Anne Gibson, a Vancouver artist who embroidered a piece called *Thou Art The Mother Womb*, makes this point but also stresses the positive outcomes of the reviews:

“She yelled a lot... the person responsible for the mistake rather than the deed itself was subjected to a very hard calling down... This quickly passed into constructive criticism” (p. 169).

Judy Chicago admits that “ego struggles, disappointments and tears were not uncommon” (p. 164). Her perception of the stitchers during reviews is that they were too sensitive and over-reacted.

“If I was pleased with their work, they were elated. If I was critical, they were devastated” (p. 164).

This problem she attributes to the lack of professionalism of the needleworkers.

At first, Chicago handed out blueprints or photocopies of her designs plus the fabric. Later she controlled the pieces more tightly by giving out hand drawn, hand painted, colour coded projects. She decided that allowing the needleworkers to transpose the patterns onto the fabric resulted in inferior work.

Ultimately, Chicago was the expert or “star artist.” She decided whether the work was acceptable or whether it had to be redone.

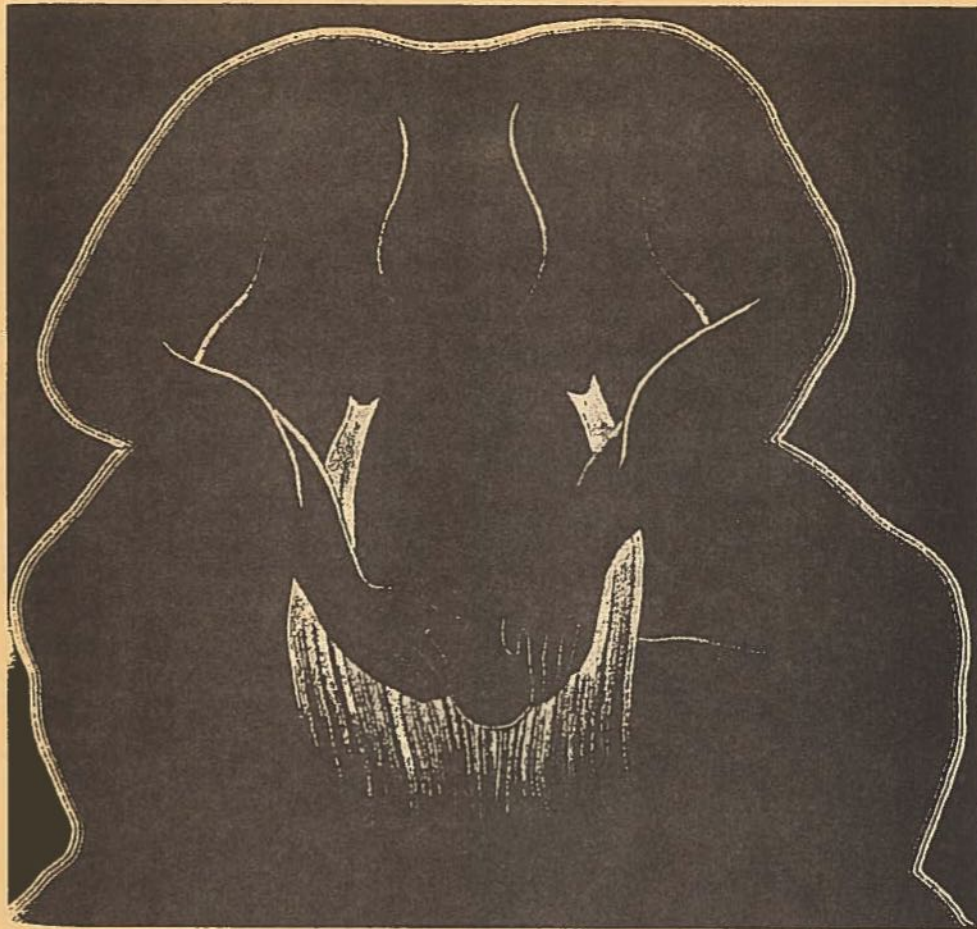
From her home in New Zealand to Sally Babson, technical supervisor, Pippa Davies writes:

“Could you please reverse your decision about the reverse appliqué?... I know that the concept and design are Judy’s and that she is a major artist. But I am

continued over



Captured by the Species Burden



Birth Power

Continued from page 17

more than a pair of hands pushing a needle... so please do not reject my ideas out of hand." (p. 95).

In this case, there is a pleasant ending. Chicago writes back:

"... we are happy to tell you that we are wrong and are thrilled that you stuck up for yourself." (p. 95).

But there were other conflicts less easy to resolve where Chicago's opinion prevailed and the needleworker just had to accept her verdict.

In her book, Chicago justifies her role of director by pointing to her many years as an artist gaining valuable visual experience. She feels that her "high level of esthetic development" earned for her the right to be the judge and that she was not just falling back on erroneous "male standards."

"There is nothing wrong with the standards of excellence we have inherited from men as long as... [they] do not carry with them the idea that the experience of women is inappropriate to art." (p. 164).

The feminist artists with whom I spoke in Vancouver react strongly against

this "masculine mode" of thinking. They insist that one of the positions of the women's movement is to reject the idea of putting one's career before everything else and seeing oneself as somehow better than others for having done so. They see Chicago as a middle class feminist who acted as a self-appointed, somewhat dictatorial manager.

The needleworkers, on the other hand, often expressed appreciation of Chicago's leadership. *Libby Vincent, Texas:*

"Her dynamic organizational abilities were evidenced in the way she directed the flow of discussion and drew people out" (p. 67).

Chrissie Clap, California:

"Working with Judy changed a lot of perceptions I had about how people become artists. It has to do with far more than talent. It has to do with vision, perseverance and dedication... I have gained more self confidence, especially in relation to trusting my own judgement." (p. 39).

I agree with those feminists who have pointed out these problems with the process. We live in an exploitive, capitalist world and are shaped by its

values. Women's oppression springs from those warped values which serve the system. It is no surprise that Chicago and the stitchers have been unable to escape completely from the sexist, hierarchical society in which we live.

In so far as *The Birth Project* makes an artistic expression of a universal female experience accessible to women, art has been "democratized." But until the women doing the work are able to share equally in the rewards, until they can direct their own creative process or function as true equals in the collaborative process, then the art-making cannot be said to be completely democratic.

Despite the difficulties inherent in the process and my reservations about certain images, I have to ask myself, am I glad that *The Birth Project* was created? The answer is a resounding and very grateful "Yes!" It is a stimulating series of works that promotes women's lives and women's art from a feminist perspective.

♀

Abortion: The Great Evasion

by Eileen Robinson

The Big Evasion—Abortion, the Issue That Won't Go Away

by Anne Collins, published by Lester & Orpen Dennys, 277 pages.

This book contains all you ever wanted to know, had forgotten or wanted to forget, and things you probably never *did* know about the abortion issue. Anne Collins documents and recalls the 15 years of struggle to change the existing laws. She recounts in a dramatic way the scope of events that have raged and continue to rage around what is termed the "abortion debate." She records actual abortions, recalls the police raids and the court battles, the political background and the tactics of both sides.

Starting questions

She states that she began the book with two reactions to the subject of abortion. The first was that it is every woman's right to choose whether and when to bear a child, and the second was that she personally could never have an abortion.

She expected to be asked where she stood when she started her research for the book, and she expected to have an answer. What was unexpected was that in the course of her research a good many people asked why she was bothering to write the book at all. Many people thought that everything about abortion had been said and that her initial reactions were reflections of the arguments—stale and polar opposites. They had heard too much about abortion in the daily media.

Authorities hiding

As her work on this issue progressed, she realised that everyone involved has something from which to hide. Politicians are frozen. The justice system is attempting to enforce an unworkable and unjust law, and despite the fact that juries continue to acquit Morgentaler, no one is daring to enact a better law.

The medical profession wishes that someone would take the whole matter off its hands. Collins reasons that doctors are trained to combat illness, not to arbitrate ethics.

What are the ideals?

Abstractions are particularly attractive to the anti-abortionists: the abstract innocence of the unborn child. For pro-choice activists, the abortion issue never quite flips into the broader category of reproductive rights. Women really want control of their reproductive systems, including safe methods of contraception and access to government funded Women's Health Clinics. These clinics should handle the whole range of gynecological concerns, from family planning to information about and treatment of venereal disease to abortion by choice.

The male flagbearers

The book progresses through 15 years of events which I found fascinating. Collins recounts her interviews with both Joe Borowski, the anti-abortionist, and with Dr. Henry Morgentaler. Joe Borowski, ex-N.D.P. cabinet minister, is now an anti-abortion crusader. He wears a little gold cross to hold his tie in place and a "precious feet" pin—the tiny soles of a ten-week embryo's feet—in his lapel.

Dr. Morgentaler tells her of his disappointment with one constituency he thought he could rely on, the Manitoba N.D.P. government. He finds it obstructive and at best ambivalent toward him. Roland Penner holds fast to his premise that he must uphold the law. Morgentaler counters that Penner is either a coward or, now that he has some power, he believes in sacrificing principles for pragmatism.

Anne Collins goes further and accuses the N.D.P. men of political schizophrenia. Abortion makes N.D.P. men uncomfortable.

She tells of two sides of Dr. Morgentaler. One is the smart aleck who insists that he's heard it all before and nothing bores him more than listening to lawyers while his fate hangs in the balance. The other Dr. Morgentaler is a passionate orator who has told a Winnipeg court that it is his intention to establish a free standing clinic to fill a medical need in Manitoba.

Abortion and antifeminist backlash

The book traces the emergence of R.E.A.L. Women. Collins describes her

first meeting with Gwendolyn Lanclot, the Phyllis Schlafly of Canada, whom she depicts as sharp, tough and physically imposing—a potent politician. There is an interview with Laura McArthur, president of Campaign Life, the largest and most traditional of the right-to-life educational groups in Canada. The interview was like "walking on eggs." McArthur describes herself and her colleagues as the "salt of the earth" and pro-choicers as feminists who attract weirdos. "Feminism is a marginal movement," McArthur states. She announces that her cause is "the protection of innocent life."

The Big Evasion is a history lesson and a totally engrossing one. Reluctant to put it down until I had finished, I became by turns angry, sad, reflective. The final chapter, entitled "Decisions," recounts actual abortions and their effect on the women involved, through to her argument on how we might resolve the pro-choice/anti-choice conflict. You may agree or disagree, but this book has a place on the bookshelves of all concerned women.

♀

continued from page 7

Prostitution: an answer to poverty

Poverty is the oldest condition of women. Men have controlled society and therefore have created the conditions in which women have had to turn to prostitution to survive. This is truer today than ever before as the gap between rich and poor widens.

Prostitute women are told constantly that there are other poor women who have not turned to prostitution and that it is an unacceptable way to make a living. But men are the consumers with the money. Men also make the laws and set the social standards. It is ironic that the same men who outlawed prostitution in Kenya, Canada, or the U.S.A. are the ones who frequent the women in the business, or who take payoffs. Is it maybe because they don't want the women out from under their control?

Throughout the conference we heard from women organizing around prostitution, whether for prostitutes' rights, or against female sexual slavery. Their reply to the question, "What alternatives do women have?" was without exception the same. "None." The next question is, do we continue to fight at cross purposes, or do we work together and address the real problem, the poverty of women? Surely everyone has the right to live a life without hunger and deprivation.

Letters to Priorities

Dear Sisters:

It's about time I got around to renewing my sub and letting you all know I'm still alive and thinking of you. It's a bit difficult to keep in touch with the issues in B.C. and Canada; not much is featured on Zimbabwean news media (though there was an interview with Walter Maclean, the Minister of State for Women's Affairs, after he attended the Nairobi conference...!?!). Maclean's also carries little that isn't distorted or sensational or both, so I really need my *Priorities*—sorry I left it so long. This should be a Year's sub so use the rest for a donation, though with the jump in postage rates there may not be much left. The brown envelopes are a necessity; I've lost one or two along the way in the mail. Perhaps theft is the sincerest form of interest!

I had hoped to get up to Nairobi but didn't make it; another WUSC'er in Harare (was active in Ottawa Network, Pat Petralla) did and I'll check with her. The Minister for Women's Affairs said in a speech yesterday that "women were free to do anything they want so long as

it's in line with government policy", and she's quite feminist by local standards. Comrade Sally (Mugabe, wife of PM) came back from a visit to Malawi saying how much women could learn from their sisters there about unity and unquestioning support for the government (!) We're required to be fairly quiet here, so discussions among my classes (99% women) of apprentices re—women in non-traditional jobs and keeping one's own name is about as much as I do. Still, we have good discussions with individuals, but feel irrelevant, being white, an odd sensation!

Maxine Boag of CARAL in Victoria arrives this month for a 3-year contract, so I expect to catch up a bit. Best of luck to all of you—will look forward to an article about the convention. Last issue I got was May '85; very good on Tech Change and the Charter of Rights. La Luta Continua!

Sharon Hazelwood
Box 399
Kwekwe, Zimbabwe

Still Sane

Press Gang Publishers is pleased to announce the fall publication of *Still Sane*, a book of photographs and writings based on the sculpture series by Persimmon Blackbridge and Sheila Gilhooly. *Still Sane* documents the three years Sheila spent in mental institutions for being a lesbian. Though many of the images are painful and disturbing, the overriding theme of *Still Sane* is one of defiance and survival. In a world where we are kept in line with the often unstated threat of being locked up, it is important to know that we can maintain our choices and our identity in the face of psychiatric oppression.

To produce a book of this nature at an affordable price, we need your help. If you can make a donation, assist with fundraising, or would like to receive more information about this project, contact Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1H2.

BOYCOTT SUNKIST LEMONS

Seaboard Lemon Association is a lemon packinghouse in Oxnard, California, that employs approximately 200 people. Jobs are segregated according to sex. All women, except for the office secretaries, are classified as washer/packers. Ten of the washer/packer are paid ten cents more per hour because they operate machinery or have other skills; all others are paid \$5.45 per hour, even after 20 or 30 years working there. All supervisors, leadmen, mechanics, mechanics helpers, forklift operators, pallet lift operators, shipping clerks, watchmen, and receivers are male. All these jobs are paid higher wages, and receive "merit" and seniority wage increases. There are also 46 men classified as general labor. Only one man is paid less than the \$5.45 paid to the women washer/packers.

In recent years Seaboard Lemon Association and Sunkist have introduced machinery to do much of the work done by the women. Almost all the women with less than ten years experience have been laid off or terminated, but Seaboard is still hiring new, inexperienced men without even offering the work to the women.

On May 30, 1985, the Seaboard employees voted to file a lawsuit for sex discrimination, and to initiate a boycott.

Because conditions are the same in the other Sunkist Lemon packing houses, a number of community groups, women's organizations, and concerned individuals have formed the *Sunkist Boycott Committee* and pledged to continue a boycott of all Sunkist Lemons until the lawsuit is settled or won.

You can help the workers in Sunkist packinghouses win justice.

- Notify your organization's membership about the boycott.
- Send an official letter from your organization to Sunkist, telling them you support the boycott:
Mr. Russell Hanlin
Sunkist Growers Inc.
P.O. Box 7888
Van Nuys CA 91409
Please send a copy to:
Alicia Sanchez
Sunkist Boycott Committee
236 E. Birch St.
Oxnard CA 93033
- Send a letter yourself, as an individual.
- Contact other organizations in your community, and ask them to endorse the boycott.
- Support our costs. We need money to pay for legal costs, paper, and printing.



**"Looking Forward,
Reaching Back"
Women's Archives
In Canada Project**

The Canadian Women's Movement Archives has been collecting material on the women's movement in Canada since 1977. The

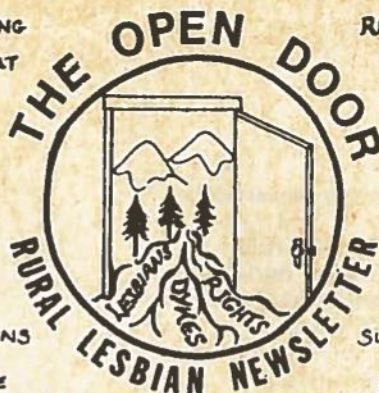
bulk of archival material, though is being saved by individuals and women's groups across the country.

During the next year, the CWMA will be researching and compiling a directory of Women's Archival Collections in Canada. A collective member will be travelling across the country to meet with individuals and women's groups.

If you or your organization have any material on the women's movement in Canada, please contact the CWMA. Help ensure that our history is saved.

Canadian Women's Movement Archives
P.O. Box 928, Stn P, Toronto, Ont. M4T 2P1 (416) 597-8865

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**Sullivan - Lemay
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On July 12, 1985, two of BC's practicing midwives were charged with criminal negligence and practicing medicine without a license. The Maternal Health Society and the Homebirth Support Group are working together to raise funds to cover the midwives' legal fees. Your financial support is crucial! Please make cheques payable to:

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Marianne Brorup Weston 1984.

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