

SISTERHOOD

Sisterhood, Volume 21, No.3

WOMEN FOR
UNIONISM,
SOLIDARITY



Diversity, generally understood and embraced, is not casual liberal tolerance of anything and everything not yourself. It is not polite accommodation. Instead, diversity is, in action, the sometimes-painful awareness that other people, other races, other voices, other habits of mind, have as much integrity of being, as much claim on the world as you do.... And I urge you, amid all the differences present to the eye and mind, to reach out to create the bond that....will protect us all.

**WE ARE MEANT TO BE HERE
TOGETHER.**

-----from "The Language of Action"



SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

The British Columbia **Human Rights Code** entitles every worker the right to an employment environment that is free of sexual harassment.

In August 1995, Sister Andrea Wallis filed a formal complaint of sexual harassment with the Human Rights Commission of British Columbia against her boss, Mr. Robin Blencoe. Andrea was Mr. Blencoe's assistant. The complaint was accepted to proceed to an investigation.

In January 1998, Mr. Blencoe appealed to the Supreme Court of BC on the basis of

the length of time it took for the case to be heard by the BC Human Rights Commission. The Court's decision was that the case should proceed to a hearing as originally intended.

In March 1998, Mr. Blencoe appealed the above decision. On May 11, 1998, the BC Court of Appeal ruled that the Commission and Human Rights Tribunal's thirty-month delay in dealing with this case was unacceptable and infringed on Mr. Blencoe's constitutional rights.

It is believed that the decision of the BC Court of Appeal has national significance, not only for workers fighting against sexual harassment in the workplace, but by anyone who has a case before Human Rights Commissions through Canada.

Sister Wallis took her case to the BC Human Rights Commission to seek justice for the harassment she experienced in her work environment. This should be simple enough but the BC Court of Appeal decision means that Andrea has to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada to regain a basic right. Andrea deserves the right to have her story told.

Andrea and her family have incurred significant legal costs due to the appeal hearings. She has until August 10, 1998 to raise enough money for more legal costs as she proceeds to the Supreme



Court of Canada to have the above-mentioned decision appealed.

If you would like to support Andrea in her struggle against sexual harassment and would like to make a donation or need more information, contact:

**Women's Defence Fund Society, #506 –
1039 View Street, Victoria, BC V8V 4V6
e-mail: womensdefence@uvss.uvic.ca**

SEX AND POLITICS IN LABOUR UNIONS (by Dr. Suzanne Franzway)

"Sexuality is everywhere. It is the most obvious aspect of gender relations, yet the study of sexuality within work organizations is largely neglected. The literature on trade unionism pays little attention to either gender relations or sexuality. The trade union movement has been dominated by men numerically, culturally and hierarchically throughout its history." Copies of Dr. Franzway's paper are available from the women's department of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

Dr. Suzanne Franzway from the Centre for Gender Studies, Magill Campus, University of South Australia, will be in Vancouver during the week of July 6-12.

SHE WILL BE A GUEST AT THE SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR UNION WOMEN, JULY 8-12 AT BCIT.

Dr. Franzway is a lecturer in Gender Studies /Sociology and a long-term activist in her own union. She is conducting follow-up research on women officials in the labour movement - "Gender and Power" - and is interested in meeting and speaking to women about sexual politics in union organizations, policies, practices, and how union women officials manage

the rest of their lives, such as home life and private lives.

She would also like to have an opportunity to interview other union activists - staff or elected - on the above issues.



MARIANNE GILBERT SCHOLARSHIP (Summer Institute for Union Women)

The Marianne Gilbert Scholarship, which is awarded each year to a female trade unionist in BC, was established in Marianne's memory as a fitting testimonial to Marianne's joint commitment to the women's movement and the labour movement. It is funded by donations from persons whose lives she touched profoundly.

Marianne was also a devoted mother to three boys, Eliot, Oliver and Lars, and a wife and companion to Cliff Andstein. She was a professional who excelled in her field; she worked as an audiologist for twenty years at the Jericho School for the Deaf. At work she acted as steward for her union, the BCGEU, and as a mentor and dear friend to her co-workers.

To the best of anyone's memory, Marianne was the first woman rank-and-file member to chair a Federation Committee other than the Women's Committee. She chaired the Occupational Health & Safety Committee.

Marianne was also the first chair of the NDP's Standing Committee on Women's Rights. She was instrumental in its formation in 1971, and remained active in the Committee for many years. Her dedication to women's rights issues carried on throughout her life, and at her death, contributions in her memory to the

year 2000. Almost 300 women's groups in 56 countries are already participating in the project and we hope that your group will join them.

In a world where -- no matter where we live -- violence against women is a daily reality and poverty is making women increasingly vulnerable, global action and solidarity-building are important. Women everywhere are struggling for equality, development and peace. The World March of Women is a stimulating global action that will mark the new millennium by demonstrating women's continuing determination to change the world!

For more information, contact Nancy Burrows, Internal Communications and Outreach, World March of Women 2000

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Montreal, Quebec H2J 2S4
By Phone: (514) 948-5995
By Fax: (514) 948-3264
email: lmarche2000@ffq.qc.ca



UPCOMING EVENTS:

CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS

1st National Aboriginal/Workers of Colour Conference
"Challenging Racism: Mobilizing Political Power for Radical Change"
The Delta Hotel, Montreal, Quebec
September 24 - 27, 1998
Registration fee: \$150

For more information:

Phone: (613) 521-3400 (ext. 262)
FAX: (613) 521-3113
email: lmaunders@clc-ctc.ca

**CELEBRATE NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK
OCTOBER 5 - 11, 1998**

**Theme: Family Can Be the Greatest
Source of Comfort in the World**

National Family Week is an opportunity for us to reflect on this important institution and its impact on our lives and society. Take time to celebrate our parents, grandparents, children and other family members during National Family Week.

**For information, contact Family Service
Canada, Phone: (613) 722-9006,
Fax: (613) 722-8610**

**BC EMPLOYMENT EQUITY
PRACTITIONERS ASSOCIATION
Employment Equity Conference**

"Roots for the Future"
Bayshore Hotel, Vancouver
October 13 - 14, 1998

**ASSOCIATION FOR THE TREATMENT
OF SEXUAL ABUSERS (ATSA)
17th Annual Research & Treatment
Conference**
**"The Battle Without Borders:
Confronting Sexual Abuse in Today's
World"**

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver
October 14 - 17, 1998

Everywoman's Health Centre Society exceeded \$4,000.00.

Besides her family, her friends, her work, her politics, Marianne had other sources of delight: she loved to garden, to play in the sun, to take pictures (she was an accomplished photographer), to read, to grow. At the time of her death, she was enrolled in a water colours course that she was unable to complete. She was ever an optimist and was loved by many, many people.

Thank you to everyone who sent in applications for the Marianne Gilbert Scholarship. Congratulations to this year's winner, Marva Vidal of the Hospital Employees' Union.

WEST COAST LEAF SPEAKERS BUREAU

Learn how women are using the law to improve the lives of girls and women in Canada. West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) is a non-profit, charitable organization providing trained volunteer speakers to address your group on LEAF's work. Since 1985, LEAF has used the Charter of Rights in over 100 cases to achieve significant changes for women and families in Canada.

In the history of the Speakers Bureau Program, West Coast LEAF has addressed a wide variety of audiences, including women's business organizations, professional groups and conferences, high schools, private and service clubs and corporations.

The purpose of LEAF is to fight sex discrimination cases, advocate change of discriminatory legislation and educate the public about equality rights issues. LEAF

is an organization specifically created to act as an intervenor or interest group in test cases before Canadian courts speaking out for women's equality.

If your group would like to host a West Coast LEAF speaker, please contact: Denise Rogers, Education Coordinator Phone: 684-8772 or FAX: 684-1543

PUBLIC SERVICE ALLIANCE CANADA (PSAC) LESBIAN AND GAY SUPPORT GROUP

We invite you to participate with us in the planning for a bigger than ever union presence in this year's Pride Parade in Vancouver on August 2nd, 1998.

We want to celebrate our community, our union activism and solidarity and our diversity and have fun. As well as our union banners this year, we'd like to have a float that all unions can help plan, decorate and ride. Thousands of people watch the Parade every year and it will be a wonderful opportunity to make unions' support of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered rights visible.

If you are interested in sending a representative to a planning meeting or participating in any other way, please contact:

**Luc Guevremont (604) 669-0758
Diana Smith (604) 876-1465**

WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN 2000

We are delighted to be writing to your group about the World March of Women in the Year 2000. You have perhaps already heard of this huge education and action project involving women's movements around the world that is planned for the

**For more information, contact Steve
Sharlow in Vancouver:**

Phone: (604) 891-0210

Fax: (604) 685-8993

email: ssharlow@compuserve.com

**CONFERENCE ON WORKPLACE
SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

London, Ontario

November 19 and 20, 1998

Registration fee: \$100

Endorsed by the Ontario Federation of
Labour.

**For more information, contact Barbara
MacQuarrie at (519) 439-0844.**

**B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR
43rd CONVENTION**

Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre
Vancouver, BC

November 23 - 27, 1998

Convention Hotel: Hyatt Regency

Look for more upcoming events in future
issues of Sisterhood.

Don't forget to visit us on the Website
[Http://www.bcfed.com](http://www.bcfed.com) or e-mail us at
bcfed@bc.sympatico.ca