

# PRIORITIES

the feminist ♀ voice in a socialist movement

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## *Free Trade:*

## *A Bad Deal for Canadian Women*

### *Also in this issue:*

- *Dismantling the  
Post Office*

- *Abortion Update*

- *South Africa*

- *Women Candidates*



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## Letter from the Editor

First, my apologies to all for a late issue—but we will (hopefully) be going to press twice more before the year is out.

You will notice some changes this issue. The format is changed somewhat, and we have added what we hope will become regular columns that you will grow to look forward to—film and book reviews, interviews and political comment.

*Priorities* will also be accepting advertising from women, so if you have a business or profession that needs advertising look on page 21.

This issue focuses on "Free" Trade (or, in the vernacular, the "Mulroney Trade Deal") and the potential impact on women's lives—both at home and in their workplaces.

Also included are brief interviews with two of our federal candidates, Lynn Hunter (Saanich Gulf Islands) and Donna Stewart (North Vancouver). We hope you are inspired enough to get out and work for one of them—or send money!

On page 20 you will find a reader's poll. We sincerely hope you will take the time to complete and return it. Your comments will help us give you more of what you want to see in *Priorities*.

I would like to express thanks to those committee members who spent long hours pulling together *Priorities* in 1987. Special thanks goes to Janet Vesterback, past *Priorities* coordinator for her dedication.

As mentioned, our committee fully hopes to get two more issues to press this year. Our intended focus for these issues will be the Environment, and Minority Women in B.C. Please feel free to contact me personally to discuss any ideas (articles, photos, graphics) you have on these or any other topics.

*Kathy Hill*

## Chair's Report

*by Ann Frost*

### Gender parity: still a problem

For the second year, the Women's Rights Committee has collected statistics on gender parity in constituency association executives. And, despite a Provincial Council recommendation in 1987 that constituencies initiate affirmative action programmes and actively seek out women for executive positions, little has changed. Men still greatly outnumber women as presidents, vice presidents and council delegates. Women predominate in the positions of secretary, membership secretary, and alternate delegate (see table).

As this report is being written, it is clear that fewer than ten women will be running as federal candidates for the NDP in B.C., a number far below the hoped for fifty percent. This imbalance must be changed.

While little can be done about the nominations for the upcoming federal election, perhaps we need to set our sights now on the next provincial election and the following federal election. The newly formed Civic New Democrats in Vancouver have given us an excellent example. Their constitution *requires* gender parity in nominations for municipal office. If good intentions are not creating the change that must occur, perhaps its time to look at other methods.

At the constituency level, we must make affirmative action a priority. Some constituencies have had success with paired positions. That is, if the president is a man, the vice president must be a woman, and similarly with secretary and membership secretary. Others alternate from year to year. Whatever action we take, we must continue to encourage women to become involved and must support those who do. It is this level of experience which will prepare women, as it has men, for other leadership roles in the party, and for the first step into the public arena.

In an effort to eliminate at least one of the barriers that limit the participation of women, the Women's Rights Committee brought the following motion to the last Provincial Council:

Be it resolved that where people serve on local, provincial constituency or federal riding executives, or chair or are members of committees, their child care costs be subsidized in whole or in part by local associations, by constituency associations or by federal riding associations.

The motion passed unanimously.

Since then, the Women's Rights Committee has asked the Provincial Executive to inform all provincial constituencies of the resolution and to put the issue on their next agenda to urge Executive members to work for im-

Gender Breakdown of Provincial Constituency Table Officers

	1988		1987	
	% Men	% Women	% Men	% Women
Presidents	82	18	71	29
Secretaries	28	72	17	83
Treasurers	50	50	45	55
Membership Secretaries	23	77	25	75
Council Delegates	71	29	65	35
Alt. Council Delegates	46	54	70	30
Vice-Presidents	65	35	70	30



plementation of this recommendation at the constituency level.

After this year, municipal elections in B.C. will only be held every two years. So, as well as encouraging women to become involved at the constituency level, we need to urge women throughout the province to consider running for municipal office, and to see that experience as possible preparation for future provincial or federal service.

### Goals and objectives

One major objective for the WRC for the upcoming year is to support our women candidates both municipally and federally. Our women's organizer, Vicki Robinson, is already working with the federal women candidates and will step up her involvement once the writ is dropped. She will also be a resource to all party candidates around women's issues, so that we can be sure they will form a central part of all campaigns.

Another major objective is to look at the impact on the WRC of the addition of regional representatives. The report of our Task Force on Regional Representation was endorsed by the Women's

Caucus at Convention. We now have representatives and alternates from six of the eight regions. Vancouver-Richmond and the North are not currently represented because their elected members have moved to other regions. Suggestions for replacements would be very welcome!

The current regional representatives have formed a subcommittee chaired by Kathy Sommers and Maureen Kalynchuk to develop a role and function statement for discussion at the September Steering Committee meeting. (September 24, 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at the Provincial Office)

### Outreach

The WRC focus on outreach which was so successful last year is continuing. Members of the WRC Executive participated with our women MLAs in a Women's Conference in Nanaimo in June and plans are underway for other similar events in the fall.

### Women's Caucus

The new WRC Executive travelled to Victoria in early June to meet with our

women MLAs and to consider how we can best work together around women's issues. We had a general discussion of our respective goals and objectives and plan to meet again early in the fall to look at more specific activities.

### Appreciations

It seems appropriate to conclude my first report as Women's Rights Committee chair by expressing a number of appreciations. First, to the members of the current committee and to those who have served in the past: it is your efforts which have made the Women's Rights Committee a significant force in the life of our party.

Particular thanks should go to Adrienne Peacock, our past chair, who led the Committee through a year which saw us work on the issue of pay equity, grapple with the Meech Lake Accord, and confront Bill Vander Zalm on the issue of reproductive choice. And also to our Women's Organizer, Vicki Robinson, whose energy and commitment are major factors in the work we accomplish and whose support I personally find invaluable. ♀

searched, we investigated the distribution system, and we made a lot of public noise, including a brief to the Fraser Committee, at which time we identified Pattison's company, Mainland Magazines, as one of the main distributors.

That was women working together. It was a woman retailer who told us about it. It was a woman in Pattison's organization who got us their printout of the kinds of things they circulated. Women in the media made sure it was properly covered.

That must have been 1984, and from that we got the B.C. Periodical Review Board which has limited the amount of material and the kind of material being circulated in the province. Our board is effective in a way that the Ontario board is not, because we learned from the Ontario experience. We insisted that the board should be half women, it should be nominated by the community, not the industry, and there should be rotating terms. I serve on that board now.

I had taught English and had believed in artistic freedom. However, pornography is a form of propaganda. There is very little content, there are images and slogans and there are a lot of hidden messages about women—that their function is basically sexual, that they are here to please men. Women are presented in a vile way, as something almost sub-human. That is the way propaganda works: pornography justifies all sorts of things, including paying women 60% of what you pay men. So I see it as one of the tools of capitalism and male domination.

I served as well on the Pornography Committee for the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. The most fun thing we did, in one memorable month, December of 1984, was to get *Penthouse* off the shelves before the media found out about it. *Penthouse* is still in the courts over that one, so it's cost them a lot of money.

The other positive thing that came out of the anti-pornography campaign was a much improved Motion Picture Act. The industry likes it because it has appeal processes, it doesn't cost the taxpayer anything, and the possibility exists of refusing a video solely because it's too violent, even if it's not a combination of sex and violence.

We haven't succeeded in getting an

improved Criminal Code. The Conservative government has tried twice and both times the bills were so bad that even the Vancouver Coalition against Pornography couldn't support them. I think it was deliberate. They could write a good bill if they wanted to. It's typical of what happens to women's concerns in Ottawa. They stall. They stalled on rape legislation for a long time.

Late in 1984 I made contact with a new women's organization called the Women's Skills Development Society. They had published a manual on women's work called "Tools for Change." When the provincial government wouldn't fund a reprinting, they got their copyright back and formed a non-profit society with three basic projects: research and education around the impact of technology on women's work; a community economic development project where they look at community economic development as a way for women to take more control of the economy in their community; and the third project is the one I'm involved in. It's basic education for women around work.

We've done various things for teens on the subject of women and work; we've had a conference on women in the economy, a career fair, career planning seminars; just anything we can think of to inform women that the Cinderella myth is not the way our lives will go in the late part of the twentieth century.

Why the New Democrats? I really didn't feel that I had a choice. I had been telling women that if they don't like the way the systems are treating women they should get involved politically. I saw the NDP as the party that cared about the little person. These were politicians who has a real sense of justice: they were not just out to get rich. I saw it as a party of intelligent, thoughtful, responsible people who knew what they believed and why they believed it. That was really the only choice for me.

My personal priorities would certainly be equal pay, human rights, day care, particularly education and training for employment, because women are the ones who are being discriminated against when they cut back on the Canadian Job Strategy Funding. It was brought in in '85 and was meant to move training to the private sector. There are some good things about it, one being

daycare allowances for women who need child care while they take training. But the training is for only six months so it's training for low level, badly paid, unstable work.

I would want first of all to stop the bleeding because the financial arrangements have just been cut, cut, cut.

Secondly I would want to make sure that the training being offered was more substantial because at the moment it's being offered by some commercial outfits that don't know anything about how to design training. They're not really serious about training. They're serious about collecting the money for running the programmes.

The trade deal is going to be bad for women in a number of ways. Small manufacturing will certainly suffer and women are employed in small manufacturing. Worse than that, these women are often women whose first language is not English and they're older women. It's not going to be easy to retrain them. This government has done a very bad job with the older unemployed. That would be another of my targets, because the government hasn't paid attention to the fact that if you're unemployed at forty-five now, you may never get another job, but you don't qualify for a pension until you're sixty.

The trade deal will affect women by reducing all the social benefits that can make life a little more livable. Unemployment insurance and maternity benefits in particular can be seen as subsidies by American employers. I think that we're at a moment of choice. We can become the kind of country where a few people are very, very, very rich and a lot of people are living from hand to mouth. That's the way we'll be going if we support this continental economic policy. My daughter lived in Chicago where about 40% of the kids aren't immunized because you have to pay for that. To preserve Medicare alone I would fight the trade deal.

I think we should learn from Hawaii's experience: they got a free trade deal because they wanted to have a market for their sugar and they became the 49th state within a relatively short time, a few decades. I think myself that Mulroney is running for governor of the fifty-first state. ♀

## Donna Stewart: Federal Candidate—North Vancouver

Photo by Stirling Ward Photographic Design



*Donna Stewart is a woman who cares. Her work is making and will make a difference in the lives of women. She has been an active crusader against pornography, has been actively involved in the North Shore Women's Centre, and has served on the executive of NAC (the National Action Committee on the Status of Women). She has done extensive research into employment and training for women and is a tireless worker on women's behalf in her position with the Women's Skills Development Society. Donna's commitment to this country is all the more focused when she thinks of the legacy she might*

*play an active part in leaving to her five children.*

We arrived in B.C. from Winnipeg in 1981. After substitute teaching for about six months, I realized that there were unlikely to be any permanent jobs; so I looked for an alternative. Since I had been involved with the Women's Centre in Winnipeg, it seemed logical to apply for the coordinator's job at the North Shore Women's Centre. For two years I coordinated volunteers in the office.

We quickly got involved in pornography when Red Hot Video installed their store down on Marine Drive. We very speedily learned that pornography was a low priority with the police, the crown, the attorney general's department and the judiciary. We picketed, we re-



# Lynn Hunter: Federal Candidate for Saanich Gulf Islands

Interview by Linda Carlson

Photo by Destrube Photography



**Priorities:** You defeated 3 others on a third ballot to win the nomination. Tell me about the nomination process.

**Lynn Hunter:** Well, that process taught me how terrifying it is to have your name front and centre. I've always spoken on behalf of issues. Our feminist consciousness teaches us that issues are more important than individuals...so it was hard during the nomination to promote myself, to have my name stand for me as an individual representing other New Democrats.

During the nomination I also learned what it means to be nurtured. In my family, I'm the one who provides emotional support and protection. I have always prided myself on being self-reliant, but during the nomination a band of women surrounded me with support. What a wonderful feeling. The terror at the beginning gave way to a feeling of being taken care of and protected. Women are always the nurturers, but all women should experience that turn-about. It was the only time in my whole life that I've felt so cared for and nurtured.

The other thing about the nomination was the difficulty I had to face when I realized that in order for me to achieve my goals I had to defeat others who share a New Democratic vision. That was alien to me because I work within a feminist framework of sisterhood. That contradiction didn't really hit me until the nomination meeting.

**Priorities:** How do you feel now about your role as a candidate?

**Lynn Hunter:** The election will be different. Once again I stand for issues; I stand for the party. I've been given "the language" to use as well as recommendations on which issues to address. I have to learn to integrate my own views and concerns with the language and direction as provided by the central campaign.

**Priorities:** How will your strong com-

mitment to feminist philosophy influence the campaign?

**Lynn Hunter:** As a feminist, I intend to take the feminist way of working...consultive, collective...into the actual campaign. It brings in expertise from a wide range of people. I'm not comfortable with the idea of one person making all campaign decisions where I am supposed to trust the political judgment of one individual instead of a group. That style erodes my confidence as a candidate. During the nomination process we were a collective, a consensus based campaign which provided me with an organic sense of why we did what we did. This is a process I hope to use throughout the campaign. I think we need to re-examine how we organize campaigns so that we can implement a structure which provides the candidate and the campaign team with the greatest degree of confidence. I know I'm not unique in feeling uneasy with the traditional campaign structure—it is something women from feminist backgrounds question.

**Priorities:** What can the party do to help women candidates?

**Lynn Hunter:** The party has already

provided help through structural support systems... Vicki Robinson (B.C. Women's Organizer) and the federal conference on Ottawa, *Taking Our Place*, but the party can also help by involving more feminist women. They validate the reasons for candidates' discomfort with process and they provide support. Overall the party has to realize we will be fundamentally different, and better, once gender parity is realized. It won't be particularly easy to meld social movement with political agenda, but nonetheless I am very hopeful about the outcome. Meeting New Democrat women from across the country at *Taking Our Place* last April filled me with hope. The generosity of spirit in accepting women who are different, look different, and have different agendas, the energy and wisdom of women all united with the common goal of furthering the participation of women...it was an inspiring weekend.

**Priorities:** What is the most important federal issue for women?

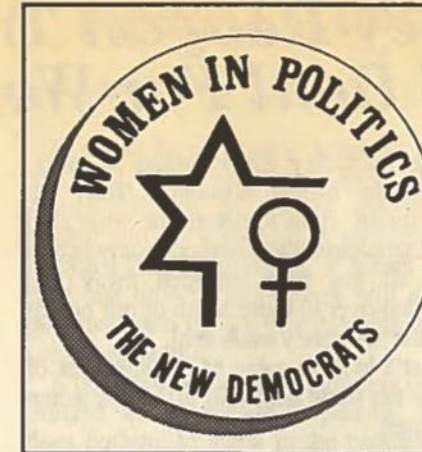
**Lynn Hunter:** The Mulroney-Reagan trade deal is the single most important issue for all women and men. It will impose a right-wing ideology and economic agenda on North America. It will irrevocably change the nature of Canada. We will become more polarized in every sense (economically, politically) and we will become less tolerant. Regional differences, historical differences, gender differences...there will be no place for these variations. Women can well imagine how it will change our lives. The increased militarization of our culture will erode those Canadian values which are feminist. It will result in a kind of economic Darwinism and women will lose in the bargain.

The abortion issue will no doubt surface during the election. It is a difficult issue for everyone. We have to remember that the question is whether or not our society is prepared to trust women and respect the decisions they make.

**Priorities:** And your personal vision?

**Lynn Hunter:** I believe our society is

searching for a new way of solving problems and conflicts. Traditional approaches and solutions aren't working. We have an opportunity, therefore, to promote the feminization of our culture. That idea might have been dismissed as silly a few years ago, but as our world hovers on the edge of global extermination people are willing to consider new perspectives. It is critical, therefore, that more feminists take their place in the House of Commons to shepherd and nurture a feminist ideology. I look forward to the challenge. ♀



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# Olga Kempo: Capilano-Howe Sound

Reprinted from the Democrat,  
July/August 1988

I'm running in this election because it's a crucial election. It is one of the most crucial elections since 1911. The real question in the next election is, "Do you want Canada to remain an independent, sovereign country?" The Mulroney trade deal is threatening our sovereignty.

I've run provincially twice but this time the danger is such that I've moved my priorities to the federal scene. The new riding of Capilano-Howe Sound includes North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton,



the most difficult riding in B.C. But you saw what happened in Boundary-Similkameen. Now every riding is a winnable riding.

You've seen the polls. You've seen that we've held our share of the voters because Ed Broadbent and the New Democrats have continued to speak out for the average Canadian. And because of those good showings this time it's Ed Broadbent for Prime Minister and me in the House!

Our party has always worked for the average Canadian and these Canadians under the Mulroney government are getting a raw deal.

Seniors got a raw deal when Mulroney tried to de-index pensions in 1985. Middle income Canadians are getting a raw deal because they are paying more than their fair share of income tax in 1988. And the Mulroney trade deal is a bad deal for Canadians.

Women's jobs will be the hardest hit if the trade deal goes through because it will hit the service industry. In B.C., 450,000 people work in the service industry, and of the new jobs created in Canada in the last 10 years 80% have been in this sector.

If this deal goes through, my Canadian home will be torn down plank by plank, brick by brick, so I'm fighting back. What about you? ♀

## Who said that?

Our feature articles on free trade begin on the next page. Here are some quotes to start you off:

"Bilateral free trade with the United States is simplistic and naive. It would only serve to further diminish our ability to compete internationally."

Michael Wilson, during Tory leadership campaign, 1983

"Unrestrained free trade with the United States raises the possibility that thousands of jobs could be lost in such critical industries as textiles, furniture and footwear. Before we jump on the bandwagon of continentalism, we should strengthen our industry structure so that we are more competitive."

Joe Clark, Tory leadership campaign, 1983

"The strategy should rely less on educating the public than on getting across the message that the trade initiative is a good idea. In other words, a selling job."

Canada-U.S. New Bilateral Trade Initiative Communications Strategy

Strategy paper prepared for the prime minister's office in August 1985



# The Mulroney-Reagan Trade Pact: A Bad Deal For Women

by Joy McPhail

In January of this year Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and U.S. President Ronald Reagan signed a trade deal that if implemented will change the way we do business, nationally and internationally, forever. Canadians will increase their economic dependence on the U.S. even more under the Mulroney trade pact—and none of the dependence is healthy. NDP leader Ed Broadbent made a dire but eminently feasible prediction when he stated that Canada was in danger of becoming the 51st American state if the trade deal goes through.

While the majority of Canadians stand to be hurt under the new so-called "Free" Trade Agreement, Canadian women will suffer disproportionately. Why? Because Brian Mulroney and then International Trade Minister Pat Carney gave absolutely no consideration during the negotiations to the special economic crisis facing women today.

The Canadian Tory team bargained away large portions of our made-in-Canada mixed economic structure that was deliberately developed to aid disadvantaged regions, minority populations and certain sectors of goods-producing businesses. The women of Canada benefitted (although not nearly as much

as is necessary for economic equality) from the mixed economy. Now, our sovereign right to determine what kind of Canadian society and economy is best for all has been stripped away and handed over to those south of our border by the Mulroney trade deal.

Let's look at some of the specifics of how the trade deal will affect Canadian women.

## Jobs

Even Conservative cabinet ministers have admitted that there will be severe job loss because of the Free Trade Agreement. When preliminary negotiations were concluded, the Minister of Employment Benoit Bouchard predicted job "displacement" (read: loss) of 500,000 Canadians. The loss will occur in areas where women are now ghettoized, so the impact will be far harsher on them than on men.

The sectors of small manufacturing, textile and clothing production, food processing, data processing and finance all stand to lose large numbers of jobs to U.S. companies. These sectors employ a majority of women. Canadian data processing firms have already lost 180,000 women's jobs to the U.S. competition and this drain will only increase rapidly as soon as the trade pact is put into place.

## Training

B.C. women who lose their jobs because of "free" trade have no guarantees from Prime Minister Mulroney or Premier Vander Zalm that they will have access to any new jobs which may be created as a result of free trade—especially if such jobs are in non-traditional areas for women. Both men say that there will be no new training programs to aid women affected by the

deal.

In the past, government-funded training programs and labour market adjustment plans have concentrated heavily on industries which employ primarily men or have streamed women into low-paying work ghettos. If these are the only support systems in place at the time the trade deal is implemented, Canadian women will suffer.

When the grape growers of the Okanagan Valley pointed out vociferously that they will lose their livelihood under the Mulroney trade pact, both the federal and provincial governments promised millions of dollars for them to help them during the transition period. That's good. But, will these same leaders offer the equivalent financial support to every woman who loses her job because of free trade? I think not.

## Social programs

In Canada we have universal medicare, unemployment insurance, family allowances, maternity benefits, old age pensions, labour standard laws and minimum wage laws. All of these social benefits are far more equitable and generous in Canada than in the U.S.

Indeed, some of these programs are virtually non-existent in America. Canadian women, who comprise the vast majority of the working poor and those on insufficient fixed incomes, rely heavily on the safety net of our social programs. They need the support to counterbalance the heartlessness of the marketplace. Is this safety net in jeopardy because of the Mulroney trade deal? You bet it is.

The trade agreement provides that over the next seven years, Canada and the U.S. will negotiate a mutually acceptable program of government subsidies. It also states that government initiatives on both sides will be "harmonized."

Already, the U.S. has challenged many of our social programs as being unfair subsidies to Canadian business and therefore in violation of free trade prin-

ciples. It is doubtful that they will take any less of a position in the upcoming round of negotiations in this area. NDP MPs have also predicted that some of our universal social programs could be "harmonized" to conform to the much lower or non-existent standards of the U.S. system.

## Childcare

Proponents of the trade deal exclaim loudly that childcare services in Canada will be unaffected by the trade pact. However, that is not so for two reasons.

In some provinces, there are actually adequate legislative provisions for childcare. (B.C. is not one of them.) Monetary subsidies are provided or government-funded childcare centres are in operation. Either of these programs could be challenged by the U.S. as being unfair under the deal.

Secondly, for-profit U.S. childcare companies now have the right under the Mulroney trade pact to claim "national treatment" if they open up shop in Canada. This means that any provincial or federal government offering support or assistance to a Canadian non-profit (or profit) childcare operator must give exactly the same treatment to a U.S. firm.

The goal of universal non-profit childcare in Canada is threatened by the trade deal.

There is no question that women will be big losers if the Mulroney trade agreement goes into effect next year. Our government will have foregone their role of speaking for and protecting the weaker in our society and will have allowed the brutality of the open marketplace to overtake the economy. In Canada, women activists have forced government to assume their obligation of counterbalancing a free market where only rich men and big business benefit. Women have been responsible for making Canadian society come closer to universal equality, both socially and economically. We cannot allow Brian Mulroney or Bill Vander Zalm to throw all of these hard-fought victories overboard.

The Mulroney trade pact is a good deal for large Canadian investors and giant U.S. corporations. It is a bad deal for Canadian women. It must be stopped.

♀

# Free Trade and Day Care

By Cathy Torhjem

To those of us closely involved with day care the news is not good. Even though billions of dollars are being poured into day care funding through the National Day Care Policy, it seems evident that little of this money will reach the grass roots level where day care is actually happening.

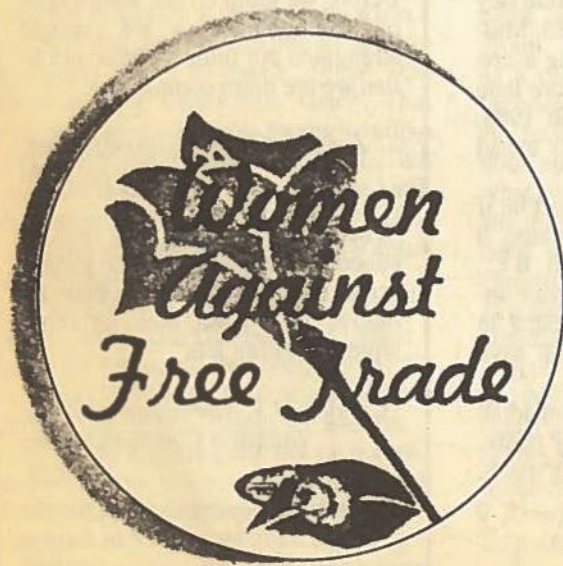
A large portion of this funding is being utilized as tax credits to parents. This does nothing to assist in the creation of new day care spaces or to help the "working poor" who do not earn enough to be eligible for tax credits.

Furthermore, this national funding is being allocated to the provinces for distribution. In British Columbia the track record for day care has been non-supportive, to say the least. Funding is only given in the form of subsidies to qualify-

ing low income parents and these subsidies do not begin to meet the actual cost of day care. (Subsidies range from \$210 to \$300 per month depending on the age of the child, while in Vancouver costs range from \$322 to \$600 per month per child—a large difference for parents to pay.)

This province has never given funding to start, maintain, or upgrade day care facilities and it does not feel it is mandated to do so. Consequently, there is little incentive for people to enter the day care field where start-up costs are high and pay is low.

When we add "free trade" the scenario worsens. There is a real concern that because of the shortage of day care spaces in Canada (in B.C. we are providing licenced care for only about one-eighth of the children who need it), American chains—McDonald's type day care—





will cross the border. The results will not be good. Because these franchises have shareholders to pay, the profits are not being put back either into the day care facility or into day care workers' salaries. At present, most people working in the day care field are paid minimum wage even though they have extensive training and experience. This poor pay means that most people stay in the day care field for a very short time. This is obviously not in the best interest of young children who need consistent nurturing and an opportunity to bond with one caregiver.

In addition, although both the federal and the provincial governments say they will ensure high standards are maintained they are not doing this now. In order to maintain these high standards

there must be frequent and consistent monitoring of day care facilities. Currently our provincial government is reducing its number of employees and day care centres and homes are only inspected if a parent lays a complaint of neglect or abuse. Thus there is no positive supervision of day care services by the agency setting the standards of care.

For the most part, day care facilities attempt to meet their community needs, planning programmes that have a flexibility to meet the needs of the children in their care. With franchised day care this flexibility and adaptability will no longer exist as programmes for children will be set in a "head office" with little regard for regional differences.

With the billions of dollars being made

available through the National Day Care Policy, the shortage of day care spaces, and the free trade climate, it is likely that we will be a target for expansion by American day care franchises. Those of us involved in the child care field and concerned about our children must continue to monitor and lobby government so that only child care of the highest quality can be allowed to operate here.

*Cathy Torhjem is a day care activist who has managed a family day care in Nanaimo for 15 years. She currently co-ordinates and team-teaches an introductory course for family caregivers, and supervises a full-time programme for native caregivers which she developed.*

♀

## What Price? The Women of Rural Canada Will Pay

by Linda MacDonald

In the fall of 1986, the Mulroney government approved a ten year plan which gives Canada Post Corporation (C.P.C.) the power to close, amalgamate, or privatize all of Canada's 5,221 rural post offices for the sake of eliminating C.P.C.'s deficit.

Removing a post office from a rural community and replacing it with super-mailboxes and poor quality service in Retail Postal Outlets (R.P.O.s) is to take the heart from a rural community. Eliminating rural post offices usually destroys the economic and social wellbeing of a community, and makes victims of the women who are 83% of the rural postmasters employed nationwide.

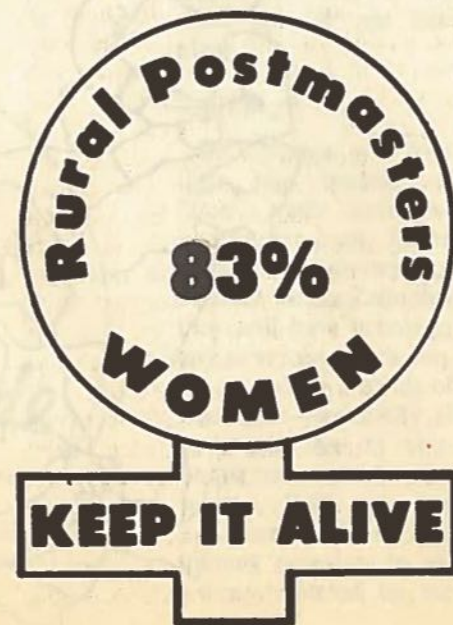
C.P.C.'s ten year plan will cause the death of communities: deruralisation. R.P.O.s will be—and have been—implemented by C.P.C., and are, in the words of one postmaster, "degrading to an individual." They are degrading for a variety of reasons: often, a post office is the only federal presence in a rural community—a link of communication essential in maintaining unity, especially in a

geographically vast nation like Canada. Must rural people be further isolated or have to re-locate to a city, giving up a way of life?

Angela Carter wrote in the *Manchester Guardian* on June 7, 1987, "everywhere that is not part of a city becomes in effect a giant suburb, depend-

ent on the city for all its services." In the rural areas where there are few retail chains like drugstores, a postmaster is offered a private contract to operate a sub post-office. She will receive no salary, only a commission from her sales: about one-fifth of the income she earned as an employee of C.P.C.—\$2,000 to \$2,400 a year, or between 47 and 90 cents an hour. These workers (85% of rural postmasters in B.C. are women) are expected to perform the same tasks as they did while employed by C.P.C., sometimes extending their hours.

After World War II, men who had served were given steady employment in government positions as a token of appreciation for their contribution to the war effort. These men have retired or are retiring, which is why there are high percentages of women postmasters and postal assistants in rural Canada now. Working for the post office generally offers the only decent salary for women in rural communities, given that village economies are based upon fishing, farming, mining and the lumber industry—all areas where there are traditionally few employment opportunities for women.



With the privatization of rural post offices, a rural postmaster like Maureen Copeland in Candiac, Saskatchewan, saw her monthly salary fall from \$700 to \$200 as an R.P.O. operator. (*The Western Producer*, April, 1988) Rural postal employees earn on average about \$13.43 an hour. For an employee to undertake a private contract at 47 to 90 cents an hour is an exploitation of workers—and is brutally forcing these workers, (the large majority being women) into a "job ghetto."

"[It] is an abuse of women in our society. It is union-bashing, plain and simple, and a way for Canada Post to ignore the contracts that provide a decent standard of living for their employees," as Marg Bail wrote in the March/April, 1988, edition of Alberta's *The Newsmagazine*.

The Canadian Postmasters and Postal Assistants Association (C.P.A.A.) has never been on strike. "Canada Post is picking on rural postmasters because they've never been on strike or caused any trouble. We shouldn't have been such pacifists," said Peter Lyaschok, former postmaster, and member of Rural Dignity—a grassroots, Canada-wide organization resisting the privatization and closure of rural post offices. (May, 1988, issue of an Albertan community newspaper called *Westlock Hub Weekly*)

Postal Assistants have been without a contract since January, 1987, because C.P.C. refuses to negotiate a very important clause concerning job security. A lockout may occur. This would be a rather convenient way for Canada Post to union-bash and steamroll along with the ten year plan. Attacking rural postmasters is not only going to destroy rural communities, it is a flagrant attack on the women employed in rural post offices. This is a feminist issue.

In response to the unveiling of C.P.C.'s insidious ten year plan for the amalgamation, privatization, or closure of Canada's 5,221 rural post offices, Rural Dignity was formed. Coordinator of Rural Dignity, Cynthia Patterson of Quebec, and Mary Otto Grieshaber, who organized Rural Dignity in Western Canada, view resisting the closure and privatization of rural post offices as an issue of enormous importance for the survival of rural communities, and also see this as a feminist issue. "Women are



the primary victims...whether a post office is closed or privatized, these women are losing decent salaries and buying power," said Patterson to the *Winnipeg Free Press* earlier this year.

One of Rural Dignity's main themes is that the post office is the heart of a community. When a post office closes—as has happened to ten post offices in B.C. and the Yukon in the last two years—people who are more isolated and alone in the community miss the warmth of the postmaster; one-third of the village's commercial transactions move to another town down the road where people are able to do business at the post office, and purchase gas, groceries, etc.

If a Retail Post Office opens in the town, the operator usually won't keep the contract for very long because of the low wages, and the quality of service will be greatly diminished. An R.P.O. operator does not have the time or familiarity with the people of the community to ensure that improperly addressed letters will reach their destination. Supermailboxes are a security problem and humiliating for the elderly and handicapped who cannot struggle with the stubborn locks as well as the rest of us. Elderly and handicapped people will become more dependent upon others or become more isolated if a rural post office closes or moves as most do not own vehicles to drive to the next nearest post office.

Rural Dignity, with its 2,000 members across Canada, has been raising public awareness about C.P.C.'s ten year plan and how this plan will affect communities and the women presently employed by C.P.C. Rural Dignity receives funding from the C.P.A.A., the

Status of Women, groups concerned with the rights of the handicapped, and various church groups. Ed Broadbent and the New Democrats are united in their defence of rural Canada.

Recently, Rural Dignity completed their Coast-to-Coast for Canada Post campaign. On May 18, 1988, a moving van with Mary Otto Grieshaber and Cindy Sams departed from Westholme, on Vancouver Island,

while in Petty Harbour, Newfoundland, a similar van left that town. The vans were filled with signed ballots protesting the closure and privatization of rural post offices. The ballots were placed in various containers symbolic of the communities from which they were collected—the ballots from Fraser Valley East were stuffed into a farmer's cream can. The destination was Ottawa, where Rural Dignity arrived on June 7, 1988, to personally deliver what rural Canada thinks of C.P.C.'s ten year plan. Approximately 200,000 signed ballots were delivered. Various sympathetic MPs carried the cream cans, grain sacks, and work-boots stuffed with the ballots to the Prime Minister's offices where they were rudely told by a secretary to "stick it in their ear." (*Vancouver Sun*, June 8, 1988)

Along their journey, which included many interviews and town-hall meetings, the travelling members of Rural Dignity were shocked to discover Canada Post employees following them, and keeping a watchful eye on them at town-hall meetings. As explanation of Canada Post's "Pinkerton Police" tactics, Harvie Andre, minister in charge of Canada Post, was quoted as saying, "it was difficult for them to go around correcting misinformation, but then that's one of the negatives of democracy." (*Toronto Sun*)

On the eastern side of the Coast-to-Coast for Canada Post campaign, 34 Canada Post employees followed the Rural Dignity van at different times during its trek. One would like to believe, in this much vaunted democracy of Harvie Andre's, that people have the freedom to express their dissent without such obvious harassment. Added to this frightening and bizarre scenario of the government's attempts to suppress freedom of speech, is the "gag order" forced upon the C.P.A.A. and other



C.P.C. unions. Union members have been informed that they will be disciplined if they speak publicly or demonstrate against C.P.C.'s privatization plan.

In May, 1988, in *Town and Country*, a community newspaper in Alberta, Guy Augert, Manager of Rural Services, Foothills Division, warned the wife of Rochfort Bridge postmaster, Ed Tuckey, to tell her husband to "be very careful what he said to others." A rural postmaster in Nova Scotia was suspended for five days because she publicly criticized C.P.C.'s plans to privatize, amalgamate or close rural post offices. Her suspension was later overruled by the Canada Labour Relations Board. C.U.P.W. members have been threatened with disciplinary action if they picket private sector post offices; and C.U.P.W. anti-privatization stickers on mail are being covered up—censored—by C.P.C. Peter Lyaschok, quoted in Alberta's *Western Hub Weekly*, said, "This is supposed to be a free society, if their plan is so damn good, what are they afraid of? Let the people decide—isn't this democracy?"

Yet, C.P.C. purchases full-page advertisements in major and smaller newspapers across Canada with erroneous information in them, and stating in bold print: "Canada Post is in rural Canada to stay. That's a promise." Another of Mulroney's now-infamous promises?

These advertisements cost \$320 per day in small newspapers. There are 70 small newspapers in B.C. alone. As for the supposed cost-effectiveness of privatization and closure: R.W. Mundy, from rural Nova Scotia, wrote a letter to the *Agassiz Advance*—a weekly newspaper in Fraser Valley East—in which he said, "We found that the cost of installing the supermailboxes was five times the annual deficit of our post office."

Hazel Humm, a rural postmaster, said in Alberta's *Western Hub Weekly*, "the rural postal deficit is less than one-half of one percent of Canada's over-all deficit." Felix Holtmann, chair of an all-party committee on government relations, reported in March, 1987: "Canada Post is not going to solve its fiscal problems by closing rural post offices or by changing rural postal service...the changes are not a dollars and cents issue—we have to respond to shifts in rural populations." The Conservative government's orders to C.P.C. to close, amalgamate, or privatize all rural post offices by 1996 will much more dramatically affect rural populations than any natural change.

C.P.C. expects a \$26 million profit by 1989: why not, as many MP's argue, improve postal service instead of dismantling the rural postal network? And with the \$160 million C.P.C. spent on the recent L.C.U.C. and C.U.P.W. strikes, financial self-sufficiency could have

been achieved by 1988. Privatization decreases the quality of service, is union-bashing, and is capitalism at its ugliest, with the rampant profit motive and greed incentive causing those in power to become blind to the needs of people. The large majority of rural postmasters are women. They will be forced to endure poverty if C.P.C. proceeds with its ten year plan. In B.C. and the Yukon, ten post offices have been closed in the past two years and 31 are under review.

According to an article leaked to *The Globe and Mail* in June of this year, C.P.C. intends to "close many employee-staffed outlets in urban Canada by 1996." The plan for the privatization of urban post offices is similar to the rural post office plan. 54% of C.U.P.W.'s members are women, and C.U.P.W. holds wicket clerk jobs in urban post offices.

Employees in rural and urban post offices have no way to voice their dissent because of the totalitarian "gag order" forced upon them. The majority of employees are women—and they are suffering and will continue to suffer the most as a result of C.P.C.'s plan. We must, as feminist socialists, resist this brutal form of capitalism on their behalf. No one—urban or rural—is immune to Canada Post's privatization plans; no one is immune to privatization in general.

We must resist.

♀

## Support the Postal Workers

Dear Sisters,

On behalf of the Vancouver Local of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, I am asking you to join in our campaign to maintain and expand the postal service.

Currently, Canada Post and the Tories are dismantling the postal service piece by piece. They are closing down post offices in rural Canada, franchising post offices in urban centres, and generally selling the Post Office to the lowest bidder.

This will hurt Canadian women. Almost 80% of the Postmasters in rural Canada are women. Since Canada Post plans include turning their entire rural post network over to the private sector, these women's jobs are at risk. Many have worked for the Post Office for at least 20 years, and few see any prospect of future employment if their rural post office is closed.

In urban centres, the plans of Canada Post to either franchise or contract our postal service to non-union drugstores, delis, laundromats and grocery stores will also hurt women. One aim behind this dismantling of the postal service is to get cheaper labour. What this means is that Canada Post and the Tories do not want to pay women decent wages for providing postal service, but want

this work to be done by women in the low paid female job ghettos.

Our union has always fought for equality for women. Privatization and contracting out go in the opposite direction.

In the federal public sector, workers are covered by legislation calling for both employment equity and equal pay for work of equal value. Even though this legislation is weak, the fact remains that it exists and presently covers postal workers. The privatization and contracting out of our work means that people who will provide postal service in the near future won't even have these protections. It is another example of how privatization is not in the best interests of women.

Privatization and contracting out hurts women in other ways. The provision of postal services in such places as drugstores puts your mail at risk. The workers have to provide postal service while selling diapers, cough syrup, etc. This means that they do not have the time to learn postal regulations, and can only guess at them. In many private post offices your mail is not treated with the security it deserves. Anyone can reach across the counter and pick up your registered letter.

We are asking for your assistance to

try and defeat postal privatization and to maintain and improve the postal service.

We are asking you to encourage your members to boycott non-union postal outlets. We are asking people not to patronize any pharmacy, deli, laundromat, etc. that provides postal service. Instead, we are encouraging you to shop at unionized postal facilities.

The reason behind this boycott is that Canada Post is encouraging more and more drugstores, etc. to take on a wider and wider range of postal business. Their eventual aim is to transfer all postal services to these non-union outlets. One of their lures for these businesses is that they will greatly benefit from the spin-off traffic. We want to make it clear that this is untrue and that outlets that carry on postal services will find Canadians voting with their feet in favour of a government run postal service.

We are asking you to distribute our petition to your members. We would also appreciate it if you could pass a motion supporting improved postal service and condemning the plans to sell off the post office at fire sale prices.

Marion Pollack

President, CUPW Vancouver Local

### To Prime Minister Mulroney and the Government of Canada/ Au premier ministre Mulroney et au gouvernement du Canada :

Yes, rural Canadians have a right to responsible mail service provided in a federally operated post office. / Oui, les Canadiens du milieu rural ont le droit de recevoir un service postal de qualité dans un bureau de poste complet administré par Postes Canada.

Yes, our federal rural post offices should be improved, not closed or privatized. / Oui, les services de nos bureaux doivent être améliorés plutôt que complètement fermés ou privatisés sans garantie valable.

Yes, full service should be restored to those communities which have lost federal post offices or rural routes, and want them back. / De plus, nous exigeons que le service soit pleinement rétabli dans les villages qui ont perdu leurs bureaux de poste et/ou leurs services de livraison rurale.

I remain a voter and shareholder in Canada Post Corporation. / Je suis un voteur et un client de Postes Canada.

(Signature)

(Name/Nom)

(Address/Adresse)

(Town/Ville/Village)

(Postal Code/Code Postal)

**The function of civil  
resistance is to  
provoke the law until  
there is an answer or  
there is change.  
What you can not do is  
be prepared to accept in-  
justice. Make the injus-  
tice visible.**

Gandhi

### DAWN: Request for Information

DAWN Canada: Disabled Women's Network Canada is conducting a project to determine the needs and priorities of Canada women with disabilities. The project is funded by the Department of the Secretary of State. A questionnaire, designed to discover the obstacles facing disabled women in parenting and child care, violence against women with disabilities, employment equity, isolation, and recreational needs, is being circulated. Interviews with women in the Atlantic provinces, in Northern B.C., Alberta and the Yukon will be conducted. The project will produce three position papers for DAWN-Canada; these will help DAWN set priorities and decide on future activities. The studies

will add to the limited information available on Canadian women with disabilities.

DAWN-Canada began in June, 1985, when 17 women with disabilities from across the country gathered to discuss issues which were not specifically being addressed by either the women's movement or the disabled consumer's movement. Out of this meeting, the DAWN-Canada network and its provincial counterparts came into being. DAWN-Canada is affiliated with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and the Coalition of Provincial Organizations of the Handicapped.

If you would like a copy of the questionnaire, could provide assistance in

distributing it, or would like more information on the project, write to:

Jillian Ridington  
Researcher, DAWN-Canada  
3464 W. 27th Ave.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6S 1P6

or  
Shirley Masuda  
DAWN-Canada project coordinator  
10401 Findayson  
Richmond, B.C.  
V6X 2A3

or call DAWN-Canada at:  
(604) 254-3585 (Voice and TTD)



# Abortion Update

by Nonni Graham

Events on the federal scene have been moving right along since the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the existing abortion law earlier this year. The Conservative approach is to try not to take a stand on the issue. A motion which they put forward for discussion was defeated and as we head into the fall everyone is looking at election time and the Tories are busy pushing free trade thus leaving the abortion issue in limbo. The NDP position is clear that no further law is required on this subject. As well, the women's movement is united in not wanting any further federal legislation regarding abortion.

Currently Section 252 of the Criminal Code remains intact and could be used to prosecute back alley abortionists. Section 45, 198, 202 and 245 all focus on the standards of care in all medical procedures. These are sections which are not disputed and are considered sufficient protection for Canadians while not interfering with a woman's right to choose.

## Government spies

Provincially, Nicole Parton broke the story on July 16, 1988 that the government, specifically Brian Smith, had hired Jack Giles, a lawyer in the firm of Farris Vaughan Wills & Murphy, who in turn hired Newcombe & Associates, private detectives, to spy on CCCA (Concerned Citizens for Choice on Abortion).

The investigation went on for approximately six months, from January 23, 1987 to around the end of June 1987. During this time the spies obtained the CCCA membership list, donors' names at the UBC cocktail party for Henry Morgentaler, a financial statement and meeting minutes. They became very active in the group on task oriented activities. In this way they gained information and the trust of the group. They wrapped up their investigation after concluding that a clinic would not be opened in the immediate future.

When the news story broke, CCCA was faced with consulting their lawyer, demanding the file, holding a press con-

ference and determining their options. Portions of the file were found to be missing and the missing information was supplied upon request. CCCA met with Stephen Owen on August 6 and 10 and is presently awaiting the Ombudsman's interim report before deciding what further action to pursue.

The Ombudsman's report should be made public by the end of August. What remains confusing is why the government chose to spend a lot of taxpayers' money to obtain information already in the public domain. What was the real purpose of this investigation?

## Pro-choice conference

On Saturday, July 23, 1988, a day long conference was held at the Justice Institute in Vancouver. The conference and evening entertainment were sponsored by the West Coast Educational Society for Reproductive Choice, a charitable educational society. Co-sponsors were CCCA, Physicians for Choice, National Association of Women in the Law (NAWL) and the Feminist Counselling Association.

One of the guest speakers was Lee Minto, Executive Director of Planned Parenthood for Seattle/King County in Washington State. Lee has been involved with Planned Parenthood for 22 years and is an adjunct professor at Washington State University School of Community Health and Medicine. Her workshop was entitled "The Issue is Choice." The entire area of choice was covered, encompassing what it means to be pro-choice, why pro-choice people feel strongly about preventive measures, sex education, community education, community clinics and the anti-choice movement's agenda.

It was encouraging that many people attending the conference were new faces, several from the Northern In-

terior, Vancouver Island and places outside the Lower Mainland. The participants included nurses, doctors, medical students, lawyers, teachers, counsellors, psychologists, hospital administrators and others.

The second morning workshop, entitled "The Unique Role of Health Care Providers," was given by Marcy Bloom, Executive Director of Aradia Women's Health Clinic in Seattle, Washington, a clinic which offers a myriad of health services for women and their families, including abortions. Marcy, who has been doing this for 17 years, spoke about the stress involved in dealing with anti-choice people, that is, the hordes of

placard waving people outside the clinics and women harassed and having to run the gauntlet just to gain entry to the clinic. Marcy herself was active in a clinic which was fire bombed.

One of the two afternoon workshops was "Present Legal Issues in Canada" given by Gwen Brodsky, a Vancouver lawyer and former litigation director for LEAF who is currently practising with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in Vancouver. It was co-chaired by Nadine McDonnell, a Vancouver lawyer and activist deeply committed to women's issues. These women discussed the legal history of abortion and clarified the legal status of abortion in Canada. They also

offered their analysis of some potential scenarios in Canada.

"Community Organizing" was the second workshop of the afternoon, given by CCCA and limited to out-of-towners. Its focus was on small communities and the purpose was to teach skills in organizing the community for hospital board elections and to draw on the community support that they know is there.

Reaction was very positive. The overall consensus was that the conference was a success. People were given information and taught skills which they can take home and share with supporters in their communities, thus aiding the forward momentum in our struggle. Q

## An interview with an African woman

# Women Are Organizing

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Can you specify exactly what women are doing in South Africa and how they are organizing?

The women are very much aware of the situation in the country. Different groups, besides the progressive ones, are involved in discussions on the situation. For instance, we have a group of women under the Home and Family Life desk of the South African Council of Churches. The SACC includes all the church women, and it would be a very nice thing if our women were involved in this group, so that they can know what other women are thinking of the situation. All the mothers in the country are worried about what is happening.

I am one of the executive members of Home and Family Life. I have been with this group for quite a long time. I discovered that in fact—it was a thing I didn't know—church women, together with ordinary women, are very much worried about the situation.

For instance, for the past two years, we have been worried about what is happening to families, what is happening to displaced and exiled children. What are we to do, how are we to help the mothers?

The children are seen roaming from one place to another; some of them are from Transkei, some of them from elsewhere in the Cape. They trek to Johannesburg in groups, looking for accommodation with other school children and other comrades.

Though the children are in Johannesburg, their mothers are in different places. Sometimes we get children from the Free State just roaming around. They have done something at school and they feel they must run away, and that they must come to Johannesburg. We call them displaced children.

At a conference, we discussed the problems of such children. We had problems with the children when they started not going to school, and they were holding meetings and going to funerals, and mothers were refusing to let their children attend these meetings, especially those mothers from the rural areas. We called a meeting to advise them as to what they must do when their children behave like that.

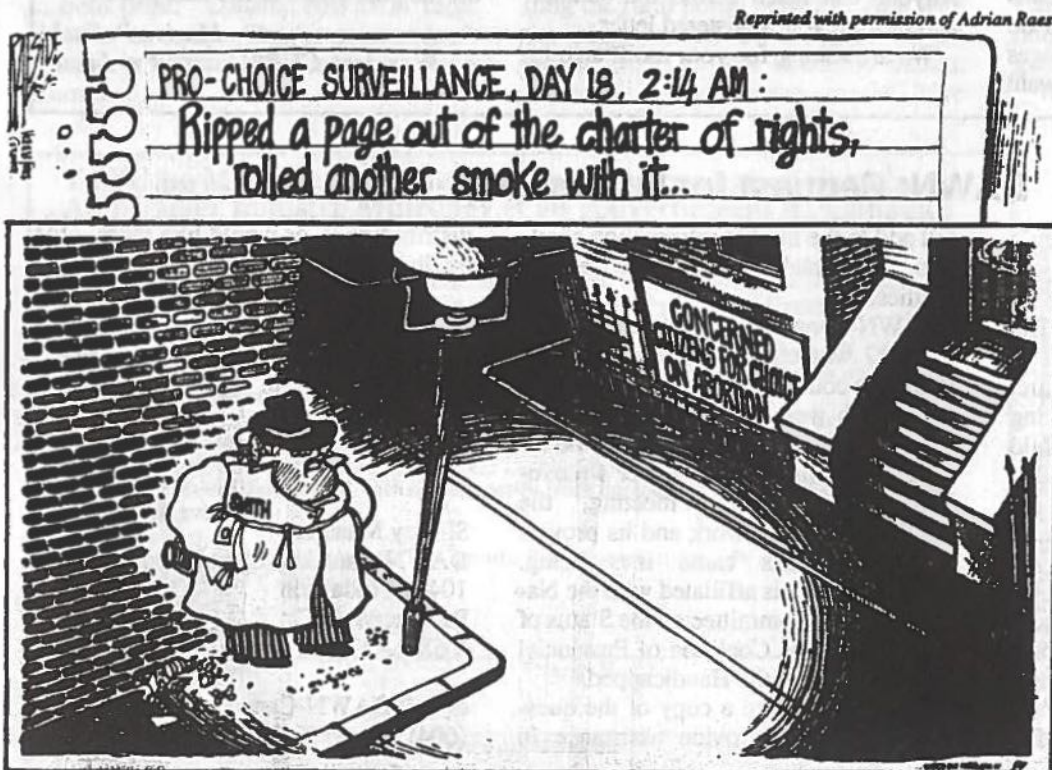
One of the most important things we discussed was that it does not matter what your child does—it still forms a part of the family, and therefore mother, father and the child must be together. There is a need for the parents and children to understand one another. That day it was as if there was a light thrown

into the minds of those women, because they did not know how to behave when their children decide, and take actions, on their own.

So, from that day onwards, the parents said, "We are very grateful that we have been able to come here and listen to some of the good advice we have been given. From today we are going to be with our children, because they are our children." Those were just ordinary women, not belonging to the struggle, and we women in the struggle must try and meet with them and help them.

Then we had another conference dealing with homelessness. People are moved from one place to another and that affects the family. What do we do in conditions like that? I went to one of the seminars, composed of people around Durban, just ordinary people who had come to listen to the problem. Some films were shown of different kinds of homeless people. Some are lying in the streets, some of them live in tents, some women in hostels, and we decided to look at this thing and take it up.

In Johannesburg we speak about the rent boycott. The rent boycott is a very serious thing. We have not paid rent for about 18 months now. There have been evictions in areas like Jabavu, where so many people live. Quite a number of people have died through eviction.



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Dina Cormick

At this conference of the Home and Family Life we also discussed the situation in Jabavu and we, the parents, wanted to know what we must do. How must we deal with our children, and what is it that they really want?

We said to the parents that the children are affected by the high rent. The children are unable to go to school some distance away because the families are paying very high rents and the children are starving. Children have no clothes and that is why they say to the parents, "Do not pay rent because the rents are very high and they are affecting us as children."

Many people have died. When eviction takes place it is not only a person being evicted, he is being evicted with his belongings, and he does not get his belongings back again. It came to a point where some of the people did not know what to do about paying rent because we were threatened every day by the councillors. Not all of them, but most of the people are not paying rents up till now.

We had the problem of our lights being cut off. Our children—I don't know where our children got the knowledge from—they connected the lights. In fact we should have no lights according to the council, but we got lights because of our children connecting the lights, unknown to them.

We are looking at what we can pay, and we have got to know how much we must pay for those essential things like water, electricity and so on. That is a very serious thing, that actually made people stop paying rent, because we pay a lot of money for electricity. We are not just going to accept anything they tell us. We are going to investigate and find out what is the correct amount to pay for water, sewerage and other things.

*The Federation of Transvaal Women is becoming a nation-wide organization. Is it going beyond the Transvaal region?*

It definitely is. I am happy to say that FEDTRAW is now very well organized. It has been launched in the Transvaal and in different areas. We are now waiting to launch the Federation of South African Women. We have organized women in the rural areas, in towns and all over. We are conscientising the women. We are making them aware of the situation.

How we manage to get some of these women to join FEDTRAW is that we feature at funerals of our comrades and we work there and peel vegetables, bake and stay there with those people until they wonder where these women come from and we tell them that we are the comrades of these people and that is how we are managing to get women from Soweto who did not know anything about us. We are drawing them by attending the comrades' funerals, and doing whatever we can do to help the family of that deceased. We also visit our people who are in courts.

We go to different areas and some of our women go as far as Messina and spend days there with the families of the people in court. I happen to be one of the women who have been visiting Robben Island for the last 23 years. I more or less know what has been taking place there and the changes that have affected us all. People in Robben Island now—I would say they are all right. Their health is all right, except for those people who visit doctors because of certain ailments but they are well looked after according to what we hear. Serious things have happened to them. Fortunately those people have recovered from those diseases. But

not Gwala.

We understand Robben Island has the best treatment.

Robben Island is a place where our young comrades are, I would say, educated. It is more or less a college, because when one comes out from there he is a different person. It is a lot of work for the senior comrades there, to teach these children, to correct them when they make mistakes and to lead them in the right direction. It does take time, because some children are young (1976 prisoners), which means a man is dealing with young boy of 23-30 years. But it is pleasing to know that they come out just the right man you want to see, as if this young man is just out of school.

There are problems, family problems, because these are young people. They have left their wives, sometimes their girl friends, and sometimes their ailing parents, and again the responsibility is for senior people in Robben Island to try and comfort, counsel, these young people. They also get messages from outside and, when these problems come to them from their homes, it means the elderly people must sit down with the particular prisoner and settle the problems with them.

We, the mothers who visit Robben Island, also have the responsibility of visiting the families of these young people whenever there is a message that calls for the parents to come. Some of the young men don't have regular visits; even there it is our duty to go to that family and counsel that family.

FEDTRAW—the group around the Transvaal—looks at the families that are very needy, and every week they collect groceries and deliver to those families to support and comfort them.

*And these groceries come from donations?*

Yes. Each woman will bring tea, sugar, whatever she can bring. The women have been visiting the Sharpeville Six several times taking their prayers, taking their dinners, collecting cooked food and fruit, having it with them to console them. Besides FEDTRAW, other women from the South African Council of Churches have also been involved with the Six. They arrange a prayer for those people. It is not only FEDTRAW people who are concerned about the Six, but all women are concerned.

*Of course, besides the Sharpeville Six, there are more than 40 people sentenced to death.*

The Federation of Transvaal Women are very much concerned. They wrote a letter to Mrs. Botha and Mrs. Malan, telling them that, as mothers, they should have sympathy, as we have sympathy with our children, and they must remember these are children, and all children are the same. A child is so connected to the mother that you just cannot cut the bond that brings the mother and child together.

It was at a press conference, so I remember we did send the letters but never got a reply.

*On a slightly different note, there have been problems in Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Can you tell us something about Inkatha and Gatsha Buthelezi? What are the problems?*

There are problems between Inkatha and the UDF. That has been going on for quite a long time. The problems have been growing. There have been fights at KwaMashu in Inanda, fights at Umlazi, fights at Lamontville. So this kind of war has been going on until it spread to Hammarsdale, and now it has gone to Pietermaritzburg.

There is now a very serious situation. Our people there are fighting the vigilan-

tes. The vigilantes are Gatsha Buthelezi's police, who are well-armed and given weapons by Inkatha from the government. Our people say, "We are not fighting Inkatha as such, but we are fighting the government, because they get the weapons to shoot from the government."

Unfortunately our people have no means of fighting. They are just fighting bare-handed and by any means they have. We are very proud that they have maintained this up till now. According to the strength of the Gatsha people with the weapons, we should long have been wiped out. But our people have kept up with the fight and they are very, very strong.

About three weeks ago, we visited Pietermaritzburg to hear what the position was. We met comrades there and they told us they are prepared to fight for as long as Gatsha is fighting them, because what else can they do when they are attacked? What they want is to be helped.

They say they have organized many people that are on our side; they have mobilized just ordinary people who do not know anything about politics, but, because they have seen what Gatsha is doing, they have sided with us. They say these are the people who must now be given political education and also the means of helping them to fight, if they have to fight.

*Recently, there was a coup in Bophuthatswana and Mangope appealed to the Pretoria regime. What does it mean in political terms: Mangope, who claims to be independent, appealing to South Africa, and what were the reasons behind the coup?*

Bophuthatswana is a thing that one just couldn't understand, because not very long ago Bophuthatswana was celebrating its tenth anniversary and what one saw was that people were united in what they were doing. Everybody was happy and everybody participated in such a way that one cannot understand that it took place. What surprises us is that, just before, there was a coup in December in Transkei. The South African government didn't participate, didn't do anything. But immediately there was a coup in Bophuthatswana they took sides.

Which means Bophuthatswana is the South African government's biggest baby, and of course being somewhere our people can use to enter South Africa, it must be so nasty as to never allow our people coming in.

*The clampdown, that is, the new government measures to ban organizations—COSATU, UDF and others—what do you think are the implications of this and how are our people reacting to it?*

We have been having a state of emergency for some time, and we have been doing our things under the state of emergency for some time now. There is nothing that we stopped doing. At the funerals, when we are burying our comrades, we have been told that there must be only about 20 people there, and we are given little cards to enter the graveside and are told that there must be no address of any kind except by the minister.

But our people have defied that order. We recently buried that young man, Sicelo Dhlomo, and hundreds of people were at Regina Mundi, standing outside, and others inside. When the coffin came out the regime arranged the Casspirs in between the people. They knew they had allowed only 200 people to get to the graveside. But the procession was not 200 people; it was all the people who were standing outside and inside.

All drove in the procession to the graveside. When we got to the graveside, near the entrance, we were stopped and asked to produce the papers, and only those people who had the papers who were allowed in.

The procession turned back and went home and the comrades sang and marched and everybody joined and followed. It was a complete defiance. The war planes were flying so low over our heads.

*So banning cannot stop our struggle?*

The banning will not stop our struggle. Some of our people were told not to address the gathering. They stood up at the funeral and addressed the people. There are many ways of addressing the people in the church. For instance, one of them just stands up and says, "Let's pray. I am now praying," and then, when he stands up, he speaks about the movement, the





people who have gone or passed away, people who are away, and mentions all of those people. It is not just praying. So that is complete defiance.

*Nelson Mandela will be 70 years old this year, on July 18th. What does this mean to our people?*

What must I say? Mandela must not die in goal. We are going to call for his release. Even during the banning orders, we will call for the release of Mandela and all political prisoners. We will go on calling for his release and the release of all political prisoners.

*And this call has become a mass movement?*

It has. People haven't forgotten them.

No. We have even been reminding the people of Rivonia. The Release Mandela Committee keeps on picking up on calendars. We are faced with the government taking away our calendars which of course we raise funds with. Every year we have a new calendar with something new. Last year and the other year we have all the Rivonia people on the calendar and that calendar was a threat.

But it was sold, and you would still find it in many houses. Some of the people have not met our leaders, and the calendars showed them one by one and it was an interesting thing for them to know that here was Mandela, Mhlaba, Kathrada and so on. They did not know.

This year we had "Remember Rivonia" on the calendar. We

enumerated one by one all those who are serving life imprisonment. That is how we conscientise people and remind them of our leaders.

*And of course Rivonia means ANC?*

Yes! Not very long ago we asked the government to release Harry Gwala from goal. We have stickers of his pictures circulating all over. We hoped it would have an impact but we don't know.

The question of stopping the execution of our people is very serious in South Africa. We are appealing to the world to do something about it. Everybody is very much concerned about it in South Africa.

SECHABA April 1988

## Boycott Shell

The next step in the movement to end the apartheid system in South Africa is to target corporations which play a key role in supporting that system.

Apartheid is the concentration camp style system under which five of every six South Africans, because they are black, are kept under total control by the government and their employers.

In response to requests from organizations of black South Africans, Royal Dutch/Shell (Shell Canada's parent company) has been targeted by major church, civil rights, labour and citizens' groups around the world because:

- Pressure on the big corporations puts pressure on apartheid. Already feeling the heat from campaigns for divestment legislation, some big corporations have announced that they will no longer invest in apartheid South Africa. Black leaders from Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Desmond Tutu and imprisoned A.N.C. leader Nelson Mandela to COSATU and other union federations of black workers, have called for stepped-up pressure on strategically important companies.
- Royal Dutch/Shell plays a crucial role in South Africa. Shell and its

South African subsidiaries supply fuel to the South African police and military and to the apartheid economy.

Without fuel from companies like Shell, the apartheid government could not enforce its system of segregation and slave labour and could not continue to terrorize those who protest against the system.

Shell refuses to stop oil supplies to apartheid South Africa, saying "that would constitute interference in the internal affairs of that country..."

• Shell is the target of coordinated international action. The National Union of Mineworkers (the largest black union in South Africa) has asked for international pressure against Royal Dutch/Shell.

Groups that have targeted Shell include the Canadian Labour Congress, B.C. Federation of Labour, Free South Africa Movement (in the U.S.A.), World Council of Churches and many others in Europe and elsewhere.

Royal Dutch/Shell produces and sells products in the names of more than 300 subsidiaries, including Shell Canada Ltd. The products of all subsidiaries are targets of the boycott campaign.

### Until Royal Dutch/Shell withdraws from South Africa... Please don't buy Shell products

All Shell products including gasoline are boycott targets until Royal Dutch/Shell withdraws from South Africa.

Some examples include: gasoline products such as Shell Diesoline; motor oils such as Aeroshell, Rimula, Rotella and Super Shell TLO; automotive and home products such as Super-Shell Snowshoe (tires), Shell Superlife (batteries), air fresheners and roofing supplies.

Shell credit cards should be cut up and returned with a letter of protest to:

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North York  
Ontario  
M3C 9Z9

For information, contact:

Anti-Apartheid Network  
2524 Cypress St.,  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6J 3N2

Phone: 737-0041

## Profiles

by Janice Vichert

*This is the first of what I hope will be a regular series of essays in Priorities. They will be personal, because I intend to write about the people, both living and dead, both real and fictional, who have influenced me most. But, taken together, they will provide a kind of intellectual history, an account of the friends and role models and teachers who have awakened the consciousness of a fairly typical, politically-active woman in the late twentieth century.*

I start with a man, Bernard Mandeville, who first came to my attention in a course on eighteenth-century literature. In a period generally unsympathetic to women and women's causes, he stands out for his remarkable insight.

Mandeville was a physician, born and educated in Holland, who emigrated to England in the last years of the seventeenth century. While maintaining a successful practice, he also achieved considerable notoriety as a controversial writer, chiefly of *The Fable of the Bees*, a work which was regularly denounced from pulpits throughout Western Europe.

My interest is in an earlier work, *The Virgin Unmask'd*, published in 1709, which takes contemporary attitudes to women and turns them upside down. The book is a moral dialogue devoted largely to a defense of feminism, but by an initial Mandevillean irony the unsuspecting male book-buyer is tricked into anticipating a work of pornography.

In the first place, the dialogues are between an elderly woman and a young virgin, her niece. This was a standard convention. Nicolas Chorier's *Satyra Sotadica*, possibly the most obscene product of the seventeenth-century pornographic tradition, was circulated in English under the title, *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid*. The searcher for smut would be instantly attracted by Mandeville's title page: "The Virgin Unmask'd: or, Female Dialogues Betwixt an Elderly Maiden Lady and her Niece."

But alas for the salaciously-minded; Mandeville frustrates his expectations completely. The first dialogue of *The*

*Virgin Unmask'd* is devoted to a bitter argument between Lucinda and her niece, Antonia, over the extent to which Antonia should follow current fashion in exposing her bosom. The discussion is perfectly frank but never licentious. With the second dialogue even the slight titillation caused by Antonia's bosom is abandoned, and the succeeding conversations are devoted to perfectly serious, though often witty discussions of a wide range of topics, chiefly concerned with marriage and the role of women in society.

### Women's role

*The Virgin Unmask'd* is part of a large body of controversial writing about the role of women. Throughout the Restoration women in literature tended to be treated cynically, as sources of pleasure but also of trouble. The many translations of *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*, which describes fifteen ways in which wives make their husbands miserable, exploited the popular cynicism about women. This cynicism may not have run very deep, but the actual content of these attacks hardly mattered. It is the attitude



which is significant, an attitude which finds nothing interesting in women themselves, except as they affect men.

The defenders of women were little better; they willingly accepted feminine subservience. Even Mary Astell, one of the few women writers of the day, saw no alternative for the married woman but total subservience to her husband: "She then who Marrys ought to lay it down for an indisputable Maxim, that her Husband must govern absolutely and intirely, and that she has nothing else to do but to Please and Obey." When Mandeville discusses the role of women, therefore, he is embarking on a subject fraught with preconceived notions. The common sense and perceptiveness of his observations is thus all the more remarkable.

Mandeville makes the spinster aunt, Lucinda, detest all men, while her niece, Antonia, cannot conceal "that there is something in my Heart, that pleads for Man in general." Lucinda's is the rational, philosophic mind; she insists that "I always was so unnatural, as to deny my Appetite what my Reason told me would hurt me, tho' my Inclination was never so strong."

Despite Lucinda's admiration for reason, however, she admits that women cannot match wits with men, and that as soon as a man is allowed to use rational arguments, he can overcome any woman. This is not because of any intrinsically feminine defect, however; women are in this unfortunate position because of man's skilful management. As Lucinda says:

...it is thought sufficient, if a Woman can but Read and Write, we receive no other Education, as to Learning: But where we leave off, they set out; they are not trusted to manage their own Affairs, before they are sent to Schools, and Universities, to have their Intellectuals mended and sharpen'd; not by one Master, or by ordinary Men, but by several, that are picked and culled out of Thousands.

According to Lucinda and Mandeville, therefore, women have no intrinsic inferiority to men; their practical inferiority is only the result of poor



education. Lucinda has great contempt for the traditional womanly crafts, and would replace them with studies hitherto strictly the monopoly of men:

I have read several Books of Physick, and abundance of things, that Women seldom trouble their Heads with; but I always was of Opinion, that in knowing the World, was comprehended the understanding of one's self; and think, that the Study of Anatomy, and the inward Government of our Bodies, is as diverting and fully of as much use, as the contriving, and making the best ordered, and most exact Piece of Fillecrew Work, that ever was seen.

### Passion and reason

Self-knowledge, the understanding of the true sources of one's actions, is the ideal toward which Mandeville is constantly urging us to aspire. And yet Mandeville makes Antonia hit unwittingly upon a degree of self-knowledge denied even to the philosophical Lucinda. Antonia can admit all Lucinda's arguments, and yet be aware that she must try the experiment of marriage; in the end her passion will overcome her reason. Self-knowledge, Mandeville implies, is most truly liberating when it makes us understand clearly the power of our passions. The moral is obvious: we must see ourselves as clearly and logically as we can, but must not expect such insight to make any real difference in our behavior. The most we can hope for is to be freed of our illusions.

The common illusions of contemporary popular fiction are those which *The Virgin Unmask'd* sets out most vigorously to destroy. The novel of the time was almost always concerned with a love intrigue, and usually with one of two kinds. The first is one in which the pure love of the hero and heroine is frustrated by a series of obstacles, often financial, until finally all difficulties are overcome and they are able to marry, thus presumably entering upon a state of bliss unconfined.

The second was in a direct descent from medieval romance but by the Restoration had become anti-romantic and cynical in tone. This was the tale of illicit love, usually of a married woman and her lover. The themes of deception

and intrigue predominated, with the cuckolded husband usually treated as a figure of fun, or else as the epitome of all mankind caught in the toils of sinful Eve.

Mandeville gives Lucinda two lengthy stories to tell in *The Virgin Unmask'd*, one of each of these types. In each case he tries to show what the implications of such behavior would be in real life, particularly for the woman.

### Pain vs romantic fiction

The first story compresses the courtship of Aurelia and Dorante, the obstacles placed in their way by Aurelia's parents, and their elopement to Chester all into just three pages. This is the point at which most romances would end, but Mandeville goes on for fifty-six pages more to trace the consequences in marital life of such a tempestuous romance.

Because she disobeys her parents, again in best romantic fashion, she is left with nowhere to go when Dorante begins to treat her cruelly. Dorante is a typical rake, interested only in Aurelia's money. When the money is not forthcoming, Dorante first tries to prostitute Aurelia, and then, when this scheme fails, forces her to live with his mother in a servitude little better than that of a housemaid. Dorante is increasingly brutal, and finally his cruelty causes the death of their son, which in turn, because it deprives Dorante of an heir, causes Aurelia to be even more harshly treated. Only Dorante's death in a duel finally releases her to begin life again.

Mandeville tells this story with great attention to Aurelia's feelings, but without sentimentalizing her. Mandeville refuses to allow her any particular virtue. Aurelia's suffering is the consequence of "her Superlative Love to Dorante: He was Quality, Riches, Honour, he was everything to her; she doated upon him so excessively, that she thought there was no Bliss without him."

Mandeville is concerned to show the extravagance of Aurelia's love for Dorante, a love which survives months of cruelty and only ceases completely after the death of her son. This love is the source of her suffering; Mandeville never suggests that Aurelia is punished for her love, but neither will he admit

that her suffering is morally commendable. Dorante is an obvious villain, and Aurelia's passion for him brings her to grief. Both husband and wife are the victims of their passions; Mandeville sees tragedy here, but no virtue.

The second story starts with an account of the love between Leonora and Cleander, a love which is frustrated by Cleander's father, who exiles Cleander and then starts a rumor that he is dead. When Leonora hears this she marries for security, only to be discovered by Cleander, back from exile, shortly after her marriage. Her virtue, however, is so great that she sends Cleander away. Meanwhile her husband, Alcandor, whom she does not love, brings a boarder, Mincio, to the house. Mincio is intent upon seducing Leonora, but he feigns total indifference towards her for a long period, during which time he wins her affection by his kindnesses. Then he fakes an illness, and when he seems near death he admits to Leonora that only she can cure his illness.

She is on the point of yielding to him when the story breaks off.

It is at this point that *The Virgin Unmask'd* ends as well. The final words are Lucinda's to Antonia, "Consult your Pillow upon it, and to Morrow you shall know all." There is no record, however, of any steps by Mandeville to keep this promise.

### The woman's point of view

The significance of these two stories, however, is clear enough. In the story of Aurelia, Mandeville shows the kind of suffering that can result from a conventionally romantic courtship. In the story of Leonora he reveals the kind of mental suffering that a conventional seduction plot can cause to a virtuous woman.

The moral judgment in these two stories remains somewhat tentative, but Mandeville's desire to show the facts of marriage from a woman's point of view emerges clearly. Various male attitudes are suggested and compared with the truth. Against the romantic notion of courtship is put the suffering of Aurelia, a suffering which is the more genuine because it is complicated by conflicting emotions. Against the wiles of Mincio, which in most stories would have been used to demonstrate his masculine ingenuity, is put the real mental distress of

Leonora.

But perhaps the greatest blow to conventional male thinking lies in the tantalizing title page. The reader is invited to think that he is getting one more account of women purely as machines for sensual pleasure, until by a supreme Mandevillian irony he finds himself linked with Dorante and Mincio as the cause of genuine suffering to real women.

Mandeville's desire to destroy male illusions about the life women really lead is perhaps best shown by his detailed description of pregnancy. In all contemporary fiction, conception and pregnancy, provided they are legitimate, are treated as happening automatically and blissfully. Children are born, sometimes mothers die in childbirth, but otherwise the nine months before birth are passed over in silence. Mandeville, the physician, refuses to allow the real suf-

fering of women to be ignored. He makes Lucinda describe at length the pains and miseries of pregnancy, and then suggest some of the long-range effects:

I have not spoke of the Faintings, Cramps, the intolerable Headachs, and violent Cholicks, that are so familiar to them: I have not told ye what Multitudes, tho' they survive, are made miserable, nor mention'd the Unskilfulness and Neglect of Midwives, or the lingering Distempers and lesser Ailments, that attend some women as long as they live: But if this they escape, the Skin will be wrinkled, the little Capillary Veins, that are so ornamental to it, must be broke in many Places; the Flesh be loosen'd, the Ligaments relax'd,

the Joynts be stiffen'd and made unactive: This perhaps you may slight, but be assured, that the Bearing, as well as Bringing forth of Children, wastes Women, wears 'em, shakes, spoils, and destroys the very Frame and Constitution of them.

It is this anxiety to give the truth, to show what the condition of women is really like, in contrast to the various popular representations, that remains the most important aspect of *The Virgin Unmask'd*. To reveal this truth, Mandeville describes four women, Lucinda, Antonia, Aurelia, and Leonora, with a psychological insight that makes them far more credible than most of their contemporary fictional counterparts. ♀

## The Gender Cop...

The accompanying notice appeared in *The Globe and Mail* (July 16, 1988). Here is one reader's response.

Letters to the Editor  
The Globe and Mail  
444 Front St. W.,  
Toronto, Ont.  
M5V 2S9

Dear Editor,

The straw has broken the camel's back. For years I have been a subscriber to your newspaper. For years I have winced every time your writers used the word "businessman" for business person. For years I have cringed when I read "spokesman" when you mean spokesperson.

Though I know the usual reaction to comments about gender bias in our language is that the suffix "man" is generic, as a woman this patriarchal response only serves to reinforce my anger and frustration and profound sense of injustice. Male writers need to understand that a businessman is not a businesswoman. When I read this word I see a room filled with men in blue pinstriped suits. When I read spokesman or fisherman or garbageman or policeman I

see men and believe your stories to be written about men.

The straw which prompts this letter is your advertisement in to-day's paper which asks us to read about "the new man to watch." The ad continues: "There's a new kind of executive out there and he is seizing control of North American business. He is the chief information officer, the man who can ration the powerful tools of technology and control the flow of information through the organization." Do you mean to say that this new and powerful position is for men only? Will recruitment ads state "women need not apply?"

I should hope that with the improving attitudes toward gender parity in business we will see more enlightened advertisements in a paper which—as this ad intended to convey—positions itself as a leader in news reporting. I would suggest if you cleaned up your language first you could do a much better job of convincing Canadians of your relevance as opinion leaders and news commentators. To ignore this task is to bury yourselves as the news dinosaurs of the twentieth century.

Sincerely,  
Coro T. Strandberg



### NEW MAN TO WATCH

THERE'S a new kind of executive out there, and he is seizing control of North American business. He is the chief information officer, the man who can ration the powerful tools of technology and control the flow of information through the organization.

"Information systems is as close to the heart of the industrial company as operations," one observer says. "The CIO is going to be the next top guy."

The CIO is a corporate phenomenon born of the Information Age, a manager for the 1990s and in an information society, he will be the one to watch.

In Monday's *Globe and Mail*.

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you will take the time to fill out and return (along with your completed Readers Poll, I hope). Please feel free to encourage any women in your community who might be interested as well.

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I would entertain any and-all ideas you may have regarding the setup and actual proposed uses of the information collected.  
 Offers of help will not go unnoticed, I assure you.

**Priorities magazine, Summer 1988**

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12. Is there anything you dislike about this issue? \_\_\_\_\_
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14. Please list three issues of greatest concern to you \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you read any other feminist publications? Y / N \_\_\_\_\_
16. If so, would you mind listing \_\_\_\_\_

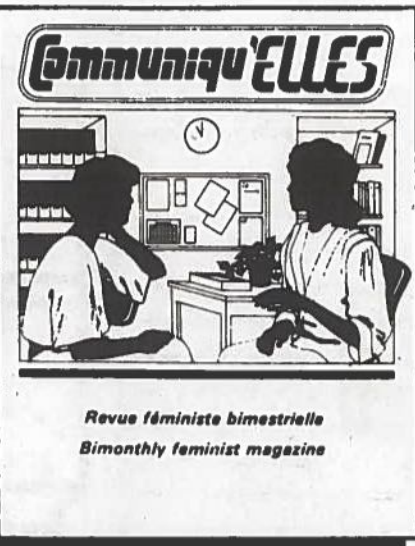
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18. Are you active in any other political organizations or movements? Y / N \_\_\_\_\_

19. If so, would you mind listing it/them? \_\_\_\_\_

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