

PRIORITIES

the feminist ♀ voice in a socialist movement

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International Women's Day



In this issue:

- *Free Trade*
- *Marriage*
—*bad for your health?*
- *Third World Women*
- *Mozambique's Graca Machel*

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

—NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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Chair's Report

by Ann Frost

So much seems to be happening, it's hard to know where to begin. I write this column on February 8, having just listened to Gloria Steinem on CBC's Almanac. And I find myself, overall, heartened by hearing her, particularly when she suggests that women are likely to become even more radical as they get older (she maintains that the reverse is true of men!). It's important to remember that we have

made progress, and that we continue to do so. So, perhaps the way to address this report is to look first at where we are progressing, and then to consider those areas where the news is not quite so positive.

Nomination Support Committee

At the last Steering Committee meeting, we passed a motion establishing a Nomination Support Committee. The Committee's mandate is to encourage and assist women to

seek nominations in the next provincial election. The committee has two initial, concurrent tasks. One is to identify those constituencies we expect to win in the next provincial election, and the other is to identify women who might run in those constituencies.

We're tackling these tasks by calling on NDP women across the province. Regional representatives and members-at-large of the WRC are being asked to begin looking for potential women candidates in their areas, and to encourage them to seek nomination. We're asking Provincial Council members and members of the Executive to take on the same task.

We're also asking Council and Executive members to help us find out what's actually happening in constituencies around the province. We're planning a Breakfast Meeting during Provincial Council at the end of this month, to get an update on the situation in specific constituencies. Constituencies which are not represented at that meeting will be followed up by phone.

As a party, both federally and provincially, we are committed to gender parity. But today we have only five women MLAs in Victoria, of a total of 22. Clearly, that's not good enough. I raised this concern in the context of the disappointing results in the federal election at the last Provincial Council, and it was referred back to the WRC for suggestions and recommendations.

Draconian measures that would address this imbalance do exist, but I would hope that they never become necessary in our party. What the Nomination Support Committee can and should do is stake out those winnable constituencies where there are women candidates who are ready to run, and give them whatever support they need to be

W.R.C. Celebrates International Women's Day

by Vicki Robinson

The Women's Rights Committee is marking I.W.D. in the Lower Mainland this year by holding a celebration at Isadora's Restaurant on Granville Island. Feminists around the world claim March 8 as International Women's Day annually in recognition of the strike by female garment workers for fair wages and working conditions. We celebrate our struggles, our successes, our work together to achieve equality for women. The details of this year's event are outlined below:

Date:	Monday, March 6, 1989
Time:	Bar - 6:30 p.m. Dinner - 7:30 p.m.
Location:	Isadora's Restaurant 1540 Old Bridge Street Granville Island, Vancouver
Special Guest:	Marion Dewar Former Federal Status of Women Critic
Tickets:	\$25.00 per person (subsidies are available)
Contact:	Vicki Robinson at 430-8600 or Terry Hall at 461-8296 to reserve your ticket.

Seating is limited. Please call early.

Please join us as we celebrate I.W.D. 1989 together. Other I.W.D. events are planned throughout the province. For details of the event in your region, please contact your WRC regional representative.

successful first in their campaigns for nominations, and then in the election itself.

Our goal should be parity in the next legislature. And that goal can be reached. But it requires all of us working together to identify and then to support the potential women candidates we all know are out there.

Regional Conferences

I'm really feeling excited about the upcoming Regional Conferences. It's wonderful to see the different regions developing conference plans that are specific to their region, and that address their own issues.

The WRC has decided to send at least two table officers to each of the conferences, and to encourage as many members as possible to attend the conferences in the lower mainland and on the Island. So far, we've arranged a Sunday morning breakfast meeting on the Island and in the Kootenays, and Vancouver Richmond is looking at the possibility of a midday event.

One of the orders of the day will be the election of the regional representative to the WRC. That woman will hold office until the next regional conference. Members-at-large and table officers will continue to be elected at Provincial Conventions.

A second order of business will be to consider a position paper being developed by Darlene Marzari and Susan Mojer. Susan has identified a number of policy areas which are of particular importance to women and has consolidated past party policy in those areas—where it exists. Her paper makes very interesting reading. It's astonishing in some cases how long we have been saying the same thing, and identifying the same needs. But in some areas, policy is scanty at best or even non-existent. For example, rural and farm women's issues are hardly addressed in current or past NDP policy. Where policy was scanty, or non-existent, WRC members have volunteered to work on short term subcommittees to brainstorm what should be addressed.

Susan's research document was discussed at the last meeting of the Steering Committee, and the meeting's input was sent to Susan in Victoria. She will have a statement of priorities, and short position statements in each of these areas ready for the Island Regional Conference, and we will be asking for input from women in that region at the breakfast.

We also anticipate using the Regional Conference as a time to network with potential women candidates, finding out what kinds of support they need to enable them to run both for nomination and for office.

Most conferences are delegated, though some will have space for non-delegated participants. Be sure you get to your regional conference. These conferences, as you all know, are a radical departure for the party, and it is when systems are in flux that there is most opportunity for change. So get there, and be an agent of change!

Gender parity motion

At the last Provincial Council, the following motion, intended to define gender parity, was introduced by Constitution, Party and Municipal Affairs:

Gender parity shall obtain in all elections in all constituent parts of the B.C. party. Gender parity is defined as no more than 60% of either gender, excluding candidates for public office.

After lengthy discussion, that motion was referred to the WRC for consideration. Ian Aikenhead, who chairs Constitution, Party and Municipal Affairs, suggested a somewhat different motion:

There shall be gender parity in all executive positions. Gender parity means that women shall hold a minimum of 40% of all elected positions, excluding the candidate.

The Steering Committee unanimously endorsed Ian's suggestion, with *one* change. We made the minimum 50%. This motion will be coming to Provincial Council in February, and we urge you to lobby

your Provincial Council delegate to support it.

On to the less positive areas...

Meech Lake

The waters of Meech Lake continue to boil and bubble. Our position is clear. We have opposed the Accord since it was introduced, and will continue to do so. We all know that our party lost the support of some of our most active members around the Meech Lake Accord. Since the federal election, a small wind of change seems to be blowing. All of us need to encourage that wind. We need the support of the women of this province to be successful in the next provincial election. We lost some of that support over Meech Lake. Let's be sure we don't miss an opportunity to regain it.

Choice

Today I listened to Gloria Steinem. Yesterday I watched the eleven o'clock news and saw clips of the arrests of over 100 anti-abortion demonstrators at the Everywoman's Health Clinic.

The right to reproductive choice for Canadian women is not yet guaranteed. Even when medical facilities exist, anti-abortion forces try to prevent women from having access to them.

And on the federal scene, the battle will begin again. We know that Mulroney's government will introduce legislation to address this issue. What we don't know is when. So, we need to be vigilant, and we need to be active. We need to continue to lobby members of our own party to remind them of party policy, and we need to support, with time and/or with money, the efforts of the Everywoman's Health Clinic to give B.C. women a safe and supportive alternative to hospital abortions.



Jan Pullinger

New Democrat MLA Candidate for Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Interview by Nanaimo freelance writer Kim Goldberg

Jan Pullinger is a woman with a vision. And she wants to take her vision to Victoria to join Dale Lovick and the rest of the New Democrat caucus as Nanaimo-Ladysmith's second MLA for this two-seat riding.

When veteran MLA Dave Stupich won the party's nomination race last spring to go on to seek (and win) a federal seat representing Nanaimo-Cowichan, the search was on for his provincial replacement.

A 4-way race within the NDP left Jan (the only female contender) on top at the Nanaimo nominating convention last October. A provincial by-election is required by May at the latest.

Because of her own grassroots experience as a mother, worker, small business owner and student, Jan is intimately familiar with the lives, concerns and needs of working people and their families. She is a long-time Nanaimo resident and single parent of her 15-year-old son, Brett. In addition to once owning her own small business, she also ran a small farm and was a foster parent for many years. She has held jobs in industry, banking, insurance, tourism and aviation. And she has logged thousands of hours of volunteer work for the United Church, charities, community organizations and, of course, the NDP.

Her life experiences give Jan a first-hand insight into the political and economic forces at work in our society. But, for Jan, seeing the problem wasn't enough. She wanted to do something about it. So she went



Jan Pullinger

back to school to take a degree in Canadian Studies from Carleton University and pursue graduate course work in B.C. political history. Some of her specific areas of study include B.C. and Canadian history and politics, feminist and native issues, the labour movement and the cooperative movement. Last year, she was awarded a \$20,000 scholarship to do graduate research at the University of Victoria, but she chose to enter the political arena instead.

The media, surprised by Jan's nomination victory, called her a "dark horse" and an "unknown." But Jan says there's nothing so mysterious about her victory or what got her there. She won the old-fashioned way by knocking on doors—1,200 in a 3-month period.

In this interview, she shares her plans and her feelings about entering politics.

Priorities: Why did you decide to seek political office?

Jan Pullinger: I've spent a lot of time working in this community. I've lived in Nanaimo for 19 years, I've been involved in many local organizations, and I've owned and operated a small business. And I've gone back to university to study in a more formal way how our society is structured and who is really in control. All of this experience has given me a pretty good understanding about what the problems are in our society and what needs to be changed.

Part of my decision to run for political office stems from the fact that I am a mother. I have some real concerns about what the future holds for our children. Quite clearly the Vander Zalm government and Socred policies don't give our kids much hope for the kind of future they deserve. For instance, in Nanaimo we still have well over 10 percent unemployment, food banks and soup kitchens. And probably one in four children here is living in poverty. And unless we make some changes the next generation may not be able to count on adequate health care and education or even a clean and safe environment. That simply isn't good enough.

Another reason I decided to run is because we need more women in politics. In the NDP we now have 5 women MLAs in a caucus of 22. I'd like to be the sixth.

Priorities: Do women bring some special or different skills to political

office?

Jan Pullinger: Women's experience is certainly different from men's so we can expect women's skills to be different as well. For instance, most women spend at least a portion of their lives at home. I certainly have. And that usually means dealing with kids, resolving an endless stream of conflicts, managing a household budget, and handling the full range of human dynamics that exist in any family. That's been an important part of my experience, and as a result I'm very much a team player. I like working by consensus. And, like most women, I've developed good listening skills. Women also tend to be very in touch with the grassroots of the community, with people's everyday lives and needs.

And like most New Democrat women, I bring a clear feminist vision and feminist understanding to the political arena. And that vision and understanding comes from my personal experience as a woman in this society as well as from my formal studies.

Priorities: As a woman politician, would you be focussing primarily on women's issues?

Jan Pullinger: As a feminist, I am very concerned about the status and lives of women and how legislation affects them. I would certainly want to join the rest of caucus in addressing the obvious and important issues such as violence against women, pay equity, reproductive rights and child care. But because women are still at a disadvantage in so many more subtle ways in our society, I think it is important to look carefully at all issues as they arise to see how they affect women. In other words, I think all issues are women's issues.

Priorities: How are you feeling about all this, about your foray into politics?

Jan Pullinger: I'm delighted. I think anyone who wins a nomination for the New Democrats can feel very proud. But one of the things I'm most pleased about is the prospect of being the first woman MLA from Nanaimo. Barbara Wallace, of course, led the way in Ladysmith.

But here in Nanaimo, I'm the first woman to even be nominated by one of the major parties. And that's pretty exciting.

Priorities: And are you ready for the by-election?

Jan Pullinger: We've got our team in place and 2,500 bumper strips out on cars. We're geared up and starting to move. But what I'm really looking forward to is going to Victoria to work with Dale Lovick and the rest of our excellent New

Democrat MLAs and adding one more voice to our women's caucus. And in two year's time, I look forward to being part of a New Democrat government that will implement the policies that will make life better for all British Columbians.

Just so you don't get the wrong impression and think it's all work and no play for Jan, in what little free time she has she like to ski, play raquet sports, paint and play guitar.



Pay Equity Conference

Dear Sisters:

Re: Conference on pay equity
"Just give us the money"

On Saturday, March 4, 1989, in celebration of International Women's Day, the B.C. Federation of Labour is sponsoring a conference on pay equity entitled, "Just Give Us the Money."

The conference is at the Sheraton Landmark, 1400 Robson Street, Vancouver, B.C. It begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. The registration fee is \$30.00. Registration forms have been sent to unions and women's groups in British Columbia.

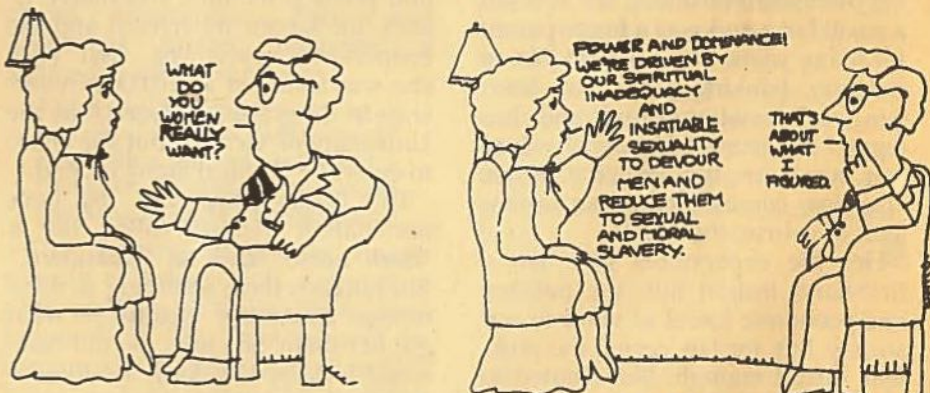
I would appreciate it if you could include this in your calendar of events.

Thank you.

Yours in Sisterhood,

Astrid Davidson
Director

B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR (CLC)



Nicole Hollander. I'M IN TRAINING TO BE TALL AND BLONDE. 1979. (USA)

Marriage and Health

by Agnes Stewart

Reprinted with the permission of the B.C. Teachers' Status of Women Journal, June 1988.

When this news gets out (and there is no stopping it now), someone is bound to start a small revolution.

The news is that marriage is bad for a woman's health. Some women, on hearing this, might declare that it is not news to them. But now they have the solid backing of a study released a year or so ago.

The timing is unfortunate. For decades, women have been getting married; some, more than once. Just when we're getting used to it, we're struck with this thunderbolt. The experts—those clever conspirators—quietly and diligently collect statistics about us. Then, without even a decent warning, they drop their little bombshells into our lives.

There is evidence, they say, to show that married women are more susceptible than married men to physical illness and that more wives than husbands succumb to clinical depression. Moreover, marriage enhances the health of husbands. Married men, we're told, benefit significantly from the emotional support their wives provide. These men are healthier than their wives. They are also healthier than single men, who have shorter lifespans.

Why didn't someone tell us about this sooner? We might still have got married; women tend to do that. So do men, though probably not for the same reasons. Still, we would like to have known, so that we'd have seen more clearly what we were stepping into. Without this knowledge to guide us, many women have regarded marriage as a sort of wedded hit-and-miss arrangement where we learn as we go and, with

luck, won't have to pay later.

We should have been alerted to the risks, as we are in other perilous activities; we are repeatedly told about the dangers of too much salt, caffeine, fat, smoking, and a variety of other everyday hazards. Yet we've heard nothing about the health risks of getting married.

Now that women know with scientific certainty about these hazards, the institution of marriage will be reborn in a new form, and women's lives will be greatly altered.

Some inevitable changes are worth noting.

Under the new system, a woman considering marriage will obtain a semi-glossy brochure describing the health risks. This official information will come as a result of pressure from groups such as SPWCM/D (Society for the Protection of Women Contemplating Matrimony/but Doubtful). Some very heavy lobbying will be necessary to establish this public service, and in the long run, its establishment will be achieved only by the united threats of women to quit marrying for good. This threat will bring immediate results.

Supplied with this information, women will then have to make some hard decisions as they think about such questions as the following: Do you take this man, knowing it will likely be better for him and worse for you? In more sickness for you and better health for him? Do you promise to love him interminably, knowing he will outlive most of the eligible bachelors? Do you promise to put on a happy face when you are depressed to that you will not impair his health or his growing wealth? Do you promise not to whine about your depression, should he happen to notice it?

More information will be available

to help women make prudent choices. All marriage certificates will be stamped with a cautionary notice. Warning: The Department of Health and Welfare warns that exposure to marriage can be hazardous to your health. Danger may increase with the dosage. *Dosage* is defined as the length of time married, or the number of marriages undertaken. For a longer lifespan, shorter or fewer dosages may be required.

Interim marriage contracts will become legal. This will become necessary as some women are advised by their doctors to give up marrying for the sake of their health, or perhaps to seek a new partner—just as one would alter one's diet or try a different prescription. Health can be expected to improve as the dosage is altered or reduced to safer levels.

Needless to say, this change in matrimonial habits will cause an uneven run on the number of marriages contracted, as women take flight for the sake of their health and men search for women with whom they can enhance their health and lengthen their lifespans.

This unequal struggle will eventually sort itself out one way or another, the outcome being that no one will know for sure who is married to whom or for what duration. Ultimately, the health pattern may be reversed, so that the risk for women will be lower than... but who's going to complain about that?

Agnes Stewart teaches in Surrey. She is on the Provincial Status of Women Committee



An Alternative to the Mulroney Trade Deal

Part Two

by Elizabeth Woods

In Part One of this article I discussed the long-term goal of evolving a new kind of society/economy (one which operates in harmony with nature), and the values of survival, of work for its own sake, of the small-scale, of cooperatives, of dealing with the economy in human terms, and of adapting to the economic cycle, instead of always going against it—which together, if acted upon, would lead us to that goal. In Part Two, I shall discuss some specific ways we could apply these principles.

Where and how to start

One consequence of regarding the economy as an organic entity is that, instead of merely breaking it into chunks so that unemployment is considered one problem, housing another, farming yet a third, and pollution something else again, we are led to consider all these different aspects in relation to one another, so that solving one problem is seen as part of solving several others. To illustrate, I'll discuss housing and farming in relation to each other, and to pollution and unemployment.

Housing is in a state of crisis. Not only do we not have enough of it (especially for low- and moderate-income households); not only is the monster urban sprawl gobbling up the countryside, but also our housing is a major contributor to pollution, from the sewage we dump into the sea, to the garbage we bury in the earth, to the fumes we vent into the air.

We need not only to establish programs which would enable people to provide their own housing, but also policies which would encourage the design of housing

which functions organically, rather than mechanically.

One source of inspiration for such new designs should be Moshe Safdie's Habitat at Expo '67—a concept which opens the way for a new kind of city.

Habitat housing is modular housing—the use of a small number of standardized components (many of which could be made from local materials on the spot by local builders) to construct a large number of differently shaped and sized apartments.

The modules would be stacked to that the roofs of one level of apartments provide terraces for the apartments around and above them (and also create a pleasingly irregular mountain-like urban landscape). These terraces would be large enough for gardens (some hydroponic; others, not), fish-pond/fountains, and play and lounging areas.

Habitats would produce most of the energy they use—electricity

from windmills and photoelectric cells; methane from kitchen and garden garbage and domestic sewage sludge; heat from solar energy systems, both passive and active (enclosed in the winter, the terraces would become solariums—integral parts of the building's heating system); and food from the gardens and fish-ponds.

Habitats would take care of most of the waste they produce. Water (obtained originally from the city's water supply) would be recycled through a system which would include the toilets, sinks and tubs, the hydroponic gardens, the fish-pond fountains, solar sewage walls, and many small streams, thick with water hyacinth and bulrushes (which remove heavy metals and other toxins), chuckling over their beds of rock and gravel as they wind among a cluster of habitats on their way back to the sea. Walking through such an apartment complex would be like walking through a hilly park.

Sewage solids would be converted to methane and organic fertilizer, while leftovers such as bottles, cans, plastic containers, packaging, used clothing and furniture, and just plain junk, would either be re-used within the habitats or sold to local recycling businesses (many of which would be small Crown cooperatives) which would buy garbage with either cash or tax credits, depending on the wish of each household.

This kind of organic housing, in addition to fostering many new small industries and all kinds of interesting work, would be a way of bringing the country into the city, so that more people are able—and willing—to live downtown.

Graphic from Images



This, in turn, would relieve much of the pressure on our farm- and wildland caused by the desire of so many of us to live in green, serene surroundings.

For farming, too, is in a state of crisis. Our large-scale "agro-bizz" dictates: large farms, large machines (consuming large quantities of gas and oil), large amounts of artificial fertilizers, and pesticides and herbicides—and high prices to service the large debt which also grows from the purchase of land and expensive machines and chemicals.

But we don't have to farm that way; we can develop an agriculture of small farms, intensively and organically cultivated. We need:

1) government leadership and investment in the development and production of small farm machines which

a) relieve the heavy labour of farming without imposing a heavy burden of debt; and

b) keep operating costs low by running on energy produced by the farm itself, and by supplying useful by-products, such as organic fertilizers;

2) government leadership and investment in the establishment of many small, vertically-integrated farm businesses, which not only grow food but also process what they don't sell fresh into preservative-free, nutritionally superior hot and cold cereals, pre-prepared meals, beverages, snacks, trail packs, and so forth, which they sell mostly through their own farmers' market booth and/or health-food store and/or roadside stand.

Produced by businesses which don't have to maximize their profits to survive, and which save on transportation costs by being close to their markets, and on energy costs by producing most of what they use themselves, such products could successfully compete with imported brands, especially if there were

3) government support for high-quality advertising, produced locally and aired as frequently during prime time as the commercials for the food giants. (Supporting local farm businesses in this way would also help support local artists—an

example of how solving problems affecting one aspect of the economy can also help to solve problems in other areas.)

Altogether, developing organic housing and farming would give us a cleaner environment, more beautiful cities, healthier food, and more secure farm incomes, along with many more people working for themselves and others in strong, broadly-based local economies, producing goods and services which are sold all over the world as well as at home.

Similarly, by developing the machines and techniques for small-scale, sustained-yield logging, and small, vertically-integrated forestry businesses which add value to every scrap of wood cut down, we would be well on the way to preserving our forests even as we exploit them.

To put these strategies into operation we need the following specific programs:

1) a Venture Capital Fund which would make long-term, low-interest loans of \$1-50,000 to every kind of struggling enterprise (the chief criteria for which would be a realistic business plan and a demonstrated willingness to work hard.)

The charge that at least 50% of new businesses fail within their first year of operation should be answered by pointing out that

a) many of these failures are due to under-funding; and

b) it is the investment of large amounts of money in a few mega-projects which concentrates risk to an unacceptable degree, while investing the same amount of money in many projects spreads the risk accordingly, as well as stimulating much more economic activity throughout the country. The 50% of businesses which succeed will more than compensate for the 50% which don't;

2) a Guaranteed Annual Income;

3) Tax Reform based on a commitment to income tax, both corporate and personal, as the major source of tax revenue.

We should oppose any form of consumption or value-added tax for two reasons: the first is that sales taxes are regressive, imposing an

unfair burden on those with low incomes; the second is that, paying income tax, painful as it is, makes each citizen aware of exactly how much our government is costing us, encouraging us to pay attention to how our money is spent.

A revamped tax system should have only two functions:

a) to collect revenues; and

b) to redistribute some of those revenues to those with incomes below the poverty line.

Apart from deductions for the actual costs of employment business, and for charitable and political donations, all income above the poverty line should be progressively taxed up to a maximum of 35-40%.

And, instead of biasing the system in favour of the rich by seeking to direct economic behaviour through tax incentives, all tax shelters (except for RRSPs for individuals) should be eliminated, with loans and grants being used instead to persuade businesses to act in ways which further government policy;

3) a Research and Development Fund for the invention and development of small-scale technologies, especially for, and by, small businesses;

4) an Arts Investment Fund for the encouragement of artistic entrepreneurial activities;

5) a Housing Fund which makes money available to those individuals, families and small organizations which wish to provide their own housing; and

6) an Organic Housing Institute responsible for developing all kinds of human habitats, and, in partnership with housing cooperatives and small businesses, the machines and systems needed to enable them to function organically.

Conclusion

In the next federal election there will be no escaping economic issues, nor our reputation as spenders. Since, however, everyone is going to be throwing so much money at the electorate that the figures will be meaningless, our goal should be to offer the most exciting, intelligent, and innovative policies going. Im-

agination and daring will win us far more votes than will fiscal caution (which no one will believe of us anyhow).

The important fact to remember is that social democratic governments are elected (and re-elected) despite the prejudice against them as poor economic managers; we can be, too, provided that we offer a vision of the future that addresses the most pressing needs of our society. We should speak from the heart about the everyday problems which must be faced and solved—What do I do with the garbage? How can I work as a logger without destroying the forests?—in order to come to grips with the plight of our environment, and save our lives.

An economy in which individuals and the work they do are valued above money; an economy which enhances rather than destroys the natural world; an economy based on cooperation rather than competition—these are the images which will win votes for us. The more down-to-earth we are, the higher we can aspire—and the more voters will support us. ♀

— ♥ —
Ladies

A nationwide (U.S.) ladies auxiliary has begun in San Francisco to satirically promote sexual inequality. Some ladies attend

Against

political events dressed in white gloves and appropriate accessories, while others wear

Women

cheerleading costumes and carry pompoms.

Some of their slogans are: Father Knows Best; I'd Rather Be Ironing;

Brooms Not Basketballs; Gold Rings, Not Gold Medals; Pump Iron: Do his Shirts; Roses Not Raises. One Ladies Against Women unit held a bake sale outside the 1984 Republican Convention, selling Twinkies at \$9 million apiece to retire the national deficit ♥ ♥ ♥

— ♥ —

*From the B.C. Teachers' Status of Women Journal.
Design and typesetting by Swee-Sim Tan.*

EQUALITY FOUR YEARS LATER

Conference on
Women and Equality
under the Charter of Rights

Equality

April 14 and 15, 1989

Media Centre, Robson Square
Vancouver, B.C.

West Coast Women's
Legal Education and
Action Fund (LEAF)



Conference on Women and the Charter of Rights

West Coast LEAF (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund) is presenting a conference entitled "Equality Four Years Later" on Friday evening, April 14, and Saturday, April 15, at Vancouver's Robson Square Media Centre.

It will provide a forum to review how the equality provisions in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms have been interpreted by the courts, responded to by government and used by equality-seeking groups in the four years since the provisions came into force in April, 1985. The focus will be on issues of particular concern to women, including family law, the criminal justice system, employment, health and native women's rights.

The conference will feature panels and workshops with resource persons from across Canada including the Executive Director of LEAF National, Christie Jefferson, and the Executive Director of the Court Challenges Program, Kathleen Ruff. Other participants include Megan Ellis of Women Against Violence Against Women, Professor Lynn Smith of the UBC Law School, Peter Carver of the Canadian Disability Rights Council, Dick Gathercole, the Executive Director of the B.C. Public Interest Advocacy Centre, and Jillian Ridington of DAWN Canada.

The registration fee for the conference is \$25, with a special \$10 rate for students, seniors and unemployed persons. Additional information can be obtained from:

Janet Kce at the West Coast LEAF office, 684-8772,
or Lynda Raymond, conference coordinator, at 224-2568.

I Never Knew

by Celine Williams

Celine Williams lives in Ottawa. Her strong interest in the Third World has led her to travel to many developing countries.

Every day, in a small shack in a suburb of Rio de Janeiro, a little girl plays mother to her brothers and sisters. It is no game of pretence, however, for eight-year-old Maria.

Someone must stay at home so her older brothers can go to school and her mother can work to support the family. Poor little Maria, it means there can be no time for school now or ever. She will never be given the opportunity to learn to read and write. Maria is destined to be illiterate all her life, coping with life in a large city where thousands of signs will be totally incomprehensible to her.

I never knew there were an estimated five hundred million women in the world who will also never learn to read or write. That number exceeds the total of illiterate men.

It is clear that children also suffer. In a village in Ghana, a mother can be seen sitting in the sun bathing her baby. It should be a pleasant enough picture, except the mother is unaware that the water she is using to wash her baby comes from a pond polluted by garbage. It isn't her fault that her knowledge in health care practices is limited, but that won't prevent her child from dying. Millions of other children will also die each year from such deadly water.

Or consider another woman's story: with a family to support but no money, Farida came to Gazipur in Bangladesh. She was determined to survive. Farida has no special qualifications but she is skilled with her hands and would like to make and sell baskets. In order to do that,

she must have at least 5,000 taka—about ten dollars—to start up a business. But no one will lend money to an uneducated woman without collateral.

Farida's story is similar to that of millions of other women who are struggling to find a way to start up a small business. Like most women, Farida has no possessions of her own. She will never have the credit she needs to finance a business.

I never knew that women own one per cent of the world's possessions. They certainly work hard enough to warrant more.

A woman named Aisatou has a double working day in Cameroon. First she must spend her days transplanting and harvesting rice. Then, she returns home to grow sorghum on her small patch of ground. She has no choice in the matter of her long working days. If her family is to eat, she must have her garden. And like most women in Africa, she must also work in the fields. More

than half of the agricultural work in Africa is done by women, as much as 80 per cent in some countries.


Now I know about these injustices to women and I am outraged.

I am also saddened by the waste of potential. I imagine what could be accomplished in the Third World if only such energy and determination, such love of family, such willingness to learn and be productive could be harnessed and directed. After all, women represent half the population of the Third World—1.8 billion. Development efforts can no longer afford to exclude so many women from training programs, credit facilities or other opportunities which could improve the quality of their lives.

Fortunately, I now know a new beginning is being offered to women of the Third World. Canada is in the forefront of a worldwide movement working to give women their rightful role and place in development programs.



CIDA (the Canadian International Development Agency), the government department that administers foreign aid, has created a special development agenda to address the problems of women living in the Third World. Through its special Women in Development (WID) program, CIDA ensures that women are considered in the planning and execution of all projects funded by the Canadian government.

In addition, institutions, associations, churches, co-operatives, and governments around the world are all devoting time and effort to help stop women from being victims of life. 



WOMEN IN THE THIRD WORLD

What is Canada doing?

We all know that women in the Third World contribute in a real, substantial way to the world economy. On every continent women farm millions of acres of land to feed the people of their country; they produce 50% of the foodstuffs, and each day they process and prepare more food than the leading multinationals. Yet their work is not reflected in most official statistics. And in the past, they have been neglected by world agencies whose job it has been to provide development assistance.

In Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) spends \$2.2 billion a year on international aid and has made women in development a priority.

I would be delighted to speak to your group or organization about the progress CIDA has made in the area of women and development.

Marian Dodds
#4-31 West 11th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1S6
Phone: 874-7893

Women and Children On the Frontline

GRACA MACHEL

*Interview by Colleen Lowe Morna
Reprinted from Africa Report
July-August 1988*

Graca Machel (nee Simbine) first joined Frelimo as a student of romance languages at the University of Lisbon in the early 1970s. In 1973, she left her studies to join the war for Mozambique's independence, which was being waged from bases in Tanzania. Shortly afterward, she became part of the transitional government in the run-up to independence from Portuguese colonial rule in 1975.

Machel became the country's first minister of education—a post she still holds today—and in September

1975, married Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel, whose first wife, Josina, had died in combat. On October 19, 1986, Samora Machel and several of his senior aides were killed in a plane crash on South African soil, widely believed to have been engineered by the Pretoria regime. Amid her grief, Graca Machel wrote a letter to jailed African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela and his wife Winnie. It read in part:

To you, in particular, Winnie, I express my sincere admiration. My husband was murdered in just one day, in just one fateful moment. Your husband is being murdered every day, every hour.

Dear Winnie, Dear Nelson, Samora, your brother, fell on the battlefield. The world will never see Mandela and Samora in triumphant embrace on that glorious day when the flag for freedom is hoisted in South Africa. He did not complete his mission. But we will.

Dear Winnie, my husband's death has left me with a great emptiness. The solitude I feel is immense. Only by continuing the struggle, contributing to the completion of his work, will my life have meaning.

Still dressed in black, and reluctant to discuss that bleak day in 1986 when southern African lost one of its most talented leaders, Graca

Machel is nonetheless one of the most powerful spokespersons for the millions of Mozambicans who have suffered untold deprivations at the hands of South African-backed Renamo rebels.

From her ninth-floor Maputo office, surrounded by works of Mozambican revolutionary art, Graca Machel shared some of the pains, hopes, and aspirations of the nation's two most vulnerable groups—women and children. The interview took place shortly after a major donor conference in Maputo where, for the second year running, the international community pledged close to \$300 million toward emergency relief efforts.

Africa Report: For the first time this year, education has been included in the emergency appeal. Why has this been necessary?

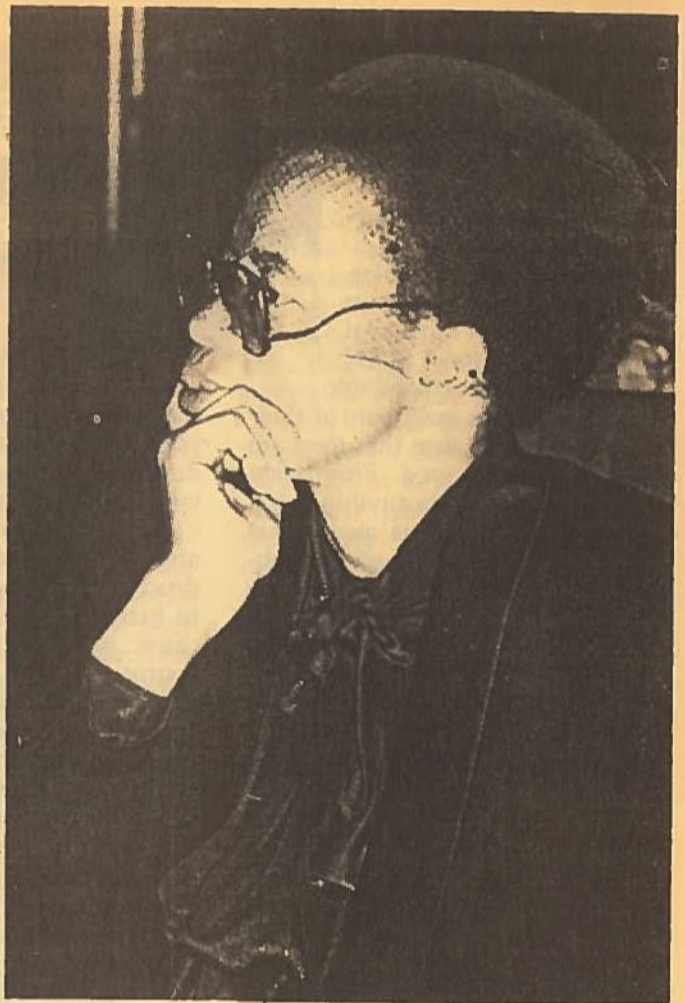
Machel: The emergency affects people, and people have a whole range of needs. They do not only need to eat and to be dressed. They also have spiritual needs. One of these is the right to learn, to develop their intellectual faculties, and to be able to solve their own problems. In our own case in Mozambique, we have reached the point where it is no longer adequate to ask for aid in the sense of food, transport, and medical assistance alone. We need to include this concept of rehabilitating human beings themselves.

There are two respects in which this rehabilitation has to take place. First, the rehabilitation of the children. We try to train teachers to deal with children who have been the victims of war not only to learn normally, but to continue to develop themselves psychologically and intellectually. The other understanding is that we have to rehabilitate infrastructure and schools. You can't rehabilitate children without giving them the basic material conditions to develop themselves.

Africa Report: Could you give us some indication of how the war has affected the government's post-independence literacy campaign?

Machel: Between 1975 and 1980, the rate of illiteracy dropped from

Graca Machel, still dressed in black, is one of the most powerful Mozambicans who have suffered untold deprivations at the hands of Renamo.



93% to 72%. This was a 21% improvement in five years. Since then, we have not been able to take a national census, but there are some indications that illiteracy now stands at 64%. If we had been able to follow the same dynamic course as in the first five years of independence, the results would obviously have been better.

In provinces like Zambezia, Tete, Sofala, and even Niassa, and in the south, in Maputo province, more than 70% of all primary schools have been destroyed or paralyzed. These buildings were used for adult education in the evenings. When Renamo destroys a primary school, they destroy the base for extending education at all.

Africa Report: Part of the emergency appeal is for assistance to

address the psychological traumas which children have suffered as a result of the war. What form do these traumas take?

Machel: In Mozambique, we have more or less 220,000 children who are orphans. They suffer the trauma of being orphans in circumstances of violence, which is not a normal situation. Second, we have children who have lost their parents. We are not sure whether their parents have died, but for different reasons, because of the conflict situation, they are separated. You can understand the anguish of a child in this situation.

We also have children who are mutilated, who have lost their physical capacity to play and study with other children. Others have suffered severe famine, because for

different reasons they have been taken from their villages and have had to walk long distances without food or water to drink. Because of this, their capacity to learn and develop as normal people is reduced.

Increasingly so, the bandits are kidnapping children to train them, transform them, and teach them to kill and rob. They are obliged to kill their relatives, members of their families, to make sure that they are completely disoriented. From then on, they are able to do anything else.

All this has made us aware that we have another more serious problem of how to rehabilitate these children. Here in Maputo, we have started a small experiment with about 30 children in this situation. We hope to spread throughout the country, wherever there are cases of children who have been used by the bandits.

This is what we know happens. What we need to be able to tell more exactly what the traumas are, and how many people are affected, is a national survey. We are asking for international support, for specialized teams to work in each province of our country, to make this assessment, so that we can draw up a clear plan. The ministries of health and education are working together to try to find funding for this project.

Africa Report: I believe there is some evidence that Renamo places children under the influence of drugs in order to get them to commit atrocities.

Machel: Yes, the children themselves have told us this and the ministry of health has gathered evidence of it. It seems to be a normal practice.

Africa Report: Why, in your view, have children become targets?

Machel: I think there are two main reasons. First, any society is very sensitive about children, and South Africa wants to touch us in a way that hurts most. Second, they want to prolong the problem in the country, so that even one day when we win this war, when we are at



peace, we will continue to have social problems, because we have a young generation that is completely deviant—mutilated physically, mentally, and emotionally.

They are not satisfied that they are able to make more difficult our process of development; they want to make it last for a long time, because if they affect our main resource for development, development will become more difficult in the future. We'll have in the next generation thousands and thousands of people who are not human beings in the whole sense of the word, who cannot realize themselves completely.

Africa Report: In what ways has Renamo's campaign specifically affected women?

Machel: In societies which are underdeveloped, the family is the basic cell of society. It is so important that a family is not complete unless all its components are together. In many cases, if you go to the accommodation camps, you will find women who are completely alone. They have lost their husbands, they have lost their children. I cannot explain to you in words what this means. In other cases, there are women who have lost some members of their family, who are not sure whether they are alive or dead. They live in a constant state of anxiety. Sometimes their sons have been captured and are living with the bandits. They cannot do anything about it. Other times, they have lost everything they have; they cannot even find clothes to put on their children. You can understand how a mother feels in this situation. In these camps, you have women who look like they are 60, when in fact they are only in their 30s. Be-

cause of so many problems, they have become old before their time.

Attacking women is one of the tactics used to destroy our capacity to develop, because they are the backbone of the family. They are also, for the most part, the farmers. Not being able to feed her family creates a sense of helplessness in any woman.

There is also systematic sexual abuse in these bandit camps. From what we know—from what women have explained to us—there have been cases in which bandits have abused women in front of their husbands, to destroy completely not only the woman, but to also destroy the husband, to destroy their sense of privacy. In many cases, women just don't want to talk about it, because it is so humiliating.

Africa Report: You have mentioned the separation of families, which I found to be an acute problem everywhere I travelled in the central part of the country. Is there any way in which families can be reunited given the present security situation?

Machel: First, we have to deal with the basic needs, because people come in such a miserable state. They need medical assistance, they need food, they need to be dressed. Reuniting the family is the next step. It is a problem we still have to work hard on, because unless there is security, it is not easy to reunite people who are in safe areas with those who are in areas that we do not control completely.

So far, our efforts in this regard have tended to concentrate on children, as a matter of priority, simply because when you have a lot of problems, sometimes you cannot deal with everything at the same time.

Africa Report: What do you see as Renamo's aim?

Machel: Initially, we thought South Africa wanted to take over, to install a puppet government here. The concept of independence and development of a non-racial society, which is exactly the opposite of

South Africa, is an example to those who are struggling for their independence. We represent something very advanced which South Africa cannot afford to see.

My opinion is that they have been forced to understand that Frelimo as a party, and the people of Mozambique, are one thing. They were not able to install a puppet government because our people have a deeply rooted appreciation of liberty and sovereignty. It is not possible to fool them with people under the orders of someone else.

Now the bandits do not say they are fighting to take over. They say that they want to negotiate a power-sharing. When someone knows he is strong enough to take over, he is not going to say that he wants to share. Having failed in this regard, the strategy seems to be to try and make our society unviable. They are not attacking the army or the government, but the people themselves. They want to make the problems of famine and underdevelopment endemic, to become a cycle of misery that constantly repeats itself.

Africa Report: In your view, how and when will this misery end?

Machel: Apartheid and its projects have no long-term future. There is no future for a society which is based on violence, discrimination, massacres, killing, and injustice. Unfortunately, the apartheid system is backed by other forces which help it to last. Ideally, all democratic and humanitarian forces—wherever people are, whatever they believe—should join our people, to build a very large mass movement that will say “no” to apartheid, as happened in the case of Vietnam.

There was a moment in history when almost everyone in the world, religious people, humanitarians, cultural associations, and students took a step to say, “Stop the war in Vietnam.” We feel that is not happening in the case of South Africa. People are just not as involved as they should be to end this genocide. This is the first step—the people themselves.

The second is the governments which support South Africa, which say that they need the strategic minerals that come from here. Some way must be found to make them understand that they do not have to sacrifice thousands of human lives

because of their selfish interests. They can stop apartheid today, and tomorrow they will continue to have cooperation with a democratic government in South Africa. So we ask, really, what are we being sacrificed for? It is very difficult for us to understand.

Africa Report: How do you see the future?

Machel: I am optimistic as a person. It is a quality of all revolutionaries that they are optimistic. I am optimistic because I believe in the capacity of our people to keep on struggling for their rights and not to surrender at any price. We have a very clear party, we have a very clear policy on how to develop our country, and we have very concrete aims. Once we have peace, the future is in our hands. To achieve peace is first and foremost our own task. But the international community has an obligation to assist, because the source of the problem is apartheid, and that we cannot solve alone.

Colleen Lowe Morna is a Zimbabwean freelance journalist based in Harare.



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