

RECEIVE

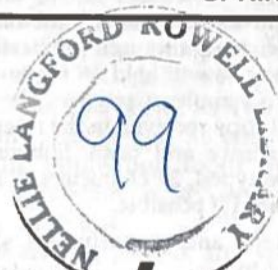
PRIORITIES

the feminist + voice in a socialist movement

VOL. XVIII NO. 1

PRICE: \$1.50

SPRING 1990



Country Living:

Feminist viewpoints

Also in this issue:

- *RU486 — abortion pill*
- *A global sisterhood — book review*

PRIORITIES is published by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights of the British Columbia New Democratic Party.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Individual: \$10.00 per year
Institution: \$15.00 per year

ISSN 0700-6543

PRIORITIES welcomes letters and articles from its readers. All submissions must be signed, although publication of names may be withheld on request. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit all copy received in the interest of brevity, clarity and taste. Submissions should be typed, 35 characters to a line, triple-spaced if possible.

Submissions and subscriptions should be mailed to:

PRIORITIES
250-3665 Kingsway
Vancouver, B.C.
V5R 5W2

"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

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE is responsible for the content of all unsigned material. Members are:

Joanne Elliott
Kathy Hill
Jane Norris
Swee-Sim Tan
Thanks to Marcia Braundy for helping with this issue.

PRIORITIES coordinator:

Kathy Hill
250-3665 Kingsway
Vancouver, B.C.
V5R 5W2
430-8600

Design and production:

Swee-Sim Tan
Medea Desktop Publishing

Printed in a union shop:

College Printers
Vancouver, B.C.

Contents

Chair's Report	1
<i>by Ann Frost</i>	
Water, Roads, Jobs and Isolation	2
<i>by Bonnie Evans</i>	
Wearing Many Hats	3
<i>by Ellen Zimmerman</i>	
Rural Women	5
<i>by Marg Lubbers</i>	
What It's Like To Go Country	6
<i>by Bonnie Baker</i>	
Coping in Rural B.C.	7
<i>by Sandy Korman</i>	
RU 486: Revolutionary Discovery?	9
<i>reprinted from Connexions, No. 31, 1989</i>	
Book Review	11
<i>by Kathy Hill</i>	

Cover graphic by Jean Tuttle.

Chair's Report

by Ann Frost

It seems difficult to believe that this will be my last report for *Priorities* as chair of the WRC. Where have the last two years gone? So much has happened, and so much remains to be done. I will be reporting to Convention on my term of office, and plan to write a sort of "retrospective" for the next issue of *Priorities*, so I will content myself in this issue with bringing you up to date.

Convention arrangements

Plans are going ahead for Convention. Women's Caucuses will be held Friday, March 9 at 5:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday morning at 8:00 a.m. Elections for Table Officers and for Members at Large will take place Sunday morning. Remember that you do not have to be a delegate to Convention to attend the Women's Caucuses, or to run for a Member at Large position on the Steering Committee.

There have been some minor changes in the organization of the WRC policy paper for Convention. We were asked to separate current from proposed policy, so that they could be dealt with separately on the Convention floor. We will be asking Convention to reaffirm current policy, to endorse new policy, and to recommend the priorities in the paper to an NDP government. Now titled "Women's Rights: Priorities for the '90s," the paper, I think, does us all proud. If you are not going to be at Convention, you can request a copy from Provincial Office.

Endorsement criteria (revisited)

After deciding at our November Steering Committee meeting to endorse women who were seeking nomination, and establishing some general criteria, we asked the

Nominations Support Committee to grapple with a definition of "demonstrated commitment" which was part of the general statement.

Sandra Bruneau tackled the problem and produce a draft discussion paper for the Nominations Support Committee. She identified the major problem involved in measuring commitment — who decides, and on what basis? After considerable discussion, the committee drafted a more specific set of criteria, and presented them to Steering the next week.

They recommended that the WRC endorse as candidates for nomination women who:

- a) declare themselves to be feminists
- b) endorse current WRC policies
- c) commit themselves to work for the implementation of these policies if they are elected.

After the criteria were ratified at Steering, Charley Beresford, chair of the Nominations Support Committee, was directed to write to women in the party who have already indicated an interest in standing for a nomination, or who have declared their intent, outlining these criteria and inviting them to request our endorsement.

There will be an article in the *March Democrat* describing the specific criteria and process by which a woman can request endorsement.

Delegate workshop

Our educational event at January's Steering Committee meeting focused on delegate skills. Many women find the prospect of speaking before 700 delegates somewhat awesome, and so we looked at ways to build confidence, as well as some specific guidelines about preparing what you want to say, and then actually saying it.

The second part of the workshop addressed how to lobby. Darlene Marzari led a "hands on" activity which gave the women at the meeting a chance to actually view and participate in a lobbying process.

Election planning

Even though many of us are caught up in the excitement of Convention, planning for the next election, whenever it happens, is still going ahead. I am sitting on the Strategy and Election Planning Committee on behalf of the WRC, and find that a most interesting experience. It's clear that our platform on women's issues will be an important factor in our next campaign, and we hope to draw support from former Socred women who are disenchanted with their leader, and attracted by our party's stand on equality and affirmative action. ♀

*Did you know?
your contribution to the
Dorothy Gretchen Steeves Fund
is tax receipted in the same manner
as any contribution to the party*

Water, Roads, Jobs and Isolation

by Bonnie Evans

I was thinking as I drove home from work yesterday about water, about roads, about jobs and about isolation.

My water comes from Percy Creek, a small spring-fed creek that flows from about a third of the way down Perry's Ridge. I pay the government forty dollars a year for rights to the water from the creek. For forty dollars I am allowed to build a water box, hire a backhoe to dig the quarter-mile line to my house, lay plastic pipe and hook up.

In the spring during run-off the water gets dirty. In the fall the intake clogs with leaves and pine needles. In the winter, the pipes freeze.

All in all I like my water. It tastes good. I don't know how pure it is, nobody tests it, but I think it's okay. But I wonder what I would do if I were a single woman. Or what I will do when I'm too old to climb the mountain to the box and hang over the edge up to my shoulders in icy water while I fish for the leaves in the intake. I wonder what I would do if I were a poor woman. How I would afford the pipe, the licence, the inevitable repairs. I suspect I would move, would have to move, would have no choice.

I know I would move if I couldn't drive. Not because I love to drive, but because there is no public transportation. None. No bus, no taxi, no sky train — or any other kind of train. No public transportation. If I were poor, a single mother, for example, working at a job for minimum wage, it wouldn't matter if I could drive, I couldn't afford the car. Cars wear out fast here. The roads are heavily salted in winter; rust is inevitable. The mileage is high. I

commute 150 kilometers daily to my job on a two-lane mountain highway. No traffic jams, but lots of deer, chip trucks, school buses, log trucks.

It's the same distance for anyone who lives here to get to services. If you need the police, a doctor or a hospital, if you want a library, a grocery store, a drug store, the UIC office, the welfare office, the swimming pool, the college, or a movie, you make that same drive — or you go without. If you want a transition house, forget it. There isn't one. There is a women's centre — at least for the rest of this month.

The distances probably explain why so few women here work outside the home. Jobs are scarce, two cars are needed if you are a two-income family, the fuel costs make a minimum wage job a waste of time. The boom that hit the lower mainland never reached our area. Jobs are either traditional low income jobs — waitress, store clerk; or industrial — logger, mill worker, miner. There are a few jobs for

teachers, social workers, other bureaucrats but they are mostly filled by people who move here. A university education is a pipe dream for most local people.

We had a university here, but the government shut it down. Most people in British Columbia don't know that because we have no real access to the media. A story from outside the lower mainland is rare on television. We get three channels, CTV and BCTV from Vancouver and an ABC affiliate from Spokane. We get one radio station — CBC AM also from Vancouver. There is no local paper.

It's hard to organize in an area without media. It's a long drive to almost any meeting, any demonstration. And no matter how successful we are, we seldom hear about it on television or radio. It tends to make other people in the province think we don't exist. Worse yet, it makes us think that we are somehow less important; that our issues aren't real. I remember the night of the

hospital board elections. Five hundred people turned out — made the long drive — to support choice at Kootenay Lake District Hospital. On the news that night the lead story was that Gordon Campbell ran in a marathon.

I like where I live. Housing is in short supply, but still affordable. My neighbours, whether or not they define themselves as feminists, are strong, independent, capable women. But if I were once again a single mother with young kids I couldn't live here.

A society in which a single mother cannot afford to live in the city, and doesn't have the support systems in place to live in the country makes no sense. There are, in my community,

Graphic from *Essays on Polish Graphic Arts*



houses for sale for \$20,000 or \$30,000. But few single mothers can afford to live in them, because the support systems are not there. The transportation, the daycare, the jobs, the government services are all missing.

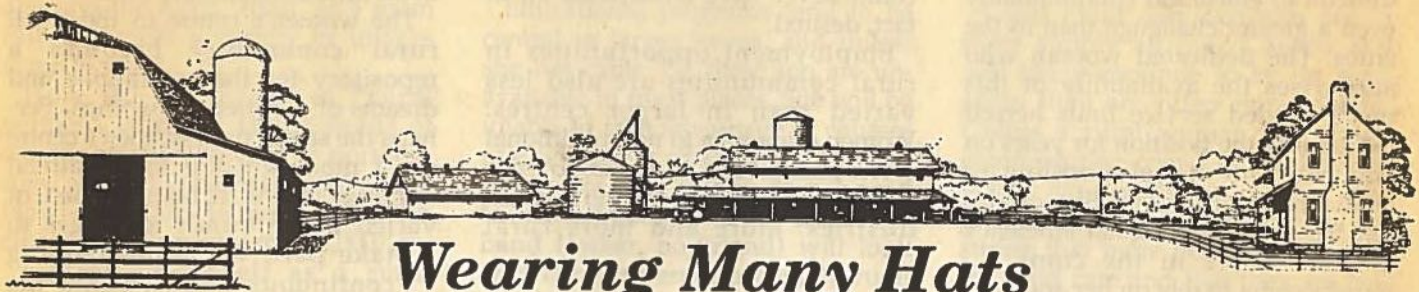
What strikes me as so very odd is that most of these problems are solvable. A community water system would relieve individuals of some of the responsibility, and might even mean a system designed to overcome the problems of silt,

leaves and ice. A community transportation system would mean senior citizens could continue to live in their homes and still have access to the services they need. It would mean a single mother could afford to go to the grocery store, or the daycare, or the college. It would mean that people like me wouldn't squander 300 litres of fuel per month commuting.

A community service centre — with a visiting doctor, public health nurse, offices for alcohol and drug

counselling, and mental health services, an office for social workers, UIC or WCB officials to use one or twice a week — would bring both social and economic benefits to our community.

Not the least of it is that we would feel like a community. We would have a common meeting ground, a core. We would feel like valued members of society. Maybe even more than that, maybe we would be.



Wearing Many Hats

by Ellen Zimmerman

Hard hat, toque, western stetson — even more than in urban centres, women in rural British Columbia often need to wear a lot of different hats. Living in small country communities, activist women maintain a variety of roles, sometimes overlapping, and sometimes in conflict. Working as a journalist may appear to some to preclude active participation in the local New Democratic Party organization or dedication to environmental pursuits. Sometimes the reporter's notebook must be obviously and visibly absent to allow others to accept the alteration in role. But a change of "hat" is all that is really necessary to allow a rural woman to take meaningful action to help make her community a better place to live.

Often, women involved in varying professional and community roles long for the definitiveness of a physical change of headgear to communicate to others her change of role. If only she could sport a toque labeled "school board trustee" or

"agricultural lobbyist" or "Credit Union director." Something as visible as an appropriate label might make it easier for those with whom she works to keep track of her current position.

A typical winter day in the Columbia Valley begins well before first light, accompanied by the ever present voice of CBC radio. Children often need to be delivered to school bus stops a distance from home through mid-winter snow drifts. Back home, there are the chores of milking cows or goats, feeding other farm animals, mucking out the barns. Then a quick shower and off to work, a 20, 30, or 40 kilometer trip down a semi-deserted highway.

The workday is frequently followed by regular meetings, whether they concern the school district, hospital board, women's centre, or environmental society. The chairperson of the local school board starts her day with a farmers' hat, changes to her professional role, transforms to another chair position for the local Family Centre, chaperones her

teenagers' high school dance, and somehow manages.

With a smaller population base to choose from, many rural women feel the need to undertake major and varied roles to help enact positive change within their communities. Combined with this social commitment is the reluctance to alter the rural lifestyle that drew many of us from the cities in the first place. When we look at eliminating some activity from an already overfull schedule, there seems to be nothing we are willing to sacrifice, even if that means we haven't finished a novel in months.

For instance, when I study my own schedule to possibly eliminate something and reduce my workload, the twice daily requirement of milking my Jersey cow seems a likely candidate. Milking is something that impacts on my plans more than any other single occupation and the one thing that can't be procrastinated. But every time I think about selling this creature with whom I have a very serious love-hate relationship, I remember

the tradition of milking that goes back more than a dozen years in my life and the pure quality of the milk that my children consume in such quantity. When the stresses of activist life accumulate and threaten to elevate me somewhere into the stratosphere, there is nothing like a quiet spell in the barn, my cheek against her warm flank, to put everything in its proper perspective and bring me right back to earth.

The very advantages of small town life can lead to added predicaments for feminists. Safe homes are difficult to enlist and confidentiality even a greater challenge than in the cities. The dedicated woman who supervises the availability of this much needed service finds herself locked into the position for years on end, with no one else willing or available to take over. She carries out her duties with quiet efficiency and feminists in the community come to rely on her and identify her with this role.

Burn-out is a typical result, but will usually take longer to occur than might be suspected. To an even greater extent than in the city, rural women rely on the support of their sisters to help them get through sometimes superhuman endeavors and workloads.

With the mountain passes of the Kootenays and frequent inclement weather, volunteer services in the smaller communities take on even greater significance. Crisis occurs with discouraging regularity as it does in the cities, but there are far fewer individuals and services to handle the load. Active rural women develop, out of necessity, a wide spectrum of skills to aid in emergency situations. Women provide, through professional and volunteer services, help for those in need.

But what about the woman who seeks higher education to increase or change her professional skills? In urban centres, this goal may entail daycare, bus transportation and possible financial and economic problems. In rural areas, add to these basic difficulties the stress of separation from home and family.

Often, a rural woman must make a difficult choice to pursue her educational goals in a distant city, returning home sometimes on weekends, other times, only during longer holidays.

Eventually, most of these women return to their community for good, perhaps as a registered nurse with maternity and midwifery skills or a therapist to fill the gap in mental health services available in small towns. During the years of her absence, her family and personal life may have undergone changes she could never have anticipated or, in fact, desired.

Employment opportunities in rural communities are also less varied than in larger centres. Women often turn to non-traditional work possibilities or make do with lower-paid jobs in the service industries. More and more rural



women are turning to small business endeavors but the opportunities for these ventures are limited in many resource-based rural communities where the population is likely to fluctuate dramatically with layoffs at the mill or mine. Women who seek a start in small business enterprises often meet with a negative response from bank managers and credit unions when they look for funding.

In politics, the New Democratic Party has committed to gender parity in choosing candidates. The woman who aims for the NDP nomination in a physically vast rural riding may find that her financial limitations severely compromise her chances of success. Candidate meetings throughout the riding will require long hours of travel and

great expense. Recent party resolutions have provided for funding at the pre-nomination level, to help overcome this frequent economic disparity.

Small interior communities have also seen recent immigration influxes. Women from a variety of cultural and language backgrounds find themselves even more isolated than they would in a larger centre. Newly provided federal immigration services have helped to mitigate this impact with English language services to assist immigrant women in an active community role.

The women's centre in the small rural community becomes a repository for the aspirations and dreams of a variety of women. Perhaps the small town women's centre must moderate the more radical feminist views to help women of varied backgrounds and ages to take part, while maintaining continuous outreach into the community and into the school system. The advantage of small town life is that, possibly, necessity encourages us to form deep friendships with women we might never have had the opportunity to get to know in an urban environment.

Rural women bring a unique and valuable perspective to feminism in this province that is daily growing more urbanized.

The shortcomings of country life are compensated by circumstances that encourage us to aim for a wide range of goals and help us develop a broad spectrum of skills. The very intimacy of small town life that we feel sometimes constricts us, in reality fertilizes our growth as surely as the compost we spread each spring revitalizes our vegetable gardens. And I'll try to remember that the next time I complain about the lack of a good ethnic or vegetarian restaurant or an esoteric video or book store or the next time I have to drive 180 miles to see a gynecologist. After all, rural life, like life in the big city, includes both compromises and kudos. ♀

Rural Women

by Marg Lubbers

When I said I would write an article on the concerns of rural women it was with that feeling of confidence one has when they can't see the whole picture. I suppose when one says the word "rural" to a room full of people a variety of images come to mind.

How do the needs of "rural women" compare to the needs of women in urban areas? In northern rural areas? In southern rural areas? How does one define "urban"? A city of 20,000 or a town of 5,000?

I think of myself as a rural woman. Most of my life has been spent on the outskirts of a small north central town. Yet a woman who lives on a ranch 20 or 30 miles from a village of five or six hundred would experience rural living far differently than I would. Her needs vary according to her wealth (or lack of), the attitudes of her spouse (if she has one), her education and the problem-solving ability of the individual.

What I have heard from various women I have talked to is that the needs of rural women are basically the same as those of all women. Women in general find it more difficult to meet their needs than men do. Northern rural women (and I suspect southern rural women) find it even harder.

Chief among these needs is economic independence, for without it, a woman cannot achieve any other kind of independence. In rural areas economic independence is much harder to achieve because well-paid jobs are the extractive resource-based type usually reserved for men. Women are still not well accepted into these jobs.

Transportation is a major problem, especially if you are poor. Single women tend to be poor. A car is out

of reach of many. Taxi services are inadequate and expensive. Bus service is non-existent, except for daily runs of Greyhound through the main communities, not an alternative to getting back and forth to work or school.

Educational programs tend to be central in larger towns, and unless she has cable TV, these too are unavailable in most places. She will be unable to take advantage of courses to upgrade her education.

The idea that women do not need to make money because their husband (father, boyfriend) will look after them is very prevalent in rural areas and many people cannot understand why women would need a good education.

Hospitals in small towns have been taken over by boards stacked by anti-abortionists who view a woman requesting an abortion as "something" to be despised. Privacy is not easily achieved in an area where everyone knows everyone. Seeking anonymity in another community is generally out of the question (airfare alone to Vancouver is around \$220).

Often women in camps or on farms and ranches do not have a place to talk to other women except for infrequent trips to town for supplies. Recent cutbacks to CBC radio has removed one excellent medium which kept rural women in touch with the rest of the country.

What must be done to address the concerns of women in rural areas?

The traditional view of the role of women in society has to change. We can begin in our schools. In many schools the image of women as second class citizens is slowly being changed, but it is in our homes that we can exert the most influence. We

must never allow sexist terms to be used. We must never by word or action suggest to our daughters that they are any less important than their brothers. They must believe that they may aspire to any field they have an interest in.

Good child care facilities are in short supply all over Canada and will likely continue to be. In rural areas they are often non-existent. Unless a rural woman has an accommodating friend or mother, she often cannot leave home. The government could help her by ensuring that more people are trained for child care and that they are better paid; perhaps we need a law that requires any place with a certain number of employees to set aside space for daycare. The workers could be funded partly by the government and partly by users.

The open learning institute could be extended to radio programs so that isolated people could take advantage of it. Transportation could be provided to enable participants to make periodic visits to a central place (for communication with instructors, yearly examinations, etc.).

We must continue to fight for the right of women to safe, accessible abortions. Better and more honest sex education should be carried out in schools with emphasis on family responsibility for both boys and girls.

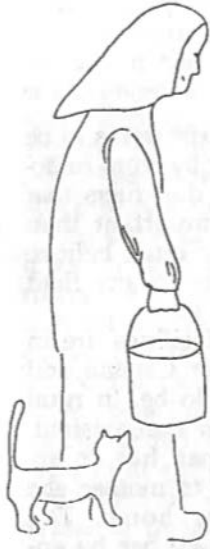
These suggestions would be helpful to women in all areas of the province. In rural areas, new and innovative ways of doing things are most often neglected because of the small number of votes and the even smaller number of voices that are raised in protest.

The voices of women in rural communities must be heard in the halls of power.



What It's Like To Go Country

by Bonnie Baker



First of all, I grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., so rural was not in my vocabulary. But my Russian grandmother, harking back to her peasant roots, took all her grand-children to

a country farm or rooming house each summer in the Catskill Mountains, while my mother commuted the 100 miles to work in the City each day, and that must be what got in my blood.

I've been heading back to the country (in another country) for as long as I can remember, going to college in a small upstate N.Y. town (I was very scornful of the "townies" who also shared the campus); from there to not-quite-so rural Illinois for a brief stint in graduate school; then on to California; then to Montreal (would have been a draft-dodger, if the U.S. government hadn't been sexist and refused to draft women), then to Vancouver, and finally, at long last, to the Kootenays. Not so much to "get back to the land" as many others here had done, but to get out of the City and find another kind of life.

My partner and I went to the Kootenays and not somewhere else because, during my four years in Vancouver, the only place outside the City I had been to before was here, and my partner knew someone in Nelson who would give him a job. At first we couldn't find a place to rent and almost had to leave after a three-week search, when I found out that a 15-acre farm (with resident chickens and a pig) was for

rent in the Slocan Valley. We took it, and have been farmers ever since.

At first we were dog and cat farmers mostly, with six cats and seven dogs (we were dog-sitting my friend's dogs and puppies), but we did eventually deal with the ever-growing pig and the minuscule bantam chickens we inherited. We also inherited two goats from the same friend (my partner's grandparents were also peasants and he knew about goats from his previous life, he said). That was the beginning of my goat raising and my new career as a feminist milk-maid, a step up, so I thought, from my days in Vancouver as an office-overload "temp." We milked the goats every day, morning and night (we took turns), and I sold the extra milk to whomever would buy it. Accumulated thousands of litre milk bottles (I'm one who favours the metric system) and cried many a time over spilled milk (especially when it spilled in my car).

We raised goats for 13 years and tried growing a garden and fruit trees, despite the goats' constant attempts to destroy my favourite things. We kept goats because they were cute, and I sold the milk because you can't raise goats without breeding them and then you have all this milk, and it's wasteful and stupid not to milk them and sell the milk. So I did. It's hard to believe now that we raised and fought over and milked goats for all those years, but it's true. Of course, we both worked off the farm during that time, since the farm never made any money. We just loved animals...

I say we, and I mean we. If my partner and I split up, I would move back into the city (the "city" now is Nelson, not Vancouver) if I couldn't find another partner. Our standard

of living has dropped severely since I have become chronically un- and underemployed. Life in the rural lane, at least in this hinterland, provides little in the way of ongoing employment for women, much less for an opinionated feminist farmer with goat hair on her coat. Job opportunities are limited, and since "restraint" and the Tory agenda, government largess has ceased too, and with it, lots of rural jobs.

Many people left, but we're hanging on. To our land, and sheep (they don't eat trees, are not interested in destroying our garden, and don't need to be milked), chickens, geese, cats and dog; our low-cost mortgage from our woman-run credit union, where we know everyone's name and more; organically home-grown vegetables and the amazement that anything edible grows from shit, dirt, worms, rain and sun; clean air (when the neighbours aren't burning their grass in the spring and forestry isn't burning slash) and water (once it goes through the obligatory filter to get the silt and worms out of it), peaches from my tree (when the crop doesn't fail), birds in my feeder, fresh eggs (when they're laying and not eating them), and the sheer physical beauty of the Slocan Valley (who cares about the mosquitos).

I've learned a lot, too. To grow food, to husband animals, to drive in snow, to recycle like crazy...

It would be nice to have more money, to repair the house (old and not so well-constructed) and not feel poor all the time (we tried joining the petty bourgeoisie for a while, and we still have to pay off the bills that enterprise generated). It would be nice to save for a rainy day. But I can say for sure that there is no way — no possible way — that we could survive anywhere else on the money we do have, and I wouldn't dare try in the City.

This isn't paradise, and the rural life has its own pitfalls, but I wouldn't trade it for the life of a city girl even for a real job and a steady paycheque. Hopefully, I won't have to.



Coping in Rural B.C.

by Sandy Korman

I have lived and work in rural B.C. for most of my life. For myself and many women in my economic circumstances it is a good lifestyle. It provides us with reasonable housing costs, safe places to raise our kids, and uncomplicated daily decisions. Also, there are no lineups. I have an education and job skills and rarely find myself unemployed. Naturally I am able to focus on all of the advantages of country life, one of which is visiting the city whenever I feel the need. Many other women who live here, however, do not share my experience of rural life. I could write my story and easily sell you on the good points of living in the Kootenays, but I think I'll tell their story instead.

For a number of years I taught a program at the local community college called COPE (Career Opportunities in Preparation for Employment). The language used in naming this program, which is designed for single-parent women on assistance, makes it obvious that there is a stigma attached to these women. It says very clearly "if you are poor you cannot cope — you are not a functional person." This program is sponsored by the Ministry of Social Services and Housing and is usually facilitated through community colleges. The COPE program sets out to train women in the most expedient way possible (the course is 10-12 weeks) so that they will "enter the workplace" and get off the welfare lines. With this as the mandate, it is easy to anticipate that for the most part important questions are overlooked. Questions such as: What type of training or continuing education are the women interested in? How much money will they be able to earn after the training is complete? What

training or educational opportunities are available in this area? Are these women ready to enter and succeed in further education at this time, and what happens after COPE?

The women I worked with ranged in ages from 18 years to 50 years, all were single parents, all were living well below the poverty line, some had grade 5 educations and others had university degrees. Poverty, demoralization and total lack of self-esteem were shared by all women. These were not people who were emotionally ready to jump into the workplace after a few weeks of career searching and take charge of their lives. They were also suspicious that this might be a set-up to get them to take the \$5/hour jobs and leave their children to be raised by strangers. I think they were right. Many women were there because they felt pressure from "the welfare" and many came cautiously hoping that someone really could hold the promise of a better life.



I'm afraid the promise was made — in fact, I gave it to them — but it was a lie. I didn't know it then but came to understand it much later. We worked hard, shared ideas and strengths, talked about the obstacles that held them back from a real life and made wonderful plans for the future. A few women even beat the odds and moved forward with their lives. I say it was a lie because after they lived up to their end of the deal and became motivated and even believed in themselves a little bit, they were let down by the deal-makers.

Where were the training and educational experiences that they now felt ready to try? Here in Creston they are almost non-existent. They were told to go to a larger center and obtain the appropriate ("they have a list you know") training. This means a number of things even though it may sound like a reasonable solution. It means leaving the only safety and security they know, uprooting their children, being cut off from assistance and having to reapply in another area with no guarantee of approval. It means a high degree of risk which simply is asking too much. The other solution was to choose from the two or three training options offered here at our community college. The choices were long-term care aide, adult basic education or an evening bookkeeping course. The final option was to go back to their lives before COPE, which many chose to do because the other two choices were either too scary or too hopeless. When this happens it is viewed by many as failure, and it is not the system that is perceived to fail. The blame is laid upon the women.

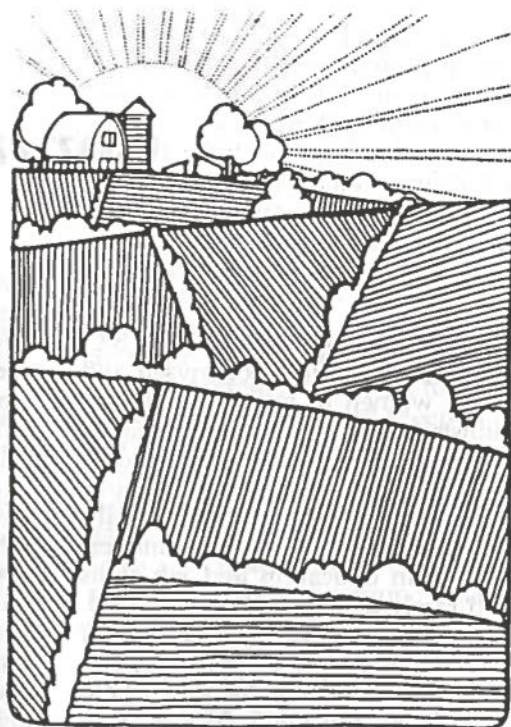
What can be done? To begin with, rural women should not be discriminated against because of where

they live. The arrogance of a system that assumes rights and privileges are deserved by only those people who live in designated geographical regions must be changed. At one time our region had a degree-granting university that was taken away by the Social Credit government because they told us it was losing money. Since when did U.B.C. or Simon Fraser make profits? And at what point did education become a business venture and not a human right?

Single-parent women in rural areas will never be able to break the cycle of poverty unless they are given opportunities to do so. A class of people is being condemned even before they've had a chance to change their lives. Throwing a few dollars their way for programming that is inadequate and incomplete only serves to remove the responsibility from government. It enables them to say, "Well, we tried." At the local level, M.S.S.H. and the college have been very supportive and understand the problem, but it is at the provincial government level where policy is made, and the local agencies can only work within the funding they are allotted. Providing adequate education and training programs is a starting point, but that alone is not enough. The economic reality within which we live requires more than education to guarantee work. Education must be integrated with social and economic change. There must be an understanding of the unique problems women face trying to raise and support families. If we have programming such as COPE (with emphasis placed on raising self-esteem) followed by further education and/or training programs, work placement programs, and a follow-up procedure that would provide support throughout the process, I believe we could reverse the cycle that leaves women dependent and powerless. In some ways, giving them programs such as COPE without these support systems is more harmful than doing nothing at all. It sets vulnerable people up for failure, which in the end confirms their feelings of low self-esteem.

They are unlikely to try again.

In conclusion, I feel that, to solve this problem, fundamental beliefs within our society must change. The assumptions that women choose to live lives of poverty, that it is an easy existence, and that they are only capable of work that pays poor wages and offers no dignity, are unacceptable. In short, we need to make a real commitment to women. No longer should words such as "cope" be acceptable when we talk about women's lives. Quality of education and the opportunity to earn a living are basic human rights and should not be doled out by a patriarchal system that dictates who are entitled to those rights. Without this commitment the culture of poverty will continue to perpetuate itself with its primary victims being women and children.



Peace Needs Your Feet.



AGAIN!

Walk 4 Peace & Planetary Survival
Saturday, April 21, 1990
assemble at noon at Kits Beach

West Germany

RU 486: Revolutionary Discovery?

reprinted from *Connexions*, No. 31, 1989
(Translated from *Clio*, No. 29, West
German feminist periodical, 1989)

Following five years of research, the French pharmaceutical company Roussel Uclaf introduced a new product to the market.

The abortion pill RU 486 (technical name Mifepristone) has caused quite a sensation. Celebrated by some as a "revolutionary discovery," it has been denounced by others as "chemical warfare" against unborn life. Researchers themselves were careful to call their product an "anti-pregnancy" product (contragestivum), deliberately placing it between contraception and abortion, thereby hoping to avoid its being targeted by the anti-abortion movement. The product is authorized for use — with limitations — in France as well as in China.

The history of the development of this product throws light on the marketing strategies of the pharmaceutical industry. The product was developed and tested as a drug to fight breast cancer, for regulation of the menstrual cycle, and as a "morning after" pill. Its surviving application is that of pregnancy termination within the first ten days after a missed period — an alternative to surgical abortion.

RU 486 is a synthetic antihormone which acts as an antagonist to progesterone. Progesterone plays a vital role in the establishment and maintenance of pregnancy. Among other functions, progesterone facilitates the nutritional enrichment of the uterine lining in preparation for the implantation of the fertilized egg. Following implantation, it continues to be active in the maintenance of the uterine lining throughout the first stages of pregnancy. Progesterone binds with receptors in the uterine wall. When

RU 486 binds to these receptor instead, so scientists assume, displacing progesterone, it inhibits all biological effects of progesterone. The nutritional flow to the implanted egg is thereby interrupted, and miscarriage results. It is further assumed that RU 486 stimulates the release of prostaglandins (hormone-like substances) which induce a contraction of the uterus and a dilation of the cervix.

The pill has been tested in different dosages and combinations on 4,000 women in about 20 countries. We assume that the first and therefore riskiest experiments were done in Third World countries.

Effects of the pill

So far clinical studies show that by taking the pill within the first ten days of a missed menstrual period, 85% of the women have abortive bleeding within 4 days. The success is independent of dosage (ranging from 400 to 800 mg) but does not seem independent of timing. If RU 486 is taken later than 10 days after a missed menstrual period, its effectiveness decreases. Fifteen percent do not have abortive bleeding, and the reason why is still a puzzle to scientists.

Clinical laboratory testing does not determine why some women have successful abortive bleedings and others do not. These observations indicate that there is insufficient understanding of reproductive biology.

The side effects of this method are usually presented as minimal: increased bleeding, on the average for 11 days, especially heavy in 18% of the women (although not to the extent of requiring blood transfusions); uterine cramps; nausea and fatigue. Consequent research indicates that a combination of RU 486 and a small dose of prostaglandin

should reduce the side effects and increase the success rate to 93-95%.

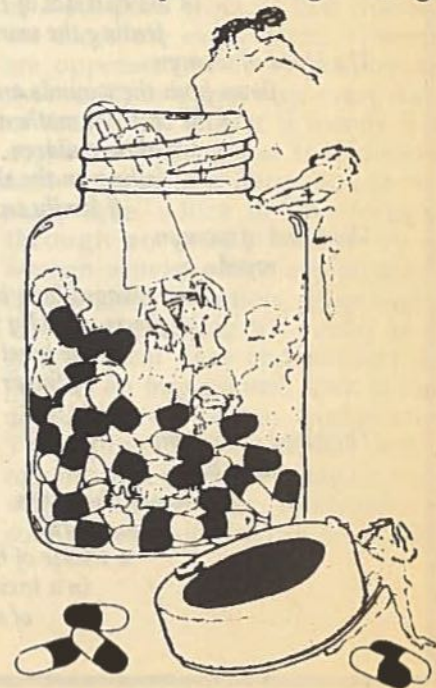
Regular use of RU 486 is not recommended. Women who took RU 486 experimentally on the 26th day of each of their cycles subsequently suffered "totally chaotic" cycles.

This method certainly seems to have the advantage of timing over the frequently used "day after" pill. It can be taken at a later point, enabling certain determination before use. It also appears to have fewer side effects.

The concerns

Most women have high hopes concerning this product. We, however, have several objections to this method of pregnancy termination.

- It has not been proven harmless.
- The history and politics of the pharmaceutical industry show that many products still in the testing stage are thrown on the market, with devastating results. For example: the high dosage



products DES or Duogynon, which were used for pregnancy testing and abortion, caused severe congenital birth defects.

- The introduction of chemicals to the body can be no less intrusive than surgery. Even if the pill is more comfortable for women, its effects are not merely local, but affect the entire organism. The loss of blood is higher than in the suction method of abortion. The suction method of abortion is not risky in itself; it becomes risky when performed by unskilled persons in undignified conditions.
- The likelihood of uninformed women using RU 486 on a regular basis is high, and thereby the possibility exists of severe health consequences. If and when RU 486 is marketed in Germany, it will be by prescription and under the control of a physician. There is an absolute necessity for a physician's supervision. Complications such as severe bleeding or incomplete

abortion of tissue require a physician's attention. To distribute RU 486 in areas where abortion is made difficult is therefore risky.

Beyond health concerns, this pill raises political questions. Will it change the abortion issue fundamentally, as its advocates claim?

It is our opinion that we may be fooling ourselves with false hopes that this new pill might expand abortion options in countries which thus far prohibit abortion. The death rate of 200,000 women worldwide due to botched abortions will hardly be reduced. Those women, who to this day abort in back alleys under life-threatening conditions, will not be the ones with access to RU 486.

France and China have permitted the use of RU 486. Three other countries are considering its admission: Sweden, the Netherlands, and Great Britain — countries with already liberal abortion laws. In the USA, anti-abortionists have manned a front against the admission of the

drug, including the boycotting of industries which market this pill. The consequences are that no pharmaceutical company shows interest in marketing the product, and there are no government funds for further researching this drug.

Even West German Hoechst, the parent firm of Roussel-Uclaf, does not intend to market RU 486. Their reasoning: it does not fit in with the other products they offer. The Bavarian Minister of Justice comments on the use of RU 486: "Unless it can be shown there are significant reasons for its use, the use of RU 486 is punishable by law." The Bavarian government will find measures to protect the unborn life, so that even those with easy access to this method will not be able to use it.

At the same time, RU 486 is only available in a few clinics in France. It is not available in pharmacies, neither by prescription nor by any other means.



The blood of womyn
lies in pools
upon the steps of learning
reflecting the horrific reality of misogyny.

The blood of womyn
seeps into the soil
in the townships of Soweto
in the hillsides of El Salvador,
feeding the wars of political hatred.

The blood of womyn
flows from the wounds and bruises
of the battered mothers
and their children,
falling on the shattered myth
of family security.

The blood of womyn
raped...
and ravaged long before their womynhood
pours a deadly poison
on the trust
of father, brother, husband,
friend.

The blood of womyn
monthly...
runs to the rivers
of our earth,
a trickle of healing
in a toxic cesspool
of suicidal proportions.

The blood of womyn
boils
in anguished
angered
pain.

The blood of womyn
will no longer
fuel
the putrid patriarchy.

The blood of womyn
in the millions
burned
and broken
and beaten
empowers the wicca
eternal
maternal,
the clear white psyche
of the womynspirit...
whose reign has come again.

The blood of womyn
bearing children
rushes forward
recreates the timeless power
of the sacred soul of womankind.

The blood of womyn
is...
the source of life.

Sharon J. Costello
December 11, 1989

Book Review

by Kathy Hill

Sisterhood is Global
 Edited by Robin Morgan
 Published by Penguin Books, 1985

It will seem strange to some that I would write a review of a book of which I have read only one-half (384 of 758 pages). But not strange for long. The more I read, the more overwhelmed I become. The jacket reads: "A historic publishing event... an invaluable reference book... a compelling, provocative reader." How often I (and I am certain you) have read these or similar claims on the jacket of a book. The difference is, here they are true.

Robin Morgan has assembled a mindboggling array of information.

All the basic facts of what it means to be a woman in over seventy countries around the world, including: life expectancy; contraception and abortion; employment rights; education; religion; marriage laws and customs; legal rights, as well as a Herstory and Mythography for each country. This is indeed a historic compilation of information that is a compelling testament to the indigenous nature of feminism.

While *Sisterhood is Global* would make a valuable reference book, I hope that women will read it as a novel, from cover to cover. This book tells of horror, atrocities and uncountable senseless acts of op-

khwahar ρ khore ρ ukht ρ soeur ρ hermana
 coathee ρ yabboine ρ sister ρ irma ρ chwaer
 'tisoeur ρ zuster ρ jiemei ρ søster ρ turi ρ sisar
 Schwester ρ õnuabea ρ novinye ρ nyonu
 nyemiyo ρ danwa ρ adelf ρ chak-ues ρ nuanapp
 nõvér ρ bon ben bahan ρ beni ρ anujathy
 penn ρ sahidari ρ saudara perempuan
 deirsiúr ρ achot ρ schvester ρ sorella ρ shimai
 dada ρ nui ρ ukht ρ bahini ρ zuster ρ tuahine
 oterelohu ρ eyen-eke-anwan ρ nwanne nwanyni
 yaaya ρ kenwa ρ egbon obirin ρ aburo obirin
 tama'ita'i ρ tei ρ turi ρ soistra ρ sora ρ a tion ani
 faa nawu ρ a tion ρ nkoto maa musoo ρ ndoko
 maa musoo ρ o maages o teew ρ o ndebes o
 ndew ρ maw nam debbo ρ mi nam debbo
 mak diou dgijueni ρ rak diou dgijueni
 kgaitseǀi ρ dade ρ sisi ρ suster ρ savodariya
 syster ρ peesao ρ nongsaoo ρ a-gi-iv-gi ρ shádi
 nimesa ρ sestrá ρ chi ρ mem ρ inkashi ρ mucizye
 kalzeli ρ kalongozi ρ mwanakwesu musimbi
 hanzvadzi

The International Women's Movement Anthology

SISTERHOOD

IS

G L O B A L

A historic publishing
 event...an invaluable
 reference book...
 a compelling,
 provocative
 reader



EDITED BY
ROBIN MORGAN

pression. It tells of hope, working toward life, and sisterhood. But the strongest message, the message clearly understood by reading this as a complete work, is that women are the same everywhere. Women are oppressed in every country in the world, in every way, every day of their lives. That it is merely the degree of oppression that differs from country to country. But, at the same time, editor Robin Morgan, through an article written by a woman activist which accompanies each country's section, gives hope. The stories cross all racial and geographical lines and barriers to give us an impassioned look at the conditions of women worldwide. They provide the reader with moving and powerful evidence that women are strong, feminism is strong, and, sisterhood is global. ♀

WRC Regional Representatives

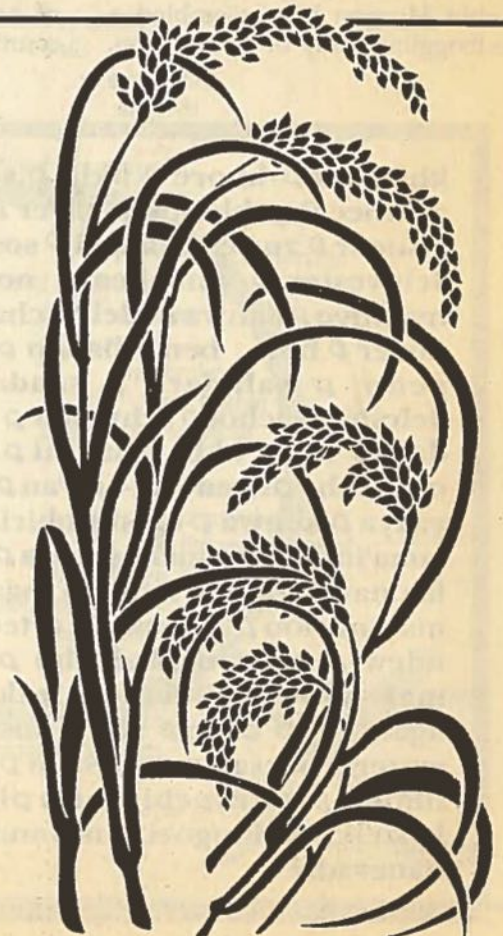
<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone/Address</u>
North Island	Marlene Crawford	Box 1784, Port Hardy, B.C. V0N 2P0 949-9707
South Island	Joanne Fox	4807K Townsend Drive, Victoria, B.C. V8X 5P2 727-3345
Interior-Okanagan	Agnes Lui	#306-3110 DeMontreuil Court, Kelowna, B.C. V1Y 9E7 862-3537
Kootenay	Sandy Korman	Box 1691, Creston, B.C. V0B 1G0 428-7886
Fraser Valley	Ingrid Berg Jensen	7374 Bates Road, Delta, B.C. V4C 6X1 594-0170
Vancouver-Richmond	De Whalen	13631 Blundell Road, Richmond, B.C. V6W 1B6 273-6159
Lower Mainland	Donna Stewart	2700 Maitland, North Vancouver, B.C. V7N 2B3 986-9604
North	Marg Lubbers	Box 4511, Smithers, B.C. V0J 2N0

To become involved in the WRC or for more information, contact any of the women listed above.

Nominated BC NDP candidates

(as of February 10)

Burnaby-Edmonds	Fred Randall
Burnaby North	Barry Jones, MLA
Burnaby-Willingdon	Joan Sawicki
Cowichan-Ladysmith	Jan Pullinger, MLA
Kootenay	Anne Edwards, MLA
Malahat-Juan de Fuca	Rick Kasper
North Coast	Dan Miller, MLA
Saanich South	Andrew Petter
Surrey-Green Timbers	Sue Hammell
Surrey-Newton	Penny Priddy
Surrey-Whalley	Joan Smallwood, MLA
Vancouver-Burrard	Emery Barnes, MLA
Vancouver-Fraserview	Bernie Simpson
Vancouver-Kensington	Ujjal Dosanjh
Vancouver-Kingsway	Glen Clark, MLA
Vancouver-Langara	Peter Kendall
Vancouver-Mt. Pleasant	Mike Harcourt, Leader



Convention 1990 Women's Caucus Meetings

Location:
Boardroom, Hotel Vancouver

Friday, March 9
5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

- Convention Planning
- Endorsement of women seeking Party executive positions

Saturday, March 10
8:00 to 9:00 a.m.

- Goals & Structure, WRC Endorsement of women seeking Party executive positions
- Coffee & muffins

Sunday, March 11
8:00 to 9:00 a.m.

- Election of WRC Steering Committee
- Coffee & muffins

All New Democrat women
welcome!

WINNING NOMINATIONS A HANDBOOK FOR NEW DEMOCRAT WOMEN

NOW AVAILABLE

To Party Members Only

To Order: fill in the form below and send with \$10.00 (cheques payable to NDP Women's Rights Committee).

----- CUT HERE -----

To: Vicki Robinson
Women's Rights Organizer
250-3665 Kingsway
Vancouver, B.C. V5R 5W2

Please send me _____ copies of **Winning Nominations**

I enclose \$10.00 for each copy. Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

Constituency _____

PRIORITIES

the feminist **+** voice in a socialist movement

**RATES \$10.00 per year
\$15.00 commercial**

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....

POSTAL CODE.....PHONE.....

RENEWAL NEW

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....

POSTAL CODE.....PHONE.....

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

send to: **PRIORITIES**
250-3665 Kingsway
Vancouver BC V5R 5W2

