

WOMEN & ENVIRONMENTS

Spring 1988
\$4



ECOFEMINISM

**PAVEMENT
DWELLERS**

CO-OP HOUSING

LIVING IN GAZA

EVENTS

May 31-June 7, 1988

GAG Annual meeting

in Halifax. Canadian Women in Geography will offer a session on Gender and Environments. Please volunteer papers to Gloria Leckie, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario.

June 13-15, 1988

In Search of Healthy Sexuality

conference in Guelph, Ontario.

Contact: Continuing Education Division, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 2W1, (519) 824-4120, ext. 3113.

June 15-16, 1988

First Canadian Nursing History Conference

in Charlottetown PEI.

Contact: Margaret M. Allemang, RN, PhD, 320 Williard Ave., Toronto M6S 3R2

June 14-19

The Third **International Feminist Book Fair** takes place in Montreal. Publishers, writers, booksellers, and related professionals will gather together with the aim of expanding the feminist book industry. There will be readings and panels, as well as art exhibits, theatre, performance, and music.

For more information contact: Diana Bronson (514) 843-3169.

June 15-17, 1988

Family Systems and the Process of Change a workshop led by Dr. Virginia Satir at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Contact: Marilyn R. Peers, Children's Aid Society of Halifax, 5244 South Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 1A4, (902) 425-5420.

June 22-26, 1988

Leadership and Power: Women's Alliances for Social Change

National Women's Studies Association tenth annual conference, to be held at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. The theme in 1988 focusses on how women of various backgrounds can work together. The conference goals include exploring coalition building by looking at culturally diverse leadership models that empower women.

Contact: NWSA '88, University of Minnesota, 217 Nolte Center, 315 Pillsbury Dr. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455



June 27-July 1, 1988

Housing, Policy and Urban Innovation

International research conference in Amsterdam, under the auspices of ISA's Ad Hoc Committee on Housing and the Built Environment. Speakers include Ray Pahl (housing and formal/informal labour markets) and Lynn Lofland (changing neighbourhoods).

Contact: 1988 Conference, OTB/TUD, Postbus 5030, 2600 GA Delft, The Netherlands

July 4-29, 1988

Women's Studies Summer Institute will be held at the University of London's Centre for Research and Education on Gender.

Contact: CREG, Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL, UK

July 5-8, 1988

International Association for the Study of People and their Physical Surroundings — Conference '88 Symposium on Women and Environments

The conference will be held in Delft, Holland, and the symposium will consist of a paper session on research in progress, a session presenting reviews of research, action and policies in various countries or regions and an open forum on priorities for research and action.

Contact: Denise Piché, Ecole d'Architecture, Université Laval, Québec,

PQ G1P 7P4, or Sherry Ahrentzen, Dept. of Architecture, U. of Wisconsin — Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI 53211

July 27-31, 1988

Women and the Arts

have organized a five-day arts festival, *Spotlight '88*, to be held in Winnipeg, Canada. The festival will feature more than 20 female artists who work in dance, literature, music, theatre, visual arts, media, fine crafts and environmental arts. Among the artists scheduled to participate are: Sharon Pollock, Elspeth Cameron, and Heather Bishop. For more information contact: Women and the Arts, 512-265 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3B 2B2.

August 21-26, 1988

North American Bioregional Congress III on the west coast of Turtle Island, at the North Vancouver Outdoor School. A cultural focus will encourage bioregional groups to express their unique identities as people and place. Strong participation by native communities is encouraged. NABC is a cooperative community, so participants should be prepared to help when necessary.

Contact: NABC III, Box 1012, Lillooet BC V0K 1V0

September 1988

National Conference on Shelters and Transition Houses, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hosted by the Manitoba Committee on Wife Abuse. Date to be announced.

Contact: Ms. Joey Brazeau, Manitoba Committee on Wife Abuse, 1823 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3J 0G4 (204) 885-3302

November 11, 12, 13, 1988

GREME,

Laval University's multidisciplinary research group on women's issues is holding their 12th Annual Conference of the Canadian Research Institute for the advancement of women. The conference will be held in Quebec City, and the theme of the conference is *Women and Development: Women From Here and Elsewhere*. For further information contact: Service des Communications, Faculté des sciences sociales, Bureau 3446, Pavillion Charles-De Koninck, Université Laval, Québec, G1K 7P4 (418) 656-2832.

WOMEN & ENVIRONMENTS



A WORD FROM US

Weeds invade where they're not wanted. Rampant, intrusive, unvalued, they push up through foundations and root in cracks. They're a nuisance: they spoil the ordered design of man's labours. If left to themselves they spread and can quickly take over.

The weeds on our cover celebrate the coming of spring, but they also carry a deeper message. They represent the new *Women & Environments* — now incorporated as a charitable foundation (the Women & Environments Education and Development Foundation, or WEED).

We had several reasons for the incorporation decision; among them, we wanted to provide an umbrella for women and environment-related groups and activities in the community. The major reason for choosing to become a charitable foundation, however, was to help us raise money.

Only one-third of our operating cost is covered by subscriptions. The other two-thirds of our budget has to be found elsewhere. So far we have been successful in getting Canadian government grants but we recognize the insecurities and disadvantages of dependence on government funds. We need to build a broader and more independent base. We would also like to see our co-operative model include our community of readers, for you to feel you have a stake in the development of the magazine.

So, valued readers, we invite you to become part of the WEED Foundation. Recognizing that for many of our readers, surplus funds to devote to a magazine only occur in dreams, we are suggesting several ways to help the weeds spread:

1. Make sure your local public or academic library subscribes (library subscriptions are important to us because of their higher rate);

2. Buy and use our beautiful WEED note cards;

3. Buy gift subscriptions for your friends and family;

4. Make a tax-deductible donation to the Foundation and become a Pillar of the Environment — a Lifetime Pillar for over \$500; a Sustaining Pillar for \$100-499; or a Well-Intentioned Pillar for \$25-99.

Help us to continue pushing up through foundations and rooting in cracks; help us to invade the ordered design of man's labours. Together, the weeds will spread!

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What is Ecofeminism?

by Katherine Davies

Francoise d'Eaubonne coined the word "ecofeminism" in 1974 in her book *Le feminisme ou la mort*. Since then, ecofeminism has been associated with the struggle against the oppression of women and natural environments. In general terms, ecofeminism suggests that there are common features in the control and exploitation of women and of nature in male-dominated cultures and that understanding these connections is necessary to stop this exploitation. The growing literature on ecofeminism includes a range of topics such as the connections between women and nature, the origins of these connections and how these might be used to resolve immediate problems like the nuclear threat and chemical contamination. Although many different issues are currently included in ecofeminism, providing a certain diversity and breadth, ecofeminism should be more closely defined in order to be useful in the struggle to eliminate existing patterns of exploitation and control.

One problem in attempting to define ecofeminism is that neither ecology nor feminism is monolithic. To some, ecology is a science. To others it is a philosophy, holistic and integrative, emphasizing the interdependence of all forms of life and the frailty of Planet Earth.

Similarly, there are different types of feminism, from liberal to radical feminism, and in between. Different aspects of ecology and feminism have been brought together by ecofeminist writers and thinkers, so that any definition of ecofeminism must be inclusive rather than exclusive. While ecofeminism may appear as a rather vague set of thoughts or ideas without a clear focus, it is important to remember that the integrative concepts of ecofeminism are still being developed. Ecofeminism should not be expected to re-

solve problems which neither ecology nor feminism have been able to solve on their own, despite their longer histories.

Just as ecology and feminism contain diverse philosophies, so ecofeminism itself contains diverse ways of thinking. There are, however, four basic principles which are common to most of these. These principles emphasize "holism," interdependence, equality and process.

Ecofeminism stresses the importance of a "holistic" approach to living. Holism implies that the planet is a single interacting ecosystem, comprised of smaller human and non-human sub-systems. The ecosystem and its components are living and responsive to internal and external forces. Actions in one component influence other remote and apparently unconnected components. Though all living things influence their environments, humans have severely affected the whole biosphere. So much so, in fact, that the biosphere may be damaged irreparably because of the exploitation of natural resources, contamination of air, soil and water, and changes in climate and topography. Ecofeminists argue that the negative effects of human life should be reversed and further damage prevented by changing technologies and lifestyles to emphasize non-polluting, non-toxic activities, such as recycling.

A recognition of the interdependence of all forms of life is a second similar theme in ecofeminist writing. Humans are integral components of the ecosystem, not separate or superior. Not only do we originate from and return to the earth, but we are open biological systems, using air, water and nutrients to produce energy and waste products. One result of current lifestyles is that we are exposed to a myriad of chemicals released or disposed of in the environment. Most North Americans

*Though all living things
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*Katherine Davies is Program Manager,
Environmental Protection Office, City of
Toronto Department of Public Health.*

have residues of at least a dozen toxic chemicals in their fat. Some of these chemicals have been linked to cancer and birth defects. Ecofeminists claim that instead of poisoning and polluting the natural world and ourselves, we should be working with nature so that life on earth can become healthier.

A third principle of ecofeminism is the importance of non-hierarchical systems. This principle follows from the holistic emphasis on interdependence. If all the components of the ecosystem are affecting and being affected by each other, then all are equally important. Ecofeminism emphasizes the value of each part of a system, each element having a unique role and function. In contrast, dualistic, hierarchical and anthropocentric philosophies stress the superiority of humans in general (and white males in particular). These philosophies denigrate the value of women and the natural world.

The fourth principle of ecofeminism emphasizes process. The way an objective is achieved is at least as important as its goal. Put another way, the ends do not justify the means. This principle originates independently in both ecological and feminist thought. In both there is an emphasis on interactions and relationships, so it is not surprising that the role of process is stressed by ecofeminists.

Elements of these four basic principles, the importance of holism, interdependence, equality and process, are found in ecofeminist writings which attempt to explain the origins of the links



B. SANFORD

Most North Americans have residues of at least a dozen toxic chemicals in their fat. Some of these chemicals have been linked to cancer and birth defects.

between women and nature. Two complementary approaches attempt to do this. The first could be described as the historical/ideological approach. It traces the development of dualism in patriarchal cultures, with their concomitant ranking of the two halves. Mind and body, spirit and flesh, culture and nature, men and women, all are seen as opposites, rather than complements, and all contain a superior and an inferior half. As a result, the body, flesh, nature and women have been linked in mythology, philosophy and literature as the degraded and inferior half of the dualism.

Historical/ideological ecofeminists vary in their explanations of the origins of this dualistic philosophy. Merlin Stone argues that, in prehistory, goddesses like the Earth Mother were widely worshipped and women had a higher status in society than in more recent history. Elizabeth Dodson Gray suggests that dualism originated in the Judeo-Christian tradition. She describes the Genesis myth of Creation as being both hierarchical and anthropocentric, legitimizing the supposed "divine right" of men to dominate and exploit both women and nature. Carolyn Merchant examines more recent his-

torical associations between women and nature, particularly those experienced during and since the scientific revolution. Merchant attributes much of the exploitation of women and nature to the development of modern science and industrialization.

The second approach taken by ecofeminists on the issue of women's and nature's subordination can be described as the psychological/physiological approach. Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow, for example, trace the origins of women's subordination to/in their traditional roles as mothers and nurturers. In patriarchal societies it is assumed that since women biologically gestate, give birth to and suckle new human life, they are better nurturers and care-givers than men. Women are almost always responsible for childcare, as a result.

Dinnerstein and Chodorow propose that during early childhood girls identify with their mother and develop by emulating her social role. In contrast, boys see themselves as different from their mother and develop by individuating. Because of

these early childhood experiences male and female psychologies are different. Female psychology is based on identification with others, while male psychology is based on separation or alienation from others. As a result, men fear things that are different from themselves. This fear leads to a need to exploit and control people, situations and things around them including women and the natural environment.

Ecofeminism would not be complete without strategies for stopping the oppression of women and nature. To do this, ecofeminist strategies advocate a re-affirmation of female consciousness, which they associate with wholeness and interdependence. Ecofeminists also argue that because women are generally more aware of the natural world than men, they have a vital role to play in this re-affirmation and in the necessary restructuring of society. Ynestra King

parenting boys would identify with their biologically similar father, eliminating the separation and alienation caused by exclusive mothering. This strategy would change male attitudes and integrate traditional "woman's work" into the male domain.

While we can describe what is meant by ecofeminism, perhaps there can be no precise intellectual definition because ecofeminism is fundamentally a feeling experienced by many women that they are somehow intimately connected to and part of the earth. As Susan Griffin stated so eloquently: "I know I am made from this earth, as my mother's hands were made from this earth, as her dreams came from this earth and all that I know, I know in this earth . . . all that I know speaks to me through this earth and I long to tell you, you who are earth too, and listen as we speak to each other of what we know: the light is in us."² □

Female psychology is based on identification with others, while male psychology is based on separation or alienation from others.

states: "It is time to reconstitute our culture in the name of that nature, and of peace and freedom, and it is women who can show the way."¹

This general strategy for change has both historical/ideological and psychological/physiological components. Historical/ideological ecofeminists argue that women should create a culture which honours women and nature, in order to emphasize the importance of each. This culture should contain myths, rituals, language and philosophies which recognize women and their roles in society, as well as human interdependence on the natural world. The history of women's struggles and achievements has not been told or recorded in patriarchal histories. This, ecofeminists argue, should be changed. Some authors argue for the establishment of a matriarchal society as a method of repairing the damage done by patriarchy. This society, they claim, would elevate the status of women helping to integrate traditionally female values into male consciousness. Our culture would then become more balanced.

The complementary psychological/physiological ecofeminist strategy suggests that the different female and male psychologies could be eliminated if men assumed equal responsibility for childcare. They suggest that under equal

1 Y. King, "The Ecofeminist Imperative," in L. Caldecott and S. Leland, eds., *Reclaim the Earth*, London: The Women's Press, 1983.

2 S. Griffin, *Women and Nature*, New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

For further reading:

D. Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

E. Dodson Gray, *Green Paradise Lost*, Wellesley, MA: Roundtable Press, 1979.

C. Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980.

C. Merchant, "Earthcare," *Environment* 23, 1981: 6-40.

M. Stone, *When God was a Woman*, New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1976.

K. Warren, "Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections," *Environmental Ethics* 9, 1983: 3-20.

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What Does Feminism Mean?

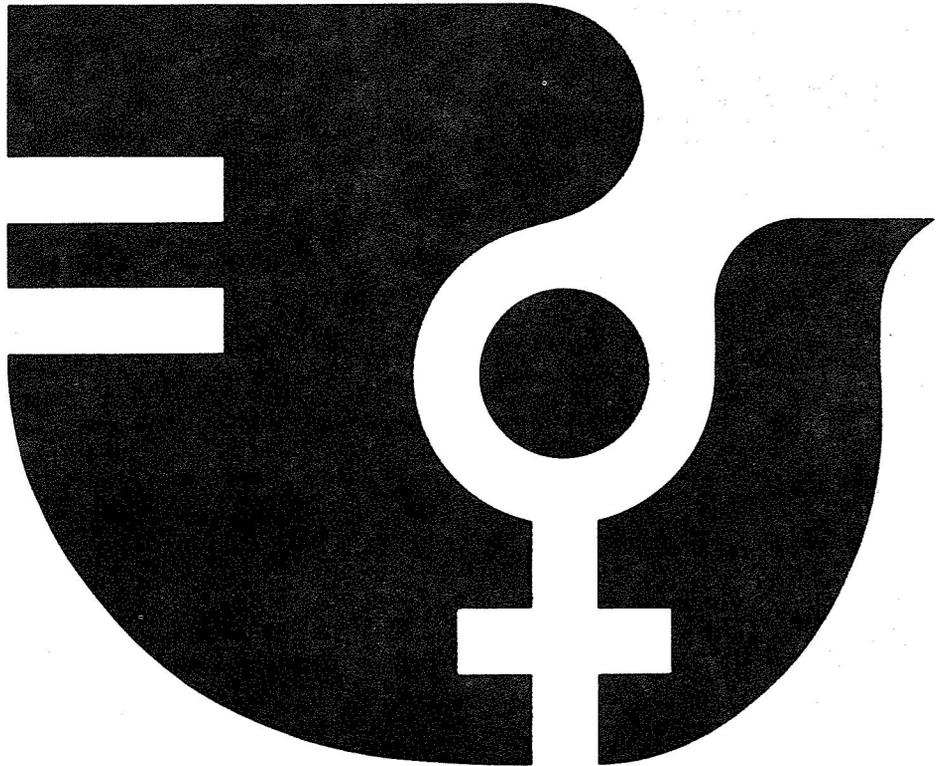
by Dorothy Dinnerstein

Dorothy Dinnerstein, the author of The Mermaid and the Minotaur, spoke recently at the University of Toronto Law School, where she presented a paper titled "What Does Feminism Mean?" In it, she establishes three essential points about the ecological role of feminism, which are discussed below, with excerpts from the paper.

Dinnerstein's first point is that the current gender divisions in society allow men and women to deny responsibility for environmental degradation and the race toward nuclear destruction:

"Central to a humanly whole feminist vision is awareness that our traditional uses of gender form part of an endemic mental and societal disorder: part of the everyday psychopathology, the normal taken-for-granted mishugas, that is killing our world. Not only do our old sexual arrangements maim and exploit women, and stunt and deform men: the human way of life that they support moves, by now, toward the final matricide — the rageful, greedy murder of the planet that spawned us — and seems bent on reaching out into space for new planets to kill."

She also points out that this denial, far from being natural, is part of a gender division which we have created: "At the core of human malaise is scared refusal to believe that we *are*, in fact, collectively self-made beings, responsible for our own existence, culture-dependent two-legged primates whose crucial biological assets — our brains and our hands — are usable only insofar as we acquire, through learning, the prosthetic equipment which, over eons, we ourselves (our human and proto-human ancestors, that is) see, collectively, to have fashioned. . . . The human fear of facing human self-creation



— this core refusal of our collective responsibility: responsibility for what we are, for the realm we have made, and for the earthly lifeweb that has nurtured our existence: all of which we now seem about to wipe out — stands face to face, at this point, with what the psychically androgynous Mumford, at eighty,² begged us to mobilize: 'mammalian tenderness and human love.'

Dinnerstein's second point is that changes in the use of gender are critical to survival. This change is needed because current gender roles stifle the critique of destructive activity: "Indeed it is mainly men — a few highly gifted men: in our own times, men like Freud, Mumford, Norman Brown — who have been in a position to articulate in the public realm the counter-considerations that women in private life

— many women, ordinary women — have all along embodied, the counterconsideration which, taken seriously, limit human enthusiasm for human (mainly male human) exploit: the doubts that women, within safe boundaries, have all along powerlessly ventilated in a running critique, a subordinate's critique, sealed off from the flow of formal historic event to which it refers. This societal safety valve, this "court jester" mechanism,³ has channelled off potentially subversive female energy, and at the same time vicariously ventilated truant male misgivings, letting the male-steered stream of public event move undeflected — and with substantial female consent,⁴ we must remember — toward what by now looks like all-but-inevitable nuclear and/or ecological hell. Can this sealed-off subordinate critique become part of that stream of overt public event in time to redirect its flow? Maybe it can; but for this to happen, the critique itself must be extended. What

is not an equal rights for women campaign: "what feminism most urgently means is something very much broader than the right to equal pay for equal work, or to orgasm (though such rights are of course essential parts of it)." It is the struggle for the survival of the earth: "Clearly, devices for wholesale death are metastasizing, and international political machinery moving us heavily, steadily toward extinction. But human impulses toward the protection of life, impulses more volatile than political machinery, more flexible and agile, may at the same time be gathering momentum; we may yet mobilize Eros, put Thanatos in its proper psychic place⁵ and turn the deathly tide. Feminism has bearing on this gathering of momentum — feminism is a vital part, that is, of current history — only insofar as feminism spells out, and embodies in its practice, the links between change in our uses of gender and reversal of our descent into nuclear and/or ecological hell." □

our old religious answers have never been wholly adequate. If they had, we would not have been moving, all along, toward our present mortal crisis. It is a question whose meaning we need time to come to better terms with — more time than we now seem likely to have. Yet even a small step toward such a coming-to-terms, a sense of movement in that direction, might at this moment be crucial.

the task of focusing human energy on protection of the lifeweb for whose fate we humans have by now, willy-nilly, made ourselves responsible is a task, at this point, which rests largely in female hands.

a few male critics of male exploit have all along been saying in public, and innumerable female court jesters in private — that history-making is shot through with crazy, life-hostile urges — omits mention of a basic concomitant of those lethal urges: if we want to renounce them, we must change what we do with gender."

The final part of Dinnerstein's argument is that this struggle is mostly up to women: "Since such change means abolition of male privilege (privilege to which wise and kind men, as well as mean and foolish ones, are deeply addicted) men are understandably slow to grasp its bearing, now, on earthly life's fate. . . . So the task of mobilizing human life-love and starting to outgrow the species-specific mental birth defect of which our uses of gender are part and our assault on the ecosphere an expression: the task of focusing human energy on protection of the lifeweb for whose fate we humans have by now, willy-nilly, made ourselves responsible is a task, at this point, which rests largely in female hands. What happens next may well depend on us."

Thus, Dinnerstein concludes, feminism

1 Dinnerstein, Dorothy. *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*. New York; Harper & Row; 1977.

2 Mumford, Lewis. *Reflections*.

Dinnerstein, Dorothy. *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*; Chapter 9.

4 It is vital, clearly, that this tacit female consent be withdrawn: that our old complicitous grumble (maternal, but cowed; unimpressed, but self-deprecating; worried, but sheepishly proud of our big boys; amused by their silly bravado, but protective of their tender egos; afraid for them, but afraid of them; angry and contemptuous, but deferent; doubtful, but dazzled) become active, unqualified resistance. Those bully boys are killing us, and our children, and the earth's sweet plants and beasts — and we, human and standing by, share by default their guilt. Standing by, we are co-responsible for their lying and their stealing, their predation and pollution, their ravaging assault on everything that lives: co-responsible, by default, for the murder of earthly reality.

5 i.e., a more tolerable place. What this place should be for humans (as compared with other intelligent beings who seem in some way aware of death: apes, whales and elephants, for instance, who have memory, foresight and imagination but not, apparently, culture or history — not the sense, that is, of a cumulatively evolving social reality) is a question for which



LEONARD BASKIN

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Taking Sides: What's Wrong with Eco-Feminism?

by Susan Prentice

I feel very disturbed about a growing movement of enthusiasm for eco-feminism. I am unabashedly critical of eco-feminism. I don't like it, I don't approve of it, and I don't feel personally touched by it. As a distinct stream or tendency within the women's movement, I think it should die a quiet death.

Eco-feminism bears some startling similarities to (and carries some of the same weaknesses as) the "maternal feminist" movement of the late 19th century. Maternal feminists made arguments very much like contemporary eco-feminists: that women had a special relationship to nature and to politics, that our moral superiority gave us a righteousness and a leadership responsibility, and that changed thinking ("respect") would lead us to changed social and economic relationships. When eco-feminists put forth similar arguments, I get restless. Haven't we learned from our history?

Before I am branded by you, gentle reader, as an anti-feminist and unfeeling woman, let me take my stand. I believe the best of eco-feminism is that it reminds all people of the fragile, endangered, and inextricable inter-dependence of all life — including human life — and the planet. I joyfully welcome a political insistence that we must take the finite strength of the environment deep into the heart of the movement for social change. To this extent, I consider myself "eco-positive."

But, wrapped up in the same package is also eco-feminism's worst. It is idealist, it wishes away power by trivializing social structures (in particular, capitalism) and it is, paradoxically, actually regressive. Eco-feminism is shot through with deep contradictions which makes it ineffective as an analysis, basis of action or strategy.

Why am I so harsh on a theory and practice that may seem so appealing? The

force of my objection to eco-feminism rises out of my passionate conviction that social change requires a very sophisticated understanding of the systems currently at work. Without a clear grip on how we

What is to be done with eco-feminism?

think power and subordination are structured, we have no chance to mount effective challenges to them. Against the slow and steady work of the feminist and left movements to build this complex social theory, eco-feminism offers a seductively simple and appealing counter-argument. I fear that whole-hearted acceptance of the eco-feminist package (not its admittedly very fine kernel), will actually set the social change movement back.

My criticism of eco-feminism is three-fold. It is flawed because it is idealist, not in the sense of "visionary" or "utopian," because I think those are fine and sustaining characteristics, but "idealist" in the sense that it assumes women and men to

have an essential human nature that transcends culture and socialization. And further, that in that transcendence, women have a privileged position. The epistemological assumption of eco-feminism, based on its analysis of human nature, is that men "think wrong" and make women and the planet suffer accordingly.

In simple terms, this is a feminist assertion that "biology is destiny." This means that domination (and its attendant dualism and oppression) is basic to men, and can never be overcome — making men, in an ultimate sense, toxic to all living things. A corollary assumption to the biology-is-destiny argument is that women are always attuned to the planet, and always good for it. In strategic terms, this would seem to mean that whatever women initiate is healthy and good. Men may be tainted by biology, but women are blessed by it.

Eco-feminism trivializes several centuries of history, economics and politics by simply glancing over the formidable obstacles of social structures. Eco-feminism's idealism allows it to wish social structures away. By locating the origin of the domination of women and nature in male consciousness, eco-feminism makes political and economic systems simply derivative of male thinking, a by-product of idealism. There is an internal logic to capitalism — for example, its relations and forces of production, commodity fetishism, exploitation, domination, alienation, etc. — that makes exploiting nature a *sensible* thing for capitalism as a world-system to do. This is no mere failure or stunting of consciousness: it is consciousness directed and organized for a different end. Terminating the oppression of women and the planet requires, at the very least, the elimination of capitalism.

The trivialization of the socio-political in eco-feminism is a major weakness. Capitalism is never seriously tackled by eco-feminists as a process with its own particular history, logic and struggle. Because eco-feminism lacks this analysis, it cannot develop an effective strategy for change.

Eco-feminism is reactionary because its only strategy is idealist.

A completely unintended, but not altogether surprising, consequence of eco-feminism is that it is reactionary. I believe it actually sets the feminist movement back a good 15 years.

Feminist activists and scholars have spent the better part of two decades drumming into consciousness the stunning insight that gender is a social construct. Simone de Beauvoir said it first. "One is not born a woman, one is made a woman." Male and female are variable, they are different in different cultures.

Margaret Mead's pioneering study among the peoples of New Guinea showed that, in fact, some cultures completely invert Western middle-class notions of male and female roles. Mead discovered among the gentle Arapesh, that men assumed the "feminine" roles of nurturing, foolishness, and vanity and that it was women who were the sturdy farmers, slashing-and-burning forests, felling vegetation to establish gardens. So much for "innate" female connection to the earth!

Masculinity and femininity are as "natural" as airplanes and jelly-beans; all are the end results of a long, involved and organized process of production. Changes to that production process would give us a different product. The upshot of feminist scholarship has been a fierce insistence that gendered people are social products.

But eco-feminism makes a different point. Instead of arguing that gender and sex roles are socially constructed, and could be socially re-constructed, eco-feminism gives us essential human natures in which women have all the good stuff, and men have all the bad. Instead of

working to un-do gender, eco-feminism actually reinforces it.

Conservatives also argue that women have an especially nurturing and maternal nature (a kind of moral superiority) and that it is "natural" for men to dominate and rule as a result of their innate qualities. What revolutionary strength is there in an eco-feminist analysis that aligns with centuries of rationalizations for female subordination and male power?

Eco-feminism is reactionary because its only strategy is idealist. "If we can change male thinking" (which, then again, may be a lost cause given [male] anatomy is destiny) "then we can save the planet." This makes psychologistic volunteerism more useful than campaigns around material structures. In eco-feminism's idealism, there is no awareness of change arising from direct challenge and confrontation. A reluctance to confront systems of domination and oppression can spring from a reluctance to replay violence, a laudable commitment. Challenge, however, isn't necessarily violent or destructive of human life. Certainly, the absence of direct challenge paralyzes eco-feminism.

Eco-feminism is also reactionary because its standpoint is very privileged. For the millions of women who feel their oppression directly as survivors of imperialism, racism, and poverty, an analysis which first wants to "change male thinking" and reflect upon "women's special relationship to nature" is completely useless — even if, in the longest run, they might reap some benefit from it. Eco-feminism is the product of North American privilege which takes its privilege so for granted that it cannot even notice it enough to comment on it.

As a distinct epistemology, ontology and (sometimes) praxis, eco-feminism should disappear. No effort should be put into "improving," "refining" or "exploring" it.

Instead, the truly useful insight of eco-feminism should be saved. The awareness of the inter-connectedness of human, global, and planetary life should be incorporated into a politic and practice that can challenge multiple systems of domination and oppression, in an analysis that tackles (among others) class, gender and racism alongside ecological destruction. □

Susan Prentice is a graduate student in sociology at York University.

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In a Stateless Environment

by Najwa M. Sa'd

Although events in the Middle East capture the headlines daily, little is known of the effects on the environment and lives of the women in the Palestinian refugee camps. We carry this eyewitness report on the situation and conditions which now face a second generation of women.

Today there are 600,000 Palestinians living in Gaza and 4.5 million others throughout the world. After the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, and the ensuing war, some of those who fled their homes were able to adopt new citizenship; hundreds of thousands remained in the refugee camps, awaiting return to their original towns and villages. Now, 40 years later, living under Israel's strict military occupation they carry identity cards that read "Nationality: Undetermined."

Throughout history Palestinians have endured a host of occupations including Roman, Turkish, British, Egyptian and Jordanian. In 1948, when the United Nations decided to partition Palestine to create a Jewish alongside a Palestinian state, war broke out, and Israel made substantial territorial gains beyond the boundaries of the UN partition plan; so too did the neighbouring Arab countries, Egypt and Jordan. When the fighting ended, Egypt had the Gaza Strip under its administration and Jordan had gained the West Bank of the Jordan river. War again in 1967 saw the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) defeating Egyptian and Jordanian armies and capturing the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Denied independence promised by the British and having already endured administration by Arab neighbours, the Palestinians now faced occupation by Israel. Refugees from the 1967 war now added to the already burgeoning population that had been displaced from their homes in 1948.

Most Palestinians in Gaza live in one of

eight refugee camps, where over two thirds of the Gaza population lives on less than one third of the land with an estimated 5,440 people per square mile. Their cinderblock "houses" were built in the early fifties by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The shelter include a common area, open to the sky, and one or two rooms about 8 feet square. Proudly, most refugees display old photos: a university graduate or a respected elder, usually hung too high on the wall. There may be the odd sight of old yak butter cans overflowing with cheery red geraniums. An average camp dwelling will house a traditional extended family with eight to ten children and various in-laws. Water and electricity are provided by the Israel military administration and are frequently cut off for up to a week at a time without notice. Toilets are a simple hole in the ground. The lack of a general sewage system means that waste products are discharged through rough channels from each "house" into the alleyways. Septic tanks are rarely emptied and often overflow. It would be of interest to compare blood lead levels between the camp-dwelling refugees and those in the town. The Mediterranean climate is damp and paint is always peeling from the walls. Respiratory and gastro-intestinal disorders are common and the leading causes of the unusually high infant mortality rate here.

In the camps there is the constant noise of children talking and fighting over makeshift toys, of couples quarrelling, calls to prayer bellowing from the loudspeakers of nearby mosques, hens and roosters squawking. The only escape is visiting among relatives and watching the dreadful soap operas beamed in from Egyptian television. The camp itself is like a sprawling, overcrowded cage; allowing no privacy or space for intimacy, no

room for individuality, little quiet even for prayer and no moments of peace. The atmosphere is best characterized by a numbing din.

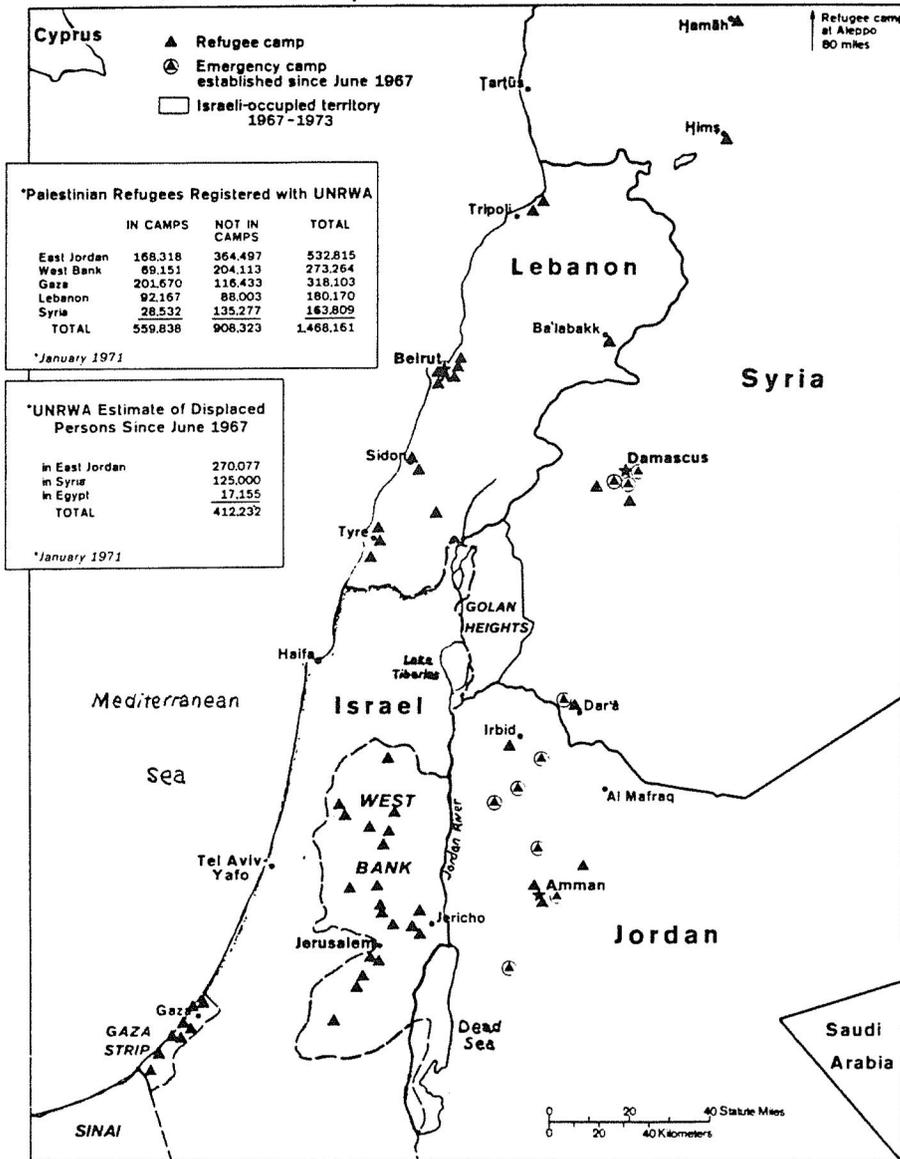
Days begin early for the Palestinian housewife. She typically rises before day-break in order to feed any of the working men in the family, some of whom travel up to three hours from their "bantustan" existence to their place of employment in Israel, returning home late in the evening. (In 1973 Israel declared it legal for a Palestinian refugee to work in Israel, but illegal for him/her to sleep there). Working in near darkness the housewife moves swiftly in the cramped kitchen-cum-washroom to turn on the gas and heat water from the one small spigot allowed each unit. (Israeli Water Commission statistics tell us that Palestinians are

Today more than 50 per cent of Gaza's population is under the age of 14.

granted 123 cubic meters of water per person per year, while Jewish settlers in Gaza are allotted 2,326 cubic meters). She will boil the water in an old milk can for the men to bathe in; pouring it into a large tin basin where they can sit or squat. She will then prepare strong, sweetened tea, little salad plates of tomatoes and boiled eggs, and maybe some zaatar — a spicy powder of oregano which is eaten on oil-dipped pita bread.

After the men have left, the mother will then help any young women in the family who are fortunate to have a teaching or secretarial job to get ready for their day — rinsing the wash basin, boiling more bath water, preparing fresh tea or warm milk,

UNRWA Camps



helping them to dress, putting some bread and cheese together for a snack. Hoping the younger children won't awaken yet, she will begin undoing the assorted blankets and heavy cotton mattresses, piling them in a corner of the room. There is no space to leave the bedding out during the day. It must be laboriously folded, piled and unpiled every day; another women's chore. The men may pick up a few groceries but do not seem to participate in maintaining the "home" at all.

Despite their impoverished condition and the high infant mortality rates, an average Palestinian woman will have seven to ten children. Today more than 50 per cent of Gaza's population is under the age of 14. Though some women would like to use birth control it goes against tradition and raises accusations of genocide from the still numerous female opponents. A number of women are anaemic due to

repeated pregnancies and protein-deficient diets which rely on breads and legumes with very little meat. Traditionally a woman's contribution to her household is seen as a fulfillment of her national duty; she serves her country by performing the drudgeries of maintaining the family unit.

Palestinian women in the camp spend most of their lives holding together their family's desperate existence. They often serve as heads of households, an odd twist in a patriarchal society where male babies are glorified and women are still accountable to their brothers. Women, in fact, account for over 50 per cent of the total population. Many women have been household heads for years due to absentee husbands who may have worked in the Arabian Gulf or have been jailed or killed by the Israelis. Some husbands who work as day labourers inside Israel have be-

come psychologically castrated — the occupation so damaging their sense of dignity that depression is a problem and women must often take over all decision making and managing for the characteristically large families. Today, despite her condition under military occupation in a society living under a siege mentality, the Palestinian woman considers herself to be the most liberated of all her Arab sisters.

Through her search for a secure and socially acceptable identity, many women count marriage as their primary aspiration. Those who teach or work as secretaries often admit that they are working to earn, not for personal fulfillment. Acceptance of the traditional female role in a patriarchal society undoubtedly involves less risk. Adopting a political role is seen by many as overstepping the bounds of closely knit Palestinian society. But Palestinian women have been prominent in recent uprisings. They have been standing in the way of soldiers. They have been placed under Administrative Detention alongside the men. The threat to their nation has been a powerful impetus for their growth and organization — pushing the limits of a traditional society's tolerance of women's roles and filling the void left by a situation where the men are often behind bars or have perished in the national struggle. Since the founding of the Palestinian Women's Union in 1921 — the first such Union in the Arab world, Palestinian women have been quietly developing their own leadership while supporting a society in struggle. Managing for survival, often in the absence of men, has enabled them to organize their own grassroots networks. The success of future generations was no light burden on their shoulders. If their loyalty to their culture and nationality bore the fruits of opposition, this is a testament to their will for national survival. Organizing for survival awakened their leadership instincts and has prepared them to organize in opposition.

Now, nearly six decades after the first Palestinian women's union was formed, young women are enrolling in higher education — including traditionally male fields — in record numbers. The dividing line between respected social work and questionable political work is faint, if not invisible. By force of circumstance, the traditional patriarchal society can no longer afford to undervalue women.

Despite the relative gains Palestinian women have made however, most remain in the refugee camps, eking out a pathetic subsistence in a desperate environment. It is precisely the misery and stagnation of refugee status that has prompted the younger generation to fight for their basic human rights; with their lives. □

Bombay Pavement Dwellers Struggle for Permanent Shelter

An Interview with Prema Gopalan

“A busing public privileges,” was how India’s Supreme Court regarded those living on the streets. The 1985 upholding of an earlier High Court judgment cleared the way for mass demolition of pavement dwellers’ shelters and for their forced evacuation to barren, drought-prone uninhabited rural areas. As several cities started to act on the ruling the masses turned activist and succeeded in halting the persecution.

Agencies such as SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres) in Bombay became deeply involved in the movement. Their “People’s Census” shed some light on how many people actually did live on the streets, a reality which until then had been conveniently ignored. An exciting grassroots process unfolded through which women developed skills, savings and permanent housing concepts. To share this experience with you, Women & Environments interviewed Prema Gopalan. Prema, a community worker on the staff of SPARC was invited to address the Canadian conference on the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, held in Ottawa in September 1987, and spent some time with housing activists in Toronto, where we talked with her.

W & E: Can you tell us about the pavement dwellers?

Prema: Bombay has 150,000 people who live on the streets. They pitch their make-shift tent-like shacks along fences, walls or anything that will provide some support. Most of these shelters are no larger than 60 to 100 square feet. Life in the streets means struggling without amenities. It means having to search out and pay for water and toilets. It means using the gutter as a washing and bathing

space. Government welfare policies for the poor do not cover the pavement community, and access to schools, medical and other social services is restricted. Bank credit is refused.

Most of Bombay’s pavement dwellers are migrants who have arrived from underdeveloped rural areas of the country. The migration started about 30 years ago and some families have lived in the same pavement spot for as many years.

Women head nearly half of all pavement families; a third of them are single mothers, yet almost half of them actually work for a living. They help recycle the waste from businesses and other more affluent residents. They work as domestic help, couriers, and as occasional trade

motion of Area and Resource Centres was established in 1984. We are a group of individuals with experience in community health, welfare, women’s development and social research. We believe that by increasing the poor’s participation and control of the information and resources needed for the process of change, development and progress can be made.

W & E: What was your approach to such an overwhelming issue?

Prema: In 1985 we found a place with a high concentration of pavement dwellers in the most congested area of Bombay’s

Half of the city’s nine million people live in slums and by 1990 India will have 24 cities with populations over 10 million.

labour in construction and other low skill jobs. As 85 per cent of them do not use city transit to reach their workplaces the location of their shelters on inner city pavements is often the most crucial factor in generating resources for family survival. They pay indirect taxes, vending and commercial licences like everybody else, yet statistics are blind to their existence and their economic contribution is unrecognized.

W & E: What is SPARC?

Prema: SPARC, the Society for the Pro-

business and trade district. We were involved with the “People’s Census.” In it, women and men had voluntarily recorded family details, counted and measured existing and required shelter space and drew occupation and income profiles. This information proved to be invaluable in dealing with authorities. It also made the women reflect, “Who are we? Where do we come from? How do we live and work?” and many started to trace their roots.

SPARC helped to set up women’s collectives and local committees. This, we felt, could empower the women to negotiate for a permanent place to live, to plan their new settlements and even design their own homes. At present we reach out to

10,000 families in pavement, slum and railway settlements in 10 different areas of Bombay. Half of the city's nine million people live in slums and by 1990 India will have 24 cities with populations over 10 million.

The Area Resource Centre is the heart of our operation. People come here for information and help. It's an easy going place and people can talk about their problems. We assist with up-to-date problem-solving methods, resource people and facilitators. We tend to encourage the women to form groups. In this way they can share their experiences, and escape the isolation and confinement of their family, caste or religious setting.

W & E: What kind of visions did the women have?

Prema: Right from the beginning we realized how worried the women were about the city's hostility toward them. They felt trapped in a dead-end situation. As we discussed shelter, living conditions and jobs it became clear that a permanent

home of their own, the possibility to make a living and safety for their children were the most important goals for these women. They developed the idea of a self-help

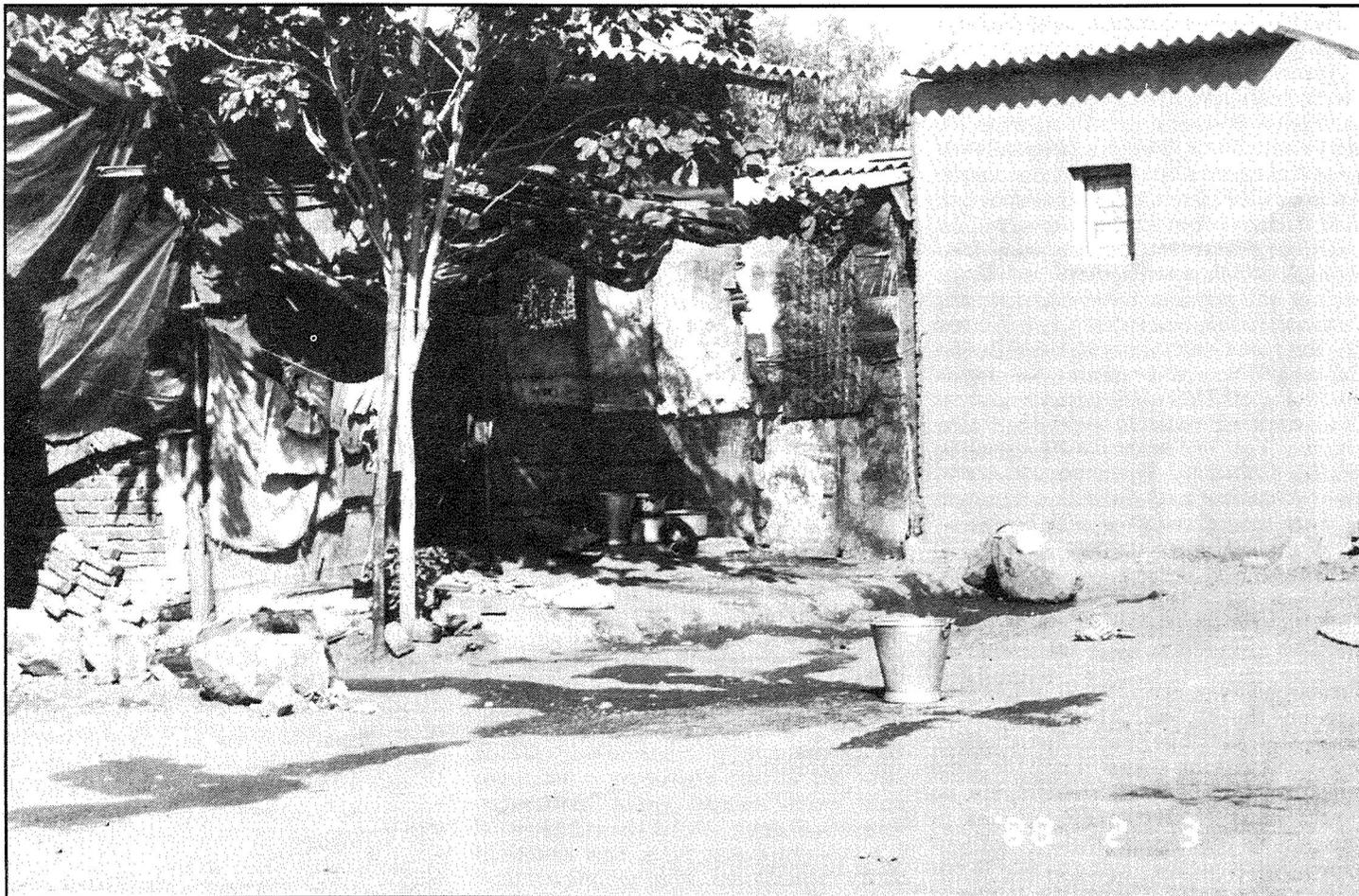
... the women are now planning a masonry training program, a savings-cum-credit society and a materials and labour bank.

resettlement community. This essentially urban concept had to meet several basic needs: shelter, jobs, shared land titles, drinking water, toilets, and welfare services such as health, education and child care. The women also want to be the "community builders," planning, building and sustaining their own settlement project.

W & E: Then what did you do?

Prema: Armed with definite ideas of their community's needs, men, women and children joined in the effort to choose a site. Vacant land was identified and we evaluated its capacity to sustain their needs.

Next, we began a critical review of public housing policies. Together, we met with city authorities, housing experts, town planners and voluntary agencies. We visited slums and other housing schemes as well as project sites and services. After this preparation the women started to lay out the site and design the actual houses. Basic facilities such as water, electricity, toilets and drainage would be shared. The community plan had to include opportunities for earning a living, a creche, a pre-school, a health and community centre. In February of 1987 we held an exhibition with life-size prototypes of the houses designed by the women. Over a thousand pavement and slum dwellers from all over came to see the models.



A typical pavement dwelling.



Meeting of the pavement dwellers caucus.

SPARC

After the initial shelter awareness training, the women are now planning a masonry training program, a savings-cum-credit society and a materials and labour bank. We have already formed a housing cooperative to manage money, material and labour for house construction. Women from 500 families have opened housing savings accounts. They hope to contribute up to 20 per cent of the estimated cost of their houses. This amounts to 6,000 to 8,000 rupees (\$600 to \$800 Canadian). A committee was struck to investigate potential public resources; another one to liaise with the authorities. The settlements will be developed along the lines of cooperatives. Under the Urban Land Ceiling Act, state governments can acquire land for public housing. We are lobbying the Central Ministry of Urban Development, since the provincial governments tend to focus more on rural issues. At this point, however, the government is unwilling to provide the land and building funds.

W & E: How do you feel about what has been achieved so far?

Prema: We at SPARC see the Mahila Milan, a women's union formed to implement the shelter program as one of the most significant achievements. It is interesting that a strong women's collective has emerged as a trainer and catalyst for other women and as alternative leadership within the pavement community. Already a core group of 50 to 60 "graduates" from our training program are teaching women from other areas to start their own redevelopment projects. Only a process such as this, not Supreme Court rulings and forced evacuations, will solve the problems of the pavement dwellers. As the women's collectives themselves have gradually realized, whether they achieve resettlement in the next five years is not the primary issue. Their strength, cohesion and vitality is. For them, there is no turning back. □

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The Reservoir: Developing One American Co-op

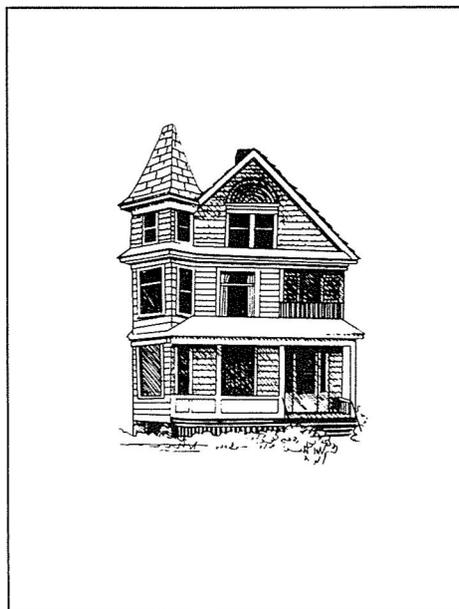
by Susan Hobart

Until recently, the old city reservoir was a vacant lot inhabited by old water heaters, weeds, and the deteriorating municipal livery stable. In the heart of the historic Old Market Place Neighbourhood, close to Madison, Wisconsin's downtown, the site presented a great opportunity to combine turn of the century character with "state of the art" technology.

Marketing studies plus the Madison Mutual Housing Association's (MHA) waiting list for cooperative housing testified to people's need for housing that is affordable, close to services, physically accessible, secure, and accommodates children. The MHA set up a planning committee consisting of the local non-profit Design Coalition, specializing in historic design and barrier free housing; Independent Living Inc., an older adults service provider; Access to Independence, an advocacy group for people with physical disabilities; Options in Community Living, which helps people with developmental disabilities to live independently, the Salvation Army Day Care, and two housing co-op members, both single-parent women. The Committee researched North American and European housing design, including the work of UCLA Professor Dolores Hayden, and invited Canadian architect Joan Simon (who designed Constance Hamilton, Canada's first co-op for women) to speak.

The Committee decided that the housing should be designed for an intergenerational mix of people with a variety of unit styles for families and individuals. The scale, design, and finish of the new construction should be compatible with nearby 1920s buildings.

A year of planning, financing, fundraising, and politicking to obtain the site produced a 28-unit housing co-op that has for the most part held true to its original



Illustrations courtesy of Madison Mutual Housing Association

intent. The units are a mix of one, two, and three bedrooms, ranging in size from 680 to 1300 square feet. Twenty-six are new construction with two in the rehabilitated livery stable.

In the absence of federal subsidies the MHA pursued every strategy to develop affordability. Packaging the Reservoir with another, larger building that we were developing provided enough collateral for a tax exempt Mortgage Revenue Bond issue large enough to cover 60 per cent of our financing for this \$1.5 million project. A further 22 per cent came from a City of Madison loan, with highly favourable repayment conditions, of funds left over from an old federal urban development grant. A further \$90,000, or 5 per

cent, came from a land contract negotiated with the City, again on very favourable terms based on the project's social and economic benefits to the City, and the remainder was contributed from equity that MHA had built up in other projects.

Income groups are mixed so that higher cost units help balance the budget with the lower cost units; nine units are priced at 30 per cent of a household's income where that is 50 per cent of the median, nine are priced at 30 per cent of a household's income which is 80 per cent of the median, and the remaining 10 units are priced at market rates.

Membership in the co-op is equal to one month's carrying charges plus estimated utilities. If a household cannot afford the membership cost immediately, they can put one-fourth down and pay the balance over an 18-month period at no interest. The affordability goal was also supported through the building's design which incorporates energy efficiency, and sharing laundry facilities and some utility costs.

The Reservoir is close to child care, public transportation, older adult programs, and within walking distance of the downtown business district and university. The bus for the elementary and middle school stops at the corner. There are three public parks, basketball and tennis courts, and a lake beach within three blocks.

The big front porches that replicate the older stock in the neighbourhood are at ground level. All first floor units are wheelchair accessible. The doors have time delay closures and lever door locks. Four units are designed barrier-free for maximum mobility, and their doorways, halls and bathrooms are wide with 360° turnabout space. Outlets and switches are set at levels reachable from a wheelchair.

Sinks are roll-under and showers allow roll-in use. Carpeted wainscoting to match flooring prevent wheel damage to the walls.

Security means more than just a locked lobby. Porches large enough for rockers and porch swings facing the streets will encourage resident use and overall neighbourhood surveillance. The large windows from the kitchen and dining area afford excellent visibility from one end of the site to the other. A landscaped inner courtyard includes playgrounds, sitting areas, and raised garden beds designed to encourage active use. Parking is split into two lots to allow the shortest distance from car to home. The walks, parking areas, and hallways are well lit with energy efficient photo-cell fixtures.

The mix of unit sizes, the affordability ranges, and location are attractive for people with children. All the units face the interior courtyard allowing grandparents or parents visual access from the kitchen, dining, or living room while doing household tasks. Playgrounds were designed to provide activities for one year olds to



An example of a finished unit.

While the project was not specifically targetted to women, design, marketing and rent levels have made it particularly attractive to women, who comprise the majority of households.

adolescents. The units are clustered four to a building with a first floor commons that can be used for interior child play or socializing. Adjacent to the commons is a laundry area so residents do not have to leave the building to do laundry. Sound-proofing was obtained through wall insulation plus an inch and a half of concrete between upper and lower units. Kitchens and dining areas are connected to allow parent/child interaction during kitchen chores. The Livery has a community room, a small kitchen and a space for childcare for co-op meetings. Unlike much of our City's rental housing, the Reservoir design and marketing blatantly waves the welcome children sign.

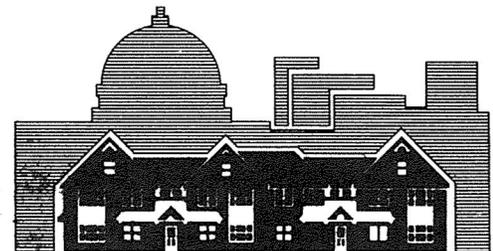
So who is moving into the Reservoir? Ten children, four female older adults, six families, seventeen female-headed households and four adults using wheel-chairs are among the initial residents. The nine lowest priced units went first and a waiting list for those continues to grow. While the project was not speci-

fically targetted to women, design, marketing and rent levels have made it particularly attractive to women, who comprise the majority of households.

All members attend a 12-hour training program in co-op history, finances, meeting craft, management, and decision-making. An orientation for children has been developed as well. Residents have established a property management Committee, Organizational Committee, Member Selection Committee, House Treasurer, and House Maintenance Coordinators. The residents have selected consensus for their general meeting decisions and left the method of decision-making at the building level to each building. Money is budgeted for child care so all members can participate equally in running the co-op. A wide variety of tasks allows people of all abilities to contribute and share in the benefits of the co-op community.

In today's housing market few options remain to promote the construction of

affordable housing, especially housing that is designed to meet the needs of today's changing lifestyle and demands. Without national priority for affordable housing we need to continue our financial patchworks at the local level to develop models in the hope that someday the necessary financial support will be available. We need to experiment to see what works. We need to expand choices and involve users in the design stage, and we need to educate professionals and consumers by example of the impact the built environment has on our independence and livelihood. □



Susan Hobart is Executive Director of Madison Mutual Housing Association. For more information call her at (608) 255-6642 or write Madison Mutual Housing Association, 200 N. Bount Street, Madison, WI 53703, USA.

A Woman's Place Home Ownership Option

by Elizabeth Forslund and Carolyn Keith

When we talk about housing, even housing for women's particular needs, we ignore the "unattached" middle aged woman, the woman who is no longer married or has never been married, the woman on her own whose children are grown. Typical of our attitude is Eugenie Ladner Birch's response to her own question: "Who is the unsheltered woman? The answer is clear. She is either a young mother not yet 35 with minor children, probably living in rental housing, or an elderly single person living alone in either a rental or owned unit."¹

It is all too true that the housing needs of many younger female-headed households and older women are at a crisis stage, but we cannot assume that women somehow enjoy a respite from the shelter crisis during the period between child-rearing and old age. Rather, it is likely that theirs is a more invisible crisis.

Home ownership is a strong norm in the United States and confers economic advantages (accumulation of equity, tax breaks), stability and control over one's housing, and social status.²

While 65 percent of all housing units are owner occupied, only 18 per cent of owners are women,³ and fully half of these are over age 64 and owners by virtue of their dead husband's earnings.

Figures on renters further underscore the housing position of women; while in 1976 female-headed households were 32 per cent of renters, in 1981 their proportion had increased to 40 per cent as other groups — married couples, male-headed households — increased their home ownership at a faster rate.

Only six per cent of US women householders currently earn enough to buy a median-priced home. Women in the US are paid wages equivalent to only about 70 per cent of men's earnings, and

middle-aged women are more likely than their daughters to have entered the labour market after an intermission for marriage and childrearing considered appropriate several decades ago, thus incurring permanent work history penalties.

The average married woman is widowed at age 56, "too young" for Social Security benefits but "too old" to start a lucrative career. Divorced women experience a 73 per cent reduction, on average, in standard of living from that of their married years,⁴ and prospects for remarriage rapidly fade with each birthday. These women may have retained custody of the marital home but may then find themselves "house rich, cash poor," as well as overburdened by maintenance responsibilities. For them the "American Dream" of the single-family home can be a lonely and imperfect solution to their housing needs.

The women reported themselves generally quite satisfied with where they were living.

How, then, do middle-aged women house themselves? The question has hardly caught the attention of researchers. One exception is a study of Canadian women aged 55 to 64, which found that single, widowed, or divorced women face the most serious housing problems because of their financial positions.⁵ It is likely that their sisters in the States fare similarly.

While long-range answers to women's disadvantages lie in fundamental social

and economic changes, women's lives cannot simply wait. A housing solution for some middle-aged women may be the non-profit housing co-operative. Less familiar to Americans than Canadians the concept has begun to attract greater attention in the US for a variety of reasons, including concerns about the growing housing crisis, recent Federal legislation, and establishment of loan funds specifically to encourage development of co-op housing.

Several co-op housing models exist in the States: The non-equity mutual housing association requires only a limited investment (typically the equivalent of one month's charges, an amount which is returned with interest when the occupant leaves), and may be limited to persons who meet low- to moderate-income guidelines. The investment co-op model allows occupants to purchase and sell at whatever the market will bear. Through commitment to affordable housing, some investment co-ops require a more adequate investment and are accessible to moderate- and middle-income members.

Such a non-profit equity co-operative can offer advantages similar to those of individual home ownership, including tax breaks, accumulation of equity, stability of occupancy and control over one's housing. The sociability of a residential community and elimination of profit-oriented costs are other benefits.

In the mid-1980s the Young Women's Christian Association in a middle-sized Wisconsin city inherited a piece of land in a residential district. Combined with the Y director's awareness that home ownership was an issue for a number of women she knew — women with some, though modest, economic resources, owners who found maintenance a burden, non-owners financially able to purchase but apprehensive about single-handed home

HOUSING DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR WOMEN LIVING ALONE AT MIDLIFE

Security

- Physical safety for person and possessions
- Economic security: control over monthly costs

Economics

- Immediate: down payment and fees, qualifying for mortgage credit
- Longer range: major maintenance and replacement costs; reroofing, painting, furnace replacement
- Payment options: flexibility in initial investment and monthly payment size
- Energy costs: included in the economic equation
- Transportation costs: availability of public transportation or dependence on a car

Spatial Requirements

- Separation of functions: a place to shift tasks or take a break
- Furnishability: Spaces scaled for possessions from her previous home
- Sufficient storage
- Guest space: public areas for casual visits, and for overnight guests
- Meal preparation space which allows guests to assist, and does not isolate the cook from the company
- Versatility: spaces which can be used flexibly
- Provision for sharing seldom used spaces; meeting spaces which build community
- Gradient of public to private spaces, and choices of spaces reflecting desired degree of privacy

Imagery

- Quiet, calm neighbourhood
- Status fit: a home which reflects one's desired social status (Anderson-Khlief)
- Home as expression of one's self
- Lightness, airiness, and freshness
- Charm and inviting qualities
- Stability and permanence

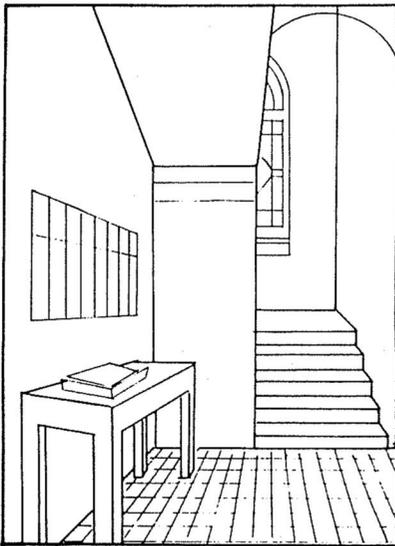
Neighbourhood Compatibility

- Closeness to friends
- Mixture of people and household situations
- Convenience to shopping

Pets

- Opportunity to keep a pet if desired

Taken from the readings and the questionnaire results.



FORSLUND

ownership — this seemed an opportunity for the YWCA to help women to find other ways to own.

To find out about their needs, Elizabeth Forslund surveyed women in the community by mail, through hand-outs at the Y reception desk, and in person at two club meetings.⁶ Twenty-two women responded, ranging in age from 35 to 66; several had children in their teens or older still at home but anticipated that they would be leaving within a few years. Annual incomes varied from less than \$10,000 to \$30,000.

Elizabeth asked about current living situations and satisfaction with those, difficulties or concerns with upkeep and maintenance tasks, and security. She asked about preferences on various possible features of a future residence, certain possible shared elements and, again, security.

The women reported themselves generally quite satisfied with where they were living. Dissatisfaction came from those who said that their homes were too large; one apartment dweller, on the other hand, felt that hers was too small. Only about 10 per cent found their current neighbourhoods uncongenial.

Exterior maintenance was mentioned most frequently as the greatest concern. Two-thirds of the women felt that the interior of their home reflected positively on them, but more than half were dissatisfied with the exterior. Several were troubled specifically about neglect of lawn and shrubs. A few foresaw increasing difficulty in coming years with aging appliances and with tasks requiring strength.

Security was of (surprisingly) little concern to these women. A few of them, in fact, ranked "security returning home at night" very positively, apparently reflecting their enjoyment of the independence

of coming home to their own place. However, when later asked about possible features in future housing, strong preference was expressed for a secure lobby (two thirds ranked this very or fairly high).

What else did they think important? Light and airiness topped the list of desired imagery. Private unit entrances (again, two thirds of respondents), covered car parking, and sufficient storage space for possessions were important. Being able to have a pet was high on the list for some women and not wanted at all by the rest. Half wanted some space within the individual units which could be converted for short-term guest use. Another quarter, however, supported the idea of guest space which could be shared by occupants of the building. Most of the women were interested in a shared meeting room — a fireplace was a popular feature — with kitchen and powder room. They also liked the idea of an exercise room and shared yard space.

From this small survey and other sources, Elizabeth developed an extensive list of issues to use in designing housing for women living alone at midlife. Central to her guidelines are: provision for safety of persons and possessions, and response to economic needs through an affordable downpayment and monthly fees, energy efficiency and selection of materials to minimize burdens of maintenance and replacement.

Spaces scaled for possessions which a woman could bring from her previous residence, versatility of spaces for varying uses and separation of functions so that, as one put it, "you can get away from yourself," are important interior attributes. Accommodation should be made for pets.

Convenience to shopping and public transportation are desirable, nearness to friends and a neighbourhood characterized by quiet and calm, with a mixture of people and household situations. Finally, a home which expresses oneself and fits one's status, characterized by lightness, airiness and freshness, offering assurances of stability and permanence.

Since most of the women preferred a large residence but could not afford one, Elizabeth proposed smaller individual units in a mansion-like building. She selected the Queen Anne style for its character and fit with the neighbourhood and incorporated a gracious entrance with unobtrusive security. Two-bedroom units (800 square feet) and one-bedroom units (650 square feet) featured alcoves, spatial variety, plentiful storage space, and bountiful natural lighting, to maximize usable space and a sense of spaciousness. Inclusion of an elevator recognizes women's later-life needs. Though initially more costly, brick masonry and other high quality materials were recommended because

they could reduce later maintenance burdens. In the spring of 1986, when Elizabeth completed her design, cost of construction was estimated at \$40,000 to \$50,000 per unit, lower than the cost of new construction or an older dwelling of good quality in the community, and an affordable figure for women who already had some home equity or savings.

We would like to be able to report that "A Woman's Place" has moved from design to occupancy. Unfortunately, however, the city's heavily industrial economy has been depressed, affected by lengthy layoffs and uncertainty of continued operation by some major employers. With the departure of the Y director from that job and the lack of someone in place to actively promote the project, it seems unlikely that the local women who need and desire such housing can unify behind it or commit economically to the long-term financing during construction. We hope that "A Woman's Place" will eventually arise in some other, more favourable location as housing for women of midlife. □

Elizabeth Forslund completed her Master of Architecture in 1986 and is now an intern architect with a large firm in Minneapolis.

Carolyn Keith is a doctoral student in Urban Social Institutions at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

1 Eugenie Ladner Birch, ed., *The Unsheltered Woman: Women and Housing in the 80s*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1985, p. 43. See also pp. 21, 30 for figures on ownership.

2 Susan Anderson-Khelif, "Divorced Mothers, Divorced Fathers and Children: A Study in Interaction, Support, and Visitation in One Parent Families," in Suzanne Keller, ed., *Building for Women*, Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1981.

3 Elizabeth Forslund, *Housing for Women Living Alone at Midlife*, Milwaukee, WI, School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1986, master's thesis (unpublished). Elizabeth's thesis includes the preference survey, design guidelines and building design reported in this article.

4 See, for example, Lenore J. Weitzman, *The Divorce Revolution: The Unexpected Social and Economic Consequences for Women and Children in America*, New York: Free Press, 1985, p. 339.

5 *Too Old Yet Too Young: An Account of Women in Limbo (Highlights)*, Ottawa: Council on Aging of Ottawa-Carleton, 1986.

6 The survey was developed with Professor Sherry Ahrentzen, UW-Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning and pre-tested on a number of Milwaukee women. Their stronger concerns about security issues were notably different from the eventual group surveyed.

Housing Co-ops in Canada

Since 1973, the federal government in Canada, either directly or by cost-sharing with the provinces, has provided assistance for the development and operation of non-profit housing co-operatives.

These co-ops are non-profit because they do not involve equity contributions, or return on equity to individual members. They aim to house a mix of low- and moderate-income members, some of whom will pay rent geared to their incomes.

In the case of the non-profit co-ops, a corporation is formed by a group (not less than five at the outset) who wish to develop a project using the government program. The group makes application and proceeds through several phases of approval including:

- proof of need and demand (a waiting list of potential members is compiled and surveyed for basic information regarding income levels and housing need);
- review of a proposed site and building design, or an existing building to be purchased;
- cost feasibility analysis (costs must be within the government's established maximums).

This process can take up to two years from beginning to final approval, or longer if municipal zoning approvals are necessary, and if there are community objections to the project.

In spite of this complex and time-consuming process, there are some 500 non-profit housing co-operatives of various shapes and sizes, from town-houses to high-rises across Canada. Many have functioned successfully for more than a decade, receiving ongoing assistance in the forms of mortgage interest write-downs or contributions toward operating deficits. This assistance will continue, under the terms of the individual co-op's agreement with the government, until the mortgage on the project is paid up.

The non-profit co-ops are owned by the people who live in them, through their membership in the non-profit corporation. If members leave they take no equity with them, and someone else replaces them to enjoy the benefits of non-profit housing. There is also no incentive to sell the property, so it remains secure for its members as modest rental housing. The Canadian co-ops are testimony to the results of removing housing from the profit-making sphere, and to the ability of many different social and income groups to work together to maintain secure, attractive and affordable housing. □

Gay Alexander

Home Sweet Dollhouse

by Schuster Gindin

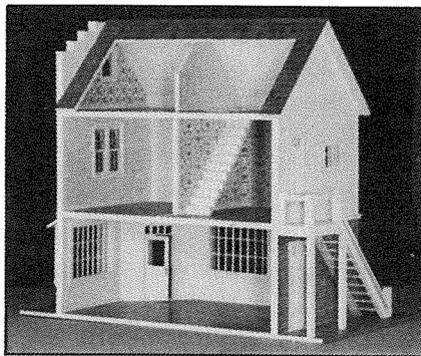
"I finally got my crystal chandelier for my dining room. Paid a lot more than I wanted to — \$250.00 — but it's just what I wanted. You know, I'd never spend that much on one for my real dining room."
—Overheard at annual Metro Miniature Show

Almost every little girl owns (or covets) a dollhouse. She plays and fantasizes with a tiny version of domestic life for hours at a time — a particularly female educational toy. "With them, little girls imitated in play the work of the adult household and learned by doing, without getting underfoot."¹ Dollhouse play limits the imaginative world to the domestic one. No one ever gives a little girl a doll-sized factory, highrise office or apartment building. Architecturally, her boundaries are set. It is ironic, in that it only allows for the mythology of the traditional nuclear family living in a house.

Dollhouses and miniatures have a history extending from ancient Egyptian civilization to the present. Eighteenth and nineteenth century Dutch and German dollhouses were elaborate and often completely accurate reproductions of typical bourgeois households.

The building and collecting of miniature houses, shops, furniture and household objects as an adult hobby, built by and for grown-ups, is a lesser-known subculture in contemporary North America. How-to books in libraries, miniature shops along commercial arteries in cities and small towns, week-end "shows" at an airport hotel, suggest the scope of its popularity. In fact, miniature construction and collecting has become the third largest hobby in the world.

The somewhat covert nature of this pastime must be due in part to its almost exclusively feminine and domestic character. However, the element which



We are encouraged to ignore our social history in the interests of our collective fantasy of the past.

sets it apart from newly appreciated feminine domestic arts such as quilting, embroidery, needlework or lacemaking is its strong fantasy component. Some miniatures are exact replicas of historical buildings or objects; a reference work to illustrate and preserve the past. Most are simply wishes. In North American culture our agricultural and often foreign roots are forgotten, and poverty is boring. It is understood that more is better and rich is best. We are encouraged to ignore our social history in the interests of our collective fantasy of the past. The miniature houses which hobbyists build are senti-

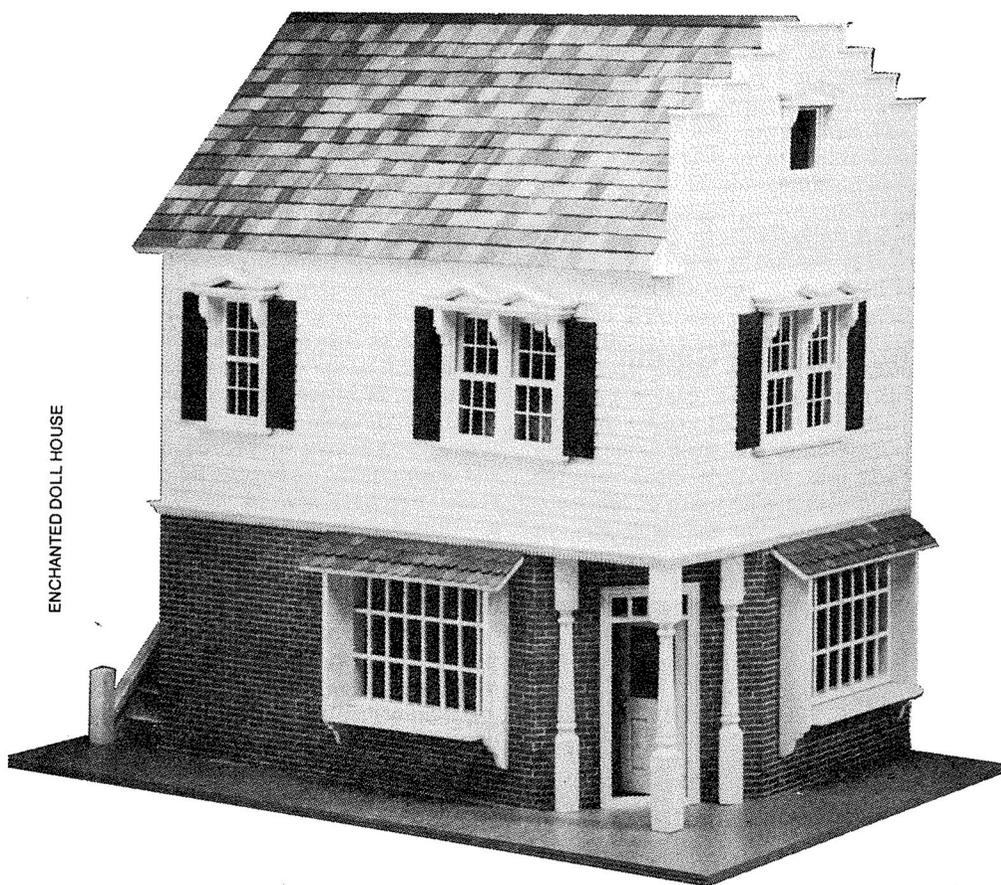
Schuster Gindin is a Toronto artist. Play-ing House, her exhibition using dollhouses and miniatures, was shown at A Space, Toronto in 1986.

mental renderings of home life in another, "simpler" era, nostalgic not only for rich people's homes, but for the family (and often servants) which inhabited them.

The enticement is illustrated by excerpts from one popular book on the subject: "Anyone who has ever dreamed of owning a large, beautiful, elegant house but can't afford one will find nearly the same joys and excitement in planning and building a miniature version of that house. . . ." It goes on to extol the relief felt in avoiding real-life mortgages, taxes, cigarette burns and footprints on the carpet; ". . . the sense of controlling your environment . . . brings peace and comfort in the threat of helplessness that permeates today's reality."²

The hobby itself, then, is actually a model; a model of our society's attitudes toward house and home, which encompass issues of sexism, property, ideals. "The dream house is a uniquely American form, because for the first time in history, a civilization has created a utopian ideal based on the house rather than the city or nation."³ Yelena Bonner, wife of Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, noticed this in 1986 when she spent six months in the US and wrote her impressions for *Newsweek* magazine: "I maintain that Americans do not want war. What Americans want is a house. This desire expresses a national trait, the desire for privacy. The house is a symbol of independence, spiritual and physical." We each expect, with our mortgage, to purchase our own little world. The house *becomes* the world, each a small sovereign statement of individuality. One senses a retreat down a path which ends in agoraphobia. Miniatures are an exaggerated expression of this larger reality.

To control space, it must be defensible; that is, one cannot feel vulnerable. One must have the choice of its function, decor, inhabitants, size, shape, architectural



features. The amount of space which women feel able to control is often on a smaller scale. Our houses are designed without any private space for a woman. Children have their rooms, men have their dens, but the "master bedroom" is shared. Women are relegated to kitchens and laundry rooms without the space or privacy for any work unrelated to home-making or parenting.

The practitioners of this hobby are mainly women. Many women work in conjunction with their husbands or fathers. He cuts the plywood sheets, and does the basic woodworking with power tools. She does the finishing and decorating of the house. This, of course, implies *a)* a husband/father who *b)* has power tools and the skills and space to use them, and *c)* is supportive or interested in helping his wife/daughter with her hobby.

One woman who lacked a handyman and didn't have the woodworking shop or skills at her disposal, devised an alternative building technique. The method is modular, and consists of cutting matboard with an Exacto knife to the size of each wall, floor and ceiling in the proposed structure. 'Studs' are cut from thin strips of basswood or pine and glued to the matboard. The entire structure is glued together when all component walls, floors and ceilings have been finished.

This construction technique requires no power tools, no unusual skills, no expensive equipment or separate workroom. And no man. It takes up very little space and can be done anywhere. It is modular, and so can stack up to be stored in any closet or box.

In mastering this method, a woman can create and control an entire fictional

held on week-ends, beginning at 2 p.m. on Saturday, giving people time to arrive and set up their tables and displays on Saturday morning. They end by 5 or 6 p.m. on Sunday, so that people can pack up and get home for work on Monday morning.

People fund their hobby by specialization. In order to complete a miniature room or house to their precise standards, they manufacture more of whatever they do best, sell it at the shows, then buy their colleagues' work with their profits.

In this fleamarket atmosphere, there becomes obvious a clear class distinction among the women hobbyists. The line of division falls along the classic opposition of time vs. money. In this case the issue has transcended the practical to become a principle. One of the primary satisfactions of this hobby is to make something out of nothing, no matter how long it takes. Odds and ends, scraps, this and that, leftovers; this is the stuff from which their beautiful illusions are made. Selling to or trading with one's colleagues is part of the insider's world of the hobby organization. Those who excel at their craft are widely known and respected. Those who are not producers at all, but only consumers, are thoroughly scorned. Gossip and anecdotes run along the lines of how much a customer has paid for some little scrap made out of paper, ink, ashes and dye. Imagine paying so much for nothing, when they could have made it themselves!

It is a closed economy, encompassing only their hobby and no other part of life. The time and skill invested are not considered as value added. Producers would spend the time anyway, for their own enjoyment. They only want to make enough money so that the hobby is self-

One of the primary satisfactions of this hobby is to make something out of nothing, no matter how long it takes.

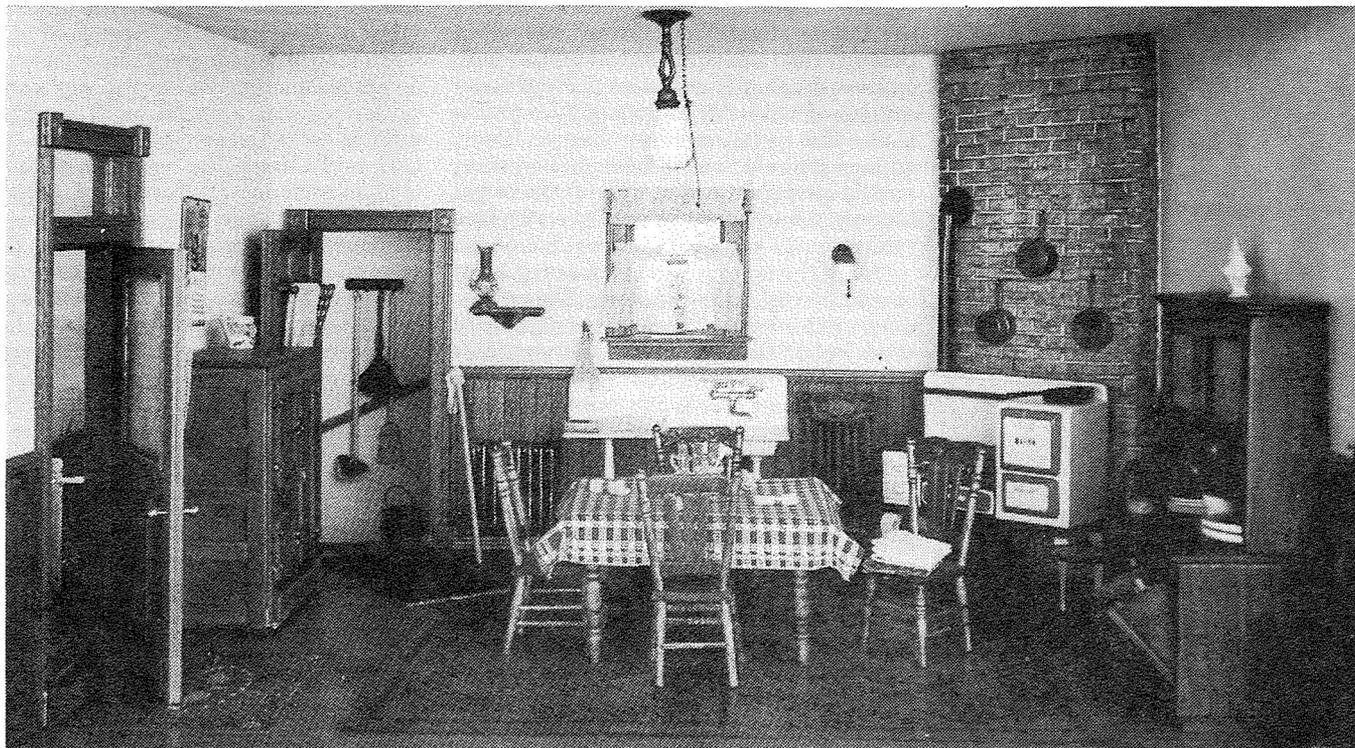
domestic world; yet she need not claim more than a corner in real, full-sized life.

In addition to specialty shops, a prime source of miniature items are the special fairs, or shows, held by miniaturist clubs throughout the year. Being surrounded by thousands of tiny objects and their makers is a very immediate, and quite overwhelming experience.

The shows cater to the schedule of a working class clientele, who are the majority in this hobby (as in life.) They are

supporting; to buy the objects which they can't satisfactorily produce themselves. They are not trying to get rich, or even to make a living at this. They are not small business people. This is not a job.

Most dollhouses are wired and electrically lit, and the variety of lamps and furnishings made for them is incredible. There exists in miniature every piece of furniture in almost every style (although a dearth of modern), appliances, musical instruments, lamps, dishes, linens, paint-



The kitchen of this typical 1920's house demonstrates how evocative miniature rooms can be, by implying details about the lives of those who live there.

ings (original and reproduction), books, photo albums, crocheted baby clothes and a variety of needlework, carpets and draperies (with appropriate hardware), eyeglasses and food. Whole platters of prepared food "that look so real you gain weight just looking at them." To fill the miniature candy dishes there are packages of miniature licorice allsorts, all handmade of course.

In the act of furnishing, the dollhousehold and its imaginary members can be manipulated to conform to a personal ideal which may be much more complex an undertaking to realize in reality. For example, one woman's dollhouse is set up to accommodate a family of four, the size of her own family. However, one child is a daughter, which she never had. The husband in the fantasy household has many of the same interests or habits as her own does; collecting hunting trophies which she regards as hideous, and creating piles of ruffled-up newspapers and empty coffee cups wherever he has spent time. However, in the dollhouse these exist in the man's den *only*. His presence is not felt in any other part of the orderly, feminine house.

In addition to the fantasy of controlling

***Time and labour are under
one's own control in the
creation process.***

household space and occupants' behaviour, there are other aspects of control which dollhouses satisfy. In contrast to work, at home or outside of it, time and labour are under one's own control in the creation process. To exercise one's humanity, by valiantly and ingeniously bringing into existence an object of one's imagination, is the creative impulse which can also produce art.

Also, domestic life and household organization are areas of prior expertise. The crucial difference about their reproduction in miniature is that of allowing the ideal concept to be *completed*. This may be the only instance of housework ever being done, once and for all.

Dollhouses offer a way for people to appropriate the things they aren't able to afford. Hobbyists are resigned to not having what they want to real life. There is no questioning or apparent hostility in their assessment of the world and its material divisions. Out of the scraps and odds and ends available, they construct a model of what they wish they could have.

In fact, they have a feeling of resourcefulness, of self-reliance, of outsmarting the system which has kept from them so many of the things they'd like. One way or another, they refuse to be deprived. *Self-sufficient*, they create their *own*. □

1 Betsey B. Creekmore and Betsey Creekmore, *Your World in Miniature*, New York: Doubleday 1976.

2 Kathryn Falk and Edlycoe Griek, *The Complete Dollhouse Building Book*, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1982.

3 Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1984, p. 18.

Environmentalists Are Doomed To Fail

The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment

Neil Evernden.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
1985 ISBN 8020-6639-9
(paper) \$12.95

Reviewed by Katherine Davies

Neil Evernden's book is a bold attempt to evaluate the current status of the environmental movement in the context of the values inherent in western industrialized societies. Despite the apparent recent victories of environmentalists, his assessment questions not only the success of the movement, but also many of its underlying assumptions. In tacitly accepting prevailing social and cultural value systems, he claims that environmentalists are doomed to fail. What is needed, Evernden suggests, is a new way of looking at the environment. To do this he advocates abandoning existing conceptual and perceptual frameworks and developing a sense of "wonder" about the world.

The book opens with a brief discussion of what is meant by environmentalism. This is a valid discussion because environmentalism is not a single philosophy and encompasses the extremes of Greenpeace's radical "actions" and the institutionalisation of the environment in ministries and departments of the environment and natural resources. Evernden's definition of an environmentalist as "one who experiences a sense of value in nature and is moved to assert the reality of *his* experience to others" (my italics) is adequate, but many feminists may question his use of the inclusive masculine, which persists throughout the book. This is worth mentioning because it suggests that the author has not yet realized the full implications of his own strategy (i.e., the abolition of existing social and cultural interpretations of the world around us) for sexism in language.

Evernden also discusses the different meanings of the word ecology. To Theodore Roszak it was "the subversive science" because he saw it as "wholistic, receptive, trustful, largely non-tempering, (and) deeply grounded in aesthetic intuition." In contrast, ecology, as practised in many academic and research institutions, is a science much like any other, in which the scientific method

is used to study the interactions of living organisms and their environments. Given the theme of this book, it is interesting that Evernden does not mention that ecology was originally envisioned as a science concerned with the quality of human life alone. The inclusion of non-human life in ecology is a relatively recent phenomenon and is probably indicative of the ways human values have changed over the last century.

One of the recurring themes in the book is that our western industrial value systems are too limited to accommodate concerns about the environment. Traditionally, nature has been seen as existing for human benefit alone. We talk of natural resources such as oil, gas, lumber and fish, making the unstated assumption that nature must serve some human purpose. One result of this, Evernden correctly points out, is that although environmentalists and industrialists may differ about the "uses" of the natural world, environmentalists are increasingly having to argue their case using the ground rules of the industrialist. In my experience, this can be seen in the increased use of cost benefit analysis to compare environmental costs with economic benefits (and vice versa), government standards which allow "safe" levels of pollution and the notion of "acceptable" risk. Evernden concludes that in the long run environmentalists cannot win these arguments. Instead, they should critically examine the rules of the game and recognize that nature has an inherent value and beauty that has no humanly defined purpose and cannot be accommodated within our existing social and cultural paradigms. In reaching this conclusion Evernden is in agreement with the proponents of deep ecology and ecophilosophy, who have already outlined a similar position.

... environmentalists are increasingly having to argue their case using the ground rules of the industrialist.

A second recurring theme in this book is a discussion about the limited way we perceive the world around us. Evernden examines the writings of several important thinkers in this area. He contrasts the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and

Heidegger which emphasize the importance of relationships, with the more rigid view of Descartes. He argues that the Cartesian dualism between subject and object is fundamental to the way we perceive the world around us. It assumes a difference between "mind" and "matter" and denies the validity of subjective experience in favour of objective measurement and description. Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, on the other hand, recognized the importance of experience as a basis for behaviour. We act according to the way we perceive things and hence our perceptions — accurate or otherwise — determine the way we interact with the natural world. Thus, we are part of the world, and not apart from it. It is in this philosophy of interactions between humans and the world that Evernden sees a solution to the problems faced by environmentalists. By seeing the world as it is, rather than by perceiving it through our western industrial eyes, our behaviour towards the natural world will inevitably improve.

Although this argument about environmentalism is not new, Evernden restates it eloquently. However, he does not provide a practical strategy to achieve his rather idealistic solution. As he acknowledges, it would be difficult to achieve the radical re-structuring of western society and culture that would be necessary for us to see ourselves as integral components of the natural world. But Evernden's only strategy for change is for us to develop and experience a sense of "wonder" about the world. This could be achieved, he concludes, if we stopped interpreting what we see and returned to a simplicity in which each of us "must explore (the world) alone." Evernden realizes that this is an unsatisfactory solution; but the absence of a more practical strategy is frustrating and in my opinion the book leaves the reader hanging and slightly disappointed. The kindest interpretation of this is that the problems of human existence are easy to articulate and that the reader should not expect any easy answers. A less charitable view would be that Evernden is avoiding the admittedly difficult task of proposing a practical strategy. In this book he challenges, with some justification, the current practise of environmentalism but he does not provide any real alternative. In the long run, the omission of a practical alternative will probably not help the environmentalists who are on the front lines of battles against polluters and developers. Despite recent successes, environmentalists are still hard-pressed and need more than to be told to develop a sense of "wonder." □

Time For Action

March 18th, 1988. A one-day conference sponsored by the employment equity office of Ontario's Ministry of Environment focussing on "environmental issues and on the contributions made by women to environmental science." The conference program was enticing. The lineup of speakers — almost all women — was impressive. I was happy to report on the event for *Women and Environments* in exchange for the pleasure of listening to women talk about their roles and their potential in environmental work.

With little advance information about the conference, I arrived expecting to hear a great deal about the particular situations of these women, as well as more general information about the role of women and the potential for women's perspectives in environmental areas.

James Bradley, Minister of Environment, welcomed the more than 100 participants. He talked about the advances women have made in the Ministry of Environment and indicated that while we've come a long way, we have a long way to go. He also gave his support to women's efforts and applauded this conference as evidence of the important roles women have been playing in the environmental arena.

Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Regional Director General, Conservation and Protection, Environment Canada, was the keynote speaker. She quoted a favourite Judith Viorst poem, "If I were in charge of the world," and talked with eloquence and passion about how different things would be if women ran the world. She surveyed the environmental challenges we face:

- pollution is a problem that is never over;
- the solution to pollution is becoming less clear-cut;
- the environment business is filled with uncertainty;
- a climate of fear and anger has developed that is not conducive to developing good public policy;
- endless debating, buck-passing and procrastination have resulted in paralysis.

We are beset by problems of population, poverty, and devastating ecological change. We continue to draw the earth's energy capital and are faced with both environmental disaster and economic disaster. Policies, institutions and forms of decision-making must be changed. This is a massive task that requires new perspectives on how to get the work done.

Feminist perspectives have been influential in the emergence of new ecolog-

ical paradigms. Learning to live with nature requires combining rational knowledge with intuitive wisdom, something native people and women have known forever. We can discern a fundamental shift in thoughts and values — there is a rising concern with ecology; there is a growth of citizens' groups; there is a growing tendency to integrate rather than separate, to move toward egalitarian relationships and toward a commitment to sustaining life.

Women's place is everywhere, we have to bring our special qualities to everything we do, and yes, we would make a difference. She asked "why is this conference not about women?" This became the question of the day.

Conference sessions dealt with solid waste disposal in developed and less developed countries, the municipal role in environmental protection, evaluation of environmental law in Ontario and prospects for reform, individual differences in response to exposure to environmental hazards, a right to know: communicating with the public on environmental issues; hazardous waste disposal; caring for the commons. With only one or two exceptions, the speakers were women — professionals, researchers, academics — talking about current, important work. They are experienced, highly trained experts in their fields, but none of them talked about what it was like to be a woman and do this work.

The one exception, in addition to Liz Dowdeswell, was the lunch speaker, Etta Wharton, Employment Equity Manager for Ontario Hydro. Ms. Wharton is a chemical engineer who had to resort to sending out resumes that read E. Wharton so that prospective employers would not know she was female. She told us about Sonya _____, the Polish woman who was so influential she became known as the father of mathematics. We laughed; we have to be able to laugh. She was articulate, entertaining, and hardhitting. Women in engineering, science and technology have to be strong and assertive; we need role models; and we have to be role models; we have to support all efforts to promote and encourage women.

It seems there was considerable ambivalence about the purpose of the conference. Women in the Employment Equity group of Environment Ontario wanted to highlight the technical expertise of women in environmental professions in Ontario. There was some discussion of the particular role of women with respect to environmental issues — why, for example, were women in the forefront of environmental groups; Love Canal, Three Mile Island, disarmament, peace? These intriguing questions, however, did not make it to the program.



It would be nice to be able to say that, for once, the vast inertia of a bureaucracy managed to take on a significant social issue and do something interesting. It didn't. No one was really clear about the purpose of the conference. Neither were they really clear about their target audience or where to find it. Publicity was sketchy and not widely distributed.

In spite of all this, there were a lot of people in attendance. It may be that this is the beginning of something big — that in asking "why is this conference not about women," Elizabeth Dowdeswell helped articulate the need to have a conference about women, a conference that deals explicitly with women's issues and environmental issues and the social contexts in which these come together. I would love to hear each of the speakers talk, not about her work, but about her experience — the pleasures and frustrations of being a woman doing important environmental work. That would make a great conference! □

Miriam Wyman
Toronto

Mid-Career Retreat

The Organization of Women Architects (OWA) is hosting a mid-career retreat on the weekend of August 12-14. The retreat will combine the pleasures of good food and leisure activities with the opportunity to discuss and examine all aspects of being a woman architect. For further information contact: OWA, PO Box 26570, San Francisco, CA 94126 USA.

For Feminist Futurists

FFIN News is the newsletter of the Feminist Futures International Network. It originated in January of 1987, when a group at the Women and the Military Symposium in Finland organized a discussion group for Feminist futurists. They decided to create a newsletter to share ideas and bibliographies that were related to feminist/futurist utopian thinking. The newsletter would also provide information on books and articles in process or published, report on "high science" issues, and explore the possibilities of a feminist futures journal and of an international feminist futures workshop to be held in a couple of years' time.

Elise Boulding, editor of the first two issues of *FFIN News* has now stepped down and the new editors, beginning with the winter 1988 issue, are Mary Clare Powell and Annie Cheatham, both of whom are in doctoral programs at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts in Amherst. They plan to publish three issues a year and are looking for contributions in the form of articles, conference notices, book reviews and letters. For further information about this valuable networking resource, contact: *FFIN News*, Institute for Women and the Future, PO Box 1081, Northampton MA 01061, USA.

Women Plan Toronto

Women Plan Toronto is a user-focussed group based on participatory research. Metropolitan Toronto women in 25 different groups were interviewed and their experiences, ideas and issues have been recorded. In a new booklet, *Women Plan Toronto — Implications for City Planning*, these concerns have been juxtaposed with current urban planning policies and processes. The first section of the booklet

deals with the role of the public in city planning, research and land use planning. The second section focusses on the specific planning areas that were of concern to the women interviewed — these include housing, transportation, and urban design.

Women Plan Toronto has produced several other publications: a report, *Women Plan Toronto: Shared Experiences and Dreams*, and brochures on aspects of city planning, as well as a regular newsletter. The organization is now launching WANT, a project to bring women's issues to the forefront in the 1988 municipal elections.

For more information contact: Women Plan Toronto, 72 Southwood Drive, Toronto, Ontario M4E 2T9 (416) 690-6644.

Farm Women's Network

The 1987 National Farm Women's Conference initiated a national farm women's network to discuss critical issues that face the farms and families of these women. Some of the areas addressed include: Education — to ensure education and training opportunities are available to farm women, in both official languages; Child Care — to implement safe, accessible, affordable child care for farm families; Finance — so that salaried farm women be eligible to receive unemployment insurance, maternity leave, and paid professional education. For further information contact: Noreen Johns, Provincial Co-ordinator, Canadian Farm Women's Network, P.O. Box 36, Zelma, Saskatchewan, S0K 4Z0.

Training Ground for Housing Renovation

A Toronto housing co-op has come up with an interesting training/employment scheme: the co-op, in association with the Women in Trades Program at George Brown Community College, plans to hire 15 women to train as housing renovators, first with three months of skills development courses at the College, then through a nine-month work placement at the co-op. Funding is to be provided by the federal Employment and Immigration Canada.

The scheme is a way for the co-op to get some very important renovations done, while providing opportunities for women to learn "non-traditional" skills — in a supportive environment.

Call for Papers

The new feminist journal *Recherches féministes* will be publishing a special issue on women and environments in 1989. They are seeking submissions, in French, on theoretical issues, empirical research or reviewing research, action and policies in various regions or countries.

For further information contact: Denise Piché, Ecole d'architecture, Université Laval, Québec, Qc, Canada, G1K 7P4.

The Canadian Women's Movement Archives have just completed Fem-Direct, an extensive computerized directory of women's groups in Canada. This program allows access by city, province, postal code, or subject and can be used to make one's own disks or mailing labels.

For further information contact: The Canadian Women's Movement Archives/ Archives canadiennes du mouvement des femmes, Box 128, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S7, (416) 597-8865.

The Women and Peace International Conference, March 12-15, 1989 is seeking proposals that relate to peace concerns and development. Conference presentations in a variety of formats are encouraged. Sessions will feature roundtables (informal exchanges of ideas), workshops, and formal papers. Proposals for formal papers and/or other sessions must be submitted by August 15, 1988.

For further information contact: Golie Jansen, Secretary, Conference Planning Committee, School of Social Work, University of Illinois, 1207 W. Oregon St., Urbana, IL 61801, USA.

Publication of the *Urban History Review* has recently been transferred from the Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg to the City of Toronto Archives. The new editor-in-chief is Professor John C. Weaver of McMaster University. He is currently inviting submissions in the areas of: women, children, and households in urban Canada. Contact him at the Department of History, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4L8.

Lesbian Manuscripts

The Women's Press is looking for manuscripts for a second anthology of writing by Lesbians about Lesbian experience. Manuscripts can be fiction, prose, poetry, erotica, non-fiction or experimental.

Send to: Women's Press, Lesbian Manuscript Group, 229 College St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5T 1R4.

Women: Isolation and Bonding: The Ecology of Gender

Kathleen Storrie, editor

Toronto: Methuen, 1987. 209 pp. \$14.95

This collection of essays addresses and examines the social and physical isolation of women and the strategies they have developed to reduce or overcome it. The papers were taken from a part of the proceedings at the Saskatoon Conference on "Women: Social and Physical Isolation" held in 1985 and sponsored by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW).

Rural Women In Latin America: Experiences from Ecuador, Peru and Chile
Isis International, 1987

This second volume of the ISIS International Book Series focusses on the growth of women's organizations in rural Latin America. Histories of the various groups are traced and descriptions of the living conditions of women in Peru, Chile and Ecuador are provided. The book offers a rare insight into the lives and experiences of these women by including numerous testimonies by the women themselves. Also included in the book is a resource list of Third World women's organizations and a list of audiovisual resource material.

Life Spaces: Gender, Household, Employment

Caroline Andrews and Beth Moore Milroy, editors

Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988. 168 pp. \$16.95.

Publication was announced in April of this important collection of essays which focusses on women and their experiences in Canadian urban settings and illustrates the importance of gender in the development of urban areas. In the introduction, the editors develop the broad area of gender relations in urban society and describe how this field of study has evolved in Canada. Three main themes stand out in the book: the changing relationships between women's roles in paid labour and the household; the interconnection between public and private activities; and the way our understanding of these is linked to changing urban milieus.

Contributors Suzanne Mackenzie, Dumaris Rose and Paul Villeneuve, Jeanne M. Wolfe and Grace Strachan, William Michelson, Gerda R. Wekerle, Frank Klodawsky, Denise Piché write on topics such as: Women in Urban Reform; Canadian Women's Housing Cooperatives; Interacting with the Urban Environment; Single-Parent Families; Gender

Sensitive Theory in the Environmental Disciplines; Restructuring of the Labour Force in Montreal, 1971-1981. The concluding chapter by the editors discusses directions for further study and suggests appropriate research methods. *Life Spaces* also includes an annotated bibliography.



New Visions: the Report of the Atlantic Women and Housing Conference, April 2-5, 1987

The report details the issues raised and the solutions proposed by the 130 participants, who represented all groups and organizations involved in the housing question in Atlantic Canada.

New Visions is available for \$6 from Atlantic Women and Housing Conference, c/o Johanna Oosterveld, 2165 Gottingen Street, Halifax, NS B3K 3B5. Also available: *Architecture and Women* (23 pp., \$4), a graduate project by a participant in the conference. Make cheques payable to the Atlantic Women and Housing Conference.

Women In Development

The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) has produced an 8-page booklet entitled, *Selected Guidelines and Checklists for Women in Development*. This supplement to Issue No. 8 of INSTRAW NEWS will aid planners and women's monitoring groups in understanding and responding to how projects will affect women and men differently. The Guidelines synthesize broad policy mandates concerning women while the Checklists act as safeguards to ensure that women's needs are considered during every aspect of a project. For further information contact: INSTRAW, P.O. Box 21747, Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic.

Women In Housing: A Working Party Report

Women In Housing Working Party Voluntary Housing 19(5) May 1987

Housing issues that affect women are discussed in this series of articles whose topics include: Housing allocation to women by housing associations; the specifically female aspects of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless; the discriminatory attitude towards women in self build schemes; homelessness among women; the involvement of women in housing design by the Matrix Feminist Design Cooperative; the need for facilities other than communal refuges for the victims of wife battering; and the work of a women's housing cooperative.

Geography of Gender in the Third World

Janet H. Momson & Janet Townsend
New York: State University of New York Press, 1987. 424 pp.

This collection of 20 papers, gathered from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia focusses on the regional construction of gender in the Third World and the role of gender divisions in the development process. This book is also the first text in which stories by both third and first world women are included. *Geography of Gender in the Third World* is augmented by a detailed list of suggestions for further reading.

Women in the Administrative Revolution: The Feminization of Clerical Work

Graham S. Lowe

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987. 234 pp. \$16.95

This book examines the transformation of clerical work from a male-dominated occupation in the 19th century to the leading female occupation of today. No other major occupation has shifted so dramatically in its gender composition and the study focusses on the origins and development of this administrative revolution.

Lowe concentrates primarily on the inter-war period in Canada but makes strategic comparisons with both Great Britain and the United States, identifying key international similarities in the growth of the modern office to illustrate how clerical feminization is linked to the broader trends of capitalist development. Also examined are the growth of clerical occupations in the Canadian labour force between 1981 and 1971, the development of corporate capitalism in Canada, and the relationship between the labour process and gender and class.

Women in the Administrative Revolution is augmented by figures and tables and includes Lowe's extensive notes on reference sources.

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