

# Broadside

Volume One, Number Ten

September 1980

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## Jamaican Fare Well?



Mike Harker

by Susan G. Cole

A couple of years ago five Jamaican women living in Canada faced deportation — they were declared illegal immigrants because they had not acknowledged to immigration officials the existence of dependent children. The women claimed the officials had originally suggested they lie, at a time when immigration policy encouraged the entry of Jamaicans into the county. The policy was changed and these women were caught in the crunch.

Very few of us, from reading the brief newspaper reports, had any idea what situation the women had left behind them in Jamaica or what they and their children would have to face on returning.

Until perhaps five years ago, what many of us knew about the island of Jamaica was that it was one of many options for a tropical holiday. An observer of world politics would have known that Jamaica's government, as of 1972, was a vague variation on socialism. Connoisseurs of rock and roll would know Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, reggae and the Rasta's affection for cannabis. But these are slim tidbits of information that gloss the real situation in Jamaica.

It is important to flesh out such skeletal knowledge, recognizing that the Jamaican community is burgeoning in Canada and that women like those who face the constant threat of deportation deserve more than lip-service for their cause. We should learn what is going on in the island. Stephanie Martin has provided *Broadside* with a capsule history of the island as a means of putting Jamaica's current difficulties in context, and has supplemented the facts, many of the devastating (from acts of genocide committed 500 years ago, to Jamaica's 1980 murder rate of 4 a day), with a personal assessment of Jamaica's situation at this point.

Jamaica's image as a holiday haven is changing with the steady reports of violence on the island. It turns out that Michael Manley's version of Democratic Socialism is looking more and more like a dismal failure as his prime ministership endures continuous crises. The Rasta's vision, perceived by North Americans as a radical one, is but another component of Jamaica's fiercely sexist culture. Those women battling to retain the right to stay in Canada had not declared their children to immigration officials, children who, if left in Jamaica, would have no future.

And if rumours that Manley has left Jamaica as the result of a CIA-backed right wing coup are true, the situation will be even worse.

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Stephanie Martin



# Pressing Need

In July 1980 *Upstream*, our sister newspaper from Ottawa, produced a special final issue. In it were described some of the factors which led to its decision to cease publication. There was an analysis of problems faced by the feminist press which we recommend every active feminist get hold of (it's free) and read carefully. We could all profit by the experience and the analysis the issue provides.

By its very nature, a political newspaper cannot be distant from the women who read it, or from the collective endeavours through which its readers express their political ideas. We are thus very acutely conscious of the way in which activist groups tend towards 'apartness' and self-involvement to the detriment of communication, cooperation and understanding. A prime symptom of the problem is the lack of ap-

munication, political education and mutuality.

No one has a monopoly on anything to do with women or feminism. For example, *Broadside* believes that rape and the fight against it are not just the business of women involved with the National Association of Sexual Assault Centres. Thus we take issue with the views expressed by members of Vancouver Rape Relief (in an open letter published in July and a subsequent letter to the *Broadside* collective) on the advisability of keeping all mention of the tactic of 'confrontation' out of the press.

There are good reasons to develop alternatives to the legal process for handling rape cases. Let's hear what those reasons are; let's share the thinking behind those alternatives. It is one of the jobs of a feminist press to cover as many ongoing discussions on such issues as possible. This is independent of total consensus and agreement on the matter among women involved in Rape Relief work. No one has the option of excluding others from all information although it might not be expedient or necessary to go into details. That's what editorial judgement is about and why trust in the feminist press is a must. If papers like *Upstream*, *Kinesis*, and *Broadside* are treated no differently from the mainstream press, then what the hell are we breaking our asses for!

A different but also sorely inadequate view of the role of *Broadside* as a feminist newspaper was evident in a letter from the Feminist Film Festival Collective which appeared in our July issue (Vol. 1, no. 9). In that letter the FFFC took exception to a review of the festival by Barbara Martineau, our regular film critic. We will leave it to her to answer specific objections to content, but *Broadside* feels obliged to respond to comments on our editorial policy regarding coverage of feminist versus mainstream cultural events.

Like it or not, *All that Jazz* and popular, mass culture generally, is what millions of women throughout the country are exposed to each and every day. Only a tiny minority have the opportunity of attending such events as the Feminist Film Festival. Of course *Broadside* covers such feminist events. The Feminist Film Festival received ample space, both in Martineau's review and in a previous report by one of the FFF collective.

However, *Broadside* is not the newsletter of the women's community in Toronto. One of its major tasks is to provide a feminist perspective on the world around us. That means a perspective on whatever is on TV or at the neighbourhood theatre.

Letters such as those mentioned above help us see where misunderstandings arise and provide an opportunity to explain what we conceive to be *Broadside's* role. We do not expect that everyone will agree with us. There is nothing unfeminist about an honest difference of opinion. Developing feminist perspectives and methods of handling differences is an ongoing process, a process in which we should all play a part.

Like *Upstream*, *Broadside* is keenly interested in eliciting response to what we publish and how we do it. We need and want to hear from our readers, pro and con. We welcome comments, suggestions, questions and criticism. Much of what we have received by way of criticism so far has involved differences in perception of the role of the feminist press generally and *Broadside* specifically. We certainly take part of the responsibility. Undoubtedly some of that is due to our lack of clarity in the matter.

□The Broadside Collective

## UPSTREAM

Volume 4, No. 5

Final Issue

July 1980

### Upstream says good-bye

Members of the *Upstream* collective are very hard on themselves (too hard, in our opinion) and pretty astute about the problems common to activist feminist collectives, such as relationships within a group (i.e. our favorite whipping-girl, "the collective process"). *Upstream* also raises issues of relationships between women's groups: organizations, services, actions, etc. This is a long neglected and much misunderstood area of very special interest to those of us who have chosen to work in the feminist press.

preciation for the potential offered by the feminist press and a lack of understanding of its role.

One would expect that feminists (individuals and groups) would be breaking down our newspapers' doors in an effort to let their sister feminists know what they are attempting to do, how and why. Instead, the most we get from political feminists are notices of meetings or demonstrations and Press Releases designed for the mainstream press.

Surely it is the absolute responsibility of every feminist collective, every service or ad hoc committee to let the rest of us know the reason for their existence, what their goals are and something of the process which brought them to this point. If they contemplate any public action in the name of women or of the movement, then other women have a right to know about it. The issue is not approval — feminism has no central committee to rule on the acceptability of women's activities — the issue is com-

## Broadside

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The Broadside Collective does not necessarily share the views contained in any article, even if the by-line belongs to a collective member. Views of the Collective are expressed only in editorials, and essays signed by the Collective.

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## LETTERS

### Broadside:

There was a time, a few years ago, when I fell in love — with a city. I was newly-appointed co-ordinator of the Feminist News Service and I was responsible for relegating the task of the translation of the first news packet to some Québécois feminists. In the course of time I spent in Montreal expediting the task I became very aware of the political differences between me and my sisters in Québec — and very surprised at our similarities.

I lived for a time on cheesecake, mineral water and conversation — in French. And as much as I like the former, it was the conversation of the women I associated with that left the strongest impression.

They were angry, they were excited and they were organized in a way I have yet to see in English Canada. Most of them directly experienced the War Measures Act. Those that hadn't ended up in jail during that time knew someone who had. There was pride in their political associations and a hope for the future. Lévesque was viewed with some acceptance — both the feminist community and Lévesque wanted their vision of a free Québec, but the differences of vision had not yet entered the picture.

In the course of the translation for FNS (which ironically and befittingly never was published) I was introduced to a number of women in the feminist community in Montréal who totally changed any preconceptions I may have had about the political expertise of Québec feminists. I met some of the women who put out *Québécois Deboutte*, a periodical publication which suspended publication in 1975. They were re-

organizing and planning to put more of their energy into political organization and book and pamphlet publication.

After having believed in self-determination for most of my life I finally came face to face with what it really meant — as an outsider. As an English Canadian I realized that if my sisters in Québec achieved their dream it would inadvertently affect mine. The economic repercussions of Québec seceding from Canada would undoubtedly have a lasting detrimental effect on English Canada, especially Ontario which for years has been profiting from an economic policy with Québec that has been to Québec's detriment.

Our view we seem to have of Québec is the traditional view that Québécoises are children — happy, mad-cap people whose chief role in Canada is to teach all of us how to acquire the joie de vivre. And in Québec, the traditional role of the church and state has been to keep the people, especially the women, in the nursery.

The women of *Québécois Deboutte* were battling for more extensive daycare facilities, the right of every woman to have freedom of choice in the case of abortion and the right of women to be able to participate equally with men in the labour force — just as we were in English Canada.

But there were differences. I became aware that, even if I lived in Montréal, learned the language, continued to eat the superlative food, and participate in women's groups there, I could never be a Québécoise — a fact which caused a rude awakening to the only person in her high

school who had voted against the War Measures Act. Even though I was considered a radical feminist, in the eyes of Québec I was a liberal.

As an English Canadian I was part of the power elite that refused to revoke the War Measures Act, diverted an unnecessary amount of Québec tax money to Ottawa and tried to keep things peaceful in the "nursery".

I guess the true test of politics is to be placed in a position where you are the passive receptor of your own theories. That's how I felt in Montreal. And that's when I became aware of a word we too often forget in our political discussions — sacrifice. I guess I decided that year in Montreal that political sacrifices are necessary. As feminists we may belong to the same political family, but we do not all hold the same amount of power.

It becomes necessary, at times, to give up the power we have. In the case of Québec as English Canadians we may have to, and it may not be voluntary. But there's a funny thing about power that doesn't fit into any closed economic theory. When you relinquish it — to a just cause — in the long run the effect is not detrimental.

At least that's what I want to believe. I'm proud of my friends in Québec. I'm not saying they won't make mistakes, but I'm quite sure they know what they need and how they're going to get it.

Kate Middleton  
Toronto

# Needing Press

Just before *Broadside* went on holiday for the summer, representatives from the collective attended a Feminist Print Media Conference in Ottawa. The conference, held June 26-29, was organized by women from Ottawa's feminist paper, *Upstream*, and was funded by the Secretary of State. The 40 or so women present came from all regions of Canada and were involved in feminist print media ranging from local or regional newspapers such as *The Optimist* from Whitehorse and *Northern Woman* from Thunder Bay, to feminist literary magazines such as *Room of One's Own* and *Fireweed*, to magazines such as *La Vie en Rose* from Montréal and *Healthsharing* from Toronto.

Workshops and discussion groups focused on the central issues of distribution, advertising, editorial policy, lay-out and design, information-sharing, the collective process, investigative reporting, and — the most troublesome common issue — funding. A number of excellent informal events were held as well which enabled delegates to recuperate from conference overkill.

It was stimulating and informative to meet with other women involved in feminist publishing, since so often, especially in isolated rural communities, we operate with no money, a small readership, and little or at best infrequent contact with other feminists. On that level, certainly, the conference was a success. Good contacts were made and efforts to share information were renewed.

But there was another particularly sobering aspect of this conference which demonstrated the perilousness of even attempting to create and maintain an alternative, feminist press. Of the newspapers and magazines represented, no less than three of



the oldest and best had just ceased publication. They included *Upstream* itself, *Branching Out*, and *Ontario Status of Women News*. We have also heard that the *Northern Woman* journal has temporarily ceased publishing while reorganizing its collective. Although *Upstream* folded in part because of collective exhaustion, it too has been subject to the besetting difficulty of funding, lack of which is the principal cause for the folding of the other two magazines.

It is even more bitterly ironic that coincidentally with the announcement of these publications' demise, a so-called 'feminist' newspaper published at Ryerson Institute, *Breakthrough*, was being widely distributed in Toronto and touted in an article in the *Toronto Sun* as the first feminist newspaper anywhere. The arrogance of this claim is enraging. (See *Media Watch*, page 7).

To succeed, any political or social movement must establish its own means of communication in order to promote desired change. Feminism must therefore have its own press. We cannot afford the loss of *Upstream*, *Branching Out*, and *Status of Women News*. Of course not every feminist publication can survive, of course energy and resources will never be adequate, of course it's an uphill battle. There are forces ranged against us and even within that constantly resist our efforts to speak our common language and to alter the conditions in which we live. We must continue the dialogue among ourselves, as we did at the Feminist Print Media Conference, we must be vigilant against co-option of our own press, and we must do everything possible to ensure that our own voice is heard. No one else can or will do it for us.

The Broadside Collective

**Broadside:**

Since I am by birth both female and Jewish, I feel a strong urge to respond to the articles on feminism and religion. I, personally, am in total opposition to institutionalized religion as it stands today. To work and struggle as a feminist within religion to me means accepting the hierarchal structure in order to effectively lobby. Wanting to be a priest/minister/rabbi implies a power or control position that one is ascribing to. I can see feminist anarchy in religion as the only effective way to obtain true 'spirituality' for all people, particularly women. Our struggle for token female leaders in religion perturbs me since the church/synagogue continues to dictate and define the 'terms' of marriage, divorce, birth control, sin, abortion, sexuality and, to my way of thinking, my dignity.

When in Judaism menstruation is considered 'unclean' and men take great pains not to touch women — when men pray and thank god they were not born women; when major focuses in families of reform, conservative and orthodox Jewish faiths revolve around the next wedding or bar-mitzvah (for boys); when women continue to be expected to wear dresses and 'not dress like men'; when the population of Jews in Toronto in ten years is to be predominately Orthodox; when the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is referred to as 'he,' when women's greatest skills in the religion are still to cook, bear children, have sisterhoods to raise money and contribute in volunteer social work; when the 'brotherhood' still makes fundamental synagogue decisions — then I withdraw.

I do not understand why accepting some Christian/Jewish/Islamic/Hindu/Buddhist philosophy requires institutionalized involvement and ceremony. Ordaining a pope

is the same pomp and ceremony as crowning a queen. If you covet a religious philosophy, implement it in your life, don't run to a god/Jesus/monolithic structure to give you approval.

To me the whole ceremony of Jewish religion whether it is led by a male or female rabbi is passive, dictatorial and controlled. Religion teaches you to give up power and to look up to powerful others in the religious community and to invisible deities. I wish to take the power back. As a feminist, I intend to keep my power, to share it in my community and also to share the power of others.

My spirituality is derived from my sense of self and the world around me. Bernadette, I'm sorry you find the feminists you like the best are "Christian feminists" (Bernadette Maxwell, 'Faith of our Fathers' Vol. I. no. 9). To me that is just another discriminatory tactic — church bound — to separate you from me. I hope all feminists of religion realize the controlling factors implicit to any religious/political/social institution. No token appointments or individual writer or article will change the misogynist attitudes inherent in all patriarchal religions. I look to women to create new spiritual alternatives, not to battle the old bastions into change.

Judy Stanleigh  
Toronto

**Broadside:**

This is a letter to the Collective asking some questions of you.

Was the original graphic decision at *Broadside* to use so much "white space"? It is either your particular style or you just

don't have enough copy to fill the paper. First of all, let me say that I do believe in "white space" as a graphic technique. But not that much! The paper has looked empty graphically. And usually it has looked empty editorially speaking, as well.

Has the philosophy of *Broadside* changed or are people too busy to make sure that it is still being followed? What happened to a feminist perspective on everything that is not normally called a "feminist issue"? I don't see so much of that. Are that many people really interested in religion? Granted goddess worship and discrimination of women in organized religion are topics necessary to discuss but the impact seemed a bit heavy in contrast to other matters to be written about.

When will you be initiating more "community meetings" and how many do you intend to convene?

How much of a national paper have you become, in terms of subscriptions?

One other important question to me (particularly as an archivist): why is there no publication date on the front cover. This kind of thing is more important that you think.

Pat Leslie,  
Toronto

(From the collective: Thanks for your questions; we hope other readers have more. We will be putting out a publication date on the cover from now on. About 10% of our readers live outside Ontario, many of them in BC. We will be holding more community meetings, in late fall and spring, which we'll announce in the paper. It was our decision to try to use "white space" creatively. As for your other questions, we hope you'll continue to read *Broadside* with critical interest for the answers.)



Since women first obtained the right to vote and to run for office, the number of women seeking federal office rose from four in 1921 to 183 in 1980. But the number of women who won seats in those 59 years rose only from one to 14. The dismal prognosis is that, at this rate, we will need another 842 years to achieve equal representation at the federal level.

Under our democratic system, elected representatives, regardless of their gender, are responsible to all their constituents. Yet the record shows that they have regularly failed to respond in an adequate fashion to those concerns which determine the lives of more than half of those they are elected to serve.

Women's full participation in the political arena will bring a new perspective and a new direction to government in general.

The FEMINIST PARTY OF CANADA PARTI FEMINISTE DU CANADA is the political voice of our time. If you wish to participate in the formation of this national party, please complete the following and return it to our address:

I would like to purchase a membership in the Feminist Party of Canada at \$5.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
Seniors, students, single parents, welfare or disabled at \$1.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to help organize (or meet with) FPC-PFC members in your area? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to be on our Mailing List? If so, please send \$2.00 to cover postage. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Lesbians in Toronto

# The Invisible Community

by Val Edwards

In May 1979, 500 lesbians from across Canada gathered in Toronto for a three-day conference with high hopes of laying down the groundwork for a Canadian lesbian movement. And just over a year ago a couple of hundred women from Toronto alone made the 400-mile trek to the Michigan Women's Music Festival, to live for four short days in an exclusively women's world.

Today there is no lesbian movement; this August, only a few dozen Toronto women bothered going to Michigan. This spring saw the demise of 342 Jarvis Street — for years the only lesbian centre in Canada. The Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT), which used Jarvis St. as its home base, is an organization in name only. And the LOOT newsletter, once the crucial communication organ of the lesbian community, publishes its last issue in September.

The lesbian community. It feels kind of strange saying "lesbian community", though it never used to. What is a community anyway? The Inuits are certainly a community; the Dutch Reform Christians possibly as well, but university professors, even though they think of themselves as members of the academic community, certainly aren't. Yet most of us would agree that something called a lesbian community exists. Which reminds me of the judge who once refused to venture a definition of obscenity, but simply stated, "I know it when I see it." Likewise a community lesbian: we recognize one when we meet her, but damned if we know exactly what it is that she has in common with the rest of us.

I suppose I *could* attempt a definition of the lesbian community, but such efforts are usually suicidal. However, at the risk of being grossly simplistic, I can isolate three attitudes that we all share:

1. *Although we are homosexuals, we consider ourselves different, in more than a physical sense, from gay men.* Actually, we don't call ourselves "gay" or "homosexual" at all, but rather "lesbian." However, consensus ends here. At one end of the spectrum there are lesbians who think gay men are just like any other men, except worse because they'd rather fuck men (and boys) than other women. At the other end there are lesbians who work very closely with gay men in political organizations.

2. *We all identify ourselves as feminists.* This is a tricky proposition — after all, there are feminists and there are feminists. Some of us think all feminists are lesbians, but just don't know it yet. Others think that lesbianism is what two women do in bed together and that feminists should expend their mental energy contemplating the higher things in life. And then there are the leftie feminists, and of course, the dykes who refuse to work in feminist groups or write for feminist publications because they are supposedly full of closeted lesbians.

3. *We think of ourselves as more enlightened and well-rounded human beings than those lesbians who call themselves "gay" and who don't give two rips about feminism, ie. the bar dykes.* Most community lesbians don't have anything to do with the bar scene, and those of us who do think that with enough exposure to our profound political insights and liberating alternative lifestyles, the bar dykes will throw off their wide belts, polyester knits and disco music and start listening to Theresa Trull, or better yet, Holly Near.

So there you have our bottom line: we are lesbian-feminists, a catch-all phrase which, as you can see, says very little about what we all actually have in common, and which begs the question of whether "community" is an appropriate word to use in describing ourselves collectively. A distinction must be drawn between a group of people who are attracted to one another by virtue of common interests, and a group in which the

contributions of its members produces a whole greater than the sum of its individual parts. The distinction can be seen clearly in the lesbian context. Have we found, or can we find, that special *something* that makes us truly different from homosexual men and heterosexual women, that aspect of our lesbianism that transcends us as individuals? Have we anything to say to the world as lesbians qua lesbians, rather than as gay liberationists or feminists? Or are we simply a maze of intersecting social circles, void of any real political or cultural content? What forums have we developed to express our ideas, and what mechanisms to fulfill our emotional needs?

For months I've been telling anyone who would listen that there is a malaise in the community, but it wasn't until 342 Jarvis St. closed its doors without a whimper, let alone a bang, that I started thinking about our problems in earnest. I considered writing an article for *Broadside* entitled "The Strange Death of Toronto's Lesbian Community", but changed my mind. I'm not at all sure the community is dead; I'm even less sure that it has ever really existed as a community. And yet there is no doubt that something has happened, that we've changed. The closing of 342 Jarvis St. is more than the end of a chapter in our history. In allowing the centre to fold, lesbian-feminists have made a cogent statement. In a word, we've given up the ghost.

What has changed is this. Two or three years ago, we were trying to pull together our fragmented backgrounds and politics into a cohesive unit; we were struggling to define lesbian-feminism, and to develop an appropriate lifestyle to express our politics. And even though political factionalism appeared stronger than it is today, we spent a good deal of energy trying to overcome our differences. The words "politically correct" and "politically incorrect" reared their ugly heads, and have since been sent back to the intellectual cesspool from which they emerged. But we were trying, damn it, and we fueled our optimism with a sporadic flirtation with lesbian separatism.

Remember the separatists? At the time the women who wanted to purge their lives of any contact with men were regarded as members of the lunatic fringe of the community, with only Wages Due Lesbians to keep them company. However, in retro-

spect, I think we've done them a disservice. The community peaked, if peak it was, when the separatists were the most visible and most vocal. Our greatest moments were surely the women-only coffeehouses, brunches and dances, where we felt the thrill of making the lesbian house we created come alive, or of taking over a church hall and making it our *own*, if only for a night. And of course, there was the Michigan Women's Music Festival, the grand culmination of a year's frustrated dream for a women's world: "Sisterhood" was more than a meaningless cliché.

Unfortunately, in the final analysis we were capable of little more than flirting, for to do anything more than flirt is to make a quantum leap into a radically different world. We each have different reasons for not taking the leap. Mine are straightforward. I like sitting in front of the TV with a beer to watch hockey. I get off on mainstream politics — I love to rant and rave about Peter Loughhead, the RCMP, Margaret Thatcher and the Ayatollah. I even prefer white sugar in my coffee. I enjoy living in Toronto, with all its faults, because (much as I hate to admit it) my parents succeeded in raising a daughter who fits into this society more than she sticks out.

Sure there are lots of things that anger me. Hardly a day goes by when I don't want to beat some loudmouth jerk on the street into a quivering pulp. But the sad truth remains: I would rather live in the straight, patriarchal world, and try to make a few changes to make my life easier, than to repudiate a lifestyle and system of values which are part of me. I don't want to spend my winters huddling by a woodstove hunched over a bowl of granola.

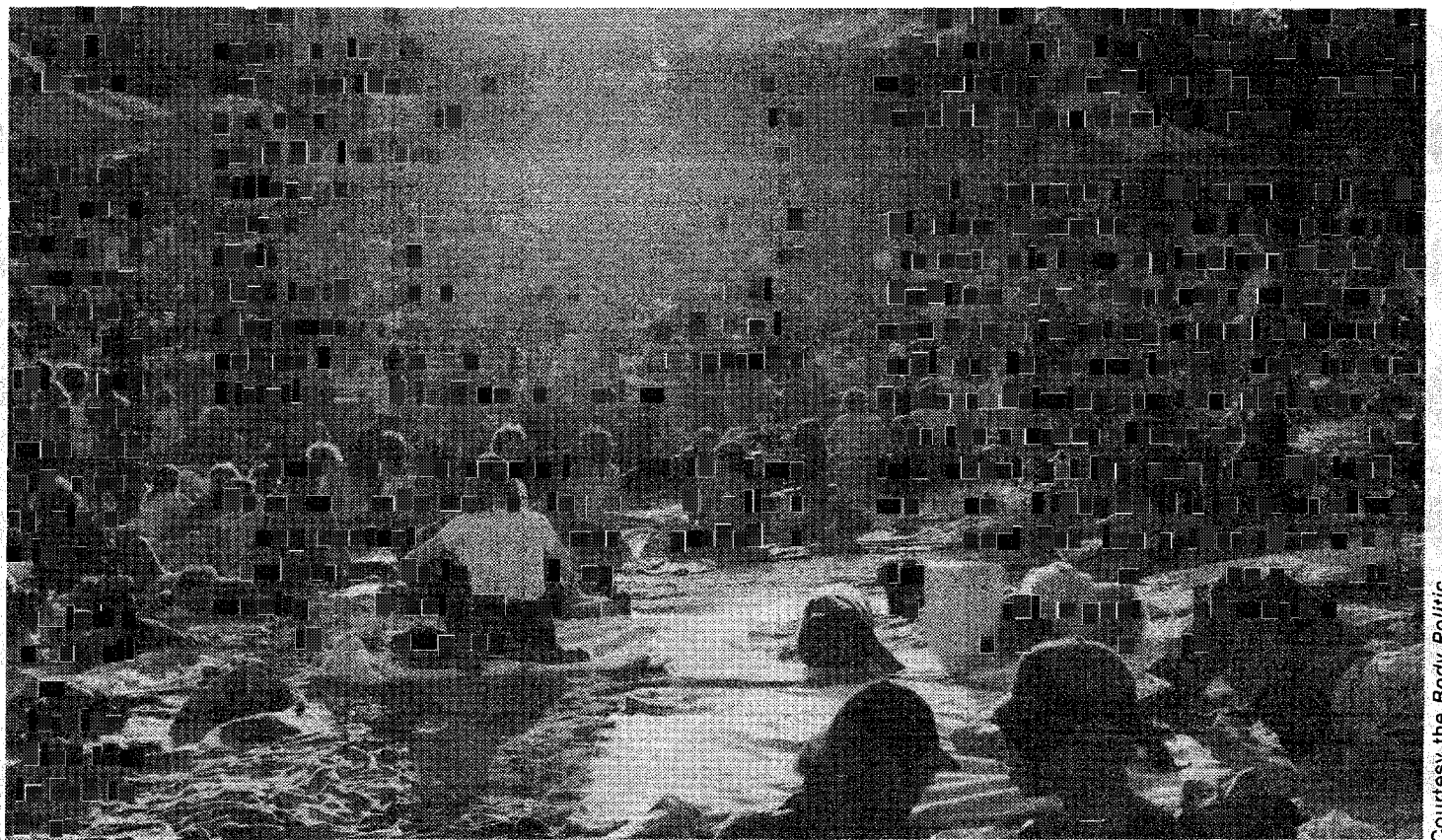
Not everyone in the community shares this view, however. What for me is a stifling alternative is to many lesbians the only worthwhile option. There are some women who would love to set up a rural community of lesbians, for example, but are discouraged by overwhelming practical obstacles. Whatever the reasons, fewer and fewer lesbians talk about getting away to the land anymore, and if they do it is in terms of making a personal decision rather than a cultural statement. And women-only events promoting lesbian poetry and music are rapidly disappearing in Toronto.

As the drive to develop a distinct lesbian culture dissipates, so too does our only real hope of creating something that can be properly called a community. For without separatism, however loosely we define it, there is no such thing as lesbian politics — our only hope of attaining a powerful common denominator — for the simple reason that there are no purely lesbian issues. Our efforts to build an autonomous lesbian movement have centred, up until now, on isolating and developing a lesbian cause. But the cause is a myth. Even custody rights for lesbian mothers — our big apple pie issue — can be analyzed completely in terms of the oppression of women on the one hand, and the oppression of gays of the other.

A while ago I asked what sorts of forums or mechanisms have we developed, as lesbians, to express our political ideas and or emotional and cultural needs. In the past, we have had identifiable forums whose failure demonstrates the absence of a distinct political/cultural lesbian identity in Toronto. The LOOT Newsletter is a case in point. In January of 1978, I took charge of the newsletter, a two to three page monthly publication that I typed and ran off on a Gestetner. By the summertime I got bored with the old format, and decided that if the newsletter was enlarged, typeset and printed, more lesbians would be willing to write for it. Some of the women I knew at LOOT were among the most articulate and argumentative I have ever met — I thought they'd jump at the chance to see their opinions in print. Not so. I found it virtually impossible to persuade lesbians to contribute meaty political articles to the newsletter.

At first I attributed my failure to make the LOOT newsletter a credible publication to closetry. It wasn't until I attended the Bi-national Lesbian Conference the following spring that it occurred to me that our problems run much deeper. The three-day conference (closed to the media) should have provided the perfect context for the development of an autonomous lesbian movement. Although the conference was a well-organized social masterpiece, it was a disaster from a political perspective.

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Women at last year's Michigan Women's Music Festival.

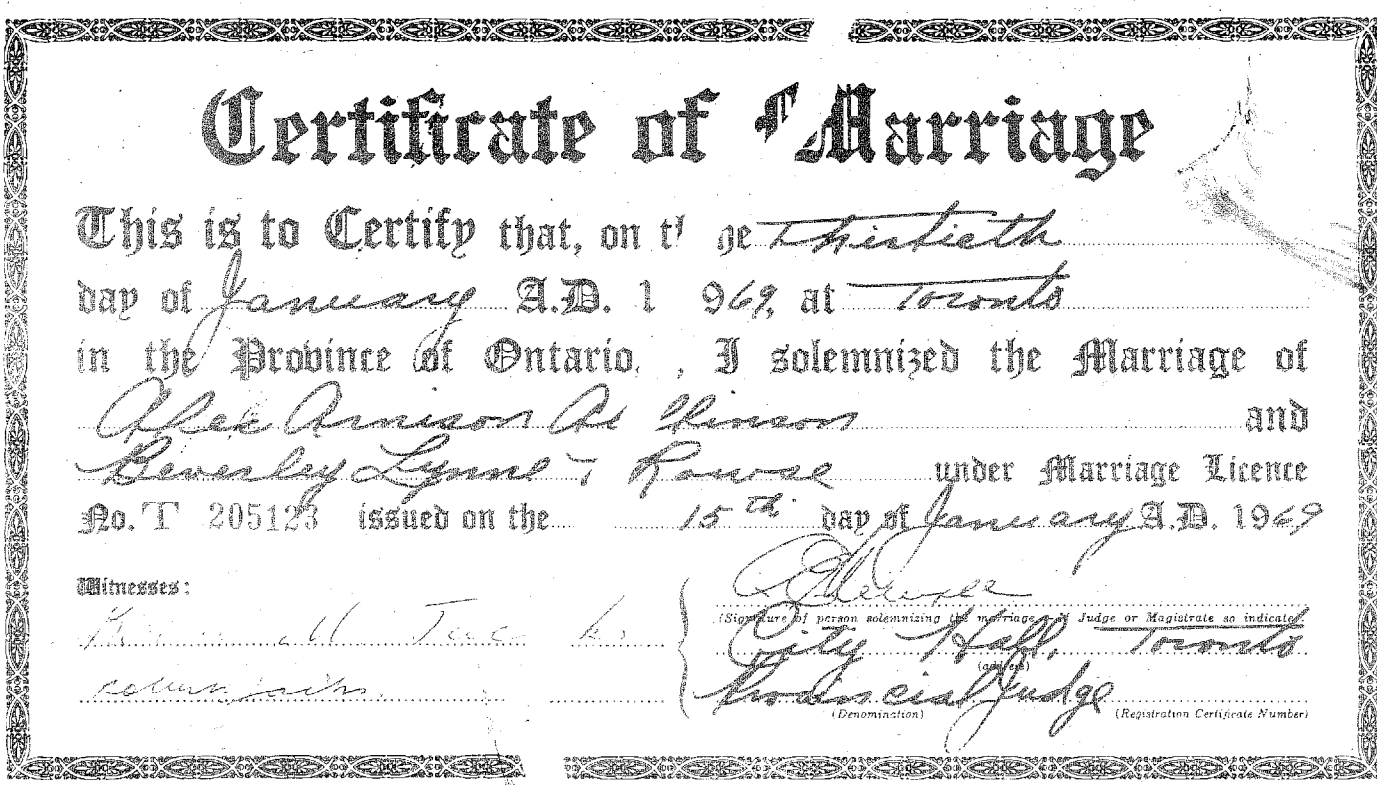
# Marriage Contracts: make them and break them

by Cynthia Hastings Zinck

Marriage is a legal as well as economic and social institution. However, much of the law regarding the marital relationship concerns the process of becoming married or the problem of dissolving an unsuccessful relationship. There is a general attitude that the working of a functioning relationship should be left to the parties involved. This has meant that there is remarkably little current law regarding the working of the marital relationship. The law that exists generally has arisen out of the desire to protect others from the marital unit.

Women no longer suffer specific legal handicaps as the result of marriage. Married women are free to seek employment and to enter all legal contracts as though they were single. However, social attitudes still penalize married women by refusing to take them seriously either as reliable employees or as financially sound individuals. Women have been reluctant to complain, a fact which has meant that their problems have received much less attention than those of other groups suffering from discrimination. Nevertheless, the law prevents discrimination on the basis of both sex and marital status and complaints should be registered promptly with the Human Rights Commission.

One problem facing all married women is the demand by credit companies to know marital status and the income level and credit rating of spouses. While this may at first glance seem blatant discrimination, there is a legal aspect which makes this type of question more understandable, if not more palatable. Married spouses are legally responsible for each other's debts for 'necessaries.' This is the term used to describe vital goods such as food, shelter, and clothing. However, an absolute standard of necessity has not been set, so the courts



have interpreted it with respect to the ordinary standard of living of the couple involved. Certainly almost all food and basic furniture would be considered necessary, and even some items which one might consider to be luxuries such as a television set or a car. If the couple have a high income and do a great deal of socializing, expensive clothing might be considered necessary. What the company extending

credit is attempting to determine is, if in the event of the borrower being unable to pay, his or her spouse has the financial resources to be held liable. In other words, the spouse becomes an involuntary co-signer for necessities. A factor probably not yet taken into account in our sexist society is a woman's financial responsibility for her family. When a man borrows, the creditor examines his ability to support his

dependents. It has not yet been widely recognized that a woman is also responsible for her dependents. Where the item being purchased is clearly a luxury, such as a boat or airplane, the person seeking credit should protest at being requested to give information about a spouse since the spouse could not be held liable.

• continued page 13

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Hundreds of women showed up at the dance and banquet; fewer, though still a substantial number, turned out for the various workshops. But the plenary sessions, which were designed for the exchange of political ideas and suggestions for future action, generated almost no interest. At the poorly attended final plenary we wasted a good hour talking about the arrest of a conference organizer for a minor liquor violation the evening before. Then someone suggested that we could keep the Body Politic in line by demanding editorial control of four pages of the newspaper, a proposal which, mercifully, we abandoned. We resolved instead to publish our own lesbian newsmagazine which has taken a year and a half to see the light of day. And finally le coup de grace: the conference decided it was time to prepare a Lesbian Bill of Rights.

No one challenged that resolution, possibly out of fear of being struck dead by lightning for uttering a heresy. However, if we had looked more closely at what rights we felt required protection we might have concluded months ago that Canada's autonomous lesbian movement is little more than a paper tiger. Look, for example, at the absence of leadership within the movement. For a long time we were immensely proud that, as feminists committed to collective action, we had no need for leaders. We were indulging ourselves in a wild fantasy. Leaders don't lead in a vacuum; rather they help give shape and direction to a group of people who hold a particular set of beliefs, who have something they want to do or say but don't know quite how to go about it. A movement without leadership is possible only if one can also have a movement without issues or ideas.

So where does this leave the lesbian community? We have failed to develop a dis-

tinct cultural identity: granted these things take time, but if we continue to direct our energy elsewhere it will take forever. We have also failed to achieve political unity, to mould gay liberation and feminism into a creative synthesis that would help pull divergent political factions into a community. Such a synthesis is not conceptually impossible, so long as it is based on something other than the notion of a lesbian cause. Whether we can actually find the synthesis, given the precarious existence of the gay and feminist movements is, of course, an entirely different issue.

There are no quick answers, and there may be no answers at all as long as we refuse to discuss the deteriorating condition of the community honestly. Rather, we keep looking for feeble excuses. Take the closing of 342 Jarvis St. Conventional wisdom holds that the debut of the Fly-By-Night, a women's bar, signalled death for the only lesbian space in Toronto. This is an utter crock of shit. Jarvis St. was dying before the Fly-By-Night came along. And it died for the same reason the LOOT newsletter died. Toronto's lesbian community has no political or cultural character to express, and our emotional needs are being served adequately by a web of interlocking social circles. If the Fly-By-Night had actually attempted to replace 342 Jarvis St. it too would have folded. The vast majority of the bar's clientele consists of lesbians who are not feminists — the Fly-By-Night receives virtually no support from the community at large.

Another excuse that is sometimes aired is the old 'lesbians are poor' argument. Simply put, the argument states that lesbians don't have the money to support lesbian services, and that as a community, we can't afford to bring speakers or performers to Toronto. Another crock. Some women who make less than \$10,000 a year manage to spend a quarter of their dispo-

sable income on clothes. Lesbians do have money — not much, mind you, but certainly enough to support a community if we wanted one. The theory also states, in its more refined form, that lesbians are too poor to come out, which is why we are weak as a movement. This certainly has not been the experience in gay liberation. Generally speaking, the higher paying and more prestigious the job, the greater the pressure to remain closeted.

And last, but not least, there's the "burn-out" approach — everybody's favourite. Burn-out means that currently we are in a lull, that we expended too much energy too quickly and now we need time to catch a second wind. It's my guess that many of the women who were active in LOOT two years ago, for example, have long since caught their second wind and moved on to other things. We have energy for take-back-the-night marches, for anti-nuke demonstrations, for the Gay Community Appeal, and energy to pursue our own interests and careers more enthusiastically. The truth of the matter is that people will fight as long as they believe there is something worth fighting for: a vibrant lesbian community seems to be at the bottom of everyone's list of priorities.

Why the reluctance to call a spade a spade? One reason is that on the surface we still look like a community. Most of us have successfully established individual support bases among our friends. And, unlike women who are just coming out, we have the distinct advantage of having access to a whole network of other community lesbians with relatively little effort. One thing that most communities have, however, that we don't have, is a built-in means of perpetuating themselves as a community, ie. procreation. This poses a problem for gay communities: even to the extent that we do have children, there are no guarantees that they will grow up gay. For us, visibility and outreach are the essential tools. There

will always be lesbians. There will always be a group of lesbians if we know how to find each other, and some of these groups will be more like communities than others.

As long as we remain somewhat visible we actually don't have to do much outreach — women have done an admirable job sniffing us out and tracking us down. But I fear that with the failure of our forums to survive we are becoming less visible with each passing month: LOOT is basically inactive but the counselling collective still operates. As the community disintegrates, the service has less to offer. When asked, "How do I meet lesbians?", a woman will be given the names of a couple of bars. 342 Jarvis St. wasn't an ideal environment to come out in, but it was vastly superior to the bar scene, particularly for politically conscious lesbians.

In the short run, and as individuals, we have little to lose by being invisible. The community, on the other hand, suffers enormously as we condemn the women who have yet to come out to a lonely and fruitless search for their support bases. And in the long run we, too, will suffer. Our social orbits, like those that satellites travel in, will eventually fail; the points of intersection will become fewer. The thought of being sick at eighty terrifies me. With no community, and friends who may not be willing, let alone able, to take care of me, I wonder who will keep me from rotting to death in a nursing home.

Where do we take it from here? Lesbian-feminists really have nothing in common. We are brought together by what we don't have in common with gay men and heterosexual men and women. The community, such as it is, is based on a negativity, and the key to its survival, if only in its current

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# MOVEMENT MATTERS

## TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

On August 5, over 200 women marched in Toronto's second Take Back The Night in co-ordination with the international marches held on August 2nd in various cities across Canada, US, and Europe.

It was with a great deal of satisfaction that the organizing Committee made the decision to delay the Toronto event until Tuesday, August 5th. The power of solidarity in our action and the need to convey the same impression to those participating was deeply felt. But it proved to be totally impractical. There were too few of us and too little time to organize and publicize the event for August 2nd, on top of which we had to content with a provincial long weekend. Just a week before the march, the change of date was made.

We gathered at a park in the Annex area of Toronto under full "police protection." After a rallying speech by Michele Dore, the crowd moved onto a circuitous route down both dark side streets and busy streets, gathering more women as we went along than we had anticipated. Information flyers were handed out giving a basic outline of what the committee thought women could do after the march and an explanation of why no men were able to take part in the march.

The high point for many women was walking by the Eve Theatre on Bathurst Street at Bloor, which has a reputation for sex movies and has, in the past, been spray painted by outraged feminists. Our chanted slogans and noisemakers made our objections well heard. With no serious incidents, we wound our way back to the starting point in high spirits. Michele Dore gave another short speech to finish the evening, warning people not to go home alone. The media were in full attendance and, despite their harrasing questions, gave the march adequate coverage.

The organizers came from the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and other interested individuals who then formed the Take Back the Night Committee as a distinct group. Members of endorsing groups (the International Women's Day Committee, Women's Press and Birth Control and VD Centre) actively helped organize the march.

An evaluation meeting was held on August 19th. Though poorly attended, those present decided to continue the Take Back the Night Committee for further action. If you were not able to make the march or the follow-up meeting, please call the Crisis Centre (964-7477) to find out how you can help stop violence against women.

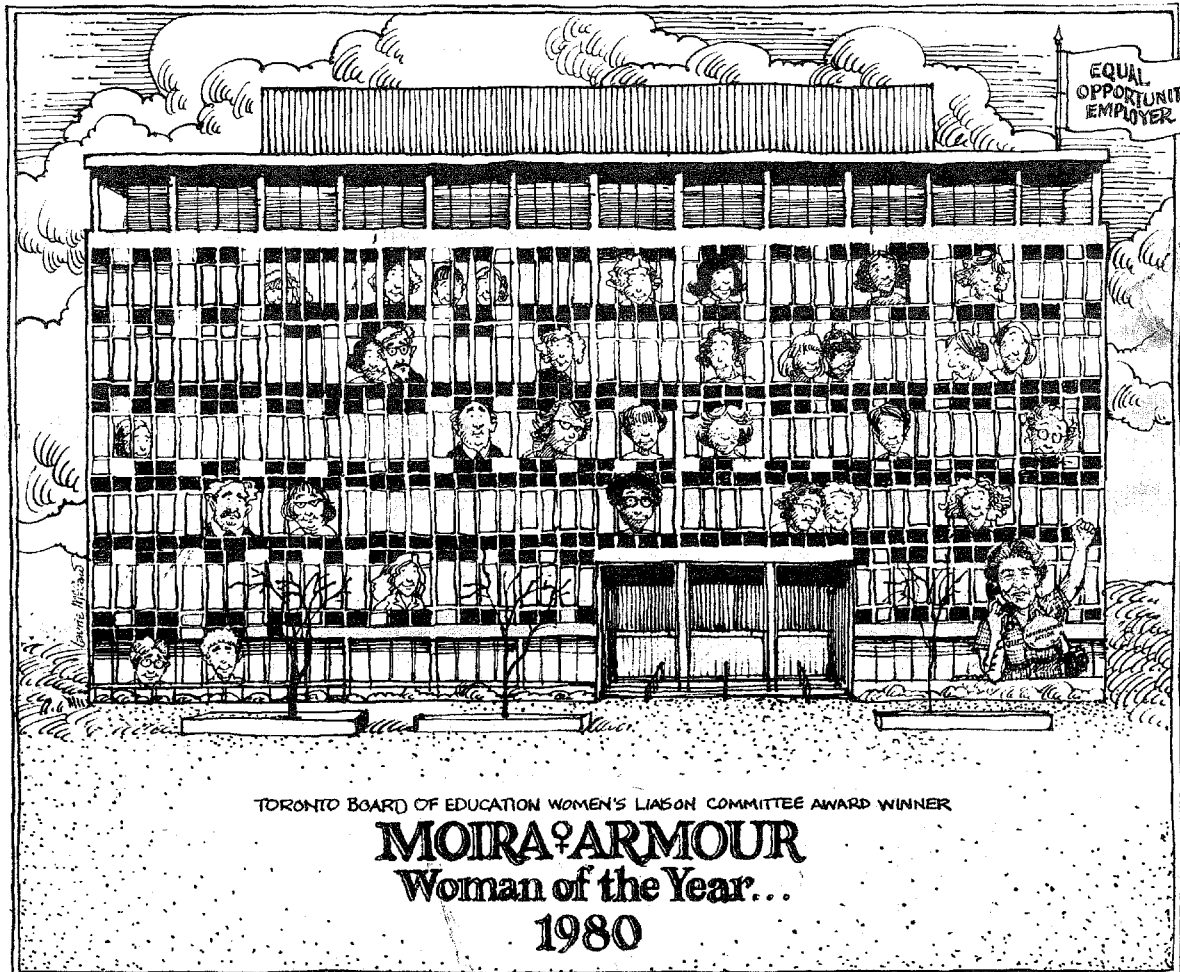
□Pat Leslie

## NORTHERN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

The third annual Northern Women's Conference will take place October 31st, November 1st and 2nd, 1980 at the Kirkland Lake campus of Northern College. Workshops will be presented by women's groups from throughout Northern Ontario on topics of interest to women of the north.

On Friday evening, October 31st, there will be an evening of film and an opportunity for the delegates to become acquainted with one another. The workshops will be held on Saturday and Sunday, November 1st and 2nd. Following Saturday's sessions, there will be an evening of entertainment featuring northern artists.

Anyone interested in helping with or attending the conference can contact Laurie Bassett, Conference Co-ordinator, c/o Kirkland Lake Board of Education, PO Box 610, Kirkland Lake, Ontario P2N 3J9.



Moira Armour, for her outstanding contribution to improve the status of women, was the recipient of The Toronto Board of Education Women's Liaison Committee's annual award, "Woman of the Year". The presentation was made at the Chelsea Inn on July 25th. Typically, Moira did not accept the award for herself but donated the money to Nellie's, a Toronto hostel for women.

## WOMEN'S WORK, 1980

*Women's Work, 1980* is the sequel to last year's *Conference for Working Women*, co-sponsored by Sir Sandford Fleming College Women's Programs and the Peterborough Women's Committee, and funded by a grant from the Office of the Secretary of State.

Examining the world of the homemaker as well as that of the woman in the paid workforce, this year's Conference will provide answers to issues raised at 1979's Conference and furnish an informational update relevant to all women.

Among the conference speakers are Pat Adams, president of Tricom Communications of Toronto, past president of the Association of Women Executives; and Grace Hartman, National President, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ottawa.

### TIME:

Friday, November 21, 1980  
7:00 pm to 10:00 pm and  
Saturday, November 22, 1980  
9:00 am to 5:00 pm

### PLACE:

Brealey Campus  
Sir Sandford Fleming College

For further information contact: Phyllis Gunther, Co-ordinator, Women's Programs, Sir Sandford Fleming College, 52 McDonnell St., Peterborough, Ontario, K9J 7B1.

## WOMEN IN FOCUS

*Women in Focus* is a non-profit feminist arts and media centre. Our distribution library of video tapes and films, on women's and other issues, is available for rental or sales. We are also looking for material by women to add to our library. Women producers or anyone interested in our free catalogue can contact us at: Women in Focus, No. 6-45 Kingsway, Vancouver, BC, Canada V5T 3H7.

## EDUCATION CONFERENCE

*The Education Connection* is the theme of a national conference, sponsored by the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, at which adult education will be related to the learning needs of women in unions, in the skilled trades, in rural areas, and women in their middle years. Low income women and francophone women have designed special workshops in which they will present their concerns.

The conference will be held at Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, on October 17-19, 1980. The keynote address will be given by Norwegian MP feminist Dr. Berit As, from the University of Oslo. In addition to a distinguished career as a politician at all levels of government, including party leader, Dr. As has been director of a series of studies on women and continuing education in Norway. She had also been successful in organizing women for political

action in Scandinavia and will be conducting the workshop on "Organizing." Major guest speaker for the conference will be Dr. E. Margaret Fulton, President of Mount Saint Vincent University, who will report on the United Nations Mid-Decade for Women Conference in Copenhagen (July 14-30, 1980) at which she represented CLOW.

Cape Breton feminist song writer and singer Rita McNeil, and Manitoba's Heather Bishop, tradeswoman, artist and musician will entertain.

The Conference will be relevant to both educators and learners and will provide an exciting forum for exchanging ideas and inspirations.

For further information write to: Mary Corkery, Co-ordinator, Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 29 Prince Arthur Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1B2.



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# MEDIA WATCH



## Breakthrough Doesn't

by Susan G. Cole

In June, Toronto was flooded with free copies of *Breakthrough* — a new tabloid newspaper, purportedly 'for women'. It showed up at women's centres, bookstores and community services across the city. It even made it to the Feminist Print Media Conference in Ottawa. While the paper blared that it was to be the "Voice of Women", its publisher seemed to be suffering from fairly heavy delusions. Its lead editorial began fulminating about the slave status women could shed, but by the end it was obvious that, according to the writer, women won't get hold of their power without the guiding hand of *Breakthrough*. "We might even win your war for you," it says in the first of a series of dead giveaways. *Breakthrough* is not a feminist newspaper, nor the Voice of Women. It is the voice of one John MacCallum, a Ryerson Institute teacher of journalism.

Now I don't want you to get the idea that we have the last word on feminism over here at *Broadside*. It's the fact that we don't have the last word that prompts us to publish a variety of points of view on the issues that touch women's lives. That a feminist politic requires rigorous thought, a deep examination of philosophical issues patriarchal thinkers thought they'd dealt with sufficiently through the centuries and an understanding that there must always be room for the enormous diversity among the women who make our movement dynamic — these are the principles that have shaped *Broadside* and that have been at the root of the complaints from our readers that we don't have a line. Well, all right, we don't have a line, but we have a bottom line. There's a difference. We know a feminist newspaper when we see one.

So, I had found it odd that a newspaper alleging to have feminist content would publish without first sending out at least a casual hello to *Broadside*. I think a group of feminists would have thought it a valuable exchange; to see where the gaps might be filled, prevent overlap or tell us they think we're full of shit and *that's* why they want to publish — whatever. As it turns out, in the case of *Breakthrough*, publisher John MacCallum hadn't any idea *Broadside* existed.

While it's true that *Broadside* isn't challenging the daily papers for numbers of subscribers, it is safe to say that most peo-

ple, men and women, associated with the women's movement in Toronto are aware of *Broadside*. MacCallum regretfully admits that his connections with the women's movement are weak. And in order to put out a women's paper without any input from the actual existing community, MacCallum admits that he'll have a tough time and has found a temporary solution to the problem: with the exception of one or two short articles and a piece by Lynda Hurst reprinted from another magazine, MacCallum has penned all the copy for *Breakthrough* himself, and at this point he is a limited resource indeed.

On the purely journalistic front, *Breakthrough's* integrity is questionable. A serious feminist journal would not make small changes to an article by Lynda Hurst and pretend it wasn't a reprint from the Toronto Star. It would never publish a headline that reads "You Can Win at Rape" (by fighting back, in case you'd care to know). Neither would it quote William French in a headline creating the impression that he was the author of the article that carries no byline and that is also a reprint, this time from Imperial Oil's house organ.

Incidentally, this kind of shoddy journalism is contagious. The Toronto Sun dutifully reported that both Lynda Hurst and William French had written for *Breakthrough*. The Sun's reporter also made the demented claim that *Breakthrough* was the first feminist newspaper anywhere. After getting over one's fury at such ignorance, there's an element of irony to the statement. There isn't anything in *Breakthrough*, with the exception of the tone of MacCallum's editorials and an obscure note on cancer-detecting bras, that the editors of *Chatelaine*, *McCall's* and *Cosmopolitan* wouldn't happily include in their copy. *Breakthrough* doesn't provide anything new.

More to the point, I wonder who *Breakthrough* is trying to reach. Most readers of feminist papers aren't interested in MacCallum's brand of paternalism. MacCallum has produced a newspaper for what he must consider an infantile collection of women who know nothing of their own lives. He confessed to me that his readership would find *Broadside* too sophisticated. He doesn't want to mess too much with difficult issues that might "confuse" women.

an essential part of their vision. But MacCallum knows precious little about feminism or the movement. He does want to know, which is I assume why he willingly listened while I told him much of what I've written here.

He believes in 'equal pay' but he won't touch abortion — too divisive. Lesbianism and sexuality? Absolutely not. "Sexual politics," he said, "are irrelevant." He certainly can't mean that sexual politics are irrelevant to feminism. What he seems to be saying is that sexual politics are irrelevant to what he's doing.

The baffling question is "Why is he doing this in the first place?" It's not that he's male that makes it so curious. After all, Herbert Marcuse embraced feminism as the most important social movement of this century; John Irving must have understood the issues or he couldn't have written his novel *The World According to Garp*; in fact there are men who have made feminism

But all I could garner from him was that he believes in equality and this is hardly the stuff of an editorial policy. He is anxious to raise consciousness. According to a billboard seen recently in a subway he is trying to do so now in his second edition. If *Breakthrough* pursues down a course similar to the one taken in its first issue, my hope is that the publisher will consider instead a newspaper that attempts to raise the consciousness of his fellow men. As it is, his methods of consciousness-raising do more to perpetuate sexist values than they do to eliminate them. In the meantime, we can still wonder what's behind it all.

□ Susan G. Cole for the *Broadside* Collective

## BREAKTHROUGH



A FEMINIST MAGAZINE  
YORK UNIVERSITY

In this issue:

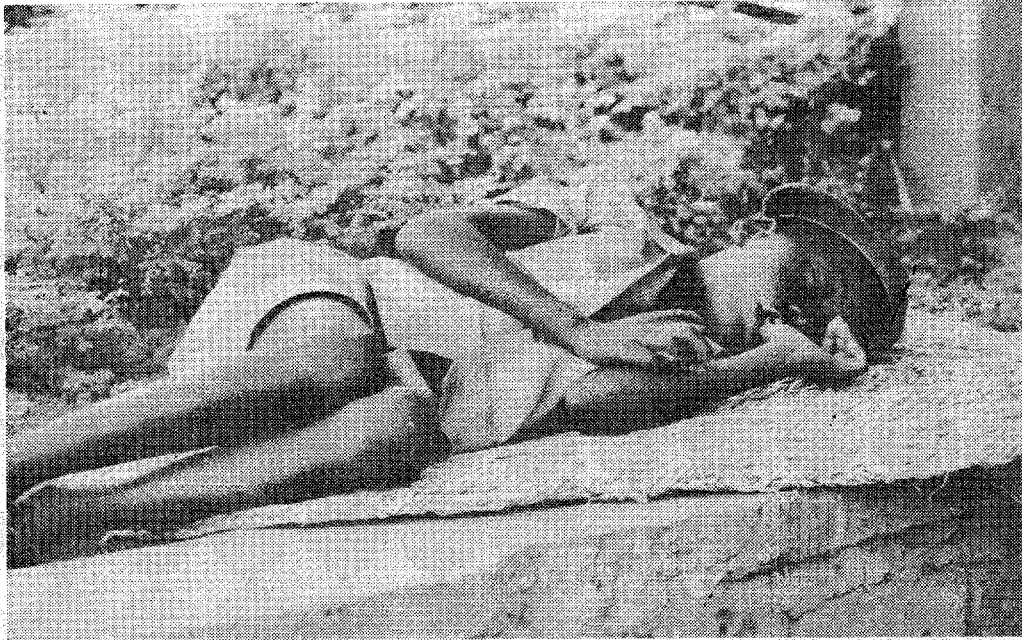
- Special Literary Section: poetry and short stories by York Women
- Lesbians and Housing
- Sexism in Primary School Readers
- Help for Math Anxiety Women
- Reviews of *Everywoman's Almanac 1977* and *The Law Is Not for Women!*

DEC 1976 VOL 2 NO 5

MacCallum's *Breakthrough* claims to be the first feminist newspaper anywhere. The date on the York paper, above, is December 1976. Where was MacCallum then?



# Island in the Sun: I



Stephanie Martin



## Dateline Jamaica

**1494:** Discovered by the Spanish.

**1655:** Taken by the British who decided after some years that for Jamaica to be useful it needed a crop — and labour — and slaves. So it began. Jamaica's historical pattern was established at the beginning of its (known) historical life. Originally a pawn of the Spanish, Jamaica's original inhabitants, the Arawaks, were wiped out and when the British arrived the land continued to be exploited, useful only for what could be taken from its rich soil. Like most colonies established in America, the island gave up a wealth of foreign fortunes while little was ever returned to Jamaica itself.

**1833:** Slavery is abolished, resulting in a large disenfranchised poor black class.

**1833-1935:** A period of steady emigration from Jamaica. The loss of Jamaicans from the island acted as a kind of safety valve as emigrés sent money back to Jamaica from Panama, the USA and eventually from Britain.

**1938:** The strike of the sugar workers in St. Thomas brought to prominence Alexander Bustamante. Busta, as he came to be known, encouraged the strikers and in the wake of ensuing and violent strikes at Frome and on the dock, the self-appointed labour leader was arrested. Norman Manley, Q.C., intervened on his behalf, and the two negotiated for a settlement of the strike. Busta and Manley worked as a political team, settling disputes throughout the island.

**1939:** The People's National Party was formed (PNP). Norman Manley, a brilliant barrister, had enormous appeal among the middle class, and under his leadership various nationalist and socialist organizations merged to form the political base of the Party.

**1939:** Busta formed the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union.

**1940:** Bustamante was jailed by Governor Richards for making inflammatory speeches. Manley reorganized and administered the BITU, whose membership rose from 8,000 to 20,000 and whose strength was such that it was able to negotiate the first all-island sugar agreement. Busta and Manley split after Busta's release from prison, over what Busta saw as Manley's failure to support him as a political prisoner. The tension between the two peaked in 1943 just as general elections were about to be held.

**1943:** The Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) under the leadership of Bustamante was formed.

**1944:** Universal Suffrage. The franchise did not by any means signal the dissolution of the class system in Jamaica. Class continued to be a controlling factor on the island. The new class of Mulatto — the sons and daughters of white slave owners and black slaves — which began to develop in the 1830's grew to outnumber whites in the Legislative Council. But this class was never considered representative of the black masses.

**1944:** Partial self-government was won from the British. The first general elections were held under the new constitution. Busta won 23 out of 32 seats leaving the PLP with only 4 seats, while the rest went to Independents. Despite this lack of concrete programs, Busta was returned in 1949 with a smaller majority and fought Manley's platform of "2 acres and one cow for every peasant" with "if you have two cows, Manley will take away one."

**1944:** The two party system was becoming vigorous and almost stabilized by 1949. In spite of the newness of the privilege of suffrage, Jamaicans voted in large numbers (59%) and since then have never been politically apathetic. The PNP was able to attract workers with better education. A Trade Union Congress, formed in 1944, became affiliated

with the PNP. Public, postal and railway workers came under the PNP sway.

**1951:** The PNP developed a split between moderates and the radical faction. Manley, eager for more widespread public support for his party began to purge the party of its Red Tinge.

**1952:** National Workers Union formed: Norman Manley's son Michael begins his career as one of the leaders of the NWU.

**1955:** The People's National Party won its first election.

**1958:** Jamaica became a member of the Federation of the West Indies.

**1961:** Jamaicans as a people considered the question of Federation. Although, economically, it was to the advantage of Jamaica to be part of a trade alliance, the fact that the Federation was the idea of the British made it difficult for Jamaicans to accept. When it became clear that joining the Federation was not a prerequisite for Independence, Jamaicans opposed Federation officially at the polls. The PNP had supported the idea while the JLP opposed it and the vote of Jamaicans signalled a shift in power to the JLP, who won the 1962 election that followed the referendum.

**1962:** With Busta as Prime Minister, Jamaica became Independent.

**1969:** Michael Manley was appointed head of the opposition.

**1972:** Following ten years of JLP Government, the PNP, now under the leadership of Michael Manley, came to power. The PNP's political position had been improving through the decade the JLP was in power. By the 1970's tension between the two political parties was extremely tense and continues to be so.

**1980:** Elections called.

by Stephanie Martin

12:01 am, August 6th, 1962. I was sitting on a mountain side in Kingston, Jamaica overlooking the national stadium. I watched the Union Jack lowered and the Jamaican flag raised. There was a loud roar of excitement as Jamaicans cheered. The thrill was nation-wide; independence from Britain; we were an independent nation. Most of us that night had no real concept of what independence would mean in our future and, except for those "British" who wanted us to remain a colony, we shrugged off any of the apprehension as a vestige of our colonized past.

But that apprehension was an intuitive warning that a country does not become independent overnight. The mind, colonized over centuries, remains so and the Third World remains at the mercy of an economic order that disfavours it. August 6, 1962 was the beginning of a new era, of national pride, of a sense of self as Jamaicans, the first official day of a distorted reckoning with a past history which set, and continues to play out, the harsh and violent scenario that now almost defines the reality of the island.

Jamaica became a nation with a population just under 2 million people, the majority of whom were black and poor. Like Canada, Jamaica is a country of immigrants (the Arawaks, the original inhabitants were annihilated by the Spanish). Unlike Canada, however, the majority of Jamaican immigrants were forcibly removed from their country, Africa, and transported halfway across the world to supply the slave labour needed to advance the wealth of the other "immigrants" — the British.

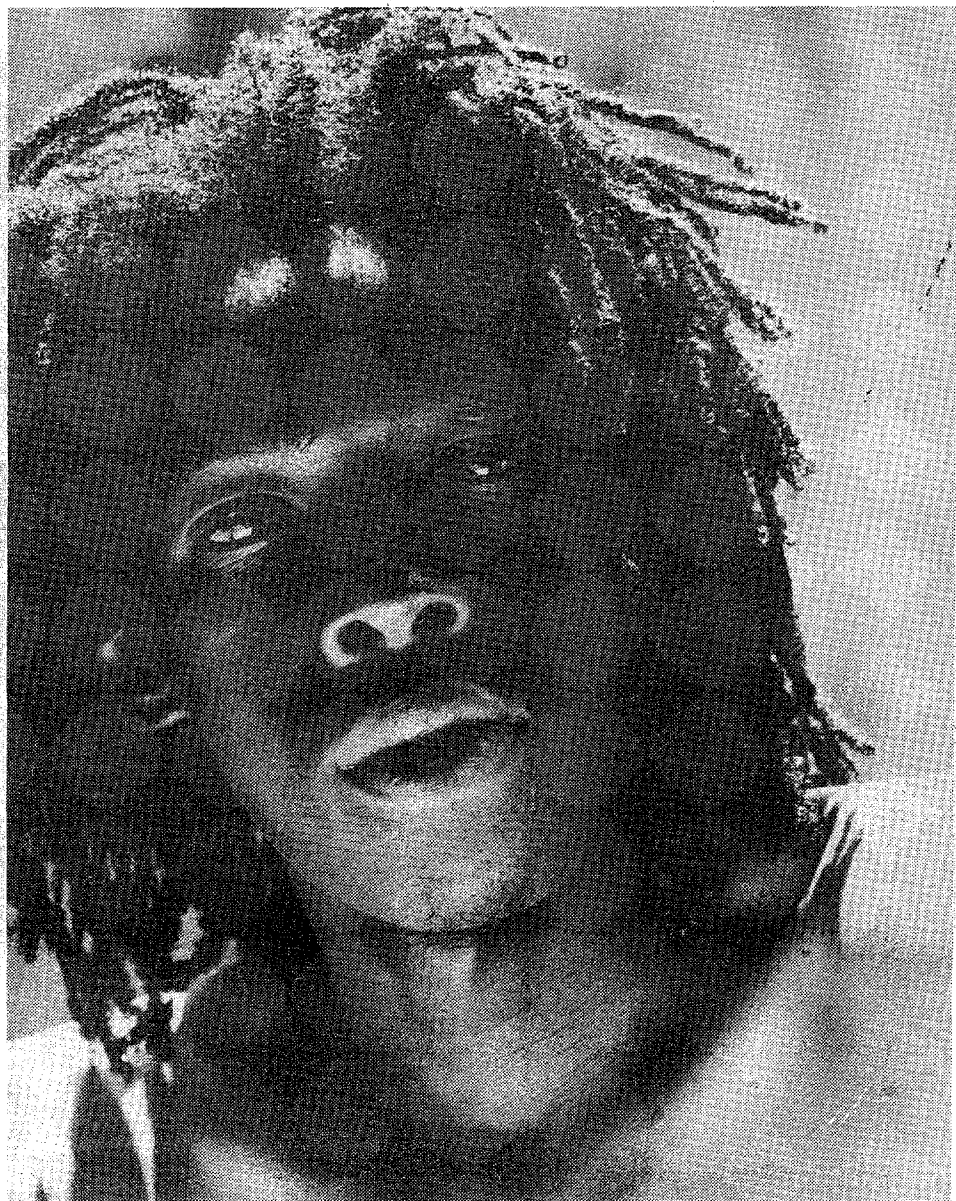
Deprived of their culture, wrenched from away and out of touch with their social base which was the African family, the new slaves became automatic victims of the English culture, and the insidious class system that British settlers willingly adapted to their new environment.

After 300 years of colonization, the Jamaican mentality continues to perpetuate typical colonial attitudes of self-hate and a national sense, hell-bent for destruction, that nothing can be achieved by us as a people. It was with this legacy of "poor black," "middle class," "privileged brown" and "wealthy white," the labels of mutual distrust, that Jamaica became independent.

Jamaica's economic structure as a plantation colony naturally was not designed in her favour. Jamaicans were not self-sufficient, as most of their needs were imported and their resources exported. The Bauxite companies (international), plundering one of Jamaica's primary resources, earned 27.5 million pounds in 1962 while the government received a 3.7 million pound handout for the product. In the same year, monies coming in from Jamaican emigrants to-



# Violence of the Sons



Stephanie Martin

Mike Harker



Stephanie Martin

talled more than the revenue the Jamaican government received from bauxite. Essentially, even as an independent nation, Jamaica was not unlike a colony still, economically organized to suit an international market in an unbalanced world order that favours the rich and yearly increases the burden of the poor.

The political unrest of the 1930s, the forming of the two party system that stabilized around 1944 and universal suffrage set the political scene as we know it now. The 1960s, under the Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) government superficially spelled economic progress, but the underlying problems — unemployment and the general dissatisfaction which began to stir protest among the people — made the economic scene a set of meaningless statistics. An active black consciousness began to emerge and a more political awareness of Rasta, strongly opposed by the government, began to develop.

In 1972 the People's National Party (PNP) under the leadership of Michael Manley came into power with a majority mandate. Manley's platform of social change, egalitarianism, later defined as Democratic Socialism, inspired and excited many Jamaicans. His subsequent eight years in power have brought to Jamaicans a new political perspective and new insight into Jamaica as a country. At the same time, and tragically, Manley's years in power have also brought more unemployment, disillusionment and violence.

The critical factor is that the two political parties are more concerned with the relationship between the factions than with the lot of Jamaicans. The preoccupation is with obtaining and holding power — at all costs — while Jamaica's economic problems continue to go unsolved. Whereas observers of history note that violence usually begins among the disaffected masses, in the case of Jamaica, the moral breakdown began at the top, among political leaders for whom the stakes, particularly after independence, were extremely high.

Political activity became closely linked with violence in the 1960s. Rumours of politicians arming men circulated regularly early in the decade and by the elections of 1967 and 1972 guns had become a part of political life and the tools of political terrorism, thus establishing a syndrome of the daily violence still going on in the island. It was obvious by 1972, that the employers had lost control of their political thugs. Gunmen are now considered an integral part of Jamaican society. Their victims? The poor, of course, and of late in larger numbers — women.

The city of Kingston is the area that seethes the most. While many Jamaicans emigrated to England and the USA

in the past 30 years, women in particular leaving with the hope that children would join them later, a great number of Jamaicans sought refuge from the rural areas in Kingston where they hoped to find work. Kingston teemed with the new arrivals and inevitably, unemployment soared, the numbers of skilled labourers remained low and the overcrowded city became a factionalized, ghettoized political jungle. Within this jungle, women, almost entirely without political power, play a role that may be the source of their current status as the victims of violence.

Many of those who left the rural areas to live in Kingston were women. They came looking for work in the domestic service. Their relationships with men were either casual or based on the hope that a man might offer some financial assistance for the children that were born at unusually high rates. A woman, by the age of 23, had an average of 4 children, and invariably supported them on her own or left them in the care of a female member of the extended family. The men, without work, invariably left the family, leaving women to eke out a living with a minimum wage of \$24 a week — in inflationary times — in an atmosphere of fear and violence.

A large percentage of Jamaican women have complete responsibility for their children. An absence of the father is in part a throwback to the slave culture, in which a father's place was never secure. He could be removed at any time and marriage was very much an institution for another class. Unemployment is the other large part. The father is now accustomed to being without work and sees this as a sufficient reason to abdicate responsibility for family. In fact, siring children becomes almost a surrogate activity for work, and Jamaican men spread their seed almost cavalierly. But their involvement with children in practical terms ends there.

For the child, the only stable relationship s/he has is with the mother. Apart from being the breadwinner she is also the sole source of discipline and as the child gets older both tasks become more difficult (belying the old Jamaican saying that "a child costs nothing.") The lack of paternal influence and the excessive reliance on his mother has an effect on a boy child when he becomes an adult. He may have no "role model" as we know them, but he is reared with favour and deference accorded to sons over daughters.

He is literally served by his sister. The social bias, however, has no apparent explanation in an environment where the patriarchal models boys must look for to justify their dominance over women is nowhere to be found. In Jamaica, it is the inability of women to provide a reason for male dominance that men resent. She has not, either by her actions, her strength or her frequently authoritarian con-

trol, re-defined for her son's benefit male dominance as the natural order of things. As a consequence there is conflict between the symbol of authority in the home — woman — and her evident powerlessness in the broader society.

Research done in the 1960s on the abandonment of Jamaican children indicates that women had the most difficulty with male children between the ages of 5 and 15. Women seem reluctant to take on the responsibility of boy children, understandably, given the obvious difficulties with socializing them. The implications are grim. Where are these boys now?

One can safely assume that with female migration to the cities and the ever-increasing hardships that accompany life there, many children born in the ghetto remain there. Growing up with violence and overcrowdedness, Jamaican youth is disenfranchised, hardly educated and with no apparent future. It is conceivable that we are looking at many of Jamaica's gunmen, aged 14 to 18 years.

They see a Jamaica with over half its population in one city, with an economic situation worse than it's ever been, with much of its middle class leaving the island, with unemployment at 30% nationally and an unbelievable 60% in Kingston, a Jamaica with an immense foreign debt that sucks 54 cents out of every dollar made in the tourist trade and from exports into interest and repayments, a Jamaica whose prime minister has called an election for September 1980 thus providing an excuse for gun-toting Jamaicans to go on a rampage. And a rampage it has been as the murders average four a day.

Many of those murdered heartlessly are the mainstay of the culture — women, many of them as old as 80 years, and children, perceived in these crazed circumstances to be dispensable. Nothing seems sacred. Those who carry guns prove the meaninglessness of their own lives. The phenomenal incidence of rape in the cities is the outpouring of misogyny that cannot tolerate the only source of stability on the island. It is tempting to rest with the notion that this is a hate war between ideologically opposed political groups. But many of the victims are not partisan.

I was 14 years old when I sat on that mountain watching the Jamaican flag raised. I was young and perhaps my aspirations for Jamaica were naïve. My more mature perceptions bring with them a certain bitterness. Independence brought to a collection of colonized men a craving for power that overwhelmed the needs of Jamaicans as a people. The few opportunities for economic development were squandered, giving way to the scramble for guns that has left Jamaica a battleground for the desperate and violent.

And women get caught in the crossfire.

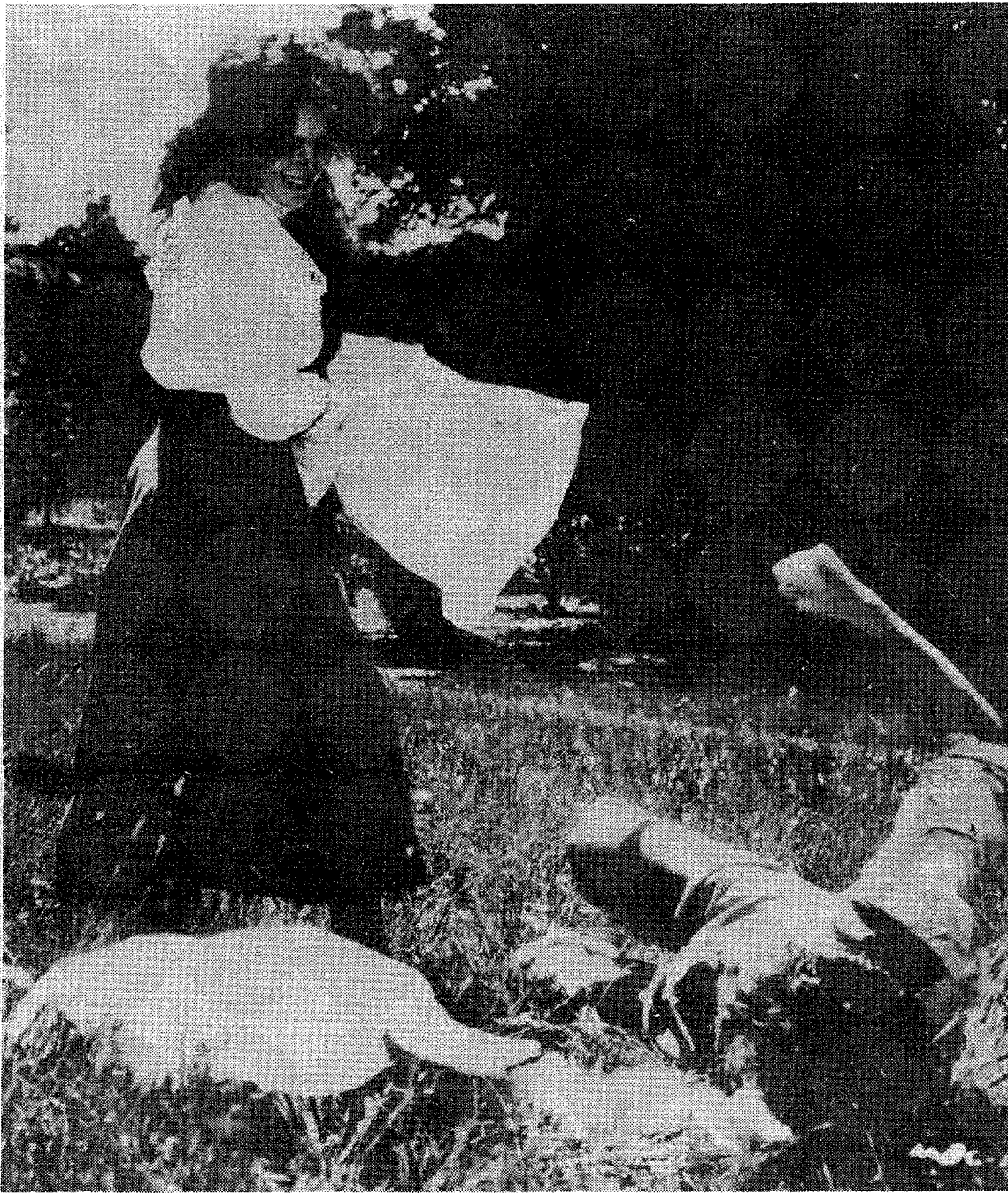


## ARTS

## My Brilliant Career

# Up from Down Under

by Barbara Halpern Martineau



Judy Davis as Sybylla in *My Brilliant Career*: a heroine who obeys her own inner voice.

"What do you want to be when you grow up, my dear?"  
"An old woman."  
*Tales of Tomorrow, B. Moon*

Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin, born 1879 in Talbingo Station, Australia; died 1954 in Sydney; wrote, at the age of 16, a novel called *My Brilliant Career*. It took weeks to write it, five years to get it published, and then the ensuing scandal led her to refuse publication rights until ten years after her death. She continued to write and have difficulty getting published; she travelled, working as a trade union organizer in the US, as a child care worker in English slums, as an orderly in the Balkans during World War I. She settled in England after the war, continuing to write sporadically. Her first novel has recently been transformed into an inspirational fable for aspiring young women, the delightful and successful feature film *My Brilliant Career*.

*My Brilliant Career*, directed by Gillian Armstrong, produced by Margaret Fink, adapted for the screen by Eleanor Witcombs, starring Judy Davis as Sybylla Melvyn, firmly located in the turn-of-the-century Australian countryside, offers a rare alternative to Hollywood-based images of women as adjuncts of American men. It's worth noting that our heroine, our subjective woman whose vision is offered to us alongside our vision of her, is herself a writer, a seer, possessor of, possessed by a truly prophetic voice. "I don't ever plan to get married," says the voice, "I'm going to have a career." Again, "I can't live in the bush and have a baby ever year . . . I want to write about my people." And so, although she discovers she is not, after all, an ugly woman, although she wins the love of a man who attracts her and although he wants to marry her and offers her "any-

thing," Sybylla holds fast to her vision — she will speak for herself and for her people. Her people are neither beautiful nor gentle — it gradually comes clear that Sybylla's vision is unsentimental, unsparring, compassionate. The film is an unusual example of a fusion of vision among director, actress, screenwriter, and source — we see Sybylla's people very much as she does, first as caricatures, then as characters in a domestic drama, finally as people in the context of their land and culture, formed by social pressure, lit by their own human graces.

Sybylla's mother is a terrible force in her daughter's life, representing almost intolerable pressure to conform, to buckle under to a poor woman's lot. She is also seen as a victim of class and sexual oppression, the woman who married "beneath" herself, who suffers from alienation — not bred to rural life, rejected by her family, linked forever to her husband's life and to the eternal cradle. Sybylla's grandmother speaks for gentility, the self-imposed oppression of wealthy women: "My granddaughter on the stage? I'd see her in a convent first, with her head shaved." Sybylla's aunt, a victim of convention, immolates herself in the shame of having been abandoned by her husband: "Marriage gives respectability," she tells Sybylla, who rejects this "trap" for women.

The achievement of the film is that all these women breathe and live on the screen — they are misguided but well-intentioned, narrow, yet deep, and, above all, seen in relation to each other and as whole beings, not mere appendages to the men in their lives, whatever their bondage, whatever their self-oppression. They remain at the centre of their own consciousness, and therefore we see them whole. Neither Sybylla's aunt nor her grandmother are capable of

believing her accounts of her experiences as a country schoolteacher — sheltered as they are in the lives of teapots and balls, squalor is outside the bounds of their genteel imaginations. But we, seeing through Sybylla's eyes, are given a portrait of Lizer McSwat, the farmwoman whose family are Sybylla's pupils, which is the coarsest caricature in the film, involving a distorted closeup reminiscent of Lina Wertmuller's tricks with lenses. Lizer, however, like the other women in the film, transcends her stereotype — she is shown as lively and high-spirited, warmer than any of the gentility.

The film has an ambivalence which reflects a very basic problem for feminists: in the portrayal of solid, earthy, vital working people, unmoving in the materialism, and on the other hand the gentility, comfortable, sheltered, educated and conventional, we see that the working-class environment threatens to exhaust and quench Sybylla's creative spark, whereas the upper class smothers, threatening sterility and isolation. This contrast is dramatized when Sybylla, elegant in her ballgown, flees the great house with its decorum and intrigues, to dance a reel with the servants out back — these are her people, too, more so than the stuffed clothes inside. But the working class looks upon women as breeders and servants, and the daily work leaves little time for creativity.

Feminists now reject the need for women to choose between career and family — birth control, marriage contracts, alternative lifestyles, affirmations of lesbian relationships and extended families all help to soften the terrible choice once faced by every woman who felt a need to express herself through her work. And yet that choice is still a reality imposed upon and accepted by great numbers of women. *My Brilliant Career*, by presenting Sybylla Melvyn as a heroine who has the courage to obey her own inner voice, is a valuable offering to the cause of change and reclamation of women's identities.

*My Brilliant Career* is a movie, popular culture, packing commercial theatres in the US and Canada, working according to long-established movie formulas, and then, blessed be, using those formulas in reverse, setting up caricatures and stereotypes and transforming them, exploding old myths in the construction of the new. Remember Scarlett O'Hara, the wind blowing her hair and the theme from *Tara*? Sybylla's last scene, leaning on the gate of her family farm, watching the sun rise after posting her newly completed manuscript, face lit by the early light, hair glowing in the morning breeze, Schumann's music celebrating her independence, is all pure movie romanticism, resting heavily on the previous buildup of her courtship by Harry Beecham, and taking off from the poignancy of her resolution to live alone. It's unrealistic, of course, as the real manuscript only reached Blackwood's after years of struggle, a fact glossed over by the printed title: "*My Brilliant Career* was published in Edinburgh in 1901." It's an ending reminiscent of Westerns, the cowboy riding off into the sunset, leaving the heroine sighing at the gate, and therein lies the triumph, for this heroine sent the cowboy away; she in fact is the cowgirl, and an author too, and she's laughing at the gate, having stuck to her pens to defend the poor and the voiceless.

No, it's not a documentary exposing the authentic miseries of the immigrant workers and the working poor we see so briefly as they touch on Sybylla's life. Yes, the film could have shown more of the poverty, less of the romance between Sybylla and Harry. A genuine interaction with one of the servants, a reminder that Sybylla was meant by her parents to go work as a servant, and the dilemma of women wishing to eradicate poverty, as Virginia Woolf expressed it, would have been clearer and more accessible. Similar criticisms have been levelled at Nelly Kaplan's strong films from France, that they are "unrealistic," too pretty, too glossy, that their heroine succeeds too easily in her improbable plots of revenge with the help of implausible magical powers. Joyce Wieland's feature film *The Far Shore* was rejected in this country on account of its "unrealism" — Wieland didn't use movie formulas as successfully as Armstrong, but she too was working in the mode of the fable, approaching reality from a different perspective. In the wake of the success of *My Brilliant Career*, we might go back and re-examine some assumptions about what makes films work, how film as myth can function for women rather than against us.

• continued page 13



# Singing in the Rain

by Anne Cameron

The Third Annual Vancouver Folk Festival was even bigger and better than the two previous years, and they were both terrific. We got to Jericho Beach early on Friday, laid out our slicker and blanket on the grass, spread our gear and lay back in the sun to watch the organized frenzy as the site was readied and finalized.

Food booths with *real* food, not fast-fry crap, were set up and by the time the first crowds arrived for the opening evening concert the scents and smells of falafel, vegetarian pizza, tortiere and baked beans, souvlaki and nutburgers mixed with fresh fruit pie aroma and the almost orgasmic temptation of espresso coffee. A first aid tent doubled as a clearing house for the little folk looking for parents, and long hair, beads, headbands and bare feet were common dress.

Four stages were set up for the big folk and the fifth stage was the Vancouver Little Folk Music Festival, with "music that's good for the kids but also all right for the parents." There were a lot of big folk at the little folks festival stage when Odetta did her workshop. It was a rainy Vancouver Saturday but nobody seemed to mind too much. Raincoats, slickers and some marvels of plastic garbage bag innovation kept us dry, the music and co-operative friendliness kept us warm, and Old Woman stepped in and took a hand in turn to turn off the tap and let us have a no-rain evening concert.

Some of the choices of the daytime workshops were hard to make: Blues workshop with Sparky Rucker, Jim Byrnes, Roy Bookbinder and Johnny Shines, or Still Ain't Satisfied with Holly Near, Betsy Rose, Robin Flower, Kathy Winter, Nancy Vogl, Laurie Lewis, Sweet Honey in the Rock and Ferron. Much as I love blues and much as I admire Roy Bookbinder, I went to Still Ain't Satisfied and was part of an enthusiastic throng of women listening to an hour of incredibly good women's music.

It was a deeply women-conscious festival and the organizers made a sincere and loudly appreciated effort to bring women performers and arrange women's workshops. Repeatedly the MCs and performers, and certainly many in the audience, spoke of how good it was that women were being given a chance to hear and do women's music. For too many years women performers have been passed over, ignored, or not taken seriously and while both previous festivals in Vancouver had a fair representa-

tion of women, this year it was obvious the organizers were determined to set some heartening precedents.

Last year it was Tony Bind, a white South African who looks like he's been eating locusts and honey for more than forty days, and whose voice sounds like sand rasping against a porcelain sink, who took the festival by storm. His music is so pure and so devoid of ego that it lifts you up and has you swaying. He doesn't go out to perform and bask in the applause, he goes out to bare his soul, share, and try to put something better into the world. He was back again and we all still loved him, but this year it was Holly Near who took the crowd, and made it hers. Holly has never played in Vancouver. In fact I think her only Canadian performance has been in Toronto, but I suspect she'll be booked often after her triumph at Jericho Beach.

Ferron, as always, received strong support and applause from her friends and fans in the audience. Personally, I'm a bit divided about Ferron; some of her music certainly satisfies something in me, and nobody can doubt the honesty of what she does, but I often find range, repertoire and content very limited, and certainly there are times where Ferron is more "on" than others. Ferron is repeatedly reviewed as being "unique", and comment is often made that her style is incomparable, but I have no trouble at all comparing her to early Bob Dylan. Structure, sound, even delivery is very derivative of the droning Dylan when he was first becoming the voice of a disenfranchised generation, and I suspect it is because of the Woman content of Ferron's work that the generally male reviewers haven't made the connection. Dylan has always seemed to me to be battling his own bigotries, but being a short man seems to try to overcompensate by being just that much more snarky toward and about women. Dylan sings of women as if they were pleasure objects created just to please him. Ferron, who sounds and plays so much like Dylan, sings of women as strong people, as individuals, as heroines, as survivors, and that difference might well be what has defied comparison with Dylan. Perhaps people are so involved in what she is saying in her songs they don't pay much attention to how she is saying it or what it sounds like. And there's nothing wrong with that!

It's amazing how a few women's workshops can make so huge a difference. I don't think anybody in her right mind would suggest the women on the coast are shy wallflowers, but it is true a lot of the men are still clinging to the security of patriarchal privilege. There are things about



**VANCOUVER  
FOLK  
MUSIC  
FESTIVAL**

JERICO BEACH PARK, JULY 18, 19, 20, 1980

blues lyrics that stick in my throat; I love blues, but find it too often scornful of or uninterested in women, and certainly the Saturday morning blues workshop was dominated by men. A later workshop featured women's blues. It's just as good, but lesser known, and I would like to see a double workshop next year, integrating the two types. A lot of country music is pretty gagging, too, so some of the performers put me in a bind. They're good, but some of their songs aren't. This was especially true when Ramblin' Jack Elliot did his set on Saturday evening. He is an incredible performer but...there's a touch too much patriarchal ego for me to get totally involved. Maybe some new material would help his act.

One of the MCs, James Barber, got the first taste of raised consciousness when he made some effusive and patronizing introductory remarks about the serene, utterly charming black ladies of Sweet Honey in the Rock. So help me, he said "utterly charming black ladies". Several women in the crowd hissed. James hastened to try to make things clear. He protested a bit too much, the crowd got restless. When Sweet Honey in the Rock came out, one of the women said she'd like to say something to "the red clay out there. We're black women. And charming doesn't need an adjective. You are or you aren't." And they were singing and we were cheering.

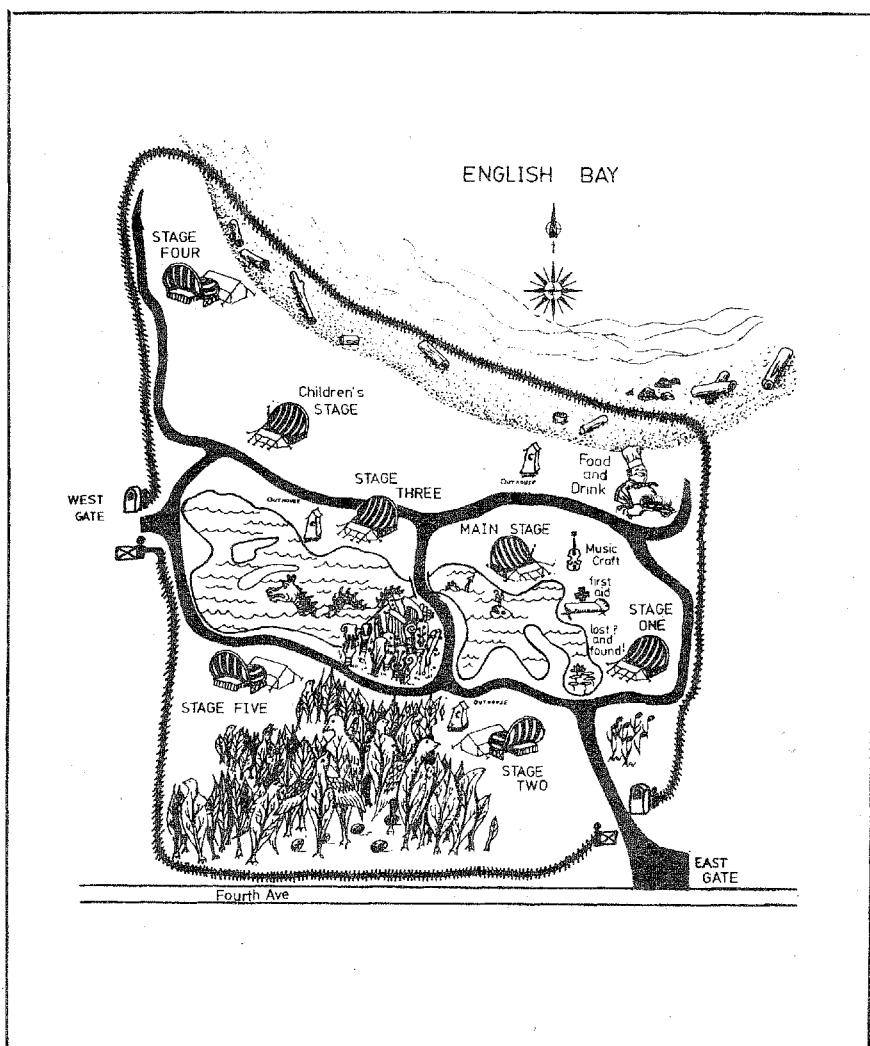
I was raised in a family divided between working class north English on my mother's side, and Scots on my father's side. Scots women have always seemed to me to be incredibly strong, especially because, somehow, they live with and laugh in spite of the disgusting patriarchal bullshit that Scots men hand out liberally. My own experience leads me to believe that 99.9% of the male Scots are fascists. Some of them are smoother than others, but they all somehow manage to lay guilt trips and dominate.

We got a Scots patriarch at the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. Robin Williamson. Remember the name. Either woman-cott his performances or go prepared to raise hell until he cleans up his act. He's about 23 or 24 and very impressed with the success he's had so far. I didn't go to his afternoon workshop, a friend of mine did and liked it very much. Sunday evening he came out and did a song I liked, then one that didn't turn me on at all, and then he started his third song. Here's this self-important little ego singing about the women in his life (he'd have us believe since he was ten), with lyrics like "and I think of her every time I see burnt grease slide down the sink."

Well, first it was hisses. Then boos. Then a sister moved up front and yelled something. Hizzoner explained that not only (you've heard this one, eh?) did he think women were the equal of men, in many ways he thought they were superior. Well, I try. Dammit, I really do try not to be loud and rough and rowdy and embarrass my friends in public, but there are limits. And dinks like Robin Williamson will insist on going over those limits. So I got noisy. Then he said he had never before been called a "chauvinist." I couldn't help it, I yelled "How about asshole?" But the best line came from a man in the audience who yelled "Welcome to an introduction to the cultural roots of sexism. You should have gone to the women's workshops."

A few years ago we would have seethed in silence, but we've done that for too many generations, and too little change was happening. The only advice my grandmother gave me that I now find inadequate or wrong is "consider the source and ignore it, lass." I consider the source, grandma, and I can't ignore it. Ignoring it reinforces it! Sure, a lot of men don't put us down, don't abuse or beat us. But only because they choose not to; we have no guarantee they won't start tomorrow. Certainly family, society, court and government is set up to allow anything — especially if we seethe and simmer in silence. It's like sleeping with a hippo. It may be kind and have a great sense of humour, it may wash regularly and use deodorant and maybe it doesn't even eat crackers in bed. But if it ever rolls over, you've had it!

The past few years, we are being told, have not seen us accomplish as much as we hoped. There are discouraging statistics. There is work still to be done. Some of the most active women are understandably tired and there is disenchantment and disension in the movement. But there were a lot of women and men at the women's workshops at the Vancouver Folk Music Festival, and a lot of women and men letting Robin Williamson hear that the time of silence is over — and that is progress. Perhaps the true strength of any revolution comes through culture. Perhaps we need to do more to support our women singers, musicians, poets. One thing that could have been improved at the Vancouver festival...more of the women should have been Canadian women. Perhaps we should send suggestions to the Folk Festival organizers, send the names of women performers living in our own country. The organizers are trying, but we all know women haven't been given the coverage and publicity men have, and maybe the organizers just aren't aware of who is out there struggling to be heard.



# Ain't Nowhere We Can Run

by Judy Liefschultz

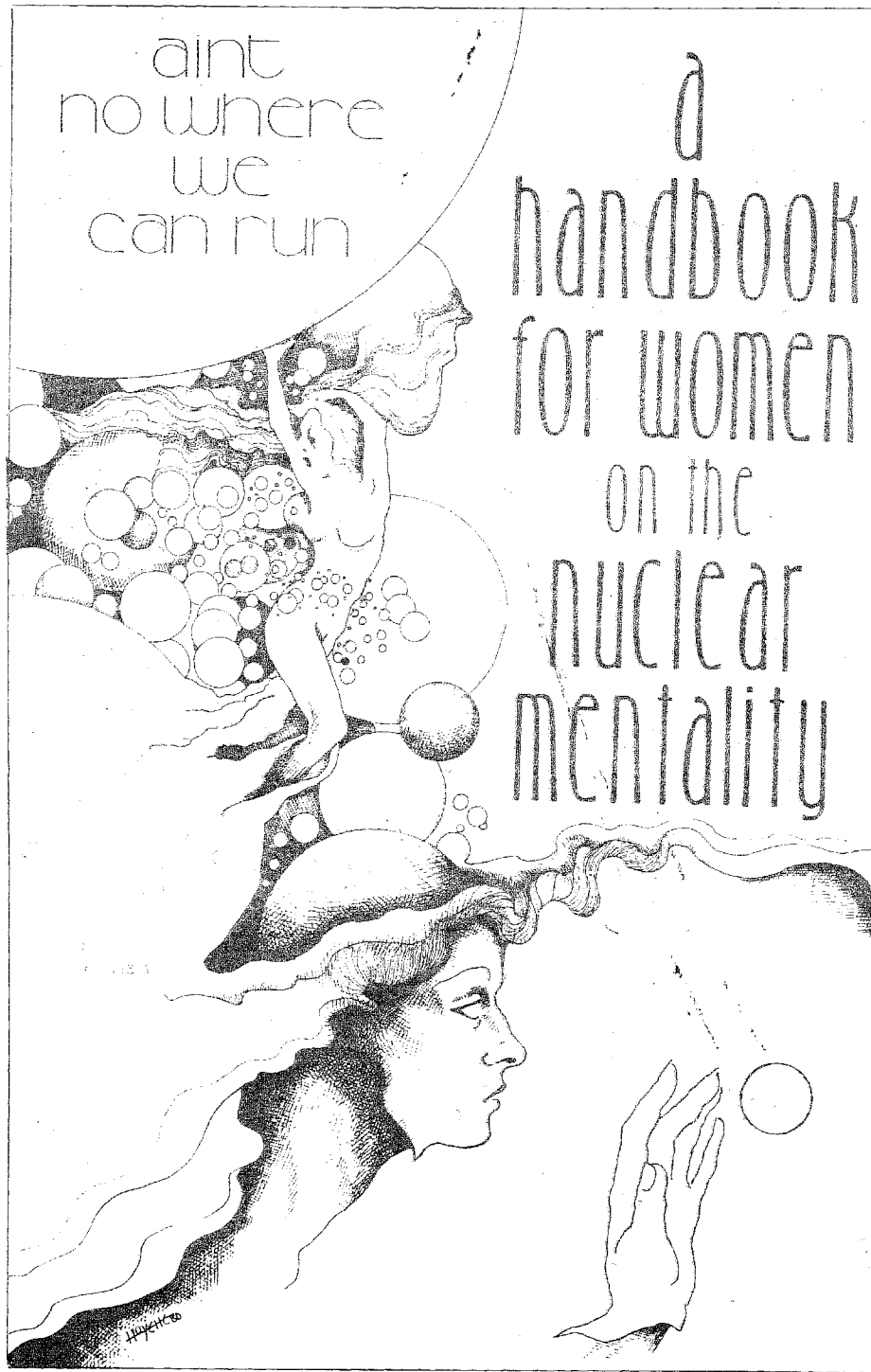
*Ain't Nowhere We Can Run: A Handbook for Women on the Nuclear Mentality*; by Susan Koen and Nina Swaim, published by Women Against Nuclear Development (WAND), Box 421, Norwich, Vermont; 74 pp.; \$2.50 paper.

"We have strong senses and feelings of what is important, and we struggle with the words to describe what we feel." At a time when the issues seem so complex we are often unable to speak, *Ain't Nowhere We Can Run: A Handbook for Women on the Nuclear Mentality* answers its dilemma well. There are better books to read about the medical effects of radiation, conservation, or the technology of a nuclear reactor, but none so simple and beautifully written as this small volume, none so good at helping to sort out what feminism and nuclear power mean to everywoman — and what we can do about it.

There are statistics (and good references) on how conservation can save us more energy and money than nuclear power can ever produce. There is a handy guide to different kinds of radiation and their effects. The health hazards of radiation for women and children in particular are discussed and illustrated.

But the focus of the book is on "ecofeminism", that is, women's connection with life forces and how nuclear power threatens them more than any other technology to date. Nuclear power's reflection of countless other rapes that have taken place in the name of progress is touched on in sections summarizing the social, political and economic effects of the nuclear mentality. Atomic weapons, job losses and centralization of energy sources and decision-making are examples cited for their snug fit with capitalism and nuclear power.

Women are asking how the fight against nukes can be won when the grip and the myth of the patriarchy is so strong, so pervasive. Is this an issue women should devote their energy to or is it merely another cause for the Left? The authors of the *Handbook* tell the stories of Holly Near, Rosalie



Bertell, Helen Caldicott, Karen Silkwood and others as an answer to these doubts. The not-yet-so-famous Women Against Nuclear Development (WAND), the publishers of the book, also tell their tale.

WAND started as a group of women getting together to talk about nuclear power. Some became involved through the Seabrook, New Hampshire anti-nuke actions, others through Three Mile Island, and still others through their nursing and science careers. They looked at the work of women like Winona La Duke, a native Indian who is leading the fight against uranium mining on Indian lands in the US. Their stories tell how women in their jobs, at their day care centres and in their communities are opposing nuclear power while acquiring knowledge and skills they need for the fight. Women are using vigils, speeches, theatre performances, municipal injunctions and their local libraries to fight nukes and explain why this is important for women. These women are slowly insisting that sexism, rape, poverty among women and the health of our children take their rightful place in the anti-nuke movement. The feminist connection is beginning to take shape.

Virginia Woolf's books *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own* are still two of the most concise treatises of the social and historical imperative for feminism. In them she asks questions we have yet to answer. How will women prevent war? How will we gain influence and effect change? If we must enter the professions and accumulate wealth, how will we use our skills and wealth differently from the men before us? While I worry that there are not enough engineers among us, and too few chemists, biologists, physicists and geologists, the *Handbook* speaks very well to some of Woolf's questions. We must stop nuclear power. We must be ready with the tools and know-how for a new future, and we must now be preparing and awakening each other to be part of that vision.

"At last, when the man has all but destroyed our species, our sister earth, our children that we made in our own holy bodies, at last we are beginning to be shrill as banshees, and to act." (Robin Morgan, *Sisterhood is powerful*).



Moirra Armour



• *My Brilliant Career*, from page 10

Sybylla's story is a heroic myth for our time — she is larger than life, and her vision enlarges our horizons. Unlike the extraordinary women featured in NFB documentaries, Sybylla is rebellious and unaccepting — her heroism rests in her refusal to take on more than she can handle. She has a vision of life and her people, which she feels a strong need to express; she has confidence in her ability to express her vision, and great determination. This concept of the visionary, the person with a mission, a creative drive, is often ignored, denied, or misunderstood by advocates of equality, as if it were somehow undemocratic, even unfair for one person to stand out so vividly. The voice of the shaman as the expression through one person of the collective experience is often suspect, too mystical, too unscientific for modern revolutionaries. The pressure on the artist to conform, to express a politically acceptable line, is therefore intense, and even more destructive than the pressure of the bourgeois family to be respectable, earn a living, be successful, marry, bear children, submit.

By presenting Sybylla's story in the format of the popular movie romance, thereby reaching a comparatively wide audience, the film makers opened themselves to charges of dilution, compromise, selling out. The pressure comes from all sides — if she's not being accused of selling out the visionary is urged to accommodate her vision in order to reach more people, or discouraged from continuing in her chosen medium... And so many artists have come to be suspicious of any criticism at all, craving only the direct response which says, "This works for me — it makes

me feel..." or "That made me angry," or "Yes, you've expressed something I knew but never said." "This is true to my experience...this isn't...this is new to me, how exciting!"

This works, this doesn't work. This is the voice which explodes in my head, clear and strong, well-expressed. This is unclear, fuzzy weak. How simple it could all be. Once the patriarchy is disposed of, all that jazz about the alienation of mankind put in abeyance until it acquires historical interest, once we no longer have to crusade for women's films which show women in their own right, then we can share constructive criticism, then we can concentrate on what works and what doesn't work. Because it is not enough, it never has been enough, to want a vision, or even to have a vision and want to share it. There is craft in the sharing, skills to be learned, and a long way to travel learning over and over again.

And so, in response to the letter printed in the July issue of *Broadside* from the Toronto Feminist Film Festival Collective: We women deserve the finest we can give each other, and that includes the honing of our skills in sharing our visions, and the clearest, straightest criticism we can manage. There was a hostility in your letter, an alienation (expressed, for instance, in the repeated use of "Ms.") which did not encourage further dialogue. To set the record straight, I did not discuss feature films shown at your festival, nor did I use the word "ill-conceived," nor did I suggest or imply that the festival was poorly organized. It is

true that I did not discuss the Super-8 films shown, although I believe the format is rapidly growing in importance, especially as a tool for social change. My coverage was a supplement to yours, and you were given time and space to provide the perspective you instead presented so defensively in your letter. As for "running the review as the second half of an article about *All That Jazz*, well, the title of the piece was *After All That Jazz*, and the point made rather clearly was that women whose films were shown at your festival had done more with much less than the producers of a very expensive, undeniably classy movie. I can only assume that your defensiveness blinded you to my praise and enthusiasm — all you saw what what threatened you.

The contentious issues remain: I refuse to accept a polarization between popular culture and feminist art — the patriarchy tries hard to separate us, but we need not consent. I plan to continue to review mainstream films in this column, because so many women see and respond to them, and because the patriarchal press reviews features from their perspective — I see them somewhat differently. When a joyous feature made by women comes along, like *My Brilliant Career*, I celebrate the event. I plan to continue to review documentaries and short films of interest to *Broadside* readers, and I plan to continue to criticize women's films as constructively as I know how. I will be grateful for feedback which is itself constructive, and, alongside the *Broadside* collective, I welcome dialogue in these pages.

• *Marriage Contracts*, from page 5

Other than for the rather broad category of necessities, spouses are not responsible for each other's debts unless they have co-signed the loan or credit line used to purchase them. Never co-sign any loan unless you would be willing to pay for the goods all by yourself. Co-signing a loan is the equivalent to taking out a loan all by yourself. Co-signing a loan is the equivalent to taking out a loan and giving the money to the other person in exchange for their word that they will repay you. It is almost better to borrow the money yourself and give it to the other person; at least you are then under no illusion about the chances of getting it back. Married women are particularly vulnerable in this type of situation. Thousands of women have had to repay loans they co-signed for spouses who took off with the money or the goods — usually a car. It is important to remember that a bank or finance company can collect from either party. They do not have to first go after the person who took out the loan or recover the goods, if a spouse stops payment they will go after the one most likely to pay; and where the party with the goods has already indicated unwillingness or inability to pay, the co-signer will be forced to pay. *Think twice and think again.*

So long as a marriage is ongoing, spouses are not entitled to a share of each other's assets. Each spouse is entitled to keep extra money earned or received and to use in it any manner seen fit. Spouses will only get aid from the court if the partner refuses to provide basic necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing. There is no right to a share of the other spouses' income. A

spouse may buy and sell property without the consent of the other, with one exception: regardless of whose name is on the deed of the matrimonial home, a spouse cannot sell it without the consent of her or her spouse, which must be in writing. What constitutes the matrimonial home has not been fully defined by the courts, but certainly the house the couple lives in or any house which they own if they live in rented premises can be so designated. The courts generally accept what is declared the matrimonial home.

Other than the matrimonial home and matrimonial assets, spouses have no claim on assets acquired by one or the other during marriage. The only claim possible is an equitable one. The spouse making the claim must demonstrate that he or she has made some financial contribution to the purchase of the asset or an exceptional labour input. For example, if the wife contributes her earnings, she will be entitled to the cost of the asset. This claim can be brought forward at the time of sale of the asset, but it may be complicated an expensive to do so. The simple solution is to insist upon a legal contract which settles the ownership of the asset at the time of purchase.

Legal contracts are becoming more common in marriage. Couples can draft a marriage contract before their marriage or at any time during it. Marriage contracts are most often used to designate specific property as belonging to one spouse or the other and to exempt it from the Family Law Reform Act. An asset, even one commonly used as a family asset such as a family cottage, can be so designated. If that happens in a marriage contract, the signing spouse will not be entitled to a share upon dissolution of the marriage. All assets can be so allocated, with the exception of the matri-

monial home, which can only be allocated upon separation. It is not possible to give up the right to a share of the matrimonial home in a marriage contract. However, it is possible to give up other equally valuable rights. Get legal advice before signing a marriage contract. Such contracts can provide important protection to a woman of property or wealth, but they are a two-edged sword when used by a working spouse to deprive his or her non-working partner of a rightful share of family assets.

In drafting a marriage contract, spouses often add provisions for children. While these may aid in understanding each other's attitudes, it should be recognized that nothing in a marriage contract regarding children is binding on the courts. The sole interest of the court is the 'best interests of the child' and it will, therefore, override any arrangements it does not feel are in their best interests. However, if the arrangements are reasonable, the court will tend to respect the parties' wishes.

Marriage contracts have been drafted which involve a wide variety of what are best termed 'personal' clauses. These clauses deal with such things as household responsibilities. While it may be useful to gain insight into the attitude of each spouse, a couple should realize that these clauses are not binding in a court of law. You cannot sue for equal time spent on housework and it may be expensive to pay a lawyer to add these types of clauses to an agreement.

As long as a couple remain together, each has equal rights to care and control of their children. Only upon separation can children be designated to be in the custody of one or other of their parents. A father has no more right than a mother to make deci-

Finally, there is a large grey area of law which is unlikely to have a substantial impact upon married women. It deals with the

sions regarding their children. right of women to control their own bodies. The issue goes beyond the right of women to abortion without a spouse's consent, although that issue is a focal point for the problem. Whether a woman can refuse sexual relations with her husband, practise birth control against his wishes, undergo sterilization, or abort his child without his consent are all open issues. Doctors have tended to resolve these controversial problems by refusing to perform these services without consent, a solution which has kept them out of the courts but not solved the underlying issue. Since husbands are not charged with rape in Canada, one can assume that a woman can only refuse her husband's sexual advances to the extent to which he is willing to let her do so. No case of a woman practising birth control against her husband's consent has yet come up in court, since there is nothing which gives a man the right to a child as a condition of marriage. In Canada, since one can only undergo an abortion for reasons of 'medical necessity,' it seems ludicrous to allow a husband the right to consent or not consent to a medically necessary procedure unless he also has the right to refuse consent to an operation for acute appendicitis.

Therefore, although married women no longer suffer any specific legal handicaps, there is a real need for women to understand their legal rights and responsibilities. Lack of awareness of the legal implications of one's actions and dependence upon a spouse's protection can lead to disaster. The courts will insist upon an equitable distribution of family assets, but they cannot protect anyone from the effects of their own actions.

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\* *Invisible Community*, from page 5

truncated form, is keeping the negation alive: to participate in gay liberation as feminists, and in feminism as lesbians. We can contribute to the gay movement, for example, without actually working with men, or by working with them on projects or for goals that don't violate feminist principles.

Likewise we are feminists, but we're not like straight feminists — we get crapped on for being women *and* lesbians. If the women's movement does not embrace the basic tenets of gay liberation it also dumps on us. Like at the International Women's Day rally two years ago, when the only lesbian to appear on stage wore a paper bag over her head. Some lesbians decided not to march in the parade because men were participating. Fair enough, but the humiliation we experienced, or should have experienced, upon witnessing that ridiculous debacle warranted a full-scale boycott.

Not that straight women were to blame — lesbians weren't exactly lining up at the podium to address the rally. Our refusal to be openly lesbian, even within the narrow confines of the women's movement, poses the single biggest threat to our continuing existence as a community, for it strikes at the root of the negativity that gives the community a half-life. Our closetry — whether it manifests itself in a rejection of gay liberation or in the liberal reduction of lesbianism to a lifestyle issue — damns the community to a slow death by attrition.

This fall, *Lesbian/Lesbienne* starts publication; next spring, there will be another lesbian conference in Vancouver. The opportunity to abandon the "lesbian cause" presents itself. We need to determine on what terms we will contribute to gay liberation, and to stop complaining that the gay movement is non-feminist while at the same time withholding our feminist energy from it. We also need to figure out how best to articulate lesbian issues within the women's movement, to attain the high profile we've never really had. Who do I mean by "we"? I mean every woman who has derived even a modicum of emotional support or happiness from the group of lesbian-feminists that resembles and calls itself a community. We have taken much; unfortunately, on the tragic assumption that the community will always be there, most of us have stopped giving.



# MOVEMENT COMMENT



## ... Marching on the Spot ...

This year women as feminists have been urged, prodded and pressed into the streets of Toronto and other parts of Canada.

We marched to celebrate International Women's Day, to support a bill for equal pay for work of equal value, to oppose the use of computerization for the detection of high-risk pregnancy, to demand an end to nuclear proliferation and to cry out in rage in a 'Take Back the Night' march.

But what accomplishments are truly derived from such an outpouring of energy as is generated in a march? Is a march truly an instrument for change? Do the same people show up time and time again? Is the valuable energy and money used to organize and advertise marches being used effectively?

Since generally protest marches set up one or more demands as their primary focus, how often are these demands dealt with by the appropriate authorities in response to the march? International Women's Day is so diffuse and diverse in its representation of women's issues that the march receives little mainstream publicity and never any

followthrough action by government or industry. Ontario Hydro in response to anti-nuclear marches has spent millions telling Ontarians how lucky we are to have our uranium and that atomic energy is Ontario's 'energy future'.

Protest marches are often for crucial and critical issues. However, the format of marches actually diffuses the emotional rage of the participants. Slow wandering on the asphalt or pavement, sing songs and slogan shouting, placard carrying, long boring speeches and usually shoddy entertainment are the composition of most marches. The participants go home tired from standing, perhaps self-satisfied and sometimes disillusioned. Some women feel they have made an active contribution to a cause by being collectively and publicly visible at a march. They close the door on further political action and wait for the next march. There is little personal risk in protesting en masse. The largest component of accomplishment is usually nothing more than renewed public awareness of an issue.

Rarely is a march effective. Certainly protest against Anita Bryant in her travels were positive and presented a clear statement to the public in opposition to her beliefs. Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) in Toronto effectively snuffed out 'Snuff'. The most innovative march I have been on was the 'Take Back the Night' march in the Beaches area of Toronto. The solidarity and uniqueness of a women's only march was uplifting. It was also creative. Noisemakers, horns, whistles, and flashlights in a night environment created a whole different *tone* of protest. This was a statement of light, noise and anger. The press listened, although in some cases not too carefully or with any great depth of understanding, but they listened. Even more so, people came out of their homes to join in, clap, wave and lend wonderful, warm support. We were in the community, not on a cement and asphalt space of uninspiring skyscrapers. This to me made sense and made a statement. That night, for that time at least, women had

'taken back the night.'

But the traditional march is outmoded, useless and inconsequential. Feminists are fully aware of the issues. Our mode of protest must be unique.

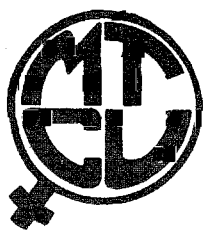
Let's not just walk around in circles or between traffic. Let's not just wave banners and cry out our well developed catch-all jingles. Let's not just stand and listen to political mumble-jumble.

Let's 'turn off' the city for a week to protest nuclear technology. Let's bring the kids to work or leave them with 'daddy' for better day care. Let's have spontaneous theatre groups communicating our protest throughout the city. Let's be innovative and creative in our struggle for change.

Seven years ago I participated in a traditional march to protest the injustices levellied against Jeanette Lavelle and native women who have lost their status due to inequities in the Indian Act. Many years and many marches later, they still wait for these changes. So do I.

□Judy Stanleigh

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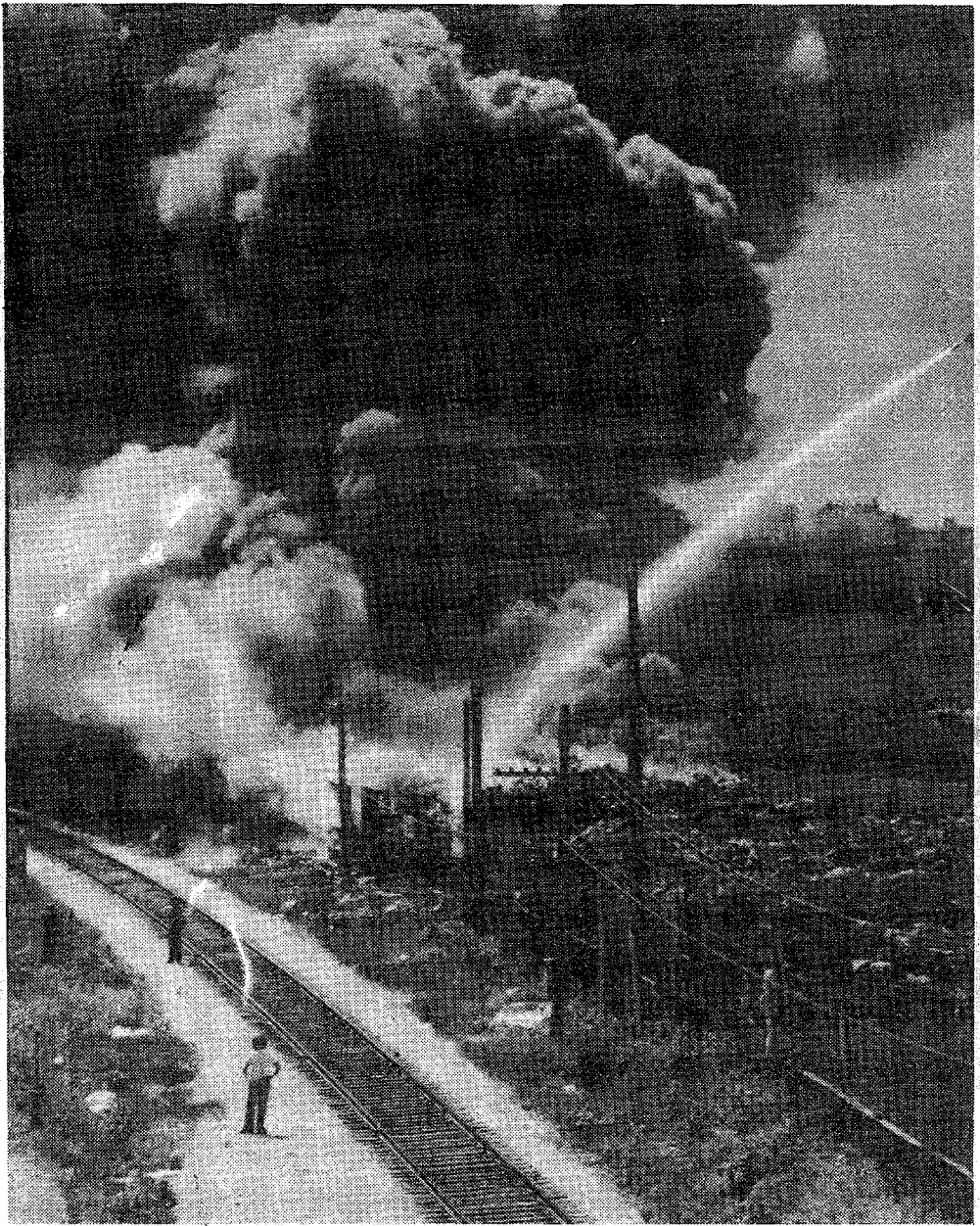
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