

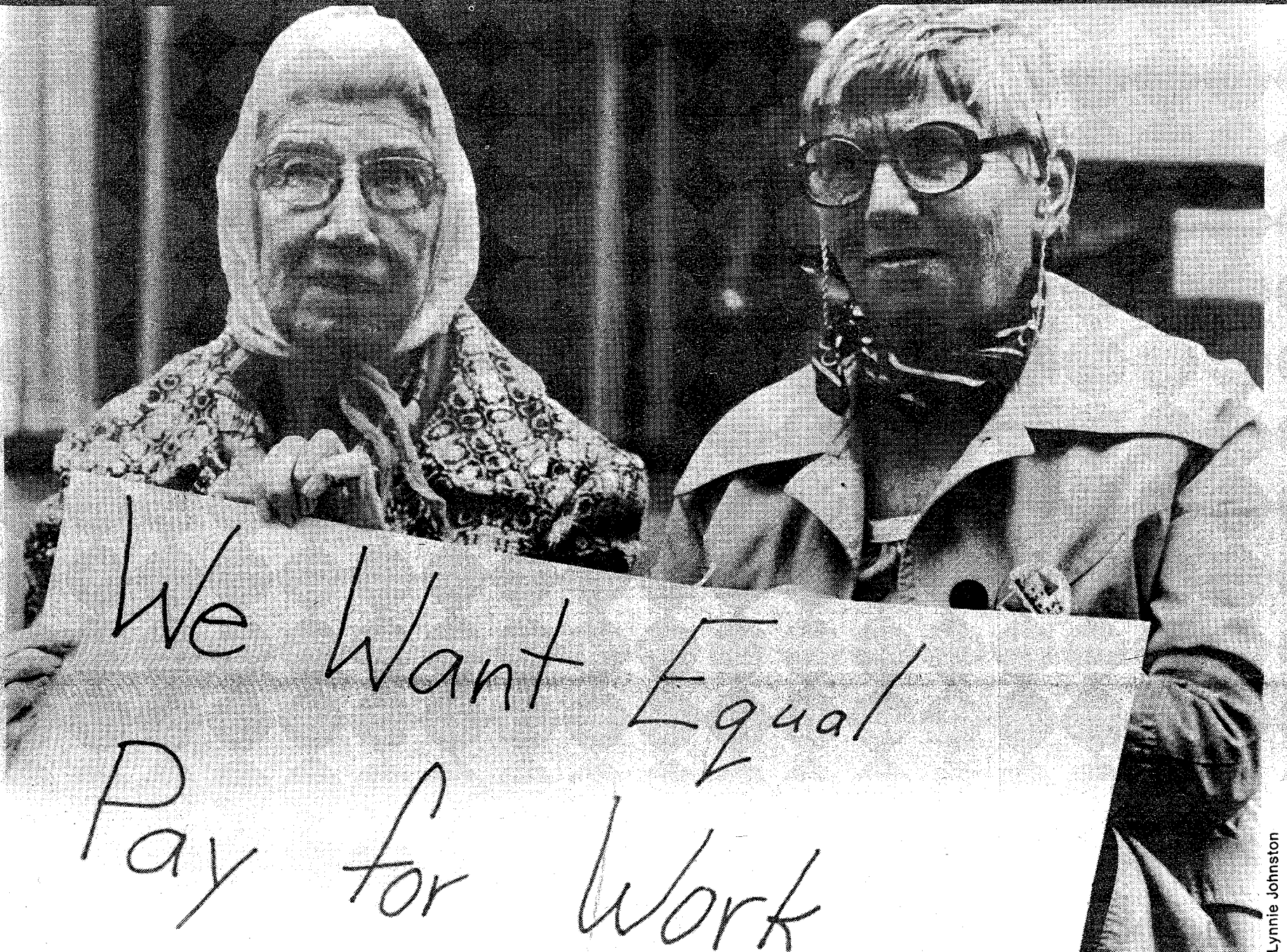
# Broadside

A FEMINIST REVIEW

Vol. 2, No. 10

August/September 1981

\$1



## ...Of Equal Value

SEE STORY PAGE 8

### FEATURES

**STRIKING A BARGAIN:** Feminists in unions fight a lonely battle educating workers about women's needs and forcing unions to take responsibility for women workers; meanwhile, most women in the labour force are not organized, and those in the ever-growing service industries are losing the right to strike. Page 8.

**RICH VISION:** Poet/essayist Adrienne Rich talks to *Broadside* about her concerns for the future of the feminist movement: we must fight harder in times of political regression, and we must listen more to Third World women. Third of a three-part series. Page 4.

### NEWS

**RAID ON RADON:** Women of Windsor, Nova Scotia, wage a fight against Aquitaine Co. of Canada's uranium mining which releases radon gas and its more dangerous, carcinogenic 'daughter' elements into the headwaters of the local Avon River. Page 5.

**BACKLASH AGAINST THE RIGHT:** At the end of the year that saw the close of LOOT and the Fly By Night Bar, lesbians in Toronto congregate again to fight the threat of the New Right. The group cuts across political lines, and so far has decided not to call itself LIPS or PLOT. Page 7.

### INSIDE BROADSIDE

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**FESTIVAL BORÉAL:** The Northern Lights Music Festival in Sudbury, Ontario was well organized, well attended and musically exciting, but the feminist consciousness negligible. Page 12.

### COMMENT

**WHO PAYS?:** The Metro Toronto YWCA responds to criticisms that it can't afford to close down essential services for women by saying it can't afford *not* to. Page 3.

**Renew today!**



# LETTERS

## Broadside:

Thank you for the letter reminding me I'd said I was interested in writing about pornography for *Broadside*.

When I thought the idea over I realized that I had too much on my plate to do a real survey of pornography and perhaps that wasn't what I wanted to consider anyway.

What worries me is a note of Grundy-ism entering into many considerations of sex by feminist magazines. Since some relationships with some men are bad, all have by extension become bad. Since some writing-about-sex is corrupting, all is corrupting, etc.

This of course denies us the freedom, newly acquired, to write about sex in our own way, and writers are worried. That this

denial of freedom should come from a liberation movement is ironic.

It does creep into *Broadside* quite a lot, mostly in the form of a lack of charity towards women writers whose work the reviewers disagree with (viz the article on Sylvia Fraser, February 1981). Surely *Broadside* was never intended to be narrow-minded!

For further material on this theme I refer your readers to Jane Rule's essay "The Sex War" in *Outlander*.

Good luck and best wishes to *Broadside*, which I like a lot.

Marian Engel  
Toronto

## Broadside:

The following letter was sent in June to the Board of Directors, Metro Toronto YWCA, by the Feminist Party of Canada.

"The Feminist Party of Canada wishes to express its extreme concern over the recent decisions of the YWCA board regarding the closing of programs and termination of services. The services that have been terminated or are slated for termination are those most feminist in nature, not duplicated elsewhere in the community, and those most essential to the welfare of low income women. The planned reductions in housing and child care services to low income women are matters of great concern. Of equal concern are the closing of the Women's Resource Centre and the discontinuation of the Community Education program. The decisions to terminate these services are puzzling in view of their relatively low cost and broad impact. These decisions seem to mark a major shift in the broadly feminist image the YWCA has worked hard to establish in Toronto.

"We view the move to complete privatization with alarm. We are aware that the YWCA has faced severe financial difficulties in recent years and that creative planning is required to deal with the growing deficit. However, privatization, restriction of services to those women with 'discretionary income,' narrows markedly the community base of support for YWCA activities, in addition to greatly limiting its impact. We believe that alternative solutions intended to maintain the broad-based feminist image that the YWCA has created in Toronto have not been adequately explored.

"We consider the changes the YWCA

board has approved to be essentially opposed to the welfare of women in Toronto, and thus antithetical to the basic principles of the Feminist Party of Canada. In consequence, we are supporting an immediate boycott of all fee-for-services YWCA programs until there is evidence of a restored commitment on the part of the YWCA to the women of Toronto."

Jeri Wine for  
The Feminist Party of Canada

## Broadside:

I am sending you a copy of an open letter to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, sent in June from the Status of Women Action Group in Victoria:

Dear Council Members:

The recent conference on Women and the Constitution was a great disappointment to me. I attended because I wanted to give a vote of confidence to the Advisory Council. The vote of confidence was based on my appreciation of past performance on the researching of women's issues as they apply to the federal government. I have found the Council always willing to take a stand for the rights of women and competently defend that position to the federal government. That vote of confidence was also based in my frustration at attending the 1981 National Action Committee Convention and finding no voice to give information concerning the perspectives of those women who have chosen to remain on the Council.

However, I now feel that my confidence was ill placed. The CACSW Women and the Constitution Conference was political window dressing: A very expensive effort to pretend that the Council speaks for the women of Canada. The panelists were excellent. But what did they say that could not have been said in February? The information was vital, but no more current than it would have been three months ago. Then, given your extra preparation time, you still did not have complete translations of speeches, maps and signs for out-of-towners, complete texts of briefs to be presented, child care, adequate space or even the juice promised for breaks.

I was also disappointed in the conference structure. I have organized five large scale conferences for women and attended a leg- ion more. One component is characteristic:

participants get involved. The experience is personal. This conference was rigid. We did not come together and share information, experience and strategy. We came and listened to the experts. Period. Informative? Perhaps, if you had not read the book. Energizing? No!

Questions were allowed on a limited basis, but it was clear from the structure that the Council wanted no discussion and no feedback. The Council hid behind the experts who had no responsibility beyond their presentations. Council members were not even available for questions. There were, six hundred women in one space with virtually no interaction. Why? So the government could say, "Look how we encourage/allow women to participate"? So the Council could say, "We got all those women together, we must be doing something right"?

I would have been satisfied with much less elaborate receptions and luncheon if my accommodation could have been paid and that money could have stayed with my local group, where I know that every penny counts. The excess of food and drink displayed an insensitivity to the poverty of women in Canada. How much more profitable if the panelists could have continued their presentations as a debate or discussion for the benefit of us all and then spent time with small groups of women who had already read the position papers and Council publications on these issues. Each Council member could have chaired a group discussing her particular area of interest and expertise.

How shortsighted to have wasted Sunday. Coming from Victoria I was one of those farthest from home, yet I was in Ottawa all day Sunday due to my flight arrangements. It was absurd to bring women across the country for one day of lectures. If you had offered more than a token contact I am sure you would have found women willing to commit more than one day.

I would also have very much appreciated introductions of and background information on Council members. I did not think that conference participants adequately reflected the wide social, economic, cultural or even regional base of Canada's feminists. Now I wonder: does the Council?

The women of Canada deserve and need a representative and powerful Advisory Council at the federal level of government. Nothing less is acceptable.

Shirley Avril  
Status of Women Action Group  
Victoria, BC

## Broadside

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## EDITORIALS

### Y-W=O

The June issue of *Broadside* carried an article on the Metro Toronto YWCA, critical of its current plans and future direction. In this issue we are publishing a response by the Executive Director of the Toronto YW, Ellen Campbell.

It is regrettable that Campbell chose to concentrate on the Y's very real and now familiar financial problems. The fact that there are problems and that something has to be done about them is not at issue. It is the proposed 'solutions' that need explaining.

The suggested rationale for cutting the Resource Centre and Community Education programs is weak, to say the least. They are minor items in the overall Y budget, and no attempts have been made to fundraise for them. As we interpret it, reading between the lines, Campbell's article does not deny that these programs are being cut because they do not fit ideologically with the increased emphasis on the 'non-threatening' image of the Y. It is not that the Y can no longer afford involvement in feminist social action, it is that the present Board and management want no part of it.

The strategy then is to cater to women with 'discretionary income' on the one hand, while avowing a commitment to the very poor (as long as the grants keep coming). As it happens, this leaves out the majority of women. How is it going to help

for the Y to indicate to a considerable proportion of women that it is not for them? It seems a very short-sighted and opportunistic strategy, one which we believe the Metro Toronto YWCA will come to regret.

The extent to which the Y is knowingly alienating itself from active women who might otherwise support it can be gathered from strength of the community reaction to the cuts. About 85 Toronto women showed up to picket at Bongard House when the Board of Directors was to make decisions on the cuts. Letter writing campaigns have been instituted, which will further undermine the Y's precarious position.

*Broadside* does not necessarily concur with every action taken to bring the Y to its senses. Trashing a women's service in public is generally not a tactic we would choose. However, we fully support the initiative and solidarity shown by the women of this community.

As Barbara Waisberg, a long-time Y staffer whose job in Community Education has been abolished, says in her short accompanying comment: "That the YWCA chose to ignore the expression of the community speaks clearly to its new direction."

One suggestion of Ellen Campbell's is worthy of serious consideration. Let's all buy a membership in the Metro Y (\$10) and show up at the next general meeting. ●



Moirra Armour

### Where's My Broadside?

The current issue of *Broadside* (August/September) is our last before the summer. The collective will take a month's break and be back in the fall to start publishing Volume 3 in October.

Meanwhile, as we go to press, the mail strike continues. We will follow our regular production schedule and hold the papers till the strike's off and service resumes. Some July issues got under the wire and reached their destinations, but not all. Perhaps readers will receive numbers 9 and 10 together.

We hope no-one has suffered sensory deprivation, heat loss or general angst in the interim.

# The Reason Y

In *Broadside's* June issue, Eve Zaremba wrote about the Metro Toronto YWCA's cutting back of services, namely the Women's Resource Centre and the Community Education program ('Y and Why Not?' Vol. 2, no. 8), saying that though the Y says it can't afford the services it can't afford to abandon its commitment to women. *Broadside* asked for responses from the Executive Director, Ellen Campbell, and from one of the staff members affected by the cuts, Barbara Waisberg, printed below.

by Ellen Campbell

On behalf of the YWCA, I appreciate the opportunity to present to the readers of *Broadside* our position with respect to the recent changes we have had to make in some of our programs. These changes were not made hastily or easily. They are the result of a year-long effort by board and staff to act responsibly in our present situation. To set these changes in context, I wish to outline three major responsibilities the YWCA believes it has.

The first is to improve the lives of women. That commitment has made us an integral part of the women's movement, contributing to the development of women's services and taking political action on women's issues.

Secondly, as a mainstream social service agency, we have responsibilities to the community at large, to our funders and to other agencies to act responsibly in managing our resources and in providing services.

And thirdly, as a provider of direct service to more than 10,000 women of all political and social views and all economic levels, we must maintain an open, non-threatening environment in which women feel at home and in which they can be challenged by new opportunities and ideas.

These responsibilities often mesh well. Leadership or support on a controversial issue by a respected establishment organization can often provide credibility as the YWCA did years ago when Planned Parenthood's admission to the United Way was at issue. More recently, the participation of the YWCA and the United Church of Canada with Intercede, on behalf of domestic workers, was probably a factor in the decision of the government to change the Employment Standards Act. Our non-threatening atmosphere for women is recognized by agencies or government services when they refer women to the YWCA and by feminist organizations which have found the YWCA a congenial first location for innovative services for women.

But sometimes they don't mesh well, as in the present situation. Our efforts to use our resources responsibly, to ensure that the Association is financially healthy in a

## Broadside:

When I was asked to comment on the termination of the two feminist services at the YWCA of Toronto, I searched for the definitive political comment or a women's organization in retreat from feminism. However, I think everything that needs to be said has been said, and further comment on the YWCA is unnecessary.

Instead, I would like to consider the response of the women's community to the closings. That response was the only heartening aspect of the situation. There was genuine concern for both the services and for us as workers. We received tremendous support from women who knew our work and the value of those services. That the YWCA chose to ignore the expression of the community speaks clearly to its new direction.

Barbara Waisberg,  
Community Education Programme  
Toronto YWCA

hostile economic climate, have been seen by some as a betrayal of feminism and the women's movement, and described as "elitist" and privatization."

To assess these criticisms, we need to look at our objectives in the planning process and ones the Board actually decided. For some time, our income has come from three major sources: donations, investment income and the like. Thus more than 50% of our income comes from sources over which we have little control, and in which the annual increase has been anywhere from 0%, in the case of some grants, to 8% — far below the rate of inflation.

Some of our costs have gone up much faster than inflation. In 1979, the disparity between our advocacy of equal pay for work of equal value and our salary scale, well below comparable voluntary agencies, was recognized and rectified by the Board. The result was a salary budget that has increased from \$1,324,797 in 1979 to \$1,751,140 in 1981, an increase of 32.2%. Again, with the increases we can expect from our major outside funding sources, it is obviously impossible to meet this commitment without developing independent sources of income, or cutting services. Without an increase in the proportion of income which we control, we will face continued erosion of our services and gradual reduction of our impact on the community. Rather than slowly wither away, we have chosen to try to balance our income more effectively, to invest more energy and some money in the development of programs that meet the needs of women in a wider income spectrum and to market these more effectively. By providing high quality programs meeting significant needs for women who can pay for them, the YWCA can afford to continue to provide services to women who are unable to contribute financially. By developing fund-raising strategies which are attractive to women who have discretionary income, we can respond to the increasing need of women in the community who don't.

The planning report submitted to the Board included both income targets and some cuts, since it was clear that the development of our capacity to generate additional income would be a long-term effort. The Board made the following decisions:

1. To work to acquire increased funding for Stop 86 between now and March 31, 1982, and at that time to determine how much deficit we could afford to carry.
2. To close one camp, concentrating efforts on the development of Camp Tapawingo and our year-round Outdoor Centre, which has provided women's programming as well as children's camping. Neither camp serves low-income children; they are fee-based, though some financial assistance is provided to about 50 children each year.
3. To reduce the Ki-Y program to the level of its grant from the Kiwanis Club of West Toronto.
4. To close the Community Education program but to increase cooperative programming and sharing of information across the Association, with particular regard to the identification of and action on women's issues.
5. To close the Resource Centre and seek to relocate the library collection in an accessible location with an organization able to operate it.
6. To retain the Referral Line and Legal Clinic.

Cuts are never easy. If there were no negative impact in cutting a service, we should not have been doing it in the first place. In deciding how and what to cut, we looked at the negative impact of the cuts: Who will be hurt? How many women are served, and to what degree is the service essential to their well-being? Are there others in the community who might be able to offer the service — if not in the same form, then in another? And very pragmatically, we needed to look at how much would be saved by cutting. Obviously, if a program receives 90% of its support from an outside income, it ac-

## Community Education

### Women's Issues

Social action and public education come together in the YWCA's program of Community Education: Women's Issues. This service offers educational programs, resources, and materials to a variety of women in as many different settings as possible on the subject of women's issues. These are topics of special interest and concern to women such as:

- motherhood
- women's health
- women in the work force
- women's development
- pornography.

Programming is done in the community, the workplace, or any setting where women gather. We work with business, government, women's groups, and community groups.

### Violence against Women

Rape, wife battering, sexual harassment on the job, child incest and child molesting are violent acts directed against females. Out of our concern with this violence, we have begun a project on the issue. We have been documenting women's experience of violence; identifying the forms of violence and examining the extent and the causes.

Our focus is public education and we present programs on this issue for the YWCA and community groups.

For further information call the Community Education Co-ordinator at 925-3137.

In addition to these programs, we are offering a five-session group for women who experienced incest when young. This will be an opportunity to discuss this experience with other women and place it in the social context of violence against women. This is not a therapy group, but a chance to look at personal experiences from another perspective. See Adult Education listings (page 14) for details.

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Metro Toronto YWCA Fall Program Brochure 1980, page 36.

completes little to close it, since we lose more than we save.

It is important to emphasize that the cuts we have made are *not* cuts to programs for low-income women, as was reported in the press. One-third of the YWCA's budget (\$750,000 in 1980) goes to programs directed toward low-income women — Focus on Change, Macphail residence, Life Skills groups for ex-psychiatric patients and Teen Mothers. The same proportion of the budget will go to these programs in 1981 and 1982. We are actively acquiring sufficient funding to assure the future of these programs, and, in some cases, to expand them.

Furthermore, reductions in our child care services will not take place in nurseries supporting programs for low-income women. We will be cutting nurseries in fee-based programs in which there are fewer than five children. We cannot afford to subsidize child care for women with discretionary income.

The YWCA has contributed much to the women's movement in Toronto. CARAL, the Rape Crisis Centre, WCREC, and the Women's Fund-Raising Coalition got their start on YWCA premises when they could not afford space of their own; Women in Trades is now using YWCA space. In the mid-70s we were instrumental in developing the Day Care Alliance, now Action Day Care, the Rape Crisis Centre, and the Women's Credit Union. Our Community Education Worker has, as part of her job, been active in the establishment of Support Services for Assaulted Women. For more than seven years, the YWCA has provided to the women's community the Resource Centre and the Community Education Worker in Women's Issues at a cost of roughly \$50,000 per year. We can no longer afford to do so and we look to other organizations to carry some of that responsibility.

The YWCA retains its commitment to women and to the women's movement. In a period when virtually every social agency is faced with cutbacks and reductions, we are not immune. There are ways that women in

## Women's Resource Centre

— houses the most extensive library of materials on women's issues available to the public in Toronto. There is a lending library, including a well-catalogued book collection, a wide variety of periodicals and an up-to-date file of news clippings.

— provides, through the Women's Information and Referral Service, a liaison with other women's groups throughout the city. Call 925-1154. The Centre produces and distributes a semi-annual listing of "Women's Groups in Toronto" (\$1 if picked up, \$2 by mail.)

— houses a legal clinic staffed by women law students from the University of Toronto. The clinic is open afternoons and evenings, Monday to Thursday. Call 925-1154 for appointment.

Drop in at 15 Birch Avenue (at the Summerhill Subway). Hours: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, Tuesday til 8 p.m.

### CHRISTMAS IS NOT FAR AWAY!

Why not "steal a march" on everyone by ordering copies of our cookbook **YOUR YW SERVES.**

This collection of favourite recipes of our members and friends makes a thoughtful gift for your family and friends. Pick up your copies at North Program Centre, Women's Development Centre or Bongard House.

Only \$5.50 each  
Proceeds to Convention '81

the community can help us to retain that commitment in practical, direct terms. For example, we are looking for:

- a women's organization willing to house and support the Resource Centre library. The location should be accessible and inviting to women. The budget for materials has always been about \$3000; staff costs would depend on the time the organization could commit to the centre and its salary scale.
  - volunteers to assist staff in carrying on the Referral Line, a well-used service since its inception at Women's Place. They should be familiar with women's services in Toronto and able to volunteer several hours per week on a regular basis.
  - social action volunteers, willing to do research, develop policies, speak to groups and mobilize support for issues.
- 5 The YWCA is a membership organization. Women who are concerned about its future directions and who wish to support the service it provides to the community are encouraged to join.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the article in *Broadside's* June issue (Eve Zaremba, 'Y and Why Not'). We appreciate, as well, the concern of many women in the community who have strong feelings about the YWCA's role in our city. We hope that we may count on your understanding and support as we look for ways to come to terms with the changing conditions all of us face and will continue to face during the next decade. The Board, the staff and the membership want the YWCA to continue to provide service to women and to be a spokesperson for women's concerns. This will only happen if we make responsible decisions and if we continue to receive the support of women in our community.

Ellen Campbell is Executive Director of the Metropolitan Toronto YWCA.



## Adrienne Rich:

# Stand Fast and Move Forward



Ottie Lookey

by Eve Zaremba

Adrienne Rich's best known prose work, *Of Woman Born*, took up an enormous part of her life in the years 1972-76. She decided to write a book on motherhood because she needed to understand what had happened to her. Rich had come to see that up until then feminist writing had not addressed this subject in any depth. Yet motherhood had been the point of her radicalization. She felt she had the task of writing a book on motherhood; it needed to be done.

Had the book been written now it would be very different. Since it appeared, much has happened and many aspects of the subject have been covered in print. Adrienne Rich herself came out as a lesbian in the process of writing it, although the content of the book does not reflect this.

"I feel that in many ways the book is incomplete. Before it even appeared I realized there should have been a chapter on food, the breast, wet-nursing, the whole symbolism of woman as nourisher and provider, the use of baby formula in the Third World ... There is much that isn't there but, thank goodness, is now in other places."

"Obviously, if I was writing the book today the work of Nancy Chodorow (*The Reproduction of Mothering*, University of California Press, 1978) and of Dorothy Dinnerstein (*The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and the Human Malaise*, Harper & Row, 1976) would have

to be critiqued. The whole issue of incest is very relevant now. To say that the solution to the social malaise is more participation by men in childcare seems to me an incredibly naive solution."

Rich had made the decision while writing *Of Woman Born* not to do a chapter on 'the black mother,' or any of many potential chapters specifying different kinds of motherhood: "I felt totally unable to do a chapter on black motherhood. I was obviously writing this book from a white/ western perspective since I am white and western. There is no getting around that."

The issue of lesbian motherhood is somewhat different. Rich says: "Given the issue of child custody and the problems lesbian mothers run up against in feminist communities with their children, it would have born some kind of special examination. I wish now I had done that."

On the other hand, Rich would have cut down on other material: "Now, there would have been less about ancient matriarchies. This was new then but is not new now. A lot has been written on this in recent years. The book, if written now, would have been much more geared to the present/ the recent past."

"In the meanwhile, my children had grown up. They are now full grown, adult, while males whom I am very fond of and like very, very much; about whose feminism or pro-feminism I would not swear an oath on any account. They are, I think, funda-

mentally decent people but have yet to understand, if they ever do, what their gender and skin colour does for them. I don't think they can realize the doors that are open, the assumptions that are made, the privilege that goes with that."

*Sinister Wisdom* is a quarterly magazine subtitled *A Journal of Words and Pictures for the Lesbian Imagination in all Women*. Adrienne Rich and Michelle Cliffe have taken it over recently from its founders and are publishing it from their semi-rural home in Massachusetts with the help of the local feminist community. They had talked about starting a magazine even before they left New York. Cliffe has had much editorial and publishing experience and Rich, of course, has been reading and commenting on women's writing for years. The reality of taking over and running an existing magazine is somewhat different from what they envisioned. The amount of ongoing business and the amount of work came as a shock. But both of them are committed to *Sinister Wisdom* as a political action, are serious about it, and feel it is all worth it.

Part of their plans for *Sinister Wisdom* is to go back to some of the classics of the movement which came out in the early days, only ten or so years ago yet not much read now. For example, they would like to re-review books like Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, anthologies such as *Sisterhood is Powerful*, *Notes from the Second Year* and *Notes from the Third Year* as well as the recently published *Building Feminist Theory*, which contains essays from *Quest*, an immensely influential feminist quarterly.

"I am recommending to us all that we go back and look at that literature now. It's astonishingly radical, a lot more radical than what is being put out today."

For many women who were not around ten years ago, it would be a revelation to read these classics of the movement, Rich feels. We somehow expect that their content will be taken in by osmosis. But it is not and cannot be. On the contrary: "What happens is that content of these texts is diffused, then it all goes soft and the hard edge is lost."

On the state of the feminist movement (her preferred phrase), Adrienne Rich is very articulate, analytical and generally not at all pessimistic. There are a number of important developments in recent years that make her hopeful. She describes the situation like this:

"Pre-Reagan, almost from the time of the Houston Conference, there was a realization of the existence of the organized Right and that it was focussing on the feminist movement. At Houston feminists saw the Klan, saw women massed against them in the other space as 'pro-lifers'. For many women it was a real eye-opener."

"Another thing which is going on is a growing sense that this is indeed an international movement. I feel this in the States now. There is an incredible acceleration of communication around the world. Not absolutely everywhere but certainly between European feminist movement and the States."

Perhaps the most important development for the future of the movement in the US is the enormous increase in participation by working-class women and women of colour. Rich sees a real growth in this area and the effect it is having and will increasingly have on the movement. She says one of the best signs is that women are seeing their working-class roots as sources of empowerment, not just as something to be moved away from. Much of what is being written now is description of female working-class experiences with class structures which have not been seen before.

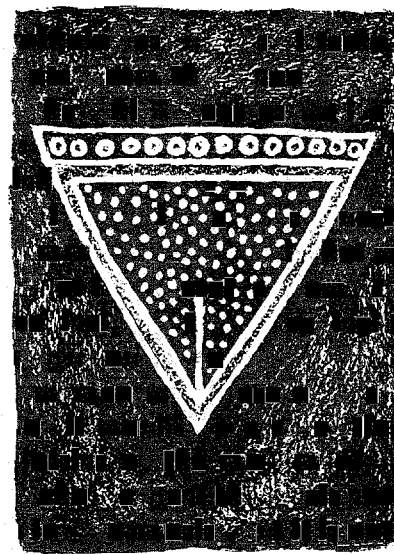
"We need all the connections if we are going to stand fast and keep moving forward. In a period of regression and reaction, just staying in one place can seem like a radical act. People retrench very fast. One thing which is going to keep us and goad us, — us, the visible, largely white part of the movement — is the presence of a very articulate and growing Third World women's movement."

"A lot of the women I have talked to in the past months, since Reagan was elected, have felt that the thing to do is to stiffen our spines and really get on with it. Now. And know that we are dangerous and be dangerous. We are all scared too, and quite rightly so. But the feeling is that we must take ourselves as seriously as we are being taken."

"I guess it would be easier if we had a program that would tell us what we have to do for the next ten years. But we don't, and we won't. We will have to find out from each other, from our mistakes. A lot of different strategies are going to be tried. *I want to keep trying to move with the kind of radical vision that was there at the beginning of this women's movement.*"

If anyone carries that radical vision with her it is Adrienne Rich.

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17

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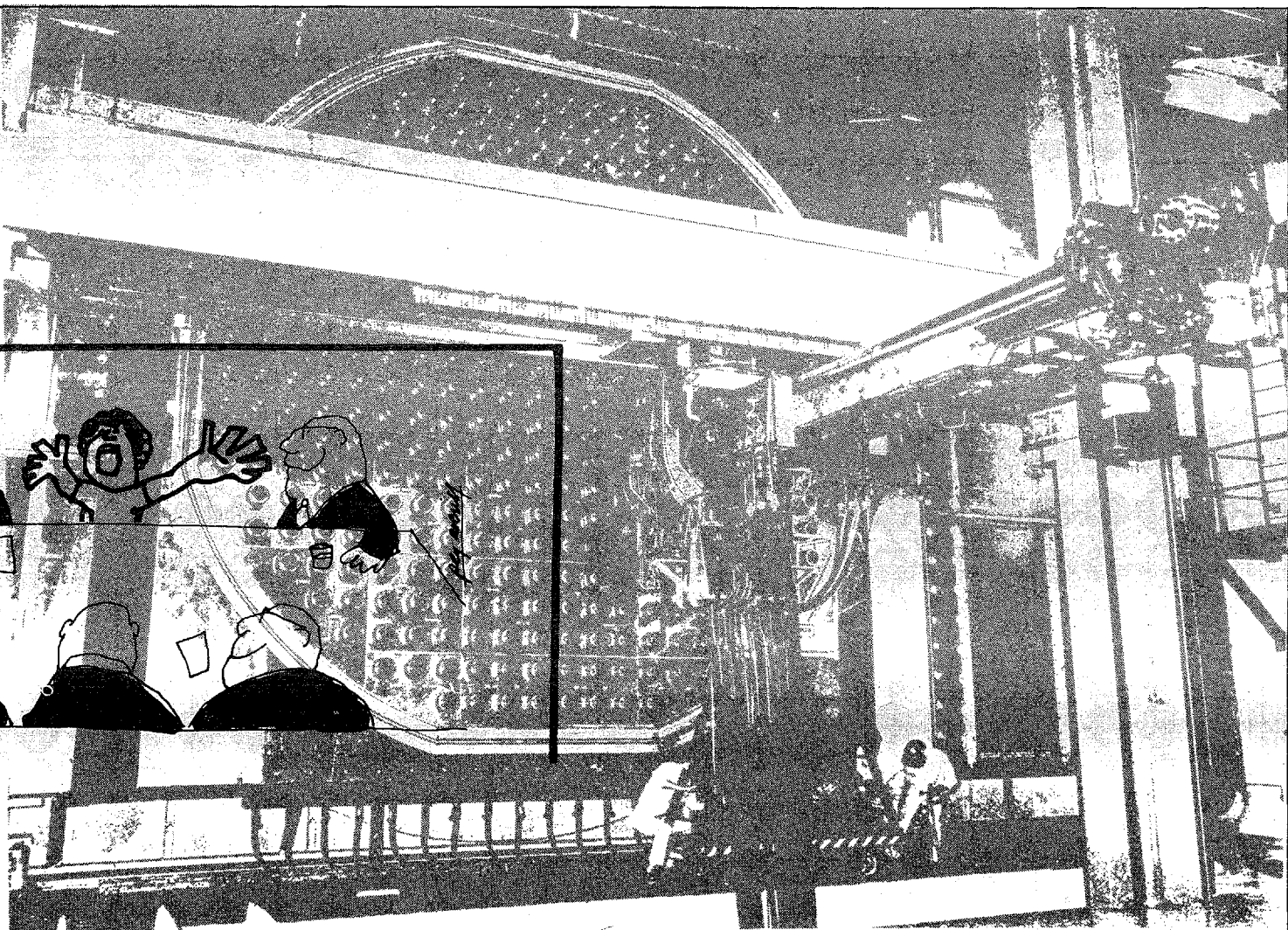
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# Radon Daughters



Peg Averill

by Donna E. Smyth

The local radio station in the small town of Windsor, Nova Scotia, has a monthly spot reserved for reports from Women's Institutes in the area. The "ladies" usually speak of quilt-making, bake sales, and flea-markets.

But when it came time for the Burlington Women's Institute to report, the station and listeners got an earful. Some members had been alerted by the Ecology Action Centre, a Halifax-based environmental group. Some had gone out in the back field and found survey stakes. A few had talked last spring to blue-jeaned and down-vested geologists.

They were after uranium. In 1975, several multinational companies had moved into Nova Scotia to conduct extensive exploration programs.

On the radio program, the ladies from Burlington expressed their particular concern about the drilling activities of Aquitaine Company of Canada Ltd. The company's most active site is Millet Brook, approximately eight miles from Windsor. Millet Brook feeds into the headwaters of the Avon River, a pretty stream which meanders through fields and hills down through Windsor and into the sea. It is one of the principle surface water systems of the area.

As the ladies talk, their knowledge of the subject is impressive. Between changing Pampers and doing the dishes they have read extensively in the background literature. Much of it is highly technical and involves learning a whole new vocabulary.

Radon daughters, for instance. When uranium ore is exposed to the atmosphere, radon gas (Radon-222) is released. Radon-222 is a "daughter" of one of the most critical radioactive elements, Radium-226; i.e., it is an isotope released during the

element's decay chain. In the lungs, Radon-222 further decays into 4 daughter isotopes, 2 of which, Polonium-218 and Lead-214, are particularly carcinogenic.

Why daughters? Why not call them sons? Does the atomic instability of uranium indicate an inherent femaleness?

The ladies of the Women's Institute are roundly berated by the station manager for raising the uranium issue and for mentioning a company name on the air.

Instead of retiring in lady-like fashion, they prepare a brief and present it to the West Hants Municipal Council. Faced with detailed information on the hazards of uranium mining and milling, the Council unanimously passes a resolution asking the provincial Tory government to declare a moratorium on uranium exploration and mining.

Aquitaine responds by immediately calling a public meeting to "quiet local fears." The company's Senior Vice-President from Calgary and an environmental consultant from Toronto are flown in for the occasion.

Windsor hasn't seen so many big-wigs since the nineteenth century when it was a thriving port town. The meeting hall is jammed.

For over two hours the Aquitaine men try to convince the audience that uranium mining is safer than flying in a plane.

But the ladies have done their homework. So have other members of the audience. Questions fly: What about the dangers of tailings and tailings ponds? What about ground water contamination? What about increased incidences of lung cancer and leukemia?

The Aquitaine men insist there is no problem. They speak of natural background radiation and toss off phrases such as, "Life's a risk."

The ladies find themselves at a disadvan-

tage because they are women. Not only is mining a "man's world," but uranium mining, in particular, is part of the masculine mystique attached to the nuclear fuel cycle. There is the "hard" macho nuclear path and the "soft" alternative paths. Hard refers to the scientific, rational, objective solution; soft means the romantic, irrational, subjective one.

It becomes clear that the Aquitaine men respond differently to questions from men in the audience. When a woman asks a question, the Vice-President looks patient, fatherly, indulgent. When a man raises an issue, he is treated with respect, the atmosphere becomes friendly, man-to-man.

This masculine style of public discourse makes the women appear slightly hysterical, over-reactive and, in any case, feminine, and therefore not capable of tackling this "man's" problem.

After the meeting, one of the women tries to ask Jaek Garnett, Director of Mineral Resources in the provincial Department of Mines and Energy, some technical questions. Garnett is a champion of the uranium industry and a tall, handsome man. He looks like he should be riding a horse into a western sunset while rolling a cigarette with one hand.

While Garnett is politely fielding these questions, he pats the woman's arm as if she is an erring child. She is in her mid-thirties and has four children of her own.

Later, some of the ladies of the Women's Institute drop out of sight. A couple of them have fallen for Jack Garnett. Others are too busy with their own lives.

But a core group goes on to help found a community-based organization, CAPE (Citizen Action to Protect the Environment). CAPE is now working towards pressuring the provincial government to follow BC's lead and declare a moratorium on

uranium exploration and mining.

For some of the women, their concern springs from their involvement with bearing and raising children. They are concerned about a future for these children and their grandchildren.

Many of them live in rural areas where, along with the farming community (the provincial Federation of Agriculture has passed a resolution asking for a moratorium), they experience every day the connectedness of human, animal, and plant life. The experts call these connections the possible biological pathways of contamination.

Some of the women are deeply involved with anti-nuclear and peace groups. Uranium has only two uses: to feed nuclear reactors and for nuclear weapons. The multinationals insist they are not involved in or responsible for what happens to the uranium after they sell it.

These women are insisting that somebody has to be held to account. The corollary to the hard nuclear path is nuclear war. The masculine mystique leads to global destruction.

The Voice of Women in Nova Scotia has recently launched a peace petition to be forwarded to the UN with two million signatures of Canadian women who are determined to ensure the survival of the species and this planet Earth.

But you can't talk peace in the front yard with a uranium mine out back. Aquitaine is moving heavy equipment into the Millet Brook site. In another part of the province Shell has stepped up its drilling program.

Radon daughters spring, like Athena, out of the heads of men. In Nova Scotia women, they may have met their match.

*Donna E. Smyth teaches women's studies at Acadia University and is co-ordinating editor of Atlantis.*

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# MOVEMENT MATTERS

## Women's Movement Archives

"Without your letter to the bookstore and the general consciousness-raising you've done about the need to get on with the collection of herstorical materials, all that would have been lost to water damage." So Margo Dunn wrote to the Women's Movement Archives about the recovery of the archival materials from the basement of the Vancouver Women's Bookstore on October 4, 1980, only ten days before the loss by arson of one of the oldest women's spaces in Vancouver.

Much of the focus on the collection of women's history in Canada, particularly since the formation of women's studies courses in academic institutions, has been on prominent women. Not all of us can be famous women, making our mark in history books, but, while the "personal is political," the slogan can be reversed to mean that our political work is very personal to us. What we have been doing for the last ten years or more is building a movement for social change in which the process is as important as the organization. And independent archives on the movement will ensure that we, as active feminists, will acknowledge that our work is important and must be preserved.

Active feminists across Canada have asked how independent a women's archives would be from the government, as the greatest worry is security from the state and its friends. An autonomous women's archives group must be accountable to and co-operate with other feminists, but always be capable of acting as a pressure group to ensure that institutions take us seriously.

Both provincial and national archives have indicated interest in the current women's movement. The British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan public archives are beginning to collect regional material and, in one instance, the National Archives has offered to buy material belonging to one of the oldest women's groups in Toronto. What are we doing to help these institutional archives? Should we be helping them?

British Columbia, for instance, could support a women's regional archives easier than areas such as the prairies or the Atlantic Provinces, where every effort should be made to liaise with the local archives. In fact, two feminists in B.C. are beginning work on the history of the women's movement there. If it is necessary to sell or donate group files to government institutions, there must be strict conditions attached concerning their accessibility and storage. However, as much material as possible should stay in the regions in which it originates.

In Toronto, the Women's Movement Archives (Canadian Herstory Project) is inde-

pendent, but works closely with the international network of alternative archives. There are now available copies of the holdings on periodicals, and group and subject titles on file (\$2.00). For a free brochure, write P.O. Box 928, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario.

WMA is looking for experienced women in library science, women's studies, photography, archival work and fundraising. WMA now has office space and, beginning on Monday, August 31, will have regular office hours on Mondays from 7 to 9 pm. For an appointment, call Pat Leslie at 489-3153 or 863-4950 (work).

Lastly, send your material donations (originals or photocopies) to the Archives. Do not put a subjective value judgement on your papers; everything is welcome. And watch for the next issue of *Broadside* for information about a celebration on October 4 of the first anniversary of the Vancouver movement's rescue from the Bookstore basement. Mark that day in your calendars for a women's day of herstory.

— Pat Leslie

## Attention All Lesbians!

**FIREWEED**, a feminist quarterly published in Toronto, is soliciting material from lesbians living in Canada for an *Anthology of lesbian culture and politics*.

We are looking for any work which you feel would explore, challenge and make visible the culture and politics of lesbians: interviews, fiction, poetry, visual work, reviews, history/documentation, dialogues between contemporary lesbian art/theatre/political/literary women.

Manuscripts should be typewritten, double spaced, on 8 1/2 x 11 paper with footnotes and illustrations (if any) fully captioned. Article outlines or proposals are welcome. If you are submitting visual work, please send a photograph or copy — do not send original work through the mail. All submissions must include a S.A.S.E. and a short biographical statement. *Submission Deadline*: September 30, 1981. Coming out Feb./82. Send to: **FIREWEED**, P.O. Box 279, Station B, Toronto, Ontario M5T 2W2. Attention: Issue 13

## Women's Credit Union Announcement

Members of the Toronto Women's Credit Union are advised that a meeting, tentatively scheduled for August 18, 1981, will be held to vote on the future of the credit union: whether to close down or merge with TorCity.

All members are urged to attend — 7 pm, Auditorium, Board of Education Bldg., 155 College Street, Toronto. For confirmation, or further information, call 960-0322.

## Stepping Out of Line



There is no woman in this culture who does not react to the word lesbian. Every time we say lesbian out loud we challenge the assumption that heterosexuality is the only option for women; we assert women's right to choice, to self-determination, to autonomy.

A Vancouver collective is currently publishing a workshop manual and resource guide on Lesbian/Feminism called *Stepping Out of Line*. It is a summary of material used in over 40 workshops presented to women's groups in BC over the past six years.

The first section of the book is the Workshop Script, which gives precise instructions for organizing and presenting a 2-day struc-

tured workshop for women, connecting lesbianism and feminism on both an emotional and an intellectual level. The *Feminsim* as Framework section serves as a resource for workshop facilitators and participants and gives a brief perspective on issues ranging from capitalism to relationships which affect us as women and as lesbians. *Feminism as Framework* also includes personal stories from many women, organizing strategies, a bibliography and addresses of relevant groups.

*Stepping Out of Line* is available (for \$6 plus 75¢ handling) from: Workshop Collective, c/o Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell Street, Vancouver, BC V6A 1H2.

## A Valiant Effort

After the Planning Report was released to Metro Toronto YWCA staff members, the women's community learned of the recommended sweeping removal of all programs overtly feminist in nature. The encouragement of the Y to provide services for women with disposable income meant a great shift in the focus of the YWCA. At the May Board meeting, the staff union, CUPE local 2189, pushed for time to respond to the Planning Report, and the implementation of decisions and recommendations from the report was therefore postponed until June.

Meanwhile, at the Women's Services Network meeting, of which the Y is a member, women committed themselves to discuss the issues with their employers (member organizations) and to request that a letter be sent to the Y Board of Directors. As a result, the YWCA received many letters from women's groups concerned with the cutbacks in services directly affecting them.

On May 21, a group of women met to discuss strategy dealing with the report and how to demonstrate effectively to the Y their concerns. The first action was to inform the media, with the result that the

Toronto *Star*, the *Globe & Mail* and *Broadside* all wrote about the proposed changes. Following that, petitions were distributed and a picket of about 80 women formed outside Bongard House on June 4, the night of the meeting which would decide the fate of the report.

Two women on the picket line were invited to the meeting to speak to the Board on behalf of the community about women's concerns.

Following the picket, demonstrators organized letter-writing campaigns. One group sent letters to the President and the Chairman of the Board of the United Way, to protest that agency's financial support of the Y. Another group met on June 28 to write protest letters to the *Star*, the *Globe & Mail* and the Y Board.

Because of community pressure, some Y Board members abstained from voting through the Planning Report's recommendations, and increased efforts were made to ensure the continuation of the women's hostel, Stop 86. But the Resource Centre and the Community Education program are still closing down.

Judy Stanleigh

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## Lesbian Movement

# Coming Together in a Hot Gym



Carroll Holland

What direction is the lesbian movement heading in? Lesbian conference marchers in Vancouver, May 1981.

by Lorna Weir and Brenda Steiger

The lesbian movement in Toronto is remobilizing after its setbacks of the last few months. In September of last year, LOOT (Lesbian Organization of Toronto) gave up the house it had been renting since 1977. The Lesbian Phone-line and drop-ins continued, but the heart had been cut out of the organization with the loss of the house.

Although many of us were disturbed by the folding of LOOT, we consoled ourselves with the thought that we still had the Fly by Night, a woman's bar with a largely lesbian clientele. The Fly was indeed a great comfort to lesbians — until January of this year when it was abruptly closed by its new owner, Phil Stein. Stein's wish to extract greater profits from the Fly cost lesbians the loss of our most important social centre, a serious blow to our sense of collectivity. There we were in February, the most depressing month of the year in Toronto, with our two most important social institutions down the drain. In some senses lesbians were back to relying on the kinds of social organization we used prior to the emergence of lesbian feminism: a commercial, non-feminist bar and friendship networks. There was a frightening sense of homelessness throughout the lesbian community at that time.

April came by and GLARE (Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere) put on a day of workshops with the common theme of fighting the rise of the New Right. It's a known fact that few lesbians ever show up at political or social events which gay men have had a hand in organizing. However, that day dykes turned up in droves. There were several reasons for this turnabout: the gay men who are active in GLARE have over the years had much closer links with lesbians and feminism than other sectors of the gay liberation movement; lesbians realize we share with gay

men a common enemy in the New Right; and, most importantly, dykes were desperate to talk to each other. In the women-only workshop, an idea for a one-day lesbian conference was aired and a committee volunteered to organize the conference.

The success of the May 9th forum, Lesbians Fighting the Right, far exceeded everyone's expectations. The consensus of the day was that we needed a new lesbian organization, the exact nature of which required further discussion. Another committee was formed to bring suggestions regarding a possible basis of unity to the first meeting of the new group.

On June 17th the new group, provisionally called Lesbians Fighting the Right, held its initial meeting. To the shock of many present, we managed to get a consensus on the basis of unity on that first night. The women in attendance accepted the proposals of the organizing group with a few changes in wording. The following statement was agreed upon as a basis of unity: "We define ourselves as 1) a lesbian-feminist organization; 2) as activists working on social, political and cultural events; 3) as women-identified women who work together to fight the right as lesbians from a lesbian perspective." The motions carried without substantial controversy, other than a dispute over whether we should call ourselves lesbian feminists or feminist lesbians.

Women at the meeting were concerned to make clear that the new lesbian feminist group should not be interpreted as an attack on those women still active in LOOT. LOOT had tried to be an umbrella organization for all lesbians in Toronto, whatever their political preference. Since, not surprisingly, LOOT was unable to fulfill the needs of all lesbians, in practice LOOT became an uneasy alliance of opposing factions. A regular bone of contention in LOOT was politics: whether or not LOOT should consciously define itself as a political group. A continuing debate developed between those women who wished LOOT

to take a more activist stance and those who argued that politicizing LOOT would exclude/alienate many lesbians, particularly those coming out. The net result was that LOOT ended up supporting everyone in the abstract, and no one in particular.

The difficulties that LOOT faced probably had less to do with it specifically than with the dilemmas of any umbrella organization. Many radical social movements evolve in the same way as the lesbian movement has in Toronto. An initial umbrella organization differentiates into separate groups, each with a more particular focus than the umbrella group had. During the course of this evolution the first group may either fold or reconstitute itself on a different basis as one group among many. What was dangerous in the evolution of the autonomous lesbian movement was the time gap which occurred between the winding down of LOOT and the rise of new groups such as Lesbians Fighting the Right and the Lesbian Speakers' Bureau.

The second meeting of the new lesbian political organization was less euphoric than the first. We were unable to reach a political consensus regarding its name. Neither FLE (rhymes with flea) — Feminist Lesbians Everywhere, nor PLOT — Political Lesbians of Toronto, nor LIPS — Lesbians in Political Struggle, were judged adequate to the task. Arriving at a politically correct name with a dynamite acronym isn't easy.

Despite our failure to find a name with which we would feel comfortable, work has already begun on a number of projects. We approved the production of a pamphlet which will consist of the speeches given at the May 9th Lesbians Fighting the Right forum, together with a general introduction, both political and historical, to the group, and an as yet undefined inspirational conclusion. A second project, for which 11 women volunteered, is the organization of a series of political discussions. Current plans for the discussions are to meet, talk

politics and adjourn to a bar. We are hoping to motivate a bar occupation one night a week by lesbians. The plan is that word will spread through the community of time and place, and that dykes will come to know we can regularly get together with other dykes on the designated night. This is meant as a stopgap measure until a new women's bar is in operation.

Lesbians Fighting the Right has agreed to participate in the March 27, 1982, bi-national Day of Action and Education which was put forward at the Lesbian Conference in Vancouver in May. Organizations parallel to Lesbians Fighting the Right are being established in Calgary, Montreal and Vancouver. Current plans are for regional actions against the New Right in the fall, building towards March 27, 1982. The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres has endorsed the Day of Action and Education, and directed its members to help in ways they are able to promote the day. The women of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre have already offered us their assistance. For further information on the March 27th Day of Action, consult the monthly newsletter *Lesbian/Lesbienne*.

Not the least of our activities is a summer social: a picnic on Toronto Island so that members can get to know each other. We are quite conscious of the fact that a political group serves important personal and social needs for its members. The healthy habit of adjourning to a bar after meetings has already been integrated into our group process.

Lesbians Fighting the Right, as we are called for the time being, hopes to attract women who are activists or who want to be activists. We're trying to run our meetings in away that is congenial, avoiding the extremes of rigid structures and utter chaos. This means a woman chairs each meeting and we have an agenda, although Robert's Rules of Order are cast to the winds and we

•continued page 14



# Union Maid

by Mariana Valverde

## Introduction

Women make up well over a third of the Canadian labour force, and our participation rate shows no signs of declining despite recessions, lay-offs, and shortages of daycare spaces. The traditional family headed by a male breadwinner is going the way of the ten-cent coffee, not so much because of the roaring success of feminist ideas but simply because Canadian workers find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Census figures for 1971 show that 65% of Canadian families have more than one income, and that the proportion of women who work increases steadily as one goes down the economic ladder. Most women work because they have to. In their book *The Double Ghetto*, Pat and Hugh Armstrong show that the misleading use of 'family income' statistics has disguised the fact that the working class has maintained its share of the national income only because more family members worked: "The increasing participation of married women in the labour force obscures the growing disparity in income distribution."

Women have joined the labour force in droves at other times in history, notably in wartime. But we usually went back into the home when work was scarce, especially if we were mothers. In the last three decades, however, women have been joining the labour force *permanently*. What this means is that women now have a life-long, personal stake in the labour force, and that as a result the need for organizations such as trade unions is more pressing than ever. And indeed, more and more women have been joining unions, going on strike, and doing all the unladylike things that workers have to do in capitalist societies in order to protect themselves.

In the last ten or fifteen years, the rising militancy of women in the labour movement has been one of the most significant changes in Canadian working-class culture. There are many reasons for this: increased militancy in white-collar unions, a higher level of feminist consciousness, a growing need on the part of many women to get well-paid jobs, etc. We know that this 'rising of the women' is no mere slogan when we see Grace Hartman, the president of the country's largest union, go to jail for not helping the government repress hospital workers (most of whom, incidentally, are women). And we have just seen the Steelworkers elect an Ontario director, Dave Patterson, who predicted that "the next president of the Canadian Labour Congress would be a woman from a white-collar union" (*Globe & Mail*, June 19).

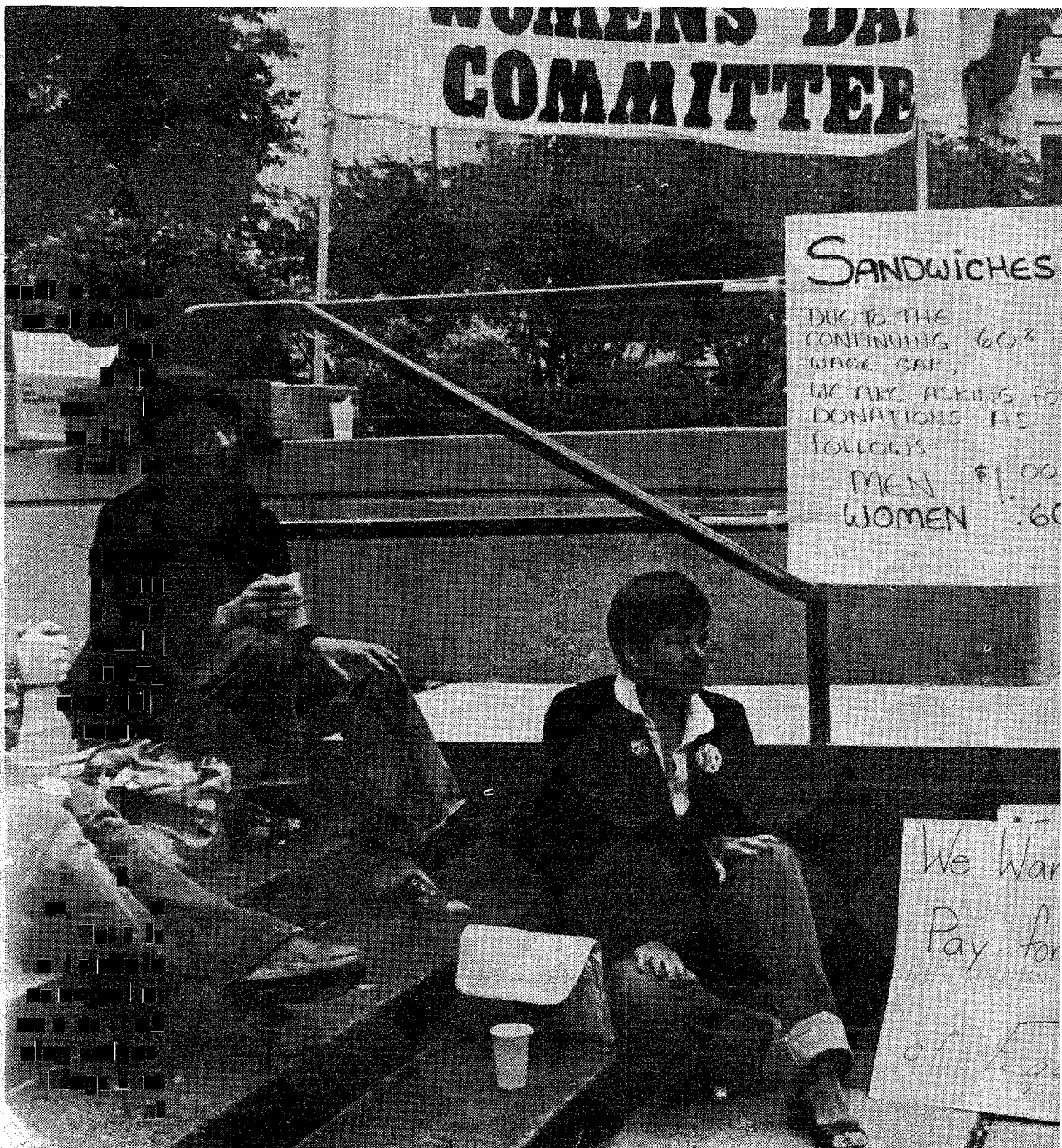
The presence of dedicated women militants is being felt in the labour movement at the same time that unionists of both sexes are realizing that the feminist movement is here to stay: CUPW, one of Canada's most militant unions, is now on strike over paid maternity leave. Clearly, there are links between the growing militancy of women as workers and the rise, over the past ten years, of an autonomous women's movement: to mention only the most obvious connection, many women unionists have been active in — or at least influenced by — the women's movement. To explore the links between the two movements, the mutual support they can give each other as well as the conflicts that arise, I talked with eight women who work as feminists in labour unions.

## Why bother?

All of the women I interviewed agree that self-defined feminists are a rather rare species in the union movement. Linda Briskin, a community college teacher who is very active in her union (OPSEU 244), explains: "You ask a woman if she's for equal pay, or for daycare, and she'll say yes; but ask her if she's a feminist, and she'll say, oh no, not me." Unfortunately for feminists, "women's lib" has a fairly negative image," despite the fact that the issues of the women's movement, taken one by one, usually make sense to union women. Feminists always have to translate the general principles of feminism into concrete struggles; but if the level of feminist consciousness is not raised, each issue has to be fought for separately and the feminist wheel has to be invented every time. The gap between single issues and feminist politics remains a wide one.

Shelley Gordon, a library technician active in CUPE 1582, pointed out that an issue like daycare can be seen as a "people's issue," as opposed to a feminist demand. Support for daycare does not necessarily lead to support for the autonomous women's movement. The dilemma that feminists face is then: does one explain women's issues in terms of "people's needs," that is, in non-threatening terms? Or does one use an issue like daycare to raise questions about women's need for economic independence, about the problems in traditional nuclear families, etc.? "There's always a trade-off," Shelley explains; and each situation has to be evaluated, taking into account the nature of the issue and the level of consciousness in each union body.

Mariana Valverde is a graduate student in political theory and is active in the International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) in Toronto.



Maureen Hynes, a teacher at George Brown (OPSEU 556), agrees that this dilemma cannot be solved once and for all. "It's okay to see daycare as a family issue," she said, "but there are other issues, like discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, that have to be aired in all their ramifications. There can be no watering down of this issue." She added that it's very important to take the time to explain such issues to union members, even if it's a slow process.

I was then reminded of a gay rights rally held a few months ago, where Toronto Labour Council president Wally Majesky gave a very politically correct speech. At the same time the Labour Council was taking a decision to condemn the police harassment of the gay community, some unionists at UAW 1967 (McDonnell-Douglas) were puzzled and concerned about the support of lesbian and gay rights expressed in the International Women's Day statement circulated in their plant. It's nice that union leaders are taking progressive stands, but it would be even better if they used their position and their resources to do more educational work among the membership: the Labour Council has access to gay and feminist information, but the aircraft assemblers at Douglas read the *Toronto Sun* and not *Broadside*.

Wendy Johnston is an aircraft assembler at Douglas. She agrees that education is sorely needed among unionists, around gay rights as well as women's issues. In terms of raising feminist issues, Wendy — who is the vice-chair of the women's committee — feels that "what you really need is a base: a few active women are not enough." Lay-offs have reduced the number of women assemblers to three. However, and Wendy herself is in imminent danger of losing her job. Musing on her experience in the male-dominated plant, she smiles: "One thing I learned is that I cannot survive without at least a hundred women."

The personal rewards of being an active feminist in a union are slim, to say the least. Our sisters in unions are often politically isolated, they are forced to explain every issue from scratch, and they even have to accept that women's caucuses — which are far from being supported by all women — are *not* for women only. Maureen Hynes describes this critical attitude: "The women's caucus has to be perfect. When it makes any kind of mistake, people come down on it so heavily!" The idea of an all-woman gathering would be seen as "a heresy," "discrimination against men."

And yet, she and many other committed feminists continue to work in unions. Why? Nancy Bayly, a carpenter, explains why she joined the union after working for a long time in non-union jobs and in collectives. "Over the years, the union has won many things; carpenters make well over \$16/hour. I doubt any small carpentry collectives make that much. Also, as there is more and more competition for work, I don't want to see women used as cheap labour; women should be starting from the point the union has already reached." Because jobs are distributed through the union hiring hall, unionized women in building trades do not have to convince individual employers that they can do the job: if an employer asks for ten "men," he may get nine men and one woman and there's nothing he can do about it. Nancy concludes: "There may be a few individuals who can eke out a living doing the fine cabinet-making, but these jobs are fast disappearing. For the vast majority, not dealing with unions is burying your head in the sand."

Feminists need unions for the same reasons that every other worker in society needs unions. But once they join, feminists bring to unions a whole new range of concerns, from sexual harassment to a critical attitude toward hierarchies. Apart from fighting for the rights of women workers, feminist unions are, in Linda Briskin's words, "challenging the bureaucratic structures of those unions."

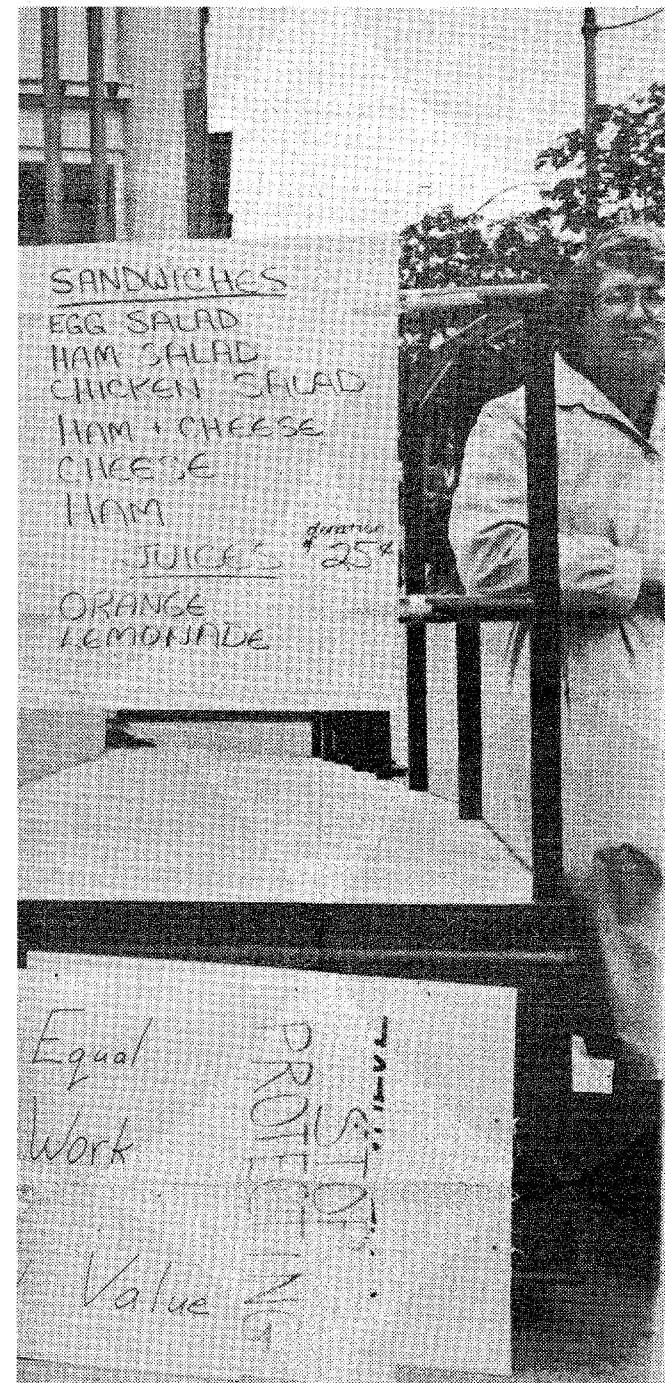
## Sexism on the job and in the union

"Oh yes, there's equal pay for equal work. Everyone gets paid the same, men and women. But the men are doing the easy work, pressing buttons and the women are doing the heavy work, sewing and glueing." Marion C. worked until recently at a Chrysler plant near Toronto, where a mostly-woman labour force turns out car seats for \$9.50 an hour. She sounds disappointed when she explains that the women, mostly immigrants, "rely on the union for security; they wouldn't think of complaining. Some women think of the union as God the Father. It's a very patriarchal union." The plant does not have air conditioning, and one day last summer the heat and the dust became simply unbearable. "I'd just seen the movie *Norma Rae*. So I thought, I'll jump on a table and get everyone to stop the machines. But the other women didn't know what I was talking about. They hadn't even seen the movie."

I asked Marion how she thought the situation could



# Union Made



Lynnie Johnston

change. She paused and then said, "Well, maybe you need a feminist type of person in the union..."

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What happens when a group of women workers who consciously define themselves as feminists decide to unionize? Isla Peters, formerly of CUPE 1289, tells the story of how the workers at Toronto's YWCA formed a union. "The YW management is supposedly liberal. So when we first decided to unionize, we didn't have any problems. It was only when negotiations for a first contract got underway that conflicts erupted. Women workers would say to management, if you're feminists, why don't you support this or that? It split the Y right down the middle."

The YW workers joined FOCAS, a small union made up of social service workers stressing collective decision-making and autonomy for each local. But FOCAS soon fell apart, and the YW workers (along with other FOCAS locals) became part of CUPE. The women at the YW did not have a realistic sense of CUPE's methods, and soon there developed "a classic confrontation between how feminists want to work and how the trade union movement works." CUPE sent a staff representative to help in the local's negotiations: the rep was apparently "impressed" at the knowledge demonstrated by the workers, but at the same time failed to understand that they had already defined their methods and were not about to defer to union experts. "We had the naive idea that we could educate CUPE," says Isla, "but they had no concept of skill-sharing, of the importance of developing rank-and-file militants."

There was a struggle over whether the local would do all the negotiating or whether the union would control the negotiating process. "The result was an uneasy compromise that allowed the YW local to continue within CUPE, a compromise based on the fact that the staff rep, who is overworked anyway, simply leaves this local to their own devices." A victory for feminism? Hardly.

•continued page 13

**Acknowledgements:** I would like to thank all the women who agreed to be interviewed, as well as Sandy Fox, Linda Yanz, the UAW research office, the Steelworkers' public relations department, and the OISE Women's Resource Centre.

## Conclusions

As unemployment and inflation continue to climb, women in Canada are going to need unions more and more. Where unions are weak or non-existent, women and other oppressed groups always end up with the worst jobs and the least recourse. Capitalists are pretty clever at dividing the working class. But if we want not just any old union, if we want a pro-woman union, then the going gets even tougher. Working women do not generally have a choice about whether or not they work with men: capital dictates where you work and with whom. Even those of us in all-woman workplaces can't forget that, ultimately, all Canadian workers work with each other; as workers, we all have to work together with men. This means that feminists working in unions cannot afford to demand instant conversions to feminism from their fellow workers: a long, slow process of education and struggle is necessary. As is apparent from the interviews, feminists in unions have been most successful when they took into account the actual conditions prevailing in their jobs and unions, and then developed strategies leading to concrete victories. Abstract, pure feminist principles never liberated anybody from anything: only by translating these general guidelines into the vernacular languages spoken in each sector of society will feminism ever become a reality. And the language of unionism is clearly different from the language of feminist collectives.

Despite the problems mentioned by the women interviewed, the strategy of concrete struggle has been achieving some significant victories for feminism. For instance, Stelco has hired over 100 women as a result of a campaign by both women's groups and the union local; the OFL has undertaken a large-scale campaign in favour of free, uni-

versal daycare; and even more encouraging, male workers at Kenworth (BC) have gone on strike in order to win equal pay for equal work for a handful of female data processors. The issue of paid maternity leave has also been taken up by several unions, including the federal government clerks (PSAC) and CUPW.

The victories are indeed encouraging, but, as the posties say, "the struggle continues." I'd like to highlight three areas of trade union struggle that concern women, as examples of the kind of concrete battles being fought in unions that deserve the support of feminists

1. *Affirmative action into non-traditional jobs.* This means: making sure that women are allowed entry into highly paid, traditionally male jobs, which involves getting unions to pressure employers and governments to help this happen.

2. *Unionization in women's job ghettos.* Places like offices and banks, where so many of us work, have to be unionized if women are going to have a hope in hell of fighting against increasing unemployment, dehumanizing jobs, and all the other consequences of the so-called revolution in office technology. Established union will have to be pressured to do organizing work in these job ghettos.

3. *Upholding the right to strike.* This may not seem at first like a feminist issue; but when you consider that many more women than men, proportionately, work in the public sector, the mounting attacks on the right of public sector workers to go on strike take on a sexist meaning. This right is especially important for government workers, since a process of compulsory arbitration means for them that their employer is also the supposedly impartial referee.



## Facts and Figures

### Where women work

Almost four million women work for pay in Canada. As of 1976, this is the breakdown per industry:

Services	44%
Trade	19%
Manufacturing (and construction)	15%
Finance	8%

One has to keep in mind that much of women's work is not reflected in these statistics; for example, the percentage of women working on farms is given as less than 1%, simply because women are expected to work in family farms for no pay.

### Ray of Hope

Increase in union membership 1968-1978	Male workers 21%	Female workers 91%
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### What unions women belong to

43% of male workers in Canada are unionized. The percentage of women workers in unions, though it has been increasingly rapidly, is still low; in 1978, it was only 27%. These are the percentages of women members in some of Canada's major unions:

Service Employees International Union	67%
Quebec Teachers Corporation	63%
Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers	61%
Alberta Union of Public Employees	52%
Ontario Public Service Employees Union	48%
Canadian Union of Public Employees	41%
United Steelworkers of America	15%
United Auto Workers	6.5%

An important consideration is that many of the unions women belong to, particularly unions of government employees, are prevented from getting too militant by the fact that they lack the right to strike. For example, out of OPSEU's 65,000 members, approximately 50,000 do not have this right.



# ARTS

## Four Seasons — A Dull Year

by Barbara Halpern Martineau

"I can't really get close to people who see themselves as lower than me. If people are envious of me, if they see our economic status making us different, I'll pick it up in the way they seem always to be talking about my clothes or my car or something like that.

When I served on the International Women's Year Commission, I was the only man in the room at one meeting in Washington. I was angry and yelling passionately about some setback for women's rights, and I heard myself saying, "They can't do this to us."

Listen, I don't want to come off as wise, saintly, or unnecessarily wonderful. That stuff is almost as hard to live up to as the other stuff is to live down." — Alan Alda, interviewed in Ms. magazine, June 1981.

Ms. magazine is not well-known for its extensive or thoughtful coverage of women's films — in fact this has been one of the weakest areas in the Ms. range of subject matter for the mass market. This fact makes it all the more difficult to swallow the Ms. love affair with Alan Alda, self-appointed male feminist, writer/director/star of *Joe Tynan* and now *The Four Seasons*, another sensitive, finely crafted feature in the tradition of *Kramer Vs. Kramer* and *Ordinary People*.

Now there is no doubt in my mind that *The Four Seasons* is indeed sensitive, and finely crafted. I enjoyed it immensely, loved the way the whole film was cut and paced to Vivaldi's music, mainly "The Four Seasons," appreciated the metaphor of the cycles of the seasons representing the cycles of friendship, laughed sympathetically at the unabashed greed for good food shared by the three couples whose friendship is the subject of the film, empathized with the trendy New York wit exemplified in such tidbits as Rita Moreno's announcement that whereas Chinese food is fine for their group feast because none of them are Chinese and therefore can't judge, Italian food is out, because she is

Italian and knows the real thing.

My own somewhat limited experience in adult white professional urban heterosexual trendy circles allows me to appreciate the authenticity and self-critical perspective of the film, as my years of marriage prepared me to appreciate the film's bedroom scenes, which are both uproariously funny and touching in the sense they give of interdependence, and different ways married couples relate to each other. That this is a topic of enormous interest to many women is undeniable. That sensitive male artists have been dealing with this and other central issues of the film for a very long time mind (Henry James is the first name which pops into my mind out of a long list) is also undeniable. And I am reminded again of Virginia Woolf's observation, back in 1926:

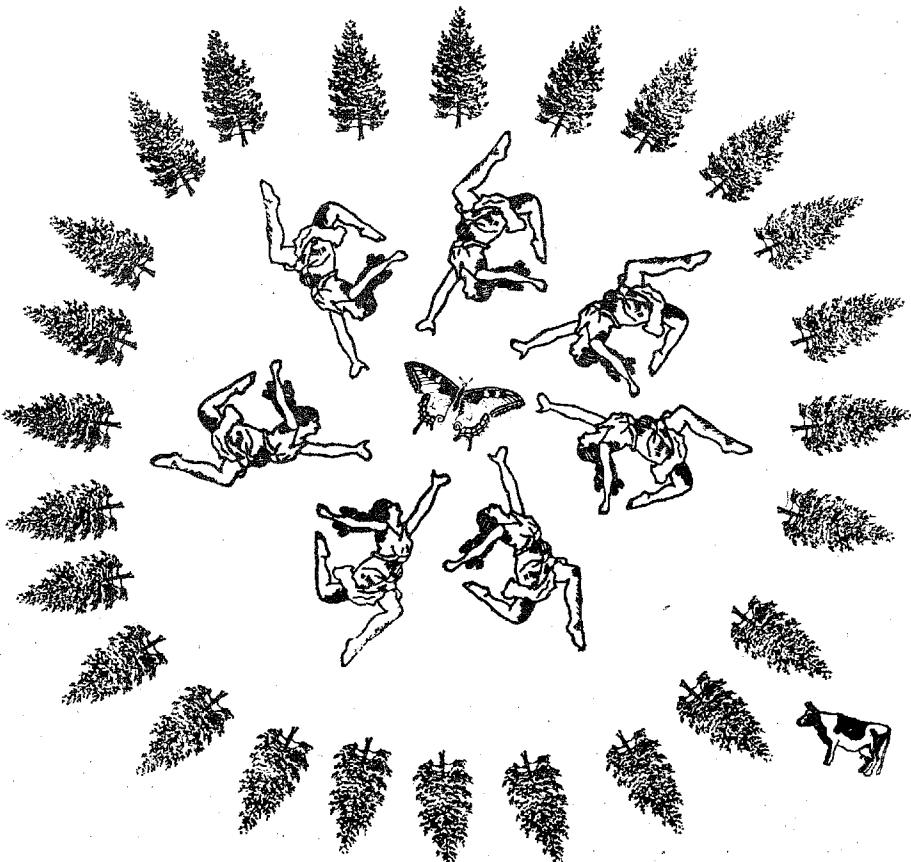
*If woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various, heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme, as great as a man, some think even greater. But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room. — A Room of One's Own.*

The women in Alan Alda's film are witty, capable, professional. One of them (Sandy Dennis), who, Alda says in his Ms. interview, represents a part of himself, is also eccentric and obsessive, working for years on photographs of vegetables. I found her to be no more obsessive than the fat male dentist (Jack Weston), who is in love with his Mercedes-Benz, food, his friends, and his wife, in that order. However, Sandy Dennis is the character who disappears from the film, because her husband leaves her to find a younger, more exciting woman. Notwithstanding the outrage, disapproval, resentment of the other two couples, the

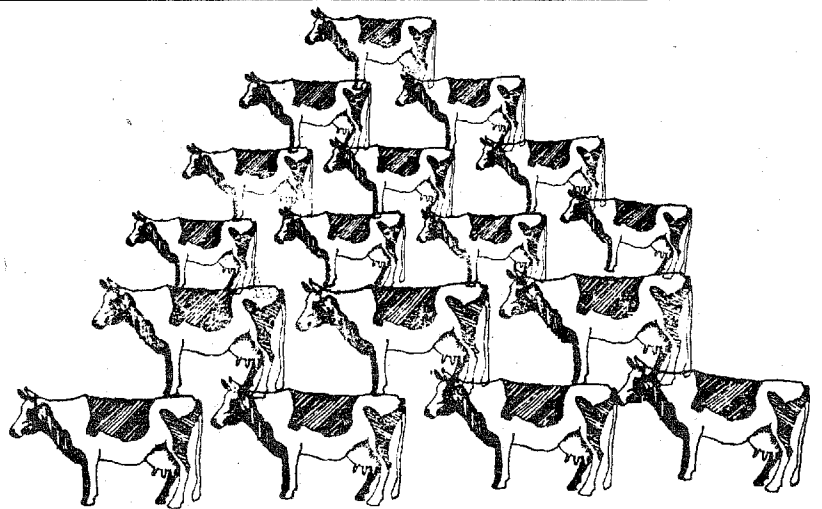
new grouping is, "naturally," the husband and his new girlfriend-wife. The old wife disappears into the dusty oblivion where spinsters and cast-off wives dwell, to reappear for one sensitive, touching scene in which she confesses to the other women how dreadful her life is and how she has bought a boa constrictor to cheer her up. Now, to those who would argue that Alda has simply shown the "reality" of a typical situation — the husband would of course be kept in the group; the cast-off wife would "really" be rejected, I respond with a lesson learned years ago from another feminist film critic, Julia Lesage. Lesage, reinterpreting theory developed by Roland Barthes in France, pointed out that classical films, films resembling the novels of the high bourgeoisie, like those novels, "vomit stereotypes." Alan Alda's film vomits stereotypes. It is a tightly woven fabric of stereotypical portrayals, from the noisy, sex-starved Italian wife to the fat, stingy but lovable dentist, through the vivacious college freshman daughter of a "good" marriage (Alda's) and the depressed, withdrawn daughter of a broken marriage, to the adoring and adorable young blonde the errant husband so easily finds.

The stereotypes in *The Four Seasons* are often self-conscious, but nothing in the film challenges them or the apparently unchangeable "natural" fabric of the society which creates and perpetuates the stereotypes. The silent, invisible statistics about all the other kinds of marriages, the ones where women are still "locked up, beaten and flung about the room" by their *Penthouse*-reading husbands, the alternatives open to a discarded wife other than near-madness and a pet boa constrictor, the material pressures on marriages and other relationships in circles other than the white urban heterosexual professional trendy realm occupied by the characters in *The Four Seasons* — all these realities remain silent, invisible, unknown, therefore by implication unknowable. Enough! Basta! ●

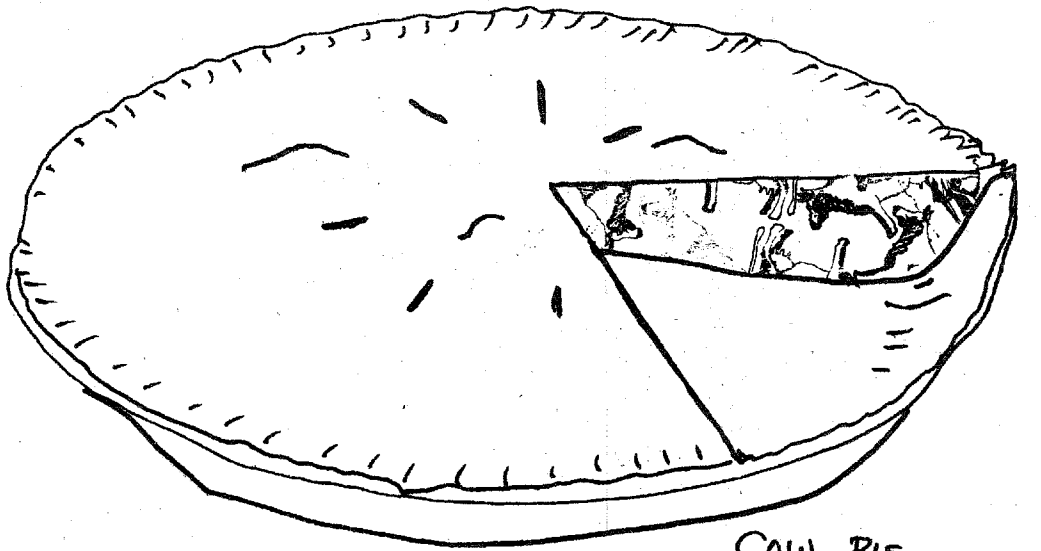
### Rubber Stamp Art by Marge du Mond



LESBIANS CELEBRATE A BUTTERFLY IN A CLEARING IN THE WOODS, OBSERVED BY JEALOUS COW



COW PYRAMID



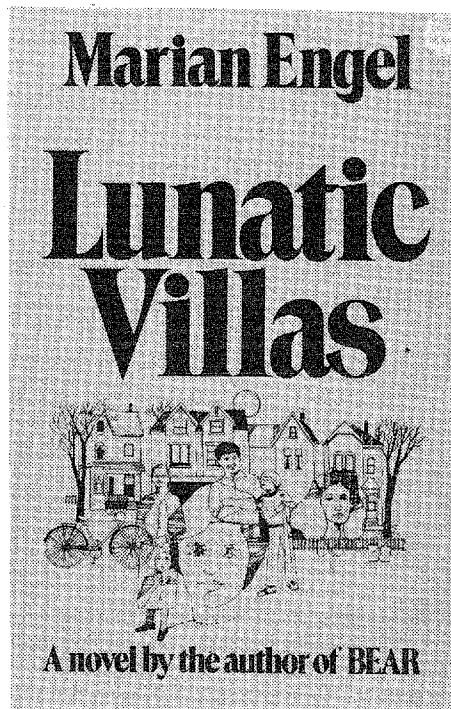
COW PIE

### COWS HEAD FOR THE BARN AT SUNSET





# Lives Not Lifestyles in Lunatic Villas



Marian Engel, *Lunatic Villas*. Toronto; McClelland and Stewart Ltd. Pp 252. \$14.95.

by Layne Mellanby

Books written about one's own city tend to make the reader feel famous, Marian Engel's latest novel, *Lunatic Villas*, has this effect. Written about the inhabitants of a small refurbished street in Toronto, it seems at first that Engel is presenting us with a

spoof of the "renovating-white-painting-cuisinarting" trend in middle-class Toronto today. That may indeed be her intention, but only for a moment; the lives of her characters are serious and we can't dismiss them as superficial trendy types who lead lifestyles instead of lives. *Lunatic Villas* allows us to sit in their kitchens and observe these familiar but never boring people.

Harriet Ross, the protagonist of the novel, is a freelance writer who lives with a variety of children: her own, an assortment that came with him when she married her now dead husband, and Sidonia, the adopted daughter of her sister. Sidonia, a precocious 13-year-old with a penchant to shoplifting, is waiting for a special placement with the Children's Aid. Harriet is now a single parent and copes with this mélange in a grim but philosophical way.

Mornings are precious new beginnings, every day a chance to exorcise yesterday's and before yesterday's sins: mostly Harriet begins her day very carefully, without shaking it hard enough to break the thin film of self-consciousness that keeps her close to her dreams. She scoots downstairs as soon as the alarm goes off, puts the kettle on, collects the paper: and this year, the first in fourteen, takes the coffee and the paper upstairs again with her, the better to protect herself from reality. They are better off without her in the morning, the mob, and as long as there are milk and sugar and bowls and spoons and four kinds of cereal on the table they consider themselves looked after. Then, in bed, pretending to read the paper that is, in fact reading her, she counts flushes, scrapes, shouts, clouts, hears Sim's gruff "Get on with it, you guys," before his great thumping exit and slam; Melanie's "Pervert" to Mick's "Slut" and the resulting clash of spoons; piggish little snorts from the twins; Sidonia, late and serene, descending the stairs like a queen, "Good morning," which makes the others snigger. "Ma, where's my ...?" can be dealt with more easily from upstairs.

Harriet, as "Depressed Housewife," writes a column for two magazines: *Maga*

and *Household Words*. She is struggling with an article about welfare women when Mrs. Saxe, the cousin of an aunt of a friend, arrives on Harriet's doorstep in the middle of the night. Mrs. Saxe becomes part of this somewhat unusual household and yet another body, however sprightly and amusing, with whom Harriet must cope. We want her to be able to somehow do more than cope. Child-rearing and being a support to neighbours and family have its rewards but there has to be more joy in life for Harriet. The two affairs that she is having; one with a Montréal executive and one with Vinnie, the husband of her crippled neighbour, Sylvia, give the impression that they are more trouble than they are worth.

Nevertheless, life in any of the houses on Rathbone Place isn't dull and Harriet with her healthy perspective and practical wisdom is connected with each one of them. We meet Roger, a teacher who lives across the street who has recently become a single parent, and Marshallene, who lives next door and is a writer and Harriet's friend. Sylvia, another neighbour, is a bird lover who seemingly dislikes people and spends her time in her aviary tending to the subtleties of each of her birds or sewing costumes for figure skaters. Harriet's interaction with Sylvia is complicated by the fact that Harriet is sleeping with Sylvia's husband Vinnie and that Sylvia is confined to a wheelchair. Bob Robbins, a painter, lives in what used to be the corner store on Rathbone Place. Bob is gay and his lover Fred, in Bob's words, "is not what he ought to be."

Although Marian Engel doesn't let loose with her fine use of words as much as she does in *Bear*, *Lunatic Villas* does contain some wonderful bits of description. When Roger is changing his new daughter's diaper for the first time:

he puts the baby on the table and begins, with fingers that grow more and more enormous, to undo her clothes, wrestle the finger-sized arms out of the tight little sleeves. She doesn't like it, she doesn't like it at all. By the time he has her half-naked she is blue with cold, and he tries to work as swiftly and deter-

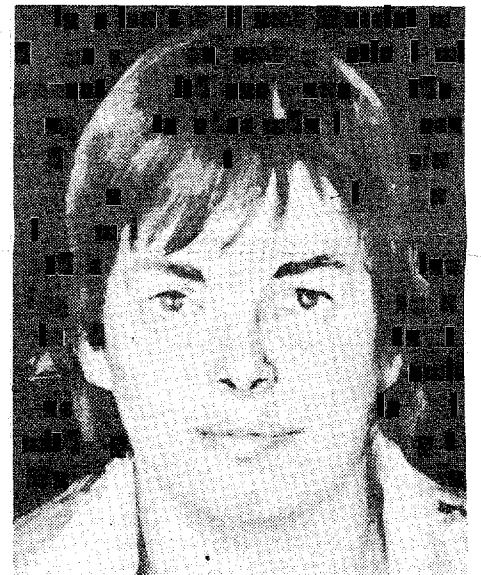
minedly as Olivia, but his fingers are too big. He gets the top off without, he hopes, dislocating her shoulder and whips her legs out with a finger each, firmly, and rips the wet diaper off.

And then there is Marshallene:

She was Miss Sombrero Township in 1951 and it tickles her and she never lets you forget. She is enormous now, in her forties, big, or as she will tell you, large as life and twice as natural. Hungry and thirsty and not after righteousness. Harriet's kids have two words for everything, gross and neat-o. Marshallene is gross.

*Lunatic Villas* may not transcend the city it is written about. References to the Paddock Tavern, St. Clair Avenue at rush hour, specific bus routes, and the ethnic variety of Toronto may be lost on readers not familiar with the city; it would be good to know. If this is the case, it is not a wise path for Engel to continue along. A writer of less than her abilities and understanding would leave herself open to criticism in the vein of "Toronto in the Year of the Disabled."

*Lunatic Villas* is not in the same class as some of Marian Engel's other novels, but as an entertaining visit to Rathbone Place, it doesn't disappoint. ●



## The Shame Has Just Begun

by Anne Cameron

**The Shame is Over: A Political Life Story** by Anja Meulenbelt. London: Women's Press, 1980.

*The Shame is Over* is a best-seller in Holland. That fact alone leads me to suspect there is a huge cultural difference between myself and the reading audience in Holland.

Parts of the book struck a responsive chord in me; the disillusion with the sixties, where peace, love and flowerpower got lost in drugs, unsatisfactory sex and recurrent non-occurrence, the realization that "political involvement" within the traditional political structure was just another way of helping some faceless oppressor continue to use me towards ends I couldn't approve of. The realization that Marxist rhetoric and euphemism was a lot of "sound and fury signifying nothing," that it had nothing at all to do with life as it was lived by most women, the final conclusion that Karl had less to say to me than Groucho and Harpo. The recognition when the women's movement provided a vocabulary I had lacked to pinpoint the real cause of my anger and frustration, the painful groping towards a personal perspective.

But the responsive chords were lost in the overall sound of that other kind of empty rhetoric that replaced the Marxist holowness.

Meulenbelt writes of being a poor single

parent, supporting her son Armin as best she can; but she seems to always have enough money to bop over to London when the spirit moves her. Poverty like that would be welcome to a lot of women.

Meulenbelt writes of her consciousness-raising group; but she is, at the same time, still crawling into bed with married men. "I have never broken up a marriage. On the contrary, through me the people have eventually begun to talk to each other. I filled the hiatus in their relationship." Really? I wonder how many of her sisters felt any gratitude for this noble series of energetic actions. Sure, I know, adultery has never been the real root of trouble in a relationship, the relationship was in trouble long before, and adultery is the symptom, not the cause. In my head I know that. I think. I still feel that a woman who messes with another woman's lover is screwing the one who isn't in bed with her more than she's screwing the one who is. If we owe each other nothing else, we owe each other some respect for our relationships, however troubled, faulty, or fragile they may be.

After the series of promiscuous affairs with married men, Meulenbelt starts an affair with a married woman. The wife, in fact, of a previous male lover! She outlines the split within the movement, as perceived by herself. Lifelong lesbians looking down their noses at those who experiment, experimenting women looking down their noses at heterosexual women, and heterosexual women looking at the others as some kind

of threatening freaks. Some of which is true. But Meulenbelt lost me and any kind of empathy, recognition, or respect I might have been developing, when, after breaking up with Anna, the wife of the previous lover, Meulenbelt punches her in the face. "At last I have expressed the anger which I have always turned inwards."

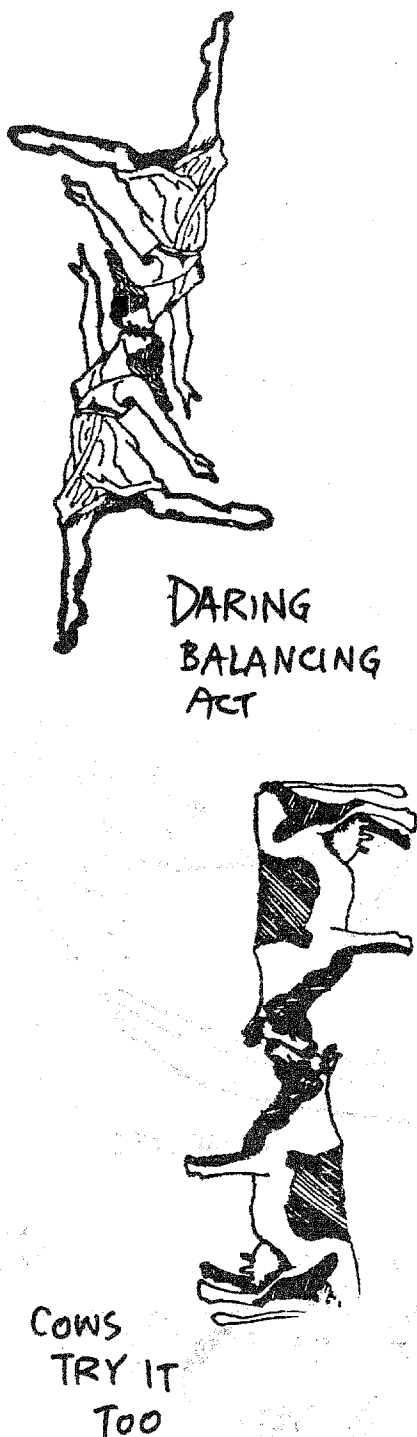
Whoopie Ding. Such freedom. A freedom enjoyed by the patriarchy for hundreds of years. A freedom enjoyed by the wife beaters. A freedom enjoyed by the child abusers. A freedom enjoyed by the muggers and rapists. A freedom enjoyed by the anal sphincters of the world. A freedom now celebrated by a woman.

A battered lesbian lover is as oppressed as a battered wife. And the battering lesbian lover is as big an asshole as the battering husband. We all have anger, we all have anger we have turned inwards for too long, anger we have been conditioned to turn on ourselves, anger we have never been taught how to express, anger we have never been taught how to turn into positive energy.

Suggesting we can be purged of this anger by punching in the faces of our sisters is sick.

The patriarchy would like nothing better! It would not only justify their own years of beating us up, it would defuse the energy of the movement and let them once again rule with the boot and the fist.

Don't buy the book. If you want to fight, contact Mohammed Ali, but keep violent hands off your sisters. ●





# Flickering Interest



by Nancy Poole

Scratchy-eyed from the frenzy of a certain city rock concert and from the overnight drive to Sudbury, we arrive at Bell Lake Park for the Northern Lights Music Festival (Festival Boréal). The terrain is hilly and green with a gentle waterfall and cool lake. Definitely not the expected blighted landscape, as seen from the highway to the Sault. Definitely not the music expected from a 'folk' festival either. For there was gospel, blues, swing, traditional and progressive rock, rhythm and blues, coun-

try, reggae, jazz, big band and fiddle music to be enjoyed.

The variety of music was staggering. It was happening on four stages, in an acoustic area and often in the children's space all at once! One had to make choices between children's songs in French, music of celtic origin (with Jarvis Benoit and others), country music (with Valdy, David Essig and others), a horn workshop (with saxophonist Jodie Goldnick and others) and step dance music (with the Mulligan Dancers and Ian Robb). And that was the decision for just one particular hour.

The instruments alone were a delight for the audience. Bagpipes, mandolins, harmonicas, congas, accordians, banjos, saxes, South American pipes and percussive toys, trumpets and even an incredibly beautiful 19th century hurdy gurdy (of Bertrand Gosselin's). And of course an array of much beloved electric and acoustic guitars.

The Festival has been happening now for ten years, which, with the demise of the Mariposa Festival, makes it the longest surviving outdoor folk festival in Canada. (It, like Mariposa, also sponsors indoor concerts in Sudbury over the winter.) As of 1976, the Festival began charging for evening concerts. During the day, families and fans from Sudbury and afar wander about the Festival for free. In the evening, a large and dedicated crowd settles into the concrete of the main amphitheatre. Since it is a public park, there is no ostensible drinking or 'smoking'. It becomes, therefore, less of a blitz out and more of a tuning in by every-

one involved. There is a spirit of co-operation in this public crowd. The far too many cops stand around looking for action.

The spirit of co-operation emanated from the music and from the organization of the event as well. The festival organization is a vast community effort of close to two hundred volunteers. It is the most nearly completely bilingual event I have encountered. The music has a joyful and gentle energy. This arises from the connecting of old friends who come together to play each other's music. It flows from the integrating of the new musicians with the veterans, the local artists with those nationally and internationally known. At each workshop or concert, rhythms and lines arise spontaneously and are then carried by one and then another musician in a caring and contagious way.

There is one notable exception. It is the women's workshop. It is not entitled the women's workshop but it is the only all woman event listed, so I hasten to check it out. Daisy Debolt leads off with the remark: "We don't know whether to go in alphabetical order or by the size of the our tits." Why an order? Why not a spinning off each other and a weaving together? Various other feminist disclaimers follow from Marie Lynn Hammond, Debolt and Connie Kaldor. The women are not relaxed with each other! Connie Kaldor sings a very fine song called 'Strength, Love and Laughter':

*Woman you're going to need some strength  
Just to get through*

*Woman you're gonna find that strength  
Deep inside of you*

She does it breezily. It could be a song about going to buy a new dress. Jeannette Schwager, a very young, creamily smooth jazz singer and Joella Fould, a Cape Bretoner who often sings with Rita MacNeil, are not even introduced to the audience! Rita MacNeil and Nancy White save it with their songs of conviction and humour. But too little and too late.

I escape to the children's area. The kids have been making kites, painting their faces, playing games and swimming. They have danced, watched magic, shared in the music and had the Phoenix Theatre folks perform for them. There are special spaces for reading books and for the 'diaper set.'

There is great food. The concessions, including one sponsored by the Sudbury Women's Centre, have home baked food. Burritos, samosas, oatmeal cookies, blueberry tarts ... even the popcorn man cares about his producee — pouring clarified butter and salt over both half way up the bag and at the top!

The artisans are perched at angles over the hills. Glass, leather, weaving, pottery, feathers, give the festival the excitement of a bazaar. Each craftsman is featured in the fifty-two page program along with well over one hundred musicians. It is a gala event and one with the good energy that makes one glad to be alive. When we can bring the feminist sensibility which we of the women's community have worked out musically together — it will be perfect. ●

## Remedial Reading

### Books to Note

Rosemary Daniel, *Fatal Flowers*. New York: Avon Books 1980

- an autobiography of a southern white woman and a fascinating portrait of how women in general are oppressed in this society.

Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. New York: Perigee Books 1981

- a powerful, painful, searing indictment and analysis of patriarchal power, especially as expressed through pornography.

Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge against Nature*. New York: Harper & Row 1981

- Griffin skillfully argues that "pornography is an expression not of human erotic feeling and desire, and not of the life of the body, but a fear of bodily knowledge, and as desire to silence eros." Her chapter on the Holocaust is particularly good.

Latin American and Caribbean Women's Collective, *Slaves of the Slaves*. London: Zed Press 1980

- a collection of essays on various aspects of women's oppression in Latin America, including an excellent analysis of why Wages for Housework is inappropriate in the Latin American context.

Elizabeth A. Lynn, *Chronicles of Torment*. New York: Berkley Books: Book 1, *Watchtower* (1979), Book 2, *Dancers of Arun* (1979), Book 3, *The Northern Girl* (1980)

- a wonderful, fantasy-adventure trilogy, peopled by "chearis" (dancing warriors), witches and lovers.

Marion Meade, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*. New York: Hawthorn Books 1979

- an excellent biography of a fascinating, complex woman.

Victoria Ramstetter, *The Marquise and the Novice*. Tallahassee: The Naiad Press Inc. 1981

- a lesbian gothic romance in which a young rich woman becomes governess to the son of a wealthy marquise in France, and then...

— Elaine Berns

- a cultural history of passionate friendships among women. Federman explores the relation between lesbianism and the various theories of female sexuality promoted over the centuries.

Mavis Gallant, *From the Fifteenth District*. New York: Random House 1979

- a collection including a novella and eight short stories by one of the best women writers around, originally a Canadian but for many years resident in Paris.

Nadine Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd. 1980

- the story of a young woman's evolving identity in present-day South Africa, lauded in a *New Yorker* review as "a riveting history of South Africa and a penetrating portrayal of a courageous woman."

Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys 1981

- a first novel by a woman best known as a poet. Based on contemporary documents and letters, *Obasan* tells the story of what happened to Japanese Canadians during World War II as seen through the eyes of a young girl.

Gail Pass, *Surviving Sisters*. New York: Atheneum 1981

- a novel by the author of *Zoe's Book*, an interesting novel featuring Virginia Woolf. This novel is about a woman who, after a devastating family disaster, overcomes her guilt and insecurity and breaks oppressive ties in order to discover her own psyche, sexuality, and creative powers.

Elizabeth Smith, "A Woman with a Purpose": *The Diaries of Elizabeth Smith 1872-1884*. Edited with an introduction by Veronica Strong-Boag. Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1980

- one of the first woman doctors in Canada, Smith had to fight to gain admission to and to survive in Queen's University School of Medicine. This book is based on diaries she kept from her childhood in Winona, Ontario, until just after her graduation as a doctor.

### Account to Settle

by Mariana Valverde

*An Account to Settle: The Story of the United Bank Workers (SORWUC)*. Vancouver: Press Gang, 1979.

The banks are, after the government, Canada's largest employers of women. They're also bastions of sexism: over 80% of the women they employ are in clerical positions, while over 80% of the men are in management positions. A union movement that excludes the 140,000 workers in the finance sector is thus missing an important sector of the Canadian labour force, as well as avoiding its responsibilities toward women workers.

In 1976, a group of women in Vancouver decided to do what everyone said couldn't be done: organize a bank workers' union. They chose to join the Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC), a small, independent and largely female union, instead of any of the big established unions.

*An Account to Settle*, written by a collective of bank clerks active in the unionizing drive, details the rise and fall of their SORWUC affiliate, the United Bank Workers. The scare tactics used by the banks and the reticence of many workers to become mili-

tant were two of the main factors that led to their eventual defeat in the second half of 1978; but a third, and no less important factor, was the hostility of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). Although many BC union locals affiliated with the CLC supported the United Bank Workers morally and financially, the CLC executive was quick to denounce SORWUC's tactics as "divisive" — as though the CLC had ever done anything for bank workers. The Steelworkers even moved in to certify a few bank branches, just to keep SORWUC out.

However, as the bank workers themselves will admit, SORWUC made some serious strategic errors, notably overestimating their own staying power and underestimating their need for external support. They were simply too isolated.

Anyone interested in working women in Canada ought to borrow, buy, or steal this first-hand account of one significant chapter in the history of women's unions. In writing about their struggle — in lively, easy-to-read prose — they draw many important conclusions that will prove useful to other working women.

(Update: In early May 1981, SORWUC voted to revive the United Bank Workers.)

### More Books to Note

Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press 1981 (first published 1956)

- a fascinating autobiography by the woman who opened a bookstore called Shakespeare and Company in Paris in 1919. It became a centre for writers for two decades and it was under the store's imprint that the first edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* was published.

M. Wylie Blanchet, *The Curve of Time*. Sidney, BC: Gray's Publishing Ltd. 1980 (first published 1968)

- a narrative of summer voyages along the BC coast by a widow and her five children from 1927 until the children grew up; a classic.

Frances Duncan, *Dragonhunt*. Toronto: Women's Press 1981

- despite the jacket blurb, has little to do with Galiano Island, although it does concern Pt. Roberts and Vancouver Island. It also concerns a whimsical quest for renewal by both the female character in the book and her otherworldly companion, George the dragonslayer.

Lillian Federman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc. 1981

●continued next page



•Women in Unions, from page 9.

One could go on for quite some time telling stories about feminist efforts being foiled by male-dominated, bureaucratic unions. And yet, attempts at building small independent unions responsive to women's needs have been notoriously unsuccessful. SORWUC (see accompanying review of *An Account to Settle*), FOCAS, and the nationalist union federation CCU are — or were — fairly marginal. And, as the Canadian union movement seeks to defend itself against mounting political and economic attacks, it will probably become even more difficult to set up new independent organizations outside the mainstream of the labour movement. This is, it seems to me, one reason why the feminists I interviewed continue to work within the system.

Nancy Bayly certainly knows about sexism in unions. A member of one of the notoriously conservative building trades unions, the International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, she is the only woman in her district. When I asked her how she manages to survive, she smiled: "you have to have a fairly thick skin." She also stresses the importance of finding allies: at the construction site she works in, she found that the foremen wouldn't give her enough work to do, but eventually she found a partner who was willing to share the work equally. "He's really supportive, but the other guys say he's lazy. He has to cope with a lot of pressure from his peers. And although I felt I wasn't really pulling my weight, the fact that I did anything at all made them think I was Superwoman."

Nancy described the change involved in going from a small collective where everyone agrees with you, to a large union dominated by Italian male construction workers. "I now see the positive things in other people. For example, when I went to the union dinner-dance, my co-workers' wives were not stereotypical housewives. They were so thrilled to see a woman who was a carpenter!"

As I talked with these committed feminists, who every day put up with what Maureen calls "an endless series of small hassles" for the sake of building workers' organizations that are responsive to women, my own work as a feminist seemed suddenly easy. It struck me that they need to

autonomous women's movement as a source of support and of political development, but the feminist movement also needs organized women workers who know how to fight and how to help each other. In supporting the struggles of women like Wendy, Nancy, Linda and Maureen, feminists can help to make sisterhood just a little more real.

**Resources**

Mary Cornish and Laurel Ritchie. **Getting Organized: Building a Union.** Toronto. Women's Press, 1980. A practical guide to unionizing, written by two Toronto lawyers with lots of experience in trade unions and in the women's movement.

Joan Newman Kuyek. **The Phone Book: Working at the Bell.** Kitchener: Between the Lines, 1979. A comprehensive survey of one of the most infamous companies employing women, covering everything from the technical aspects of the Bell system to union activity. Lots of good interviews.

Julie White, **Women and Unions.** Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, April 1980. Very good for facts and figures, and not as conservative as one might think, given its origins.

Linda Briskin and Linda Yanz, editors. **Women and Unions,** a special issue of *Resources for Feminist Research*, July 1981. The most up-to-date and politically aware source of information and analysis on the question of women and unions. The editors hope to revise this collection of articles and publish it as a book; watch for it. Includes an extensive listing of films and videos available, book and film reviews, and of course, many articles on specific union struggles, the politics of the trade union movement, etc.



Liz Martin

•from previous page

**Women: Sex and Sexuality**, edited by Catharine R. Stimpson and Ethel Spector Person. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1980

• a collection of 22 essays, including Adrienne Rich's superb "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." The various authors explore the confusions and contradictions that inform common notions of female sexuality.

Lynn Strongin, **Bones and Kim.** Argyle, NY: Spinsters, Ink. 1980

• a novel about being disabled and the feelings of anger, fear and vulnerability that experience creates.

Aritha Van Herk, **The Tent Peg.** Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1981

• Van Herk's second novel and a story about a young woman who disguises herself as a man to obtain a job in a uranium prospecting camp in the Yukon.

**Poetry**

Margaret Atwood, **True Stories.** Toronto: Oxford University Press 1981

Dorothy Livesay, **The Raw Edges: Voices from Our Time.** Winnipeg: Turnstone Press 1981

Anne Marriott, **The Circular Coast.** Oakville: Mosaic Press 1981

Phyllis Webb, **Wilson's Bowl.** Toronto: Coach House Press 1981

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— Jean Wilson

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•Lesbians Fight the Right, from page 7.

basically operate by consensus (that vague but amiable notion).

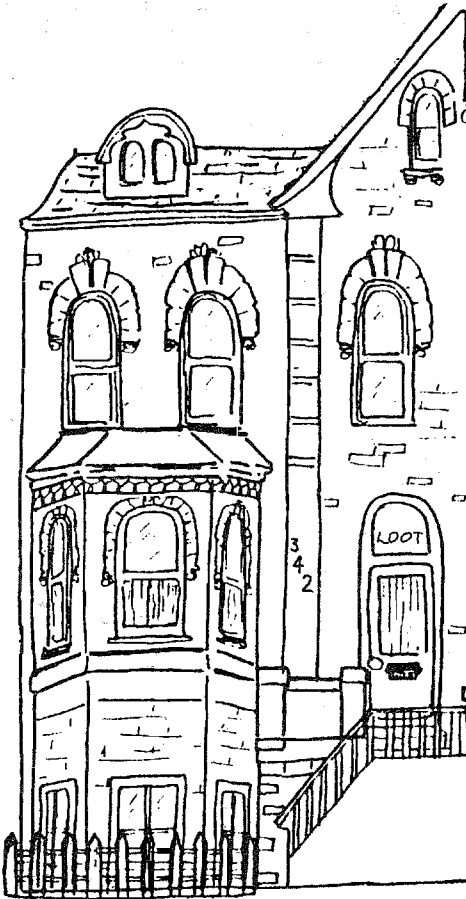
What is remarkable in Lesbians Fighting the Right is the degree of co-operation lesbians are displaying to each other, coupled with a lessening of traditional hostilities. This is reflected in the group on both the political and personal levels. Women who found themselves in opposite camps over the years are now actually talking to each other, discovering that they even like each other. The group shows no tendency as of yet to split into separatist, radical feminist, socialist feminist or gay liberationist camps.

There are good reasons for this thaw in relations. The initial organizing committee for the May 9th forum was made up of lesbians with differing political analyses and histories as activists — radical and socialist feminists, a woman active in the gay movement, women employed in social services, etc. The panel invited to the May 9th forum was intended to reflect the diversity of radical social movements in which lesbians participate: trade union, anti-imperialist, anti-nuclear, gay liberation and women's movements. On May 9th, we began to realize that our stereotypes of each other were inaccurate, that our varying positions were each more cogent than any of us anticipated. May 9th set an important example

for us all; we began to come to terms with the fact that we as lesbians would have to deal with our diversity in order to get together under the same lesbian roof. We did not then, and are not now attempting to bury our political disagreements in an unprincipled way. Our basis of unity statement in Lesbians Fighting the Right sets down guidelines to which all members, whatever their politics, are accountable. Perhaps we can begin to talk about political differences from within the context of our basis of unity.

More politically experienced than we were a few years ago, a lot of us realize that our hearts need not have a single beat in order for us to work together. A visible enemy in the New Right is assisting in the process of turning our anger against our real enemies instead of against each other. The terrible lesson we have learned over the last year is that if we don't learn how to work together, the autonomous lesbian movement will collapse, leaving us as lesbians isolated from one another.

The lesbian movement has from the first been cross-cut politically by the different currents in the women's movement. Over time the political terrain of the women's movement has been changing. Issues such as racism, classism, and anti-imperialism



have been taken up by radical feminists. Former lesbian separatists have entered the anti-nuke movement. Socialist feminists are moving away from crude economism, trying to integrate the areas of reproductive rights and violence against women into their politics. The contradictions between the different currents in the women's movement are shifting, leaving the lines of demarcation fuzzier than in the past. This has the effect of making it easier for lesbians who come from different parts of the women's movement to develop a common language and work together. There may develop a feedback effect on the women's movement as women who would not otherwise associate with each other talk and work together as lesbians. The potential for constructive political dialogue exists today in the lesbian movement to a degree that we have not seen since the heyday of lesbian feminism in the early 70's.

Forty women attended the first two organizing meetings of Lesbians Fighting the Right which were held on hot summer nights in an uncomfortable gym. That means commitment. It also means pleasure: the excitement of meeting new lesbians and re-establishing a sense of our collectivity. Commitment and pleasure together mean that Lesbians Fighting the Right as a political organization will survive and flourish.●

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# MOVEMENT COMMENT

## Broadside Appeals

by Philinda Masters,  
for the Broadside Collective

After two full years of publication, we think it is time to let readers know how we operate financially, where we get our money from, how we spend it and what kind of financial problems we run into. A newspaper, even a small tabloid printed on cheap stock, doesn't run on air. It's an expensive proposition.

In June, we held the first of our fund-raising events — a Strawberry Brunch. There was a healthy turn-out and a good time was had by all (we hope). But since it was a fund-raising event, one of our main concerns was how much money was made. The truth is, the proceeds covered the cost of one month's typesetting bill. That is to say, a quarter of one issue, or 1/40th of our annual budget. If we were to hold 10 brunches a year we'd be able to put out one quarter of a paper each month. We'd have to hold 40 brunches a year to cover our costs. That's one every 1.3 weeks.

Fortunately, our revenue from advertising, subscriptions and newsstand sales covers a fair chunk of our operating costs: in fact about two-thirds. Our average monthly income for advertising is \$700, for subscriptions \$850, and for sales (traditionally the smallest income-producer) \$120. That's a total of about \$1700 a month.

But there's still a huge gap between income and expenses. The average monthly cost of the product sold (i.e., the newspaper, as opposed to overhead) breaks down as follows: printing \$580; typesetting \$825; photo-mechanical work \$100; and mailing \$200. For overhead (rent, salary and other) our expenses are on average \$1400.

Bearing in mind that some of our costs are monthly and others incurred 10 times a year, that leaves us with a monthly deficit of at least \$1000.

That's \$1000 we have to come up with every month. Now the quickest among you

will realize that since we've been publishing for two years, we must have managed somehow. We have, with help of loans from the Women's Credit Union (soon to be defunct) and a large personal loan which was to tide us over in our first year or so of operation. Both loans we are still in the process of paying back.

Other sources of income over the past two years are collective pledges — each collective member has pledged to invest \$500 in *Broadside* over time (we're still collecting), and individual donations from about 30 women — a few between \$500 and \$1000, but mostly smaller amounts. We want to thank those women for their support; every little bit helps keep *Broadside* afloat.

But we must find more ways to cover our deficit. Since our credit situation is such that we can't for the time being carry any more loans, and we can't depend on fairy godmothers (would that we could) we are planning more fund-raising events for the future (not 40 brunches), and every effort is being made to expand our revenue from advertising, sales and subscriptions. But that goes hand in hand with another kind of expansion (PR, fees for contributors, more paid staff, etc.) and this we can't afford. That \$1000 is just to maintain our current level of operation.

There are ways readers can continue to help *Broadside*. Taking out subscriptions and sending them to friends is important, but not enough. We have situated a Sustaining Subscription at \$40 for 2 years for those who find \$10 a year too cheap.

We are currently working on a plan for our 'Friends of *Broadside*'; for an annual \$50 membership fee, you too can become a 'Friend.' Women who have donated \$50 or more in the past are already 'Friends' although they may not know it. We are in the process of systemizing the concept, as one collective member put it, and will print more information in future on the perks, privileges and honours involved in belong-

ing to such a select group. (Incidentally, membership fees are tax deductible for freelancers.)

Other ways to support *Broadside* are to support our advertisers (so they continue to advertise and so we can attract new advertisers); become a *Broadside* volunteer; donate a service (as a business write-off) if you are involved in an appropriate business; and for those women who wish to make a substantial financial contribution, please call the office or talk to a collective member for information as to the best ways to go about it.

Whatever method you choose, it is important to realize that the newspaper must be supported concretely. And if readers think *Broadside* is important and should continue to exist as a tool for the feminist movement, it must be supported consistently. We have a stake in seeing *Broadside* flourish and hope you have too.

For those of you who have read to the end of this article — you get a gold star on your forehead.



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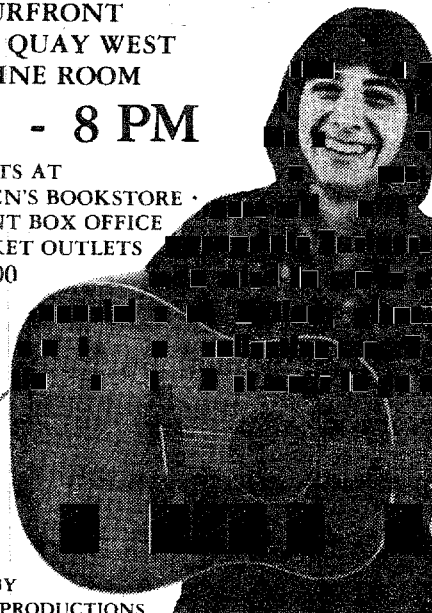
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