

Broadside

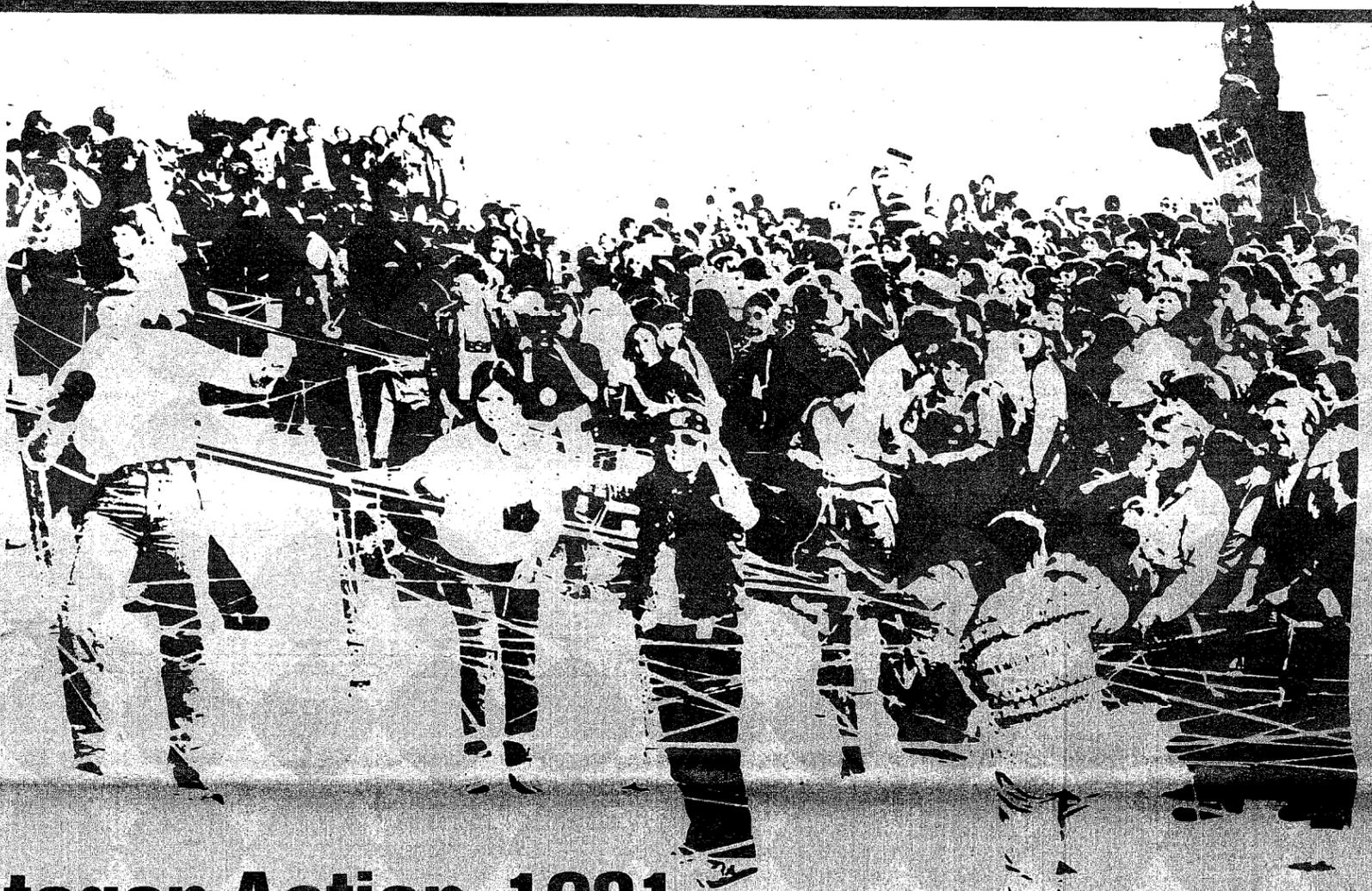
A FEMINIST REVIEW

Toronto Women's
Calendar Inside!

Volume 3, number 4

February 1982

\$1



Mimi Morton

Pentagon Action, 1981

SEE STORY PAGE 6

INSIDE BROADSIDE

FEATURES

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doors with string spider webs in a massive demonstration against nuclear proliferation. Mimi Morton, one of the few Canadians present, reports. Page 6.

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birth symbol notwithstanding, women for centuries and across the world have been weaving birth symbols, notably the toad. Elaine Johnson visited a recent show at the Museum of Textiles in Toronto. Page 17.

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OUTSIDE BROADSIDE: With this issue *Broadside* presents a new feature — a monthly Toronto Women's Events Calendar, which can be torn out and put up on the refrigerator door. Page 19.

LETTERS



Judy Stanleigh

Broadside:

In your editorial "TTC Finds a Better Way" (Vol. 3, no. 3), you describe Eleanor Pelrine as a member of the Canadian Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Law. Please note that the organization is now the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League. The national office is in Toronto at PO Box 935, Station Q, Toronto, M4T 2P1. The phone number is (416) 961-1507.

J.V. Culliver,
CARAL, London

Broadside:

We were pleased to see your coverage of the "Toy Soldier Affair" (Vol. 3, no. 3). However, there were a few errors in your article. The ads *never* appeared in the TTC. They were scheduled to appear in December but they were refused after widespread protest to the TTC. The name of our organization is the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League. The name was changed two years ago from the Canadian Association for the Repeal of the Abortion Law.

Mayor Art Eggleton and Metro Chairman Paul Godfrey were not singled out for special attention in the protest. As for

Laura McArthur, it is not correct to say she and her outfit were unprepared for the meeting on November 17 when the Commission made its decision to refuse the ad. She turned up and pretended that she was unprepared, but went on to rant and rave at the commissioners. Those of us who were there were not spared her hysterical display and of course the media flocked round her as this is exactly the kind of display which makes news.

Nevertheless, everyone who took the time to write letters and make telephone calls to the TTC should be pleased at the result. The offensive ad did not appear on subway cars this Christmas.

Ruth Miller
CARAL, Toronto

Broadside:

We are writing to comment on some aspects of the editorial "TTC Finds the Better Way" (Vol. 3, no. 3).

Although you mention the "careful planning and smart strategy" involved in the campaign against the Right-to-Life's toy soldier ad, the editorial suggests that the protest took place spontaneously in response to the ad's appearance.

In fact, this campaign was devised by two women's organizations (CARAL and the Toronto Abortion Committee) which have an ongoing commitment to the abortion issue.

Broadside rightly gives credit to Eleanor Pelrine and Miriam Garfinkel for their presentations at the TTC meeting. Although we would not wish to take away from the importance of Katherine Bee's presentation, we feel that the editorial denies the importance of organization and mutual support, and romanticizes the individual. Credit for the decision against the ad is due to those women who met, phoned, organized, wrote and lobbied for six months prior to the TTC meeting.

It is simplistic to think that we can spontaneously win such victories against the Right-to-Life and other groups on the right — it is only through organization, hard work and collective action on a continuous basis that we can be successful in the long run.

The editorial made it seem too easy and compounds the myth in the feminist community that we don't really have to worry about abortion anymore. In fact, the abortion struggle is far from over.

Shelley Glazer and Marilyn Reinwald
Toronto Abortion Committee

Broadside

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

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EDITORIALS

Drumming Up a Storm

On December 31, *Broadside* and Womynly Way Productions hosted a New Year's Eve dance, with Mama Quilla II providing the music, and Caroline Duetz (who did 1001 other things to help organize the evening) providing the food. By any standards, it was a successful dance: women enjoyed themselves on the dance floor, the food was delicious and the champagne was free. We made a little money — not as much as we'd hoped, but that's because women weren't drinking as much as in former years. And that's a positive.

Unfortunately, the organizing was marred by a controversy over whether or not men should attend the dance. Womynly Way and Mama Quilla's audiences are not exclusively female, nor is *Broadside's* readership, so we decided, without a lot of consideration of the matter, to welcome everyone. Some women felt that New Year's Eve should be an all-women celebration and decided not to come. We regretted their decision, but respected their position.

Three days before the event, however, a

small group of Toronto women began to use intimidating tactics to force us to exclude men. They confronted members of *Broadside*, Womynly Way and Mama Quilla personally. They planned to picket the dance and hassle men coming to the door if we didn't change our original decision. Alternately, they offered to stand politely at the door and turn men away, if we *did* change our minds. Then, the day before the dance, Mama Quilla's drummer decided not to play if men were admitted. A dance band without a drummer is not very effective (although the rest of the band agreed to play without her if necessary). Until 10 pm New Year's Eve we didn't know if the show would go on or not.

The organizers of the dance were put in the position of having to pick between two bad choices: either to stand by our original plan and risk having no band, having to refund tickets, losing a lot of money (which none of us was in a position to do) and a lot of credibility; or, to back down from our original decision in the face of hostile ma-

nipulation, and again lose a lot of credibility.

In the end, we chose a middle course, which was to sell no more tickets to men (we'd sold very few anyway), and to explain the situation to men at the door, giving them the choice of entering or not. Not surprisingly, no men came in. We had to refund about 20 tickets.

We regret the inconvenience to those men and particularly to the women who brought their male friends. (Most women these days are perfectly happy to have 'all-women' dances, but when we say 'everyone welcome' they think we mean it.)

Most of all we regret the bullying tactics of a few women who wanted to impose their particular interests on all of us, and who were prepared to see the dance fail in the name of true sisterhood. We can't support the fact that those women put such energy into struggling against us, when there are so many more constructive ways to take political action, and so many other deserving targets.

Broadside Bulletin

Item: On Saturday, February 13 at 8 pm, Valentine's Eve, *Broadside* is holding a benefit talent show. Come watch the wide display of genius, mainly amateur, at the Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazleton Ave. (in Yorkville), Toronto. It's \$5 admission, and refreshments will be served. If you want to be part of the talent line-up, call Jane Hastings (923-4560), a.s.a.p., to reserve a spot. Don't miss this talent show of the decade — Hollywood producers may be in the audience: your chance for stardom.

Item: As part of the Reel to Real Film festival — which brings to gether various activist groups in Toronto for Sunday afternoon screenings of documentary films — and as part of our International Women's Day celebrations, *Broadside* will present "The Power of Men is the Patience of Women". This extraordinary West German film about the experience of wife battering has caused

a sensation in Europe and the US because of its powerful, inspired high-spiritedness. (The film is brought to Toronto with the assistance of the Goethe Institute). Join us at the Bloor Cinema, 506 Bloor St. W., Toronto at 2 pm, Sunday, March 7. Child care will be provided at 427 Bloor St. West. For more information and a tentative schedule of the other films in the Festival, see the Arts Section of the issue.

Item: On January 14 *Broadside* held an Open Forum meeting, the first in many months. About 40 women showed up to discuss community responsibility, the function of Open Forums, news coverage, how to work for *Broadside* and, of course, the New Year's Eve Dance (see the other editorial this page). One interesting comment made was that *Broadside* is perceived as hard to "break into." Not true — we're happy to have any woman come along, show some interest and do some work.

Come to any production week-end or mail-out session, for starters. (Next production: Saturday/Sunday afternoons, February 27/8; next mail-out: Thursday March 4, 4-7 pm). Or phone the office (weekday afternoons) with a story idea or offer of services.

Item: In upcoming issues of *Broadside* you can read about: the matriarchal city, mass hysteria in the industrial workplace, Womanspirit Gallery in London, Ont., the Toronto housing situation, aid to victims of crime, and a theatre review of 'the Saga of the Wet Hens', and more.

Item: In May, subscribers will receive the *Broadside* 'Sampler' instead of the regular newspaper. It will be a cross-section of topics and writers from our first two years. A useful addition to your library, it will contain informative articles, graphics, humour and a couple of feminist games.

Broadside:

I am renewing my subscription, despite the fact that *Broadside* is so insular, even predictable. Woman as Victim, preferably by incest, rape, pornography (the more brutal the better for copy), is your favourite theme. A feminist vision beyond a quasi-lesbian, non-hierarchical (vague buzzword), urban life-style is seldom suggested. It just don't seem too relevant up here in Northern Manitoba (or Thunder Bay when I was there, for that matter). There isn't enough creativity in the paper, just the same old indignation that women are oppressed. A broader vision please!

Georgina Garrett
Norway House, Manitoba

Broadside:

I read with interest the letter in *Broadside* from Laurie Kokko (Vol. 3, no. 3) which said: "Could we have an article on how couples are coping with double last names, each keeping their original names, alternatives, and what to do about their children's last names?"

I too would welcome such an article. I am aware in some circles that a married woman using her name is very accepted. However, I sometimes feel like someone from another era (future, of course)!

I am a young married woman living in a small rural community of 400 people. There was never any doubt in my mind that I would continue to use my own name. (I am sure I could list 50 reasons why.) Although I have support from my husband and friends, I find I am continually coming up against questions, reactionary responses and 'Is it legal?' looks! Because I live in a small community, more and more people

are learning about my decision — as a small town person, I continually need to deal with them — either by explaining, choosing not to, or whatever. This is quite different from when I lived in an urban setting, and "travelled" with a group who accepted my decision. Still, I have no regrets about my decision; it has been so important for my identity.

Let me say how much I enjoy *Broadside*. It continues to provide analytical feminist thought unequalled by any other publication in Canada.

A *Broadside* Reader
Saskatchewan

Broadside:

Broadside is an excellent publication, and I, for one, enjoy seeing it come into the Women's Centre. Actually I would like to see it arrive a little sooner, since it is delivered three weeks after it appears in Toronto.

Don't forget about us! Many of us originally came from Toronto, and we don't want to be left behind when it comes to being kept informed of all the happenings, etc.

Is *Broadside* sent first class? Third? I don't want to dwell on this. Keep up the good work. I can't wait for the next issue.

Marie Battaglia,
Queen's Women's Centre,
Kingston, Ont.

(Ed. note — Be thankful you don't live on the west coast. It takes six weeks to be delivered there. Broadside is sent second class, and that means we do all the sorting and putting in bags, which the Post Office then sits on. We're working on a system for first class deliveries, but it costs twice as much.)

marshalls were prepared to deal with any fears that participating women might have had and with any potentially violent incidents from outsiders. There were no major incidents or problems during the march.

We are aware that there are many women who are unable to come out openly as lesbians who read *Broadside*. We feel that it is important that lesbian events such as that of October 17 be covered in *Broadside*, so that these readers and other women can become aware of lesbian communities, and of the fact that many lesbians who are politically active are challenging our status as invisible women. We were fortunate to get national coverage on the CBC news to reach many of these women. We hope that some of our pride, power and visibility of that day was transmitted to those lesbians who were watching the television coverage that evening.

Lesbianism as a choice and lesbian feminism as a politic are an integral part of the struggle for women's liberation. With the growth of the right wing it is important that women reading *Broadside* be aware of why many lesbians are organizing ourselves for the right to exist. Coverage of the October 17 march would have certainly allowed readers the opportunity to better understand and participate in the lesbian struggle.

Lesbians participate in large numbers in organizations fighting for women's liberation, gay liberation, union rights, non-nuclear power and the environment, and anti-imperialism. How often have lesbians had our own organizations and united to publicly declare our rights?

As a Toronto-based feminist paper that focuses on women's issues, and serves as one of the few forums for discussion in Canada, we feel that you have a mandate to cover important and significant events and issues. We do not know what *Broadside* as a collective felt about the march, but your silence is still a statement.

For all these reasons we think that the Lesbian Pride, Power and Visibility day should have been covered. We hope that this letter can help us all to learn how to discuss openly and trustfully so that, as Adrienne Rich says, "...if we can risk it, the something born of that nothing is the beginning of our truth."

Virginia Adamson, Natalie LaRoche and
Brenda Steiger
Lesbians Against the Right

Broadside:

Susan G. Cole's piece on charisma (Andreas... Bearing Gifts' in Vol. 3, no. 3) does exactly what the mainstream North American press does — it discredits leftist leaders by suggesting their popularity is based on speaking style and the ability to manipulate crowds.

Cole's article, which uses newly elected Greek prime minister Andreas Papandreu as its example, shows a remarkable ignorance of Greece, its socialist party, PASOK, and Papandreu himself. But then, the reader should beware of a journalist who seems to base her analysis on a seven year old memory. Having just returned from Greece, where I covered the elections and their aftermath (for *Maclean's* and *The Globe and Mail*), I'd like to make a few corrections.

1. What Cole was referring to when, for the umpteenth time she referred to the euphoric crowds of 1974, was the joy and relief over the demise of the colonels. At that time it was Karamanlis (now President) who was the charismatic leader. Papandreu's party gained a paltry 13% of the vote.

2. "The crowd," writes Cole, "not inclined to deal with the political and economic realities... was thrilled at what was essentially the stuff of easy politics." In fact, what gave PASOK its stunning majority this October, what attracted farmers and businessmen, doctors and professors, was the common sense, the integrity, and the well developed plans of the party. PASOK is the only party in modern Greek history to bring to the elections a detailed document (800 pages) setting forward platforms on everything from banking to the quality of life. A large part of Papandreu's "charisma" is based on his constant references to these plans. I attended many pre-election rallies, and saw crowds going wild over ex-prime minister Rallis, and pro-Moscow Communist Party leader Florakis, whose engaging personality captivated even right-wing journalists who disagreed with him totally. When Mr. Papandreu spoke, the wildest cheers arose at the mention of educational reforms, inflation and women's rights. Cole hardly mentions women, and seems ignorant of the fact that Margaret Papandreu, the prime minister's wife, has for years been a fervently dedicated feminist activist. Thanks partly to her influence, Greece for the first time has a government which officially regards women's rights — and men's attitudes to them — as important as anything else.

3. As for Papandreu's charismatic style, that elusive quality on which Cole bases her article, I — and the many journalists I spoke with in Greece — just couldn't see it. Where was the vocal range, we wondered;

(From Susan Cole: Jacqueline Swartz's letter puts the issues currently exercising the Greeks into perspective. We still disagree on some crucial points.

1. Yes, the Greeks were relieved to be flexing political muscle that the Colonels had kept atrophied. But I can't regard 13% of the vote as "paltry," particularly since PASOK had only six months to organize in Greece after the Junta fell. I would argue strongly that a good deal of Papandreu's support in 1974 came from his ability to play on emotions — particularly the anti-Americanism that was rife at the time.

2. I am happy to stand corrected on the existence of an 800-page document detailing PASOK's platform. The existence of such a policy does emphasize my point that a strong committed organization is what Greece needs to make the policy and real change become a reality in Greece. As for the ability of other political leaders to engage a crowd, perhaps we can agree that the Greeks are an excitable lot, in which case the excitement Papandreu and PASOK have generated continues to remain suspect.

3. Well, I saw it. Maybe this is just a matter of taste.

4. Sixty percent of an electorate makes for a majority but it does not make for an "entrenched" majority. The fact that PASOK has grown steadily since 1974 does not change the fact that the party is only eight years old. I would say that separatism in Québec is more entrenched than social-

ism is in Greece. The Parti Québécois came to power almost as quickly from its inception as did PASOK and already Lévesque is having difficulty keeping his coalition intact.

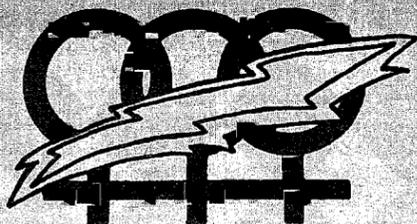
5. Just after the Greek election, when *Broadside* went to press, Papandreu was being pumped by foreign correspondents on the question of NATO. He was simply not clear on the issue. Since then, Papandreu has had much more concrete things to say on both the foreign and domestic fronts. I'd like to add the fact that Papandreu used to thunder about removing American bases from Greek soil. He demanded it. It's good to know that he has cooled his rhetoric.

6. The point of my article was to say that the work has just started, that a grass roots organization will be needed to implement Papandreu's ambitious policy. In fact, I wrote the piece not in response to the Greeks' tendency to be taken in by charisma and slogans, but by the international press' tendency to do the same — to assume that a majority means real victory. Victory in Greece can't come unless the country's problems meet with some solutions.

What is not clear from my original article (and I'll take the blame for it) is that I was happy that PASOK seized the day. I do think that Papandreu has the qualities to lead Greece out of its difficulties. Like everyone else, I'm waiting, watchful and hopeful.)

What has totally eluded Cole is that the Greek people have gone through too much and are too educated, politically and otherwise, to be taken in by a leader who offers charisma and slogans. The majority feels that for the first time, modern Greece has a chance for a progressive, sensible, humane government. If there's one common saying in Greece today it is this: "We shouldn't expect very much now. The government can't perform miracles. Let's give it a chance".

Jacqueline Swartz
Toronto

**Broadside:**

We are writing as feminists to our sisters in the hope of beginning a process for breaking down some of the communication barriers built up in the feminist community. For us, it was an unpleasant surprise to discover that *Broadside* did not cover "Dykes in the Streets," Toronto's first lesbian pride march, held on October 17, 1981.

For Lesbians Against the Right, the march was a success. We organized the day so that lesbians could openly declare our pride and power, happily and without fear. We were united as lesbians: political dykes, street dykes, bar dykes, gay women, lesbian mothers, socialist feminists, radical feminists, lesbian feminists, lesbian separatists, working women, straight women... we were all there enjoying the bright sun and blue skies. The mood was festive and political, with hundreds of pink, white, and lavender balloons; the beautifully embroidered colours of the Amazon Motorcycle Club; the chanting; the All Girls Hit-and-Run Leather Marching Band; the children; banners from the Lesbian Organization of Kitchener, the Ryerson Women's Centre, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, the International Women's Day Committee, the Lesbian Phone Line, Lesbians Against the Right; multicoloured placards and a huge banner proclaiming what we all know already: LESBIANS ARE EVERYWHERE. Cheering, and blowing whistles and kisses, gay male supporters showered us with confetti from the sidelines. Dancing all the way down Bay Street singing "We're here because we're queer", and chanting in syncopated rhythm: "We are the D-D-Y-K-E-S", we approached Old City Hall. The sense of power of over 200 women on the steps of Old City Hall (of all places!) loudly and proudly celebrating ourselves, was magical!

It was a safe march, with well thought-out security and sufficient marshalls. The

Was Stalin Right?

by Eve Zaremba

"And how many battalions does the Pope have?" Stalin is said to have asked in response to claims about the influence of the Catholic Church. This anecdote, probably apocryphal, is always used to illustrate Stalin's blindness to anything but brute force as the real source of power.

Was Stalin right? In the long run, history may not necessarily be on the side of the big battalions. But looking at Poland these days it's possible to claim that he wasn't altogether wrong. It all depends whether one looks at the sweep of history or its individual events.

Nobody should be surprised at recent events in Poland. It's not the military crack-down but the previous 18 months, during which use of force was relatively absent, which should be a source of amazement.

That an authoritarian, corrupt communist regime neighbouring the Soviet Union would be allowed or allow itself to be overthrown without a fight belongs in the realm of fantasy. Obviously, that's where many Westerners and Solidarity members, having forgotten Stalin's simple retort, have been operating. Wishful thinking may be a luxury we can afford in Canada but they sure can't afford it in Poland.

With perfect hindsight, it is now clear that Solidarity had been outmanoeuvred and manipulated. A total clamp-down of the type, size and efficiency perpetrated on Poland does not happen overnight. It has to be planned and prepared for carefully for some time. Solidarity certainly knew something was in the works; it's not a secret which can be kept in a country like Poland under prevailing circumstances, if anywhere, ever. It wasn't Solidarity's information which was faulty, it was their underlying assumptions.

First of all, the very important matter of timing: everyone, it seems, had been lulled into believing that the government would first use anti-strike legislation. Attention was focused on Sejm, the national legislative body. The government gave notice it intended to bring in a law making strikes illegal; bishops thundered against the law from their safe pulpits; Solidarity issued dire warnings of what would happen if it was passed. Meanwhile it was all a smokescreen behind which a 'state of war' was being prepared and then unleashed well before anyone was ready for it.

It's no good pointing out now that events prove the regime had not been acting in good faith with Solidarity all along; whatever could have led anyone to believe it would?

Most of Solidarity's leadership viewed military preparation in Poland as a tactic of the Polish government to give it credibility with the Kremlin and to forestall direct Soviet intervention. The presence of a top Soviet general and a number of Soviet 'observers' in Polish uniform only confirmed this perception. It must be remembered that there was (and presumably still is) wide divergence of opinion within Solidarity membership and, indeed, leadership. It would be natural for the so-called moderate wing, represented by Lech Walesa, to counter radical demands by playing down the possibility that the government of General Jaruzelski was opting for a military solution. That would have made all negotiations absurd and left strikes and, ultimately, an armed struggle the only option open to Solidarity. In the long run, strikes are a very blunt instrument. Walesa understood that Solidarity could not mount or win an armed campaign. Solidarity had to believe negotiations could and would work. It had no other option.

It is unlikely that Solidarity leadership had any clear idea in advance of the possible scope, thoroughness and efficiency of the clamp-down. Even those who expected or feared it was on its way could not imagine what its effects would be when it came. They were too intoxicated with their newly-found freedom and power to realistically evaluate how fragile it all was. To be effective, leadership had to be self-confident and appear fearless. It's a short step from there to overestimating yourself and underestimating your opponent.

Solidarity, and perhaps Polish people generally, have been hoisted with their own petard of nationalism and piety. Symbols are a potent force with Poles, as they tend to be with peoples who have little else. Forty years of communist rule had apparently not weakened the value Poles place on flag and Church. (That's one of the reasons why anti-Soviet leftists in the West have so much trouble understanding and supporting them.)

"It's hard to throw a Molotov cocktail at a tank with Polish boys and a Polish flag" is a current saying. The citizen-army (not the professional militia) is part of the national pride. There was a romantic notion that Polish troops would not fire on Polish workers, their 'brothers.' In the event, they did not have to.

It would have been different had the men with guns and tanks been 'Russians.' The reality would have been bloody, but resistance would have been psychologically easier.



Solidarity leader Lech Walesa

Courtesy Kornagraphics

er. This reality will affect the future too. Clandestine activity is easier against an outside foe. But in Poland the legend of romantic heroism dies hard. We may not have heard the last of it.

In all of this, the mighty Catholic Church played its usual ambivalent role vis-a-vis the state: praising and 'protecting' Solidarity on the one hand, urging caution and compliance on the other. Whatever the ideological objections it has to 'Godless communism' the Catholic Church itself holds dear many of the same values as its opponents. Among them is commitment to 'order' and authoritarian rule. Like its opposite number, it does not trust people to rule themselves, and any sign of so-called anarchism is anathema to it. Its influence on Solidarity and Lech Walesa has been largely negative. Now, it will undoubtedly conspire with the regime in pacification and normalization. It will use its clout to dampen militancy and will act as guarantor of good behaviour in the name of humanitarian values.

There is a large segment of the Polish population, Solidarity members included, directly influenced by the Church. But it has done most damage indirectly. In conjunction with Western powers, it manages to create the illusion that Solidarity and the Polish people as a whole have someone and something to count on in their struggle with the ruling regime and the Kremlin. The rhetoric of western leaders, including the Pope, has in the past 18 months totally misled the Poles. It has allowed them to hope, made them think of themselves as the bulwark of western Christendom, made them feel less isolated, and allowed them to take more risks.

This is a totally inaccurate and damaging illusion. The west's self-righteous insistence on non-intervention in Polish affairs is, after all, a device for getting off the hook. With no risk, they can garner kudos for fostering 'freedom.' It's made to appear that 'non-intervention' is aimed at the Soviets, but since they have been 'intervening' in Polish affairs for forty years, that's rather hypocritical. What non-intervention does is to guarantee the Soviet backed regime, which controls the military, a carte blanche.

As for direct Soviet armed occupation, it has been clear for some time that the situation in Poland is too serious to allow for such simplistic solutions, except as a last resort. With martial law and the military in

firm control 'a last resort' scenario is not likely to arise. Nothing the West or the Church have done has materially aided Solidarity in its struggle with the system. A cheering section is not enough. Prayers of the Pope, hypocritical rhetoric of union-busting Reagan (how would he like really militant unions on his turf!) and miles of sentimental media coverage are ineffective. The Soviets know this. The rest of Europe, sitting on a nuclear powder-keg, understands it. Even Trudeau seems to be aware of it.

So was Stalin right — only force matters? Are Solidarity and the dream it represented just a mirage with no substance? Not at all. Paradoxically, the use of force is evidence of weakness. The Soviets can try to blame the CIA, the Jews or the Vatican, Poland's military government can exhibit unexpected street smarts in their day to day tactics, but none of it changes the fact that Poland has had to be occupied and its people treated as a conquered enemy.

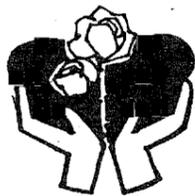
Poles have a centuries-old tradition of underground activity with periodic revolts against occupying powers. Recent events will have whetted their appetite. Having learned a hard lesson — don't trust the Church or the West any more than the Soviets — elements of Solidarity have gone underground and will remain there regardless of any accommodation which others might have to make in the short term.

The stamping out of revolts within and outside its borders is an occupational hazard of an imperial power. No empire in history has yet survived the effects of these rebellions and the efforts to combat them. It is the conflict itself which finally leads to the break up of empires, no matter what is the outcome of individual revolts.

The internal vulnerability of the Soviet system has been hidden behind a screen of communist ideology, and rhetoric of "Workers Unite" and "Oppressed Arise." Now, that vulnerability is real and growing. After all, the central power is an empire in itself; it's not only its client states which are colonized.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is ruled from Moscow by Russian-speaking white men. The majority of these republics, controlled and exploited by the centre, are non-European. Their time, too, will come. The date for the decline of this empire has already been set. Its breakup and death is as inevitable as that of any other.

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In Bed with Whom?

by Susan G. Cole

Feminist opponents of pornography have been encountering harsh criticism lately. As long as we keep dreaming up ways of dismantling the porn industry we appear to be teaming up with the right wing, particularly the forces of the Moral Majority who are also trying to stamp out smut.

Those who insist that we are in the back pocket of the right wing should probably put us in the back pocket of the left as well. The USSR has banned pornography. The Cuban and Chinese governments have also taken a strong stand against it. The Moral Majority? Moscow, Peking, Havana? Politics do make strange bedpartners.

This odd coalition helps put pornography in its rightful place as one of the hallmarks of western liberalism. Quite rightly, in his review of "Not a Love Story" (*Saturday Night*, Nov., 1981) Robert Fulford identified the burgeoning of the porn industry as one of the central disappointments of our liberal democracy.

By now feminists should be accustomed to finding ourselves on the same side as our otherwise arch-foes. But it's one of the healthier aspects of a feminist politic: the difficulty everyone has pinning it down to a specific point on the conventional political spectrum.

With that in mind, it is crucial to understand how it is that we are not on the same side as the radical right crusaders or those socialist regimes which have laid down the law against pornography.

The socialist states find it in their interests to curb the civil rights of pornographers for political reasons, each of which is a cultural variation on the Platonic notion that the preoccupation with things sexual weakens the state. In the Soviet Union, for example, pornography doesn't fit neatly enough into the artistic category of proletarian realism. The state's demand is for the realistic depiction of tractors, factories and the like — those things that are useful for production. Realistic depictions of genitalia is not what the Central Committee has in mind. They distract the body politic from the goals of the revolution.

In China, the matter is closely connected to the Chinese attitude toward sexuality in general. The Chinese have developed strict guidelines designed to keep sex in the closet. Sex before marriage is verboten and marriage is not encouraged until the age of twenty-seven. Pornography, as Peking sees it, encourages anti-social disturbance of the status quo — a declining birth rate. No sex please, we're Chinese.

The Cuban regime has a bit of that Puritan edge to it as well. In order to keep

machismo under wraps, pornography mustn't be allowed to see the light of day. The policy has Freudian implications, specifically that it is in the best interests of the state that all that macho energy be sublimated and directed towards practical goals of the revolution. In all three countries, the interests of the state and the economy are at stake.

For the Moral Majority, it is the family that is in need of protection. The radical right has always clung to the Victorian notion that unbridled male sexuality has to be harnessed for society to stay relatively civilized and for the nuclear family to remain society's institutional mainstay. This position proves Angela Miles' point: that the right is fighting its battles on the feminist frontier (*Broadside*, Vol. 3, no. 3). While we may agree that the male compulsion for violence needs some control, we hardly see the nuclear family as the best refuge.

Both the right and the state-controlled governments think of pornography as a 'liberating' force, one that will wrench the profligate male away from the family or from the paternal embrace of the state. They are willing to sacrifice the "freedoms" of artists and workers, because consuming pornography is anti-social or, as Rousseau might have put it, a violation of the social contract. So, the state and the re-

actionaries descend. No wonder that apologists for pornography see themselves as freedom-fighters.

As feminists (need I say, as usual?) we disagree with everyone. The right and the authoritarian left fulminate against excess and sexual 'liberation', using pornography (and, incidentally homosexuality — another topic for another time) as their target. The liberals want to stay free. Feminist opponents of porn state unequivocally that pornography waves no banner for freedom, but rather is the vehicle through which women are kept down. This is a crucial distinction. Pornography is not a liberating force but an enslaving one. When the right, left, and centre confuse pornography with sexual freedom they are seeing things from a male point of view.

As feminists we see pornography from a woman's point of view. As feminists we consider our own rights more important than the civil liberties of propagandists for male domination. No one will speak for us unless we do it ourselves. If in so doing we sometimes invite a little name calling — that splendid alliterative phrase "feminist fascist" seems to be a favourite — bear in mind the kids' jingle: "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." Let's not forget that pornography makes up the sticks and stones of patriarchy.

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Photos by Mimi Morton

Spinsters at the Pentagon

by Mimi Morton

Accompanied by the usual national news blackout awarded radical activities in the US, the second Women's Pentagon Action took place in Washington, DC on November 15 and 16, 1981. The action brought together over 3,000 women from the eastern, central, and southern US, and Canada and Europe. Impressive in its organization and scope, the Pentagon Action revealed the current strengths and weaknesses of the American women's movement.

The first Women's Pentagon Action (WPA) grew out of brainstorming at the 1980 Women and Life on Earth conference held in Massachusetts. The march was envisioned primarily as a demonstration against nuclear arms, and many prominent anti-nuclear activists such as Grace Paley and Helen Caldicott lent their support. From this event emerged the ideological split which is obvious throughout American feminism. Certain planners criticized the lesbian and counter-culture presence at the march. These women felt that to be strategically effective (and credible) the march (and feminism in general) should adopt a more conventional image. Conservative sensibilities should not be offended.

Out of this split grew the Women's Party for Survival (WPS), headed by Helen Caldicott, which organized itself on precisely this strategy of cultural/sexual appeasement, presumably with the hope that pragmatism might win over Washington. The WPS organized a Mother's Day march on the Capitol during which mothers, dressed in white and with their children, presented their case for disarmament to members of Congress. The effect of such sartorial compromise has yet to be felt.

At the 1981 WPA the only compromises that were made concerned the personal comforts usually sacrificed during any demonstration. Of these, sleep was the only creature comfort at a minimum. Throughout the two-day action, the emphasis was on physical and emotional sustenance: communal sharing of the best kind. Affinity groups provided the support so necessary to sustain a long demonstration. I found these groups especially helpful. As the only Montreal participant, I was at first adrift. On the ten-hour bus ride from Vermont, I was encouraged to join an affinity group in order to establish a base for orientation and support. This group gave me the sense of solidarity that I might otherwise have only felt abstractly.

The communal spirit of the action extended to the providing of food and shelter. Soup kitchens were set up in the church

basements we slept in, stocked with food brought by participants. Communal bread was baked with flour each woman had packed from home. The few men who attended did cooking, childcare, and luggage transfer. Anyone with special physical needs was accommodated.

This concern for the total quality of life was reflected in the multi-issue approach of the march. There was a certain amount of criticism that this approach muddled the action's purpose. I found, however, that most women approved of the WPA's agenda. Certainly the interconnectedness of militarism and domestic life was a constant topic. At registration, tables of literature, buttons, posters, and T-shirts catalogued the broad social concerns of the march. Workshops covered topics ranging from rape and child abuse to women workers in the nuclear industry. The banners at the march to Washington Mall further emphasized the link between rampant military spending and curtailed social services, social repression and the oppression of minorities as well as women.

The demonstrations used ritual to heighten the effect of group expression, and to lend coherence to what might otherwise have been just another march. It also allowed women to vent their feelings. Finally, it united and energized.

An important part of the ritual was the use of immense female figures (papier mâché puppets donated by the Bread and Puppet Theatre) to express rage, mourning and defiance. Women formed a chain around the Pentagon, and wove a web to symbolically strangle the destructive power of militarism. That this ritual created an air of vitality is obvious from the response of a lab technician in Montréal who developed my film. She knew nothing of the event; but when I came to collect the photos, she commented, "It must have been quite a festivity." The pageantry of the march indicated to me that the event had more effect as a means of strengthening the participants than as a protest. We were, however, noticeable. In the subway stop under the Pentagon, as two Army officers passed me, I heard one mutter to the other, "That's one of them."

As we drove away from the Pentagon parking lot and the vastness of the building extended into view, I was amazed that we had actually woven a web long enough to encompass it. However, at the encircling itself, women tended to bunch up at the five doorways, perhaps in anticipation of the doorway weavings or the impending arrests.

At one point, I found myself virtually alone, hanging onto the strand of wool that was my lifeline to the rest of the demonstration gathered elsewhere.

The most effective part of the Pentagon ritual occurred when women wove the five entrances shut with twine. A riveting moment came when, at the completion of a weaving, women raised their arms to form the goddess sign and began to keen. The high wail continued in waves as more people took up the call. Police moved away from the weaving, refusing to touch it. Pentagon officials trying to enter or leave the building stopped, apprehensive. The women employees could not fail to listen to this eerie sound of anguish and power.

The arrests at the Pentagon were confusing. Even as I write this, it is unclear how many women were arrested. Numbers range from 44 to 105, the upper number being reported by lawyers for the accused. The night before the march, rumours flew: the police would be merciless, arresting for the slightest offence; the police would be lenient, avoiding arrests wherever possible. At the Pentagon, I noted forbearance on the part of the police, most of whom were black.

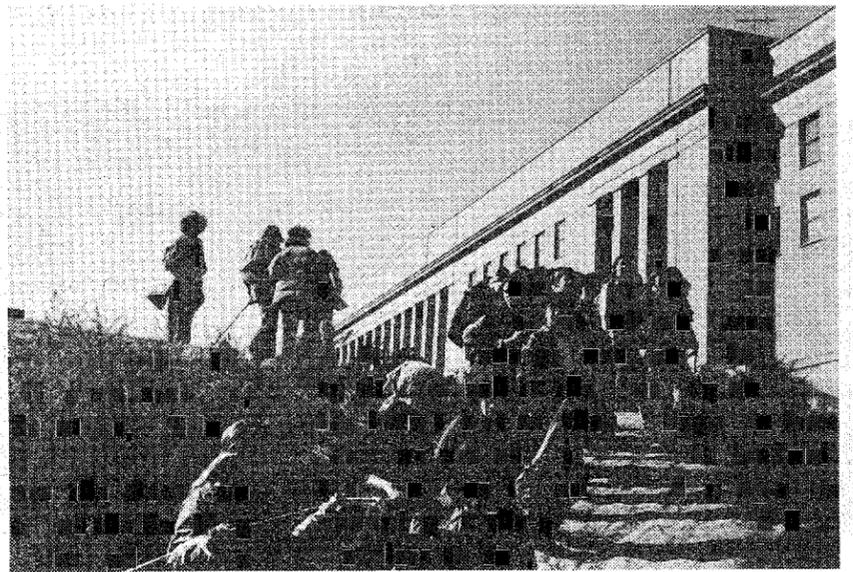
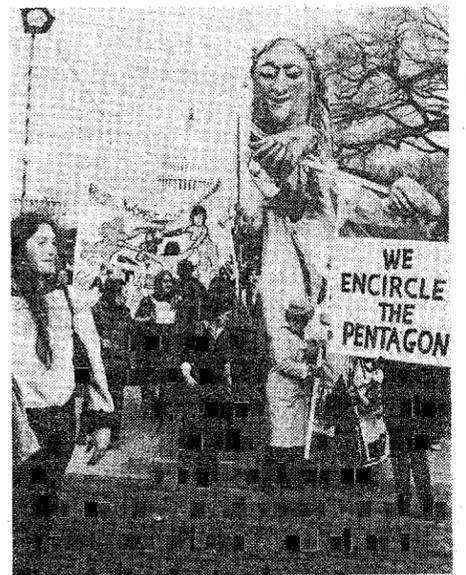
The WPA highlighted, as have all other Washington demonstrations, the racism that persists in America. Here we were, a predominantly white, vaguely middle class group, being housed in the midst of black Washington, with its rigid colour and class barriers. This action could come no closer to solving problems of race and class than have other feminist groups, such as the National Women's Studies Association, whose 1981 convention on racism ended with the recommendation that the 1982 convention be again devoted to racism.

Finally, for all its communal compassion, the action exhausted me and others, as far as I could see, for rather mundane reasons. Idealism is sometimes sorely lacking in practicality. In this case, the action was simply too ambitious and too long. Sunday's workshops and mass meeting generated the energy necessary for a high-spirited march to the Washington Mall. By the time the street theatre began in front of the Museum of Air and Space Technology, the sun was lowering and people began dropping to the ground, tired and hungry. Needless to say, that evening's vigil at the White House was sparsely attended. Everyone knew they had to save their strength to begin the main march at dawn on Monday. Early in the morning, as we waited for the Pentagon march to begin, and after, as we

wound through the desolation of Arlington Cemetery, I felt as if we had taken on all of Washington. And we weren't yet at the Pentagon.

The WPA demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of the women's movement. Its strengths centre on the creation of rituals which build feminist community. In Washington, a city dedicated to rituals and symbols of militarism, the WPA's feminist alternatives were essential. The action was galvanizing. However, it is an open question as to whether feminism and the broader anti-nuclear movement can join forces. Such a movement would require that the ideological split within feminism be bridged. In addition, there is the issue of working with men. Feminists have learned from the radical actions of the 1960's not to trust men. If they choose to form a coalition with men on the issue of disarmament, it will have to be based on their good faith that men recognize the sexism of the past and are willing to work to overcome it in themselves. It is to be hoped that the urgency of disarmament would impel men to evolve rather than compel women to compromise their feminist principles, as has so often been the case in the past. In spite of the unsolved problems it raised, the Women's Pentagon Action was good for feminism and a decisive step towards building a more powerful disarmament movement in North America. ●

Mimi Morton lives in Montreal and was one of the few Canadians encircling the Pentagon last November.



A Chinese Puzzle



by Maureen Hynes

One of China's foremost women writers, 76-year-old Ding Ling, was the guest of honour at a York University reception on November 27 in Toronto. Ding is not only noted for her significance in modern Chinese fiction, but also for her amazingly dramatic life.

Ding Ling's iconoclastic principles on writing, politics and women placed her at the centre of events during three decades in China — from the mid-twenties until 1958, when she was purged from the Communist Party and denied her rights as a citizen and author. In 1979, she was rehabilitated and allowed to resume her career after twenty years of manual work with the peasants in a remote section of China. She is currently giving a four-month writers' workshop in Iowa, and several Canadian writers, among them Margaret Laurence, supplemented a Canada Council grant to pay for her tour across Canada.

Some of the remarks made by Ding Ling that night left Toronto feminists puzzled and surprised. Our discussion began with some general remarks on the problems of women in China today. She noted that the feudal, patriarchal ideology which has so long oppressed women was rapidly disappearing in China, although its remnants constitute a problem still. The literature of that ideology is no longer being produced, and the Chinese government has taken steps to eliminate oppressive features of Old China through the new marriage laws. Divorce has been made very difficult in order to discourage the practice of discarding no-longer-beautiful wives. Ding Ling discussed the harsh Chinese attitude toward sexual promiscuity: women who have many sexual partners are called "dirty shoes," while men who do the same are merely called "rascals." She emphasized, however, not so much the double standard in this attitude, but the "protection" such social pressure affords young women.

When pressed on the issue of the relationship of personal experience — like a husband's willingness to share housework — to the predominating ideology, Ding Ling stated: "There is no connection. A man who loves his wife will help in the home; a man who doesn't, won't. This kind of personal experience has no relation to the current ideology. It is purely an individual matter."

These are precisely the kinds of questions that had been of great importance in Ding Ling's career. Her political involvement began at the age of 13, in 1919, when she led a demonstration for women's equality. She was fortunate in having access to education and to an artistic circle in Shanghai and Peking in her youth. Ding joined the Communist Party in the early thirties, after her literary reputation was established. Her avant-garde literary style was linked to a lifestyle marked by sexual emancipation and an assertion of independence, principles she later fused with a deep commitment to political protest. Ding was arrested by the Nationalist Forces (the Guomindang) in 1933, and shortly thereafter her husband was executed with 18 other young Communists. For a short time, she was assumed dead as well and was widely eulogized; however, she in fact escaped from the Guomindang disguised as a soldier and joined Mao Zedong in Yenan. There she took on propaganda work with the resistance forces during the war against Japan and the struggle for liberation.

After Liberation in 1949, she held key posts in Chinese writers' associations, and won the Stalin Prize, international recognition of her importance as a writer. However, in the anti-rightist campaign of 1957, she was attacked for her extreme individualism and for the "bourgeois decadence and nihilism" evident in the preoccupation with sexuality in her writings. Her work, it was claimed, failed to show that the reactionary classes, not men in general, were responsible for the oppression of women. The ex-

ploration of purely "personal" matters in literature was considered not only unnecessary, but also a dangerous illusion. She was also accused of rejecting party guidance and of disrupting party unity. These were the charges that resulted in her twenty-one year sojourn in the Chinese countryside.

It is small wonder, then, that Ding Ling appeared reticent in answering Toronto feminists' questions on the relationship of the personal level to the political level in literature. As she picks up again on her career as a writer at the age of 76, many of the questions about women that she raised so many years ago are now being openly discussed in China. And it is surprising how many of these concerns are relevant to women in North America. For example, in her essay, *Thoughts on March 8* (International Women's Day), written in 1942, she observed that "women cannot live beyond their time in history" — she was referring to the expectations that women live under and place upon themselves — that they can find the resources to live freely in a society not yet transformed.

It was gratifying and educational to see the energy with which she rejected the notions of male superiority, and her faith in the young women of China. And it was impossible, in the face of Ding Ling's stamina, not to wonder whether we would be actively pursuing our careers with such firm conviction at her age.

Maureen Hynes is a Toronto feminist and teacher who spent five months in China in 1980. Her recent book, *Letters from China*, was published by Women's Press.



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Women and Children Last

by Donna Rosensweig

According to present government plans, income maintenance for sole-support mothers in Ontario will be shifted from the Family Benefits Program to General Welfare early in 1983. While Family Benefits are given on a long-term basis, General Welfare is seen as short-term assistance to people who are temporarily unemployed.

Details of the new arrangements have not been worked out, leaving only partial answers to several key questions: to what extent will sole-support parents be pressured to work outside the home? how much money will they receive? should income maintenance for sole-support parents be administered locally or provincially?

One Job or Two

Until the 1970's, the Ontario government tended to view all sole-support mothers as unemployable. In the past years though, some attention has been directed to developing day care facilities, employment counselling, and support services that assist Family Benefits recipients in seeking employment outside the home. But now, as government finances get tighter, services that began as a support to sole-support mothers may very well become compulsory.

Frank Drea, Ontario's Minister of Community and Social Services, announced last June that "the necessary support services have been put in place in many areas of the province. What is necessary now is to develop a co-ordinated approach to their delivery and to tie them directly to the eligibility determination process for social assistance."

The availability and adequacy of day care facilities and of employment opportunities for women should be seriously questioned. A great deal of information about deficiencies in services and the scarcity of employ-

ment opportunities is available from groups such as Action Day Care, Neighbourhood Legal Services and Ontario's Women's Bureau.

But even more important is the indication that sole-support mothers will be required to seek employment outside the home in addition to their responsibilities as homemakers. In a letter to the Minister, the Citizens' Advisory Committee of Ottawa's Regional Social Service asked: "Will single parents (men and women) be subject to more pressure to seek employment even if it is their choice to stay home and care for their children? How will these parents be perceived by the system? As layabouts?" These questions have not been answered.

Money and Administration

At present, people receiving Family Benefits are given a higher allowance, since their long-term earning capacity is generally lower. On Family Benefits, a mother with three children will receive \$696 a month, whereas a couple with two children on General Welfare will receive \$615. (Both figures apply to the November 1981 rate and include a housing subsidy.) The amount of money that a sole-support mother will receive through General Welfare has not yet been determined.

Plans for the administration and government financing of income maintenance programs are also now under consideration. The Family Benefits Program is administered provincially with a single set of regulations that apply across the province. It is cost-shared on a 50-50 basis by the provincial and federal governments. General Welfare, on the other hand, is a municipally administered program. Each municipality develops its own regulations, allowing for systems that can be responsive to community needs in some areas and barbaric in

others. Municipal governments pay 20% of the cost of General Welfare, the province contributes 30% and the federal government 50%. Under the proposed changes, sole-support mothers will be served by their municipalities. The government cost-sharing arrangements have not yet been worked out.

Pilot Projects

Information on which to base administrative decisions will be gathered from the experiences of pilot projects being planned for 1982. Pilot projects will be conducted in several areas of the province, including Peel County, Waterloo, and Etobicoke, an area within the Metropolitan Toronto municipality. Only new applicants will be included. While they will be served municipally, they will receive their cheques from the provincial government at Family Benefit rates. The pilot projects are designed primarily to establish and test new administrative procedures and to assess staffing implications.

Sole-Support Mothers Organize

In Metro Toronto, a sole-support mothers' group has organized to express concern about the effects of the proposed changes. This group has formulated several sound resolutions:

- Single parents with dependent children have the right to sufficient long-term income assistance to enable them to work full-time as parents and homemakers.
- The right to define "employable" and "able-bodied" (terms used in government programs) in reference to participation in the paid labour force belongs to the sole-support mother. She can determine the time when such a move is feasible for herself and for her depen-

dent children.

- Use of support services must be voluntary and not in any way linked to eligibility for income assistance.
- For those women who are in a position to work outside the home, the Ministry must develop a more effective range of support services and policies.
- The foregoing should apply equally to all sole support parents, regardless of sex.

This group has been working to publicize the issues and to pressure government to recognize their views when formulating new policies and programs. At the provincial level, they met with John Stapleton of the Ministry in November. He provided little information or clarification of government plans.

Some progress has been made at the municipal level in connection with the pilot program being planned for Etobicoke. Largely as a result of the group's efforts, an advisory committee will be established early this year. As described in a motion passed by Metro Toronto, this committee will "have input in the implementation and monitoring of the Pilot Project, as well as have input in the development of a long range policy related to this issue." Sole-support mothers will participate in this committee, establishing a channel through which their views will at least be heard, if not heeded.

(The mothers' group is now planning strategy and action for the winter. New participants — both sole-support mothers and people who share their concerns — will be welcome. Contact Gail Davis at 465-3376.)

Donna Rosensweig is a researcher at TV Ontario, and is a single parent, living at the Bain Ave. Co-op in Toronto.



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Women's Labour Bears Fruit

by Mariana Valverde

One of the highlights of the recent Ontario Federation of Labour convention held in Toronto in November was a resolution calling for abortion clinics. At the convention the province's labour movement endorsed a resolution which, though strangely worded, supported the right of women to free choice. This move came as a surprise to some feminist observers, and it seems to indicate that the union movement is willing to take up non-economic women's issues. Also, the daycare campaign, to which the Federation devoted a good bit of energy last year, will be continued throughout the next year; and other issues, such as microtechnology and affirmative action, were highlighted for discussion and action in the months to come.

These victories were not won without hard work. The all-powerful Resolutions Committee takes the resolutions presented by locals and amalgamates them or edits them for the convention. This means that a watering down process can take place: for example, a composite resolution on daycare substituted the mild term "encourage" for the stronger term "mobilize." As CUPE delegate and International Women's Day Committee member Shelley Gordon stated, "what gets dropped from the composite resolutions are the concrete actions." It is thus necessary to watch out for these subtle changes and be prepared to do some serious lobbying and floor organizing.

In the case of the daycare resolution this lobbying and strategizing was fairly successful, and the resolution was partially amended by the committee to reflect the fighting spirit of the locals. (One of the most shockingly anti-democratic rules of the convention is that resolutions cannot be amended from the floor. If unsatisfied, the conven-

tion can only move to refer the resolution back to the committee, in which case there's no telling when — or in what form — the resolution will return to the floor. Hence the need for lobbying the committee before the resolution gets to the floor.)

Unfortunately, some of the resolutions concerning women were inexplicably scheduled for the first day of the four-day convention, i.e. before the women's caucus had met, so that it was almost impossible for feminist unionists to strategize around these resolutions.

In previous years, the women's caucus or forum had consisted almost solely of speeches. This year, although paid union staff did a great deal of the talking, there was more opportunity for rank-and-filers to get involved. People concerned with specific resolutions took the opportunity to meet and discuss floor tactics, which are quite complex, given that there are about 2,000 delegates and about as many rules of procedure.

There was also some participation from the autonomous women's movement, notably the IWDC, which leafletted the delegates and helped in the strategizing. One delegate, who has been involved in the women's movement for many years, expressed the hope that more women active in the women's movement would also become active in their unions.

As a first-time observer, my overriding feeling was one of great respect for the women and men who, day in and day out, struggle with their co-workers and their union bureaucracies to translate the principles of feminism into concrete gains for women. The abortion resolution and the daycare campaign show that this hard work is beginning to bear fruit.

MOVEMENT MATTERS

WAVAW

Women Against Violence Against Women is reorganizing and contacting women to work out its position on various aspects of violence against women, in both theory and practice. WAVAW is committed to *action* from a feminist perspective against violence against women.

WAVAW is women fighting for women. Its orientation is specifically feminist in content, structure, and execution. It is conceived of as but one segment of a broad struggle which women are waging throughout the world. It in no way replaces or supersedes any other feminist struggle or group.

WAVAW's intention is to contact as many women and groups as possible for the purpose of participating in a women's network of communication, co-operation, and mutual support. Involvement is needed and sought from the women's community at large.

WAVAW, Box 174, Station "D", Toronto, Ontario, M6P 3J8.

AMNESTY ACTS

Amnesty International has begun a campaign to protest the disappearance of people in countries such as Argentina, Guatemala, and the Phillipines. Since 1978 for example, when General Lucas Garcia seized power in Guatemala, about 5000 people have disappeared in that country alone. In most cases they have been killed. About 3000 people the Guatemalan government called "subversive" or "criminal" were killed outright in 1980.

There are at least 364 people on whose behalf Amnesty International is acting. One such person is Alaide Foppa de Solarzano. She is 67 years old, a mother of 5, a poet, and an art and theatre critic for a prominent Mexican newspaper. She is also the founder of *Fozo de la Mujer* (Forum for Women), a feminist magazine. Alaide Foppa de Solarzano went to Guatemala on December 13, 1980 in order to visit her sick mother. About noon on December 19, she and the driver were seized from her mother's car by armed men said by witnesses to be members of the G-2 squad of the Guatemalan army. There has since been no news of this woman.

Group 50 of Amnesty International, located in Toronto, is encouraging anyone interested in human rights to write letters or sign petitions on behalf of Alaide Foppa de Solarzano and send them to: Gisele Igier, either c/o Amnesty International, Group 50, PO 6196, Stn A, Toronto, M5W 1P6; or, c/o 72 Isabella St., Apt 34, Toronto, M4Y 1N4.

So as to avoid antagonizing the Guate-

Calendar

Don't miss *Broadside's* new feature — a monthly Toronto Women's Events Calendar called 'Outside Broadside.' See page 19.

MacPhail Residence

The directors of the Metro Toronto YWCA voted on January 7 to continue to operate MacPhail, a residence for young women on low incomes, until the end of this year. Their decision was largely the result of community pressure.

The Women's Housing Coalition was organized last fall in response to the housing crisis affecting single women with or without children. One of its first concerns was the future of MacPhail. The residence is owned by the Ontario Housing Corporation and managed by the YWCA. As a result of the Y's clean-up campaign to protect its image, the building became almost one-third empty. And in December, 1981, OHC announced that it would take over the building in January.

At first, the Y seemed inclined to accept the take-over, despite the fact that its contract with OHC would not terminate until next December, but was prompted by the concern — expressed by letters, phone calls and a demonstration — of the Housing Coalition and other women's organizations, to continue operating MacPhail. At the present time, the Y Board has announced its intention to obtain a new contract.

Resource Library

The YWCA's Women's Resource Library, an extensive collection of books and periodicals, has after a delay of several months found a home at Founders College, York University, Toronto. The collection continues to be open to the public: the room location and hours of operation have not yet been determined, but will be announced shortly by York.

malan authorities if possible, Group 50 suggests that letters or petitions be clearly but diplomatically worded. Copies of petitions can be obtained from the above addresses or at Amnesty International meetings or other public events attended by their representatives.

IWD 1982

Once again International Women's Day is drawing near. It is time to celebrate the victories of the past year and to show our strength and solidarity by uniting around the many issues we fight for every day. In order to make International Women's Day 1982 bigger and stronger than ever, it is important that we begin to organize now.

Plans are already underway for a demonstration and fair to be held on Saturday, March 6th. Organizing meetings are held

each Wednesday evening (check 'Outside Broadside' for details). If you want to help build the day, come to the meetings. If you are interested in having a booth at the fair or in participating in any of the cultural activities (singing, reading your poetry, performing a play) call Carolyn at 789-4541 for more information. Check *Broadside's* March issue for more specific details of the day.

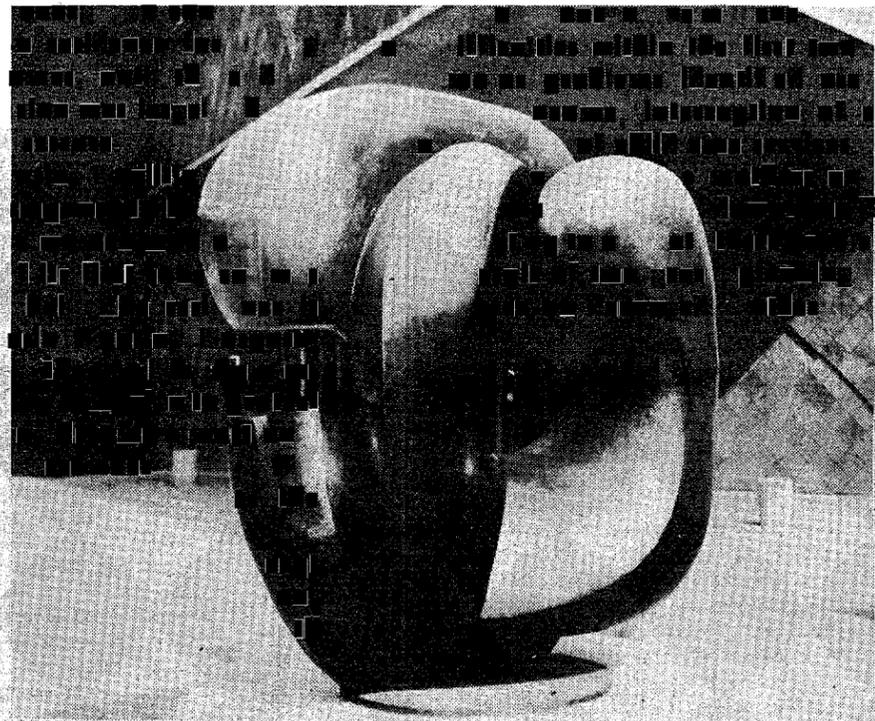
Jessie's

Of unmarried teenagers who raise their babies alone, one in five will encounter serious difficulties within the first two years. The major problems identified are isolation, low income, interruption of education, and lack of child-care services.

Jessie's, a centre for mothers under 19 which opened January in downtown Toronto, was set up to alleviate these problems. It is the result of two years' planning by the Task Force on Teenaged Mothers, chaired

by June Callwood and composed of front-line community workers.

The centre is a comprehensive service, offering counselling, medical care referrals, pregnancy tests, birth control information and discussion groups. The house, at 152 Bathurst St., has a resource centre providing parent relief, parent-child drop-in, well-baby clinics, a swap shop for cribs and toys, etc., remedial classes for school re-entry and 24-hour emergency infant care.



"Pasiphae," by eminent Canadian sculptor, Maryon Kantaroff. This bronze sculpture, approximately 6' by 6' and weighing one ton, was commissioned to stand in front of the new Canadian Embassy in Mexico City.

Kantaroff, a feminist familiar to *Broadside* readers (see interview, Vol. 2 No. 6), has recently won the competition to produce the largest sculpture in Canada, to be located in the plaza in front of the Richard-

son Building at the corner of Portage and Main in Winnipeg. This sculpture is to be a bronze fountain 45' x 35' and of varying depths and will occupy a space reminiscent of a Greek amphitheatre.

"Pasiphae?" The god Poseidon punished King Minos of ancient Crete for refusing to sacrifice a prize bull by causing Minos' wife, Pasiphae, to fall in love with the bull.

MOVEMENT COMMENT

High Standards for Low Life

This week in Toronto the LesbianAction Centre announced a new outreach and education program — a monthly list of Community Standards. Scheduled to appear in newspapers, schools, and public notice boards, it will be a guideline for dykes across the city who are interested in political and personal growth. This month's list was distributed to media at a press conference and is reprinted below.

Community Standards for February, 1982

1. Sadomasochistic sex is unacceptable this month, but biting is and continues to be part of our progressive sexuality.
2. Rolling Stones are not considered to be in good taste. The same holds true for Bob Dylan. Teresa Trull remains a bellweather for lesbians everywhere in spite of how boring her albums are.
3. Young women are encouraged to take part in community events, but please do not

gawk at women over 30. It makes them painfully aware of the blind adoration they bestow on women over 40, particularly those with grey hair.

4. Sex in public is encouraged, particularly the bambi variety.

5. Fidelity is always a community standard, but forms of non-monogamy are encouraged at the discussion level.

6. Roles are discouraged, but tolerance of both skirts and leather is necessary for strength and unity.

7. There is some concern that the controversy about s and m sex is becoming a diversion from other important issues — like our inability to talk about or take part in any kind of sex with any regularity. Therefore, sex discussion groups are an important activity this month.

8. These standards can and probably will change monthly.

— Judy Liefschultz

The triumphant return to Toronto of comic

ROBIN TYLER

"Many performers still live in a world that for women and men of independent spirit in general — and for lesbians and gay men in particular — is literally a never-never land. Thank goodness for Robin Tyler! She lives in the real world!" — CFRO — FM, Vancouver

"An outrageous and uproariously funny comic" — Flo Kennedy

Convocation Hall, U of T
8:00 pm, Friday, February 26, 1982

Tickets \$4.50. Available at Women's Bookstore, This Ain't the Rosedale Library Books, Parliament Gold Records, SCM Books, SAC ticket outlet, and Glad Day Books

A non-profit event in U of T's
GAY AND LESBIAN AWARENESS WEEK
Co-sponsored by SAC

For information and childcare, call 961-8890, evenings

Tit for Tat: Coalitio

by Lorna Weir

This article on coalition politics is a major contribution to a feminist understanding of the topic. It presents a cogent view of a complex subject from a definitive and well organized perspective. Moreover, it supplies a compendium of pertinent ideas on how to approach the political reality of coalitions which will be useful and interesting to every feminist, regardless of her political involvement and orientation.

Of course, the article in no way exhausts the subject. There are other, perhaps conflicting perspectives; different emphasis, other considerations, caveats, practical suggestions and examples. Broadside intends to continue publishing articles and letters from as many points of view as possible. We have much to learn from each other. All our readers are cordially invited to share their ideas on this important topic. Write: Broadside, PO Box 494, Station P, Toronto M5S 2T1.

Preliminary Pep Talk

A familiar pattern of despair creeps into conversations concerning the real gains the women's movement has made over the last 15 years. It is frustrating and enraging that violence against women continues unabated, that we are still underpaid, that nothing even approaching free, universal daycare has been attained. But surely there is some comfort in the fact that during the 1970's, the women's movement became a mass movement. This was altogether quite a pleasant change. A mass movement: we now have our own literature and theory, our own journals and newspapers. We have a wide variety of political organizations and social services, fighting for the liberation of women. The women's movement is a mass movement: it is organized from below by the oppressed group itself, not from above by people external to it. Feminism is a movement constituted by a social group whose oppression cuts across class lines.

There is another important sense in which we are a mass movement: we have affected the daily lives of millions of women and men, most of whom would not think of themselves as being either feminist or anti-sexist. This is not a vapid remark: feminists tend to underestimate the influence of the women's movement through discounting its effects on those women who are not self-identified feminists. Many, if not most, women now agree with specific issues that have been raised by the women's movement, and, while their refusal to align with a broad feminist program is a source of difficulty, we should understand agreement on specifics as a significant political gain for feminism. If our influence were really as narrow as we believe, the Moral Majority, Renaissance or the 'Right to Life' would have been unsuccessful in mobilizing political reaction against us. That the New Right has achieved such influence in the US is in large part due to their anti-feminism, which is in turn a back-handed tribute to the political significance of the women's movement. Internally divided we may be; politically ineffective we are not.

Coalitions are a focus of debate among feminists at the present time. The motivation for these discussions comes from developments both within and without the women's movement. One of the sources for the attention currently being paid to coalitions is the growth of the women's movement, which now has a broader social base than it did during the late 1960's. Women who are simultaneously members of other oppressed groups, such as people of colour or immigrants, increasingly demand feminist political support for their activities outside the women's movement. What form the inter-movement support should take is a subject of concern to the women's movement; one kind of support which may be appropriate is feminist participation in coalitions.

Secondly, feminist theory is expanding in scope, an expansion which has consequences for our political strategy. When a feminist theory of the state or a feminist critique of developmental economics is articulated, it will alter the types of programs and strategies we put forward. If feminism truly is a politic with universal implications, then our theoretical contributions are eventually going to take the form of political interventions outside the women's movement. Our bodies will follow our theory, or vice versa.

Our final motivation for the discussion on coalitions is the New Right, a politic whose cutting edge is its coherent anti-feminism. Rosalind Petchesky, in her article "Anti-abortion, Antifeminism and the New Right," has summarized the intention of the New Right in the US: "The aim is surely to reprivatize every domain of social, public intervention that has been created through the struggles of working people, blacks, the poor and women for the last 20 years." As an example of the kind of dynamic about which Petchesky is talking, we can point to the struggle over daycare. The women's movement is attempting to redefine child care as a social responsibility, whereas "pro-family" politics argues that childcare is a private, i.e., woman's, responsibility. The threat that the Family Protection Act, the social flagship of the American New Right, might be

passed has recently pulled together a broad coalition of women's, labour, gay and civil liberties groups. The moral is common enough: a common enemy on the offensive can make for solidarity among those being attacked.

People theorize about coalitions as a way to go "beyond the fragments" of our present political practice. Although the women's movement has excelled in grassroots organizing by single feminist groups, we have found it harder to mobilize intensive campaigns beyond the local level. Coalitions among ourselves or with other movements could help give the women's movement greater visibility and power. Potentially, coalitions offer us access to greater numbers of people and resources than we ourselves can muster, a help in carrying out projects that we alone simply can't tackle.

When considering the topic of coalitions, we should bear in mind that we're not talking about working with the federal Liberals or Exxon. Our possible allies are groups engaging in popular-democratic struggles, groups which are socially marginal. At stake in the discussion of coalitions is the broadening of feminist influence in popular movements, and the integration of feminism into the political practices of these movements. Stating that our politic is universal is not enough: we have to make it such as well.

Coalition politics and the women's movement

A coalition is a group of groups. Whereas, in other types of formation, individuals represent themselves, in coalitions individuals represent the groups by which they have been delegated. A coalition has a basis of unity bonding its disparate members together, although each component group maintains its independent organizational existence. The basis of unity can range from a single demand to a complex analysis. Most coalitions are defensive in nature: they are ways of organizing alliances when different groups are confronted by a common enemy. Members of a coalition tend to organize support for the basis of unity of the coalition within their own communities; thus, the women's movement would work among women, immigrant groups among immigrants, and so on. People may have a common enemy without understanding the fight in the same way. Coalition members may well abide by the basis of unity, but use wildly different justifications for it when organizing in their own constituencies.

As feminists, we cannot help but view coalition politics with ambivalence. Coalitions mean working with men. We cringe at the thought of returning to the typewriters and coffee cups of the male left; we fear merging with other movements and thereby losing the organizational independence of the women's movement; we worry about devaluing our feminist principles when making inter-movement alliances. Our misgivings regarding participation in coalitions are certainly not without foundation, but we should note that, contrary to current belief, feminists did participate in coalitions prior to 1980. The coalitions in which we participated as feminists tended to be of two types: 1) coalitions among groups within the women's movement, or, 2) coalitions which had as their basis of unity feminist demands. Witness, for instance, NAC (National Action Committee on the Status of Women), as an example of the first type, and the coalition to defend the 1967 Abortion Law in Great Britain, as an example of the second. We are more experienced in coalition politics than we have given ourselves credit.

Feminists from the different currents of the women's movement are talking and writing about the significance of political alliances with other autonomous movements. That we support other popular movements does not at all mean their issues and ours are all the same, nor that there is no distinction between these movements and ours. In the same way as the contradiction between men and women cannot be reduced to the contradiction between labour and capital, so too the contradiction between white and non-white, or colonizer and colonized, is not reducible to the contradiction between men and women. Feminist support for anti-nuke actions is very different from our support for free universal daycare or an end to violence against women. When discussing coalitions, it is important to remember that the issue at hand is one of solidarity and co-operation among mass movements, not the assimilation or subordination of these movements to one another. The current debate on coalitions is happening precisely because the women's movement is a powerful mass movement being motivated externally and internally to support people/issues that are in some sense *other* than it.

The organizational independence of the women's movement still meets with widespread resistance. At a personal level, I've been struck by the incapacity of most of my closest male friends to appreciate the political necessity for all-women's events and organizations. Even well-meaning feminists working in other movements have made the mistake of lumping together all progressive resistance movements. We cannot afford to forget that the women's movement is unique. All other political movements — from the most reactionary to the most progressive — are male-

centred, defined and controlled. Feminists in the past have fought tooth and nail to preserve our autonomy from the assimilationist tendency of the Left.

The small but growing feminist presence in the anti-nuclear, anti-imperialist and anti-racist movements has created a new situation which has led some feminists to assimilate movements in order to justify their work, not realizing that to be distinct and to be isolated have separate meanings. Statements such as "nuclear disarmament is a feminist issue" can have the covert effect of assimilating the women's movement to the anti-nuclear one. Yet this statement and others like it do seem to have a positive ring. The grain of truth is that feminist social and political theory will be a constituent element of the analysis of movements outside the women's movement proper; that feminists will operate within other progressive movements; that the women's movement will support other popular movements. However, the anti-nuke movement, for instance, is not part of the women's movement — and it doesn't have to be for feminists to form alliances with it.

If this point about the necessary autonomy of the women's movement is here belaboured, it is because this point becomes especially acute when coalitions appear at the top of the political agenda. The women's movement originated

Fig. 1: Traditional Model of 'The Party' and its movements.

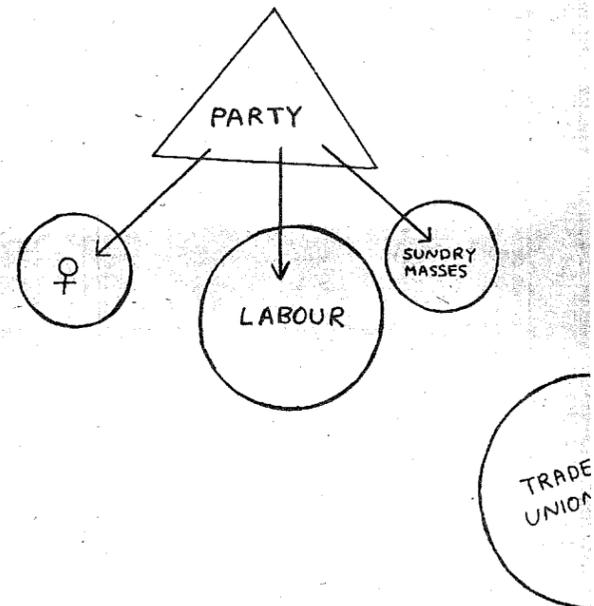


Fig. 2: Co-integration

SPOTTING A HIDDEN AGENDA: THE CP

Working in coalitions will bring feminist groups into contact with unfamiliar and sometimes dubious allies. The coalitions that feminists will be interested in joining will frequently have the Communist Party as a participant. Members of the CP tend to be politically experienced, dedicated, and in possession of a broad political education. Unfortunately, all too often these admirable qualities are used against the coalitions in which they participate. The following are characteristic of the CP's operating methods, and should be carefully monitored:

- Representatives of the CP will not identify themselves as such, using instead front organizations or individuals.
- The CP attempts to set the political policy of the coalition by stacking their representatives on what they take to be the decision-making bodies of the coalition.

- While wanting direction of the representatives do not follow its actual organization.
- If the line they adopted position of undemocratic creates internal tension.
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If this point about the necessary autonomy of the women's movement is here belaboured, it is because this point becomes especially acute when coalitions appear at the top of the political agenda. The women's movement originated

in part from a withdrawal of women from the Left; to work again with men hearkens back to that benighted time. In the early days of the contemporary women's movement, we rebounded from being assimilated by other movements to a position of separatism and uncompromising organizational independence. This sharp opposition between assimilation and independence is now politically (if not emotionally) obsolete, given the existence of an organizationally autonomous women's movement. We are now in a position to begin working with men in coalitions on the basis of our organizational independence. In certain places where a strong women's movement exists we can afford to struggle on two fronts: 1) building the women's movement; 2) working in conjunction with other groups outside the women's movement. This second may entail participating in coalitions. A caveat: clearly, the first must take priority over the second.

To this day, feminists are subjected to the covert, and sometimes overt, sneers of people who think we should be doing something better with our time than talking about women. Why aren't we taking care of everyone else in the world except ourselves, just like we always have been? Implied in this is that the women's movement has a merely

particular interest, while more universal. Feminists l universals have a sneaking implication that the wome versal concerns attempts t with our oppression, and t movement does not deal w linked to the reinforcemen personality as nurturers.

The prerequisite to unde affirmation of the indepen legitimacy of our politic. O pendent women's moveme cize the forms of our oppr begin to define our collecti terms, not solely in a defe

Strategy

The central dilemma f guarding coalitions is how selling our feminist princi Rich has posed this probl "Coalitions for women ha we have worked long and h port from men or any o called yet again to bolste around other issues that a more universal." (See Broc sary that the basis of unity ticipate be a feminist one? those coalitions which dea lating to the oppression of

What feminists may der a series of factors: the str issues around which the c ticipated length the group be:

defensive
single-issue
short-term

As a rule of thumb, if a and short-term, the politic generally consists of one demands simple and the b maximal support from a this type of coalition, any g its own politic in the basis sectarian fashion.

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Coalitions which concer tics should for obvious re groups, with at least som vance in order to selectiv would be mouthpieces for on record of coalitions, because the political char for grabs in the initial me

Where the coalition is term, the basis of the all strategic, and feminists m inist issues and analyses as If a coalition were to be f the right to employment, issue of women's right to quate jobs. As a corollary employment, the coalition stand on equal pay for e Failure to address wome would justify feminist wit of the happy facts about ways pick up its marbles;

Even the simplest of d difficult questions for femin of an anti-nuclear coalition nuclear power plant. Shou group which is anti-nuclea alition? This addition to t basis of unity of the grou fensive and single-issue. be included in the basis political purpose of the co probably be defeated on g stances, a feminist group reserved the right to distr taining material on repro take issue with anti-choice

Fig. 1: Traditional Model of 'The Party' and its relation to popular movements.

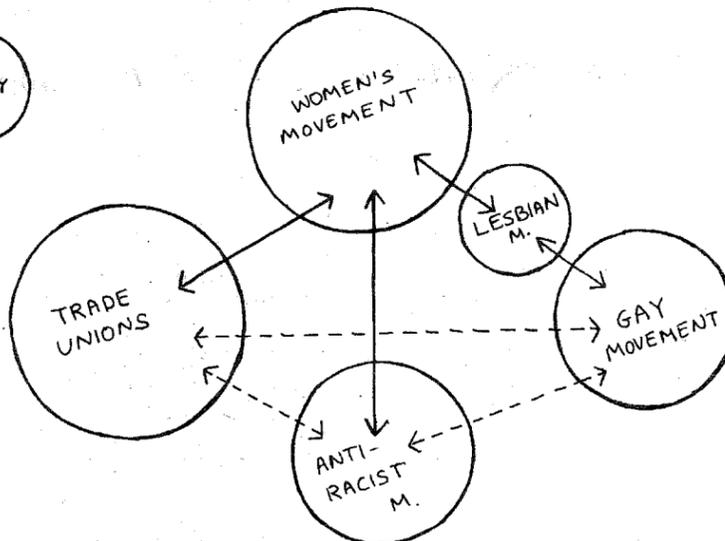
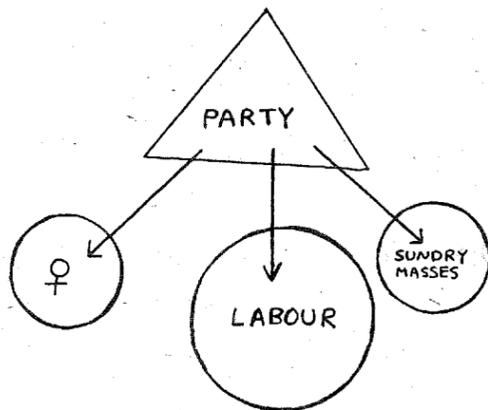


Fig. 2: Coalition politics in action (example): non-hierarchical integration of popular movements.

SPOTTING A HIDDEN AGENDA: THE CP

Working in coalitions will bring feminist groups into contact with unfamiliar and sometimes dubious allies. The coalitions that feminists will be interested in joining will frequently have the Communist Party as a participant. Members of the CP tend to be politically experienced, dedicated, and in possession of a broad political education. Unfortunately, all too often these admirable qualities are used against the coalitions in which they participate. The following are characteristic of the CP's operating methods, and should be carefully monitored:

- Representatives of the CP will not identify themselves as such, using instead front organizations or individuals.
- The CP attempts to set the political policy of the coalition by stacking their representatives on what they take to be the decision-making bodies of the coalition.

• While wanting input into the political direction of the coalition, their representatives do not involve themselves in its actual organizational work.

• If the line they are putting forward is defeated, they misrepresent the adopted position, accusing the coalition of undemocratic procedures. This creates internal problems in the coalition.

• Political criticisms are mistakenly labelled personal attacks.

These practices are certainly not characteristic of all socialist groups, most of which do not have fronts, nor do they share all of the CP's *modus operandi*.

According to the CP's rationale, in a revolutionary situation it is necessary for political groups to go underground and operate publicly only through fronts. It is also sometimes the case that, in times of generalized red-baiting, front organizations can be more politically effective than a party, which, under its own name, would fail to win support.

To the first justification, one can reply that we in Canada are manifestly

not in a pre-revolutionary situation, and, to the second, that it rationalizes a cynical lack of faith in democratic discussion in popular movements. Feminists and other progressive people are quite able to debate a political position on its own merits, and we won't stop up our ears if the Communist Party, instead of one of its fronts, puts forward its position. In the long run, the strategy of intervening in popular movements through front organizations backfires, for the people in these movements feel an abiding anger towards those who come to manipulate them with hidden agendas.

Leftist interventions along these lines within the women's movement have contributed to the distaste that many feminists have acquired for socialist theory. Yet a feminism that refuses to learn from the critique of political economy — the basis of socialist theory — will leave unquestioned economic privilege and domination. The truths which may be found in socialist theory and practice deserve to be incorporated within feminism, and its lies rejected.

Politics

THE NEW RIGHT

Canada is not the United States. This is worthwhile to bear in mind when examining the New Right, for the New Right in Canada differs in important ways from its brothers in the US. Throughout this century the dominant force in the US economy has been eastern American finance, whose interests American federal economic policy has usually favoured. Over the course of about the last 25 years, new regional forms of capital emerged in the southern and mid-western states: oil exploration, construction, agribusiness, tourism/recreation, real estate, supermarkets. The interests of eastern and sunbelt capital were in competition, with each wanting federal programs to cater to its interests.

Enter the 1974, post-Watergate cleanup of campaign financing by the American Congress. The reforms limited individual and corporate lump-sum political contributions, as well as establishing limits on direct party funding of candidates. Intended to democratize the electoral process, the reforms had the effect of wrenching control away from the old party bosses, and placing it in the Political Action Committees (PAC's). This is beautiful in idea, hideous in actuality. Corporate-controlled, for the most part by sunbelt capital, the PAC's gather funds from mass-based constituencies.

Parallel to the growth of the PAC's has been the expansion of direct-mail fundraising and campaigning. Right-wing, single-issue groups give lists of their members to direct-mail corporations in return for help in their own fundraising. The people on these lists are of obvious use for election purposes — millions of single-issue voters on file in the memory banks of computers controlled by right-wing direct-mail companies. A wonderful thing to have on tap in a period of low voter turnout.

The period from 1974 to 1978 saw the growth of right-wing PAC's, foundations, coalitions and research groups through which the New Right consolidated itself outside the formal structure of the Republican Party. Sunbelt businessmen by themselves did not have the votes to displace eastern finance. Their alliance with the New Right and its social issues gave them the electoral base to become the dominant business interest within the Reagan administration. The whole infrastructure of the New Right was placed in the service of the Reagan campaign in 1980, and millions of single-issue voters dutifully went to the polls to vote against the single issue of their choice — abortion, ERA, sex ed, childcare, gay rights, busing, social welfare, unions, etc. As the leaders of the New Right are the first to admit, they won because of the social issues they raised: pro-family, anti-bureaucracy, pro-"free enterprise."

The New Right in Canada clearly does not have the same kind of political power that it does in the US. Canadian laws regulating campaign financing are not the same as the American ones. We do not have PAC's, nor do we have anything approaching the direct-mail technology of the "new politics." Further, the Canadian state is much more regionalized than the American, making it much less necessary for new business interests to control the federal state in order to achieve their ends. Canadian provinces have a lot more power than American states. Economic conflicts tend to be enacted here in the form of federal-provincial wrangling. Alberta oil can remain with its hegemony over the Alberta state without needing to stage a takeover in Ottawa.

Lest we become excessively self-congratulatory, it should be pointed out that Canada has not been spared the presence of the New Right. Several new virulently anti-gay and, occasionally, anti-lesbian organizations flourish in Toronto. Their hate literature was instrumental in the defeat of NDP candidates in the last Ontario provincial election, as well as in the defeat of John Sewell in his campaign for Mayor of Toronto. The KKK is busy gaining a foothold *ad mare usque ad mare*. Renaissance, with its "pro-family" ideology, operates in seven of 10 provinces. The Pro-Family Coalition, consisting of Campaign Life, Renaissance, Positive Parents and Canadians for Family and Freedom, united anti-feminist and homophobic groups in a "Canada in Crisis" rally which managed to pack Massey Hall in Toronto last March 8. It is interesting to note that Ron Marr, who heads the Pro-Family Coalition and Canadians for Family and Freedom, was a member of Christians for Reagan. The Pro-Family Coalition was active in last year's constitutional struggles, trying to get God and foetal rights into the new constitution. Campaign Life, a non-denominational group, has a cross-country network for anti-abortion work.

These groups have not yet been organized by any political or economic interest with a chance of gaining power at the provincial or federal levels. Given a continuing feminist offensive, given uncontrolled stagflation, given the prevalence of anti-state and anti-bureaucratic sentiment, the Canadian New Right does have the potential for growth. All it needs is power-hungry businessmen to manipulate its ideological apparatus for their own ends. It does not augur well that Howard Phillips, one of the big four in the American New Right, attended a conference of the federal Tories in North York last fall. Elements of the Conservative Party were sounding out the possibility of dumping Joe Clark as a Red Tory, and then swinging the Conservatives in a New Right direction.

The actual issues the New Right will emphasize in Canada — whether "law and order" as in England, or "pro-family," as in the US, or some third alternative, has yet to be determined. Most likely there will be "free enterprise," anti-state, and anti-feminist components to the Canadian New Right. The challenge in Canada is to effectively contest the ideological terrain of the New Right, and to defuse it before it attains political office *en masse*. The issue of coalitions thus arises as a way of uniting those movements/groups under attack by the New Right to fight back in a cohesive manner.

(I would like to thank Leo Casey, Carolyn Egan, Gary Kinsman, Mariruth Morton, Mariana Valverde and Eve Zaremba for their help in writing this piece.)

Lorna Weir has been active in the anti-war, feminist, lesbian and gay politics. She is presently trying to find the time to write a doctoral thesis in political theory.

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particular interest, while other movements are somehow more universal. Feminists have pointed out many times that universals have a sneaking tendency to exclude women. The implication that the women's movement has less than universal concerns attempts to subtly guilt us into colluding with our oppression, and the accusation that the women's movement does not deal with universal concerns is closely linked to the reinforcement of women's traditional gender personality as nurturers.

The prerequisite to undertaking coalition work is the reaffirmation of the independent women's movement and the legitimacy of our politics. Only with the existence of an independent women's movement can we understand and criticize the forms of our oppression. Autonomy permits us to begin to define our collectivity and subjectivity on our own terms, not solely in a defensive manner.

Strategy

The central dilemma for the women's movement regarding coalitions is how to participate in them without selling our feminist principles down the drain. Adrienne Rich has posed this problem with her customary clarity: "Coalitions for women have always meant dropping issues we have worked long and hard on, with relative lack of support from men or any other political group, and being called yet again to bolster and salvage movements built around other issues that are always described as somehow more universal." (See *Broadside*, Vol. 2, no. 8.) Is it necessary that the basis of unity of any coalition in which we participate be a feminist one? Do we become members of only those coalitions which deal at least in part with issues relating to the oppression of women?

What feminists may demand from a coalition depends on a series of factors: the strategic situation, the scope of the issues around which the coalition is forming, and the anticipated length the group will be together. Coalition can be:

- defensive or offensive
- single-issue or multi-issue
- short-term or long-term

As a rule of thumb, if a coalition is defensive, single-issue and short-term, the political alliance is not a broad one and generally consists of one clear demand. Keeping coalition demands simple and the basis of unity narrow encourages maximal support from a wide spectrum of groups. Given this type of coalition, any group which insisted on including its own politics in the basis of unity would be behaving in a sectarian fashion.

Feminist demands in single-issue, short-term coalitions should be minimal, except where an issue directly relating to the oppression of women constitutes the basis of unity for the coalition. Fighting against the location of cruise missiles in your neighbourhood differs from fighting against laws that would re-criminalize abortion. In the latter case, the coalition might well be defensive, single-issue and temporary, but a feminist analysis of reproductive rights would be essential to the undertaking.

Coalitions which concern the heartland of feminist politics should for obvious reasons be motivated by women's groups, with at least some of the terms laid down in advance in order to selectively alienate those groups which would be mouthpieces for the patriarchy. There are cases on record of coalitions backfiring on their motivators because the political character of the coalition was left up for grabs in the initial meetings.

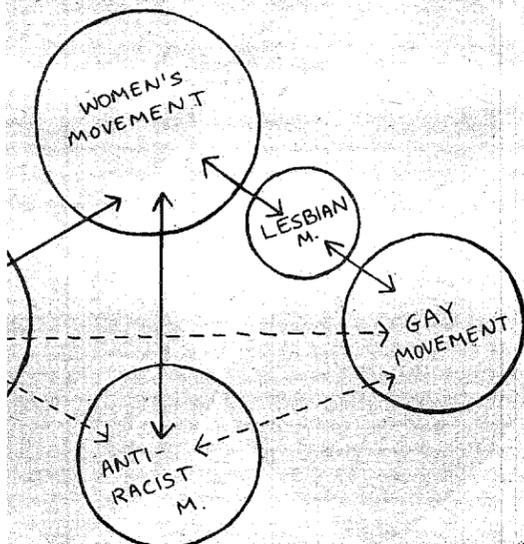
Where the coalition is offensive, multi-issue and long-term, the basis of the alliance is not merely tactical but strategic, and feminists must demand the inclusion of feminist issues and analyses as a condition of our participation. If a coalition were to be formed taking as its major focus the right to employment, feminists would have to raise the issue of women's right to work for decent wages at adequate jobs. As a corollary of dealing with women's right to employment, the coalition would be forced to include a stand on equal pay for equal value and job segregation. Failure to address women's issues and feminist analyses would justify feminist withdrawal from the coalition. One of the happy facts about coalitions is that a group can always pick up its marbles and leave.

Even the simplest of defensive coalitions can raise difficult questions for feminists. Take, for instance, the case of an anti-nuclear coalition trying to block the building of a nuclear power plant. Should feminist groups participate if a group which is anti-nuclear and anti-abortion joins the coalition? This addition to the coalition would not affect the basis of unity of the group, which would remain both defensive and single-issue. To insist that reproductive rights be included in the basis of unity would not speak to the political purpose of the coalition, and such a motion would probably be defeated on good grounds. Under such circumstances, a feminist group would have to make it clear that it reserved the right to distribute anti-nuclear literature containing material on reproductive rights, and to publicly take issue with anti-choice organizations as part of its coalition.

part from a withdrawal of women from the Left; to work with men hearkens back to that benighted time. In the early days of the contemporary women's movement, we were bounded from being assimilated by other movements to a position of separatism and uncompromising organizational independence. This sharp opposition between assimilation and independence is now politically (if not emotionally) obsolete, given the existence of an organizationally autonomous women's movement. We are now in a position to begin working with men in coalitions on the basis of organizational independence. In certain places where a long women's movement exists we can afford to struggle on two fronts: 1) building the women's movement; 2) working in conjunction with other groups outside the women's movement. This second may entail participating in coalitions. A caveat: clearly, the first must take priority over the second.

To this day, feminists are subjected to the covert, and sometimes overt, sneers of people who think we should be doing something better with our time than talking about men. Why aren't we taking care of everyone else in the world except ourselves, just like we always have been? Indeed in this is that the women's movement has a merely

to popular



Politics in action (example): non-hierarchical popular movements.

to the political not in a pre-revolutionary situation, and, to the second, that it rationalizes their representatives in a cynical lack of faith in democratic work. Discussion in popular movements. Feminists and other progressive people are quite able to debate a political position on its own merits, and we won't stop up our ears if the Communist Party, instead of one of its fronts, puts forward its position. In the long run, the strategy of intervening in popular movements through front organizations backfires, for the people in these movements feel an abiding anger towards those who come to manipulate them with hidden agendas.

Leftist interventions along these lines within the women's movement have contributed to the distaste that many feminists have acquired for socialist theory. Yet a feminism that refuses to learn from the critique of political economy — the basis of socialist theory — will leave unquestioned economic privilege and domination. The truths which may be found in socialist theory and practice deserve to be incorporated within feminism, and its lies rejected.

ARTS



Courtesy Michelle Rossignol

Michelle Rossignol

Interviews and translation by Gay Bell

On February 18, 1982, *The Saga of the Wet Hens* will open at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto. I interviewed both Jovette Marchessault, the play's author, and Michelle Rossignol, its director, who have been working together on *The Saga* since its inception. The original French version played at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde to sold-out houses. Toronto audiences will see the English version. — Gay Bell.

Gay: You have auditioned three actresses in Toronto for the English version of Jovette Marchessault's *The Saga of the Wet Hens*. What qualities are you looking for in your actresses?

Michelle Rossignol: Primarily, I'm looking for talent. However, I think what often goes with talent is commitment. Actresses who feel alien from the feminist discussion, the discussion on women that takes place in the play, wouldn't be able to play the parts.

To be more specific: for the Anne Hébert part, someone who's both hot and cold. For Gabrielle Roy, someone who's acrobatic and brilliant. For Laure Conan (I don't know how this'll sound in English) someone who's an animal woman, a woman with instinct and brilliance. And for Germaine Guèvremont, someone who has the characteristics of suffering, of intense suffering, and someone who has had difficulty sleeping.

I'm looking for four absolutely different women, different as women and different as actresses. I met many interesting actresses, but they were too much alike. The play presents four characters, four women writers who each have their style. They come together as women who have their suffering and their pleasures and also their celebration in common, but each writes quite differently.

Gay: Monique Mercure played Gabrielle Roy in the French version and she'll play Laure Conan in the English version. This isn't the first time that you've worked with Monique. Could you familiarize us with her theatre career?

MR: We've known each other for at least 20 years. We weren't at school together, though; it's a friendship that started when we were young actresses. When we met we had similar ideas, the same kind of culture. When I first directed, Monique was the first person I called. She encouraged me a lot in my directing. She acted in a play called *Isavet Rouge* I did a year ago, and we've acted together often.

I have enormous esteem for her talent. We're not friends because we're alike; we're actually very different in temperament and in point of view. She's my security blanket; but that doesn't mean she always says, "You're beautiful, you're sweet and all that". Almost the opposite. She's always asking me "What are you doing?" "How come you did that?" Everything is questioned with Monique. That too, I find entrancing.

Gay: What do you do at the Ecole national de théâtre/National Theatre School?

MR: I'm co-director of the French section of interpretation. In the school there are three autonomous sections: the French and English sections of interpretation and then the set design, costume and technical section. I organize the programs in interpretation. I hire the teachers. This is an enormous amount of work to plan three levels of coursework each year.

As well as that, I teach. I put on two or three exercises per year. I teach at least four hours a day in those courses. It's a big job but I think I'm exceptionally lucky to be

able to make a living working at my particular passion — which is theatre.

I cannot imagine teaching without acting. For me there's no sense teaching an art that you don't practice. This job gives me freedom so I can choose only the acting and directing jobs that I want. When I do something outside the school it's because I have an intellectual and principled need to do it. I'm glad the school enables me to do that.

Gay: The word 'animatrice' (animator) is not well known in English. I saw it in your bio in the program of *Emilie ne sera plus jamais cueillie par l'anémone*. What did you do as animator?

MR: As animator, I did a two-year TV series on the cinema. It's altogether exceptional in my career. The reason I accepted the job is that it allowed me to see and know an enormous number of filmmakers, and to have some kind of view on what was really happening and what people in cinema were talking about. As an art it's very close to ours.

Besides, it was a special type of program. I wasn't a straight "speakerine." I was rather an actress and a cinematographer discussing a film about to be shown.

Gay: What roles have you done that you particularly liked?

MR: Many, but my references are mostly Québécois.

Gay: Of course, that's what we need to know about.

MR: Tremblay's plays. I had a wonderful time doing *Les Belles Soeurs* in 1970.

That play was a whole cultural event. You know at the time even the idea of having 15 women on stage without one single guy was shocking. Everybody wondered how it was going to work and people came a bit worried, saying to themselves: "15 women..." And it worked! We had a very long run. It was one of the funniest and most enjoyable experiences — really extremely pleasant between women. So unexpected! You see, it wasn't feminist theory. We had no particular ties except that it was a play which we liked, and we were 15 women conscious of doing a valuable play.

I also did a very good surrealist play by Claude Gauvreau, *Les oranges sont vertes* — a play which is not at all known here.

I began at 15 as an actress on TV in a series written by Germaine Guèvremont. The series was based on the novel *Le Survenant*. It's a series which people are still talking about 20 years later: they come up to me on the street and say, "I remember you..." — the scripts were that good! It's quite a coincidence that I'm now doing a play with Mme. Guèvremont as a character.

I've also done a lot of repertory, such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, which I liked to do; but since 1970 I've done mostly Québécois theatre.

Gay: I imagine your extensive experience as an actress helps you as a director.

MR: Yes and no. When I began at the Ecole nationale I made a bargain with the director of the school: I want to teach but I also want to learn how to direct.

There's a difference between being an actor and a director. On one hand there's the technical aspect of directing. On the other hand there's the total vision which a director must have. An actor has to go way inside for just one character, but a director has to do that for every role plus have an overall collective vision. And that takes some learning.

For me, it doesn't follow that if you're an actor you can necessarily become a director. In my case directing didn't just fall onto my plate. It's something I always wanted to do. In my time — when I was 20 in the 60s — it was unthinkable that a woman would direct. And it's altogether by another route, through teaching rather than through being an actress, that I have become a director.

Doing *La Quarantaine* with Anne-Claire Poirier as director was the first time I've ever had a woman director. However, all my professors have been women.

Where Nest

Gay: What do you think about collective creation where the roles of actor, writer and director are not defined separately?

MR: I've a lot of respect for that form. From time to time extraordinary things come out of it. However, I myself can't work that way. I can't write — it's completely foreign to me. I have immense respect for the texts of writers; but once I've got the text, I must have the freedom for my own vision, my own reading, and my own interpretation.

I can work in a collective in another way, not in relation to the basic writing, nor in relation to functions, but in terms of working in a team (in big theatres, of course). I've worked with two women for the past five years. It's still the set designer who does the set and the costume designer who does the costumes and I who do the directing. However, I see all their plans and what they do and we discuss it at length. They come to see the rehearsals and they modify their designs according to what they see. It is very unusual to do that in a big theatre. Also, I take the advice of the actors. I'm nevertheless a person who absolutely needs role definition and I'm very 'straight' on that. That's especially because I'm a person who needs the texts of others.

Gay: But you worked a lot with Jovette Marchessault in the creation of the *Saga*, didn't you?

MR: Yes, an enormous amount. But I didn't write a word. I discussed each tableau with her. I did the work of a dramaturge saying, "Why did you write this or that?" "This doesn't make sense." "This should be here or not here," and so on.

What I tried to teach her is what I know of the principle of theatre. Sometimes there're rules for good reasons, I think. There's no point in reinventing the wheel every time. Sometimes there're false rules which are boring or stupid; but there are also real traditions which are based on simple experiences.

The Saga is not a formal piece; nevertheless in the *Saga* there are rules, rules of progression, of the amount of humour and sadness or suffering, the interrelation of characters. At one point I had a hard time convincing Jovette that four women celebrating had to be theatrically interesting. There had to be a dynamic. There had to be conflict which is the source of dramatic action. Jovette thought about it and soon she found the source of conflict. That really amused her.

Gay: The relations between the four women are more friendly than not. The conflict is directed not amongst themselves but from the outside the source of their repression.

MR: No. At a certain time, the conflict is very clearly amongst themselves. It's a social conflict and one that's very interesting, I think. But we also detach ourselves a bit from real life. That's why the characters have their second names: Little Crow, Cloud Dancer, The Islander and The Ancestress. We imagine not a conflict between Anne Hébert and Gabrielle Roy but between the form of writing which is poetry and the form which is the popular novel.

There's a kind of social conflict between the genres. There's the elite which is poetry, intelligence, concentrated words, refinement. Cloud Dancer comes from that milieu where it's more possible to be a writer. She never had to do weekly journalism. But Gabrielle Roy had to. And she points it out. It lasts only five minutes, but the conflict between them is understood in the whole play.

Similarly there are other understood conflicts between the four women. For example, fire for Laure Conan means real fire, to be burned physically. That's the terror. But for Anne Hébert, fire means dryness, the fear of not being able to write. And the play does not take a uniform interpretation on meaning. For example, the forceps for one mean difficult childbirth and for another they mean censorship. It's at that level there's conflict until the time comes where they find a common language. For me, that's really important.

Dramatic conflict with the outside isn't interesting because you have to suppose a whole pile of characters. It's interesting when just by naming the conflict it is realized inside each character — when we find out that their views include their prejudices. Like Laure Conan who brings her prejudices on religion; there are certain things we're not supposed to talk about. For Laure, Gabrielle is uselessly iconoclastic and uselessly sacrilegious, whereas for Gabrielle it is essential to be sacrilegious in front of Laure and she must be accepted as such.

One of the extraordinary things in this play — and there are many — is that it's not a question of men. And I find that an enormous relief. In a certain sense it's the real feminist discussion.

Yes, of course, the discussion is about obliteration by a patriarchal culture which is the only culture known for two thousand years. Once that's stated, I think the effects are more interesting than every enterprise of revalidation. For me, the real feminist discussion is why so many difficulties

the Wet Hens

by Gay Bell

Gay: You've said that *The Saga of the Wet Hens* is a play about the culture of women. What do you mean by the culture of women?

Jovette Marchessault: Fundamentally, I mean everything that women produce, not only what is culture. I mean the production we do in our kitchen, our living rooms, our hospitals and schools, our productivity at our work tables in factories, offices, studios and on delivery tables. The culture of women is in women's memories. It's the totality of all our energy.

Gay: Is your play something new in Québec theatre?

JM: In an interview, Monique Mercure said that Québec theatre is renewed by the *Saga*. That really touched and flattered me. What I can say, Gay, is that I wanted to write a play to depict the interaction of women who would escape History.

Gay: Escape History. What do you mean?

JM: I mean History as it is told by the patriarchy: it's a falsified, lying version which obscures us completely. Escaping History also means escaping from isolation and anonymity. I think the greatest victory of the patriarchy is to have isolated us to the point of completely cutting us off from each other. And this isolation prevents us from communicating, recognizing and loving each other. Whether we're francophone, or anglophone, whether our skin is red, black or yellow we're interned in a concentration camp, a ghetto. What's a ghetto? A place of misery where we suffer all sorts of violence: rape, battery, pornography, scorn or emotional blackmail, sexual harassment and psychoanalysis or psychiatry — more refined forms of violence.

In the *Saga*, my four protagonists break out of this isolation. There's a real meeting to which each brings her life experience, her lucidity, tenderness and humour — the extra-

• from previous page

in creation? Where do our imaginations have problems? Is it only because our imaginations are oppressed or because they have a language in themselves which isn't known in altogether the same terms?

I think that Jovette's play is very reassuring and very extraordinary in that she names a line of women who were known and who did things. But history didn't always recount these things; and that's the patriarchal kind of censorship.

I've read a lot of scripts and especially lots of scripts by women, and very few women's texts have dialogue. Women write in monologue. What's the significance of that? That's a difficulty of creativity — because theatre is essentially dialogue. One can use a few plays to reinvent the forms of monologue but it doesn't go very far. It can't go far because there's no interaction according to the rules of theatre.

I'm not convinced that the rules of theatre were made only by guys — they were made by the audience, and there are as many women as men who go to the theatre. You could say that among all the arts, theatre is the most woman-defined because the majority of its spectators are women.

So why do women write in monologue? I don't know whether I can answer that. Monologue is the first form of writing. Is that because women are used to talking to ourselves. Do we monologue while we do the dishes?

I'm wondering whether it's important for us to write differently. We write what's important to us, what troubles us and what makes us happy or unhappy. I think that the content has to be renewed but that renewing the form is often a false question. Rather than asking ourselves "What's women's culture?"; I think it's more important to ask ourselves "What makes a good play?"

When you write a good play, it is because the content is powerful; but I think that we need to make a big effort to renew the themes and content rather than the form. I think that the forms which exist are generally ok. We can work with them; we can make them into what we need.

That was my long conversation with Jovette was about, because I know the rules of theatre and why they work well.

Gay: Yes, I understand; except that the *Saga*, from the point of view of form, is very unusual.

MR: Exactly, and that's because we asked ourselves theatre-type, formed questions. It works according to a mechanism which I call classical. If you take the classicism of the tragedies, you get the introduction of characters, their meeting, the combination of two or three characters, then the addition of several other characters. The intervention of the outside world then occurs and you progress towards an inevitable catharsis. Subsequently, in the Greek tragedies, the god or goddess comes into the action and everything winds up fine.

So in the *Saga* we did the same sort of thing. There's a catharsis in the forceps part and then the goddess-hens start having fun and they get off in the air. The play ends with everyone in good humour and lots of joy. •



Photo by Kero

Jovette Marchessault

ordinary humour of women! They share everything, their bread, doubts, pain but also poetry, creativity, childbearing.

Gay: I believe you worked in close collaboration with director Michelle Rossignol.

JM: Yes, we worked very closely together. Same with Louise Lemieux who did the set design and Mérédith Caron who did the costumes. We had a lot of meetings, consultations — it was very stimulating. Michelle taught me a lot and so did Louise and Mérédith. The teamwork really blew me away.

Gay: Do you keep up with feminist art in other countries — France, the US, and English Canada, for example?

JM: I sure do! I read women who are African, Puerto Rican, Italian, Amerindian, American, French, Québécoise and English Canadian. I go to exhibitions, performances, theatre, films — it never stops.

When Gloria Orenstein lived in New York City I went there regularly in order to see the woman I love, on the one hand, and to be in contact with American feminist culture on the other hand. Now that Gloria's living in Los Angeles I'll go less often to NYC. However, I don't intend to stop going altogether because what's happening there concerns me. I just got back from two weeks in LA with my suitcase full of books. We've got to be cosmopolitan and avoid barriers.

Everything that women do interests me. Three years ago I organized an exhibition of visual arts in which both anglophones and francophones participated. We've exhibited in NYC in a feminist gallery called Soho Twenty. We must take down the barriers, constantly. I deplore that literary women are interested very little or not at all in women in painting or dance. Or vice-versa. Gloria Orenstein is one of the rare feminist critics who is multidisciplinary. What a drag, these barriers — not to mention the barriers of language!

Gay: Do you often come to Toronto?

JM: No, not often, but the road to Toronto is familiar to me. I have exhibited there three times. The last time was at A Space Gallery in December 1980. I have a lovely memory of that.

The exhibition was organized by Nancy Nicol and the opening was followed the next day by a performance of my text, *Night Cows*, at the Music Gallery. It was acted by Pol Pelletier who is co-founder of the Théâtre Expérimental des Femmes in Montréal. And Gloria Orenstein came from New York to do an audio-visual presentation on women's art in North America depicting the re-emergence of the great goddess archetype. I think that Nancy Nicol was really successful in organizing an event which transcended the disciplines of theatre, literature, and the visual arts. And I must add that Pol is originally from Ontario, Gloria is American and I'm a Québécoise.

Gay: Women in Toronto are getting to know your work. First thanks to the performance of Pol, and then that of Atthis Theatre. Are you glad that your work is being translated and played here?

JM: Yes, Yes, Yes. My *Vaches de nuit* was translated by Yvonne Klein and *The Saga* has been translated by Linda Gaboriau. Superb, magnificent translations by two women both talented and generous. It's thanks to them that I can come closer to you people.

Gay: Do you know Toronto feminists and artists?

JM: I spoke a minute ago of Nancy Nicol and there's also my friend Lynne Fernie, the *Fireweed* collective, Pam Godfree, Sasha Hayman whose work I very much admire and Rina Fraticelli, Barbara Godard who translated Nicole Brossard and your extraordinary rock band, Mama Quilla II, and its singer Lorraine Segato. Many many women whom I've met, with whom I've had exchanges and whom I really admire.

Gay: At the end of November when I was in Montreal you were in the press a great deal: the feminist magazine *La Vie en Rose* as well as the two French dailies. The critical reviews of *La terre est trop courte*, *Violette Leduc* were extraordinary. I also read an article by you in *Le Devoir* in which you wrote about the censorship of women in literature and of lesbians in particular. You've become a major voice in Québec. How do you feel about it?

JM: I'm a voice amongst several, Gay. Nicole Brossard's there, France Théoret, Denise Boucher and so many others. To be there amongst the others is what's important for me. That and to reserve my time for writing, painting, meeting women, reading in English — which still takes me a long time — participating in life in the city of women, doing conferences, being as often as possible in the public eye.

Gay: How do you find the time to do it all? Do you write night and day?

JM: Almost. I sleep very little. When I'm writing I begin around 4 or 5 in the morning and work until 2 in the afternoon. Then I have time to read and go out for the evening.

When I'm not writing I read at least eight hours a day. I live alone with my cats and my whole life is given to creation. I take the phone off the hook and sit down at my work table to write, write more, scratch it out, wonder and begin again.

Gay: In the French edition of the *Saga*, your editors, Les Éditions de la pleine lune (Editions of the Full Moon), published some of your letters to Gloria Orenstein during the time you were writing the *Saga*. This gives the text a very special character. What do you think about love and friendship between women creators?

JM: I think it's one of the most beautiful things in this promised land!

When I was working on the *Saga*, Gloria was spending a year in France. We wrote each other every day and sometimes twice a day. These letters enabled me to make it through all the agonies, doubts and despair of creation. She gave me support and recognition, and I know that without this correspondence with her I would never have made it.

In all periods women have supported each other; but the patriarchy has always tried to cover it up by burning our books. In the *Saga*, Laure Conan is frightened of the book burners, the censors; and Anne Hébert says, "Two things on this earth have been burned: women and books."

Gay: What new project are you working on now?

JM: On a new play whose title will be *Alice et Gertrude, Natalie et Renée and dear Ernest* (Alice Toklas, Gertrude Stein, Natalie Barney and Renée Vivien and dear Ernest Hemingway). I want to explore the relation between lesbian couples and the violence/interference of the patriarchy incarnate in the rapacious Hemingway.

And, Gay, so many more projects, many more...

"Between 1971 and 1981 I've done about 25 solo exhibitions in Montréal, Québec, Ottawa, Toronto, New York, Paris, Brussels.

I am a self-taught artist and I publicly identify myself as lesbian, feminist, painter, sculptor, novelist and dramatist.

Between 1975 and 1981 I published 5 books:

Comme une enfant de la terre (As a child of the earth), novel, Québec-France Prize, 1976.

La Mère des herbes (Plant Mother), novel, 1980.

Tryptique lesbien (Lesbian Chronicle of Medieval Québec, Night Cows and The Angel Makers) 1980.

La Saga des poules mouillées, (The Saga of the Wet Hens), play, 1981.

La terre est trop courte, *Violette Leduc* (The Earth is Too Small, *Violette Leduc*), play, 1981.

I have also participated in feminist magazines in Québec, Toronto, France and the US as well as in *Le Devoir* and *Châtelaine*. — **Jovette Marchessault**.

From Rags to Reds

by Barbara Halpern Martineau

When I first got my period, it must have been in 1955 or 6, tampons weren't widely available. So on hot summer days being a woman meant waddling about with a thick bloodsoaked pad between my legs, praying nothing "showed." A few years later the tampon admen had a heyday with images of beautiful maidens exploding out of ocean waves in bikinis, or smashing tennis balls, dressed in spotless white. I remember thinking how horrible it would have been to be a woman in my mother's "day" — she once told me that they didn't even have sanitary pads, but used strips of old sheets, folded and pinned in place, which then became bloody rags requiring boiling before re-use. "Ragtime," or being "on the rag," were popular terms for menstruation then.

The appellation "Red," long a term of abuse for anyone suspected of harbouring critical views about the status quo, has a different sense for me than its usual meaning of Left with a capital L, Ladies-make-coffee-and-men-make-politics sort of slant. In the movie *Reds*, there's a scene where producer-director-star Warren Beatty, playing the famous left journalist John Reed, heads for the toilet in a crowded jail cell filled with other activists and more "common" out-laws. Beatty's face expresses pain and bewilderment; an old geezer looks over his shoulder; we see a closeup of the toilet bowl; then the old geezer says, "This one even pisses red." Laughter. Meaning: in his tireless crusade for justice, John Reed is about to lose a kidney. But he will persevere, in spite of government persecution, dissension in the left, and desertion by his wife because of his infidelity. I am reminded of a T-shirt I've coveted on other women. It has a beautiful batik design of red on purple, and lettering which says: "I am Woman; I can bleed for days and not die." When Louise Bryant, Reed's colleague, lover, wife, is shown trekking through Finland on skis trying to find Reed and get him out of prison (an episode almost entirely fictionalized by the film and

milmed for its romantic interest), I wondered what she did when she got her period. The film didn't enlighten me.

Reds and *Ragtime* are two current Hollywood movies set at the time of deep social unrest immediately preceding World War I and the red-bannered Bolshevik revolution. Each bears some reference to the current waving of red banners, in El Salvador, for instance, and in Poland. Each movie focuses on a central male character who is driven by his obsession for justice, as he defines it, which costs him his life. Each man is involved with a beautiful woman who tries to persuade him to give up his obsession, who fails and then suffers on his behalf.

In the immediate sources for each film the notorious anarchist Red Emma Goldman is a significant character: her role is distorted in *Reds*, omitted in *Ragtime*. Both films raise issues of interest to feminists; both films are profoundly sexist. Both provoke questions about the relationships between film, history, fiction, reality, and the obsessions of men and women. Both are sufficiently well-made and entertaining to persuade large numbers of people to pay \$4.50 or \$5 for about three hours of film-time.

Reds first. It begins with a series of brief on-camera remarks by famous real-life "witnesses." Adela Rogers St. John, Henry Miller, Scott Nearing, and other strongly wrinkled old faces appear out of the darkness at screen right, leaving a great stylish space of black at screen left where I longed to see a prosaic title telling me who this person is, dammit. Is this History, or Gossip? Most of the remarks fall into the realm of Gossip — witty, interesting gossip, which has always been a source of knowledge of the sort History refuses to provide — but how can we gossip about the gossipers if we don't know who they are?

The witnesses continue to appear, on-screen and as disembodied voices, from time to time throughout the film, lending to the scripted, invented, dramatized Beatty version of John Reed's life a spurious sense of Historical Authenticity, along with the fake sepia-toned "old" photos of characters in the film, characters such as Eugene O'Neill, Max Eastman, Emma Goldman. Is Beatty flirting with issues of Film, History, Reality? Is he urging us to question these categories? I think not.

The pace of the film is too rapid; there's no time to consider. It's an epic romance, in the tradition of *Gone with the Wind* and *Doctor Zhivago*, in which history serves as a backdrop to personal plot. Will Louise Bryant/Annie Hall/Diane Keaton leave her boring life in Oregon to go live with Reed in New York? (yes); Will she succeed in carving a career for herself as a writer, indepen-

dent of Reed's sphere of influence? (issue raised but never resolved); Will she have an affair with Eugene Jack Nicholson O'Neill? (yes); and how will John Reed respond? (by proposing marriage). Etc. Will the Bolsheviks revolt and will Louise sleep with John again? (Yes x two.)

There are moments when the film appears to be asking some fairly thoughtful questions. Not about Left politics, not about socialism, anarchism, bolshevism, nor feminism, but about the politics of personal power. These are questions Hollywood dramatic film seems well-suited to consider. The first time I saw *Reds* I was excited by the scene where, as Reed quarrels with the leader of another leftist splinter group, there is a recurrent close-up of Louise Bryant looking shocked, and she soon leaves the meeting. In the next scene she tells Reed how idiotic it is for two small groups, neither of them representative of the American working-class, to fight in this way; that Reed's best talents are as a writer, not as an organizer, that he should stay home and write, not go to Russia again to claim recognition for his group. Her argument is compelling, and I was delighted to see the emphasis given her by the film. I was puzzled when the film proceeded to set up Reed as a hero in the face of all comers.

Seeing *Reds* again, I realized how much of a set-up it is. In the argument scene, Bryant/Keaton is dressed in a housecoat. She's disheveled, almost hysterical, begging Reed not to go, playing the role of possessive, irrational wife she has played before. Reed/Beatty is immaculate in suit and white shirt, composed, determined, unwavering in his obsession. Eventually Bryant "proves" herself by making her own way to Finland and then to Moscow, where she finds Reed just in time to nurse him during his final illness. Emma Goldman, portrayed as a sexless, humourless rhetorician, tells Bryant, "I was wrong about you," and Bryant nods. "So was I," she said, leaving me wondering if Reed is the only one who's ever right. I mean Left, in this movie.

The film ends with a shot of Louise Bryant crying at John Reed's deathbed, and absolutely no information is supplied about her subsequent life. It's as bad as if she were a Hindu woman, expected to immolate herself in the flames of her husband's funeral pyre. Unfortunately, the book which appears to have been Beatty's main source for the film script, Barbara Gelb's *So Short a Time: A Biography of John Reed and Louise Bryant* (New York: 1973), takes essentially the same approach. Gelb glosses over the last sixteen years of Louise Bryant's life, years in which she remarried, had three children, continued to write, divorced, went to Paris, died destitute and addicted to alcohol and drugs at the age of 49. She says

only that "Reed's memory continued to haunt her and gave her no peace." Her "brief period of success as a journalist" is examined in no further detail by Gelb; as for the film, well, she no longer existed.

Gelb's book does give more information than the film, of course — she remarks in a photo caption that Louise Bryant was sent to Russia to cover the Revolution "from the woman's viewpoint" for an American news syndicate. Bryant then published a compilation of her newspaper reports in book form, *Six Red Months in Russia*. Neither her book nor her assignment is acknowledged by the film, in which Bryant is taken to Russia by John Reed, who even supplies her ticket. We hear about the success and importance of Reed's book, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, but whether or not Bryant's book was successful, or even any good at all, the film's omission represses the very issue at the heart of Bryant's recurrent conflict with Reed, her obsession, if you want to call it that, that justice be given her as a woman, surely no less important than Reed's demand to be allowed to write as he chose.

At one point early in the film, in their first on-camera fight, Reed demands to know what Bryant wants (what do women want, after all?). I want to stop needing you, she yells back, fiercely and hopelessly. The want is valid. I admire the film that raises it as an issue, but this film doesn't validate that want. Louise Bryant is systematically trivialized ("You don't even write about serious things," Reed yells, referring to the Armoury show of 1913, which revolutionized the art world as this film does not revolutionize the film world.) The woman who could have been used in the film to embody both women's independence and the fullness of love and tenderness, Emma Goldman, is instead a sexless caricature whose remarks, even when they make absolute sense, are continually refuted, directly by Reed, indirectly by the film. The emotional weight of the film rests almost entirely with Reed (with Louise when she is identified with Reed's cause), and there is no incentive to examine the words of those who question him. The picture glorifies Reed, and the picture prevails, the motion picture, Romance, Hollywood, True Love, True Confessions...she's sorry now that she left him.

As I left the theatre after my first screening of *Reds*, my friend, a courageous woman who has been involved in political struggle for many years, remarked: "It's so sad that people have worked so hard for the working class, and the workers never really appreciated them."

First of a two-part review; next month: *Ragtime*.

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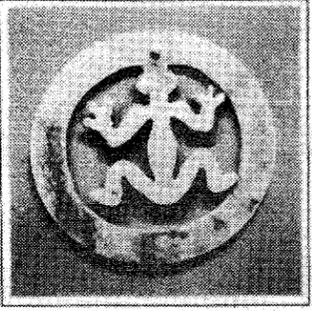
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by Elaine Johnson

"Welcome to the Birth Project," announces a recent newsletter published and distributed by Through the Flower, alias Judy Chicago Incorporated. Chicago's latest venture into art through women's lives has moved from the dining room into the birth process. She began this project to address the lack of birth images in art, to "use the birth process as a metaphor for the creation of life in the largest and most metaphorical sense, i.e., the female as the source of life and the feminine as the affirming life principle." While I applaud her efforts to portray women using their own particular symbols in a medium which is not commonly accepted as being worthy of producing great works of art — namely, traditional women's textiles — I am disappointed that she does not seem to be aware of the female image, the birth symbol, which already exists in textiles.

"The Birth Symbol of Traditional Women's Art from Eurasia and the Western Pacific" was a textile show presented this fall at the Museum for Textiles in Toronto. On display was a wide variety of textiles from traditional cultures, from Bulgarian prayer rugs to the Abaca 'birthing cloth' used by the T'boli people in the Philippines. The connecting theme was the birth symbol, which was woven into or applied in various methods on to each of the textiles displayed. A leaflet given to each museum visitor described the birth symbol as "an ancient textile pattern still used across Europe and Asia, throughout Indonesia, and in the Philippines. It originally represented the Great Goddess.

"The pattern in its simplest form consists of a diamond with pairs of lines projecting like arms and legs from its top and bottom vertices. Often the diamond, representing the female torso, encloses a cross-shaped figure (the fetus); sometimes additional pairs of curved or hooked lines project from the side vertices or edges of the diamond, elaborating the pattern."

This particular symbol is in fact "the single most frequently occurring iconic motif in Eurasia and Indonesia." In the catalogue accompanying the show, Max Allen, curator of the museum, elaborates on the outline in the leaflet, presenting a compelling argument to support his thesis that this symbol is indeed a birth symbol which goes back to the time of the ancient religion of the Great Goddess. For those who are unacquainted with textiles and textile theories, he has provided some necessary background, and clarifies the development of the birth symbol in connection with the religion and its probable path of migration from west to east on various textiles together with archeological evidence. There is also a good discussion concerning traditional women's art versus 'art' and an essay in which he speculates on the reasons why the birth symbol has been overlooked for so long by textile experts and other interested

Diamonds and Toads Are Forever

parties such as Judy Chicago, who has been researching women's history and images for her past project, The Dinner Party, as well as the present project.

Although I found his argument quite impressive and the migration theory well illustrated by the range of textiles displayed, the cynic in me was not entirely satisfied. I felt that textiles, being as fragile as they are, were not able to provide the connection which could reach far enough into the past to link up the representation of the Goddess as a figure with the symbol that was on the textiles in the show.

After combing through what books I could find that referred to symbols, signs, ancient religions and archeological digs in the Near East, I finally came across a fascinating book called *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe: 7000-3500 BC. Myths, Legends and Cult Images* written by Marija Gimbatas. Most of this book centres around the finds of archeological digs in the Balkan and central parts of Europe, from Bulgaria, Roumania and Yugoslavia to Hungary, with references to the Minoan culture in Crete and similar cultures in Anatolia. Gimbatas discusses the Great Goddess and her many manifestations, such as the Snake and Bird Goddesses, other images which relate to the old religion, all illustrated by clay, rock and bone figures or painted onto ceramic pots dating back as far as 7000 BC. One of the most common images used to represent the life-giving aspect of the Goddess is the toad, often shown with breasts and vulva. "The goddess as life-giver assumed the shape of a toad... her outspread legs and pubic area are accentuated while her head is just a cone or entirely neglected." Gimbatas goes on to show how this image becomes shortened into the ideogram 'M' which frequently occurs with other forms of the Goddess. The pregnant form of the Goddess is represented as a figure with a lozenge, incised or drawn on the body. The dot represents the seed while the lozenge represents the sown field since the pregnant Goddess was associated with the vegetative process.

The picture of this form, and the more schematic ones which followed, lead directly to those on the textiles in the Birth Symbol show which were produced several thousand years later and are in fact still being produced (although most of the producers are unaware of the actual meaning of the symbols which they use). In one culture, however, the fertility theme is still obvious. The T'boli people in the Philippines, which may be the farthest reach of the birth symbol (and I emphasize the word 'may' since research could very well follow the symbol even farther), still use the pattern in its less schematic form. The catalogue of the show has several excellent photos of the T'boli textiles, mostly Abaca or 'birthing cloths' which clearly show the more figurative symbol.

Even if one missed the show, there are still examples of the birth symbol to be seen in any textiles which come from the areas

outlined. My small, very threadbare 'Turkish' carpet has three prominent birth symbols running up the centre of the carpet. Maybe the unconscious force of the female symbols was what compelled me to buy it in the first place, when what I actually needed was a much larger rug in better condition.

For anyone who is interested in textiles or information on the birth symbol, copies of the very well illustrated catalogue for 'The Birth Symbol' show are still available at the Museum for Textiles, 585 Bloor Street West, open weekends from 1 to 6 pm.

And for those interested in more detailed

information concerning the Great Goddess religion, the only copy of *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe: 7000-3500 BC* seems to be in the Metropolitan Toronto Library, 789 Yonge Street, in the religious section of the social sciences area.

Then maybe someone should point out the long-used birth symbol to Judy Chicago. •

Elaine Johnson is a Toronto potter and frequent contributor to *Broadside's* behind-the-scenes work.

Books to Note

by Elaine Berns

Jane Alpert, *Growing Up Underground*. New York: Morrow 1982.

•autobiography of a woman who becomes part of the radical underground; her life as a fugitive; her renunciation of the left and her commitment to feminism, which placed her in the centre of controversy between the left and the Women's Movement.

Judy Grahn, ed., *True Life Adventure Stories, Vol. 2*, Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press and Diana Press, 1981.

•excellent anthology that speaks of the lives of women with clarity, integrity and unsentimentality.

Nadine Gordimer, *July's People*, New York: Viking Press, 1981.

•excellent novel of a future South Africa where civil war has begun and fugitive white people are trying to escape; one white family is given refuge in the village of their black servant, and very quickly a shift takes place in roles, character, and especially power.

Erica Jong, *Witches*. New York: Abrams 1981.

•good beginning exploration of witches and witchcraft through prose and poetry.

Includes a brief history of witchcraft, recipes for love potions, spells, etc., as well as an excellent bibliography for those who want to read more on this subject.

Valerie Taylor, *Prism*. Tallahassee, FL: Naiad Press. 1981.

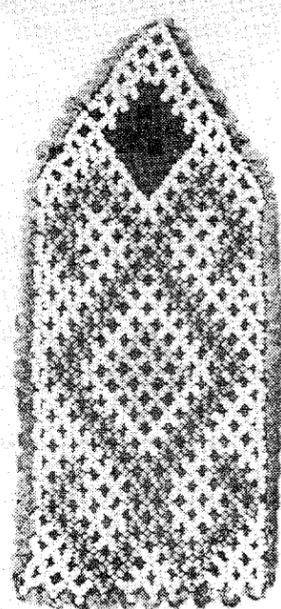
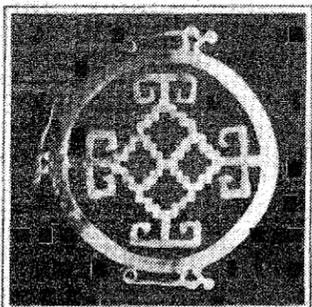
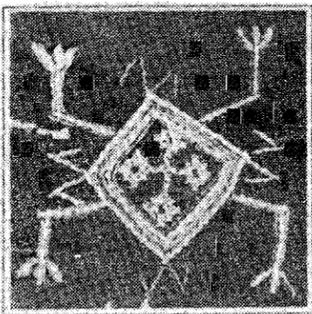
•Ann, 65 years old, retired, a closeted lesbian, moves to a small town expecting to live out her years in solitude, meets another woman 60 years old, a widow who lives with her son and daughter-in-law and then...

Valerie Taylor, *Love Image*, The Naiad Press 1977.

•whatever happened to Nanette McClure also known as "Baby McClure," famous juvenile star and about to be sex symbol of the sixties? If you want to find out the answer to this question, read this novel.

Adrienne Rich, *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far. Poems 1978 - 1981*. New York: Norton 1981.

(These books are all available at the Toronto Women's Bookstore.)



by Martha Keener

Wallflower Order is a collective of women which has been performing dance for six years. Their work embodies the historic association of modern dance with political and social issues. Grupo Raiz is a band of five outstanding musicians who, although rooted in the South American New Song Movement, draw also upon such influences as Caribbean music and even North American jazz.

On November 27, 1981, the Toronto community enjoyed an exhilarating amalgam of these performers, brought together by Womynly Way Productions. It was an occasion of artistry of high technical quality with an inspiring basis in politico-social commentary.

Each group has a high political consciousness as the foundation of its work. Such is the excellence of their craft, however, that their creations are never didactic or exhortatory. Rather, their pieces, both separately and together, are emphatic and enthralling.

The first part of the program was performed by Grupo Raiz. They play an impressive diversity of instruments, and sing with skill and a rousing intensity. Three of

the group are Chilean exiles, so that songs such as "My Routine" and "Flight of the Flamingoes" project a strong poignancy. Even though their words are Spanish, the emotional quality of their music is accessible to the anglophone.

In the second set, Wallflower Order danced both to music by Grupo Raiz and to other carefully-chosen pieces. The irony of using such music as Fats Domino's "Ain't That a Shame" evinces a thought-provoking wit, while Jean-Michel Jarre's "Oxygène" was the ideal accompaniment to "Resistance." The breadth of experience of the members of this group, derived from modern dance, gymnastics, ballet and kung-fu, generates a wide range of modes of movement, mood and interaction.

From the graceful angularity of kung-fu to the generous free-form phrasing as in "Endangered," from the satirical playfulness of "Pieces of Lies" to the sombre freneticism of "Hay Una Mujer," to the harmony and counterpoint in "Resistance," the work of Wallflower Order allows for individual style and diversity in a context of cohesiveness of purpose. This seems symbolic of their stated goal of expressing the feminist/socialist ideal.

Counterpoint to Courtly Love

by Ottie Lockey

Meg Bogin, *The Women Troubadours*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1980. Pp. 192. \$3.95 paper.

"Perhaps the elevation of the lady was a major turning point in the history of men; to consider this development a positive one for women would be to ignore its crippling effect on women of succeeding centuries, including our own." (p.16)

Troubadours were not, as most of us believe, wandering minstrels. Rather they were poets and songmakers attached to various 12th-century European courts. Their songs were actually performed by "joglers," who travelled about and were hired to perform the troubadours' works.

Meg Bogin's *The Women Troubadours* contains all that is known about 12th-century women troubadours of Provence. Although over 400 male troubadours are known to historians, only the works of 20 women, called "trobairitz," have survived to our time. The primary source of information about the trobairitz before Bogin's book was the German *Die Provenzalischen Dichterrinnen* (1888), which has a total of 36 pages. It is sad to realize that only 23 poems exist and only one poem has been recovered intact, that is with its own music.

Bogin gives the complete poems and all the details of the life histories of these 20 women troubadours. She analyses the role of women in medieval society and through her fresh translations into English gives notice to the poems of women troubadours after centuries of obscurity.

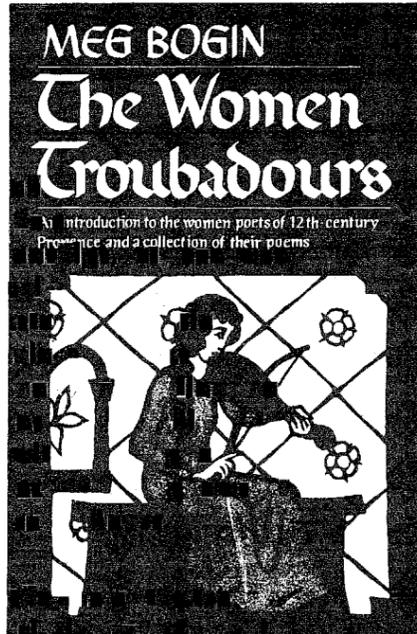
The rise of the troubadours is directly related to the development of "courtly love,"

i.e. the elevation of and idealization of the lady in poetic form. The effect that "courtly love" had on relationships between men and women has strongly influenced much of the literature of western civilization and lives today in Harlequin romances. Bogin provides reasonable and fascinating answers to such questions as: why did 12th-century Provence permit women poets and what are the differences between poems of the male and female troubadours?

Bogin's account of the rise of the troubadours includes a description of the social changes caused by the Crusades in the 12th century. In many ways the Crusades were economically profitable: artisans and merchants outfitted the warrior-pilgrims, and trade was stimulated to the advantage of ship companies and inns. The flow of men to Jerusalem allowed women to directly control land and vassals in their husbands' places. It is likely that this sort of role relaxation helped to produce that strange creature the trobairitz.

Like Rosie the Riveter, symbol of the women who worked in factories while men fought World War II, 12th-century women yielded their places when the men returned from the Crusades. When the Crusaders returned to the castle, ladies were encouraged to take up embroidery again.

During the century of Crusades and confusion, the voices of women troubadours were heard in a sharp counterpoint to the idealistic tributes of courtly love written by the men. The poems written by the trobairitz reveal emotion and personal experience of love relationships. These women weren't perched on pedestals. In contrast to male



troubadours, the women use concrete, not transcendental metaphors. "They sound like women any one of us could know," claims Bogin. Listen to their voices:

Elias Cairel, you're a phoney
if I ever saw one,
like a man who says he's sick
when he hasn't got the slightest pain
(Isabella)

If only I could lie beside you for an
hour and embrace you lovingly
(Countess of Dia)

Friend, if you had shown considera-
tion,

meekness, candor and humanity,
I'd have loved you without hesita-
tion;
but you were mean and sly and
villainous.
(Castelloza)

Throughout the last 800 years, male scholars have seen what they expected to see in their studies of the troubadours. The work of the trobairitz has been trivialized, ignored, buried, or called "mere literary exercises." Bogin emphasizes that these are the "first female voices we have from a culture that has hitherto been known only through its men."

Unfortunately, in her critique of scholars' attitudes towards one of these women, Biers de Romans, Bogin too seems rather limited in her vision. Biers de Romans wrote a love song to another woman. Bogin justly criticizes scholars who have attempted to prove that the poems was actually written by a man (who was impersonating a woman) or explained it away as a religious parable. Bogin makes clear that the poem is a passionate love song by a woman to a woman. Yet somehow she never utters the word "lesbian." Thus she forfeits various possibilities such as the vision of lesbian troubadours making music together and remaining invisible as many lesbian maiden aunts have done up to and including the 20th century.

Nevertheless, *The Woman Troubadours* is a marvellous book which offers many delights and poses as many questions as it answers. An intelligent and entertaining study for any woman who wants to reclaim her musical roots. •

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— \$4.25

Deaf to the City is Hi-Fidelity

by Jean Wilson

Marie-Claire Blais, *Deaf to the City*. Translated by Carol Dunlop. Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd 1981. Pp. 220. \$13.95.

Reading *Deaf to the City* is like looking at one of Breughel's crowd scenes, such as the one my Vancouver dentist has cunningly placed on the ceiling for the contemplation of the gaping patient. That painting literally is a cross-section of sixteenth-century Flemish life and it rewards hours of study. *Deaf to the City* is a painting in prose and achieves a similar level of interest.

The cross-section of twentieth-century

life shown is set in old Montreal and features a wide range of vividly realized characters whose images stay in one's head long after the book ends. Not that that might seem the likely result at first glance. Except for the odd period or other concluding punctuation here and there, *Deaf to the City* is essentially one paragraph 220 pages long. As well, there are only occasional snatches of conversation. The style works, however. Once begun, this is a hard book to put down.

As in earlier Blais novels, characters in this one tend to be at odds with life, if not dying outright. But here there is a startling undercurrent of *joie de vivre* even in the midst of death and decay. There may be down-and-outs at the Hôtel des Voyageurs

like old Tim the drunken Irishman and Charlie the ex-con and lover of Gloria, part-time stripper and hotel manager; and there may be the pathetic condition of Mike, Gloria's young son dying of a brain tumour; and there may be the anguishing loneliness of Florence, driven to suicide in her sixties by the desertion of her husband and bewilderment at her sudden rootlessness. All these characters and others in the book are to some extent "deaf to the city" — like most people, deaf to almost all other concerns except their own. Most of these characters, too, are trapped within their own silences, "dying alienly" as in the epigraph from Rilke at the beginning of the novel.

What Blais manages to do, especially through Florence and Mike, is to convey an intense, overwhelmingly exuberance about living and loving. Mike suffers excruciating pain a lot of the time, but even he has his moments of happiness. Florence temporarily resists suicide in being forced to look outside herself by consideration of Mike's condition compared to hers and his gentle, patient nature.

Ultimately, *Deaf to the City* is an affirmation primarily of life and love, not a lament about death and decay. Florence dies, but having had more insight into the richness and joy of life than she had ever had before. Mike will die soon too, but he will have known happiness, even if it was in small doses, and that's what matters for him. Other characters will survive longer and some will never reconcile themselves to death, but that is as it is. Every one of them is brilliantly realized.

Deaf to the City (Le Sourd dans la ville in French, winner of a 1980 Governor-General's Award) has been well translated by Carol Dunlop and is a good addition to the impressive International Fiction List being published by Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd. If you care about literature, read this book. •

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• Feb. 28: *Rosie the Riveter* — sponsored by Action Day Care

• March 7: *The Power of Men is the Patience of Women* — sponsored by Broadside (with the assistance of the Goethe Institute)

• March 14: *Uprising* — sponsored by Canadian Action for Nicaragua

• March 21: *Witches and Faggots, Dykes and Poofers* — sponsored by Lesbians Against the Right and Gay Liberation Against the Right Everywhere

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Barbara Noda

STRAWBERRIES



by Betsy Nuse

Doris Davenport, *It's Like This*. Pp. 46. Available by mail for \$3.50 U.S. per copy, which includes postage and taxes, from Doris Davenport, 1316 S. Highland Ave, Apt 7, Los Angeles, CA 90019; Barbara Noda, *Strawberries*. Drawings by Wendy Yoshimura. Berkeley, CA: Shameless Hussey Press, 1979. Unpagged, \$3.95; Alta, *The Shameless Hussey: Selected Stories, Essays and Poetry*. The Crossing Press. \$7.25.

Are you suffering from psychic frostbite? Has midwinter depression got you down? This year I've found some remedies I thought I'd mention. The first remedy is to force bulbs to bloom indoors. May Sarton has made this practice sound so wonderful that I've been longing to try it, and this year I finally did. Beautiful, tall, sweet narcissus, rich and extravagantly scented hyacinths, they really do seem like indoor miracles on cold, wintry days! Although it's a little late to start bulbs yourself, you can buy already-sprouted pots at the greengrocer's. I've found the cheer is worth the price.

The other remedies are word bouquets — books of poems — that seem as wonderful as indoor flowers and which have brought me much pleasure this winter. Poets have wonderful ways of talking about the feelings the dufflecoats and parkas tend to suffocate! I've chosen to describe three books I am enjoying, but check out the poetry sections of libraries and bookstores near you, and you might discover even more wonderful poems.

It's Like This is a bright and varied bouquet, and I really enjoy its versatility and variety. The poems are roughly in three sections: about life and politics ("it's like this"), about relationships and personal life ("spiritual orgasms"), and about themes from Black culture ("Iansa Oyé"). Within each section some poems are serious and

some funny, some musical and some "concrete." There is *at least* one magic poem. Called "Vision I: Genesis for Wimmin of Color," its theme emerges in the lines: "in the beginning was the Goddess./she chose not to speak, but to do." There is a wonderfully funny poem that put me in a good mood for a whole day after I read it! It begins:

theory no.777
is that
nature has to be female
because if it were a father nature
there would be seasons,
but for a price.

It's Like This is Doris Davenport's first book of poems. She contributed a strong essay to *This Bridge Called My Back* and hopes to publish a second book of poems soon. Be the next person in Canada to encourage her by ordering this one!

Barbara Noda's *Strawberries* is the most delicate and visually pleasing of the three books. All the poems, one page or shorter, are set on right-hand pages opposite white space or careful and attractive line drawings by Wendy Yoshimura.

Like rare flowers which blossom in greenhouses even at this time of year, Barbara Noda's poems seem to thrive in this setting. Their strong words and memorable images contrast with their cool environment.

The rainbow-
trout we hooked
high in the sierras
air so thin
and brimming with treetops
even the fish
trembled in the dungeon
of our rowboat
and refused to die.

Some of the poems capture childhood memories (there are several "sketches" of Barbara's father), others are vignettes of recent relationships. Transparent images of the beautiful and varied California countryside in some poems contrast with the snap of urban rhythms in others.

It was a temptation to gulp this whole book down at once; it seems so short and simple. But if you can exercise your will — or if you prefer to savour a short poem only occasionally — Barbara Noda's *Strawberries* is for you.

The Shameless Hussey is a wonderfully rich anthology. It's a book for those who buy themselves *several dozen* flowers at a time in a bouquet! It's the first collection of

Blossoms for Winter Blahs

Alta's writings, and includes poems, stories, and essays — old and new work published together for the first time.

Alta is one of a special group of west coast American poets which includes Judy Grahn, Susan Griffin, and Pat Parker. They were a poetic vanguard of the women's movement in the United States in the early seventies. Most of Alta's work was published by her own small press, Shameless Hussey, or other small presses and has been hard to find for years. So this volume is as wonderful and important an addition to a library of feminist literature as theoretical classics like Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* or Millett's *Sexual Politics*, which were published at the same time but have remained in print.

Alta's language is so simple that some people would probably refuse to call her a poet. She often writes with poor punctuation and grammar. But she speaks with the true voice — with the *many* true voices — of women, the women we are and know. Alta is angry, happy, and proud. She feels betrayed, enraged, and enlivened by roles, situations, and companions that are as likely to be found today as they were in the sixties and seventies when she began to publish. Like other feminist poetry, Alta's pieces communicate direct emotion; they cut through bullshit. But her writing is so "unpoetic," so plain and direct that I can

forget about her artistry until it strikes me down. Take, for example, this little poem: "let's stop hurting each other./ you go first," or this piece, which predates Susie Orbach's *Fat is a Feminist Issue* by three years

lots of yummy things to eat.
i am now trying to resist peanut butter.
just finished cranberry juice with tigers
milk.
i could eat for hours. feeling full just
feels better.
some folks in the u.s.a. are trying to
lose wait.
is there anything more ridiculous. food
is so precious
i want to eat it whenever it's there. sort
of insurance
for in case i get poor. munch munch.
o i love it.

Judy Grahn writes in her preface to *The Shameless Hussey*: "No poet irritates me more than Alta does... because... she never lets me use simple categories and become absolutely right about anything."

If you don't know Alta's work, if you know it and have missed it lately, or if you already love it and would like to read her newest writing — be sure to explore *The Shameless Hussey*. I expect you'll find spring coming soon!

Betsy Nuse lives in Toronto and works at the Toronto Women's Bookstore.

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• Coalition Politics, from page 11

tion work. It should also be made clear to the coalition that the anti-nuke movement as a whole cannot hide its head in the sand indefinitely on feminist matters, for to do so is equivalent to destroying machines but not the system which produces them. At the present stage of development of the women's movement, we might well want to put our political energy elsewhere in such cases.

Vicki Leonard, in an article called "On Second Thought, We Were Right" in *Off Our Backs*, raised the issue of feminist participation in housing coalitions. Women's housing needs differ from men's: "Men want safe, good, cheap housing that's accessible to their workplace. Women, however, need that and more. We need a place for children to live and play; we need safer streets and better mass transit since we are more vulnerable to street crime and less likely to own a car." She goes on to describe the process whereby women's concerns were deleted from the final list of demands because women, a minority in the coalition under question, were perceived as a particular interest group whose needs can be compromised and deleted for the supposedly general interest.

Seeing women as a particular interest group is a problem often encountered in coalitions. It is a characteristic of ideological domination that a particular interest group passes itself off as the general interest. In the case of the housing coalition, men were assuming the role of the general interest, implicitly assigning women the role of the particular. One of the tasks of feminism is to break the male monopoly on universality, to expose them as particular, thereby disorganizing masculinist ideological domination. An effective tactic for the feminist groups in the housing coalition could have been the proposal of a slogan "Housing for Men," plus a plan on how the coalition could purposely avoid addressing women's housing needs. If the reverse logic failed, and masculine pretensions to universality still reigned, a very noisy withdrawal would have been in order. These tactics would most probably be misperceived as blackmail, rather than as an issue of principle in defence of half the population. Leaving in good conscience is an acquired skill.

The case of CIRPA (Citizens' Independent Review of Police Action) may serve as an illustration of some problems feminists have to face in coalition politics. CIRPA is an organization formed to investigate police misconduct and to press for police reform in Metro Toronto. It collects information, publicizes complaints, gives support to complainants, and acts as a political pressure group. Since CIRPA is likely to remain in existence for several years, it is an example of a long-term coalition which is in addition defensive and single-issue. The activities of CIRPA are beyond the capacity of any one of its component groups to sustain individually. Superficially, one might be tempted to say that police reform has little to do with "women's issues." This might be true, but police have a lot to do with the oppression of women. Witness their new trick of using polygraph tests on women who have been sexually assaulted and subsequently laying public mischief charges against women who fail the test (polygraph tests are completely inaccurate when used on a person in emotional crisis); the harassment of street dykes and physical assaults on lesbians in custody; the harassment of prostitutes.

CIRPA could be a way for feminist groups to support women subject to police abuse, to publicize mistreatment and press for reform. Before leaping at this golden opportunity, we would do well to investigate who belongs to CIRPA. An obvious point to make is that some groups are sympathetic to the women's movement and others are not; a feminist group can generally get a political reading on a coalition before joining. The CIRPA groups are individually sympathetic to the women's movement; this means that they may well be infuriatingly sexist at times, but they are educable. While CIRPA is of interest to the women's movement as a whole, it is not a priority for any one overworked feminist group.

The lack of intra-movement networking diminishes our presence outside the women's movement. I'm not suggesting that we create a "Feminist Central" to perform a division of political labour among feminist groups. There is, however, a problem of collective organization of the women's movement, and I'm simply noting it.

Some valuable principles for feminist political practice can be picked up free of political cost by taking a look at the anti-fascist coalitions which were formed during the 1930's. The popular fronts, as they were called, consisted of both working-class and middle-class organizations united to fight their common enemy, fascism. In France, the Popular Front won the May 1936 election. In June of that same year, France was close to a general strike. The Popular Front, the Communist Party, was instrumental in demobilizing the workers' movement. Whyever would a communist group nip a revolution in the bud, one might wonder? The Communist Party was interested at the time in de-emphasizing class struggle so that the coalition alliance between the working class and the middle class could be maintained. Fearful of alienating bourgeois interests in the Popular Front, the Communist Party helped suppress the general strike. Preserving the basis of unity of a coalition may lead groups to downplay and conservatize their own politics, which in turn may cause a rupture between the representatives of an organization and its rank-and-file. This is a terrible price to pay for sustaining any coalition, and feminists must be wary of the trap of valuing coalition alliances higher than the liberation of women.

Another approach to forming coalitions, the opposite of the above, consists in patching together demands from a whole series of movements. The "US out of El Salvador" marches in the States last year were characterized by the additive approach to coalitions: anti-imperialism + anti-racism + women's rights + gay rights. In this process the coalitions were transformed from being defensive and single-issue to being offensive and multi-issue. Let's suppose that the attempt to integrate a number of different movements is genuine and not simply a bribe to get a higher body count. The tendency to broaden coalitions in this fashion may be seen as an attempt to form a united popular movement in the absence of a coherent ideology capable of synthesizing the separate movements. Coalitions have the tendency to expand to fill this political space, in so doing moving from defensive, single-issue to offensive, multi-issue formations. This process of development creates an impression of unity which may be illusory, because the membership of the component groups understand little about the politics of the other members. They stand beside one another. A homogeneous politics does not emerge, and the coalition disbands after the action. This is one of the reasons feminists end up feeling discounted and manipulated in coalitions. We must realize that, since everyone else is in the same position, we're not being singled out for neglect.

Coalition work requires a dual strategy of alliance with struggle. The strategy of "all alliance and no struggle" will lead us to be infinitely accommodating and betray our feminism. An absence of feminist struggle within coalitions will lead us to compromise our feminist demands out of existence in order to maintain the unity of the coalition. Without struggle, we will begin to accept our perceived role as a special interest group. Our underlying struggle within an alliance will revolve around the male presupposition of speaking for everyone, versus our attempts to undermine this arrogance, even should we be in a numerical minority in the alliance. The reverse problem of "all struggle and no alliance" is the sin of purism, which will isolate the women's movement and cause us to close our doors to other progressive communities. Purist politics hobbles the political effectiveness of a movement, leaving it sectarian and isolated.

The long run

The first principles of feminism have to do with a critique of the institutionalized forms of domination of women by men. This domination is expressed in, and maintained by, a variety of institutions, among them the state: the government, military, judiciary, state bureaucracy, educational system, etc. Every now and then we need to remember that one of our long-term goals is to control and transform the state. (It's almost embarrassing to mention such a vision in

these pragmatic times.) If the women's movement is a revolutionary movement, we then have to come to terms with the fact that we will only succeed in our goals when we form alliances with other dominated groups. Ultimately, the question is one of constituting a popular-democratic majoritarian movement to contest the systematic ideological and economic means by which domination is perpetuated. Coalitions prefigure this movement by linking together stigmatized social groups.

There are several stigmatized groups in Canada today which either are or could be mass movements: women, immigrants and labour, for example. The hope in forming coalitions is that the politics of each movement might come to mirror the others. It is clearly not desirable for all these movements to merge into one mass party; the women's movement is and will be necessary to define the specific oppression of women for the foreseeable future. Each popular movement has its own articulating principle based on a particular social contradiction. For the women's movement, the articulating principle is the oppression of women; for people of colour, racism; for labour, the exploitation of the working class. An articulating principle organizes ideological discourse and political practice into a coherent whole. What can be expected of each mass movement is that it be aware and supportive of the politics of other popular movements, and take responsibility for those issues which affect it internally. To take a concrete example, the women's movement should understand and support anti-racism, and deal with racism in its own ranks; the articulating principle of our movement will nonetheless remain the oppression of women. Conversely, other movements must understand and support feminism, while fighting sexism and the oppression of women within their membership. This mirroring process would broaden the vision of each movement, while preserving its autonomy. Individuals would retain their organic links and primary loyalty to the movement(s) in which they located themselves. This model of mass movements avoids many of the problems which arise when masses are conceived of as isolated from one another, blinkered in their vision, and therefore ripe for being co-ordinated by some third party generally anxious to conceal its hand.

In order that a mirroring of movements might happen, it is absolutely necessary that members of coalitions engage in internal education within their own ranks about their allies. Methods such as internal education must be found to gradually surmount the ideological fragmentation of coalitions so that we can go beyond united defensive struggles to a popular-democratic movement.

Ideological struggle is a process of conflict between dominators and dominated to claim and interpret social categories and practices. The New Right fights with the women's movement to control the social meaning of such ideological elements as abortion, "the family," and sex. At this time feminism is of critical importance in ideological struggle against the New Right because of the latter's very anti-feminism. Shun the company of leftists who are unwilling to recognize the significance of reproductive rights in the fight against the New Right.

To argue for the paramount importance of feminism to present ideological struggle against the New Right is much too modest; we should say, rather, that feminist theory will play an essential role in all future ideological struggle. We know better than anyone else that the public realm is constituted by the consignment of women to the private sphere. The federal Cabinet and the Toronto Stock Exchange share a lot in common; among their common features is the exclusion of women in ways both literal and metaphysical. A woman's experience of domination extends from her workplace to her home to her bed. Our critique does not start from some point floating in the public realm, but from our bodies. We therefore ask a series of fundamental questions about the nature of power that have been neglected by other movements. Up to now all ideological struggle has been a discourse among men; the inclusion of women will change the elements and organization of ideological struggle. We are not just another special interest group competing for a piece of the pie; we're here to change the nature of power by empowering women. •



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TORONTO WOMEN'S EVENTS CALENDAR, February 1 — March 7, 1982

Week of February 1

• **Monday, February 1:** Beverly Glenn-Copeland performs at PWD, 88 Yorkville Avenue, February 1 — February 14, 923-9689, \$5.



Beverly Glenn-Copeland: at PWD, starting February 1.

• **Monday, February 1:** Marxist Institute course on Feminism. *Introduction to Socialist Feminism.* Lord Lansdowne School, 33 Robert St. 8 pm. \$10 for 8 weeks.

• **Wednesday, February 3:** International Women's Day Committee (IWDC) organizing meeting for International Women's Day, 1982. Cecil Street Community Centre, 58 Cecil Street, 7:30 pm.

• **Thursday, February 4:** Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) meets at 519 Church Street, 7:00 pm.

• **Thursday, February 4:** Marxist Institute course on Feminism. *Psychoanalysis and Marxism.* Lord Lansdowne School, 33 Robert St. 8 pm. \$10 for 8 weeks.

• **Thursday, February 4:** Marxist Institute course on Feminism. *Microtechnology and Work.* Lord Lansdowne School, 33 Robert St. 8 pm. \$10 for 8 weeks.

• **Friday, February 5:** Singer/Songwriter Lois Fine at Free Times Cafe, 320 College Street. 9 pm — 1 am. Also Saturday.

• **Sunday, February 7:** Sound Women. One hour of women's music, Sundays, 11 pm, CKLN 102.9 (Roger's Cable).

• **Sunday, February 7:** Lesbian Phone-line Meeting. 3 pm, Women's Counselling, Referral and Education Centre, 348 College Street, third floor.

Week of February 8

• **Tuesday, February 9:** Lesbians Against the Right (LAR), monthly meeting. Feminist Party office, 175 Carlton Street. 7:30 pm.

• **Tuesday, February 9:** Marxist Institute course on Feminism. *Motherwork Under Capitalism.* Lord Lansdowne School, 33 Robert St. 8 pm. \$10 for 8 weeks.

• **Wednesday, February 10:** International Women's Day Committee organizing meeting for International Women's Day 1982, Cecil Street Community Centre, 58 Cecil St., 7:30 pm.

• **Friday, February 12:** Casa Loma II, Gay Community Appeal Celebration with Mama Quilla II, 8:00 pm. Casa Loma. Advance tickets only, available at the Toronto Women's Bookstore and Glad Day Bookshop, \$10.



• **Saturday, February 13:** Broadside Benefit Talent Show, Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Avenue, 8:00 pm. Refreshments. \$5.

• **Saturday, February 13:** Community Bash! Open Circle Theatre Fundraising Benefit. Toronto's grassroots theatre offers songs of freedom from Greece by Antonis Mihailidis, dancing, Compañeros, food, cash bar. 80 Winchester Street, 8 pm. \$10.

• **Sunday, February 14:** The Feminist Party celebrates the First Anniversary of the Conference, of February 14, 1981, on the Constitution. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Avenue, 7:00 pm. \$2.

Week of February 15

• **Thursday, February 18:** *Saga of the Wet Hens* (La Saga des Poules Mouillées). Play by Québec playwright Jovette Marchessault about four Québec women writers. Tarragon Theatre, 531-1827.

• **Wednesday, February 17:** International Women's Day Committee organizing meeting for International Women's Day, 1982. Cecil Street Community Centre, 58 Cecil St., 7:30 pm.

• **Thursday, February 18:** Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), 519 Church Street, 7:00 pm.

• **Friday, February 19:** Womynly Way Productions presents pianist/singer Margie Adam, kick-off concert for 'Reaching Out on the Environment' series, to increase public awareness of environmental issues. Harbourfront Brigantine Room, 8:00 pm. \$6.

Friday, February 19: Organized Working Women Conference on Technology and the Working Women at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education February 19 — 21. For more information, call 447-7462.

Saturday, February 20: OWW Conference, see February 19 listing.

• **Sunday, February 21:** OWW Conference, see February 19 listing.



Robin Tyler: at U of T's Convocation Hall, February 26.

Week of February 22

• **Tuesday, February 23:** Lesbians Against the Right general meeting. Location not set. Call Lucie, 925-5697.

Wednesday, February 24: International Women's Day Committee organizing meeting for International Women's Day 1982. Cecil Street Community Centre, 58 Cecil St., 7:30 pm.

• **Friday, February 26:** Comic Robin Tyler at Convocation Hall, U of T. Sponsored by U of T's Gay and Lesbian Awareness Week and SAC. 8 pm. \$4.50.

• **Saturday, February 27:** Women Artists Film Series. Screening of Art-park People Film, Funnel Experimental Film Theatre, 507 King St. E, 8 pm. \$3. 364-7003.



Week of March 1

• **Tuesday, March 2:** Lesbians Against the Right general meeting. Location not set. Call Lucie, 925-5697.

• **Wednesday, March 3:** International Women's Day Committee organizing meeting. Cecil Street Community Centre, 58 Cecil St., 7:30 pm.

• **Thursday, March 4:** *Loving Women*, evening of songs, stories, poems. Thursdays through Sundays, until March 14. Palmerston Library Theatre, 560 Palmerston, 8 pm. \$6.

• **Saturday, March 6:** International Women's Day Demonstration and Fair. For more information call Carolyn at 789-4541.

• **Sunday, March 7:** Reel to Real Festival presents a film sponsored by *Broadside*. *The Power of Men is the Patience of Women.* Bloor Cinema, 2:00 pm. Sundays until April 4. \$3.50 (8 for \$24).

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