



DONNA MARCHAND

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INSIDE BROADSIDE

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Critical Distinction**Broadside:**

We were deeply angered and disappointed by your editorial for International Women's Day, "Fighting Racism and Sexism" (March 1987).

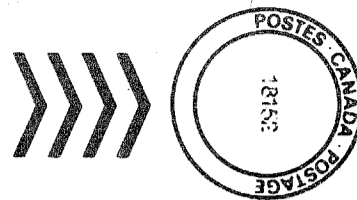
The first paragraph, while generally good, contains an important error. The demand put forward this year by Native women in the March 8th Coalition was "Native Self-Determination," not "Autonomy for Native Women," as your editorial states. Native women are making this demand because they feel that it is their historic right and because they feel that it is basic to their survival as a people. Native women cannot be free so long as the Indian Act, a deeply racist and sexist piece of legislation, remains in place.

Some Native women feel angered by the fact that non-native women, while supportive of the struggle against the sexism in the Indian Act, have not always continued that support now that Native women are in an all-out struggle against the Indian Act and for Native self-government. On International Women's Day 1987, we wanted to make explicit the support of the women's movement in Toronto for Native women in their struggle for Native self-determination.

We found the second paragraph really disturbing. We would like to make clear that *in no way* was last year's theme, "Women Say No to Racism from Toronto to South Africa," a "narrow focus." Nor did it threaten to "create a hierarchy of oppression" as you argue. In the first place, you need to understand how last year's theme was chosen. An early paper which circulated within the 1985/86 March 8th Coalition talked about the ways race and ethnicity had been presented in the past:

"At first, we dealt with these issues in a separate section of the leaflet and in particular forums or activities. Later we tried to overcome 'tokenism' by referring specifically to the impact on women of colour and immigrant women whenever we discussed any feminist issue. Nevertheless, many women have felt that issues of racism somehow tended to 'get lost.' The media seldom picked up on it, and people might have attended the March 8th celebrations without having to think about the connections between racist and sexist oppression!"

We believe there is a critical distinction between looking at the anti-racist struggle as one issue among many and adopting an anti-racist perspective because of its importance for all



our areas of struggle. This second approach, which opens up a way to develop an anti-racist feminism, is precisely the approach which was taken in the pamphlet which the March 8th Coalition produced for IWD 1986. All the familiar feminist issues and themes are there — interpreted and developed from the specific experience of Native women, Black women, and women of colour. This year's theme comes directly out of last year's experience and hard work: it is *not* somehow a sign that the March 8th Coalition has returned to the "feminist agenda," as you suggest. We strongly challenge the implication here that racism is not a feminist issue.

Finally, we would like to address the issues around heterosexism raised in the last paragraph of the editorial. To begin with, the March 8th Coalition has been for years at least 50% lesbian, and among the leadership that percentage is probably much higher. Thus, any criticism of how lesbianism gets talked about on IWD has to be based on a recognition that it's a Coalition with substantial numbers of lesbians who are making these decisions. It is not a Coalition of homophobic, "straight" women who run around kidnapping the "Lesbians are Everywhere" banner each IWD.

We do not believe that the March 8th Coalition has all the answers when it comes to the issue of heterosexism; there is much work to be done in this area. But neither do we feel that "a fundamental question of the value of lesbians in the women's movement is fomenting," as you argue. The fact is that there are some interesting similarities between how the Coalition has dealt with heterosexism on the one hand and racism on the other.

Several years ago, the Coalition highlighted Lesbian Rights by making it one of the themes for the day. Many lesbians felt that they did not want to be put in a lesbian "box" and argued for the integration of a lesbian perspective throughout the leaflet. This practice has continued ever since, but many lesbians have argued that the message is still getting "lost." *Broadside*, in calling for a theme of saying no to heterosexism, is *exactly* paralleling the whole process through which the anti-racist theme was chosen—that so-called "narrow focus" which threatens to "create a hierarchy of oppression." Once again, the implication is that certain issues may properly be taken up by feminists, while others may not.

This year's editorial contrasts sharply with the clear anti-racist position which was put forward in the editorial for March 8, 1986. We are therefore very disappointed that *Broadside* chose to run in 1987 such a skimpy, superficial and just generally poor piece of analysis when these issues of racism, heterosexism and feminism are so central to the growth of our movement right now.

Carol Allen, Patricia Antonyshyn, Julia Barnett, Sheryl Boswell, Debi Brock, Vera de John, Carolyn Egan, Nancy Farmer, Deb Gardner, Linda Gardner, Mary Gellatly, Nikki Gerrard, Shelly Gordon, Lise Gotell, Cynthia Grant, Wanda Haber-Kucharsky, Lynn Lathrop, Marie Lorenzo, Cherie MacDonald, Michele Paulse, Judy Vashti Persad, Jocelyn Piercy, Jennifer Stephen, Mariana Valverde, Maria Wallis, Ellen Waxman, Cynthia Wright
Members and non-members of the March 8th Coalition, Toronto

Appropriate Attire?**Broadside:**

I have recently been suspended for insubordination by a school board in Penetanguishene because of my attire (jeans and a sweatshirt are "inappropriate" and "unprofessional" and definitely not "a good example") and because of my refusal to be classified/identified by my gender (I will not use the titles Mr or Ms). My union is not being too helpful, and basically I'm on my own, writing letters to the Ministry of Education, the Human Rights Commission, the Ontario Labour Relations Board, etc. If there is anyone out there willing and able to help me fight this in any way (for instance, knowledge about existing laws, precedents, strategies would be very helpful), please contact me: Peg Tittle, RR#1, Wyevale, Ont. L0L 2T0.
Thanks.

Peg Tittle
Wyevale, Ont.

Quote of the Month

"When women's work is a marriage, and income secured through the acquisition of a husband, then issues of chastity in a woman's world are issues of marketability; what men have sometimes termed women's gossip is to women tantamount to dealings in the business world."

—Dale Spender, *Women of Ideas*

EDITORIAL**The 64% Solution**

The Ontario legislature is presently considering the implementation of a pay equity law which will attempt to bridge the gender gap in wages in both the private and public sectors. Statistics Canada reported in March that the disparity between male and female full-time workers has grown, dropping from women earning 65.5% of what men earn in 1984, to 64.9% in 1985. While a portion of the wage gap can be attributed to the absence of employment equity (ie, unequal access to education, the absence of universal day care, maternity leaves, interrupted careers while women raise children), a significant proportion of women's wages are denied on the basis of gender discrimination.

Bill 154 attempts to redress the wage gap by challenging the traditional undervaluing of "women's work." Female dominated jobs will be compared on a point gathering basis with male dominated jobs in the same establishments. Points are accumulated on an assessment of skill, effort, working conditions, and responsibility. (The largest obstacle will be ingrained prejudice: anthropologist Margaret

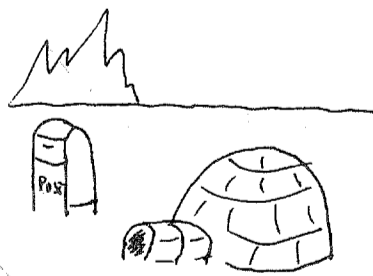
Mead found that when tasks were done by women in a given tribe, that work was valued less. The same tasks done elsewhere by men, were elevated to importance.) This bill considers gender only, and does not consider pay equity on a race basis, as clearly it should in order to create genuine equity in Ontario.

While the legislation might seem a gift horse from afar, it has been only reluctantly welcomed by women's groups. The Equal Pay Coalition supports the bill with amendments, and the provincial NDP wants substantial changes. The three key amendments are a shorter implementation period, coverage for all-female workplaces, and coverage for all employees on a complaint-initiated basis, including workplaces with less than ten employees, which are presently and illogically exempt from the bill as it stands.

Several women's groups not supporting this bill are doing so with the well-founded political conviction that the state does not hand us what we want, and that we should not accept piecemeal reforms on its terms. Since the state does not accept our terms, we should say no to the

bill. At the same time, we know that goodwill does not prevail in society at large, and that women's wages have not improved more than 6% against their male counterparts in the past twenty years. The establishment of pay equity is just one step towards the goal of employment equity which would provide a complete package of equalized access to employment: maternity leaves, affirmative action, universal child care, equal opportunity for education. The bill, even as it stands, will ease poverty for elderly women, as more wages will yield a better pension income.

So, clearly, legislation of some sort is required to motivate employers towards equity and, with amendments, *Broadside* supports the passage of this bill. Women's wages have been providing a profit margin and subsidizing the labour force for as long as women have been working. It's about time that changed. Right wing opponents of this bill claim that equal pay "will cost too much" and their cries of "pay police" have been seen in full-page ads in the national dailies. The real question is, cost whom too much?

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Feminist Agenda? The NDP Convention

by Greta Hofmann Nemiroff

You could smell the adrenalin as soon as you entered Montréal's Palais des Congrès on March 13 1987, the first day of the NDP National Convention. It was the kind of suppressed excitement one senses in a team that is one goal ahead with only ten seconds to go. Few risks are to be taken and no fights in front of the TV cameras, if you please.

A neophyte delegate at NDP National Conventions, I had to learn my way around and especially to differentiate between the formal and informal power structures and processes within the convention. It didn't take me long, though, to realize that only a few of the hundreds of resolutions submitted from throughout the country would make it to the floor for debate. The decisions regarding which resolutions would make it were made behind closed doors.

The "Big Issues" were: affirmative action for all; the export of uranium, an issue which divided the peace activists in the Party with the unions representing workers in that industry; and a compromise motion forged by the Federal Council of the NDP for special status for Québec within the Charter of Rights. While a weak motion confirming the NDP's pro-choice stance on abortion did reach the floor and was passed, many women were in favour of a more contentious motion that provincial governments withdraw their charges against doctors charged with performing "illegal" abortions.

This would have had a direct and embarrassing effect on Manitoba, one of the two NDP jurisdictions in Canada; it was relegated to the Federal Council for further discussion far away from the TV cameras.

Although there were many women present

at the convention, I nonetheless felt a distinct sense of my own and other women's institutional invisibility there *qua* women. Relatively few women make it through the Darwinian battle for the microphones; while women are often mentioned in the "whereas" clauses of motions, we don't always make it to the "be it resolved" clauses which form the heart of motions and future policy, if adopted. While it is true that the NDP has outstanding credentials of politically correct policies for and attitudes to women, often these seem to be little more than the conventional tip of the hat to that favourite Canadian catch-bag: women, "visible minorities," native peoples, immigrants and the disabled. . . an undifferentiated and highly diverse group often put into the ignominious position of vying for public funding and attention at the same lean troughs.

On the other hand, 10 per cent or three members, of the federal caucus are women: Marion Dewar, the past president of the NDP, has been replaced by a personable young woman, Johanna den Hertog of Vancouver, whose candidacy was firmly supported by three prominent NDP women. Den Hertog's brochure, however, made no mention of a feminist agenda although she expressed pride that the party has made a commitment "to nominating and electing the largest number of women ever to the next parliament." Some skeptics privately expressed their fear to me that, given the increasing popularity of the NDP, women might find it increasingly difficult to get nominations in choice ridings. Women outnumber men at a ratio of 8:5 on the NDP executive and form a small majority on the Federal Council. While this looks very good, the real question from the point of view

of women's advocacy, is: how many of these women (and men) are committed to feminism?

The official forum for organizing women in the NDP is the Participation of Women Committee (POW), a standing committee of the Federal Council since 1974. Through the work of this committee, comprising representatives from each province and territory, the NDP has an affirmative action policy aimed at achieving the goal of placing women as 50 per cent of the nominees in federal elections. There is, however, no provision for women's groups within the NDP to choose or inform their representation on the POW. I was given to understand that the Québec representative had been "promised" this position by the Québec NDP executive even before her unadvertised "election" by a small group of women. Thus, the POW representative is essentially accountable to the provincial executive and not to a base of women members within the party. This is particularly disturbing in Québec since the executive there has had numerous changes in its membership in the past months without election or informing the party membership between provincial meetings, which are as rare as they are expensive to mount. One hopes this anomaly is restricted to Québec due to its evolving organization as a party: a ship with an uneasy crew of varying political hues.

How does the POW Committee fare in the NDP since it can bring resolutions directly to the Federal Council? Well, the princely sum of \$25,000 has been set aside for five regional conferences devoted to "Women and Political Involvement." This money will not go very far in a country where women are poor, conferences are expensive, and many women cannot afford the expense of travel over the vast terrain served by each "region."

The only other women's group in the NDP is the women's caucus, which meets informally throughout the NDP conventions. Only dele-

gates (not even alternative delegates!) to the convention may vote at the caucus, although anyone can speak. Rank and file women members may be heard here, but their recommendations have no official status unless adopted somewhere within the official party structures.

Since time was the most precious commodity aside from power at the conference, the women's caucus could only meet for a little more than two hours in all this time. Several women told me that it was only at the caucus that they felt their *real* issues were addressed and where they felt comfortable with the processes, although they realized that the *real* action of the conference takes place either on the convention floor or in configurations and rooms beyond their access.

Given all the above, should feminists support the NDP? My own personal answer is that it is still the only show in town for those of us who want to see fundamental rights and social programs assured and improved for all Canadians.

However, feminists in the NDP must be careful not to be dazzled and coopted by the possibility of winning. I think we are standing at a crossroads now, where either we must "feminize" the processes of the NDP (after all, the women's movement has managed to develop for itself democratic structures and processes throughout the world!), or we will assimilate into the party structures in the hope of vast changes after the millennium when the NDP forms its first federal government in Canada. We will only reach our full stride in the NDP, however, when women are able to form an identifiable constituency within the NDP, rendering the processes within the party more transparent and more democratic.

Greta Hofmann Nemiroff, while a neophyte at NDP conventions, is a longtime feminist activist and writer living in Montreal.

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From Prejudice to Policy

by Helen Lenskyj

In a variety of contexts across Canada, from local advocacy groups to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, feminists are addressing the question of lesbian rights, and the related issues of homophobia, heterosexism and discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. Quebec and Ontario human rights codes now include sexual preference as a prohibited ground for discrimination, and other provincial governments may soon follow. Some collective agreements include sexual preference clauses as well as provisions for benefits for same-sex partners and their children.

What do the following have in common? Tax benefits; pensions; health insurance; common-law relationships; family unit; dependent; next-of-kin; sex education; femininity; tomboy; single; couple.

They are all defined in heterosexist terms. It is assumed that every woman has a sexual, social and economic relationship with a man. Alternative sexual expression, living arrangements, interpersonal relationships and contractual agreements are ignored or penalized. This heterosexism is borne out in law, government policy, social services, school curricula, even in casual conversation. It's the language of income tax forms and employment contracts, family court and hospital visiting policy. It's the language of Monday mornings in the staffroom and Friday afternoons in the elevator.

Heterosexism is not just an abstract idea in the heads of politicians and bureaucrats, or teachers and social workers. Heterosexist theory produces homophobic policy and practice. It directs the politicians who eulogize "traditional family values," the sex educators who teach only heterosexual genital sex, the judges who deny custody to lesbian mothers.

But at one stage in the process abstractions are important, just as they were in the old "chairman/woman/person" argument. Names and labels, categories and concepts help to shape thought and argument, and ultimately policy and practice. And so there is an ongoing feminist struggle to clean up sexist language and to invent new language to fit

women's experience. With the new language, 1970s feminists were able to take the personal experiences of women as wives, mothers, daughters and employees, and to identify and conceptualize the common factors of isola-



Compulsory Normal Behaviour

tion, powerlessness and oppression at the hands of men.

This pioneering work in feminist theory helped to generate a collective feminist consciousness and to challenge male power. And popular language and thought have been transformed in the process. "Chauvinist" and "sexist," for example, are now household words, perhaps less powerful than they were in the 1970s, but nevertheless high profile as words and as concepts.

This intellectual work on the part of contemporary feminists has been developing both inside and outside the academic community for over two decades. Through books and journals, lectures and courses, feminists have made their ideas accessible to a wider audience. And feminist scholarship has made an impact on the academic community. For example, in 1985, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council, the major Canadian funding body for scholarship research, published rigorous guidelines for nonsexist research. They appeared in Margrit Eichler and Jeanne Lapointe's book, *On The Treatment of the Sexes in Research*, which makes it clear that sex-related bias in funding proposals is unacceptable.

Contrary to popular myth, research does not stay in ivory towers. Some feminist research—and a lot of non-feminist research—finds its way into government policy, school curricula, legislation, media, the health system, etc. Sport Canada's recent Policy on Women in Sport is an example of a policy document based extensively on feminist research. But while feminists have been chipping away at the sexism in social policy and practice, its blatant *heterosexism* remains almost intact.

Heterosexist concepts and categories do not fit lesbian experience, or even take it into account, except negatively. Heterosexism in research is more than simply lesbian invisibility, which after all has characterized virtually all fields except "sociology of deviance" and sexology, where "sex-role non-conformity" and lesbianism were pathologized. Developmental psychology took a similar approach, explaining same-sex attraction among adolescent girls as a passing phase, resolved when girls "discover" boys. Sexologists labelled "tomboyish" behaviour (interest in boys' games and toys, rejection of "feminine" clothing and activities) as an indicator of adult lesbianism, even though there was ample evidence that most women who were leaders and achievers, not just women who were lesbians, were tomboys during their childhood years. In Barbara Deming's words, "We cannot live without our lives," and feminist scholars are challenging psychology's attempts to trivialize adolescent girls' emotional attachments and to pathologize girls' independence and initiative.

Sexism and heterosexism are predominant features of research on physically active women, perhaps because men (correctly) see sport as a crumbling bastion of male bonding and male supremacy. It served male interests very well either to ignore sportswomen or to present their activities as abnormal and "unfeminine" (ie, unattractive to men).

Sex-role research on female athletes reduced "femininity," "masculinity" and "normal sex-role orientation" to points on a scale. Showing questionable sensitivity and timing, investigators in one study approached women at the end of a marathon (26.2 miles) to inquire whether running interfered with their feelings of "femininity." A condition called "role conflict," allegedly experienced by girls and women who could not reconcile their "masculine" success in sport with their "feminine" need for men to open doors for them, underwent some adjustment with the discovery of androgyny. Social psychologists found that most female athletes, like most androgynous individuals, scored high in mental health. A more explicit message was conveyed in other personality studies, where a standardized test (Edwards Personal Preference Schedule) administered to female athletes included the item "heterosexuality" as an indicator of a "normal" personality.

In socialization studies, investigators routinely asked girls what their boyfriends thought of their sporting activities, as well as asking the boys whether they would date a girl who was good at sport. Other studies of adolescent girls made boyfriends and marriage normative by asking "What if are you not married by age 35?" On the question of motivation, the Canada Fitness Survey reported that, for one in three women, having an exercise partner was an important factor in encouraging greater participation, but women were not asked about the gender of that partner.

Sociologists were fond of attributing adolescent girls' high dropout rate from sport to such vague forces as "peer pressure" or "girls' social interests" rather than naming the agents of compulsory heterosexuality in the school and the community that make it unacceptable to outperform boys in any activity, work or play, or to appear in front of boys without the prerequisite makeup, styled hair and designer clothes.

Some physical educators, lamenting girls' high dropout rate, recommended more dance exercise, even of the soft porn/Twenty Minute Workout variety, to lure them back into the gym. Admittedly, the teachers planned to introduce other sporting activities if the "Workout" approach was successful, but this approach conveyed their tacit approval of the exploitation and cooptation of fitness portrayed on the screen.

In sportsmedicine and sports gynecology, no one could complain that women were neglected. Indeed, some researchers grew rich and famous investigating the bra requirements of basketball players or the daily hormone output of marathon runners. The physically active female subject was defined exclusively in terms of her primary and secondary sex characteristics: she was in fact reduced to a uterus and breasts. The menstrual cycle of the active woman has been the predominant concern in sportsmedicine literature for the past century, and this branch of research is permeated with assumptions that marriage and motherhood are the destiny of every woman, that a constant state of fertility is the only normal state of affairs and that heroic medical intervention to assure this condition is justified. In short, this research served to entrench (male) medical control of female sexuality, an unmistakably heterosexist enterprise.

The problems with sexist research are well known. Findings based on male experience and behaviour are not necessarily valid for women, nor can generalizations be made from men to all humans (male and female). There are parallel problems with heterosexist research. Findings based on heterosexual women's experience and behaviour are not necessarily valid for lesbians, nor can generalizations be made from heterosexual women to all women (heterosexual and lesbian). When heterosexist bias is not questioned—and it rarely is—the result is social policy and practice that entrench discrimination against lesbians.

Helen Lenskyj is the author of *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Women's Press, 1986).

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Forces of Opposition

by Karen Dubinsky

It's unlikely that you've missed hearing about that curiously titled R.E.A.L. Women of Canada (RW). It is also unlikely that you have read or heard much about them from a critical, feminist perspective. The Canadian women's movement has been extremely slow to react to this challenge. It is time we began. Fast.

The anti-feminism represented by the RW has to be seen in the context of an increasingly conservative political climate in North America. It's wrong to separate the "economically right wing" (those who attack unions, or social service spending) from the "socially right wing" (those who oppose abortion, or gay and lesbian rights). They represent the same phenomenon, they spring from the same impulses and, increasingly, they are the same people. We need look no further for an example of this than the "Coalition for Family Values" which recently organized to oppose Bill 7 in Ontario. This group brought together fundamentalist churches, anti-abortion and anti-feminist groups, as well as the "traditional" right wing, the National Citizens' Coalition.

Another point about the RW is quite simple, but in at least some feminist circles, controversial. So called pro-family groups are fundamentally opposed to feminist ideas and the practice—indeed, the existence—of the women's movement. Simply put, *they exist to oppose feminism*.

Having said this, it should be clear that I think the women's movement must fight back. RW cannot be ignored, treated as "part of the spectrum" of feminism, or wished away. They, and more importantly, the image of feminism they are trying to exploit, must be challenged.

In order to do that, we must keep two elements in mind. We have to understand anti-feminist women as political actors *in their own right*. There's a tendency in the women's movement to see RW as "dupes of patriarchy" or, as a popular feminist cliché puts it, "men in skirts." That's wrong. It's insulting to those involved, and it denies them any responsibility for their actions. These people are not stupid. It's indeed difficult for us to understand how our movement for the liberation of women could be opposed by some women—it seems absurd. Yet it is possible to understand why anti-feminism exists without being patronizing.

To understand all this, we have to allow ourselves—the women's movement—to be self-critical. What is it about feminism that some women are threatened by, or opposed to? In a bizarre way, RW provides the women's movement with a necessary shaking up to see where we have been going wrong.

History of R.E.A.L. Women

The formation of RW was announced February 1, 1984, at a press conference in Toronto. Quite audaciously, they announced their membership as 10,000 at this time—no mean feat for an organization which had scarcely published its first newsletter. This attempt to fudge their membership figures began a controversy about the size of their constituency which continues to this day. Despite a steady increase in reported membership, the organization has constantly evaded questions about membership lists and procedures, as well as sources of funding. Working backward from their 1986 membership income (\$28,000), their membership figures are more like 2,800—a far cry from the 45,000 they currently claim.

Several other recurring themes were announced at their public unveiling. Grace Petrask, their first president, announced RW's opposition to most feminist issues: ie, abortion, easier divorce, universal day care, equal pay and affirmative action; and to feminism itself. She vowed that the organization would "fight back on every single issue the radical feminists make with which we do not agree."

RW also set the tone for one of their most emotional and stirring themes: their defence of the family. RW's major premise was and is that the family is the "cornerstone of Canadian society" and, as Petrask articulated at the press conference, "The prime responsibility of

a woman is her family."

Through the rest of 1984, RW spent time recruiting, writing position papers and submitting briefs to government. Perhaps their best remembered action of that year was their attempt to cancel, then disrupt, the televised debate on women's issues held by the three party leaders during the federal election, on the by now familiar grounds that the NAC panelists were "unrepresentative" of most Canadian women.

The organization celebrated its first anniversary by holding its first convention. Two hundred "delegates" attended—though I use the word advisedly, as there was no attempt at representativity, democracy, policy making process or structure at the gathering. Their focus remained an overt attack on feminism. Participants were told, for example, that NAC was a "danger to this free country" because it "breaks up marriages and destroys family life."

Incorporated, perhaps, by their convention, the organization took bolder steps in its self-declared war on the women's movement. In Ottawa, organizers of International Women's Week 1985 were faced with the dilemma of RW's request to celebrate this internationally recognized day of feminist solidarity with an anti-abortion workshop. (IWW said no, and was ridiculed by the press.) Later in the year the group made its second well publicized request for funds from the federal Secretary of State Women's Program.

It has been in the last twelve to sixteen months, however, that the organization has begun to receive the kind of legitimacy from the government and the press that they have been seeking. They held two lobbies of Federal MP's last year, one of which was attended by 40 Tories and 9 Liberals. Their "gift" of homemade muffins (sprinkled with pink icing) earned them national headlines, and no doubt endeared them to not a few politicians. Their support in the House has extended from the lunatic fringes of the Tory backbench into the Cabinet, notably in the person of Health and Welfare Minister Jake Epp.

A look at their leadership is revealing. (A membership profile would also be most interesting, but given their secrecy, impossible.) Five of the seven women who initiated the organization have university or professional degrees. Their provincial representatives in 1985 included a pharmacist, two businesswomen, a social worker and a teacher. Lynne Scime, their recently elected president, is also a social worker. Most are also married to professionals, thus they lead comfortable middle class lives. Most of these women quit their jobs to raise their children, yet virtually all are also veteran political and community activists—primarily in the anti-abortion movement. In light of what RW has to say about "selfish and upwardly mobile feminists," it is indeed ironic to see such an active and accomplished group of women at the helm.

Ideology Policy

We can get the flavour of anti-feminist ideology from the policy statements of RW. In many ways the organization is getting politically smarter. They are far more careful in their public and policy statements than they were at the beginning. Petrask's unequivocal statement at their first press conference that a woman's prime responsibility is her family has been replaced in a recent brief with more flexible and reasonable comments, such as: "To support homemaking as an option is not to say that we believe every woman should be in the home. We believe every woman should have the option to remain in the home if she so choose. Neither motherhood or a masters degree is for everyone."

I would argue, however, that this doesn't represent a major ideological shift in the organization, but is rather a skillful bit of public relations. RW remains committed to a fundamentally anti-feminist program. To really get a sense of what the world would look like if RW were in charge, read Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*.

To see this, we have to start where they start,

with the notion that the family is the cornerstone of society, and women's place is within it. Their opposition to most feminist issues springs from this beginning.

Universal daycare is opposed, for example, because they believe children should be raised by their mothers. They confidently cite the work of psychologists published in the 1950s to argue that "without an early foundation of love and trust, the victims of maternal deprivation might be gravely damaged for life, pathologically suspicious and detached."

Easier access to divorce is opposed as "trendy legislation" which lets couples off the hook too simply. "There is nothing new about unhappy marriages," they argue. "What is new is the unwillingness of a married couple to work through the problems that are inevitable." Even male violence is not seen by some as sufficient grounds for marital break up. In one of their more horrifying statements, one of their leaders has insisted that "too often a woman is sexually attracted to a man and rushes into marriage within six months. If she had waited a couple of years, she would have realized that he was the type to beat her up." A program of tax deductible marriage and pre-marriage counselling is put forward as a "solution"—to prevent unhappy marriages and to bolster shaky ones.

Their strident opposition to human rights protection for gays and lesbians shows that this is one issue they have difficulty even pretending to be liberal about. They participated in the Coalition for Family Values which engaged in a vicious campaign against Bill 7. Their own literature is similarly hysterical. They claim that gay rights legislation gives "special privileges" to a group which has chosen an "offensive lifestyle"—and with this logic argue that groups of alcoholics or gamblers might claim similar protection. The gay rights movement exists, they claim, to redefine the family, to promote homosexual marriage, and to seduce the young. "The homosexual seeks sex in the young age group. As he ages, when he begins to lose his attractiveness, he resorts to buying sex from young boys. . . . Homosexuality involves acts such as oral sex, anal intercourse, sadomasochism, bestiality and other perversions." Not surprisingly then, RW believes that "homosexuality is one of the gravest threats to society in the last two decades of the twentieth century."

Funding Controversy

As soon as it became clear in 1985 that RW's funding application to the Secretary of State was opposed by the women's movement and by some members of government, they went on the attack. Their newsletters began to read like scandal sheets. The Women's Program was "riddled with radical feminist extremists," they claimed. Certain recipients of federal funds were targeted, such as the publications *Horizons* and *Kinesis* ("lesbian papers" to our intrepid inquisitors) and NFB's Women's Studio (another hotbed of "radical feminism"). Federal politicians also came under the gun, including such notorious subversives as Judy Erola and Flora McDonald. RW supporters were urged to complain that federal funds are being used to "promote lesbianism in Canada."

Clearly, lesbian baiting is a favourite trick. Most recently, Ottawa IWW's funding from Sec. State has been stalled thanks to RW's complaint that approximately five of over 200 IWW events have a lesbian focus. RW also uses the funding issue to denounce what they call "professional feminists" or "feminist selfishness." RW has a particular vision of feminists as young, white, upwardly mobile career oriented women who simply don't give a damn about men or children. The women's movement must counter this vision in our struggle against anti-feminism.

RW cast the funding debate in all or nothing terms. They have stated on several occasions that they don't care if they are denied funding, so long as the government shuts off the tap to every other women's group as well. The funding issue is the clearest example of RW's attempt to set themselves up as the alternative to

the women's movement, or, as they have begun to call themselves, the "new women's movement."

In fact, it's possible RW applied for funds for precisely this reason—they were as interested in damaging the women's movement and engaging in a virtual lesbian witchhunt as they were in actually getting some money. As Gwen Landolt, one of their leaders, said when they were denied funding: "Without equal funding, we can't enter the national debate with the radical feminists."

Impact of Anti-Feminism

There is an increasing legitimacy of anti-feminist ideas within government and the press. It's true that support for RW has extended beyond the realm of Tory dinosaurs who oppose every idea generated after the seventeenth century. It's also true that it's more and more common to see RW commenting in the press on stories which contain a "women's focus." These are troublesome and annoying instances, but they hardly represent an avalanche of anti-feminist sentiment, and we shouldn't push this legitimacy argument too far. What is more important, and more insidious, is the way in which the existence of groups like RW can and have been used by the state to either actively oppose feminist demands, or to justify inaction.

An example of the first can be found in Ottawa. Last year a right wing city council, which clearly had no desire to assist the women's movement, used RW as a cover to justify their reduction of funds to the local women's centre. This kind of thing is likely to happen elsewhere.

Using an overdrawn opposition as an excuse for inaction has long been a favourite delaying tactic of government. The federal government has refused for years to change restrictive abortion laws, on the basis of a so-called "polarized political climate"—this despite the fact that polls consistently report a huge pro-choice majority. Anti-feminist rhetoric is indeed creeping back in to circles where it was once considered unfashionable—or at least indiscreet. How else are we to understand the wistful recommendation of the Forget Commission on Unemployment Insurance, that if women would simply go back home, the unemployment problem would be solved.

We should also be concerned about the impact of a potential anti-feminist cold war within government bureaucracies—especially those concerned with the status of women. Most feminists never believed that the state would fund or organize our revolution for us. Yet we all recognize the importance of feminist research and policy analysis within government agencies. Press reports quote several unnamed feminists in government complaining that more and more of their time is taken up justifying actions or decisions someone higher up is afraid RW will get angry about. My own discussions with feminists in government reveal similar frustrations. One's imagination can truly run wild here. We should remind ourselves that only 30 or 40 years ago Canadians were jailed and deported for their association with another great incarnation of evil, Communism. Left wing activity (however defined) is still seen as sufficient cause for the harassment of federal civil servants.

Analysis — What is the New Right?

The first point that most feminist accounts of the rise of the new right stress is that it is *about* feminism and sexuality. What is important and new about the new right is two elements: they have discovered what feminists for generations have been arguing—that issues related to the family, sexuality and reproduction are political at their root; and they have succeeded in combining two conservative impulses, so called economic and social conservatism. What brings these two impulses together and gives new right ideology its coherence is its defence of the patriarchal family and its promotion of a particular notion of privacy. As feminist theorist Rosalind Petchesky argues: "Histor-

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Protective Custody

Interview by Wendy C. Whitfield

Gayle Bezaire is a lesbian mother who was given custody of her children in 1979, but which she subsequently lost to her ex-husband George. She was later charged with abduction. Her trial begins in May 1987. She spoke with Wendy Whitfield for Broadside.

Wendy Whitfield: How old were your children when their father gained custody?

Gayle Bezaire: They were five and seven. He came to get the kids with his lawyer and I was trying to explain to them why they had to go with their father. They didn't understand. Obviously they didn't understand that they had to go because Mommy was a lesbian. I told them not to worry, that I would go to court and get them back home as soon as I could. The kids were screaming—I'll never forget their screams.

I was told that I could see the kids once a month, the second weekend of each month. So, I went down to Windsor month after month. I would drive there and he would tell me I couldn't see the kids. Then, the first visit I had with the kids, they complained of being beaten by their father. I asked him about it and he denied it. He told me that if I was going to make up such lies I couldn't see the kids any more. I only saw them about four or five times in nineteen months, although I went month after month to see them.

WW: Did you see signs of physical abuse?

GB: Oh yes, I saw bruises on them. I took my son to a doctor at one point. Then, I think it was the March visit, my daughter brought her diary with her. I had been reading her *The Diary of Anne Frank* before she went to bed at night and she thought that diaries were great. So I bought her a diary for Christmas and told her she could write anything in her diary, that it would be her best friend, that nobody would ever read it and she could tell the diary everything. I told her that I kept a diary when I was a little girl, so she brought her diary with her and at night when we had our quiet time, I was going to read them a story. But she said, "Let me read you my story." I said, "You have a story you want to read me?" and she said, "I want you to read my diary." I said, "No, no, you don't have to do that." But she wanted to, and this kid read what she had written in her diary—parts of it was explicit details of sexual abuse. And I was just sick, sick to my stomach. Things like, "It makes me scared when Daddy comes down to my room at night," and "I don't like it when Daddy makes me touch his penis," or "It hurts when Daddy puts his fingers in my vagina,"—things like this.

I went to every agency I could go to that was available at the time. We went to court in September of 1980 for the appeal of the custody decision and they wouldn't accept the new evidence. But they did accept the official guardian's report of what he had read in the diary and they did accept the report from court-appointed psychiatrist who said that the

kids should be returned to me immediately, that their father was a very sick man, a very violent man with no sense of warmth or affection towards the children.

George's evidence was that he had remarried two weeks before the hearing and his wife was pregnant with her second child so that he could provide a more stable home. He was living in a house that his mother owned, and he had a good paying job which I didn't at the time.

WW: And did he have the support of his family?

GB: Of course—he had the support of his family and I really didn't have the support of my family. I lost the appeal.

The senior judge said if there was indeed child abuse going on I should bring it back to the county where they lived and charge him with child abuse, that I should start all over again, and that he couldn't see how children raised in a homosexual home would grow to be "normal, healthy, contributing citizens in our society." And because the senior court judge decided I should lose custody, I lost the appeal. He did say he thought I should have more access to the kids.



Gayle Bezaire at a Defence Fund meeting, March 1987

I went to Windsor the next weekend. George met me at the door and said the kids weren't there, that I couldn't see them. The second weekend he told me again the kids weren't home. But I could hear them screaming to me from the basement, "We are home mommy, we want to see you, Mommy." It was such a scene, I decided it was best to turn around and go back to Toronto, and take him back to court again. So, I filed again and he got to go back to court again for a "show cause," and he phoned me and said, "OK, you can take the kids, but not till the last weekend in November." I went down there in November—the middle of November—to pick the kids up and he wasn't home. I had a taxi waiting outside, put them in the taxi and onto a train, and we came home.

This time my daughter wouldn't get into the bathtub. She said it hurt her to sit down. "It hurts my vagina when I sit down." I said, "Why does it hurt?" She said, "Well, look at it!" Her vagina was swollen and infected and

red. I asked her what had happened and she said it always does that when Daddy puts his penis in it.

I'll never forget it. I wanted to scream. I was enraged. I called a friend of mine and told her what I had just found out. I knew I could not ever send the kids back to their father at that point. I got some money from some friends and the next morning I talked to the kids about our options and they told me they never wanted to go back to their Dad again, and as a result I was charged with child abduction.

WW: Do you feel that the legal system and child protection services failed to protect your children?

GB: Very definitely. The Catholic Children's Aid Society in the town where they lived did nothing. They investigated twice and did nothing. They closed the file. The Catholic Children's Aid in Toronto would do nothing. Metro Children's Aid wouldn't do anything because the kids were Catholic. I went to the Official Guardian—I believe they did what they could at the time. I went to the court-appointed psychiatrist. I brought my kids to a doctor. I did as much as I could possibly do. I

bail conditions are that I remain in Ontario unless I'm given permission to leave. I need to register with the police—they need to know where I'm living. I cannot move.

WW: Where are your children now?

GB: The children are living with their father.

WW: Your trial begins here in Toronto on May 28 and will run for several days.

GB: It's scheduled to go seven to ten days.

WW: What kind of support would you like to have from the feminist community in Toronto?

GB: I need as many people that were involved with us in the past to contact me through the Defence Fund and let me know their experience with my children, if my kids talked to them about the abuse. If so, could they come forward and testify about that. I need women to do fund-raising so I can bring in expert witnesses, so I can provide transportation for friends in the United States to come up and testify, so I can pay lawyer's fees that aren't covered by legal aid, so I can pay for any assessments that need to be done, or any professional evidence or anything like that. I need women to fill the courtroom every day of the trial, not just the first hour of the trial or the first day of the trial, but every day of the trial. I need women outside the courtroom picketing. I want a demonstration outside the courtroom.

I need people to take this seriously and realize that my issue is their issue, that it could happen to any mother. It doesn't matter if they are a lesbian or if they're not a lesbian, if their kids are being sexually abused and nobody's going to help them. If I go to trial for protecting my kids, it's their problem too. I need them to show the court that they care, that they do care about my being proven innocent of the charge. I need people to write me letters of support.

I have been silenced all my life: as an incest victim as a child I was silenced; through my marriage I was silenced, I couldn't talk about the abuse; through my custody hearing I was silenced; as a lesbian mother I was silenced in court and for five years I was silenced. I couldn't scream like I wanted to about what happened to my kids then, and I refuse to be silenced now. I believe that as long as we are silent it's going to continue, the abuse is going to continue, and I believe that a good way to start to end the abuse is to speak up about it. For those of us who can speak up about it, I think we have to do that. I'm at the point in my own recovery that I can do that and I need to for my own mental health.

I'm not going into this being really naive and thinking everything's going to be okay. I know that I could very well go to jail for what I've done, but I would do it again tomorrow.

(For information about the Gayle Bezaire Defence Fund, call (416) 531-0732; to send donations, write: Gayle Bezaire Defence Fund, 151 Gerrard St. East, Toronto, M5A 2E4.)

Wendy C. Whitfield is a graduate student at OISE in Toronto, and member of a collective formed to provide support for Gayle Bezaire.

• RW, from previous page

ically, the concept of privacy has included not only free enterprise and property rights, but also the rights of the white male property owner to control his wife and his wife's body, his child and his child's body, his slave and his slave's body. It is an ideology which is patriarchal and racist, as well as capitalist." Defence of the family involves the re-establishment of the family—not the state—as the provider of social welfare. It also involves the re-entry of women into the home where we become defined as subordinate reproductive beings.

Why do women so enthusiastically support this vision? Unlike Andrea Dworkin, I don't believe women "consent" to patriarchy solely because they are terrorized by male violence. The hegemony or popularity of patriarchal ideas lie in their ideological appeal—they simply fit, or make sense of the world for large numbers of people. It's only when these presumed natural, commonsense ideas start breaking down that the whole structure begins to shake, and an attempt may be made to reassert dominant ideas in a particularly virulent manner. This is what we are witnessing with the rise of the new right, and the culprit in this case is feminism.

This is the sense in which the new right is not only a response to feminism, but a measure of our success as well. But our success is only par-

tial. Feminism, in combination with great changes in the economic and social structure in recent decades, has certainly freed many women from some traditional domestic roles, but such freedom has often proved rather illusory. For many it has meant entry into the low paid monotonous world of the female wage ghetto. It has meant an increase in female headed single parent families. And, as Dworkin points out, "sexual freedom" can also be rather bogus. "Sexual liberation," as it unfolds in a still patriarchal and capitalist society, can have the effect of "freeing" women from one of the few sources of security we have had—a stable and responsible male breadwinner. As Petchesky has pointed out, "Anti-feminism has attained a mass following and a measure of political power because it is in fact a response to real material conditions and deep-lying fears—a response that is utterly reactionary but nevertheless true."

Thus, when NAC recently announced that they were "taking the gloves off" in their fight with RW, what was missing—at least in the press reports—was an analysis of what creates anti-feminism. As a friend of mine asked, "Why isn't NAC saying that if the state had acted on women's movement demands regarding women and poverty, childcare, pensions, and workplace equality, RW wouldn't have a

leg to stand on?"

We must also look at the women's movement and examine our failures. I believe that in many ways the rise of RW is intimately connected with the rise of liberal feminism. Barbara Ehrenreich has argued that what she terms "lifestyle feminism" has allowed fewer women to identify with the women's movement. "Outside the middle classes, lifestyle feminism can be actively repellent. If feminism is for women who are slender, intelligent and upwardly mobile, and you are over 40, perhaps overweight and locked in to a dead end job or marriage, then you are more likely to see feminism as a put down, rather than a sisterly call to arms.

Feminism as career strategy is clearly the image of feminism RW runs with. They pitch their message to older women, women with large families, women who do not work outside the home, or women with less than professional jobs. They tell these women that it's the fault of feminists, not the state or business, that their work isn't valued properly. Feminists have often responded to RW by angrily reminding them that of course the women's movement has long championed the cause of all women, whatever economic or social choices they have made. I know that, you know that, the point is why don't the women attracted to

RW know that?

Anti-feminism forces us to ask some difficult questions about ourselves. I used to think that liberal feminism could be tolerated. Now I wonder if they do more harm than good. I used to find feminist culture (ie, young, educated, urban women spending most of their lives in long and intensely personal political meetings) sustaining. Now I find it alienating. I wonder how the women's movement can balance its claims to work for the liberation of all women, without ignoring or wishing away very real divisions among women based on class, race, age and politics. Paying attention to what RW is saying is depressing, and clearly induces pessimism. But unless we are willing to challenge the perception of feminism which they are trying to exploit, we run the risk of losing the little ground we have gained.

And that's really depressing.

Karen Dubinsky has recently given workshops on RW in Ottawa and Kingston. This article is an updated version of a paper published by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIA). All quotations from R.E.A.L. Women come from either their own literature (newsletters, policy statements and briefs) or from press reports.

MOVEMENT MATTERS



IWD 1987

by Ingrid MacDonald

Fighting Racism and Sexism Together, the objective for this year's March 8th Coalition, was described by Carol Allen and Judy Persad as the building of the new women's movement. The two women began the rally and the day's celebrations with a noticeable happiness, while stating their claims as women of colour, and describing their process as members of the Coalition in what can be recorded as a successful year.

To Allen and Persad the women's movement is, historically, a movement led by and centred around white women. An inclusive movement is one that takes a systematic look at the way racism, as an agent equivalent to sexism, affects the lives of women. It is a movement that does not involve tokenism, such as adding "black women, women of colour, and Native women" when it sounds good.

Special guests at the rally were a group of women on strike for a first contract as cleaners at Toronto's South Central Post Office. They get paid \$4.50 an hour (it's \$4.65 an hour for men) and have no guarantee of employment, nor any promise as to safety or working conditions. One woman isn't able to read English, but no caution is given to her in her own language when she uses dangerous cleaning fluids. The cleaners gathered on stage with singer Arlene Mantle to sing a song they wrote together.

As 1987 is the International Year of Shelter, there was support for homeless women, for women in shelters, for women who have less access to adequate housing because they are poor, are immigrants, or women of colour. Carmencita Hernandez of the Coalition of Visible Minorities spoke of the urgent need for adequate housing for the homeless. In Toronto, money is found for glamorous projects, such as a hotel at the sight of the Dome, while the poor, mostly women and children, must settle for handouts, charity or food banks.

Carolyn Egan, who has been part of the March 8th Coalition since it began almost ten years ago, spoke on behalf of the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics. Egan stressed that the Canadian laws mean that women with money and opportunity may have access to abortions while women without money, without connections, without privilege do not.

June Veacock of the Ontario Federation of Labour spoke about pay equity, employment equity and affirmative action. She described how bills, such as the one currently being debated in the Ontario legislature, are not far reaching enough in that they fail to recognize the need for legislation against prejudice in the assignment of work in the public and private sectors. When people talk about pay equity as being too costly for society, she said, "It is clear that women are subsidizing the economy."

Rights and dignity for lesbians, were referred to periodically throughout the rally and once quite humorously by folksinger Laurie Bell. Accompanied by Anne Healy and Sue Bellyea, Bell reconstructed a gospel tune, "Who's that yonder dressed in red? Must be the ones that the lesbians led / Who's that yonder dressed in red? Must be the one that the bull dykes led." Other entertainers included singer Diana Braithwaite, Arlene Mantle and comedian Sheila Gostick. Nor was entertainment left for entertainers alone—coalition member Cherie MacDonald loosened many a pocket when she delivered a most persuasive fundraising speech,

the funniest monologue I have heard in recent feminist history.

Deb Parent of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre co-hosted the rally with Nikki Gerrard and paid tribute to the diversity of groups attending when she gestured to the banners hanging from the balconies. "Look at us, look at all these banners. . . Is there any group not represented here today?" Parent asked. Lesbians were represented by a huge pink banner, carried by the Lesbians Making History group, which had the slogan "We're interested in older women."

Aside from a furor over an editorial that appeared in last month's issue of *Broadside*, the events of this marathon celebration were conducted without incident and in the best of spirits. Taking advantage of a wave of unseasonably hot weather, 6000 women and supporters marched in the streets and close to 2000 attended an all-women dance that evening, co-sponsored by Lesbians of Colour and the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre.

It was clear from the positivism of the Coalition as a whole, that the struggles of the '86 season (see *Broadside*, April 1986), have made for a reconciled group, with a renewed commitment and a strengthened sense of purpose.

Writing Retreat

From August 14-21, 1987, the Canadian Women's Writing Retreat will be held at Far Hills Inn, Val-Morin, Quebec.

Women writers of English fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction prose, and translators working from French to English, will be able to take intensive workshops. Well-known Canadian women writers will conduct morning writing workshops and afternoon discussion groups. There will also be a panel discussion led by representatives of the Canadian publishing industry.

For further information, please contact Debra Martens, c/o Centre for Continuing Education, Dawson College, Victoria Campus, 485 McGill Street, Montreal, Quebec, H2Y 2H4; telephone: 514-931-8731, local 6102.

Health Programs

TORONTO—A comprehensive range of new women's services in Ontario, expansion of existing health programs and a central focus for women's health issues within government were announced by Health Minister Murray Elston in March. The Ontario government will provide more than \$9 million in new funding, with approximately \$7.5 million from Health and \$1.5 million from other ministries, for the coming year. Among the new programs:

Women's Health Bureau to be established in the Ministry of Health: Responsible for promoting greater awareness and sensitivity to women's health issues among ministry program staff. Annual funding for 1987-88, \$280,000.

Birthing Centres: Establishment of three hospital-affiliated birthing centres, to be located in Metro Toronto, Ottawa and Northern Ontario. Proposals will be accepted from hospitals. Estimated cost approximately \$6.5 million over the next two to three years.

Birthing Conference: To be held in Toronto this fall and sponsored by the Ministry of Health, with international representatives. Conference will assist ministry in setting future directions for childbirth care.

Implementation of Powell Report: The Health Ministry will work with the Ontario Medical Association and hospitals to develop a range of hospital programs for women—including comprehensive pregnancy testing and counselling, abortion and post abortion services—within the framework of Canadian law. Dr. Powell will work with hospitals, physicians and nurses to develop proposals on how these services might be re-organized and re-structured. Annual funding will be up to \$2.5 million.

Short-term Psychotherapy Program—Women's College Hospital: Outpatient services for women in crisis situations; designed to prevent the development of serious psychiatric illness. Annual funding will be \$260,000.

Sexual Assault Treatment Centres: Twelve new sexual assault treatment centres are to be designated in hospitals throughout Ontario in addition to the three existing centres located at St. Joseph's Hospital in London, Chedoke McMaster Hospitals in Hamilton and Women's College Hospital in Toronto. Annual funding will be \$300,000.

Public Education Program on Sexual Assault: The Ontario Women's Directorate will be developing a public education campaign to increase public awareness about sexual assault. The program is scheduled to begin this fall. Estimated cost will be \$600,000 over the next two years.

Rape Crisis Centres: The Ministry of the Solicitor General will provide annual funding directly to rape crisis centres. Beginning April 1, the centres will receive a total of \$300,000—a 100 per cent increase over last year's funding. In addition, the head office of the Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres will receive \$38,000.

Research on Women's Health: The Ministry of Health will provide grants for 14 research programs in women's health. Programs will include a project at Hospital for Sick Children which will examine the effects of exposure to drugs and chemicals during pregnancies; a project at the University of Ottawa which will study changing attitudes and practices in obstetrics and childbirth; a project at McMaster University which will examine the therapeutic effects of exercise on elderly women with bone disease; and a project at the Ontario Cancer Institute to study the effectiveness of techniques for breast cancer screening. Funding will be approximately \$500,000.

MOVEMENT COMMENT

Suing for Safety



Catharine MacKinnon

by Joi Saunders

"If someone can be tortured and enjoying it is considered entertainment, if the pleasure people derive from one's pain is the measure of one's social worth, one isn't worth much socially speaking."

These words are taken from a powerful speech by Catharine MacKinnon, presented to a standing-room-only audience, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education on February 28. MacKinnon, a notable US feminist activist was introducing the legislative proposal on pornography, researched and developed by herself, Andrea Dworkin and other women, many of whom are victims of pornography and prostitution.

The women working on the various Ordinances, said MacKinnon, "concluded that pornography, not all by itself, but crucially in an important way, institutionalizes the subor-

dination of women, and perpetuates the ill-conceived image of women as being worthless."

"We came to consider this a form of sex discrimination," she went on to say, "that is to say a series of abuses where the people who are hurt by pornography are singled out for it and hurt by it on the basis of their sex. This remains true whether the person actually is a woman or a man—everyone who is hurt by it is hurt by it through their gender. It is primarily women, however, who are hurt."

MacKinnon described the civil rights approach to pornography as "based on the notion that equality of rights, to be serious, cannot permit people to be trafficked in. This remains true when they are trafficked through pictures and words, even when the enjoyment and pleasure from their trafficking are sexual and economic. Based on our investigation on this entire range of materials and parts, we proposed a law, a law that defines pornography as the graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and words. That is, it is graphic material that is made intentionally to actively subordinate women through pictures and words." The law would address materials including women presented as dehumanized sexual objects who enjoy pain, humiliation or rape, women being bound, "mutilated, dismembered or tortured, women in postures of servility, submission or display, being penetrated by objects or animals."

"We also in our law permit men, children or transsexuals, all of whom are violated in the same way women are, to sue for similar treatment. It is extremely important that this is a civil law. What this means in legal terms is that you do not go to the police. What you do first is find a lawyer of your choice and you tell her or him how you were hurt." The essence of the legislation is that one could sue on the grounds

of "being coerced into pornography, having pornography forced upon them, for being assaulted in a way that was directly caused by a specific piece of pornography; and/or permit any woman to sue pornographers for trafficking in women and consequently undermining, devaluing, destroying, denegrating and creating women as a second class group of citizens."

An impasse has arisen in the anti-censorship/pro-censorship debate on pornography in Canada. As a woman who was a teenage prostitute, I am anxious for action. There is a need for concerted effort by all women concerned about this issue. While we deliberate, women continue to be violently victimized by pornography and pornographers.

MacKinnon is proposing that Canadian women may want to adapt this civil rights approach. In my opinion, this proposed legislation could be used as a common ground to bridge a variety of stances. The Civil Rights approach has a number of advantages. For example, women victimized by pornography are empowered through being an active party in the process. Pornographers would be held accountable through heavy economic penalties provided to those victimized. However, questions do arise with this approach. Will the fine line between pornography and erotica be drawn? Could right wing groups like R.E.A.L. Women use this legislation to ban lesbian erotica? We would need to develop safeguards if we were to proceed with the adaptation of this legislation.

I experienced what it was like to be used and abused by a pimp; as a grown woman and feminist I strive to experience the power to do something about it. I know I am not alone.

Joi Saunders is a Toronto feminist who works at Interval House.

Feminism in the Media

by Liss Jeffrey

Outrage over the constricting images of women portrayed by the mass media—from sex queen to dish-mop princess—has been a hallmark of the modern feminist movement. Beginning with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, feminists have mounted a sustained attack on what one researcher has called "the symbolic annihilation" of women by the media.

To try to answer the question of how great is the feminist presence in the print and broadcast media, I devised a project called WoMedia. My concern was not so much with "women's issues," but rather with the specific question of how great is the presence of a feminist voice in the media.

For this study, I adopted the definition of feminism contained in *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* (eds. Bullock and Stallybrass, Fontana/Collins, 1977): "Feminism. The advocacy of the rights and equality of women in social, political, and economic spheres, and a commitment to the fundamental alteration of woman's role in society." I chose to interpret the word "commitment" in the DMT definition broadly, so as to include a variety of possible activities, ranging from the release of a government report advocating legislative changes for women to the review of a feminist artist's work.

The common link that identifies these items as "feminist" is the part of the definition that speaks of the nature of the commitment, namely to the "fundamental alteration of woman's role in society." Once this modification of the definition was made explicit, I encountered no ambiguity when identifying and coding media material.

WoMedia is a systematic content analysis of a sample of Canadian TV information programming, newspapers and magazines, for the purpose of measuring how much feminist content they contain. The survey was conducted in Toronto, in part because I live there, and more important because English Canada's largest media market could be expected to provide as great a choice for the viewer/reader as could be found anywhere in the country.

WoMedia is a pilot project. The purpose of a pilot project is to raise questions that may require a larger study for definitive answers. In an area where minimal work has been done, it is also the purpose of a pilot project to explore research questions using the means at hand, in order to determine whether or not further work is required, and should be undertaken.

These findings are clear, but they are also preliminary. Valuable work has been done in this area—notably by US sociologist Gail Tuchman, et al, in a book called *Hearth and Home*. In Canada, WoMedia has carried out revealing content analysis of advertising, and Erin Research has meticulously examined sex role portrayal in the electronic media for the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission. Ground-breaking earlier work was conducted by Alice Courtney and her associates on stereotypes. However, in these studies I did not find a systematic definition of feminist content that appeared to hold across mass media information programming outlets—print and broadcast. Therefore, finding a usable definition of feminist for purposes of content analysis seemed a worthwhile attempt.

The second point is that WoMedia is a content analysis, which means that the results are only valid insofar as they are explicitly systematic. In one sense this pilot project lacks a vital component of social scientific content analysis—intercoder reliability measurement which means the comparison of various observers' perceptions in a systematic manner. There was one observer on the WoMedia pilot project, the author. In a larger study, more coders would be required.

To compensate for this lack, the category "feminist" was constructed in an unambiguous manner. Further, the objective of the study is the relatively crude measurement of presence or absence of feminist content according to the definition.

It seemed wise to compare different media forms, so newspapers, magazines and television were chosen. One week was a manageable length of time—six days out of the seven were sampled for each medium. The judgments permitted on the category feminist, and the raw numbers are documented in reading/viewing diaries. The fail-safe mechanism of content analysis is making the investigator's judgement calls explicit. Therefore the raw numbers are documented in the diaries.

With these preliminary findings presented, I cannot resist speculating on the implications, but these comments are offered in a strict spirit of speculation. In addition to these precautions, in every case I have coded only for explicit content. Hidden meanings are not a part, nor are they part of the results of the study. The search was for explicit, not subjective, content. Key questions in the coding procedure were: Is the word woman, or a woman identified term such as wife, in the title? (That's a start.) Is the word feminist in the title or first paragraph? Does the item advocate changes in the role or status of women? Does the item report on commitments to these changes even if only for purposes of criticism? Please note that it is the presence of feminist content, without primary regard for whether the presence is considered editorially positive or negative, that is the object of the inquiry.

There is one more assumption contained in this content

analysis that should be made explicit from the outset. Instead of the passive viewer with an average view of events, I am assuming a channel-changing, page-flipping viewer/reader in search of news and information about her concerns, one of which is changes in the role of women. This hypothetical viewer/reader is in search of feminist content. For this reason, a weighting system is not incorporated in terms of front page or lead item position. Instead it is quantity of editorial space for newspapers and magazines, and quantity of time for television that is measured. For this viewer, presence or absence is the key indicator which measures how much choice she has when she seeks information relevant to her life. The original aim of this study was to see how hard she had to look to find feminist content in the mass media.

* * *

Television

The sample included only Canadian TV channels received in Toronto. I limited the channels to English-language broadcasting, which meant that CBLFT, TV Ontario, and the multilingual Channel 47 are omitted from the sample. TV Ontario, although it should be included in a larger study, was excluded also because I limited the study to commercial broadcasting outlets. The channels monitored were Global, CBC, CTV, City TV, and CHCH (a Hamilton station received in Toronto, not surveyed for news broadcasts). Some of the programming received originated from the network, some from the local affiliates in the cases of CBC and CTV. However, this was irrelevant to the coding, as was the question of where the programs were produced.

The survey was conducted for six out of seven days in a one week time period, the week of Monday, September 14 to Sunday, September 20, 1986. This was done in order to facilitate comparison with newspapers, which in two out of three cases published six out of the seven day week. In order to make cross-media comparisons possible, to include newspapers and magazines, I sampled only television information programming. "Information" programming means non-dramatic programming, and runs the gamut from network news shows to morning chat shows. Thus we are not examining entertainment or variety shows, and therefore ignore for the moment the question of dramatic portrayal. Instead, the aim is to compare the results across media forms, and thus the method to examine only that part of the broadcast medium directly comparable with print. It is beyond the scope of this paper, but more work is required into the refinement of the distinctions and comparisons among the different media forms.

The results highlight those time periods where a feminist item showed up. The morning time slots for example contain the so-called "Women's ghetto" shows, such as Phil Donahue (a US strip carried on City TV), Cherington, carried on Hamilton's CHCH and received in Toronto, and Dini Petty's City Line. An item coded feminist may occupy 30 seconds of time, whereas on the chart the entire half hour will be coded as containing some feminist content. Based on the observation, I arrived at an averaging formula to express the time actually devoted to feminist items.

The average time for an item was 3 minutes. The numbers indicate that the total hours of information programming surveyed was 80.5 hours, or 4830 minutes. During that period, 38 items which can be coded feminist content appeared on the screen. Averaging these out, at 3 minutes, 114 minutes, or 2.36% of the information blocks surveyed in the six day period contained feminist content. Erin Research surveyed women's issues—a larger category—in TV general information programs and found 6.1% presence. ("The portrayal of Sex Roles in Canadian Television Programming," Erin Research, 1986.)

One striking result—apparent on the chart—was the availability of time, particularly in the morning, for women's information programming, yet the minimal presence of feminist material.

Another pattern became evident. The news broadcasts—noon, early and late evening—featured some feminist material. Typically, these items were government reports announcing changes in the status of women, or programs to address problems faced typically by women. For example, it was during the week of September 14 that the Ontario government announced assistance to battered wives, and steps to be taken to address the problem. The news crews interviewed battered wives, dramatically silhouetted so as to conceal their identity, and the operators of battered women's shelters.

The attitude was sympathetic, yet rarely were these items followed up the next evening. But they were there, available as information. (It may be noted that lack of followup is an often repeated criticism of TV news. However, for this study it is sufficient to note that items coded feminist are among the items not selected for followup.)

Another source of feminist news that week was the annual feminist Take Back the Night march. Typically, these items con-

Magazine Type

Title

General Interest

Maclean's
Toronto Life
Saturday Night
This Magazine

Special Interest (women)

Horizons
Healthsharing
Homemakers
Broadside
Toronto Life (fashion)
Verve
Canadian Living
Flare
Chatelaine
Influence

(men)

Financial

Canadian Business
Your Money
Marketing
The Financial Post
MoneyWise
Report on Business Magazine

centrated on the visual impact of women marching alone chanting in the dark. Rarely was there any inquiry into rape, nor any systematic attention to the question of the lack of safety for half the population on the streets. But the information from the image was there. This we might call feminist-generated, as opposed to the previous (and more prevalent) example of government-generated feminist information.

There were two shows during the week devoted to feminist issues. The first was a half hour show called Women and Success. The show had a healthy roster of corporate sponsor. Feminist information comes in polar opposites—from the success and making it type of information, to the hardship/victim stories like wife battering.

From the standpoint of drama, albeit information drama, the most extraordinary show I witnessed in the week under study was one edition of The Cherington Show. The host, Tom Cherington, is a gruff individual who barks at the viewers who call in on the daily hotline. This particular episode was entitled "Misogyny," and was sparked by a US author's book of the same title. Cherington began the show a skeptic, but was visibly touched by the pathetic desperation of many of the female callers who had suffered abuse from woman-hating men. At the conclusion of the program, Cherington himself emoted on camera, saying, "I hate doing shows like this. It makes me ashamed to be a man."

The Cherington program on "Misogyny" illustrates a theme familiar to television producers. Where there are authors writing about feminist themes, then these themes, especially provocative, tend to gain an airing. Serious issues come from authors. The more provocative the thesis the better. Cherington's program on Misogyny is a good example. In this case, the author—a woman—was interviewed by phone from New York. The guests in the Hamilton studio were local experts on the subject, and thus could (and did) offer numbers to call and places to go for help.

Another major source of feminist content appears on the call-in shows, such as Cherington and the US Phil Donahue Show. Here the gritty reality of many women's lives is expressed for brief seconds on the air.

But on balance, it became apparent hour after hour that the kind of change that feminism talks about for women appears

The 3-Minute Workout

GAURVEY

Editorial Pages Available	Pages with Feminist Content	Percent of Total
53	0	0%
141	7	5%
40	3	8%
39	3	8%
40	40	100%
26	22	85%
50	15	30%
11	11	100%
72	0	0%
53	0	0%
134	0	0%
131	0	0%
141	14	10%
46	2	4.3%
83	1	1.2%
66	0	0%
19	0	0%
31	1	3.2%
47	0	0%
67	3	4.5%

tained feminist content, for a total of 4.5%. The *Globe*, with a total editorial pages of 314, had 14 containing feminist content, for a 4.5% total. Finally, the *Sun* had a total of 512 pages, 13 of which featured feminist material, for a total percentage of 2.5%. Remember that the feminist content includes pro- or anti-feminist views. The idea is not to find only positive content, but rather to locate any content or discussion at all.

In the newspapers, feminist coded material fell into all categories, news, columns, obituaries, letters to the editor. No attempt was made to weight the various sections, again because the objective was the measure presence or absence. There were major items on feminists who had died, and letters to the editor were a lively source of feminist content.

Two observations were possible. First, where the paper has a "women's section"—whether it is called The Life or Lifestyle section—this tends to be a source of feminist content. Second, where there are columnists identified as feminist—such as Michele Landsberg in the *Globe and Mail* at the time, or Doris Anderson in the *Star*—or a reporter assigned to cover women's issues, this too tends to be a source of feminist content.

Magazines

The Canadian monthly magazines were the major focus. The survey began with general interest magazines (*Macleans*, *Toronto Life*, *Saturday Night*, *This Magazine*). General interest magazines then were separated from target readership magazines, special interest as opposed to general interest. The women's magazines were surveyed (*Herizons*, *Healthsharing*, *Broadside*, *Toronto Life Fashion*, *Verve*, *Canadian Living*, *Flare*, *Chatelaine*, *Homemaker's*) and the lone men's magazine, *Influence*. The distinction between controlled circulation and off stands magazines was not relevant for the study, so both types of magazines were included. For a special target comparison, business magazines were surveyed (*Canadian Business*, *Your Money*, *The Financial Post*—weekly, *Marketing*—weekly, *Moneywise*, *Report on Business Magazine*).

The totals (see chart) were calculated in the same manner as for newspapers—that is total editorial pages, total pages with feminist material, and a percentage. *Macleans* had zero that week, *Saturday Night* had 8%, the same total as for *This Magazine*. Overall, general interest magazines had 273 editorial pages available, 13 carried feminist items, for 4.8% feminist content.

The women's magazines range dramatically—from a high of 100% for *Broadside* and *Herizons* to the low end with *Flare*, 0%, and the largest circulation women's magazine, *Chatelaine*, 10%.

In keeping with the presence/absence aim, the *Chatelaine* total included Bronwyn Drainie's story on the death of feminism. *Homemaker's* feminist content was 30%. Total for women's magazines was 15.5%. This result was unexpected. For the business magazines in this category, the total percentage is 1.6%.

Implications

Turning now to interpretation, in a limited study such as this, one is necessarily limited to speculation. However, the context for this study includes certain knowns and givens. We know that the role of women has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. All the major indices, from birth rates to employment participation, marriage rates, age of marriage—have reflected the profound changes in the role of women. It is not my intention to debate how far or to what degree the feminist movement has played a role in these changes. That there is a role seems beyond doubt. What is also indisputable is that the attitudes of Canadian women have changed. In a major marketing study conducted by the Thomson Lightstone firm, the researchers concluded that the widespread "feminist" attitudes uncovered in their survey were not just the attitudes of elite middle class women, but instead represented the views of a majority of Canadian women, who supported changes in the role of women, and had adopted "feminist" attitudes.

Is there then a market for feminist material? One would suspect so. Where is it then?

Rena Bartos, in her book *The Moving Target*, reviewed the data on the changes in women's attitudes and urged marketers to see their best interests and speak to women as they are, not as they were. Is anybody out there listening?

Along with these changes in the role of women is the increase in media outlets competing for the attention of women. This is particularly true in Toronto, the media capital of English Canada. We also know that much of the mass media is in the business of selling audiences to advertisers.

These results—in preliminary form—may offer an empirical basis for criticizing a philosophy of media that by and large passes for commonsense. In theory, the media express a diversity of views, and reflect the audience that they reach or hope to reach. Those audiences can—still in theory—choose the media

outlet that appeals to them. The "marketplace of ideas" notion, an adaptation of economic ideas to cultural practices, goes back to John Stuart Mill and underpins our ideas of a free press, ideas central to notions of democracy. Rooted in our culture, the idea has been challenged, but persists. The market in this view is judged to be fit to decide who should be and who should not be heard. Content analysis—such as this pilot project—offers an empirically-based way of measuring categories of content. Traditional feminist critiques of the media have focused on the fact that in theory, there is freedom of expression, whereas in reality some kinds of expression are not evident on media to the degree that they exist among the population.

The concept of balance in media is an evolving response to the inequities that have resulted from the uncritical acceptance of the marketplace of ideas notion. The balance idea suffers from a lack of precision as to what exactly "balance" is and how its measurement is to be determined. The call is for balance, as opposed to censorship, and thus proponents of the idea have been reluctant to espouse quotas. This study contributes to the debate a definition of feminist content which can be successfully utilized, and some preliminary results across three mass media forms.

Everyone agrees that a woman's place has changed—but what role does the media play in all of this? Selling her makeovers to play on her insecurity? Or selling her an upwardly mobile dress for success image so she can forget all those pictures of woman as victim? Telling her that her desire for change and a better place for women in the world is in fact part of the problem, and not part of the solution?

In this regard it is worth commenting on the Drainie article in the September issue of *Chatelaine*. It is revealing. In "Meet the Post Feminist Woman" Drainie observes: "In the sixties women rebelled against constraints of domesticity and fought the good fight for political equality and financial independence. The post-feminists of the mid-eighties, women in their twenties and thirties, are less concerned with waving a feminist banner than with focusing on personal needs and wants." The reader meets a number of women who have achieved a great deal—mainly high powered jobs—and who have the accoutrements of success, clothes, terrific apartments or houses. However, they don't have it all—missing is the heart's desire, a man. This is a genuine dilemma for many women, but here comes the next step. This central lack in these women's lives is linked to feminism. The feminist now, according to author Drainie, is "the mainstream feminist dream turned nightmare, and the latest villain of North American culture. Whatever happened to Mary and Rhoda, those cute spunky baby feminists of the early seventies?"

A more blatant example of this misapportionment of blame lies in an article that appeared under the headline, "Bulimia in Young Women Linked to Feminism: Study" (*Toronto Star*, October 14, 1986. Associated Press). Instead of saying young women get frustrated with a system that doesn't allow them to reach their goals, the article blames the feminist movement for causing the bulimia. Of course, upon reading the article it becomes clear that the headline and first paragraph of the article are misleading. This wrong-headed view seems to me indicative of an attitude—the same attitude that lies in the Drainie article. Blaming feminism for leading us to have higher expectations does not seem helpful or accurate. Indeed, the feminist may not be the culture villain at all, but one would have to look very carefully to see the other side of this debate.

The pilot project WoMedia demonstrates, in a preliminary way, that there is little choice offered to the viewer/reader in search of feminist content in the mass media. Feminist ideas are not making it into the marketplace of ideas, at least not to the degree that some research would show those ideas are held by Canadian women.

A study such as WoMedia doesn't simply confirm that we are marginal. There are more women on the air, more women writing, but they aren't going far and fast enough and the quantity of information is still lacking. It is important to challenge the adequacy of the notion of the marketplace of ideas by using empirical measurements such as content analysis to determine whether varied types of information are available. If not, then the question of why not should be pursued.

The results of the WoMedia study left me not outraged, but profoundly uneasy. Women across the country are in transition, and times are tough. The problems of the woman who has "made it" and the woman victimized by rape or domestic violence may appear worlds apart, but both are aspects of this great transition in the role of Twentieth century women. The mass communications media—the pervasive symbolic environment in which we live—is providing minimal feminist content. The makeover is no substitute for devoting more space, and more time, to "the advocacy of the rights and equality of women in social, political, and economic spheres, and a commitment to the fundamental alteration of woman's role in society."

Liss Jeffrey is a Toronto journalist. The WoMedia study was funded by the Connaught Foundation through the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology.

frequently on the air. Instead, there is another type of change for women which does appear on the air, a change called the makeover. A makeover is a before and after sequence, in which the person featured is observed before hair cut, colour, makeup, clothes, etc., are applied, and then is seen after the transformation. This staple of magazines and talk shows is hardly new. Former *Chatelaine* editor Doris Anderson notes that the makeover has been around during her career of more than 20 years. Combining elements of the magical transformation, and the selling of the products that make possible a "new you," makeovers are still astonishingly prevalent. There they stood on the small screen, the shy 17 year old, and the hopeful senior citizens, while well-coiffed hosts, hairdressers and make up artists described the changes that money could buy. One day during the viewing sample, Global TV featured a makeover on its noon news. (That's not news, that too is reality, Global evening news anchor Peter Trueman might say.)

In contrast this image of the makeover with the feminist image of change. The makeover remains in my mind as a summary of a type of change for women, a type of change compatible with the television medium. The type of change represented by feminism is virtually invisible, present roughly 2.36% of the time.

Newspapers

Turning to newspapers, six days out of the seven were compared—due to the fact that at the time two out of the three Toronto dailies—the *Sun*, *Star*, and *Globe and Mail*—published six days a week.

The standard method for content analysis with print media is to count all editorial material, and arrive at a total number of editorial (non-advertising) pages. The editorial count includes sports scores and the stock market results, but does not include classifieds. A page by page count was then conducted for pages containing feminist material, and a percentage then calculated.

The final weekly totals show the *Star* with 357 pages, 16 con-

ARTS

Firewords: Challenging the World of Language



Nicole Brossard

Director: Dorothy Todd Hénaud; Producer: Barbara Janes; Executive Producer: Kathleen Shannon; Camera: Zoe Dirse; Sound: Diane Carrière; Editing: Pascale Laverrière; Animation: Michèle Puzé; Original Music: Anne Lauber; Narration: Anne Ekinner

by Doqna Gollan

Right from its earliest moments, *Firewords* captures our attention with cascading fireworks beneath the opening credits and pulsing drums that seem to be sending us the message that this is not your average National Film Board documentary. In fact, this is the newest release from Studio D, the Women's Studio, by Dorothy Todd Hénaud, producer of the recently acclaimed *Not a Love Story*. This time she is working in the capacity of director, and if we are to judge by the quality of this film alone, it is to be hoped that she will not stray from this role again. This is a sumptuous film about three vibrant, alive women, Louky Bersianik, Jovette Marchessault and Nicole Brossard, all of them exciting, non-traditional writers from Québec. We are treated to excerpts from their plays, songs, books, thoughts and hearts. As writers, words are the tools of their trade and, make no mistake, they wield them with power. But Hénaud's trade is filmmaking, and it is the superb combination of that perfect visual image with each gem of wit, whim and wisdom that keeps this film ever lively, ever beautiful.

The women's movement owes much to writers like Bersianik, Brossard and Marchessault. These are women who are taking risks with their writing, re-defining our being in the world and the language that controls that space. In this film they joke about raising feminist sons and the dreadful current vocabulary of a woman's sex, and speak confidently about loving women, living alone, our solidarity, our history, and challenging the world with language. Ideas roll out from these three sources in concentric waves until it seems as though there is a real possibility of swallowing up the world of pure patriarchy, as we know it. In a casual lunchtime meeting, anglophone writer Gail Scott challenges her friends: "Describing a woman's sex in a poetic, pleasurable way is awfully hard... and when we do find a sentence that's pleasing we feel dumb... because the words are so derogatory?" These wordsmiths come up with "gynility" for female virility, since the word "femininity" is so completely lacking in strength, and "clitorivage," a combination of clitoris, vagina and *rivage*, a French word meaning the shore whereupon, at some point, one alights. Somehow our sexuality has never seemed so delightful.

Delightful too, are the images that illustrate the writers' words. Rushing water, living spirals, the shifting colours and dimensions of a hologram, cityscapes, fossils, the sea; everything, in fact, from the women going through

right away I see a Riopelle, an original, a real beauty. So I go on, and there's a Chagall and at the back of the room was... a Marchessault... Oh it was just awful... I felt like I was haemorrhaging. Like all my blood was flowing out of me to supply the colours for this big drawing. So I left all my cleaning stuff there, went downstairs... I couldn't work anymore, and thought... this is insane, it can't go on!" And so she settles down to write with a passion or, as she puts it, "I'm trying to match my grandmother's energy and passion in the literary adventure." There follows an excerpt from her deeply surrealistic play *Night Cows* which leaves us wanting more and the actress who plays the part for us explaining: "there is so much emotion in this play that sometimes I feel my heart is going to burst." Evidently Marchessault has wasted none of her life's experiences either.

Nicole Brossard moves rapidly through the events of her life to the theoretical stance those

what we invest in them, changes... Reality is shattered as every word explodes and unfolds.' Brossard's language is strong and disturbing, as is, she claims, the best of her writing. "I intend to be disturbing. So that when people read the text... a certain unease sets in. Because I think that when we feel troubled, we're forced to question things..." Each writer in her own way is questioning the natural lazy order of our minds and the ideas that spark from writer to writer occasionally ignite us too.

Does it make a difference that these women are all from Québec? This is a very Québec-oriented film, and although there are anglophone women who are taking similar risks, rising to new challenges, writing in new formats and, especially, experimenting in poetry, perhaps the biggest difference is in the audience for the work Hénaud discovered when travelling with the French language version of *Not a Love Story* that while people argued and disagreed with the film's stance on pornography, they did not simply discount the film because of its feminism. How many times have we heard a Toronto critic—usually a man—warn us to stay away from this play or that film because it is "blatantly feminist"?

And so I take this opportunity to encourage you all to storm the NFB offices across the country and demand this film because it is joyously, radically feminist. In my three years as film critic for *Broadside*, I have seen many equally enjoyable and intelligent films by women, but nothing that has touched me as often as this one did. Though their ideas can be as invigorating as a spiral or as ethereal as a bubble, Bersianik, Marchessault, Brossard, and indeed, Hénaud have repeatedly brought me back to my own experience. I have looked into a mirror which our male-oriented world would deny even exists. Solidarity is created when we actually see ourselves as part of the vision, not just listening to it or watching from our own personal well of molasses. And yet, often as I touched base with these women, a moment later we would leap up together from that base into the free skies of our potential as creative women. It is a vision which includes us all. ●



Louky Bersianik

space and a view through a microscope. Hénaud has taken pains to show us the conditions in which these women create and has succeeded in capturing their very inspiration. There is a wonderful scene, for example, in a simulated sequence about a young Jovette Marchessault and her grandmother in which the fascinated girl describes the hens her grandmother would draw. These hens, she claims, would come alive and spring from the page. The visual image is not merely excellently animated, but actually rotoscoped so that the hens do, in fact, come alive for us as well. We have been allowed a glimpse of the seed that will one day grow into *The Saga of the Wet Hens* among other works.

The film opens with passages from Bersianik's bestseller *The Eugélonne* about an extraterrestrial, "because women haven't arrived on earth yet." This book, which Bersianik did not begin until the age of 41 "because it is so grounded in my life's experience," challenges constructs which we have been forced to take for granted. In it, for example, the men look down into a well full of molasses at the women living on the bottom who are trying to draw. And the men say "look at them; they'll never produce masterpieces. All they know how to draw is molasses!" Bersianik makes us stop in our tracks, focus our gaze and gather our wits about us as we delve deeper and deeper into a film about women doing exactly that, creating masterpieces from molasses.

While Bersianik comes across as a woman who has happily settled into the second half of her life, with a wry joke or two about the difficulties she may have encountered in the past, Jovette Marchessault appears to bear all. From happy memories of a poor but environmentally rich childhood to her tales of eating cat food with the cats while nearly starving in the city, the pivotal tale is of the time when she worked as a cleaning lady in an office tower in order to buy materials for painting her colourful masterpieces. "One night I go into a room and



Jovette Marchessault

events have inspired. "I had my daughter only after 8 or 9 years of marriage. Suddenly I became a woman like any other. I mean I was a writer... in harmony with my own time and space... my desire... my projects... then all of a sudden I became two bodies to feed, to wash, to carry around... This caused me to re-examine my female condition... because when we're relatively free to fulfill our desires, we forget or we pretend to forget what it means to be born a girl!" If this was Brossard's first challenge to her usual mode of writing it was soon followed by an even greater change: "Very shortly after the birth of my daughter... came the love of a woman, and the two events combined to produce texts such as *These Our Mothers*... I was like a fish in water, totally in my element... my presence in relation to the world was completely transformed... words themselves change. The meaning we give them,



Filmmaker Hénaud

Sight Spectacular

by Ingrid Macdonald

Subtitled lesbians and representation, *Sight Specific* at A Space Gallery in Toronto explores the relationships between artistic identity and lesbian identity. Lesbian relationships, personal histories, torrid lesbian novels, and sexual politics are the subjects of a show that presents a polished view of the modern lesbian as woman in a continuum of women, and as a sexuality that is just beginning to show itself in the common or public realm.

When asking the question, "Is the art itself different than non-lesbian work?" I found an interesting phenomenon. All of the artists worked with images that required two or more panels. A philosophical explanation of this would mean dragging the French feminists into this review, from which I will refrain. Nonetheless the diptych (a two-panelled work) dominated this show, along with one triptych (a three-panelled work), and two photo series.

Margaret Moores' video "Frankly, Shirley" is an irreverent encapsulation of a sex-mad summer romance. At 10 min. 23 sec., "Frankly Shirley" follows the passion struck couple as they lovemake at a variety of indoor and outdoor Toronto locations. With a good eye for editing, good timing for humour, and two very handsome co-stars, Moores' video considers lust and an endless love which comes to a sudden uneventful end.

On a political note, Nina Levitt's photogram series "Conspiracy of Silence" confronts those trashy dimestore paperbacks of a few decades previous. Titles like *Strange Sisters*—"One was normal, the other was not" or "The savage novel of a lesbian on the loose!"—condemn lesbianism as a sickness. Levitt interrupts the image of the five book covers by superimposing underwear (underpants, undershirts, brassieres). In retrospect these novels may seem torrid, or naive, or prudish, but in their day they represented the entirety of available lesbian literature, at the expense of real women's lives which were, as Levitt suggests in her title, silenced.

Lynne Fernie's "The Spectacular Body" is technically captivating, two unframed canvases brushed with sepia to make a textured field on which two images are shone from a slide projector. The first picture, subtitled *The Lesbian Body in Public*, is the repeated image, as if cut from a filmstrip, of a white woman with spots and lines painted on her body. The second, *Eclipse*, is a single literal depiction of an eclipse. Fernie's piece revolves, I think, around the pun of speckles (as in the spotted woman), spectacles (as in an object being observed by a spectator), speculate (as the uninformed public inevitably does), and spectacular (from the title, and as women's bodies are to each other). The second panel, the eclipse (the sun shining from behind a darkened moon) represents the inversion of the projected image (as from the slide projectors) and represents the naming of identity from a self-referential perspective.

Grace Channer's work, black and white acrylic on canvas, is eerie and powerfully ex-

pressive. Alluding to the book of the same title, *But Some Of Us Are Brave*, it is a gathering of women, as if recalled from memories, or rediscovered photos of the family. It is as if to say, "This is me when I was four, I spent the summer with my grandmother, I remember seeing my father standing beside our tractor in a field!"

The first panel is youth: in the long grass of a field, a child stands in a dress with her hands shading her eyes, another child hides behind the skirt of a woman looking back onto the scene. An elder woman, a grandmother figure, stands in the field, and faintly in the distance is a man with a tractor. The second panel is adulthood: five women stand, one dancing, one bending down to reach something in the long grass, one scowling as she holds a basket, one holding the hands of an elder woman, and a fifth, the central figure of the whole painting, her forehead swept up and frighteningly distorted. Her steady eyes confront the viewer point blank. In the background, a woman stands before two militia men, her hand raised in the fist of struggle. The third panel is old age: an elder woman smokes a pipe with a child on her lap looking at three faraway women—perhaps two sisters and their mother—who stand in a street. In the distance are the shapes of houses and mountains. More than any other work in this show, Channer's piece locates the lesbian within the lineage of women in all stages of life and family.

"Some notes on ending" by Cyndra MacDowall is an eight-piece photo series, self portraits expressing variations on the theme of anguish, due, to presume from the title, to a painful break-up. Like Grace Channer's work, MacDowall's series is captivating for its emotional intensity and like Jude Johnson's "Untitled" for its self disclosure. It evokes a voyeuristic fascination in the viewer for the changes that emotion brings to facial expression, like the responses we have unconsciously to photos in the news, of people caught by disaster. The photographs play with the intangibility of the shadow, the darkened eclipsed self, the blur of hands in gesture, and the nakedness of the body as a vessel of grief.

"Untitled" by Jude Johnston uses text and photomurals to convey some observations about the connection between the sexual body and conclusions about reconciling differences between lovers. Johnston uses a word that has come into accepted use by lesbians as a description of our sexual organs: like dyke, cunt has outlived itself as a negative word and re-emerged as a positive one. "When I put my hand inside her cunt we discuss our sexual differences!" The panel on the left is a photograph, the backs of two women embracing on a couch. On the right and where the text is overlaid, is a typical street scene in Toronto, a man and a woman seen from behind. "When we see few reflections around us we are glad we have our networks."

Stephanie Martin, well known as a photographer (see *Fireweed*, Winter 1987) works with acrylic on canvas to confront racism and



"Frankly, Shirley" by Margaret Moores

sexual politics in two companion paintings, "Is It True What They Say About Coloured Pussy?" In the left hand panel, a woman on her back is seen from her breasts to mid-thigh. Running the length of the painting is a colour bar (colour bar is what racism used to be called), a technical key of colours used to make images, in film or television. The woman has white underpants on; across them Martin has written "What color is my cunt?" On the right hand panel the woman lies on her belly; a gesture of privacy, we see only her back. This time her underpants read "for cold girls only."

The colour bar has been replaced by a tone bar of black and brown tones. Martin has effectively used graphic representation and a sharp wit to convey a message about being a woman of colour in a dominantly white community.

Despite there being two or more pieces from each artist, I could have done with more work, either from the same artists or from other artists. That's the one complaint I would have of *Sight Specific*—like nouvelle cuisine, everything was delicious, tastefully presented, but there wasn't quite enough of it.

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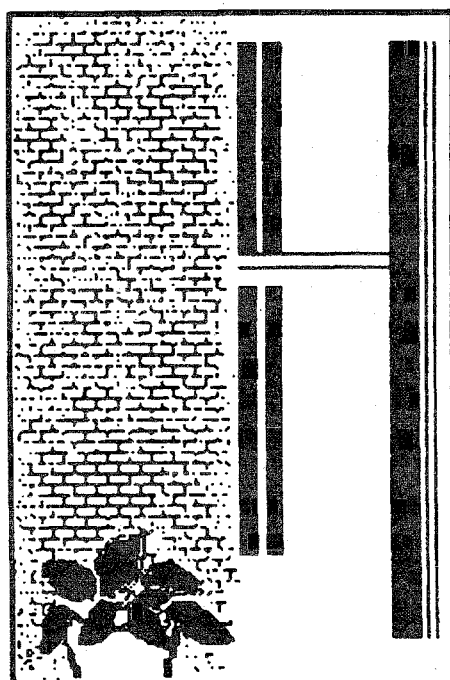
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Working in the Off Rhythm



Penn(y) Kemp

Penn(y) Kemp is an internationally respected Canadian poet who has a long artistic engagement with feminist issues. Her first book Bearing Down (published in 1972 under the name of Penny Chalmers) was inspired by her pregnancy and the birth of her daughter Amanda. In 1973 she edited IS 14, an anthology of women's writing for Coach House, and in 1978 she published the play Angel Makers, dramatic interactions between women waiting in a hospital ward to have abortions. She participated in the Women and Words conference in Vancouver in 1983 and last summer was poetry instructor at the West Word Two writers' retreat.

Because she has never tried to become a literary celebrity and her many books have been published by small presses, Penn(y) is not as well known as she deserves to be. I hope this conversation will prompt Broadside's readers to seek out her work.

Reviewed by Betsy Nuse

Betsy Nuse: How are you spending your time?
Penn(y) Kemp: Writing, giving workshops and performances, teaching in the schools. I have two teenagers! And I'm studying creativity at O.I.S.E. in Toronto, a course this term on feminist criticism.

BN: It seems like producing books is a very small fraction of your work.

PK: Small—but useful!

BN: Could you describe your two most recently published books for those who may not know them?

PK: *Some Talk Magic* is a dialogue between mother and children. I raised my kids on my own for seven years. They wanted to play with me and I wanted to write, so if they said something amazing I wrote it down. It was a way of recording my amazement at how a kid came to figure out meaning. I use that book extensively in public schools—not just performing it, but talking about how kids can learn to listen to the world around them, how language is a vehicle to sort out meaning, how we come into this world, what the world is all about. It's a useful heuristic device.

BN: Do kids approach the text differently than grown-ups?

PK: It's a tricky book to come across cold because it's got both my reflections and then straight dialogue from the kids. When I perform it, I perform it with different voices. I say to the kids at school workshops, "Of course, once you hear the poet you will always be able to read her poems because her voice is in the work, encapsulated on the page." The kids find that so. Once they have heard me performing—no matter how difficult a poem looks and

the teacher will not believe they can—they can read it.

With *Travelling Light*, I was proving to myself that I could write elaborate, elegant poems in a fairly traditional mode. They are quite shamanic on the one hand, but they're also family-oriented on the other. They were written during my last years on Toronto Island and in Northern Ontario. There are a lot of poems dealing with the natural process and seasonal rounds. The images are sometimes real and sometimes metaphoric for eternal process. I often use dreams in that book. The poems feel quite crafted. I get great pleasure out of the illustrations. That's an advantage of working with small presses: you can really have some control over the design of your book.

BN: You have published twelve books and had three plays produced. As well, you have edited anthologies and a little magazine. How have you managed to get the books published?

PK: People ask me to, basically. Or publishers have been friends and I've said, "Do you want to look at something?" But publishing is a problem. I was looking today at manuscripts that hadn't come out. One is an anti-nuclear piece called *C'loud*. It began as part of Peace Write, from a piece that Women and Words sent to John Turner. Anne Anglin and I performed it in a number of places. I continue it in the schools. But the piece is not published and it's two years old. When I was writing it, it was really new to look at what effect living with the nuclear bomb had had on our psyches. But now that's really old hat. We've looked at despair and we've come through the other side—or we've forgotten it again. I wrote the book, but to what avail? However, I'm still using it in schools, and having students write their experiences.

It's the same with the book I just finished in December. It is basically a collation of all the goddess poems I've ever written plus a whole lot of very strange new poems. There are poems using the sound "Hera" or "Hym" and just playing. It is called *Wise Cracks in Spirit Trees*, playing on the pun "inspiritrice." I invented a place in the body called the lunar plexus, totally different from the solar plexus. They're wonderful poems—but they should be out there!

BN: Those poems that play with words and sounds are fun to read. They also sound wonderful on the tapes of readings and performances you've made. How do you write them?

PK: If I sit down to write a poem or if I hear a poem in my head, I just follow the language along and find out where it leads. It's a lovely way of connecting with the unconscious. I call them "3 a.m. poems" because I wake up sometimes with a phrase ringing fairly obsessively in my head. If I write down the phrase that's given, then another phrase appears. I'm attuned to listening.

BN: Did it take you a while to learn to trust that method of composition?

PK: Oh yes! I thought it was crazy, but when I used to write collaborations, we allowed ourselves to follow associations and images as they surfaced. Now I work with kids a lot to let them do the same. It's so boring to write what you know! You want to write into what you don't know. It's very scary, but really the most interesting way.

BN: It seems to me that a number of feminist poets are interested in language, but you are interested in sound—in a sense going back even before language. Some of your poems that build by increment play with sound before they even play with words.

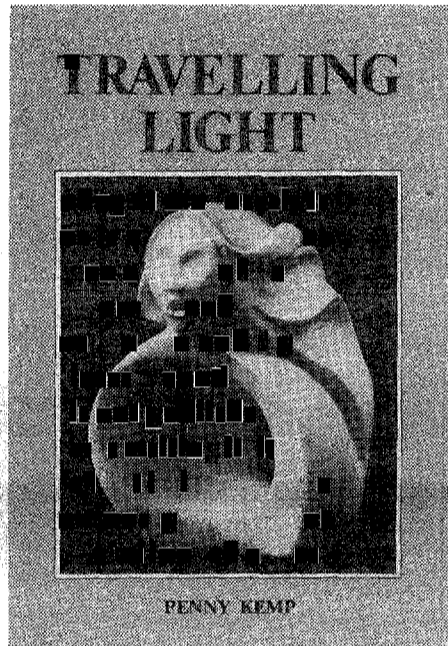
PK: I really feel that worlds have been created through sound, through sounding. So I've been exploring the power of sound and of the voice, as principles embodied. The primal sound "Ah" for example, from the heart. Finding the note for things is very important to me: finding one's own note, working in a group to find the group note, playing notes back and forth and changing one's notes, then finding the note for different things.

BN: You sound like a musician.

PK: I was trained in classical piano, but I'm certainly not a musician. In fact I practised dutifully for six years an hour a day at least, sometimes an hour and a half. I would play with great feeling, but I could never get the timing as the nuns heard it. Finally a sitar player recognized what I was doing. I was working contrapuntally—in the off rhythm—all the time. It's just the way I hear.

BN: So our western formalistic concept of music cut you off from the world of sound for a long time.

PK: Yes. But now, it's my own time I'm working with when I'm performing. I've been known to work with jazz musicians and sweep them along in the pattern that I set. I'm thinking of a performance with Karl Berger at Findhorn.



BN: Do you often read or perform with other artists?

PK: Yes—it's a way of being with my friends. I love performing with Anne Anglin. She adds body and movement to my work; that's something I didn't imagine I could do on stage that I've learned through her. We took *Trance-form* and made it into a movement piece for both of us. She directed *Eros Rising*, and she worked with me on *C'loud*. She's been my greatest collaborator. But I've worked with musicians, other poets—anything to keep the juices running!

BN: Can we come back to goddesses? They've been important in your work for some time.

PK: My source is "the goddess"—the energy of woman. But I'm discontented with the word, since it's just a feminization of "god." The word "Elohim" is more what I would like. "Elohim" is a Hebrew word. There are two creators in Genesis, Elohim and Yahweh. The Elohim are feminine plural.

BN: You've been giving metaphysical workshops recently. How did you become interested in doing that?

PK: I don't distinguish between a workshop or ritual or a poem on the page. Obviously the focus is different, but the primary matter—the "prima mater," in an alchemical sense the vessel, the source—is the same.

BN: How did they begin?

PK: A woman was at a performance I gave of *C'loud*. She knew of my interest in this material and said, "Where can I find out more about this?" So I said, "Arrange a workshop and I'll do it." She did, and I've kept on doing them!

BN: What sort of shape do they take?

PK: Well, all my conscious life I've lived the seasonal round. I've been very aware of the Earth as a living being. I do like to see our individual lives in the larger perspective of the seasons, of loss and growth and renewal. The seasons can be used to enhance our personal energy process if we work with the energy of the time. For example, the equinox is the balance point between light and dark. You're on the edge of skin between internal workings and being out in the world. Summer means being out in the world—politically or gardening—whichever way. I live my life as an Earth being, as a bit of consciousness or a cell of the Earth. My deepest belief—and what I've found in nature and in the landscape—is we enact these ancient rituals of the seasonal round anyway. By lending our consciousness, we allow the Earth to become conscious through us, as we become conscious of her. That's the basic process that I teach in these workshops: how to attune yourself to the Earth, both for you to become as large as the Earth and for the Earth to become conscious through you. We are a thinking part of Earth.

BN: Do people write as part of the experience?

PK: Yes—often—or draw or paint or make something. There's always some way of bringing the experience into the world. It seems important to anchor the image, to give it form. That's why I'm so keen on publishing and writing: it gives our "exceptional" experiences form, making them congruent with our normal consensus reality.

BN: So the key concepts of your workshops are not at all separate from the issues you explore in your own writing.

PK: Of course not! Every one of my books has been written from different aspects of a woman's consciousness, exploring spirit, birth relationships, death. I'm deeply committed to writing a language as I hear it, to writing as woman. The last two years I've been focussing in my own work on journal writing, finding form for the daily stories and their interconnections. I'm hoping that my studies at O.I.S.E. will provide a framework that will allow other people to enter this work and find it useful.

(Penn(y) Kemp's books are available for sale at the Toronto Women's Bookstore, Writers and Co., Letters, and The Bob Miller Bookroom. In 1987 she expects two new books out: What The Ear Hears Last from Red Kite Press and Eidolons from White Pine Press. Angel Makers will be performed at the Grand Theatre in London, Ontario in June 1987. For more information about workshops and readings and a list of tapes available for sale, send a S.A.S.E. to Penn Kemp, 44 Brookmount Road, Toronto, Ontario, M4L 3N2. She offers Creative Retreat weekends on equinoxes, solstices and Earth quarter days.)

Betsy Nuse is a Toronto feminist and regular contributor to Broadside.


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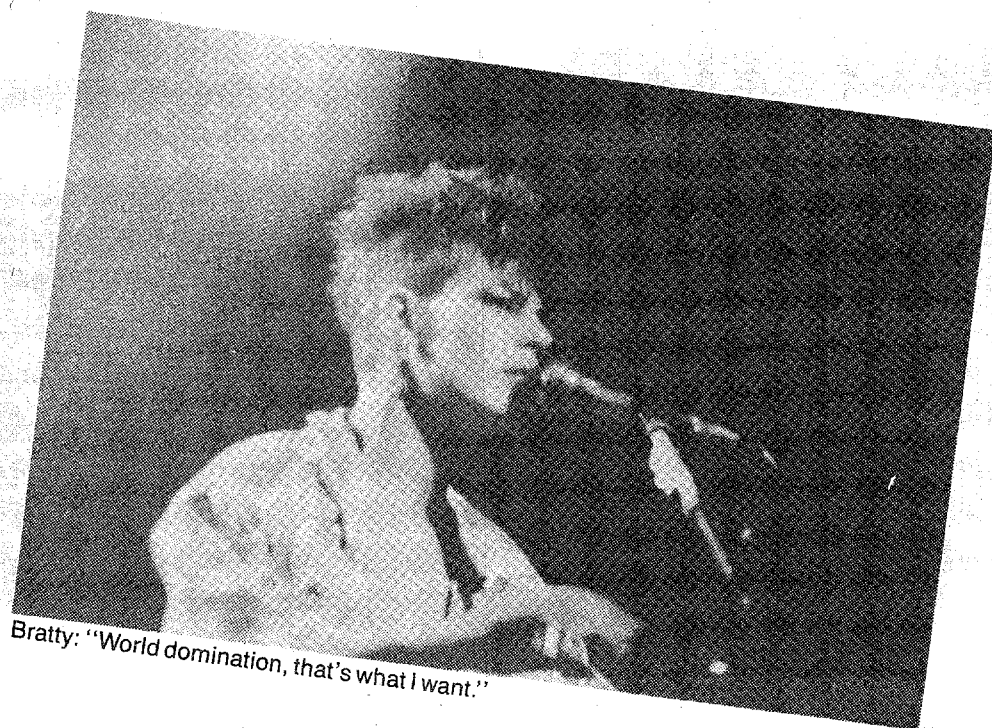
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Bratty: "World domination, that's what I want."

by Cassandra Nicolaou

It's a Tuesday night at the BamBou club in Toronto and the dancefloor is jammed with hot, sweaty bodies. The song ends and the bodies slow down, but nobody moves off the floor, nobody is willing to give up their space. They're waiting for the next song. And the next. And the next. It's after 1 o'clock when Beverly Bratty, leader of Bratty and the Babysitters finally pauses and asks, "Don't any of you have to get up and go to work tomorrow? Are you guys crazy?" Then she grins and laughs. The crowd laughs too, but only until she begins the next song. Then, of course, they dance.

Bratty and the Babysitters have been packing Toronto dance floors for the past two years. The November 1986 release of an EP, *In A State*, has carried their sound into the basements and bedrooms of the suburbs. And the airing of their new video for the single "Casual" will put them on nation-wide TV. It quickly becomes apparent, however, that these achievements are a small part of Beverly Bratty's master plan.

"World domination... total international exposure everywhere. That's what I want," the Montreal native calmly explains. And yet her confidence rings true. It has been a short time since Bratty quit a successful eight-year career in marketing to become a musician. Three years ago she began to write songs and audition for bands, only to experience continual and constant rejection. Out of desperation, she decided to put together a solo act.

"I began playing my guitar, everywhere I could. For free, it didn't matter; for a beer, it didn't matter. My first job was in a Legion Hall, singing country and western. It was hilarious. I used to have to do five sets a night and they'd get upset because I didn't drink enough beer. They'd give me tons and tons of beer to say thank you and I couldn't drink it, so they'd get offended."

Audiences are no longer offended. Whether playing solo or with her band, Bratty performs with an energy and honest delight that is captivating to watch. She has the unique ability to amuse, entice, outrage and enlighten an audience all within the confines of one song. Her striking androgynous appearance and her unabashed and exaggerated expression of emotion are partly responsible for this reaction. However, it is Bratty's skill as a songwriter that sparks amusement and controversy.

"I have a song called 'My IUD Rejected Me.' Now, that's a popular song in the feminist camp, because they can really relate to what I'm saying, that there are these horrible things that happen to women. The IUD thing doesn't get much press anymore, but I have a lot of friends that got so maimed I was motivated by anger to write this song."

"But I'm not a political activist. I have pretty strong opinions and I put them across in my songs. If that opinion happens to be over some kind of heated political issue then I write about that. However, if it's not about a political issue, I still write and perform the song with the same conviction."

"I have opinions about modern living. That's where 'Condo Dogs' came from. I also have opinions about when you meet someone and you're so turned on you can't stand it, and that's where 'In A State' came from. Or you meet someone and maybe you're already involved with somebody else and so you can't really get involved. That's where 'Casual' came from."

With songs like "Nuclear Free," "Sit Down

Shut Up" and "The Ugliest Girl in Town," Bratty deals with serious issues in a humorous manner. This approach is augmented by her upbeat, hummable melodies, creating a sound that is very accessible. Proof of this is her recent opening gig for comedian Sandra Bernhard at The Diamond in Toronto. The crowd of 700, most of whom had never heard of Beverly Bratty, were left cheering for more. And the audience at her Cameron House show is as diverse as her music. Bratty has been doing matinee solos there every Friday for over a year, playing an eclectic variety of material that includes old Patsy Cline tunes, the Beatles and her own songs.

The release of *In A State* has helped Bratty and the Babysitters to gain access to an even larger audience, one they would not necessarily reach through the Toronto club scene. The 5-track EP provides a sample of the band's sound, which has been inadequately described as pop/calypso/funk/rock. Produced by John Switzer and Jeff Wolpert, the album show-

Be-Bop-a-Bratty

cases the versatility of the Babysitters, many of whom work with other Toronto musicians, most notably, Jane Siberry. *In A State* was produced independently, with funds that Bratty raised herself. "I had to beg, borrow and beg, and then beg some more to put it together. It was very difficult at times."

The EP is excellent, but nothing can capture the excitement of the band's live show. The Babysitters mirror and magnify the confidence and obvious joy with which their leader performs. The close-knit ensemble is comprised of Colleen Allen on saxophone and support vocals, Al Cross on drums, Evelyn Datl on keyboards, Bryant Didier on bass, Ken Myhr on guitar, and Gina Stepaniuk on support vocals and percussion. Unlike many other groups, it is clear that these people are having fun. There is a very strong chemistry within the band; they touch a lot and they laugh a lot. Yet surprisingly enough, the audience does not feel excluded. The onstage camaraderie is infectious and the crowd soon joins in, dancing and laughing along.

"I want the band to be very open and giving and trusting with the audience. Sharing something with an audience is important. And the bottom line for me is that I want to take you through a lot of different moods and spaces, with the band or solo, but at the end when it's over, I want you to feel good somewhere."

Bratty's solo show is very different from her band performances, in terms of content and mood, but both definitely do leave the audience feeling good. She believes that exploring the sensual, sexual side of the music has a lot to do with it. "I like providing people with a little bit of fantasy. I certainly like it that everyone in the band can express their sexual side and that it comes across to the audience. I think when people feel sexy they feel pretty good. The audience gets that, and they feel pretty sexy too. There's definitely a big turn-on connecting with your audience."

It isn't often that the Babysitters don't connect. The band alternately heightens and softens Bratty's presence, both vocally and visually. Bratty's unusual and powerful voice, which has been compared to everyone from Joan

Armatrading to David Bowie, can be smooth and soft. However, she often chooses to use it to accentuate, rather than blend with, the melody. Bratty bellows about rejection and screeches about lust. Her face contorts, her eyes roll and she gnashes her teeth, all in a kind of self-mockery of her own heartbreak or agony. By comparison, Stepaniuk and Allen are almost complacent as they sway and shake to a calypso rhythm or a rock-edged beat.

It remains to be seen whether Bratty and the Babysitters will break out of the Toronto club circuit. With the release of the "Casual" video some time in April, the EP should get some of the airplay it deserves. Bratty intends to use both products as a promotional package and is looking ultimately to sign with a record label. She is, however, quick to dispel any quaims about "going commercial" and giving up creative control. "As an artist, I've always been an independent. I do all the publicity. I do all the management stuff, and I book all the gigs. I do all the artistic stuff, I write the music, I look after the band, I lead it. I look after hiring the crew and the stage managing and everything. It has really stretched me as a person. And it has all been out of necessity."

"At this point, it's going to be very difficult for a management company or a record company to take advantage of me and take me and turn me into something not nice. I know too much now, about how things are done and how they work."

"But in the music industry, you have to be prepared to become a product. Now, just because I'm a product, is not a negative statement. I feel that it can be, but I am so strong in my conviction of the reason why I'm doing this, that even if it's sold as a product, as long as it reaches people, that's all that counts. I want somebody in Cleveland, walking down the street, to be humming one of my songs and feeling happy. Thinking about their lover or something and humming a Bratty and the Babysitters song, well that is what it's all about."

Cassandra Nicolaou is an English student at the University of Waterloo with an interest in music and film.

Working People's Popular Appeal

by Laurie Bell

My friend Deb flew in from South Indian Lake, a Cree and Métis community in Northern Manitoba, to take part in the week's festivities for International Women's Day. I told her we were immediately kicking off the week by going to the Working People's Picture Show.

"Is it a play?" No, not exactly. "Is it a concert?" No, not exactly. "Is it an educational?" No, not exactly. "What is it then?" It's popular theatre. "I don't think we have that in South Indian Lake."

The Working People's Picture Show, produced by Toronto's Company of Sirens, is everything popular theatre should be. It combines humour, music, drama and poetry. It is both historical and prophetic. It brings before a community the experience of the community, reminding us of our past and prodding us to consider the future.

The Working People's Picture Show chronicles the history of women working and raises current issues about women and work. The theatrical approach is as threatening as the softshoe yet as poignant as a fine poem.

The Toronto performance on March 1, co-sponsored by the Canadian Action for Nicaragua and the March 8 Coalition, was like welcoming the hometown band home. The Working People's Picture Show began two years ago as a ten minute piece prepared for the tenth anniversary of Organized Working Women. It has developed into a full show, largely due to the collective writing and design of performers and members of the Company of Sirens. With the assistance of an Ontario Arts Council touring grant, the Working People's Picture Show has been playing to audiences in Windsor, Thunder Bay, North Bay and Sudbury; to union members, students; and for International Women's Day they were welcomed home.

The material is extremely accessible and the company is highly versatile, tailoring each performance to the audience. The Working People's Picture Show introduces us to a number of characters, including Professor Chauvinist, Plain Jane, Hannah the Housewife and Sarah XJ2, the secretary of the future. They take us

through industrialization, World War II, the Baby Boom, into the computer age and beyond. They sing, dance and dramatize the reality of many different women's lives; the double work day, racism, sexual harassment, health issues and imperialism. This performance incorporated a dramatic presentation of poetry by Nicaragua's Daisy Zamora and music by Tinku.

Some of the sketches, like *The Revolving Door*, where a woman is subjected to the humiliation of the inefficient social assistance bureaucracy, stab at the systems actively oppressing women. Others, as in *How are you Feeling?*, a look at women and therapy, point out our own foibles and let us laugh freely at them. The portrayal of a Jamaican woman working as a domestic and a Black woman doing 9 to 5 with a nervous white woman depict with biting clarity the layers of racism the women's movement is compelled to address.

Popular theatre, as demonstrated by The Working People's Picture Show, is a persuasive educational medium; it is so engaging that you hardly know you are being educated. And for those who spend a good deal of their time knee-deep in the struggle, it is a refreshing celebration of our rich tradition of organizing and resistance.

This summer, the Working People's Picture Show will represent Toronto at the Canadian Popular Theatre Conference on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Then it's on to a busy fall tour schedule. If you get a chance to see the show while it's on the road, do it. You will feel right at home.

Oh, and my friend Deb thinks popular theatre would be a big hit in South Indian Lake. Whatever it is.

Laurie Bell is a feminist, folksinger, organizer and member of the March 8 Coalition.



WPPS: from left, top: Cynthia Grant, Diana Braithwaite, Amanda Hale, Catherine Glen; bottom: Makka Kleist, Aide Jordão, Diane Sokolowski

DONNA MARCHAND

Filmeos and Feminism

by Margaret Gail Osachoff

Cathy Jones is a national treasure. Her *Wedding in Texas and other stories* played to packed houses in Toronto for several weeks in February and March, and it's not likely Theatre Passe Muraille has had any more exuberant audiences this winter.

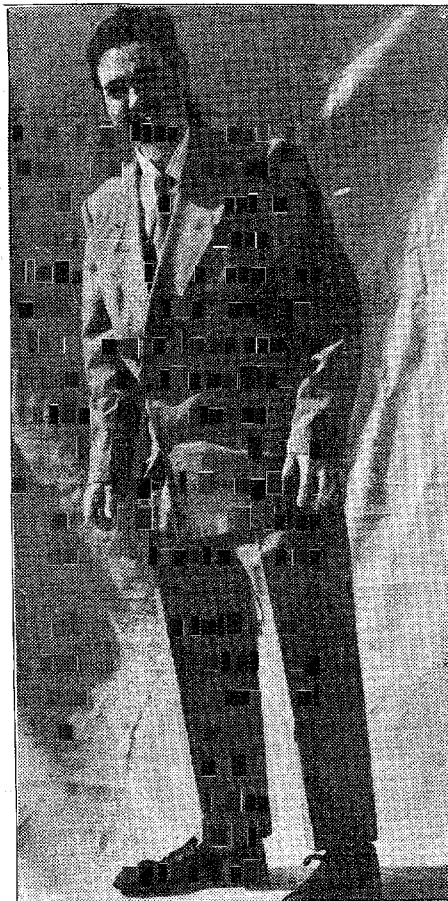
Jones's programme consists of half a dozen character sketches in the first half, followed by *Wedding in Texas* in the second half. She herself is the "some sort of integrating force" of the show. With a quick change of costume and a few props, Jones becomes a new character with a distinctive voice and manner. Some of these characters have been with her for many years while some are new; through them she is able to explore the conflict in relationships between men and women and between women and men.

Hailing from Sicily-Greece-Peru, Amanita Muscaria, one of the "veteran" characters, is a parody of "exotic" singers, such as Nana Mouskouri, who reveal far too many embarrassingly intimate secrets in an awkward at-

tempt at in-between-songs patter. Muscaria seems to know only one song, "You're my Pyjamas," which must have the worst and funniest lyrics of any love song anywhere.

Although Jones thinks that Drusea Ice Cream Morningstar Farm River, the back-to-the-earth flower child from a previous era, is outdated and should be dropped, the audience recognizes with laughter the "importance" of brown eggs from range-fed hens and the references that lie behind knitting with yoghurt and reading one's fortune with french fries (without gravy) rather than with tarot cards or tea leaves.

Another hit is Vave Gladney, the talk-show host of "Fudgeos and Feminism." Not strong on theory, fortunately, Vave is full of practical advice for women: "Don't pick up men. They're too heavy. You'll put your back out." And one-liners: complaining about her ex-husband, Vave says that he was "one of those people who think sex is like doing the dishes; if he did it badly enough, he wouldn't be asked to do it again."



Cathy Jones as Burford "Love" Murphy

Less funny are the "Rod don't love Cheryl" and the Burford "Love" Murphy sequences. In the former, the husband is physically violent toward the wife. Cathy Jones effectively plays both parts, the assaulter and his victim, with no comment necessary. In the latter, Murphy's nickname must be ironic since he mistakes passing sexual attraction for love. Jones captures his sleaziness and bad faith perfectly in his song, "I Love my Wife." The laughter in

these two sketches is perilously close to pain and tears.

It is understandable that Jones wants to try something new in turning away from her cavalcade of individual unconnected character sketches and in giving herself the scope of a more complex character, Lindy Anna Jones, who exists within a narrative. That narrative contains a small horde of supporting actors who appear in her "filmeos," the Newfoundland version of videos. However understandable and laudable Jones's desire is to create something different, the attempt is not always successful.

In fact, for me *Wedding in Texas* was most successful when it was least "ambitious" and most down-to-earth as in Lindy Anna's conversations with her dog and with her mother. Although invisible, yappy Jakey is incredibly real; and anyone who is a mother or has a mother will know that a disembodied "mouth" full of advice (as represented by the "talking" fingers of Jones's hand) is the essence of motherhood.

Of all the filmeos, I liked "Outport Lesbian" the best because it is the funniest in its parody of television rock videos. And that brings up the question of tone. Perhaps when *Wedding in Texas* is made into a film, independent of Jones as a performer on stage and separate from her series of satiric characters, an audience will be able to appreciate it on its own merits. As it is, the audience seemed to want to see only the humour and not the sadness. In terms of narrative development, I lost interest in the story once Lindy Anna dies in a highway accident. I wanted her to arrive in Texas and confront her former lesbian lover and resolve the situation one way or another. This way, my mind was busy trying to figure out how the special light-and-explosion effects were created on stage, whereas the focus should have always been on the human level where Jones's strength lies.

Margaret Gail Osachoff teaches Canadian literature and Canadian drama in Saskatoon.

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BROADSIDE

APRIL 1987

Compiled by Catherine Maunsell



• **Saturday, April 4:** "Reclaiming Our Power—Correcting the Political and the Spiritual," an evening of talk, reading and ritual with Starhawk, author of *Dreaming the Dark*. Debates Room, Hart House, U of T. 8 pm. \$10 (\$8 seniors/unemployed) at Toronto Women's Bookstore.



• **Saturday, April 4:** Rita MacNeil in concert. Convocation Hall, U of T. 8 pm. \$13/\$15. Reserved tickets BASS and Toronto Women's Bookstore. Info: 872-2277.

• **Monday, April 6:** The Centre for Women's Studies in Education at OISE presents Mary Nyquist: "Protesting Too Much: Women, Language and Feminist Disclosure," one of the Popular Feminism Lectures. OISE, 252 Bloor St. West. Room 2-212. 8 pm Free. Info: 923-6641, ext. 2204.

• **Tuesday, April 7:** The Company of Sirens presents "Sex-Réalité" with Lyn Carter, Amanda Hale, Shawna Dempsey, Rita Kohli, Patricia Winter, Lina Chartrand and Cynthia Grant. OHM Place, 187 Harbord. \$6 (\$5 advance at Toronto Women's Bookstore). 9 pm. (Sunday, 2:30 pm. PWYC.) Info: 461-6101. **To Sunday, April 12.**

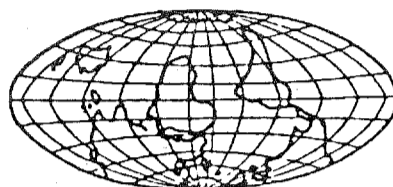
• **Wednesday, April 8:** WEN-DO, Women's Self-Defence classes, start in the Parliament and Gerrard area. Call for other April starting dates and times. Info: 593-0171, 925-4363 or 431-1138.



• **Wednesday, April 8:** "Women in Labour History," a free course offered jointly by Humber College and the Centre for Labour Studies, OPSEU. The course gives knowledge of women's labour history, links historical struggles to present-day issues, helps advance current women's issues and develops research and writing skills. OPSEU, 56 Wellesley St. West, Room 300. 7-10 pm. Info: Jill Jones, 465-5995 (h) or 968-3422 (w). **To Wednesday, June 10.**

• **Thursday, April 9:** Child Sexual Abuse—Are We Coping? A panel with Mary Lou Fassel, Lorna Grant and Laurine Jarvis, and moderator Lois Sweet. Co-sponsored by Aftermath. Centre-Stage Forum. 8 pm. Hydro Building, 2nd floor auditorium, 700 University Ave. (at College). Info: CentreStage, 362-7041 or Aftermath, 535-0537.

• **Tuesday, April 14:** The Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) encourages women to get involved in the fight to win full reproductive freedom. Open meeting. 7:30 pm. Trinity-St. Paul's, 427 Bloor St. West. Info: OCAC, 532-8193. Also **Tuesday, April 28.**



• **Wednesday, April 22:** "Women and Shelter—More Than just a Roof," a forum to mark World YWCA Day and its theme "Shelter for Women," with Cassie Doyle, Joanne Campbell, Barbara Gibaut and Barbara Thornber. 80 Woodlawn Ave. East. 7 pm. (6 pm. Light supper for cash donation.) Info: 961-8100.

• **Thursday, April 23:** Building Unity in the Women's Movement, a forum sponsored by International Women's Day Committee. Speakers TBA. 7 pm. Gladstone Public Library, 1101 Bloor St. West. Wheelchair accessible. Info: Lynn, 531-6391.

• **Thursday, April 23:** "Challenging Our Perceptions: Women in the Criminal Justice System" a forum presented by the Elizabeth Fry Society with speakers Darlene Lawson, Christie Jefferson, Banakonda Kenney-Kish, Donna Hackett, Kathy Misener and Susan Cole. North Auditorium, OISE, 252 Bloor St. West. 7:30 pm. Refreshments. Free. Info: 924-3708.

• **Friday, April 24:** Women's Independent Thoughtz (WITZ). A discussion/seminar group for the exchange of ideas and creative endeavours in art, literature, philosophy and political thought. Topic: Feminism in China. A discussion of contemporary feminist issues in China, with spokeswoman Zhang Yali from the All-China Women's Federation. 7 pm. Info: 536-3162.

• **Saturday, April 25:** Womylnly Way presents Lucie Blue Tremblay. Trinity-St. Paul's Centre. 427 Bloor St. West. 8 pm. Tickets Toronto Women's Bookstore. Info: 925-6568 (voice/TDD).

• **Wednesday, April 29:** Broadside and the NFB Women's Studio present "Firewords," a feature documentary film on three Québec feminist writers; Nicole Brossard, Jovette Marchessault and Louky Bersianik. Filmmaker Dorothy Hénaut will be present. 8 pm. Premier Dance Theatre, Harbourfront. Admission free. Info: 598-3513.

• **Wednesday, April 29:** Group reading of prose and poetry. Jeanette Armstrong, Afua Cooper, Nila Gupta, Lillian Allen. 8 pm. Sylvester's Café, 16 Bancroft Ave. (2 blocks south of Harbord, east of Spadina). Sponsored by the Toronto Women's Bookstore and the Canada Council. Info: 922-8744. (If signer needed, call 1 week in advance.)

WEEKLY

Sunday: Lesbians of Colour (LOC), a social and support group for Native, Asian, South Asian, Black and Latin lesbians regardless of age meets every 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month. 519 Church St. Community Centre. 3:45-5:30 pm. Info: Michele, 588-2930. (Out of town lesbians of colour can write for information: LOC, PO Box 6597, Station A, Toronto, M5W 1K4.)

Monday: The Women's Group, an open lesbian discussion group, meets at 519 Church St. 8 pm. Info: 392-6874.

Monday to Friday: "By All Means," a noon-time Women's radio magazine show. Every day at 12:15 on CIUT-FM, 89.5. Interview, reviews, commentary and chit chat. Tune in! Info: (416) 595-0909.

Tuesday: International Women's Day Committee (IWDC), a socialist feminist activist group, meets on alternate Tuesdays. Info: Nancy, 531-6608.

Tuesday and Thursday: The Women's Information Line is open from 7-9 pm. Messages may be left any time, at 598-3714.

Tuesday and Thursday: The Lesbian Phone Line is open for calls from women. 7:30-10:30 pm. 533-6120.

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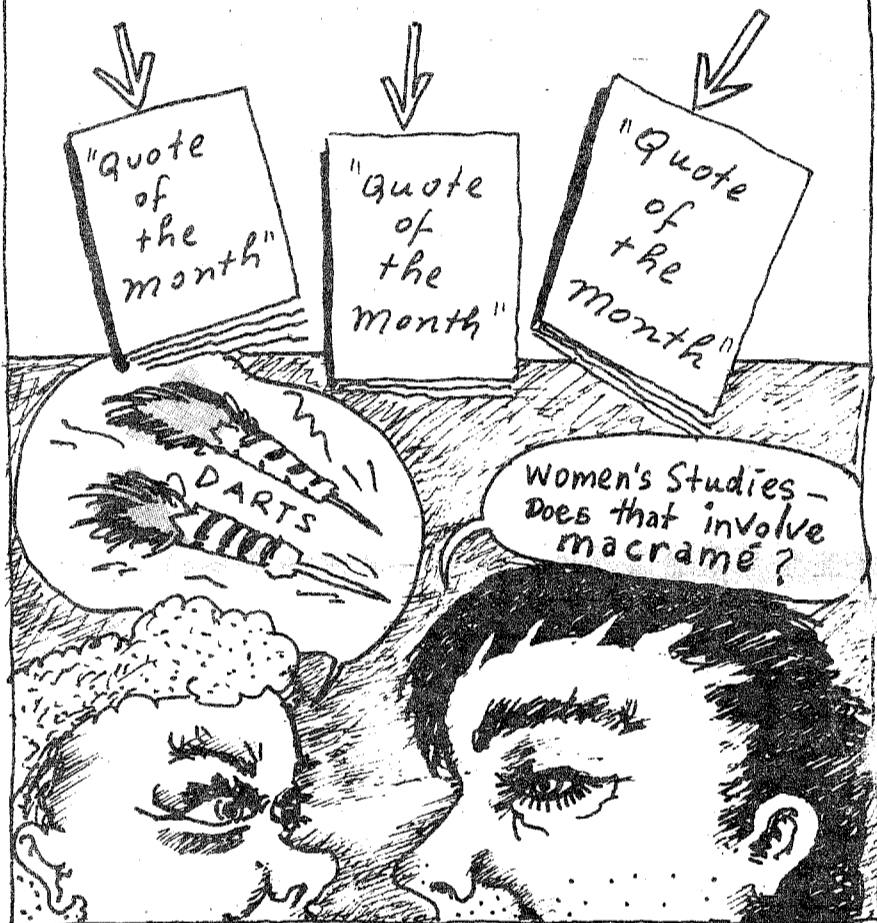


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GUADALAJARA—Canadian lesbians with large home on lake near Guadalajara invite other lesbians to visit us while in Mexico or just come and visit us. We would enjoy the company of good women. Correspondence welcome. APDO #111, Ajijic, Mexico, Jalisco 45920.

CHRISTOS METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH invites you to attend the installation service of its new pastor, The Reverend Sue Mabey, April 12 at 7 pm. St. Luke's United Church (S/E corner of Carlton & Sherbourne Sts, entrance via Carlton St. door). (416) 968-7423.

COTTAGE FOR RENT: Four Seasons—one bedroom, secluded cottage on Haliburton lake. Reasonable. Call Mary, (705) 754-2469.

BISEXUAL WOMEN'S GROUP—Bykes—meets monthly. Interested women leave a message at (416) 863-1597 or call (416) 961-1335.

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FEMINIST PSYCHOTHERAPIST has openings for women seeking counselling/psychotherapy. Lisa Coy, (416) 465-6563.

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