



priorities

THE FEMINIST VOICE IN A SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 4

PRICE: \$2.50

DECEMBER 1997

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THINKING GLOBALLY

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— Asha has two mums, but Surrey school trustees don't want to hear about it.

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PHOTO: KAREN KILBRIDE

An estimated 5,000 people were part of a Walk for Global Justice through the streets of Vancouver on Sunday, Nov. 23, 1997

Women educating women on human rights issues

by Jean Birch

Along with 400 women from all over the world, I spent November 17 and 18 at the Second International women's conference against APEC at Vancouver's Plaza of Nations. The underlying purpose of this conference was education — educating the workers in the sweatshops of the world of their basic human rights and their rights to organize — educating the public of atrocities in countries where human rights violations are an everyday occurrence — educating the world about the increase in child labour. This was also an opportunity to hear first hand about the international implications of trade agreements such as APEC, FTAA, NAFTA, MAI, GATT, and the list goes on.

The importance of education on these issues really hit home when I returned to my job as a Quesnel hospital worker the day after the conference ended. Discussion around the coffee table turned to the possibility of a WalMart store being built in Prince George, our closest large city. I commented that we shouldn't want a WalMart as their goods come from child labour sweatshops. I was horrified when a female co-worker (non-union), who I had previously considered a compassionate human being, said, "I don't care about that. If I don't have to see it, it doesn't bother me, I just want cheap clothes." I thought immediately of the single mother living in poverty who sobbed into the microphone the first day

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priorities is published by the standing committee on women's rights of the British Columbia New Democratic Party.

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the standing committee on women's rights of the British Columbia New Democratic Party.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Individual: \$10.00 per year
Institution: \$15.00 per year

ISSN 0700-6543

priorities welcomes letters and articles from its readers. All submissions must be signed, although publication of names may be withheld on request. The editor reserves the right to edit all copy received in the interest of brevity, clarity, and taste. Submissions can be typed or handwritten on a paper bag — it doesn't matter, just send stuff in!

Submissions and subscriptions should be mailed to:

priorities
c/o B.C. NDP
3110 Boundary Road
Burnaby, B. C. V5M 4A2

"The issues and demands raised by the women's liberation movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist movement. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the women's liberation movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."

— NDP Policy on Women's Rights

The editor is responsible for the content of all unsigned material.

Editor: Nancy Weaver

Designed and produced by Angela Kenyon

Printed in Canada in a union shop.



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THE FEMINIST VOICE IN A SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

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Remembering Gillian ...

by Merrilee Robson

Gillian MacDonald, who passed away Nov. 18, 1997 after a courageous battle with breast cancer, will be remembered as a tireless worker for the NDP and for the wisdom and gentle sense of humour she brought to her work. She was a fighter, with a strong vision for social justice, but I always remember her with a smile on her face.

Gillian's work for the party was awe-inspiring. She was president of both the provincial constituency association of Cariboo South and the federal riding of Cariboo Chilcotin, as well as a regional representative to the Provincial Executive and vice-chair of the Women's Rights Committee. She was a federal candidate in the 1993 election and was preparing to run again last year when her cancer recurred. She was so dedicated to her work with the NDP that she timed her hospital chemotherapy around her meeting schedule.

She was a member of the City of Williams Lake Committee on Air Quality and vice-president of the Williams Lake Environmental Society. She was active in the Girl Guides for many years, both in England and in Canada.

Gillian was born November 19, 1946 in Sudbury, England and emigrated to Canada with her parents in 1964. She married Brian McDonald in 1966 and the family moved from Victoria to Williams Lake in 1972.

As a business person, Gillian was as hard-working as she was in her political and volunteer commitments. She ran a home-based sewing business, and became the top Tupperware representative in the province. For 19 years, she and her husband Brian operated Lo's Florist in Williams Lake.

Premier Glen Clark remembered Gillian as "a dedicated British Columbian who will long be remembered for her generous spirit and her active involvement in the community."

"Gillian was a dedicated New Democrat who fought all her life for social justice and



Gillian MacDonald (r) with WRC Chair Kristina Vandervoort (l) and B.C. Minister of Women's Equality, Sue Hammell.

especially for the rights of women," said Minister of Women's Equality Sue Hammell. "In life, she was a beacon for us, and in our memories she will remain the bright, smiling sister who shared our struggle." WRC Chair Kristina Vandervoort said she relied extensively on Gillian's guidance in the committee's work and feels privileged to have known this remarkable woman. "Our sister Gillian displayed a quiet and gentle strength as a tireless advocate on behalf of women."

Gillian was campaign manager for Forest Minister David Zirnhelt in the last election.

Zirnhelt, who gave the eulogy at Gillian's memorial service, said, "Without Gillian, I could never have been re-elected here for a third time. But she didn't just turn her hand to the big jobs. She has organized everything from leaders' visits to bake sales and garage sales."

Rick Barnes was Gillian's campaign manager in the 1993 federal election. "She always took on a lot," said Barnes. "And she always finished what she took on."

Gillian is survived by her husband Brian, her daughter Paula and sons Kerry and Wade. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her. But, perhaps her greatest tribute is the number of people who laugh when they remember a particular time spent with Gillian. Rick Barnes tells of the time a group of people from Cariboo South attended the opening of the Legislature after the NDP was elected in 1991. A group of them were heading out for dinner when they found themselves driving the wrong way down a one-way street. They were a bit concerned about this until Gillian said, "It doesn't matter, we're government now!"

That's what we'll remember about Gillian. That she cared about a lot of things and was willing to fight for justice. But she always made it fun.

She brought brightness into our lives, and left the world a better place.

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Human rights catastrophe in Afghanistan

Dear priorities,

I am writing to bring attention to a situation that I feel has been given too little attention in the western media. Since seizing power in Afghanistan's capital Kabul a year ago, the faction known as the Taliban has created a human rights catastrophe in that country. Immediately upon gaining control the Taliban issued edicts that have changed the lives of the citizens dramatically. While men are subjected to rules that forbid laughing, singing, clapping and playing or listening to music as well as being required to grow a full beard, the laws applying to women make their lives unbearable and often result in physical abuse and death.

Women are no longer allowed to work for wages, must completely cover themselves before going outdoors and must be accompanied by a close male relative when not in their homes (which, by the way, must have the windows painted black.)

Violations of the dress code are met with severe beatings and possibly death by stoning. Women's lives are further put in danger because of laws that forbid a woman from being treated by a male doctor. With a shortage of women doctors, a life-threatening condition often results in death because of lack of treatment. Women are also forbidden to attend training sessions that teach the identification and safe handling of landmines and artillery shells which are commonplace in a country that has been at war for years. In fact, women get no education of any kind, since all but male-only

schools have been shut down.

Unfortunately, protesting such conditions is not easy for the women of Kabul. When recently

conducting a peaceful demonstration against the restrictive laws, the leader of the group was burned alive in the street by the Taliban. The protests have to come from outside of Afghanistan. It is disturbing to note that this has not been the case. The governments of other countries are aware of the problem as is the United Nations, yet very little has been said. Both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are said to support the Taliban and an American transnational oil company is eager to build a pipeline from Turkmenistan in the former Soviet Union to Pakistan, and they see the Taliban as being more cooperative than the previous regime. It appears that the plight of women in Afghanistan is going to take a back seat to the interests of expanding global capital.

The situation in Afghanistan is dangerous not just to women, although it is probably one of the most glaring examples of misogynist oppression anywhere. It is dangerous for all people in Afghanistan and because the Taliban claim to receive guidance from the Koran, followers of the Islamic faith throughout the world — the overwhelming majority of whom don't subscribe to the Taliban's interpretation of the

teachings of Islam - could be subjected to increasing religious intolerance from non Muslims.

The message must be sent to

governments and the UN that such behavior is unacceptable and that the Taliban must cease this blatant mistreatment of women's basic human rights.

In solidarity,
GERRY LEBLANC

Anne LeBlanc, WRC Rep for Northern BC, has sent a letter on behalf of the NDP Women's Rights Committee to the United Nations opposing and protesting the human rights violations of

women in Afghanistan at the hands of the Taliban. The letter, will be submitted to newspapers, women's groups, *Kinesis*, trade unions, women's committees and the Ministry of Women's Equality. It will be prepared by the WRC to coincide with December 6, the day we are all reminded about how fragile women's lives are as we remember the women murdered in Montreal in 1989.

Here is Anne's letter:

We are outraged with the UN for allowing the Taliban militia to carry out their acts of violence against Afghanistan women. This situation is a human rights catastrophe which the UN must recognize, address, and stop. The NDP Women's Right Committee appeals to your organization to stop the continuing brutal Taliban

Dear priorities...

Time to learn is now

Dear priorities

Thank you for reprinting from *Canadian Forum* the article "A Constitution for the Corporations" by Maude Barlow. Enclosed in case you haven't seen it is a copy of an article [on the MIA] in the April issue of the magazine published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the *CCPA Monitor*. As always, there are many good pieces in the *Monitor*, including a lengthy one that concludes, "...the great majority of us are under siege — students, the elderly, the unemployed, the underemployed, the insecurely employed — nearly everyone in short, except the rich and powerful elite who really run the country. It is time to learn, to strategize, mobilize and fightback — together."

To me, the most important is "to learn", which impels the other actions. And the time cannot be sooner than now.

Thank you, also, for publishing the letter from Donald Allen about the Maria Barahona matter. Together, we can have an effect for good.

HELEN HAWTHORNE
North Vancouver

human rights atrocities against women.

What the Taliban militia is doing to women does not represent any religion except their own violent interpretation that is based on terror, brutality and fear. No one, under the name of Allah and the guise of Islam, would permit these abuses to occur.

The principle of basic human rights and freedoms for all women in Afghanistan must be enforced by the UN before more women die at the hands of this hostile groups of thugs who torture, rape, murder and enslave innocent women, simply because they are

allowed to. The UN is well aware of the violence and lack of freedoms which the Taliban inflict and make women suffer in fear of. It's time to recognize that by condoning the actions of this hostile group, you are placing women in life-threatening conditions.

Please do not ignore this abuse. It is not a women's issue, it is a global human rights issue. Under the present regime, there are no rights for women in Afghanistan. More women will die if the UN maintains its current stand of non action. We demand that the UN put this

important issue on the agenda and deal with it now.

ANNE LEBLANC
Women's Rights Committee
British Columbia New
Democratic Party

A letter writing campaign is underway to raise awareness and increase pressure on the UN to put this horrendous issue on their agenda and deal with it. A Canadian solidarity group — Women for Women in Afghanistan — is pressuring national governments and the UN to recognize that this is an issue about global human rights and freedoms.

You can make an impact by writing letters of protest and action to:

Lara Paul, Women for Women in Afghanistan
PO BOX 204
Dunnville, Ontario N1A 2X5
(905) 774-8091 of (416) 535-6585
or, send your letter of protest to the UN through:
Veiled Threat,
Homemaker's Magazine
25 Sheppard Avenue West, Suite
100 North York, Ontario
M2N 6S7
fax: (416) 733-8683
E-mail:
homemakers@telemedia.ca

Why don't you just leave?

Artist Anne Popperwell's exhibition, *Why Don't You Just Leave?*, is a powerful examination of the experience of domestic abuse. Comprised of 19 paintings, 5 drawings and a 26 minute video, the exhibition has toured to art galleries in Victoria, Prince George, Quesnel, Dawson Creek, Surrey, Smithers and Kitimat. The exhibition will be at the Port Alberni Art Gallery January 13 to February 21, 1998.

The video is a collaboration between Anne and filmmaker Al Razutis.

In it, women who have been victims of violence talk about their experiences, and men who have been violent talk about what made them stop and get help. The video was screened at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris in October and is being used by the Vancouver General and Burnaby Hospitals in their domestic abuse education programs. Anne has produced a silkscreen print to help raise money to continue touring the exhibition. Unframed prints of "New Doors/Baja" cost \$225, or \$275 if matted and framed. (Shipping and handling not included.) Twenty-five dollars from each sale goes to the BC and Yukon Society of Transition Houses. Anne can be contacted at (250) 539-2779.



Artist Anne Popperwell with silkscreen print "New Doors/Baja".



PHOTO: KAREN KILBRIDE

International solidarity was the theme as people walked through the rain to protest APEC.



NDP MPs Libby Davies (l) and Svend Robinson (r) participated in the Nov. 23 Walk for Global Justice.

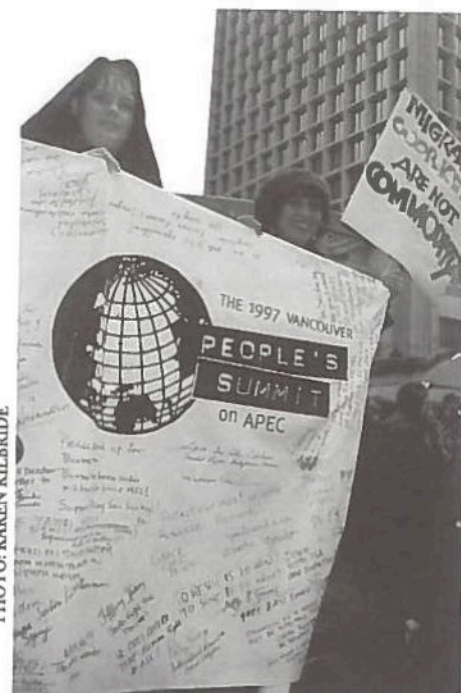


PHOTO: KAREN KILBRIDE

Women were out in force for the Nov. 23 protest against APEC.



Sister Sol (front) with facilitator from Bangladesh and two representatives from GAATW in Victoria.

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of the women's conference, distressed that because of her circumstances she had no choice but to purchase these goods. On the other hand, my co-worker wants for nothing and has a wardrobe that could clothe Vancouver's homeless. Her biggest financial problem was deciding between re-decorating her house or going on a cruise! Sitting at that table, I felt like I was at a mini APEC. The ones with the money don't care how they get what they want, or who suffers for it, and this is the same mentality of multi-national corporations involved in APEC and the MAI.

The conference was officially opened by Nancy Riche (Chair of the CLC Women's Committee) who then introduced NAC Chair Joan Grant-Cummings. Joan reminded us that at the women's conference in Beijing in 1995, the UN had declared rape a war crime. For this reason alone, Suharto, Indonesia's leader and therefore responsible for the terror wrought by the Indonesian army, should be barred from Canada or arrested on arrival.

The keynote speech was given by Jeanette Armstrong who is Okanagan and lives on the Pentiction Reserve. Jeanette has travelled extensively and has seen the detrimental impact globalization has had on indigenous people.

Poor health and social conditions develop where "cash crops" replace quality food and the impact is worsening with each generation.

Alicia Sepulveda has been with the Telephone Worker's Union of Mexico for 20 years. Prior to signing NAFTA, the Mexican

government privatized and deregulated all public services and lowered wages. Women were hit the hardest. "We should not ask government to do the right thing, we should demand that they do the right thing," said Alicia. "We have to learn how to win, not just

LABOUR MOVEMENT WORKSHOP

At the labour workshop, the postal strike was signalled by a representative of the Postal Worker's Union as a key struggle in the offensive against corporatism and received a strong reception from the delegates.

Cheung Lai Har of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions spoke about the current status of women in China and the changes women in the "special administrative region of Hong Kong" will likely experience. Women in China, who constitute one-half of the workforce, are working 10 hour days and suffer deteriorating health under poor working conditions. Barriers to women organizing include a ban on women talking in the workplace, and government controls on trade unions.

A delegate from the East Timor Action Network talked about the oppression and genocide of people in East Timor, and about the jailing of trade union and pro-democracy activists. Hushi Kabir of the Environmental Committee in Bangladesh gave a vivid description of environmental concerns in her country. Bangladesh has abundant inland waters, but the water supply is being contaminated by the residue and effluent resulting from harmful fishing practices.

A member of the Committee of Defense for People's Rights in Oaxaca, Mexico talked about the powerful position of women in a country where 80% of the food was produced by women. Hers was a strong message of solidarity and support to all women.

— Ellen Ramsay

how to fight. We have to make it clear that an injury to one woman is an injury to all women in the world."

Yayori Matsui, Director of the Asia-Japan Women's Resource Centre and who worked for 33 years as a journalist for a major Japanese newspaper, spoke on human rights and the effect of globalization on Asian countries. Northern Thailand has extreme poverty in contrast to Bangkok's highrises and expensive cars. Poorer areas don't have schools or medical aid. Daughters are sold to brothels in order to survive. Eighty percent contract HIV. Japan is the largest recipient of women sold into sexual slavery, with 30-40,000 girls trafficked every year. In turn, Burmese girls are shipped to Thailand.

Saroheni Rengam, of the Pesticide Action Network of Malaysia, talked about a study, begun in 1980, to track the impact of pesticides on women's health. The use of pesticides is rampant, and workers have no protection from toxicity. Pesticides are applied by workers with their bare hands — a good, hard worker is identified by their blackened fingernails which eventually fall off.

Multinational companies, clearing land to plant crops in Indonesia, have started fires which have darkened the skies and increased

particulate fallout. Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines have all suffered from fallout. Smoke is now reaching Darwin in Northern Australia.

Farmland is being lost to multinationals as small farmers are given loans to change from vegetable farming to cash crops, such as flowers for the Japanese market. These farmers often don't know how to properly grow the new crops and, when the enterprise fails, the corporation the farmer owes money to takes

of them. And let's not forget tourism, which brings in major bucks.

But there are advocates for the girls and young women of Southeast Asia. In Bangladesh, the group UNIBIG has organized, held workshops, put together a declaration and addressed the government at a state summit last year. They're in the process of organizing an international convention on sex trafficking in Southeast Asia to be held in 1998. The media in some Southeast Asian countries is picking up on the sex trafficking theme, which is appearing in books and on soap operas. And here at home, the arrest of 22 Thai and Malaysian women in Toronto in September resulted in the formation of the Global Alliance Against Trafficking of Women (GAATW) in Victoria. Members of GAATW went to Toronto to help the women, who weren't told of their right to legal representation due to language barriers.

APEC equals cheap labour. It also signals

Sex trafficking is a multimillion dollar business with a profit larger than the arms trade.

the disintegration of rural societies and economies as multinational companies move in to log, to take land for cash crops, and as a result push women into areas they don't want to be in.

— Nancy Weaver

over the land.

Former NAC Chair Sunera Thobani addressed economic and social development. She reminded us that we don't not have to leave Canada to see violations of human rights, as First Nations, single parents and the homeless all suffer.

The conference then broke into workshops, with topics ranging from labour to sex trafficking, child labour, violence against women and many more.

BANNED IN SURREY

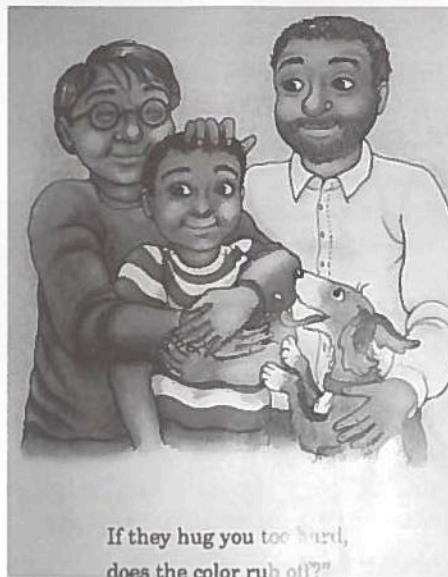
by James Chamberlain

As the teacher who sparked the book banning controversy in Surrey, I'd like to inform you of the anti-gay motions passed by the Surrey School Board. These stand in direct opposition to educators concerns to strive to eliminate homophobia and heterosexism from schools.

In April, Surrey trustees passed a motion "that all administration, teaching and counselling staff be informed that resources from gay and lesbian groups such as GALE (Gay And Lesbian Educators) or their related resource lists are not approved for use or redistribution in the Surrey School District." This motion effectively banned counsellors from using the handbook "Counselling Lesbian and Gay Youth" that had been in all Junior and Senior high schools for about two years.

At their next board meeting, the trustees debated the use of three children's books for Kindergarten and Grade One classrooms. I had submitted these books, which included images of same-sex parents in them, with the intent to use them as part of a unit on Families under the K/1 Career And Personal Planning curriculum to demonstrate the diversity of families with the context of an age-appropriate theme. The books were Asha's Mums, Belinda's Bouquet and One Dad Two Dads Brown Dad Blue Dads.

In a vote of 4-2, the trustees chose to ban these books from all schools in Surrey. They made their decision using no criteria whatsoever and despite presentations in favour of the use of the books. GALE-BC, the BC Civil Liberties Association and parents from my classroom all gave convincing arguments as to why the books should be approved. Eighteen of 20 families from my classroom read the books and presented a petition to the board in favour of their use.



At their subsequent board meeting, trustees put forth another motion in a futile attempt to gain retroactive support for their book banning. They voted to send home a parent survey with all elementary children in the district. It stated that the majority of trustees felt the three books were inappropriate for elementary aged children. The survey asked only one question — "Do you agree with the use of materials such as books, videos and/or presenters from the Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC for classroom instruction for Kindergarten through Grade 7?" A simple yes or no response was required. This question was inaccurate and misleading as the

board was unaware that GALE did not even do presentations to elementary schools or own the resources in question. The board also felt that parents throughout the district could make an informed decision about the age-appropriate use of the books without even reading them!

Parents in Surrey became outraged at this decision and asked questions regarding the costs of sending this survey out and the accuracy and

validity of the results. They further questioned the appropriateness of it, given its biased and inaccurate wording. Finally, they called for it to be rescinded as they did not think it appropriate that elementary aged children bring home any referenda from the trustees, and they objected vociferously to the discriminatory nature of it.

Two parents then brought a motion forward to the District Parent's Advisory Committee (DPAC), calling for the rescinding of the survey. DPAC voted to urge the trustees to rescind the survey and went to the media calling for the board to stop the survey and focus its attention more properly on budget cuts to schools and classrooms.

The BC Human Rights Commission then declared the survey discriminatory as it singled out gays and lesbians as an identifiable group for discrimination. At the same time, the BC Teachers Federation released an independent survey that was published in the Vancouver Sun on May 31. The survey showed that 73% of parents in BC wanted their children to be taught tolerance of homosexuality in schools. Under pressure from all of these events, the Surrey School Board was forced to rescind the survey with the warning that it may still be considered in the future.

So after all of this, the books are still banned in Surrey and the board is unwavering with their anti-gay agenda. The professional

autonomy of teachers is threatened as we are unable to use books in our classrooms that we feel are age-appropriate.

In August, I, along with parents and students from Surrey, launched a lawsuit in the BC Supreme Court against the book banning. The case is expected to be heard this spring and a positive ruling will set precedents for all school boards in BC. It will send a clear message that individual boards cannot ban books and censor our ability to teach the provincial curriculum.

The case boils down to two main issues, those of censorship and discrimination. Individual school districts should not be able to impose a narrow set of "family values" upon the public school system. They have no right to censor innocent picture books that simply portray same-sex families as part of their content.

This case will be expensive and I urge you to get involved and help prevent the domino effect of Surrey in other districts. Indeed, every child's future and ability to learn in an inclusive, accepting environment depends upon it. Donations can be made to the "Action Fund to Fight Book Banning In Our Schools" through the BC Civil Liberties Association (call them at 687-2919), or send a donation to the Bigots Ban Books Campaign, 12 Laurel Place, Port Moody, BC, V3H 4N1.

Check out our book banning website for frequent updates on the case. The address is www.lesbigay.com/bigots. You can also link to it via the GALE website at www.galebc.org.

James Chamberlain is a Kindergarten teacher in Surrey.

UNVEILING THE MARKER OF CHANGE

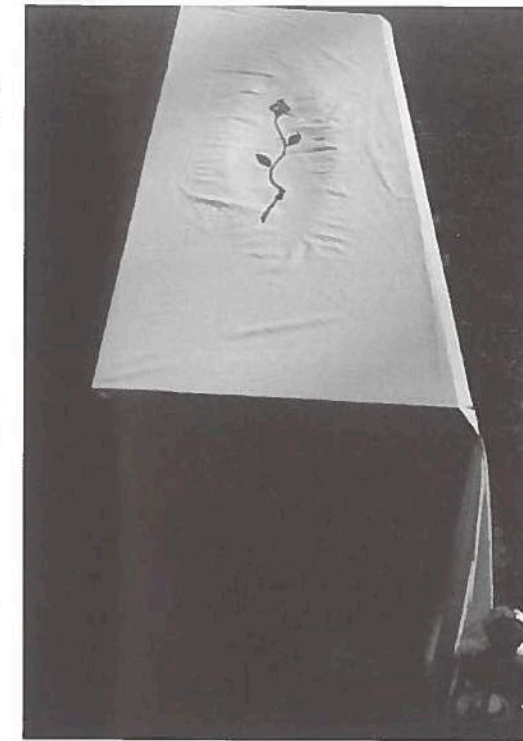
by Nancy Weaver

Those who arrived early for the 2pm unveiling of the Women's Monument on December 6 were met with an unexpected shock. Organizers were setting up tents, putting out displays and food and setting up chairs in the cold air of a perfect, sunny, winter day. In the midst of this activity were the 14 benches arranged in a 300 foot circle which comprise the monument — fourteen rectangular benches, each draped in a simple white cloth and looking like coffins.

As it neared two o'clock and more people had arrived, it became difficult and then impossible to see the covered benches. The benches are encircled by a ring of clay bricks bearing the names of six thousand contributors to the project - for the unveiling ceremony, people were asked to stand around that ring, forming a huge circle 4 to 7 or 8 people deep.

The ceremony began with a drumming procession by women from the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. Frances Wasserlein introduced herself as MC, and Yvonne Joseph offered a prayer in the Squamish language.

"We are here to keep a promise", said Rosemary Brown, who spoke next. The murders in 1989 "ripped the veil of secrecy away from an ancient and secret crime", forcing men and women to admit the complicity which has sheltered and protected acts of violence down through the ages. We must keep our promise, Rosemary said, to never forget the unprovoked killing of women and to never stop



working for an end to violence — to have no more secrets, no more lies, no more euphemisms, to ensure that the crime of killing women would bear its true name. She called the Marker of Change "a circle of mourning, marking and remembering", a place to "reaffirm our commitment and rededicate our lives toward ending violence against women and girls and toward creating a world that is safe for all of its people."

Suzanne LaPlante Edward, mother of Anne-Marie Edward who was one of the women killed in 1989, read - first in English and then French - an article by

James Quig which appeared in the Montreal Gazette several days after the murders. It is a call to action to men. "We mourn all our daughters," she quoted. "They were killed in action. They died in a war. They were the daughters of a revolution whether they wanted it or not, whether they knew it or not. Let good men not hide. When will we act? When will we care?"

Janine Carscadden, a member of the monument Committee, then led the unveiling, with Shari Ulrich's instrumental music in the background. Shari later said the inspiration for the music used was the true story of a young boy who had been placed in a foster home, only to be killed by his foster parents. As Janine said the name of each woman, a group of people - children, volunteers, some family members - lifted the white covering from each bench, folded it carefully and lit a candle, placing it beside the name inscribed on the bench. Annie St. Arneault. Maryse Laganriere. Genevieve Bergeron. Barbara Daigneault.

Helene Colgan. Maryse LeClair. Barbara Klucznik. Annie Turcotte. Anne-Marie Edward. Nathalie Croteau. Maud Haviernick. Michele Richard. Sonia Pelletier. Anne-Marie Lemay.

People were then invited to place flowers on the pink granite benches. Exotic blooms in cellophane were laid beside dried hydrangea blossoms picked from someone's backyard. There were

roses by the dozen, single orchid stems, a just picked rhododendron blossom, and even crayoned pictures of blooms that could only exist in the mind of a six year old. Shari Ulrich sang. Beth Alber, the artist who designed the Marker of Change, talked about the logistics of creating such a monumental piece of public art, and reflected on her feelings seeing it done. Serge St. Arneault, brother of Annie, spoke about his sister.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MARKER OF CHANGE

by Beth Alber

The circle, the symbol used by women for centuries to represent a continuum, a non-hierarchical way, is one of the major elements for this Women's Monument. It is a symbol of women's spirit and is associated with the idea of a protected or consecrated space.

Fourteen stone slabs are equally spaced around the perimeter of the circle and the honed slabs are cut from pink granite from Quebec. Each stone slab bears the name of one of the fourteen women murdered on December 6, 1989, in Montreal. Stone is a material that has been traditionally used for monuments and markers of time by all cultures in recorded history.

The horizontal rather than the vertical position of the forms, the solid mass of the stones, and the length of five and one-half feet, all draw reference to the female body — fallen bodies. A shallow, subtle and textured depression of approximately five-eighths of an inch at the deepest point in the top surface of the stone slab serves as a reservoir for collected water and a vessel of memory — a collection of tears.

The dedication of the Women's Monument appears of the outside face of the circle on seven of the forms, incised into the honed granite. The dedication appears in English, French, Chinook Jargon, Chinese, Hindi, Swahili and Spanish.

A continuous ring of paving bricks behind the granite forms are positioned in the ground with the names of the contributors to the monument hand-stamped into clay. The circle of donors acts as a frame - a protection, a caring gesture. An orientation stand is positioned outside the circle with Braille and raised lettering for people with sight impairment. Dedications from the families to their daughters are contained in the ring of bricks, next to their daughters' bench.

The natural setting of Thornton Park with the forms resting in the grass, under the trees, impervious to the weather, will encourage people to stop and rest and remember.

Beth Alber designed The Marker of Change

Linda Joe spoke about her daughter Cheryl, whose murder inspired the women of the Downtown Eastside to march annually on Valentine's day to remember the many women, so many of them First Nations, who have been killed or have disappeared in the Downtown Eastside. Janine Carscadden read the words written by the Monument Committee included in the circle of thousands of tiles - "In loving memory of the women killed on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. So many women lost to us. We dream a different world, when the war on women is over." An ambulance rocked and screamed down Main street, lights flashing.

Many found it hard to leave the circle, even after ceremony was over and the sun had set and it got really cold. Organizers passed out tea-light candles, and people placed them on and around the benches. The light from the hundreds of candles cast shadows which outlined more sharply than in daylight the names engraved on the benches, and gave the place a sacred, quiet and contemplative air. Two young men with skateboards were overheard passing by — one said, "what's going on here?" to which the other replied "I don't know". Then, on looking closer, he said "It's just a bunch of chicks."

There is so much work to be done.

CLC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

by Patricia Charter

The Canadian Labour Congress' 10th biennial National Women's Conference was held June 15-18 in Ottawa. More than 500 union women from across Canada attended the conference — the theme of which was Organize! Mobilize! Create Our Future! — and which included a celebration of the first anniversary of the National Women's March Against Poverty.

Speakers included Alexa McDonough, CLC Executive Vice-President Nancy Riche and NAC President Joan Grant-Cummings. Women from labour movements in Korea, Nigeria, Hong Kong and the US provided a global

perspective to the challenges facing all women. Many of our NDP MP's were in attendance along with Alexa McDonough, including our own Libby Davies.

Since no gathering of trade unionists would be complete without making our presence known, we marched to the Treasury Board to voice our concerns about pay equity along with our sisters and brothers from other unions.

We then went to Starbucks, Wal-Mart and McDonalds and let them know how we feel about the way they do business.

This conference reinforced my belief that we can make a difference.

by Patricia Charter

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women held its Annual General Meeting in Hull, Quebec September 19-21. Women from across Canada attended the 25th anniversary meeting which looked at NAC's activities over the past year and set priorities for 1998.

The 1996-97 Priority Campaign was designed to pursue 15 demands arising from

And still we rise

the National Women's March Against Poverty. This formed part of a strategy to push for women's democratic involvement in the political process, to end women's poverty, to push back the corporate right-wing agenda and end the discrimination — racism, sexism, homophobia and violence

against women that women face every day.

A resolution was passed calling on NAC and member groups to reaffirm our strong opposition to globalization and to organize around the National Women's Day of Protest Against APEC on November 24. NAC will work toward developing a

women's economic and social vision as part of the action plan of NAC's 1997-98 Priority Campaign, the theme of which is Women's Rights are Human Rights.

Panel discussions included Feminism into the 21st Century and Violence Against Women.

Many of NAC's past presidents were in attendance for an International Solidarity Dinner, and were honoured at a President's Luncheon.

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