

NOVEMBER 14, 1969

Editor-for-this-Month's Note:
This edition of the newsletter is almost entirely my fault – I hereby apologize for errors, omissions and misspellings of names. Also, included as a separate paper is my very unofficial estimate of where Women's Caucus is at just now.
Margaret Benston

ABORTION CAMPAIGN and MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT (November 27, Thursday)

A number of suggestions for actions around abortion were outlined in the last newsletter. A group interested in this work have been meeting for the last month making specific plans. The first actions planned are (1) setting up a counseling service to operate two or three nights a week. Counselling will centre around women's rights under the new law; information about abortion services in other countries will also be available. The possibility of doing pregnancy tests is being investigated also; (2) doing educationals in the Lower Mainland area on the exact provisions of and implications of the new law.

All of these plans are to be discussed and ratified at the November 27 General Meeting, so it is important for everyone interested in Women's Liberation of attend, since this is likely to be one of our most controversial activities. We will also have a guest speaker at the meeting to talk on facts and fallacies about abortion and to discuss the new law.

COUNTER-COURSE REPORT and MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT (Nov. 20, Thursday)

Five of the six counter-course sessions on "Women as an Oppressed Group," co-sponsored with the striking PSA department at SFU, have been given. Attendance ranged from 60 to 25 and overall the sessions were quite lively. The sixth meeting, "Women in Social Movements: Past and Present" by Dale Evans (a PSA student and Women's Caucus member) was postponed because of Remembrance Day. This talk will now be held Thursday, Nov. 20 at 8 PM in the Labour Temple. Mary Norton, an original member of the Pioneer Political League for Equality, gave us the chance for a good discussion of how Women's Liberation Movement is taking up again some of the problems left unsolved and unanalyzed by suffragists.

DEMONSTRATION REPORT

The demonstration called for October 24 in the last newsletter was highly successful. About 25 women picketed the Engineer's Club downtown for nearly an hour and then marched to the nearby Manpower office to picket for about the same time there. (The youngest picket was Tasha Laubly, who is four.) Over a thousand leaflets were distributed; these gave documentation that "sex work roles for the leading cause of poverty in this country." (Copies of the leaflet are available in the office.) Press coverage was

reasonably good: one edition of The Sun even featuring a front page photo and The Sun later honoured us with one of their more inane editorials. (Vaguely bloomerish was the description.)

The reaction at the Engineer's Club was mixed: one man was overheard to say, "They ought to chain those women to the kitchen stove." But considerable sympathy was also shown. The Club sent down a waiter with coffee (which was refused on the grounds that we wanted to drink it inside). At Manpower, a woman employee was sent down especially to talk to use and she was definitely not friendly. An attempt to leaflet inside the Manpower office met with instant opposition. Passerby reaction ran from sympathetic to indifferent to hostile, but most people took leaflets and read them.

GENERAL MEETING (Oct. 30) REPORT

The leaflets handed out during the picket invited the public to the General Meeting held on Thursday, Oct. 30. Attendance at the meeting was small, about thirty, with some new people, as a result of the demonstration. Alice James spoke first, giving facts about the extent of poverty and discrimination that working women face in Canada (her paper, "Poverty, Canada's Legacy to Women," is available at the office. Nicole Thiel followed with a description of the ways in which women are oppressed by the legal system itself. Her basic thesis was that "the law is an all-pervasive phenomenon, it sets all limits and boundaries which are based on social and cultural mores; since prejudice against women is based on social and cultural mores, it follows that the law is prejudiced against women." Among the specifics she cited was discrimination in the legal profession itself, including judges: "They are against women lawyers and they call them either (1) soft and emotional or (2) hard, rational and aggressive." Other areas of discrimination are in the tax laws, abortion and sterility laws, employment laws, in legal aid, etc. Copies of Nicole's research should be available soon.

In the discussion which followed it was suggested that the Legal Committee (started in September but not really functioning) should take on:

- (1) Collection of specific cases of discrimination against women and investigate the possible avenues of legal action. (If you know of such cases, call the Legal Committee, contacts listed on page of this newsletter.
- (2) Interviews with the Women's Bureau of the Labour Dept. To see what help is available there.
- (3) Investigate discrimination at Vancouver Vocational Institute.
- (4) Investigate legal aspects of pregnancy and abortion counselling.
- (5) Investigate possibilities for dispensing with a lawyer in divorce cases, and
- (6) Begin to get files on legal status of women and legal precedents in various areas.

It was also suggested that legal material of use to people on welfare be collected, mainly for the benefit of welfare mothers.

A short discussion about changing the name of the group to Women's Liberation concluded with a tentative decision to retain the present name, mostly because it was felt the present name is neutral and gives us a chance to explain our position to women who might not otherwise listen.

LEGAL COMMITTEE REPORT

After the discussion above, a group of women revived the Legal Committee and it has met once to begin specific tasks. It appears that, contrary to the situation in Ontario for example, it is not possible in B.C. to completely do without a lawyer in a divorce case. It may, however, be possible to minimize lawyers' fees. The legal aspects of the proposed abortion counselling service are also being studied. People are taking on specific areas of research as priorities are established. The next meeting is at the Labour Temple on Monday, Nov. 17. Meetings will be held approximately every two weeks, probably on Mondays. Eleanor Laubly (922-3875) or Alice James (261-8084) are the contacts for this group. Call either of them if you are interested in working on this project (the group can use lots more people) to find out when the next meeting is for sure.

UBC REPORT

UBC Women's Liberation has started on three projects:

- (1) Liberalization in dissemination of birth control material (they found that not all girls can get pills when they go to the UBC Health Services);
- (2) Setting up a co-op day care centre, and
- (3) Starting an accredited course on the women's liberation movement.

They have also written for The Ubysey (student paper) and contacted a number of people. The group at UBC is relatively new.

SFU REPORT

The strike at SFU upset plans for a broad program dealing with problems of women. Instead, counter-courses were set up for both staff and students. About a dozen staff members got involved in discussions and short seminars, but some new organizations [need] to be invented since it is very difficult to find meeting times – half-hour lunches are really long enough and most can't make evening meetings. The student counter-course emphasized problems specific to women students. Fifteen to twenty women were involved in this over-all. As a follow up to the downtown demonstration on October 24, the women in the course asked the director of the campus Manpower office to talk on "Job Prospects for Women Graduates." The full report of this confrontation will appear in The Pedestal but it really confirmed discriminatory practices in the Manpower office at SFU.

The SFU group also managed to convince the Simon Fraser Student Society Council to send a Women's Liberation protest candidate to the "Miss Canadian University" contest at Waterloo Lutheran College in January. Janiel Jolley will be the candidate.

VANCOUVER CITY COLLEGE REPORT

The VCC group is active but no detailed report is available.

PEDESTAL REPORT

A second issue of The Pedestal is planned for the end of this month. A great deal of material is already in or promised, but more can be used. The absolute deadline is Friday, November 28. This edition, as usual,

will cost money. Please volunteer some to Jean Rands (298-8430). She'll be calling people about it anyway, but you can save her time by calling her. Graphics would also be appreciated.

The people working on The Pedestal (call Jean, too, by the way, if you want to work on it) would like to publish monthly. It costs about \$150 an issue; some of that is recovered by sales, but it will take time to recover it all for each issue. So money would be necessary regularly. We should discuss the matter at the next General Meeting on November 27.

MISCELLANEOUS AND DO-IT-YOURSELF ACTIVITIES

(The point of this section is, even if you can't make it to the meetings or can't find a group that appeals to you, there are lots of things that need doing, you can do by yourself or with one or two friends.)

1. Drena McCormack and Linda King spoke to two Grade 12 history classes on Nov. 7 at Eric Hamber High School. The opportunity came through a friend of Drena's in the Inter-High Union. Drena has also arranged for a Women's Caucus member to speak at a New Westminster NDP Club educational this next week.
2. During the Vancouver Teachers Convention, Marcy Cohen and Donna Liberson (who both worked on the Education Committee at UBC last summer) requested time to speak on Women's Liberation and were given workshop time on Oct. 24.
3. The call for the Oct. 24 demonstration was sent to the local papers, including The Georgia Straight. The Straight printed the whole release but illustrated it with a "bat-woman" holding a bullwhip, wearing black thigh-high boots and a spiked dog-collar. Catherine Stone and Debbi Sopol volunteered to write a story for The Straight about what women's liberation and Women's Caucus were all about and why the picture was so offensive. The story appeared in the Nov. 12 – 18 issue exactly as written with one of the graphics from The Pedestal as the only illustration.
4. At the recent NDP convention in Winnipeg, the issue arose when women demanded a constitutional change which would increase the number of women delegates on the governing federal council from at least 5 to at least 25. The issue was defeated by the full convention by only one vote! The Vancouver Sun reported: "'Great' was the comment of Vancouver activist Miss D.J. O'Donnell. 'We've got what we were after ... we've brought the whole issue of women's oppression before the full party.'" Reporting on the episode at a Women's Caucus meeting later, D.J. admitted that the things just sort of happened without any prior planning. For more details, see The Pedestal.
5. Black Brothers recently constructed an apartment block in Coquitlam with a built-in day-care facility and hearsay suggest that they may even hire a supervisor. If Black Brothers can do it, so can other landlords. So Jane Johnson plans to try to get women in her apartment block and the three others nearby, owned by the same company, to pressure the landlord to provide a vacant suite as a tenant day-care facility.

6. Two teachers at one of the Burnaby schools are doing a series on "Sexuality," including such topics as birth control and male and female roles. They have asked that a member of Women's Caucus come to speak with the students about the changing roles of women and men in today's society. Catherine Stone and Ellen Woodworth have volunteered to go since two people are often more successful than one alone.

7. Marcy Cohen will be speaking on Nov. 18 on Women's Liberation in response to a request from a National Council of Jewish Women extension course at UBC.

PROPOSED BOOK WORKSHOP

Monthly Review Press is looking for a "book on the woman question" from a socialist perspective. There is a very good chance that they would publish a book done collectively by interested members of Women's Caucus. Some people are already doing, or have done, work that would fit into such a book. All people interested in this should meet at 3484 Oxford Street on Wednesday, Nov. 19, at 8 PM, or call Margaret Benston (298-1732). Unless Wednesday turns out to be a bad day, this workshop will probably meet every Wednesday at Oxford Street at 8 PM. The first meeting will be to discuss content and collective procedures.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Janiel Jolley, who has been acting as treasurer, reports that we are in desperate financial troubles. Janiel, who will be away from Vancouver until January, has turned finances over to volunteers Diane Schrenk and Betsy Meady. Both of them are willing to try to raise money – by pledges, socials, etc. – but neither of them feel capable of coping with the bookkeeping. We need more volunteers for the Finance Committee, both for fund-raising and for the bookkeeping. (Just two or three hours a month, probably.)

A complete financial report will appear in the next newsletter, but right now, our fixed expenses are about \$60 a month (most duplicating funds come from campus sources so these aren't included) and our assured income is about \$45 or \$50. If we want to publish The Pedestal regularly and consider keeping the office open during the day (perhaps by a "rotating" system of support for out-of-work members who would work full time for women's liberation for a month or two), we will need 5 to 10 times that income. Pledges will have to be our main support. PLEASE PLEDGE WHAT YOU CAN! Six months of post-dated cheques are ideal.

DOWNTOWN MEETINGS: Labour Temple, 8 PM

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| Nov. 20, Thurs. | "Women in Social Movements" (see Page 1) |
| Nov. 27, Thurs. | GENERAL MEETING: Abortion Campaign & business meeting |
| Dec. 2, Tues. | Education Action Committee and Teachers |
| Dec. 4, Thurs. | Informal work and business meeting |
| Dec. 11, Thurs. | Workshop to get out newsletter and plan Dec/Jan schedule |

ACTION GROUPS AND WHO TO CONTACT

Abortion Campaign	Donna Liberson, 733-8864
Legal Committee	Eleanor Laubly, 922-3875; Alice James, 261-8084
Education/Teachers	Marcy Cohen, 733-8864; meets Tues. Dec. 2, Labour Temple
VCC	Susan Claus, 255-7442
SFU	Dodie Wepler, 298-5185
UBC	Ellen Woodsworth, 732-5191; Linda King, 224-3035
Book Workshop	Margaret Benson, 298-1732; meets every Wed., 3484 Oxford, 8 PM
Pedestal:	Jean Rands, 298-8430
Orientation	Alice James, 261-8084
Finance	Diane Schrenk, 874-4874; Betsy Meadley
Women Artists Co-op	Donna Liberson, 733-8864; Pat Hoffer, 731-5412
Newsletter	Drena McCormack, 522-0400

Where no meeting time is given, call to find out when meetings are held. Orientation meetings particularly are held informally and people who want more information about women's liberation and Women's Caucus in particular should call Alice James to see when a orientation meeting for new members is planned.

WOMEN'S CAUCUS, NOVEMBER 1969: How are we doing?

Women's Caucus at the present time has over 250 women on our membership list. Out of these, there are at most 75 who participate actively at the things we are doing as a group. There are probably a number of reasons why the other people aren't attending meetings or working with some action group. One of these is perhaps simply the inability or lack of time to get to meetings. For this reason, the latest newsletter contains a "do-it-yourself" section, describing activities that one person or a small group of people have initiated. (When anyone does such actions, can they let us know, so we can encourage others to do similar things?)

A second reason for non-participation is perhaps a feeling that women's liberation doesn't seem relevant in personal terms; a feeling that Women's Caucus is not answering a need in one's life. Most of the people who were in Women's Caucus in its first six months (we're only a year and a half old) spent time together discussing just why we needed a women's liberation group. As our activities and numbers have increased, some new people don't get the sense of involvement these first members had. We hope that new people who feel this need or who want a chance to talk about themselves and how they relate to the world and to this group will attend one or two "orientation meetings." It's a much better chance to get to know people and to get an idea of what the group is all about than at the very practical and often hectic workshop or business meetings. And since we're not very organized and may not call you for a while, please call Alice James, 261-8084, if you want to attend such a meeting.

A third and probably the most important reason some people find it hard to get involved is the peculiar structure (or lack of one) of this group. On one level this is deliberate: we do not want to create an organization, we want to build a movement. We are trying to operate without an official set of leaders and by doing so we want to try to have as many people as possible feeling responsible for the whole

group's success or failure. We do not want to operate without a structure; we do want to operate without a hierarchy. We want to be a cooperative group in the broadest sense possible where decisions are made by people directly involved and ratified by the widest number of people possible.

There are two dangers in this. The first is that without a set of "officials," nobody takes responsibility and things don't get done. That happens fairly often in little things and in things connected with the office, like keeping records and keeping contact with other groups.

The second danger, and one which is hardest to fight, is that a small group tends to control things behind the scenes. This happens too in Women's Caucus and we must fight it all the time. The only way to do this is for everyone to participate as fully as possible. The main way we try to overcome this danger is decentralization – our main work is done in campus groups or in small action committees. These committees may form for only one action (like the Job Discrimination Demonstration) or may continue for a long time.

Those groups functioning right now are VCC, UBC and SFU caucuses and committees on abortion, legal rights and educational system/teachers. Usually two or three people decide they want to work in a particular area and ask, at Women's Caucus meetings, for others to help them. For example, a Day Care Committee met several times, did some research and organized one of our public General Meetings. They haven't met recently, but if anyone wants to continue the work Liz Briemberg (298-9638) can tell you what was done and who was involved. There is a lot of necessary research to be done in this area and lots of interested people. It simply requires someone who is interested and has new ideas to start it off again.

Two other areas where we have lots of people doing "unorganized" things are working women and welfare mothers.

We have only one public General Meeting a month. This combines a short business meeting, our only formal business meeting, with an educational program or guest speaker. The educationals are usually organized by one of the action committees (the Job Discrimination Committee which organized the demonstration also organized the Oct. 30 General Meeting, for example. Ordinarily, there is a meeting every Thursday. When it's not a General Meeting, these can either be workshops or informal business meetings. Other meetings are called as groups or individuals wish.

Things like correspondence, communication between groups, general office functions, etc., are supposed to be handled by a volunteer coordinating committee. In practice, such of this work as gets done, gets done on Thursday nights. General publicity and obtaining speakers when requests come in are also usually done on Thursday nights. It would probably be better if there was a coordinating committee responsible for seeing that all such things get done. Finance is handled by a Finance Committee, but we've operated in a very haphazard fashion – we've relied on erratic donations, a very few regular pledges, money from articles and the support the campus groups can get on campus.

One final word. If you want to be involved and there is nothing going on that answers your needs or interests, think of something that does. It's your fight after all – use your imagination!