CONFERENCE REPORT

Moving Forward: Creating a Feminist Agenda for the 1990's

Conference organized by the
Peterborough - Trent Women's Coalition
Held at
Trent University
Peterborough, Ontario

June 15, 16, 17, 1990

Report written and compiled by
Brenda Ponic with the aid of B. Joan Mann

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK
THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS, GROUPS, AND INDIVIDUALS, FOR MAKING THIS CONFERENCE POSSIBLE

Early financial assistance came from various sponsors at Trent University - the Nind Fund, the President Stubbs Discretionary Fund, the University's Women's Centre, the Frost Centre, the Native Studies Program, the Canadian Studies Program, the University's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Committee on Research (SSHRC), and the Women's Studies program.

External financial assistance has come from several sources including the CUEW Local 8, the CUEW National Office, the Canada Employment Centre, and the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Most important however, is money received from three sources: the Ontario Women's Directorate, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRCC), and the Secretary of State Women's Program.

Invaluable non-financial support came from Peter Robinson College and its principal, John Milloy, the Academic Skills Centre, the Peterborough Civic Hospital Women's Health Care Centre for posters, and the Trent Day Care Centre for the loan of equipment and personnel.

We cannot give enough thanks to all of the women from the Peterborough community who came out to organizational meetings which were held for over two years and who, in addition, worked on any of our many conference sub-committees.. We would also like to give many thanks to all of those women who submitted workshop and panel proposals, or who were speakers, facilitators, notetakers or volunteers throughout the conference. We would like to thank Linda Slavin who ran very helpful facilitation workshops. Joelle Favreau and Deb McWhinney were invaluable in furthering our outreach to immigrant and differently abled women. In addition, students Jennifer Tiberio, Anne Ludbrooke, and Rhonda Jessop contributed many hours of vital labour.

And finally, our steering committee, composed of the following individuals from the community and the university, have struggled through endless meetings, discussions, and conference preparations to make this conference happen. Thanks go out to Heather Avery, Charlene Avon, Caroline Langill, Barb Mann, Joan Mann, Marg Phillips, Brenda Ponic, Roma Rees, Sue Rice, Janice Ristock, Joan Sangster, Verna Shackleton, and Christl Verduyn. Special thanks go out to our 'star' steering committee member and student conference organizer, Phil McLoughlin.

August, 1990

Individual copies of this report can be obtained for free from:

Women's Studies Program
Eaton College
Trent University
Peterborough, Ontario
K9J 7B8
(705) 748-1436

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OUR HERSTORY

How This Conference came to Be

Moving Forward: Creating a Feminist Agenda for the 1990's began as an idea on the part of women's studies faculty and students at Trent University, an idea which had been formulated as a result of women's studies university people feeling isolated, and wanting input and integration with the community in which they lived and worked. As well, university women were searching for ideas about how best women's studies in the university could be useful to community women. A concentrated conference, as well as overt activity to reach out to the community, was proposed.

In order to assess what the community could possibly gain from such a conference, and to focus in on ideas of what kind of conference was wanted, a student, Anne Ludbrooke, was hired on a government summer 1988 SEED Grant to interview community members about what their vision of such a conference would involve. At this point, the nature of the conference was unfocused, moving back and forth from a more academic conference, discussing the role of women's studies, to one focusing on feminist issues, or even one issue. Anne approached visible women's organizations, social service workers, women working in the health field, women working in cultural creation, and many others whose names or organizations were suggested by the first people approached, or who were listed with national groups concerned with women's studies and feminist policy, such as the Ontario Women's Directorate and the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW). A large number of her contacts were with local women. From these discussions, she began to develop an extensive mailing list. From this information, Anne and the newly created women's studies conference committee determined that what was wanted was a conference which integrated community women's work and concerns with the activities of women's studies faculty and students. The desire was for a conference which was not academic, but which would allow the sharing of knowledge between these two groups, in order that we could all strategize about how best to develop a plan of action for promoting equality between the sexes. One important method which was strongly advocated by community members was that the conference operate by means of workshops which stressed participation by all

involved. It was envisioned as a 'working' conference. It was also decided that the conference would be divided into four sections: social justice, health, culture, and work. These themes would be the focus for setting an agenda for the 1990's.

Following this, in the fall, the conference steering committee, which was at this time composed solely of university women, began a series of meetings in the community at the local public library with women who were interested in the conference. Women who were on our mailing lists were informed of these meetings, and in addition, newspaper notices in the local paper, the *Peterborough Examiner*, drew in many more.

In October of 1988, the conference committee saw an opportunity for funds and submitted a 'Women and Work' Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant proposal, drawing on ideas given to Anne during the previous summer, on our own contacts, and on names gained from extensive national phoning. This effort was an important attempt to secure funding for this conference. We were assisted in this by two students who were hired on an Ontario Work Study Grant, Phil McLoughlin and Rhonda Jessop. An immense amount of time and effort was needed to do this grant; we needed to make up proposals and justifications for each workshop, and gather resumes for each workshop leader, in addition to just deciding what workshops to list and what they were about. Some of these workshop leaders needed to be academics in order to qualify for the grant. This fit in with our goals as outlined above, although the conference was increasingly beginning to concentrate on feminist activists. It was also moving away from some of our original goals of focusing just on women's studies in the university.

In the spring of 1989, a major community meeting was held at the public library to present the committee's work to date and to ask for more input for workshops and speakers. We divided into four groups: work, culture, health, and social justice, and asked women to define their interests and issues. At this meeting, there was again some discussion and debate about the proposed audience of the conference and its practical goals. There seemed to be some acceptance of the idea of appealing to feminist activists, including academics and writers, rather than 'women on the street.' Some of the community members interested in the latter did not continue to attend the community meetings.

At this time we also prepared a pamphlet describing the conference and asking for workshop proposals, which was mailed out nationally as well as locally, with 1,000 copies going out. In addition, a call for papers went out to community based organizations, academic settings, and to feminist publications. This call asked for submissions to be made in writing summarizing the content that would be covered in a workshop or panel session. This step was included in order to solicit workshops and input from women across Canada in both academic and community based settings.

In the summer of 1989 we again hired a summer SEED grant student, this time, Phil McLoughlin. Her many tasks included further applications for grants and the beginning of an exploration of 'private' funding, community outreach through the organization of community meetings, making reservations, and making preparations, replying to paper proposals being sent in, making arrangements with the university, and meeting with Trent Daycare regarding the daycare at the conference. The committee went out in groups to meet individual women, for example native women from Lovesick Lake and Curve Lake.

In the fall of 1989 the committee continued with ongoing community meetings, usually bi-monthly, which, for the most part, concerned selecting workshop proposals and facilitators, as well as panel discussions and panelists. To some extent, what also began to happen is that community women were using the conference meetings as a forum to present the local feminist community's concerns and happenings.

The steering committee, which during the summer had been expanded to include representation from community women, met to do intensive reviews of paper and workshop proposals, and to select, from among these, those that seemed to best fit in with the topics deemed important at the community meetings. We rejected those proposals that were too academic or that did not address an area that had previously been identified as important by the local community. The committee also took a trip to Toronto to meet with people who had organized other similar conferences. These people strongly advocated that we stress things like having training for the facilitators. Letters of confirmation were sent to those who were accepted as session leaders. It was also decided at a large community meeting, that in reviewing the conference agenda as it stood at that time, the needs of native women, women of colour, immigrant women, and lesbians were not adequately addressed, and therefore workshops in these areas needed to be added to the conference.

Extensive and continuing outreach to immigrant women was done throughout the fall and winter by two women in particular, Joelle Favreau and Marg Phillips. Through their ongoing contacts with English

as a Second Language classes (ESL), and the local New Canadian Centre, efforts were made to solicit ideas for workshops, and to familiarize the women with the nature of the conference in hopes that they would find it useful for them to attend. Immigrant women's organizations were recontacted in order that we could explore further contacts. Outreach to native women was an ongoing process, with visits and meetings by members of the steering committee with groups of native women in the outlying areas of Peterborough. Full subsidies were offered to target groups as well as to any individuals who expressed a need for them, and in particular, both the immigrant women's organizations and native women's groups were highlighted. Ideas for lesbian workshops arose from both the steering committee and community members themselves, and this was followed by phone calls to women from diverse organizations for suggestions of speakers who could be resource people for these workshops.

At this point the large community meetings lessened in frequency, and instead smaller working committees were struck which carried out specific tasks like organizing entertainment, daycare, cultural events, displays, accommodations, food, driving, and program writing and printing.

The steering committee met intensively, continuing with work such as budgeting, fulfilling requirements for grant applications, finding keynote speakers, outreach for subsidies, finalizing the ongoing changes in workshops, as well as actively participating in each of the conference subcommittees. The steering committee also spent time discussing and working on the actual process of how the conference and the workshops were to be conducted. We dashed around madly for the last week, and then - it happened.

INTRODUCTION

"We're always talking about what it's like to be black. Don't ask me what it's like to be black! Don't ask me how I identify oppression! Don't ask me how I identify expectation as a black person. Ask white people "What is it like to be white?" That should be the crucial question. Ask them how they engage in racist relations from when they open their eyes in the morning until they go to bed at night. That's what should be questioned."

Rozena Maart, keynote address

"I think that it's time for heterosexual feminists to be as knowledgeable and supportive of our issues as we are of yours, because ultimately they are all feminist issues... I think it's long past the time when lesbians were just tolerated in the feminist movement. I think we should be respected in the feminist movement for the work that we do."

Karen Andrews, keynote address

"And when she said, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" it was like she absolved all responsibility of racism and of horrible things that her people have done to people of a different culture all over the world."

Alice Williams, keynote address

"Women's oppression is endemic to the power relations in this society. So is racism. So is economic exploitation, heterosexism, language and national oppression, and bigotry. All reinforce these power relations. And unless we change these power and economic relations, we will never have liberation for women... all of the struggles against racism, heterosexism, economic exploitation, all of those struggles are struggles for the equality of women too."

Judy Rebick, keynote address

"Moving Forward - Creating a Feminist Agenda for the 1990's" was a feminist conference which pushed many of the participants, and certainly, we the organizers, to examine and confront an issue critical to the feminist movement in Canada today. As articulated so clearly by our four keynote speakers, the women's movement, as represented by the over four hundred women from across the country attending our conference, continues to be largely an educated, white and middle-class women's movement. Although the last decade has seen the movement increasingly wrestle with the need to become more inclusive and to link up with other struggles, our privilege is an ongoing issue. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the biases of white and middle-class women continue to perpetuate a definition of feminism which privileges the needs of one group of women over all others. The exploitation and oppression of women within the movement related to differences of class, race, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, size and geographic location, as well as academic background, persists, and we were continually pushed to realize this as it was reflected in our conference.

Throughout the weekend, criticism leading to this realization made many women tense and defensive. But it also served as a catalyst in opening many people's eyes to issues of difference and oppression that they had not considered before. There were however, still whispers and words saying things like "yeah but... we <u>are</u> working on those issues, it just takes time... not AGAIN... I'm not really racist, homophobic etc... it's just the systems we're operating in... and so on. As Rozena Maart said, "coming to revolutionary consciousness is ... painful." But a point that was driven home about this defensiveness is that guilt is not productive and is not something to dwell on. It often ends up just being an excuse. "Guilt should be turned into positive action and that guilt should be turned into the acknowledgement that I am white, or I am Jewish,

or I am South American, and this is how I can proceed, by looking at myself first." (Rozena Maart) As Judy Rebick states, "feminism should take up the issues, as a priority, of doubly-oppressed women in the 1990's... This should be done not out of guilt, but out of an understanding that until all women are equal, no woman will be truly equal."

Our four keynote speakers set the tone and the agenda for the conference. The differences between these four women - Rozena Maart, a black South African feminist and anti-racist activist; Karen Andrews, a lesbian feminist activist fighting the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (O.H.I.P.) for coverage of her partner of twelve years; Alice Williams, a local native cultural worker striving to incorporate her double heritage in her quiltmaking; and Judy Rebick, a national feminist lobbyist striving to fight the ideological offensives of corporate agendas, spoke to the need for diversity, representation, and responsiveness to grass-roots issues in the feminist movement. They also spoke to the urgency of such an agenda. Their keynote speeches are included here in Appendix B.

Which brings us back to urgency. The need to seriously and systematically examine the women's movement's structures, issues, and organizing styles for systemic discrimination and exclusion has frequently been overlooked, noted as an afterthought, or put aside in the need to address more immediate struggles. Too often in our efforts to 'get the job done' or to meet a perceived need, we fail to be analytical, to be critical, and fundamentally, to be visionary about exactly how we can be more egalitarian, participatory and responsive to grass-roots social justice issues. No matter what community one is involved in, there is a tendency to be caught up in the debates of one's own 'world', and not to see or prioritize the reality of other women's situations. We need to look seriously at how, in our methodology and issues, we can overcome the oppression and exploitation which we impose on any woman by virtue of our unexamined privileges and assumptions. Fundamentally we need to identify our bottom-line social justice issues, and prioritize and integrate these within every aspect of our organizing, from beginning to end. We need to recognize the positive value of the differences between women. And though it is vitally important, we need to do much more than continue to 'name' our issues. We need to recognize the interconnection of these issues. And we have to look at how we can implement action on these and on our social justice demands both within and outside of the 'movement.'

We wanted this document to sketch out some of the common themes to organize around which seemed to arise consistently in the forty-four workshops offered at the conference (see Appendix A), in the final plenary session (see Appendix D), and at our last community meeting (see Appendix E). Difference, and the exclusion and oppression of women based on their differences, was shown to be the major issue that we must tackle in our feminist agenda in the 1990's. The strengthening of the women's movement through coalition building arose in many workshops, although questions of just how to accomplish this, given the diversity of our issues, was rarely expounded. The relationship between local and national feminist politics and regionalism surfaced covertly, with many asking "Who is the movement anyway?" The question of language as it relates to accessibility to feminist politics was consistently raised. And the necessity for the women's movement to be based in grass-roots politics and not to be an exclusive, insular community surfaced as a priority. Finally, we learned that process, as it applies to how the conference was organized, is not neutral.

The concrete 'naming' of specific issues to be focused on in the 1990's happened in the forty-four workshops at the conference. Workshop notes are included here in Appendix C. Many of these issues, such as daycare, reproductive choice, and pay equity, have long been named by feminists as ones requiring our critical attention. But naming our issues as a community of women is only a first step to empowerment and to creating a feminist agenda for the 1990's. This very critical stage must be followed by a concrete "plan of action" if we are to see anything change in our lives. It is our intention in this report to focus on common strategies that we saw as relevant to all of the specific single-issues important to feminists in the 1990's. We hope that the naming of these common issues and strategies will serve as a catalyst to reflect on how feminists can further seek change, seek action, and set into play our feminist agenda for the 1990's.

DIFFERENCE

In planning the conference, our organizing priority centered on exploring issues shared in common by Canadian women within the areas of health, work, culture and social justice. What this denied, however, was that differences between women, in terms of class, race, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, size and regional location, are often more important than commonalities for many women. Differences between women are vitally important in that they are the site of historically specific unequal distributions of power which organize the lives of women in different, oppressive ways. Until the exploitation and oppression of one woman by another, based on these differences, is recognized and redressed, there can be little effective

organizing done by feminists in the name of 'all women.' In the 1990's, we need to place the issue of the differences between women at the center of our organizing strategies.

We did try to incorporate issues of race, class, sexuality and ethnicity into our conference. We planned separate workshops to specifically tackle aspects of these issues, and we tried to integrate difference into workshops by seeking diversity in our speakers and facilitators. For example, we planned a stream of workshops which specifically dealt with native women's issues, such as "Equity for Native Women in Post-Secondary Education", "Native Women and Literacy" and "Native Women: First Nation Council." We tried to have native women speakers in other

workshops, but disappointingly, there were unavoidable cancellations at the last minute. We also intervened and added workshops of interest to native women, women of colour, immigrant women and lesbians at a certain point in our organizing, in order to redress what we considered to be inadequate representation of these issues. We also tried to use physical spaces which would be more comfortable and less alienating for women. For example, the native workshops were in the native studies lounge. We put other workshops in close proximity so that these women also would not feel isolated. But despite our efforts, being successful at integrating issues of race, for example, into feminist organizing, entails complex and multi-faceted strategies which, largely, remain elusive for feminists. Much work needs to be done in trying to make feminist concerns and processes relevant and accessible to native women, for example.

We did however, identify some obstacles that groups or individuals might have in attending the conference. Accessibility was facilitated by providing extensive subsidies, many of which were targetted for women from particular organizations who might otherwise not have heard of, or had an interest in, the conference. Physical accessibility was facilitated by providing services for the deaf and visually impaired, and providing physically challenged women outlines of the location and times of workshops which were accessible by wheelchair. We also shifted room locations for those additional workshops that they identified they were interested in attending. We tried to plan promotional material to make it accessible to all women, by for example looking at the kind of words that we used and whether or not we were being culturally sensitive. And finally, recognizing the needs of many women, we provided on site daycare throughout the entire conference.

In the end, there was still a lot of work that we needed to do around difference, as articulated so clearly by the criticisms that arose in the women of colour caucus, for example (see Appendix D.) For women who hadn't given much thought to difference, our conference was somewhat successful in opening their eyes to the issue. But for women for whom difference was a central concern, the conference fell short. The struggle ahead to create bridges between women, to really tackle the issue of the differences and power inequities between women, and the struggle to change the organizing strategies of the feminist movement so that it is relevant and accessible, is not going to be easy. We can anticipate opposition, pain, and reluctance on the part of women who must challenge their own privilege. As issues of difference become more acute, there is great potential for division between women. But women with privilege must not react to that criticism and opposition as a threat or roadblock, but rather as part of the continuing challenge of feminism. As one participant stated, "All I know is that it's going to be a rocky road. But hopefully we're going someplace."

COALITION BUILDING

Coalition building, the process of developing alliances between various groups working for social change, is a strategy long familiar to socialist organizing. It is one that many of the women advocated as an ongoing necessity and vehicle for increasing our understanding and appreciation of diverse women's situations. Coalitions are important not only in terms of their effectiveness in pressuring politicians for reform and in gaining public support through education campaigns. They are also a means of integrating the goals of various inter-connected groups into the same

struggle, a struggle to create a broad movement working for change which has an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist, class perspective, respectful and responsive to each of our differences.

An example of coalition building arose in workshop number nineteen on "Women and Free Trade." Workshop participants, largely united in their opposition to free trade, began to share some ideas on strategies to continue their opposition. One idea discussed was the need to build international links in the labour movement. Another participant noted that in her community her union had gone out to some other women's groups and consumer advocate groups to build opposition to free trade. But out of the discussion a problem remained - largely a result of our conference 'format' - how could we really use these suggestions in our own communities? Should we have national coalitions too? Many questions remained. We didn't have time to really plan strategies. We were once again limited by our conference structure and process. However, the ongoing use of coalitions and alliances with other groups is a vital strategy for feminists in the 1990's.

REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXTS FOR FEMINIST POLITICS

"Moving Forward - Creating a Feminist Agenda for the 1990's" was organized by feminists in the Peterborough community. Peterborough is a city of 60,000 two hours drive northeast of Toronto. It is a community without a large, or organized, or diverse feminist culture or politics. In reflecting on the conference we learned that there can be significant differences between feminist assumptions and politics based on the community context. Communities of varying sizes, racial and ethnic compositions, organized political histories, and regional settings often have very different needs and political strategies. Working within a small community, having to negotiate one's feminist politics with, for example, a small and conservative municipal government, makes for an analysis of feminist political strategy which can be quite unlike that of other communities. There can also be significant differences between feminists who are in fact the representatives and articulate speakers for the visible Canadian feminist movement and those women who see themselves working on single issues within their community. Our commitment to organizing a conference which gave voice to both women working locally in the Peterborough community and women who are perhaps more long term veterans of the feminist movement, was never successfully clarified for the presenters or participants. Integrating these two had been one of our expectations of the conference. But as a result of our ineffective communication of this, tension arose from a lack of sensitivity to and knowledge of the different contexts the feminists at the conference worked in. An example of the tension arising from our ineffective communication was that the women of colour in the local Peterborough community did not always identify with the discourse or strategies of women of colour from larger cities like Toronto; as a result, "feminism" was not clarified for some women, but rather made more confusing and potential alliances were not initiated.

As a result, one of our conclusions is that it might have been better to organize a regional or local conference which addressed our needs, rather than one that also had a national focus. It was too difficult to articulate, on a national level, what our collective needs were and what our strategies should be, given our limited resources and lack of a clearly identified body of representatives spread across the country, who might have been better able to report on our goals and methodology.

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Exclusive forms of language usage have traditionally created insidious barriers for women within various cultural institutions and in society in general. Language itself, whether in the words that it is composed of, or in the ways that it is used to disguise hidden agendas, contains within it the biases of those who have power. Feminists have long argued that language as we know it falsely defines women and excludes us from reality. An example of this would be the use of the term "chairman" to mean anyone chairing a meeting, when in fact the term assumes and perpetuates a history, and a reality, where women do not participate equally in this activity.

Many feminists are trying to change this situation. They are tired of being left out of the cultural mainstream, of seeing their work overlooked, their voices silenced; they are tired of having their primary life-concerns dismissed as peripheral to the real world. One strategy these feminists interested in language have used has been to concentrate on social action - working on non-sexist reviewing and improved distribution of women's books, organizing women's caucuses in various associations to push for inclusive language, or working to guarantee the means for women of colour and working class women to produce a literature of their own that will reflect their lived experience. In their efforts to address issues previously denied, hidden or suppressed, or to affirm a new identity, another strategy feminists have used is to try to create a new women's

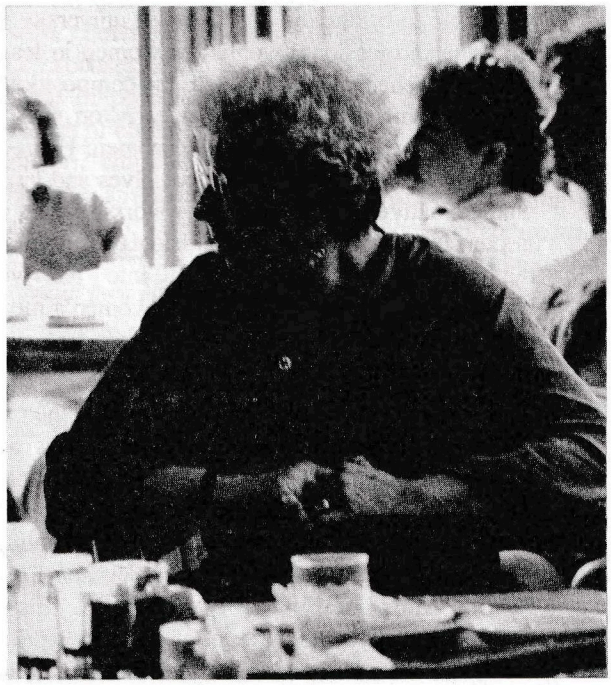
language, a new language use that articulates our values, vision, and actual experiences as women.

But this effort again reflects the biases of those who have the privilege to participate in this struggle - predominantly white and middle-class women. This struggle is often still inaccessible to many women. Feminist language is frequently alienating and exclusionary. There is a kind of 'inside speak' or 'insider language' which feminists can be caught up in, which presents grand problems for accessibility and barriers for many women. At our conference, this happened, in that, although we tried to minimize the jargon, a certain level of comfortableness with, first, the English language, secondly, feminist terms, and finally, a certain kind of discussion style, was necessary to participate freely in the conference. We recognize that this continues with the language used in this report. But we had made a conscious decision to aim the format of the conference primarily at feminist activists and academics (see 'How This Conference Came to Be') - women, in general, with educational privilege. As a result, the language used throughout the conference spoke primarily to these women, to the exclusion of many others.

A further example of language exclusion is that, given our lack of financial resources, we decided we couldn't provide simultaneous translation for French-speaking feminists and for other women whose first language is not English. The result was that we excluded women. This 'national' conference had a large gap in terms of representation from Quebec, and it also did not adequately provide a forum for many immigrant and native women.

But we did realize that the conference would not be a forum for the voices of all women. We recognized that we simply could not do this. We believed that it was still valuable and valid, however, to hold a conference which deals with the production of ideas. Ideas are important in culture, and even though academic and professional institutions are infused with hierarchy, we believed that we could still challenge this by struggling from within for a 'counter discourse.' We do not accept the existing societal hierarchy which presumes that ideas are generated solely or primarily from thinkers in academic or professional institutions. One of the premises of the conference was that there should be an interchange of ideas, a space for many voices. But every day women in these institutions have to struggle with the contradictions between their desires to be a part of a broad based, non-exlusionary movement, while still benefitting from the privileges these institutions accord them. Therefore, although we think that it was valid for our conference to use the language that it did, we also recognize that the challenges we received about this are an invaluable part of the feminist process.

We were also, to some extent, caught in a catch-22 situation arising out of financial considerations - we were seeking funding from some academic sources and this was predicated on a certain kind of presentation of our issues. If we are to utilize academic resources, we have to realize the repercussions this might have for feminist organizing - the internal, bureaucratic, institutional structure requires a certain reproduction of its own interests and language. If we believe that there is a possibility of working within these institutional



structures while still maintaining our feminist principles, then we have to look at how we can work effectively in creating some changes and opening up the way these institutions respond to women's issues. We need to push to be able to present our issues on our own terms, in a language which responds to our basic principles of social justice.

GRASSROOTS OUTREACH

The feminist movement has quite justifiably been criticized for being internally focussed, an exclusive community, and not very successful at doing outreach to women not involved in or open to our community. The difficulties feminists have in doing outreach were compounded for us by organizing a 'community' conference out of the venue of a university. Even where there is openness on the part of women in universities to difference and issues of oppression and exclusion, the present social and historical definition of what a

university is and who 'university people' are, colours people's perceptions of what possibilities exist for working within this context. And for those of the steering committee who are affiliated with the university, it was difficult to surrender our privilege when individual women were still willing to grant us our 'special status.' As a result, as far as outreach goes, we did a successful job of appealing to women in our community who have a kind of 'latent' feminism - that is, young women, lesbians, some women in community and labour groups, and burned out feminists who may now be open to reawakening. Outreach worked where it met the path of least resistance and least difference. We were able to bridge the gap between university women and other professional women or women in leadership positions - one need only look to the composition of our steering committee, which very early on was able to reach many of these community women. However, we didn't bridge the gap between ourselves and immigrant women, native women, and many working class women in our community. We need to encourage outreach and the inclusion of new women into the women's community - we need to make the women's movement truly grassroots.

One idea for how we could implement this is to continue to push our universities to rethink their roles as agents of social action. An example of this arose in workshop number thirty-one, "Building Community/ University Feminist Liaison." Dalhousie University has taken one step in doing outreach and in involving itself in social change by establishing the Henson College of Public Affairs and Continuing Education. This college has done an incredible amount of outreach work, by for example setting up innovative distance education programs, co-ordinating and promoting academic research that is of direct relevance to community organizations, for example, and establishing a strong affirmative action admission program. In this workshop some feminists expressed sympathy and interest in the Dalhousie experiment, although some non-university women in the workshop were skeptical that any true 'community' program could come out of a university. The conference organizers came away with the feeling that efforts at outreach from within a university are a long way from being accepted. An isolated program like women's studies cannot forge a new consciousness about the role of universities as agents of social change by itself. This must be broadly endorsed and supported by the university as a whole if the community is ever going to believe that universities can be responsive to their needs.

As organizers we also gained a much more in depth knowledge of the interconnection between our ability to do grassroots outreach and our biases in terms of our privilege as white, middle-class feminists. For example, the conference format, which largely derived from our academic and professional biases, was in the end, exclusionary (see process). We need to do a lot more work in making our movement, its expectations, and its language more accessible and less alienating to women.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SHORTCOMINGS AND STRENGTHS OF OUR PROCESS

Ongoing evaluations of how we as feminists work together and of why we choose particular models of organization is an essential aspect of focusing our struggles, and of creating a broadly based movement accessible and relevant to all women.

Throughout the conference, several women voiced their concerns over who organized this conference, for whom, and why. One of our major problems as organizers, as we see it, was that we chose an outcome -holding a conference- without having a clear sense of why the format of 'a conference' would be the answer to any of our questions over where we were heading. The women's studies program at Trent University was looking for an activist direction and also involvement with the local community - both vital concerns. But we chose our activity prematurely rather than identifying our objectives and then deciding how best to meet these. We fell into a model which was 'known' and comfortable to us as academics and professional women, without adequately exploring other possibilities for meeting our needs.

This conference was to have generated analysis and direction for Canadian feminists - the creation of an agenda - rather than an introduction to feminism or 'women's issues.' Being uncritical about methodology from early on (See 'How This Conference Came to Be), it took us, the organizers, some time to decide how the conference would meet these goals. As a result, we never comprehensively clarified for all of the participants, and particularly for the speakers, our assumptions about these goals, and about who the conference was targetted for. We did not adequately declare the bias that we had arrived at, that is, that we did not want to 'create' activists, analysts, and organizers, but that we wanted to target women who were already active, to focus on our direction as a social movement. Naming these assumptions was vital, even if we necessarily excluded other directions. By not both clearly naming 'the creation of an agenda by women working with women' as our goal, and centrally, naming how this was to be implemented, we failed to provide an opportunity for participants and speakers to negotiate these assumptions by either participating or

not. We tried to do too much without adequately reflecting on the specifics of how we expected the speakers and participants to achieve these goals. As a result, women at the conference had wide-ranging expectations, from sharing their own experiences, to analyzing the topics presented, to getting further information, to making an action plan.

The question of process was vital to organizing the conference, given our goals of generating analysis, direction and focus on broad feminist issues and strategies, within a diverse and politically committed community. How could we as feminists work together most effectively in assessing what some of our fundamental demands are, and how could we most effectively push them forward? We needed to question our decision to continue with the idea of 'presenting papers' when we wanted to emphasize the conference's participatory nature. What we needed to discuss further and explain to everyone involved with the conference, was that participatory means not just getting people to talk, but getting people to actively participate in the creation of an agenda. If the conference was to focus us as a movement, then we needed to choose activities and models which would facilitate this happening. An example of this structural problem was the use of the word and the concept of 'speakers', when perhaps we should have had 'resource people.' As a result, we rarely focussed on visionary strategies, but often just redisseminated our information.

Despite all of the above, there were a number of strengths in the organizing that we did for the conference. The idea for the conference came from faculty and students in Trent University's Women's Studies Program, and one of our consistent goals was working with, and doing outreach to, the women in our local community. We wanted to break down some of the ivory tower separateness of the university, and examine what relevance our women's studies program could have to this community. We wanted to make our resources of interest to local women, and we wanted to hear their voices, needs and concerns. Because of our extensive and often painful efforts at breaking our isolation, we had considerable participation by local women in planning and facilitating the conference. A diverse community of women in Peterborough and surrounding areas not only had *input* in shaping the conference, but formulated much of what the subject matter of the conference was to be, based on their self-identified needs. And arising out of this extensive community involvement, a network of women interested in feminist activities locally was formed. This was an important step for grass-roots feminist organizing in the Peterborough area. Activities arising out of this network are touched on in Appendix E.

And lastly, we had some good ideas for making the conference open to input and responsive to women's self-identified concerns. We built in several opportunities for input into the outcomes of the conference, including the plenary and open-ended evaluation forms in each workshop session and at the conclusion of the conference. Each workshop had both a facilitator and a presenter/s, and this was helpful in negotiating potential conflicts and in facilitating involvement by all participants in each workshop. We offered several very helpful facilitation workshops which were attended by presenters and facilitators. A local activist and educator, Linda Slavin, was instrumental in this. Another positive structural aspect to our conference was the inclusion of times and spaces for caucuses. A caucus is an opportunity for a specific group of people, whether working class, lesbians, or women of colour, for example, to come together to give support, empower each other, or to discuss how to equalize an unbalanced power relationship within a larger group. Caucuses were used at the conference, and many positive criticisms and recommendations arose as a result. (see Appendix D)

Process - the heart and guts of how we organize - is a fundamental aspect of realizing our goals of equality for all women. As a movement, feminism needs to incorporate issues of process into all of its organizing.

CONCLUSION

Written by Heather Avery and Joan Sangster

Organising this conference was a personal, collective and political process for all members of the steering committee, one that heightened our awareness of women's oppression and of our own roles, both in overcoming and perpetuating it. Brenda Ponic's report usefully underlines our self-critical reflections on the process of organising and the outcome of this conference. It reminds us, for example, how much the process of organizing can shape our feminist goals and vision. It shows us both the potential for institutions like the university as agents of social change and the serious limitations of such sexist and hierarchial organizations. Finally, it underlines for all of us the urgent need for the women's movement to actively embrace difference and take action to eradicate racism, economic oppression, and homophobia, as well as sexual oppression--to end all systems of domination.

Taking up Rozina Maart's and Judy Rebick's exhortations not to dwell on guilt, however, we must also understand our failures not only as individual and internal, but also as the products of social and structural

limitations. Thirteen women cannot change the world with a conference--especially not in their spare time!

That recognition, however, did not always stop us from trying. One goal of the conference, for instance, was to "bridge the gap" between feminist activists inside and outside the university and, in order to do that, some sections of the bridge had to be built before the conference. Furthermore, the gap, in Peterborough at least, was as wide as the St. Lawrence. Women on the steering committee who were situated in the university readily acknowledged the necessity of recognizing their privileges and devoting their efforts to helping the community benefit from their resources and energy, and placed themselves, in a sense, at the disposal of the community. Working outside the structure of one's own institutional framework proved to be a daunting task for many of us--overwhelming at times--yet all the energy we could devote was rarely enough to build a substantial bridge.

To illustrate with one example: soliciting input was perhaps the most time-consuming activity of all. If we were not to unilaterally determine what issues were important to women, we need to invite women to tell us what issues were important: what speakers should be invited, what questions should be answered, what form the conference should take. However, we could not simply invite written input. To avoid privileging the more literate, we had to meet all community members on their own terms--in their homes, at their jobs, in an environment comfortable for them. These consultations were time-consuming in themselves, and each meeting initiated more work for the steering committee: contacting recommended speakers, consulting with other groups, researching possible contacts. No speaker or topic decisions could be make independently: all had to be presented to committee meetings for approval. And of course all this "bridging the gap" occurred within a national framework that further augmented our workload. We could not simply take community ideas and organize around them: we had to shape and augment those ideas so that they addressed matters important to other women form across the country who had also contacted us.

Despite our hard work, the bridge isn't as strong as we would like. However, without instant financial resources, and with family, personal, work, and other political commitments vying for our time, we were forced to draw limits, to set aside certain goals, and to accept less than ideal situations. Yet, even though we made compromises, we also opened some local doors for new coalitions, initiated some younger women to feminism, drew a number of new activists in this community together. Though our efforts were partial, though we were never satisfied and always too far from our own utopian vision, these accomplishments must not be disparaged.

Would we do it again? Probably not. Exhausted by the very process that we set in motion and frustrated by its shortcomings, we want to move in new directions, focusing on other types of feminist work or on particular feminist issues, perhaps even on the partners and families we neglected. Still, our exhaustion and our frustration were not futile: the experience has left us more aware, more resolved, and still eager to move forward--into the 1990's and beyond.

APPENDIX A

The Conference Agenda

Moving Forward: Creating a Feminist Agenda for the 1990's - Conference Agenda

FRIDAY

REGISTRATION, Noon to 10 pm, LEC Porters Lodge
Facilitation Workshop: 2:30-5:00pm, begins LECLH, splits into LECDH, LECLH, LEC Pit

Dinner, 6-7 pm, LECDH, CASH

8 pm, CC Great Hall

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS, Rozena Maart, Karen Andrews, Alice Williams and Judy Rebick will speak on "Creating a Feminist Agenda for the 1990's"

RECEPTION, 9:30-12:00, LEC Pit

SATURDAY

REGISTRATION FROM 8 am to noon, LEC 8 GATHERING PLACE, LEC Pit
DAYCARE in the ATHLETIC COMPLEX DISPLAYS in LEC 1 and hallways FILM SCHEDULE ENCLOSED
REFRESHMENTS all day in the LEC Pit

7:15-8:30 BREAKFAST, LECDH

Room Locations	LECLH	CCPDR	CCCC	NSL	Morton RR	AJM Smith	OCLH	OC5
9:00-12:30	**1) Maintaining a Feminist Perspective in Women's Health Care** -Gio Guzzi, Coordinator of Volunteers for Birth Control and Unplanned Pregnancies Counselling, Women's Health Care Centre, Winnipeg -Susan Law and Roma Rees, Women's Health Care Centre, Peterborough	**2) Feminism in Other Parts of the World** -Angela Miles, OISE -Rozena Maart, York University **Break 10:30-11:00, LEC Pit** **3) Health Issues for Office Workers** -Lynn Bueckert and Lois Weninger, Women and Work: Research and Education Society, Burnaby	**4) Educating Against Racism** -Leah Vosko, Former Employee of Toronto Board of Education -Denise Graham, Coordinator of Race Relations Committee, Peterborough -Bambi Stables, Peterborough	**5) The Spirit of My Quilts: My Double Heritage** -Alice Williams, Curve Lake **Break 10:30-11:00, NSL** **6) Equity for Native Women in Post-Secondary Education** -Agnes Grant and Maria Ross, Equity Program, Brandon University	**7) Female Cultural Workers: Looking at Difference** -Sara Diamond, Women's Labour History Project, Vancouver -Sarindar Dhaliwal, Visual Artist, Kingston -Jacqueline Beauge-Rosier	**8) The Struggle for Lesbian Rights** -Karen Andrews, Ontario Coalition of Gay and Lesbian Rights **Break 10:30-11:00, LEC Pit** **9) We're All Sisters Here: Working in Collectives** -Tunde Nemeth, University of Ottawa -Janice Ristock, Trent University	**10) Childcare in the 1990's: Education or Social Service?** -Sue Colley, Executive Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare -Suzanne Potvin, Executive Coordinator, Canadian Daycare Association	**11) Women and Popular Culture: The Contradications of Pleasure** -Helen Simson, OISE -Leslie Gotfrit **Break 10:30-11:00, NSL** **12) Caucus**
LUNCH, 11:30-1:30, LECDH								
1:30-3:00	**13) Stress in Caregiving: Personal and Work Experiences** -Karen Williams and Marina Morrow, OISE -Nora Gold, University of Toronto	**14) Refugee and Immigrant Women: The Iranian Experience** -Homa Asaysh, Women's Health Clinic, Women's College Hospital	**15) Value Considerations in Daycare** -Dixie Schilling, Director, Curve Lake Daycare	**16) Traditional Values and Customs of Women** -Moira Seymour, Ojibway Cultural Centre, Kenora	**17) Working Towards Education Equality: Strategies and Resources** -Ann Holmes, Ontario Women's Directorate	**18) Lesbian Images in Culture** -Paulina Palmer, University of Warwick, England -Nada Levitt, Toronto	**19) Women and Free Trade** -Barb Cameron, Former Research Director United Electrical Radio & Machine Workers of Canada -Alex Daag, Education Director, ILGWU	**20) Caucus**

COFFEE BREAK, 3:00-4:00, LEC Pit and NSL

SATURDAY CONTINUED

Room Locations	LECLH	CCPDR	CCCC	NSL	Morton RR	AJM Smith	OCLH	OC5
4:00-6:00 pm	**21) Childbirth and Midwifery** -Jutta Mason, Toronto Historian -Kelly Sexsmith, Local Midwife -Edyeth Johnson, Association of Ontario Midwives	**22) Immigrant Women Organizing** -Bonnie Wood, Coordinator Women Working with Immigrant Women (WWIW), Fredericton -Salome Lucas, WWIW, Toronto -Lena Rebeiro, ESL Instructor, Peterborough -Jaklin Zayat	**23) Violence Against Women** -Gloria Geller, Regina -Kathleen F. Taylor, Curve Lake	**24) The Spirit of My Quilts: My Double Heritage** -Alice Williams, Curve Lake	**25) Women's Art: Looking into the 1990's** -Susan Douglas, Ottawa	**26) Empowering Lesbians in Counselling** -Janice Ristock, Trent Uni. -Laurie Chesley and Donna MacAulay, Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays, Toronto	**27) Feminist Methodology and Workplace Struggles in Clerical Work and School Teaching** -Anne Manicom -Marguerite Cassin, School of Public Administration, Dalhousie University -Nancy Jackson, McGill Uni.	**28) Sexual Harassment: How to Deal with It** -Marina Morrow, June Larkin, Karen Williams, OISE

DINNER, 6:00-7:45, LECDH

COMPANY OF SIRENS THEATRE SPECIAL, 8:00-10:30, CC Great Hall, Introduction by Mavis Wilson. Followed by a Woman's Dance, 10:30-1:00, CC Great Hall, and a Gathering Place, CCSCR

SUNDAY

BREAKFAST, 7:45-9:00, LECDH

Room Locations	OCLH	OCPDR	OC4	NSL	OCDH	AL	OC6	OC3
9:30-11:00	**29) Pregnant Women: Fetal Containers or People with Rights?** -Kelly Maier, Simon Fraser University -Nikki Colodny and Katrina Kilroy, Women's Choice in Health, Toronto	**30) Women Within Organized Labour** -Marg Bail, CUPW, Yellowknife -Lynn Bue, CUPW, Toronto	**31) Building Community/ University Feminist Liaison** -Anne Bishop, Halifax -Joan Sangster and Barb Mann, Peterborough/ Trent Women's Coaltion	**32) Native Women and Literacy** -Priscilla Hewitt, Ministry of Skills Development, Toronto	**33) Dealing with R.E.A.L. Women/ Mobilizing Women in the Home** -Mary Louise Adams, OISE -Karen Dubinsky, Queen's University -Meg Luxton, York University	**34) From Women and Development to Feminism and Development: MATCH's New Direction** -Rita Parikh and Louise Guenette, MATCH	**35) Feminism and Political Economy: Gender and Class** -Pat Armstrong, Sociology, York University	**36) Caucus**
11:00-11:30, COFFEE BREAK, LEC Pit & NSL		**38) Equality in Employment: Assessing Policy** -Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, City of Toronto -Charlene Avon, CUPE, Peterborough -Pat Bird, Ontario Equal Pay Coalition						
11:30-1:00	**37) Women and Emotional Wellness** -Anne Oakley and Shirley Addison, Women's College Hospital, Psychotherapy Centre for Women		**39) The Challenge to Women's Studies** -June Larkin and Pat Staton, OISE -Connie Guberman, University of Toronto	**40) Native Women: First Nation Council** -Nora Bothwell, Chief, Alderville Reserve	**41) Passages: Female Life Cycle and Creativity** -Anne Newell, Margo Smith, Caroline Languill, Betsy Struthers, Peterborough	**42) Strategies of Political Communication in the Feminist Movement** -Nancy Worsfold, Montreal	**43) Quebec Government and its Women's Programs** -Jacinthe Michaud, OISE	**44) Caucus**

LUNCH AND PLENARY, 1:00-3:00, CC Great Hall

APPENDIX B

Keynote Speeches

ROZENA MAART

Rozena is a black feminist, South African scholar and activist in a number of areas including black consciousness and violence against women. In her work toward a feminist agenda for an anti-apartheid and anti-capitalist politics in South Africa, she is engaged in the investigation of regulation and control of women through racist, capitalist and patriarchal policies. In 1987 she was nominated to the women of the year event in South Africa for her work on women and violence. She is a founding member of the first and only black feminist organization in South Africa, Women Against Repression, otherwise known now as People Against Sexism. She is presently Toronto-based.

Hello. There are four keynote speakers, and so we have all been asked to be as brief as possible, so I will try to be as brief as possible. In Toronto, Canada, I work in the Biko/ Rodney/ Malcolm Coalition, a black consciousness organization, and I am also a founding member of a very new organization called Awamandla. As you all know in South Africa we say amandla, and that means power to the people. The new organization, Awamandla, as an acronym, stands for African women's demand to live without abuse. Now in South Africa, amandla, and note the emphasis on man in the middle, has actually been taken literally and figuratively, and so, we thought, that in order to salute the rebellion and resistance of women, we should have an acronym, an organization, that recognizes that South African women are 52% of the population, and have been fighting since the day of dawn.

In Toronto, apart from being in the Biko/ Rodney/ Malcolm Coalition and being in Awamandla, I feel since I've arrived, that I'm not very far away from home. And I say this because I'm in a country that created, or sketched, the master plan of apartheid. Living in a country like Canada, where South Africa got its apartheid policy from, as you all know, Canada was the first country to send its indigenous people to reserves, or as we say in South Africa, the homelands. So, having heard what has been said about me as an introduction, and having heard what I've just told you about the things that I do in Toronto, how does that inform you about my thoughts on forming 'Moving Forward, Creating a Feminist Agenda for the 1990's?' Feminism as a movement, feminism as a political tool, feminism as a tool of the masses, has been criticized for its inability to grasp the manifestation of racism. It's been critically looked at for its inability to grasp the structural, the systemic, and the institutionalized manifestations of racism.

At this point, I'd just like to draw your attention to a workshop that I did when I first did one term of a so-called Phd at OISE. I need to mention this, for you to look at what it is that forms, for many of us, an understanding, and an analysis that is called feminism. What it is that we read, that we perceive, that we become cognizant of that then forms our framework of understanding about feminism. In the workshop a friend and I did, we were the only non-white women in the course, and so when it was our turn to present a workshop, we decided that because there were several events in the class that actually led us to believe that feminism is no longer the emancipation, sorry, the work toward the emancipation of all women, but sometimes should be called self-aggrandizement, we then proceeded by having a workshop that looked at how the 98% of white women that were in the class, what they

identified as feminist, and we had various columns: what constituted their understanding of feminism, another column for feminist thinkers and contributors to the women's movement, another column for what has been written about, and when we proceeded by doing this, it became very clear to me, to all of us, that black, African women's names were never ever mentioned, because we asked them to do this on a piece of paper, that South American women who have contributed to the women's movement, were never ever mentioned, that Asian women, that first nation women, did not constitute women worthy of mentioning as contributors to the women's movement. What later happened in this event was that two people started crying, one person got up and said that the purpose of this workshop was for me to get satisfaction out of calling her racist, and I said to her, I never mix my words, I'm always very concerned and try to be as precise as possible when I point out to people what I consider, and who I consider to be the agents of racism, who work for the .... of white supremacy, and I look at the particular actions, and I talk about what it is, and get people to learn to understand that when you think of feminism and the only people you can think of is Adrienne Rich, and we all know how they've contributed, but the words Barbara Smith, Angela Davis, Bell Hooks, Audre Lorde do not enter your mind, then you have serious problems. And your problem is not yours alone, your problem is learning to see for yourself, not only the recipients of racism, black women, otherwise known as visible minorities in this country, but how you, as an agent are able, are encouraged, to perpetuate, to maintain, and to reproduce the processes of your thought that are going to lead you down the path of racist relations. One of the women rang me the next day and said that she had thought, and the many women that she had spoke to about the workshop, that coming into feminist consciousness meant a refreshing, reverberating, a movement towards being with women, understanding, but she did not for once believe, or think, that when we talk about revolutionary consciousness that it would be as painful as the experience that she went through the night before. And I can tell you that coming to revolutionary consciousness is equally painful for me, when I stand up there as a black woman, as a black South African woman and I talk about gender inequality because for us, from where we come from, that is one of the most defying things you can do, because we say that your fight is not only to fight apartheid and racism, but the fight to dismantle male domination in all of its transforming ramifications and that is coming to revolutionary consciousness, that is painful when you as a black woman get up and talk about how South Africa has the second highest rate of violence against women in the world and refuse to be silent, and refuse to only talk about only what you've been socialized to believe, and that is, never talk about violence against women in the black community. So it's equally painful for me to stand up and talk about all the concerns and issues that form my feminist agenda, which includes having to address the whole question of sisterhood, and what it is, what it means to be white, what it means to be black. Unfortunately, another woman that I see from time to time - this is after the workshop - commented about the way I've been addressing racism and sexism. And when I responded to some of the things that she said, her being a feminist psychoanalyst, the first thing she said to me was that I was using what she labelled as transference theory, that I had a bad experience and that was why I was reacting towards her. And I told her that for me, as someone who - my academic training includes social work, sociology, and psychology - for me, having worked as a therapist and counsellor, in gynecology and emergency in hospital, being the first black social worker surrounded by white folks, surrounded by being in a hospital that was another pillar of the apartheid strength, I said to her that my training and my experience has taught me that psychology has no language for the pathology of racism. And so we proceeded to discuss, to have dialogue about, what she called my transference reaction and I called just one of the little arrogances, the naivetes, of how she continues to perpetuate what she herself critiques. When I finished talking to her, her comment was "I'd like to see the cemetery of all these people you talk of" and unfortunately, this is how, when you as a black woman reluctantly engage in dialogue with white women about these issues, are labelled.

Being in Toronto and my contact with women who are concerned about what the feminist movement, what the women's movement, what the 1990's will bring, are not being called upon to talk about racism, are also concerned about white women doing work on racism and never making it clear that when they do work with people of colour, that they are actually working with recipients of racism. I never hear that language being used. I never see, at OISE for example, where, I still think, missionary education is still rearing its ugly head, because I don't see African or black staff in the department. That is a reality for me. It's a reality for me when, coupled with all of that, the imperialism that goes on, white academic arrogance which includes bringing settler colonialists, otherwise known as white South Africans, into this country to talk about black universities in South Africa. It brings to mind the question that I posed to somebody who said that she was doing work on racism. I said to her, why don't you stand at the elevator at OISE and ask white people "what is it like to be white?" We're always talking about what it's like to be black. Don't ask me what it's like to

be black! Don't ask me how I identify oppression! Don't ask me how I identify expectation as a black person. Ask white people "What is it like to be white?" That should be the crucial question. Ask them how they engage in racist relations from when they open their eyes in the morning until they go to bed at night. That's what should be questioned.

I'm concerned that a feminist agenda that we are addressing is going to continue to say, "We have a women's studies program at McMaster" and then a few people..., we have a women's studies program at this institution, and that institution, and then when people actually get up and say "what are you teaching on race?" or "what are you teaching on nonwhite women?", you get the usual coy answer, "Oh, but we've only just started." And I want to say to this conference, if you ever have contact with women like that, tell them that black women are tired of coming later. We want to come *now*.

Before I end, and I want to end with a poem, because I come from a verbal tradition where writing papers becomes a lethargic process most of the time because they're banned, so information is disseminated by word of mouth, I want to talk about the political insignificance of guilt. It hasn't worked, it isn't working, and it's still not going to work. Talking about, for me as a black person being asked to come and talk about "Moving Forward," I have to talk about the naming process, I have to talk about violence, I have to talk about whether, when the women who were massacred, and there's no doubt about the fact that they were massacred, and there's no doubt the fact that it was gross, and painful, and another step backwards for women like us who have been working so hard in this area, to name it as yet another attempt by male domination to undermine the work and to silence us and keep us indoors - we should also be naming in the same process and look at the imperialism that has penetrated through our minds when we do not think about U.S.-backed rebels in Sudan and Ethiopia killing women and children, when we do not think of black women shot by the police as a feminist agenda. Feminist agendas are named, and sometimes it's unnamed. And this is when it becomes a responsibility to take it forward and not always think of black women as the ones to take black women's issues toward a feminist agenda. Moving Forward towards the 1990's also means to me that guilt be turned into positive action, that guilt be turned into the acknowledgement that I am white, or I am Jewish, or I am South American, and this is how I can proceed by looking at myself first. I always tell people, "You know, I'm heterosexual." I'm black and I'll always be black, but I'm heterosexual and that may change, but how do I limit the fact that I am an agent of heterocentrism no matter what I say or do. How do I limit the heterocentric relations by which my mere presence here as a heterosexual person begs of me to continue forming those relations and perpetuating heterocentrism, and maintaining it, and reproducing it. And my cause as a heterosexual black woman is to acknowledge the heterocentrism that exists within me and to take upon myself to question every little piece of lesbophobia that I see, that I see with other people, that I see within ANC politics, that I see in black nationalist politics. That is my commitment, that is my concern, that is my feminist agenda as well. And so, guilt should not remain something that we feel, but should remain something we should focus on. If feminists cannot "Forward" toward the emancipation of *all* women, we should not hesitate to call it anything else but self-aggrandizement.

If feminists cannot "Forward" toward the emancipation of all women, we should not hesitate to call it anything else but self-aggrandizement.

The poem that I am going to read, ... a friend of mine who is from South Africa as well - we had a very painful experience being in organizations who were feminist in South Africa, like rape crisis, it was always 97% white feminist analysis, and having been there for such a long time, we went through a lot of pain and anger and frustration, because we didn't only see ourselves as black women concerned with racism and colonialism but we also saw ourselves as black women committed to struggles which meant dismantling male domination.

Meet the door
the door swung open to meet the gaze like it usually does to announce the coming
the coming of yet another
yet another white feminist to a feminist meeting
my eyes did their weekly survey: two black skins, and the rest
the rest, all staring and glaring, whispering and smiling, squashed noses [unintelligible] free minds, dressing as closeted
and me, a black working class, dressy, perfumed, revolutionary feminist with a razor blade mask, so-called communist
lipstick

They talk
we listen
they talk
we listen
they talk
we understand
we always understand
we talk
they don't understand
we talk and talk
they still don't understand
we talk and talk and point and talk and laugh and talk and yell and talk and gesture and talk and move and talk
they still don't understand
they reply, with vigor and with righteousness
they respond, smitten with disdain
they analyze imperfection
no flaws, no dreads, no hanging threads
we say "we didn't say that"
they say
all together now
"it's all in your head"

It's always in our fuckin' head
never in theirs
we say
what you talk about applies to you
applies to your white world
your brown rice white world
your economically strengthened white world
your racially configurated white world
your Minnie maids in the kitchen white world
you want the keys to the car white world
you want your own banking account white world
you can't speak coloured slang white world
you don't know how to get [unintelligible]
you don't know how to talk to black women white world
you're scared of black men white world
you don't know how to get to our homes white world
Our feminism is not feminism white world
not your feminism
not your feminist white world

Our struggle is black
your skies are blue
ours hazy
but we know what to do
if we have tits
you love us to bits
if we withdraw
we make you feel sore
you say that we're sisters
and that we are one
but if we ain't like you
we ain't no fun
if we question your framework
we're opposing the cause
so call off your cause because
your cause ain't no cause
until your white cause is done.

KAREN ANDREWS

Karen is a lesbian activist who has been involved with a number of gay and lesbian organizations in Ontario. Recently she's been affiliated with the Toronto Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays, as well as the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario. Since March of 1985 Karen has been involved in a legal case against OHIP. She's been fighting for the coverage of her partner of twelve years. This case has been supported by the labour movement, Ontario's ombudsman, and in particular by the gay and lesbian community. Karen has certainly been an inspiration because of the many risks that she has taken in her legal struggle. This fall, after working for eleven years as a library worker, Karen will enter Osgoode as a law student, and she claims that she is bruised but not totally disenchanted with the legal system.

Thank you. When I was still old enough to need a babysitter, Germaine Greer had just published *The Female Eunuch*, and I had a babysitter who, when she came, she used to forbid the use of the television, and we got to stay up later... and we used to discuss the precepts of feminism when I was eleven years old. And it was a great book to do this, because the language was quite colourful, and the chapters were quite small, and it wasn't really like reading Juliet Mitchell, and it was a very meaningful relationship that I had with Lisa. And most importantly, Lisa was going to go to university, and girls from my neighborhood did not go to university. It enhanced my appreciation of books, and ideas, and it spoke directly to a lot of feelings that I was beginning to have as a little kid going to high school.

I progressed through high school and I began to realize that I was not only a feminist, but I also began to accept my lesbianism. And when I entered my early 20's, I decided that I was more oppressed as a lesbian than I was as a woman, so I tried to participate in social action in the gay liberation movement. The gay liberation movement that I found in the early 80's did not speak to my values, did not speak to the way I lived, did not speak to my gender, and did not speak to my feminism. So very reluctantly I gave that up, and I started going to women's events, feminist events, and what I found there were the lesbians who were also not working in the gay liberation movement. I remember going to Women's Day in the early 80's, and probably a third of Convocation Hall in Toronto was lesbian, and there was no mention made of this, but at the time it didn't matter, because it was a very empowering experience. We were there.

I am not going to suggest that the character of the feminist movement is lesbian. But what I do notice is that there seems to be a disproportionately large number of lesbians who do work in the feminist movement. When I look at feminist agencies, agencies that help battered women, raped women, pregnant women, women who are in conflict with the law, women and mental health - you find lesbians. And I am not suggesting there are not lesbians at the Royal Bank, or that there are not lesbians at the Junos, or at Wimbledon, because they're there too, but they just seem to be very visible in feminist work. This is the problem. I think the gay liberation movement is run by men. And that the feminist movement is legitimized by issues that are important to heterosexual women - middle class, white, heterosexual women. That the lesbian agenda is not being articulated by anyone. That there is no lesbian liberation movement.

Two main issues that are very important to the feminist movement are choice and daycare. Now, I am an advocate of choice: I have never had an abortion; except for the possibility of assault, which is not as remote as it should be, I will never need an abortion. But I go to demonstrations, and I send money, and I send postcards at work, distribute them to all the people I work with. I am actively pro-choice. But it's not personally my issue. It is my issue because choice is the bedrock of women's equality, it is predicated on women's reproductive freedom. Women's reproductive freedom means women's sexual freedom, it means *my* sexual freedom. This is why I am pro-choice; it is my issue too. Look at daycare: I don't know a lesbian who is not supportive of daycare, except as *Newsweek* recently reported, only a third of us have children. But we understand that little boys and little girls need care and education and nutrition; it is in society's interest. I do not begrudge the taxes that I have to pay for daycare, but my children are not in those centres. We understand and support those issues. Yet our issues, issues of terrible importance to us, are not understood and supported in the same way. I don't even think they're supported and understood in a remote way.

The problem is that the gay liberation movement is run by men, and that the feminist movement is legitimized by issues that are important to heterosexual women

I recognized this when I started fundraising and actively promoting my case against OHIP. And what I sensed from the thousands of lesbians that I met across the province was a tremendous relief and a tremendous pride, not that a lesbian was winning, but that a lesbian was fighting. I mean, really, how our lives are presented usually in the press is that there's sort of a love triangle and somebody gets stabbed. And people come up to me and say, "You know, this is the first time I've heard anything about lesbians that's sort of wholesome." You know? Okay, I contribute to this, because I have a cute little dog, and every time the media wants a picture, the dog is there, and okay, we look wholesome and we lie - but we're wholesome. What a truly edifying experience for me was the fundraising, because I had to raise $10,000 to appeal a very negative, homophobic, anti-feminist decision to the appeals court in Ontario. And I had some pretty interesting experiences. I approached Canada's premier feminist journalist, instrumental in the choice movement, instrumental in Casey House AIDS hospice, instrumental in Nellie's - it's June Callwood. And I had to raise money and I said, "You know, it's an issue that's very germane to AIDS health care, men are having a hard time getting health care, and I have to raise money, and I don't know how I'm going to pay for the first consignment of buttons. Will you write about it?" And she said she wished me a lot of luck, but there were just too many other issues. Okay, I'm a reasonable person, I understood this. Then, a feminist entertainer came to town, wink wink nudge nudge... she's known in the feminist community and in other communities. I approached her and I said, "Will you please sign a few books for me? We'll auction them off, you know, and I'll be able to pay to print my buttons." And you know what? The same thing happened. "We wish you a lot of luck, but... sorry." And the next thing I knew was that she was going off to Casey House to wield her charitable good works. And these experiences embittered me a little bit. But I think the issue is a little more complicated than just sort of a public relations problem that we have. I have a friend who works at Jessie's - this is an agency that helps pregnant teenagers - and my friend regularly complained to me about the homophobia of this particular constituency. And we disagree about kind of the morality of spending your career empowering these women when these women think that it's a socially acceptable activity to go out and fag-bash on Saturday night with your boyfriend. And I know how the argument works: we support them, and we educate them, and we change them. But I think the reality is that professors are closeted to students, and doctors are closeted to patients, and that social workers are closeted to clients, and that not much changes. And it's kind of like slitting our own throats.

I have a lot of conflict about the issue of AIDS. Lots and lots and lots of lesbians do AIDS work. I know men who are sick, and you know, I'll do their shopping, and I'll do their laundry, and I'll advocate in their hospital rooms for them, because these are my friends - but I don't do AIDS work. Is there a lesbian here who

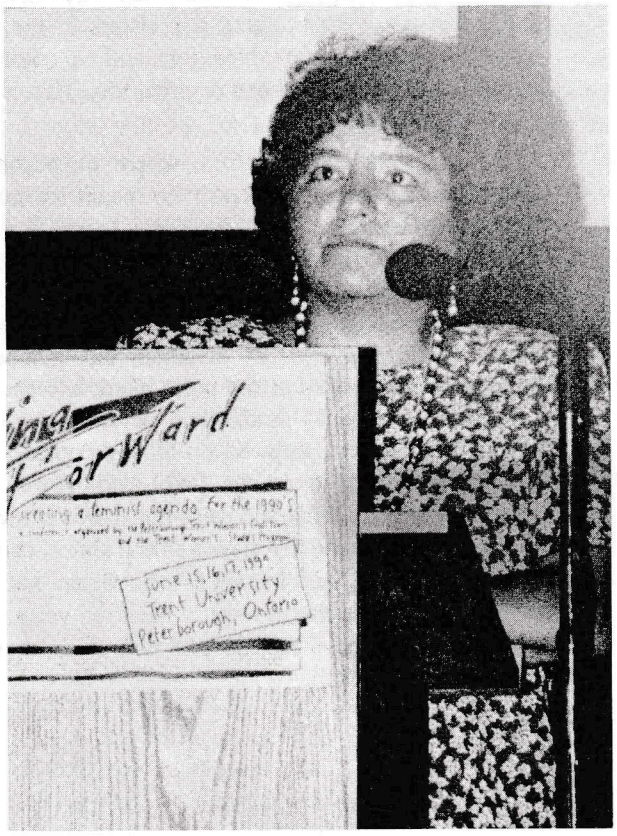
can say with any kind of certitude that gay men would be there for us, with their anger and with their money, if we were sick?

I think the issue of lesbianism discredits feminism. I think lesbianism taints feminist organizations. I remember hearing a REAL woman, or REAL lady, talking about the Supreme Court decision around abortion, and she said, "The lesbian periodical *Broadside* thinks that the Supreme Court of Canada is just great." I thought this was interesting because I didn't think that *Broadside* was a lesbian periodical, and I miss that periodical, but it was a very clever remark, because what she was saying was, "Gee, you know, if *lesbians* think the Supreme Court of Canada is doing the right thing, it is really time to fire Bertha." I think this argument is largely bought by the community, and I think it is the responsibility of heterosexual feminists to decry these notions. I think it's time for heterosexual feminists to start admitting that some of their best friends are lesbians. I think it's time for heterosexual feminists to be as knowledgeable and supportive of our issues as we are of yours, because ultimately they are all feminist issues.

I think it's long past the time when lesbians were just tolerated in the feminist movement. I think we should be respected in the feminist movement for the work that we do. I'm very sorry that Nancy Rich isn't here, because I had the privilege of hearing her speak in Calgary and she talked about lesbians and gays. And it meant a great deal to the lesbians and gays that were there, that we were brothers and sisters in the union movement, that we could have jobs and we could have families and we could have cavities too. This is what I'm talking about.

I wanted to conclude from where we began, and talk about my feminist friend who meant so much to me. About ten years ago she came to my house in Toronto, and we have a very tiny house. In Toronto, the size of your house is disproportionately related to the size of your mortgage. She came, and she's not a stupid woman and she sort of counted the number of bedrooms. She looked at me point-blank and she said, "Are you a lesbian?" And I had never said 'yes' to anyone before. So I screwed up all my courage and I looked her straight in the eye, and I said "yes". I don't remember exactly what she said, but it was something about if I didn't mend my ways I would almost certainly be better off dead. And I never saw her again, and she's a public school teacher now. It's been ten years, and I miss her - but she owes me one hell of an apology! Thank you very much.

ALICE WILLIAMS



Alice was born of an Ojibwe mother and a Norwegian father in Trout Lake in northwestern Ontario, the traditional hunting and gathering territory of her mother's people from time immemorial. She received her teaching certificate at Thunder Bay, where she taught for two years, and she finally settled with her husband, Doug, at Curve Lake reserve which is just north of Peterborough. While looking after a home and four children, Alice completed her B.A. from Trent University as well as developing her skill in beadwork and sewing. Then, in the late '70's, she discovered quilting, mastering the techniques which allowed her to create the meticulous hand-quilting in her bedcoverings and wall hangings. Gradually, Alice formed the concepts which would be the basis for future work and her distinctive style. She envisioned blending her cultural heritage into a unified whole, the central motif depicting symbols and themes of her native background, surrounded by traditional North American patchwork patterns, the legacy of her father's people. Through her understanding of the teachings of the elders, she has created her own life symbol. Some of these quilts are on display in the Lady Eaton College Pit. As Alice grows as an artist, she is searching for new ways to express the spirit of the images she portrays in her own drawings.

...Megweetch... [Anishnabe language].. I want to thank everybody for coming here tonight. Some of us have come from very far, and some of us don't come from very far. We want this conference to bring social change, and in our hopes and prayers for social change for our people, we ask the good spirits that surround us to help us, and we ask the earth for her help. We also ask the four directions for their gifts, the gifts that teach us to care for one another. The life-givers are here also to help us to that. The life-givers, and we in turn, in the way that we respect them, we show respect to one another.

When I first started quilting - it was only ten years ago - I worked with many quilters in the area, and I wanted to do this work, I really really loved it, but I wanted it to be something special for me, and I wanted it to be a message for all people. I wanted it to speak to people, and I wanted it to be distinguished from other quilts. The way I did it was to incorporate my double heritage. Like Brenda said in her introduction, my mother is Anishnabe and my father is white, and I have that double heritage. When I was small and going to school, it was a very shameful thing to be Indian in Canadian society. I went to school in Kenora, and because my father was white I was not considered Indian under the Indian Act and in order for me to get my schooling I had to live in private white homes. I was isolated from all Indian people, and I had no idea what it was like to be Indian, because I didn't associate with Indian people. Then the age of liberalism came in the early '70's, and all of a sudden it was wonderful to be Indian. For some reason, there was magic in being an Indian, and every white person wanted an Indian friend. And it was really funny ... sometimes people think, the way I talk, that I hate white people; that really isn't true, although I hate many, many things about a male-dominated Western culture. One of the things that has always plagued me, ever since I was small and couldn't understand it, is racism. Our first speaker spoke about racism, as a black woman. And I just want to share some things with you about racism in Canada, being a native person. You know, this is our homeland. In our history, we believe that we were put here to take care of the earth. And it really pains us when we see how terrible everything is.

As a child growing up with white people, it was always me that was wrong. When boys used to call me "squaw" - "squaw" is a very derogatory name for Indian woman - I would come home and I would tell these people I lived with, the woman of the house, I would tell her, "You know, those boys called me squaw, and I know there's something wrong with that. I don't know what's wrong with that, but there's something very very wrong with that." And you know what she said to me? She said, "Oh, don't worry about that. You know those boys are teasing you and they really like you. Deep down inside, they really like you. They just want your attention." And I used to think: "Oh... I can't believe that. But there must be something wrong with my system of beliefs that I can't believe that. What's wrong with me?" So all my life I have grown up thinking there's something wrong with me because I just don't perceive things properly... It's taken me a long time to be showing about my double heritage. But one of the things I feel I have to do as an Anishnabeque is, I want to educate people. I want to educate people more than saying, "One and one is two." Sometimes I want to educate people in their hearts. Because of the life I went through living in white society, I have had to look at my own heart.

I just want to share with you some of the recent discriminations, or racial things that have happened... that I have come across. I know you can't know that every day of our lives as native people we face discrimination. You know, one of the things that we have, one of our rights, is that we can go to a store and be tax-exempt. When you tell the sales clerk that you're tax-exempt, they really hate you. You know they want to say something to you, and sometimes you get remarks like, "Hmmph. It must be nice to be Indian." Or else they say, "I wish I had a band number." And I think, What am I supposed to do with that? You know, to educate that person as to why we're supposed to be tax-exempt... would take a long time. But there are historical reasons for that, which the public isn't educated about. They know we're tax-exempt, and then they're really mad at us about it. But like I say, everybody should know why, so that there wouldn't be any hate. I'm sure if people knew why, they wouldn't be so angry, and want to take it out on us.

I said I wanted to share with you a couple of pictures that I have come across very recently. I'm debating whether to apologize or not, but I really do believe that I will apologize if I hurt anybody, because I know they meant well. This is something that really bothers me, when people have done something to insult me or my people, or any people. I don't know yet, but I'm talking to people all along and I keep getting educated, but I don't know yet what to say to people when they say, "Oh, I didn't mean that," "Oh, that's not what it means." I want you to look at this picture. I want you to think about this person in this picture. Where do you think she is? What's she feeling? You can make up a little story about what's happening there. But think about her and look at her. I want you to think about: who is she? Who is this woman? Now remember all those things you've thought about.

Now for some of you, you knew right away, even from the first picture that was a native woman. For some of you, you didn't want to admit it was a native woman. For some of you, when you saw the bars, and you knew that that was jail, you knew that that was a native woman. I knew it was a native woman when she was behind bars. This picture is very offensive to me. When I saw this picture, I couldn't believe my eyes. I couldn't believe that somebody wouldn't know what that meant. It is on the outside envelope of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Ontario. It is also on the outside envelope of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Ontario. It is also on the corner of their letter. And they're soliciting for money. Now, I complained about that, and this must have been about six weeks ago, four weeks ago; I still haven't heard, although through the grapevine I've heard them say that "Oh, we didn't mean it," that "I'm sorry she interpreted it that way." You see, I'm wrong. It sounded like they argued back and forth who was going to write to me and explain - I don't know if they're going to even apologize, but I haven't heard from them yet.

Now, I don't know if you understand what that does to native people. There's a process at work, and I feel, I strongly feel, it is in the whole of society. It is very insidious, it's not out in the open. But for me, the message is: native women do more crimes; native women are bad women - that's another thing I wanted to explain before I go any further. As Anishnabe, I find it difficult to... be feminist. I feel that our men are in trouble too, our men are oppressed also. But that's not even it, there's something deeper than that. In our language - our language is divided with the animate and the inanimate. Our endings for our nouns and our verbs and our adjectives show whether a certain noun is animate or inanimate. For example, human beings are animate, the animals are animate, some foods are animate, tobacco is animate, because it's very sacred, sweetgrass is animate, and rocks are animate. Those things that are not animate are inanimate. So our language is divided by animate and inanimate. In our language we don't have the gender, he, she, or it. In your language, you have he, she and it. You cannot speak with a pronoun without thinking in terms of female, male or neuter. In our language, it isn't like that. Consequently, when we think of people in trouble, we never distinguish between male and female. So when I say that picture tells me that native women do more crimes, that's just not the message for native women. It's native people do more crimes, that's the message for us. and the message is that native people are bad people because they are in jail more often - they must be in jail more often, look at the picture. Seeing things like that really does do a number on our self-esteem. Also we start to believe the myths about ourselves. We all seem to have gone through a period of being very ashamed of being Indian, and this kind of thing perpetuates that. I see it in the school, when my children come home from school and show me their work, I see some of their papers and I just... give up. One time my son, I looked at his paper, and they were taking 'pioneers.' Imagine us learning about pioneers. And one of the lines said, "The first people to come to Canada were pioneers." Little things like that just make me sick. Because, when I go to tell the teacher that, she gives me lip service, but the paper is there again the following year. Also, seeing pictures like this, makes white people feel superior. They start to believe the myths about Indian people and about themselves, that they don't do crimes, and they're not in jail, and they're not bad people like Indians are.

And when she said, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" it was like she absolved all responsibility of racism and of the horrible things that her people have done to people of different cultures

This is in the Peterborough paper and has been for a year and a half or more - a year and a half for sure. It's also been in *Peterborough This Week*. But I've also seen it in other papers like - I can't remember which one it is, but it has a big circulation. Whether it's the *Toronto Star* or something like that, it's something that's bigger than the Peterborough paper. It must be in other papers too, because the Centre, I believe, is in Belleville. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw this one, because definitely that little girl is a native girl, and she's

positioned next to "Is your child having difficulty in school?" Well, you know, our children do have difficulty in school, and I'm not ashamed to say that, because I happen to know, I happen to have the privilege of knowing that the school is at fault, that the education system is at fault. But for people who don't have the privilege, they do believe that Indian people are less, that they have difficulty in school because they are stupid and they come from poor family backgrounds and they're culturally deprived and on and on. But we hear those things and we see these things supposedly in an enlightened age. Now I phoned these people and I complained to them, and they knew that I was a native person. Well, I might as well have not phoned. In fact, I think it did a negative thing to me to have phoned. I tried to explain to him how that was offensive to me, and he said, "Well, she's not a native girl. She could be any brunette." And then he said, "You know, you might be the one with the problem. Maybe you're the one who is prejudiced, and you don't want to face certain things." So, after talking to him, I was dismissed as being paranoid, or having a chip on my shoulder. And in fact, I have a nice white middle-class friend in Peterborough whose children happen to be half-breed, also, and I showed her the picture and I asked her to phone those people. When I explained to her that it was racist and it was something I didn't like, she said to me, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" And somehow, that really pissed me off. Because I felt like somehow, she belongs to the dominant group, she belongs to the people who run our lives and dominate our lives. We have no choice. We as Indian people, we have no choice, we have to go to white schools. In fact, when our children go to your schools, we pay more money for our children to go to your schools, than your children do. And when we said, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" it was like she absolved all responsibility of racism and of the horrible things that her people have done to people of a different culture all over the world.

When we think of the agenda and "Moving Forward for the 1990's", I really think that we should look at the subtleties of the dominant society, the dominant society that's run by white, capitalist males. Can we as women bring change to that? I have to tell this little story about the IODE (Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire), how I envisioned the IODE. The IODE at one time asked me - the IODE to me, I envision women who are kind of well off - like, I can't relate to that. They're alive and well, by the way. How I imagined them is to be nice rich white ladies. I mean, I think they have furs, and they're very privileged white women. And you know, they phoned me, they phoned me to ask me if I would do a presentation for them. Well, my quilting and the presentations that I make are the way that I make my money. And there's a per diem rate, and the whole bit. When I asked them about money, they said, "Well, we were thinking of giving you gas money, because you're so close, maybe $10." And you know, it just made me sick, it just made me sick. I wanted to tell her that these women are married to men, white men, powerful men, and you know, to me, those kind of men represent the kind of people who took our land away and made us homeless, or put us on reserves with land that was no good for them, for their expansion. And they did this to people all over the world. They did it - they're still doing it, in Australia, Brazil, Africa, South America, everywhere. They're still doing that. And these women - you know there's that saying, "Behind every good man there's a good woman." Well, I think about that, and these men, and these women. And I think, you know, those women, while those men raped and pillaged the people and the land, those women sat at home and knit mitts for the 'displaced.'

As Anishnabe, I find it difficult to... be feminist. I feel that our men are in trouble too, our men are oppressed also.

I believe that's where Canadian society is at, even today. Those women sit at home and they think they're doing wonderful - we should be thankful for these mitts. Everything was taken away, our children's hands are freezing, so they're going to knit us mitts.

JUDY REBICK

I think we all remember how during the 1980's the media kept telling us that we were in a 'post-feminist' era, that a 'big chill' had calmed the women's movement. Well, we all know the contrary was actually quite true, and Judy Rebick is the kind of woman that's testament to the continuing dedication to social change and to women's equality which has characterized the movement for the last fifteen to twenty years. In the early 1970's, Judy participated in the student movement and the New Left. She helped to create a strong socialist-feminist International Women's Day Coalition in Toronto, and in the '80's she became active in the NDP, running both within the party and as a provincial candidate. I think, perhaps though, we all know Judy best as a founding member and as a leader of the Ontario Coalition of Abortion Clinics. In that capacity Judy Rebick provided important leadership to all Canadian women in their struggle to obtain full reproductive rights. More recently, she has been active in Women Against Free Trade and the Alliance for Employment Equity. And this year, of course, she was elected president of NAC, the National Action Committee, Canada's largest feminist lobby group. She has predicted that the recent protests against cutbacks in federal funding to women's centres is only the beginning of the militancy we can expect over the next decade. We couldn't ask, I don't think, for a more dedicated or more clear-sighted feminist to help guide us in our struggles and to work with us over the next decade to create a more equitable and democratic society.

Thank you very much for that very nice introduction. I think, actually, the previous three speakers have defined the feminist agenda for the 1990's, and that is the fight for equality for all women. If we don't take up the issues, as a priority, of doubly-oppressed women in the 1990's, we will not be worthy of the name feminism and of the women who have fought in generations before us for equality, and I think that the last three speakers have very eloquently explained that to us. We should do this not out of guilt, but out of an understanding that until all women are equal, no woman will truly be equal. Half of the victims, or recipients - that's a new term for me - of racism are women. Half - more than half - of the poor people in this country are women. Half of the disabled people are women. Half of the native people are women. But not only that, although that's very important, women's oppression is endemic to the power relations in this society. So is racism. So is economic exploitation, heterosexism, language and national oppression, and bigotry. All reinforce these power relations. And unless we change these power and economic relations, we will never have liberation for women, and all of the struggles against racism, heterosexism, economic exploitation, all of those struggles are struggles for the equality of women too. And I think this is the understanding we're coming to - we're still learning, but we're coming to - in the 1990's, and I think it was very eloquently explained by the other speakers, and so I want to talk about another aspect. Something Karen said really struck me, when she said she thinks lesbians make the women's movement not respectable. I don't think the women's movement should be respectable, in this society, because being respectable means being respectful, and this society and its power elites are not worthy of our respect. And I want to talk about a few things that have happened, really in the last month. The first is the eleven white, middle-aged, upper and middle class men who paraded and preened before us last week, telling us they were saving the country. The second is the first death from a self-induced abortion we've had in this country in twenty years; that happened in Toronto last Monday. The third is the police shooting of a young 16 year old black man, the fourth black person, unarmed, shot by the police in Toronto in the last year and a half. And the fourth is the Montreal massacre of twelve (sic) women. Now what do all of these events have in common? They show the increased attacks on women and others in this society who are oppressed. But they show something else: that is, a monumental ideological offensive.

We should fight for equlity not out of guilt, but out of an understanding that until all women are equal, no woman will truly be equal.

These eleven men told us they were saving the country; aboriginal people fighting for their rights were going to destroy the country, or women fighting for our rights or poor people and disabled people fighting against decentralization of the country, to save social programs, were going to destroy the country. They told us that what Meech Lake was about was welcoming Quebec into the constitution. That's not what Meech Lake was about. Quebec had five demands, they're simple demands, they could have been granted. What Meech Lake was about was all the other premiers grabbing power at the expense of the Quebecois, so that all the provinces could have the same rights as Quebec. That's what Meech Lake was about. But through an ideological offensive of three years, they turned that around, and they pitted women against Quebecois, and aboriginal people against Quebecois, and they tried to create a hierarchy of rights and convince us that somehow women's rights or aboriginal rights were contradictory to the rights of Quebec. They're not, necessarily. It's Meech Lake that makes them contradictory, and it's the language in Meech Lake that makes them contradictory. An ideological offensive that made eleven white men, who were actually in the process of destroying certain gains that we had made over the last number of years and still breaking further promises, look like they were saving the country. And the people who were fighting to save those gains looked like they were destroying the country.

And the death. When the pro-choice movement said this death is as a result of an abortion law that was passed two weeks ago, they accuse us of using a tragedy

for political advantage. Yet, there hasn't been a death - a recorded death - from a self-induced abortion in this country since abortion was made legal. And this is the second self-induced abortion in two weeks in Ontario. Coincidental, is it, that two weeks ago the abortion law was passed? It's not even law yet, it's not proclaimed. But women don't know that - most women, even doctors don't know that. Clinics have been besieged by phone calls from women who think that abortion is illegal. These two particular women were desperate enough, as we've said many a time, to take matters into their own hands. But when we say that, they try and make us look like the villains, like we're doing something wrong, instead of those guys in Ottawa who have made women criminals for a personal choice. Take the heat off them and put it on us.

And the police shootings, even more incredible, that the chief of police tells us, "this is just an isolated incident" - the fact that four black people were shot by the police unarmed, and no white people who were unarmed, not really committing any criminal offence, have been shot by the police in the same period - "this has nothing to do with racism." This is just, you know, an incident. And, when the black community said, "This is racism, and there's racism in this police force," they attacked the leadership of the black community. The black activists - now activist is suddenly a bad word - were creating all this division between the police and the black community, not the fact that the black community is terrified that their young people, who are out in the streets doing the same things all other young people are doing out in the streets, are victim to racist cops who have guns and are willing to shoot at the slightest provocation - at no provocation. That's not what's the problem. The problem is black activists.

And perhaps we can understand that better - well, I think we can understand it in any case - in the Montreal massacre, when we were told, by many people, that this had nothing to do with misogyny and violence against women, this was just, you know, one deranged individual. The fact that he divided the women up from the men, the fact that he said "you're all a bunch of feminists" before he mowed them down - just a 'crazy guy,' not an indication of increasing misogyny against women. And if there was an admission - I mean, some people, to their credit, and some men, to their credit, did acknowledge the relationship - if there was an admission, it was "oh yes, well this is because of the backlash against feminism and it's because you feminists are fighting too hard, you're too visible, you're asking for too much, and you're making men mad."

These distortions of reality, these attempts to blame the victim for the violence, to blame the victim for the problem, are part of an ideological offensive on the part of the government and the power elites of this country. And it's an ideological offensive whose purpose is to roll back our rights, to stop us - and when I use 'us', I use 'us' in the broadest sense, and that is, the majority of people in this country, who are oppressed: working people, women, blacks, aboriginal people, disabled people, poor people - to stop us from gaining any more rights. And there's a reason for that, and that is, for them to hold onto their power. Because you see, in the last twenty years what we have achieved - the women's movement, the civil rights movement, the movement for liberation in southern Africa, the people's power movement in eastern Europe, the revolutionary movements around the world - what we have achieved is an understanding among the people - of the world, really, but certainly here in Canada - that we should have equality, we should have social justice. But we don't. And for them to hold onto their power, we can't. Because you see, if up there in Ottawa wasn't eleven white middle-class and upper-class men, and there were aboriginal people at that table, and women, and black people, those guys wouldn't be there! And their corporate buddies wouldn't be able to get away with the kinds of economic policies that they're getting away with, and I want to talk about that, just for a minute, because I know we've all been here for a long time.

The corporate agenda, we can call it the corporate agenda, we can call it a Reaganite or Thatcherite - certainly Margaret Thatcher proves one thing, which is being a woman just isn't enough - corporate Reaganite agenda, which is basically simply this: what's good - you know that old slogan in the States, "what's good for General Motors is good for the U.S.A."? - that's what they want to convince us, that what's good for the corporations, what maximizes profits, is good for all of us. And we have the ideological offensive on economic issues too. I'll just speak briefly about privatization. They tell us we need privatization because the public sector's not efficient, because if you privatize, deregulate, you have more efficiency, more competition, more prosperity - they never say more prosperity for whom. But if you look at it a little closer, that's not what happens when you privatize. When you privatize, jobs are lost, wages go down, service gets worse for the consumer; just look at in the States, what's going on, let's say, with deregulation. But nobody talks about those realities. And so one of the most important jobs of feminism in the 1990's is to speak the truth, is to talk about reality the way we see it, and the way it is, and the women's movement knows a lot about that. We know a lot about how you have to name a problem and talk about it, like sexual abuse, like male violence against women, like choice on abortion, to solve it. And this society is very good at covering up

what the real problem is, as in the examples I gave earlier. And so one of the big jobs of the women's movement in the 1990's is going to be to counteract this ideological offensive, which is directed not just at maintaining the status quo, but in fact at increasing the gap between the rich and the poor, between men and women, between black and white. And the other thing I think, that's part of our agenda, and this was mentioned earlier, is we have to be part of a fight back. We can't just sit and take this, we have to organize to fight back, and we have to take the gloves off...

...This whole attack against NAC for being 'stuck in the '60's - you may remember this - stuck in the '60's, 'back in the old tactics'; the purpose of all that was to say, 'well, now that you've got a few women in the corridors of power' - and we've seen how much good that does us, when those women sold us out rather dramatically by voting for that abortion bill, those women who call themselves 'pro-choice' - 'but now that you have Barbara McDougall there, you can just go and knock and let us know what you want and we'll, you know, we'll listen, and just be polite, because you upset us when you're not polite.' They really say this, you know, they don't want to come to the lobby of NAC because they don't like being booed and yelled at. The fact that they abuse each other every day in Question Period - they just don't like to take any kind of criticism from too many women, it makes them nervous. So, I think we have to be part of a fight-back movement. I say *part* of a fight-back movement because it's not only - although this is a central issue for us - it's not only a question of fighting for equality for all women. I believe that fight has to take place in coalition with other groups. Again, all of the women who spoke before me spoke about the struggles of black men, of aboriginal men, of gay men, and I talk about, also, disabled men and women, who often get ignored in our discussions, because they are the most marginal and least visible among the oppressed groups. Those are real struggles, and that's real oppression, and I believe that we have to form coalitions with other groups who are fighting for equality, who are fighting against the corporate agenda, and fighting for social justice, and we have to find ways to form those coalitions so that feminist issues don't disappear inside of them, and so that our issues, which are our issues, like issues of violence, issues of choice - alone, our issues alone, if you want - continue to receive our priority.

we have to form coalitions with other groups who are fighting for equality, who are fighting against the corporate agenda.

Those coalitions work, and I'll give you an example in the pro-choice struggle, and I'm going to end on this. Years ago in Toronto, a number of socialist-feminists fought for the women's movement to work more closely with women in the labour movement. We organized solidarity pickets, particularly for women's strikes, and we started to build what was really, in those days, I think, some of the first coalition-building between the women's movement and the labour movement. And then, when the Morgentaler clinic was about to open in Toronto, we went to an Ontario Federation of Labour convention and we said, "We want the Ontario Federation of Labour to support free-standing abortion clinics." And some of the women in the labour movement said, "Oh no, we can't put this on the floor, it'll divide the delegates, and we want an affirmative action resolution and it'll poison it..." and so on. We had a big debate in the women's caucus there, and we said, if we're going to build this coalition, it's not enough for us to support labour women; the union movement has to use its social strength to support our struggles. And we worked it out, and we put that debate on the floor, and we had labour women who got up and explained to their brothers and sisters what this issue meant to them. And probably the most moving moment of that debate, and it was a very moving debate, because, I don't know how many of you have ever been to labour conventions, but in those days, which was about... six years ago, any mention of anything to do with sex or women usually brought titters and giggles from the floor, or everybody would leave the room, three-quarters of the room would leave. A woman who was a rather hard-bitten labour militant, everybody knew her, she was about fifty-five, talked about her son, who was also a labour militant, who had just died. He was a hemophiliac. And she talked about how she had had three backstreet abortions, because once she knew her son was going to suffer from hemophilia all his life,

she didn't want to have any more children, and in those days abortions were illegal. And she was forced to go to backstreet abortionists despite all her efforts and all her attempts at birth control, three times. And she talked about that. And you could have heard a pin drop in that room. And suddenly all those labour men understood what the real morality of the abortion issue was, and we won that vote by a huge majority, and ever since then we have had tremendous support in the pro-choice movement from the labour movement, without which I believe we wouldn't have been able to win the victories that we've won.

So I think we can say that it's going to be a difficult time in the '90's for the women's movement, we have a lot of challenges before us, the women's movement has changed its face and we have to change our organizations, and that's not going to be easy. As a sister pointed out, it's going to be painful, because change is always painful, but we have to do that or we won't succeed in a fight for equality. And we're going to be under a lot of attacks and we're going to suffer defeats, as we have in the last few weeks. But we have something we didn't have before, and that is, we have a basis of unity among a large number of groups in this society who have been struggling separately for generations, and who are beginning to see our common struggle. When I see Elijah Harper stand up in the Manitoba legislature, he's standing up for me. And when I hear George Erasmus talk on the radio, he's talking about women's rights too, not just aboriginal rights. And that's exciting. And when I hear Nancy Rich talk about lesbian rights to a labour convention, I know something's changed in the labour movement. And when I come to a conference like this, and out of four speakers, there's a black woman, an aboriginal woman, and a lesbian woman, I know something's changing in the women's movement, and that's exciting, and that's where we're going to draw our strength from, and, I believe, our ability to defeat this corporate agenda on the way to defeat this government, this Tory government, and win the victories that I know we can. Thank you.

APPENDIX C

Workshop Notes

WORKSHOP NOTES

*** The following are summaries of the discussions that occurred in each of the workshops and are based largely on the workshop recorders' notes.**

1. MAINTAINING A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE IN WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE

Format of wksp.:presentation by reps of Peterborough Women's Health Care Centre and Winnipeg Health Clinic

Small groups - discussion around these questions:

- what is feminist health care?
- what services would you provide in a feminist health care centre?
- who would provide these services? (e.g., nurses, volunteers, lay women, etc...)
- what general obstacles would you anticipate encountering in providing these services, and how would you address these?
- how would you deal with issues of race/ethnicity, class, age, homophobia/ heterosexism, and disability in health care?

Consensus of small group findings (and it was a consensus):

What do women want in health care? or ***Our Agenda For The 90's:***

- Emphasis on women and *wellness*, positivity/ness, personal control/choice + personal *responsibility* for health care.
- Education, resources, info. and services must be accessible to all including elderly, poor, illiterate, non-English speaking, etc... in a safe and empowering environment. Start with flexible hours. Anti-poverty and social service issues should be dealt with within a health framework - fill in gaps left by traditional medicine. Also, try to raise awareness of and monitor traditional medical professionals.
- info. should be non-judgmental and value free - health care should be community-based, include preventative care and follow-up, and be holistic. One visionary example is a hospital with no 'departments', so no 'parts' of a woman examined.
- Health care - not necessarily a building or a centre; not necessarily providing a product.
- Less emphasis on curing diseases than maintaining good health and providing support and education/info.
- Organizational structure of health centres should be different -more consensus, a collectivity. Have a diversified staff, representative of community served. Recognize our own biases as care-givers.

OBSTACLES:

- funding - so far, $ comes from a structure we don't subscribe to and don't wish to perpetuate
- we still don't have enough money to offer services to all of the women who would like to use our services
- system also makes feminist health care seem risky, radical- must work on fringes of existing system
- accessibility - physically + emotionally welcoming environment
- resistance of women who have faith in old system - translation, new language, dialogue with women to broaden network of health care

What's required to attain feminist health care?

- suspension of assumptions and unquestioning faith in scientific model
- to take direction from clients, not dictate to them
- recognition of each woman's capability and experience
- recognition of personal biases of caregiving - need health care workers that truly represent clientele -a cross section
- coalition with other groups and professionals, not isolation

* This was a most agreeable session.

2. FEMINISM IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

- need to fight the exclusion of issues of racism, colonialism from the feminist agenda and to recognize the interconnection of all forms of oppression.
- It should not be assumed that women of colour should talk more about racism than feminism -they are not separate issues - racism is a feminist issue.
- Gender can't take a back-burner in movements fighting other forms of oppression.
- Global feminism does not equal women in development.
- We need a transformative politics not limited by an equality frame. A transformative politics is an integrative feminism which understands the oppression of women in connection with racism and colonialism, always taking these issues into consideration with every feminist issue. An equality framework asks for the same rights as privileged people -for example, white males. A transformative politics calls into question whether we as women want to have the same rights as the oppressors - do we not want to base our politics on our own visionary ideals?
- We should link a larger theoretical analysis with the daily lives of women - this is oppression too.
- Reproduction and women's work is invisible in all economic definitions.

- Can't have a narrow definition of "what is feminist" (how a feminist looks or where she works...)
- Need to rename the issues that are central to us, replacing liberal, ineffective, inappropriate language with terminology that speaks to our experience - i.e., "Reproductive rights" becomes "reproductive violence."
- Need to foster knowledge of what's happening elsewhere and create linkages with feminist activities and analyses globally. There are many exciting things happening elsewhere which we're unaware of. Need to connect....

3. HEALTH ISSUES FOR OFFICE WORKERS

- Myth: offices are safe and healthy places to work
- Important Issues:
  - -stress
  - -ventilation
  - -VDT's and radiation hazards
  - -how to design a healthy workplace
  - -pay equity
- this is a women's issue as 37% of working women do clerical work
- clerical work more stressful than management
- Stress Problems
  - - work is continually interrupted
  - - high responsibility /low control
  - - complexity of job is not understood
  - - under staffing
  - - low status job
  - - lack of flexibility
  - - low career mobility
  - - low gratification
  - - no control over pace
  - - not valued work
- Disadvantaged women get streamlined into clerical work
  -perpetuates the association of low status work with 'low status' workers
- How do we evaluate 'value'?
- Associated injuries (repetitive strain, reproductive problems, headaches, burning eyes, nausea, drowsiness, fatigue, respiratory problems) - not recognized
- We need to recognize: the harmful effects of non-ionizing radiation
- that computers should always be at least 5 feet apart
- that radiation comes from sides and back where there is no screen to protect you
- that we don't yet fully understand the long term effects of this radiation
- Onus is on the woman worker to prove her complaint/ change conditions
- No support for clerical complaints

Strategies

- need to network in order to redesign working conditions (away from open offices, fluorescent lighting, continual computer work, lack of space, poor ventilation, etc...)
- recognize hazards and lobby for new health codes
- re-value clerical jobs
- workshops can be held with/ by clerical workers in order to validate and name the above complaints as a first step to politicization around them (for example use popular theatre techniques)

4. EDUCATING AGAINST RACISM

- The workshop started off with presentations by three Peterborough women who either work in the race relations field or who come to racism directly from their experience of its oppressive effects.

- Points raised included:
  - - the 'triple challenge' or dealing with multiple oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism)
  - - the need to not isolate race issues, but rather focus on integrating race as an issue on many fronts
  - - focusing on similarities between people rather than on difference
  - - opening people's eyes and accepting difference - recognizing that all human beings should be treated with respect
- a Peterborough community race relations committee was formed in the city as a response to violence against blacks. It was decided that an ongoing body was needed to 'promote positive outlooks for race relations' in the city.
- the Peterborough race relations committee broke away from the city government because they felt they could be more pro-active, and free on their own. Staff are no longer 'city' employees.
- policing and justice are becoming very important issues in Peterborough. Examples of this are a lack of action by police forces, e.g., OPP, RCMP, and no positive efforts to increase 'visible minority' representation on the force.
- controversy arose out of the use of the term 'visible minority.' It was expressed that 'visible minority' is a racist term which ignores the fact that there are black people, Asian people, etc... There was confusion over the importance of the use of language.

In this workshop a number of conflicts and tensions arose between women. Some of the areas of division included:

- differences in what were perceived to be 'appropriate' political strategies to be used by women of colour - some advocating working for change through presenting more positive, integrative models of race relations, while other women find it more effective to work for change through confrontation and challenge.
- context: whether one was from a smaller regional area, or from a larger urban centre.

Major issues that arose included:

- the charge that white people often do not recognise their internalised racism
- rather than seeing that it is the racism in white women that is being criticized, white women often become defensive and see this criticism as reverse racism, or feel that they are hated by women of colour because they are white
- once again this workshop was directed, unreflectively, at a white audience - and as a result, some women of colour felt they were subjected to another racist encounter. Workshops targeted at educating white women should be labelled as such.

- some women of colour expressed their frustration at once again having to educate white women, and suggested that white women take responsibility for their racism. For example, it shouldn't always be women of colour speaking out about racist comments.
- the question, "Why isn't racism being addressed at this conference?"

5./24. THE SPIRIT OF MY QUILTS: MY DOUBLE HERITAGE

PERCEPTIONS

- Dominant white culture assumes everything, white middle class values are taken as the norm and everything else is measured up against it - Indians and their culture come up lacking.

RACISM

- forcing assimilation
- pity and sadness for the "plight of the Indians" translates into contempt for native people
- we see ourselves through who our fathers are - we refuse to see our mothers
- moving our mothers into the centre - quilts
- education system perpetuates stereotypes as well as forcing Indians away from their intuitive knowledge - English has a need to explain and analyze everything.
- teach people to unlearn myths that they have about Native People through her quilts
- white women have expectations of what Native Women "should" be doing in their quilting and they are disappointed if their expectations aren't met.
- Alice feels she is in a privileged position to be able to tell white women how she feels and sees racism. Most native women don't have that opportunity.
- Centers of all her quilts are traditional Ojibway symbols.

6. EQUITY FOR NATIVE WOMEN IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Brandon University Northern Education Program
- integration between academe and community life
- recognition of a woman's life-cycles, e.g., daycare and housing, and how it may affect her schooling - alternatives are arranged
- take the university to the students to avoid family and community upsets caused by removing members
- basic + life skills offered
- Women's responsibilities do not pressure them to drop out but push them to succeed - they do not have "the luxury of 'copping out'"
- spiritual and physical violence against native women is the result of the imposition of white culture
- in Indian culture, women are powerful
- the importance of role models for native women - unfortunately, they are scarce
- an investment of time and money is necessary to develop a pool of qualified teachers - they often can do better elsewhere
- native men need affirmative action as well

7. FEMALE CULTURAL WORKERS: LOOKING AT DIFFERENCE

Major topics of discussion:

- female cultural workers
- education equality
- women's art - self definition
- feminist/ feminine....?
- theory vs. practice
- medium
- tradition
- images
- Values
- intuition
- judgement
- assessment
- Separation vs. integration and exclusion
- Context of cultural production - social, political, economic
- Communication between women artists
- Access - social, intellectual, physical
- Marginalization - accepting difference - cultural/racial
- Creation of Space: -which system do we work with?
- context?

8. LESBIAN RIGHTS

Karen Andrews discussed her case.

We contribute and are taxed like straights, but don't get the same benefits.

PROBLEM -legal discrimination against lesbians, lack of legal rights

- health and pension benefits
- bereavement leave
- spousal rights
- visitation rights
- tax exemptions
- power of attorney (Ontario Health Act overrides; in Nova Scotia, p. of a. is now enduring - a victory)
- Bill 7 (Ontario Human Rights Code) - Education Act overrides
- What is needed is not *good will* on the part of *heterosexuals* but *power for lesbians!*

What Actions Can Be Taken?

(different women are comfortable with different actions, lesbians who are less vulnerable can take more public actions)

The Court Route

Access Services

- unions
- human rights commission
- liberal lawyer (increase her/his business)
  - paternalistic but worth it

Pitfalls

- access -$- you need lots of it
- effect on private life (your case is a matter of public record)
- a loss would be precedent setting
- adversarial system - antithetical to feminism
- time
- ultimately the gov't "controls the game."

Other Ideas ("Popular Activism")

- Visibility as key - being out
  - advertising (buses, billboards)
- Letters
- Boycotts (*one woman didn't agree with boycotting advertisers to affect a publications editorial policy - advertising should (ideally) not control editorial policy
- Elections - all candidates meetings
- Events - e.g., Pride Day - getting city council to declare it
- Coalition Building (exchange support) e.g., Jewish and lesbian /gay groups on East Coast/ Maritimes)
- cultural strategies: street theatre performances
- graffiti
- have lesbians and gays in your community do all their shopping at the same supermarket at the same time (a different suburb each week) - it's being done in Nova Scotia!
- flood human rights commissions with complaints
- cross country, cross region newsletter

NETWORK FOR LESBIAN ACTIVISM (National Lesbian Feminism Network)

- See mailing list

9. WE'RE ALL SISTERS HERE - WORKING IN COLLECTIVES

- Vision of collectives as egalitarian - decisions made by consensus; however process not always so - power dynamics are not always clear therefore it's confusing when things go wrong. We begin with the premise that we're all sisters, but reality does not always fit this vision.
- Problems symptomatic of the collective process:

a) strong personalities tend to dominate

b) sometimes blame centred on people for lack of accountability re. decision making

c) Taking action without consulting group members

d) accusation that one is not 'politically correct' that one is more oppressed than another

- Ideology of sisterhood allows us to deny that there is a power structure among us -practice though does not always equal the theory
- we do not all adhere to a single vision of what feminism means.
- collective structure does not preclude hierarchy
- power conflicts in collectives often attributed to an individual's own crisis -perhaps we need to use our abilities to empathize with individual women (i.e., She who grasps power and then tells us how oppressed she is)
- necessary to rethink the dynamics of the collective process
- re-defining "power," i.e., 'Power to' and not 'power over' as in hierarchical structure
- we've been socialized in a way that does not teach us to work collectively, which is reinforced by a government which does not validate this process

General questions to address in group discussions

a) why work collectively?

b) what are the problems?

c) what new structures or vision/ behaviours can we create?

Focus upon the collective dynamic in 1) a hierarchy 2) volunteer groups 3) all types of collectives 4) social service groups 5) board /staff processes 6) arts groups

Discussion from group #3 (all types)

- 'collective' defined as women working together towards a common goal
- can we expect complete equality?
- necessary to define individual talents in order to draw out all that is positive within each person
- 'power' seen as a nasty word, especially to women
- necessary for direction to emerge; does not have to be ego-dominated, we can facilitate instead of dominate
- necessary to share knowledge -delegate responsibility to avoid 'burnout'

Suggestions for Collective Model:

- facilitators should rotate position; ownership of group is shared
- share knowledge
- acknowledgement of differences
- identify needs
- honesty
- respect

Paradox of Collective: That an individual must speak alone not collectively of problems or a collective will flounder

Suggestion:

Bring collective principles to hierarchal organization

Principles

- sharing responsibility
- sharing decision-making
- sharing knowledge
- negotiate boundaries
- documented responsibilities (clearly defined boundaries)
- willingness to cooperate
- commitment to philosophy and learning
- recognizing individual experiences and skills as valuable to wisdom of group
- group has to form structure to meet their specific needs (general model not always applicable): who has to be involved in which decisions?
- trust

Other Issues

- gender struggles in women/ men organization
- how do we avoid hierarchical engagements in everyday interaction?
- respect for differences
- what's possible in specific contexts?
- salary = skills?
- sharing work
- devaluing of certain work
- deconstruct hierarchical thinking

10. CHILDCARE IN THE 1990'S: EDUCATION OR SOCIAL SERVICE?

Childcare is at a strategic crossroads

There needs to be a new vision of childcare

- moving away from fragmented piecemeal, under-resourced centres in perpetuation of cottage industry type of situation in childcare.
- must develop a system of networking
- recognize poverty and its effect on women and children (develop stronger links with anti-poverty network)
- educate to see childcare as a right (public issue and not a private family issue)
- system of childcare should be restructured to reduce parent fees and increase staff wages
- should we move childcare out of social services and place it under education? This question is still being debated. We could not resolve it in 3 hours.

11. WOMEN AND POPULAR CULTURE: THE CONTRADICTIONS OF PLEASURE

- How can we appropriate the pleasures of the popular in service of our feminist agenda?
- contradiction: pleasure is an area of regulation of women's lives
- pleasure is implicated in anti-feminist backlash
- there's a danger in not taking up the popular -we need to work in the popular, not on the margins (for change)
- looking at idea of addiction /reaction -how to become critical
- have to learn how to read the images in popular culture
- have to create positive /real images of women

12. Caucus

13. STRESS IN CAREGIVING: PERSONAL AND WORK EXPERIENCES

A. *A feminist critique of co-dependency*

- within co-dependency theory "the personal has become personal" (rather than political) -the language of disease is used rather than the language of oppression -women are those primarily affected.
- co-dependency is based on a family system which does not acknowledge power relations within families.
- human interdependence rendered a woman's sickness
- co-dependency theory has become a multi-million dollar business.

Action: need to relocate personal healing in the context of political community

B. *The caregiving role as it pertains to the mothers and sisters of autistic children.*

- effect on female family members tends to be more dramatic.
- single most common feeling among mothers of autistic children is guilt -mothers tend to exhibit depression, low self esteem....
- effects on fathers is less direct -affected mainly through their wives
- costs of caregiving to women include decreased participation in public sphere of work, financial losses and physical, psychological and emotional stress.

Action: recent trend of shifting the responsibility for caregiving to the "family sphere" (i.e., to women) must be stopped. The costs to women are too high!

C. *Women's experiences of front line work in feminist service organizations.*

- causes of stress include the personal nature of the work, its marginalization within larger society and underfunding.
- effects of these stresses/ this work includes changed relationships, affirmation of beliefs, sense of our own vulnerability, powerlessness and burn-out.

Action: includes setting limits, expressing anger, blocking out large realities, seeking support from family, friends, taking care of oneself emotionally, spiritually, physically.

Overall need for advocacy - The government must take a larger role in caregiving.

14. REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN: THE IRANIAN EXPERIENCE

Need to differentiate refugee and immigrant women

Whether there was a decision to come to Canada

Similar issues but cannot be lumped together

Refugee -lack of choice, torture, rape, and trauma.

Immigrant-- trauma of change is present but not as severe.

-'refugee'- derogatory term
-patronizing attitudes
-why is one a refugee?

Problems with immigration

- re-certification of degrees
- language problem
- cultural gap between parents and children
- job problem -lower paid, menial jobs
- racism, prejudice
- more emotional problems
- less access to education
- lack of childcare facilities
- job discrimination
- "head of household" discrimination

Immigrant/ Refugee (more acute here)

- lack of control/ identity loss

How does mainstream society need to change in order to help (not dictate, patronize) immigration issues?

Human Rights issue

- Canadian government's complicity in creating refugees -- selling weapons to other countries
- supporting repressive regimes

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expansion of government subsidized programs -language programmes
- childcare
- "Pathfinder" -what services are available to new immigrants
- cultural support groups of same background as immigrants
- professional immigrants -re-certification procedures easier and faster to accomplish
- governmental immigration policy -similar for all?
- support not dictate to minorities
- networking among minorities and mainstream, without losing own identity
- Canadians should keep aware of what's going on in other countries
- Monitor Canadian government's help to repressive regimes -lobbying to cut support

15. VALUE CONSIDERATIONS IN DAYCARE

Curve Lake Daycare:

- centre based on the needs of the community - unlike we find in the white education system, native culture is respected here. (1979 - a native language teacher was funded by the province to work at the centre as part of a new Native Language and Culture program).
- centre tries to respect and involve the entire community:
- employs "untrained" community people (always at least one male staff person)
- the "education" of the children is unstructured
- volunteers are welcome. Parents are encouraged to participate and become involved with the centre. This way the people aren't daunted by "professional" care-givers and trust that their values will be respected.
- children can "drop-in" whenever the community needs this service (e.g., funerals)
- children given freedom to choose activities; many activities take place outdoors (e.g., canoe/fishing trips)
- no fee for daycare (despite pressure from the government for ten years)
- 80% of children go to daycare!

Trent Daycare (in comparison):

- a "community" building is difficult to create in this city and university setting (services are needed on campus)
- asked question how can it become community and world oriented? (Suggestion that they get in touch with Trent University Native Association for ideas)
- asked if a drop-in centre would be feasible? Certainly both drop-in and full-time facilities are required (but would this not be disruptive?)

Difficulties (not present at Curve Lake Daycare):

- high child turnover rate
- children used to structure/stability
- no relationship with the other children and/or care-givers outside of the centre

Possibilities and points to ponder:

- Free Trade - daycare corporations from the U.S. - over-professionalization of daycare centres
- projects can come out of conferences between native and non-native daycare centres
- Native Early Childhood Education courses are being developed

16. TRADITIONAL VALUES AND CUSTOMS OF WOMEN

UNIVERSAL VALUES

1) God -every nation has a god -called by different names; to the Indians, god is the great spirit

2) Self-created by the Great Spirit -put here for a reason -a purpose, a mission -a search -what's inside is what is important.

3) Humankind

- attaching ourselves
- a sense of caring and belonging
- Indians taught a sense of self within the culture (by their mothers) but in white culture, they are taught that they do not belong -rejection leads to low self-esteem

4) Land and the Environment

- life is a circle -like the earth
- we must learn to take care of the earth because she takes care of us
- Clan as a social organization -ignored by the missionaries
- Naming of an Indian -very significant -let's the Great Spirit know who you are -missionaries also disregarded this and gave Christian names
- stripping of identity
- language given as a way to communicate with others and with the Great Spirit
- each person given an aura, a colour to protect against negative energy

- each person given a song, a death song, to alert the Great Spirit to movement into the next world
- dance for joy -to show appreciation -important even though there are hardships
- holistic values
- taught that women have a specific role to play in this world just as men do
- both are equally important

17.WORKING TOWARDS EDUCATION EQUITY: STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

- Education Equity: situation through which students learn -through curriculum and teacher example -that capabilities and potential are genderless
- Issues: -language in education
  -socialization of gender roles
  -hiring practices
  -occupational segregation
- Strategies for achieving education equity

1) multiple strategies needed for different groups of people

2) examples -our group: awareness raising exercises

-school children: videos presenting women and men in non-traditional occupations

-emphasis upon presenting positive role models for students

3) approach people likely to be open to ideas first

- Issues raised in discussion: -low value placed on occupations associated with women

-gender differences in learning styles

-mixed messages presented to young women

18. LESBIAN IMAGES IN CULTURE

Paulina Palmer - Lesbian Fiction (British and American)

Nina Levitt - Images of Lesbians in Popular Culture (slides)

- "adult" pulp lesbian novels (of 50's and 60's)
- photographs from late 1800's, early 20th century
- as spectacle for male-dominated porn

Two general approaches:

1. Radical popular movement

- emphasis on achieving united identity

- agency

- idealized representation of lesbian community (anti-bisexual)

- plays down conflict, sex

2. Personal psychoanalytical approach (Academic)

- multiple identities (sympathetic to bisexuality)

- constructed subject (lacks idea of agency)

Divisive effect on representation of lesbian

- some work mixes these two approaches (e.g., J. Winterson)

(both are important)

DISCUSSION

- on integrating a feminist, gay-positive perspective into university teaching
- demand for lesbian works/books that will bring them about (paradox of capitalist system)

Stereotypical Signifiers

- cross dressing
- woman as criminal
- woman taking on 'male' tasks

These "subverted" through disjunctive images, transposition (collage), reversal.

QUESTION: To what extent is subversion of these images possible?

GENERAL DISCUSSION

- Focus: RACE (+ artists' and our responsibility)
- Lesbian culture assumed to mean only white lesbian culture; presentations only on white lesbian writers and images -this noticeable absence of material on women of colour was not even addressed
- Some say they don't want to speak for women of colour
- White women must attempt to address race issue, despite fear of appropriation
- Historically, segregation in lesbian communities

- Artists have a responsibility for images produced and analyzed
- Access to materials (race/ class intersection)
- Problem: one presentation can't encompass all views -more presentations needed
- Labelling issue- the dominant culture, whether white, male, heterosexual, etc..., is always assumed.

-only workshops labelled as addressing race ("native", "immigrant") actually do -not incumbent on other workshops to have race analysis

-why is it incumbent on women of colour to present images /demand this?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- be clear whether it's a workshop or a presentation
- AGENDA should be checked at the beginning -to see if issues are to be added, participants comfortable
- MORE clear labelling of workshops
- have variety of presenters -if workshop claims to be encompassing

19. WOMEN AND FREE TRADE

- Free Trade must be viewed within context of International Competitiveness - it did not cause all problems but rather accelerated the situation of one integrated North American market for goods and production

Strategies for International Competitiveness:

- lower wage rates
- flexible production
- workers can shift jobs
- new technology
- global basis
- competitive workforce
- fear of unemployment
- re-orientation of government spending
- shift from social spending

Alternatives:

- make the third world your market - forgive them their debt (but this is not in the best interest of those in power)
- childcare and housing (but these do not work within the logic of competitiveness)

Effects of Free Trade on the Garment Industry

- garment industry still mainly Canadian owned
- 60% clothing Canadian made
- number of garment workers has dropped 20% in the past year from 120,000 to 100,000 - and there has been a loss of 100,000 jobs (total) across Canada since Oct. 1988
- erosion of tax base - loss of jobs and closure of companies
- garment industry is viewed by government as a "sunset industry"
- vulnerable sector - mainly immigrant women (English as a second language)
- wage gap : $9.30 (sewing operation in T.O.) vs. $3.40 (minimum wage in Southern U.S. - e.g., Florida - and some states don't even have a minimum wage)

Outward Processing Scheme

- negotiation with Mexico under Free Trade - cutting still done in Canada but sewing done in Mexico, thus tariff on labour but not on garment

*NOTE: cutting is done almost exclusively by men, whereas sewing is done almost exclusively by women!

Strategies

- building coalitions
- public outreach education programs
- fight GST
- defensive strategies yes but alternative vision of economic development (a certain type of capitalist development is NOT the only solution!)
- international solidarity
- forgive the debt
- support boycotts

Economic struggles are linked with social struggles thus a strong basis for coalition building.

20. Caucus

21. CHILDBIRTH AND MIDWIFERY

- resistance in the past 20 years to medical model of health care.
- this has been a powerful time - women's alternative literature shaped today's childbirth movement. Co-operative lifestyles dealt with isolation, LaLeche League provided support, etc...
- BIOS -a Greek word which describes each woman's unique experience, allows a woman to follow her own timing, focus on one's own life story, life force.
- stories have therefore been very powerful in the childbirth culture.
- it is not long before this resistance is noticed by dominant medical culture

ONTARIO '83 -Midwives seek licensing

-talk about licensing versus certification

-were then obliged to meet 2 criteria

1) demonstrate that they had a distinctive body of knowledge -broadly accepting 'standardization'

2) 'compliance' in order to come under health disciplines act.

Diversity becomes a problem - trying to retain diversity while obtaining licensing.

Suggestions:1) Must not be monopoly even within a certifying system

2) No criminalization of alternative healers

3) Work for each individual,s right to direct their own OHIP payments

4) Renaissance of radical thinking about our bodies

5) Listening to 'ordinary' women vs. scholars

6) Keep stories at centre - stories even more important than a consensus.

- The context of licensing must be understood - it is a response to the strong drive of nurses and doctors in defining midwifery model.
- Compliance is an acceptable principle as long as it is defined by practising midwives - it is important to illustrate the competence of midwives.
- Home birth has been under scrutiny.
- Does a woman have to be part of the alternative birth culture in order to deserve an alternative?

22. IMMIGRANT WOMEN ORGANIZING

- An organization called 'Women Working with Immigrant Women' has worked since 1974 to gain support through networking and through mainstream involvement with other groups such as the women's movement, labour coalitions, etc...
- Its work has concentrated on the new wave of immigrants and their problems with lack of language skills. They have also focused on skills development for new immigrant workers, providing different information material, and developing a shelter for battered women.
- In 1983 an umbrella organization called the Ontario Immigrant Women Organization was established. Later its name was changed to the Ontario Immigrant and Visible Minority Women's Organization

- There are differences between groups of immigrant women. There is an assumption that immigrant women share exactly the same kind of things - but what is an immigrant woman? How is an immigrant woman's identity affected? Whatever women identify themselves with should be respected.
- This organization works around issues WITHIN the immigrant's own society and also networks with MAINSTREAM society -immigrants need to promote certain issues which won't get promoted otherwise.

- There are issues around how to compromise new community behaviour with the expected family behaviour when family's traditional behaviour is more restrictive than mainstream society's.

Problems for immigrant women --- they are 'caged', their situation is not very open --- they cannot get education and thus they have no jobs, or have very low paying jobs.

- in Peterborough, immigrant women organized in the 'New Canadian Centre'. The main intent was to practice English and to help with bureaucratic procedures. Coming out of this there was an exchange of ideas around the household, political ideals, and economics. Women had problems with household chores and with their children and husbands, who at times were not very supportive. One action that they devised was sewing clothes and selling them at festivals. They got some recognition for their own labour and awareness of their presence in the community.
- There is a lack of mainstream awareness about the constant migration into Canada and that all of us were 'immigrants' to this country, other than the native peoples.
- Children are caught between two worlds. In some areas the adaptation is aided by special organizations which foster the immigrant,s original culture.
- Lack of knowledge of country before migration
- isolation
- community is not necessarily neighbourhood
- top down organization for temporary welcoming to Canada does not foster community, therefore women must try to find their own needs and organize around own issues.
- There are problems with reactions to immigrants' cultural backgrounds - their cultures are considered to be weird and exotic. The ethnic backgrounds which are within even our language are invisible to us now.

Strategies

- Immigrant women's groups need to be independent and self- determining
- Immigrant women's groups need to do networking around common, semi-common issues.
- Immigrant women need to get their issues redefined on the political agenda, do some lobbying. There is a need to rename human issues as they are applied to women. Human rights as they apply to women are sometimes overlooked because of women's secondary status. Government policy creates immigrant women -inaccessibility to all kinds of services perpetuated through multiculturalism clause which lets human rights be overridden by cultural norms, which give women sole responsibility for their own situation.
- Need for a greater mainstream awareness of global issues
- There was a lack of consensus around the issue of educating immigrant men around what is acceptable in Canadian culture about ways to treat women. Some felt that Canadian culture should not be the model to adapt to, and that this comment was patronizing, implying Canadian society was better than that of the immigrant's country. It's a question of power shifting to women from men whatever their cultural background.
- There is inappropriate organization of immigrant women, reinforcing stereotypes.
- There is a presumption that structures must be imposed from outside the immigrant women -we must recognize their own organizational structures
- Reorganizing the conduct of meetings, allowing voices to be heard
- Groups need to rethink planning, invitation, outreach process. There is a danger in the attitude of the organizers, the evaluation process, in objectification.
- Political activists and lobbyists perpetuate the exclusion of participants. The problem is that these elites need'required' skills
- Some Immigrant women present had a fear of confrontation at the conference
- Purpose of conference and of this workshop - who organized it and for whom? Why?

23. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Where we have been

- women's movement has uncovered truths about women's lives-rape, battering, incest -and have developed women's services
- we have recognized the failure of the criminal justice system to respond to women's experiences and so have pushed for changes
- in 1983 a new sexual assault law was passed

- in 1988 there were new laws concerning the sexual abuse of women
- an important case was heard where Linda Lavalee, in a Supreme Court defence, was acquitted from murdering her husband, not guilty by reason of self defence. An important landmark in the battered women's syndrome.
- we have recognized that the criminal justice system is a male system of social control which works against working classes, non white men and women, lesbians, gays etc...
- we have seen the role of the victims of men's violence within that system - the victim is a witness of the state, and has no lawyers or rights
- we have seen how what comes out of this is questions about whether or not she is a good witness, for example was she drinking, etc... Will her evidence be considered useful?
- the closer her relationship is to the offender, the less likely that 'justice will be served.'

Gloria's Research- what would be justice for victims and survivors of abuse?

- no focus on individual rights of victim

-Types of justice:
-therapeutic
-compensatory
-penal
-conciliatory
-rights of victim
-public education
-social change

-research results from interview with women survivors of sexual offense, is that these women focus on the rights of the victim

-feminist movement has focused on centres, support groups, etc... which are central to women getting their lives together

-their own welfare is seen as a form of justice and compensation

-women felt there was a need for public education

-women felt there was a need for a change in the social system
-displacement of male hierarchies

Major Points -women are using both justice and caring models

-there is a need for support and advocacy clinics

-there is a need for dialogue between women about what justice is

-we need an inquiry into the way the justice system treats women

Comments- court takes property violations more seriously than sexual abuse charges

- punishment doesn't fit the crime

- why was there no inquiry into the Montreal Massacre?

Recommendations

- We want a local group to form to meet regularly to address the justice system's inadequate response to violence against women and children. This group will include representatives from appropriate/ related agencies and the public
- An inquiry into the Montreal Massacre be held, recommending the Honourable Bertha Wilson as chair. Extend this inquiry to underlying causes, that it be taken as a societal issue, that a feminist perspective be incorporated, that this be appointed by justice system and health and welfare system, that this not be simply a judicial inquiry, that the inquiry be done at a grassroots level.

24. THE SPIRIT OF MY QUILTS: MY DOUBLE HERITAGE

See workshop #5

25. WOMEN'S ART: LOOKING INTO THE 90'S

- How to obtain institutional validation?
- Is it necessary -since they are not representing women of colour, lesbian women
- look for alternatives
- acceptance of new imagery is essential
- Issues of representation still valid
- Need to unite on inclusion of every woman within the institutions.
- Can we work personally and still feel that our work is valid?
- Is the tension of racism and feminism and politics inhibiting for women? Could it be liberating?
- "Identifying the oppression within us." -Audre Lorde
- Couldn't come up with a definition of feminist art. Can you?

26. EMPOWERING LESBIANS IN COUNSELLING

AGENDA

1) introduction
2) information about Toronto counselling centre for lesbians and gays
3) violence in lesbian relationships
4) counselling issues

Address for an info. booklet on the issue of abuse in lesbian relationships (free):

- Toronto Counselling Centre for Lesbians and Gays
  517 College St. Suite 308
  Toronto, Ont.
  M6G 1A8

WHAT CAN WE DO?

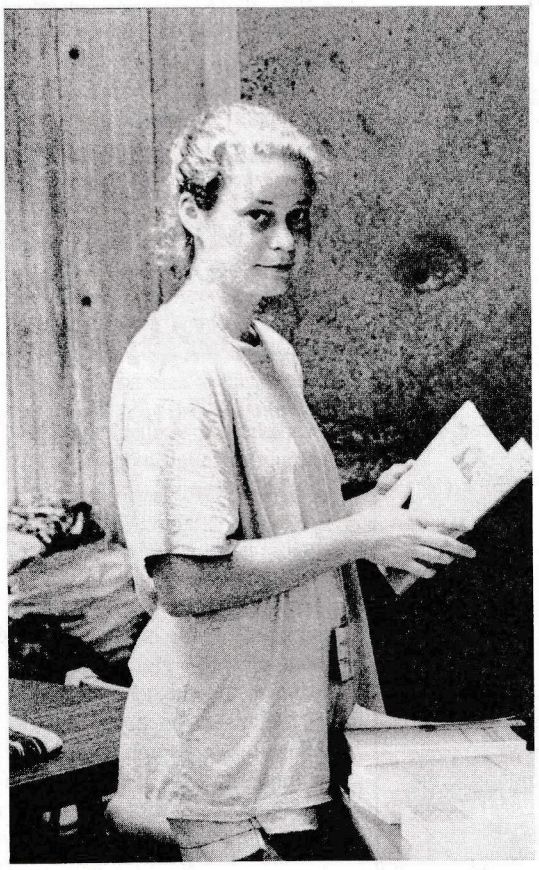
- talk about the issue of lesbian battering, raise awareness
- bring info. to coalitions of shelters, women's services
- create safe spaces for survivors' groups
- challenge heterosexist assumptions

BROADER SUGGESTIONS

- counsellors coming out to clients -when OK
- registry of lesbian counsellors
- guidelines on how to choose a lesbian positive counsellor
- ethics in lesbian counselling -talk about
- understand problems in dealing with a small community
- acknowledging adolescent sexuality -education of students in school system

27. FEMINIST METHODOLOGY AND WORKPLACE STRUGGLES IN CLERICAL WORK AND SCHOOL TEACHING

- Women are not well represented in promotable, intermediary positions in elementary teaching facilities
- We are always having to 'reinvent the wheel' with regards to advancement and sexism



- We are seeking a methodology in use, not just academic principles
- One methodology is using our experience in daily work to evoke change because what's there doesn't work -the personal to the general. Singular experiences are collective
- The presenters, who were the workers, assessed own workplace struggles and designed their own conference. Here they worked on education and exploration of biases and their implications at work
- The workers rejected a management system of job evaluation designed by an outside company which was hierarchical, pyramid type management -not appropriate to the workers.
- Their conference generated self-evaluation toward pay equity. Now clerical positions are evaluated on different set of criteria from technical ones. They published the 'Union Guide to Job Evaluation,' stating that for the purpose of pay equity, 'packaged' evaluation systems not created by the workers favour the management level, not the workers.
- Women in technical positions are devalued, perceived as assistants, not 'real' technicians, therefore there are salary discrepancies and lack of recognition and promotion. Women technicians also feel they have to prove more about everything they do.
- Essential clerical work is not perceived as particularly valuable. Advancement is not commensurate with skill. Computers, for example, create higher expectations, don't alleviate workload. Now compensation depends on collective efforts and structure - not individual ability and skill
- Issue for the 90's - develop a *methodology* for job evaluation that will lead to greater pay equity
- if you 'assess' positions as they are, then you've already committed to a hierarchical system that exists no matter how they're evaluated. Skills of individuals not assessed; only the position is assessed. As a result, much valuable work and skill of working individuals is overlooked, i.e., 'counselling' of students by secretaries, extra work not necessarily covered by job description
- will pay equity mean a loss of jobs?
- how do school teachers 'hook' into feminist agenda in the 90's?
- what is the connection re. race, class, gender issues to teachers?
- historically teachers have been trying to make women equal to men, i.e., career counselling, text language, gender imaging rather than changing the patriarchal structure. It has been a 'band-aid' approach
- one method to change this is to take into account different work conditions of teachers and how social conditions of the children greatly shape the teacher's job. Workplace struggles include societal struggles, and therefore must necessarily be feminist ones.
- Therefore as strategy for the 90's, we need an analysis of day-to-day work of teachers to show how social struggles are teacher's struggles too, and part of their job
- Strategy - acknowledging that to deal with feminist issues like racism and classism in the classroom will be as painful as it is necessary.
- Strategy - in dealing with the technocrats, we must act collectively - support necessary to success
- When women workers get together, they find they have similar grievances, and the only way to have them addressed is to act collectively and be vigilant

28. SEXUAL HARASSMENT: HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

- influenced by woman's race, class and sexual orientation
- myths: it's harmless, it's flattery
- IMPORTANT POINTS
  1) Social Context -can policy deal with this?
  2) Impact (and not always intent) on the recipient
- COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES
  -petitions
  -send a letter: collectively signed

-send pamphlets on harassment to the harasser anonymously

-TELL OTHERS;WRITE IT DOWN

-can go to employment equity officer or to Human Rights

* -sexual harassment can often lead to sexual assault

-above all look out for your own safety

-name the abuse

-stressed importance of male responsibility and collective action

29. PREGNANT WOMEN: FETAL CONTAINERS OR PEOPLE WITH RIGHTS?

- "Reproductive Wrongs" are violations against women because they can get pregnant
- they are part of patriarchal violence against women and part of harassment based on sex
- they include "fetal apprehension" (Baby Rease-woman declared unfit parent for refusing medical treatment, i.e., C-section)
- the debate should not be focused on women's rights vs. fetal rights, but rather who decides?
- women who are marginalized are at highest risk for having their rights violated
- the laws protect the state's control of women's bodies

CHOICE IN HEALTH CLINIC

- strategies used thus far have been effective, e.g., abortion is more accessible than it once was.

BUT focus is still needed on accessibility

- information must be easily available re. new bill and present situation. People feel that abortion is illegal - are we partly responsible because of our lobbying efforts? ("No new bill @bullet1 = we can't lose choice")
- abortion workers want to be used and to share information, experience
- abortion workers need critical support; don't feel solidly supported by the movement
- abortion workers cannot stop performing/supporting abortions
- are lay abortionists the answer to accessibility problems?

* Feminist Women's Health Care in Atlanta has produced In Our Own Hands re. lay abortion (*Jane collective in U.S.)

- in Peterborough accessibility is a real problem
- in Edmonton: 2 year residency law for physicians - 70% Edmonton women leaving province
- in Nova Scotia: no freestanding clinics

30. WOMEN WITHIN ORGANIZED LABOUR

NOTE: Only 39% of the Canadian workforce is unionized!

And only 36% of these are women!!

Women have historically been excluded from the organized labour movement.

Issues for women in organized labour:

1. What changes does affirmative action bring?

Does it actually give women power?

2. Women in organized labour are often placed in the position of being responsible for all equality issues.

3. Although women are now more active in executives - there is still a lack of action on the local level.

4. Q.: Is it worth working inside the organized labour system?

(Our group said Yes)

5. Demands placed upon women within organized labour - many of us have other obligations e.g., childcare which limits the time we can devote.

6. Pressure for women to give excessive amounts of time and energy.

7. Women involved in Unions are often also involved in other groups, creating further demands (unlike male members).

8. Men and women get involved in unions for different reasons:

Women

- grass roots level
- see a need and want to do something

Men

- more often for career/power considerations

9. Q.: How can women empower themselves when dealing with sexism/sexual harassment within the union?

10. Women's action (on #9) is often suppressed as we are told that "scandal" will hurt the labour movement - working on our guilt to suppress us.

11. Need to restructure trade union movement to allow for more women to stay involved - involvement need not be constant but can be issue oriented in order to acknowledge how women participate.

MOST IMPORTANT: Women need support systems!!!

31. BUILDING COMMUNITY/UNIVERSITY FEMINIST LIAISON

Possibilities

- workshops in simple language
- strength through coordination
- less responsibility and burnout through a larger community
- building bridges to the entire community
- access to resources
- women working together - different strength than with men
- women from the community eventually becoming students
- alienation of the university to the community limits a larger community which would have more resources and strengths to draw upon

Hurdles

- finding mutually easy meeting times
- conservatism of community
- 'elitism' of ivory tower attitudes and language
- no good structures within our community yet
- 'validity' of the university vs. community definition

- Process of organizing the conference - attempt to include academics and activists. Wanted to provide a 'think tank'
- What is community and how do you reach them? Extensive advertising and telephone trees to get participants
- A conference as a way to inspire ourselves from others around the country and to hopefully provide others with energy and ideas
- Energy of funding takes away from effectiveness. Having to shape your agenda to suit the institutions with money.
- 'Women's issues' are a safer approach than 'feminism' which may scare off a lot of the community
- Differences between women as the focus for why we have such difficulty uniting - sex, race, sexual orientation, ageism
- Most difficult task of this conference was to start out with the university (oppressor) base and try to fit in and incorporate minorities (oppressed groups)

Ideas

- Participatory research - sharing of information
- Continuing Education program - bringing courses to the community
- Transforming theories into work
  -Outreach Units
  -Access programs
  -Participatory research support
  -using conference resource people
  -Opirg's (Ontario Public Interest Research Groups)
  -Participatory research network among faculty
  -Credit/ Non credit courses in the community
  -Popular Education- participatory -accessibility -action
- Must address differences instead of continuing steam-rolling over the issues of oppression, rather than thinking this and continuing to be goal oriented. Avoidance of tokenism
- Nurturing ourselves as groups to continue progress
- University as its own community, transitional community
- Women's studies fighting the university as well as the outside community
- Keep seeing that even the best models must incorporate differences in the community or else they will inevitably fail in the process

32. NATIVE WOMEN AND LITERACY

- Whole person approach -not just reading and writing, but also deal with whatever is affecting people -emotional support
- common denominator is low self esteem, lack of choices
- treat learners as equals, concentrate on their strengths, learn from the students
- reading materials in libraries contains negative stereotypes of native people. Need to create positive examples of native culture
- in one community, there is an after school program to work on homework and get a nutritious snack - a big improvement in marks resulted
- learning computer skills, producing a newsletter
- mother tongue programs - keeping native language alive, learner-centered
- working with native people in correctional institutions
- a broad-based literacy program based on 'real things' -trapper's course, woodworking, driver's education
- distance education - fly in communities
- many single mothers involved - they often bring their children to class with them
- people making their own learning materials, writing their own stories

- concerns about native culture and feminist culture interacting
  - why weren't more women at this workshop?
  - lack of attendance of native women at conference
  - conferences like this draw mostly academics
- there was outreach to native communities but many native women were too busy to attend. Natives see issues holistically - hard to look at issues separate from community
- women seen as important in native culture - seen as strong because of their power to give birth
- feminist community has a lot to learn from native community
- having deaf people at the workshop was a good learning experience for the hearing people - understanding many different ways of communicating
- what about the whole workshop format? It assumes good verbal communication skills - not something everybody has. Many people leave feeling completely inarticulate. Need to talk about whole conference format and how to include many different people

33. DEALING WITH R.E.A.L. WOMEN/ MOBILIZING WOMEN IN THE HOME

Who are they? What motivates them?

- seven women who started it are suburban, white, middle-class, religious, heterosexual, educated ... (i.e., very privileged) women
- main focus is on sexual politics - pro-life and pro-family
- slogan is: "Feminist issues are not women's issues"
- real agenda: derailing the feminist movement, mainly through attacks on funding. And while they are not a major grassroots organization they have had an effect on our funding, and thus our work - for example:
  - the federal government has cut funding to women's groups while giving $20,000 to R.E.A.L. women
  - the Secretary of State women's program can no longer fund groups or projects which focus primarily on issues of abortion or lesbianism. Nor can any money from Sec. State be used explicitly by any group to cover costs of work done (e.g., lobbying) on such issues.
- R.E.A.L. women have shifted the balance of power by legitimating traditional system and structure
- Ideology:
  - presentation of themselves as women in the home - they claim to speak for the forgotten housewife. (Provide a

nostalgic tribute to the stay-at-home mother)

- presentation of the women's movement. (They represent feminists as career-minded yuppies who don't give a damn about men, the family, etc.. In this view feminists have already won, and have taken over)

Q.: The work that women do in the home is socially and economically viable and feminists advocate this. So why don't women in the home see value in our work? What attracts them to R.E.A.L. women?

- could it be feminism's critique of "family politics"? For example:
  - the strong critique we have developed of the male-breadwinner, nuclear family
  - our uncovering of issues of family violence, wife assault, etc.
  - the gains we have seen in women's work outside the home
  - our understanding of the need for childcare and our subsequent struggles around this issue
  - our critique of compulsory heterosexuality

Problem for feminism is that our politics, ("politics in the negative"), does not speak to our needs as human beings, i.e., for emotional security, love, children, etc.

There is an absence of a "pro-love" position which makes it hard to mobilize women in the home.

Recommendations:

- change the alienating image of feminists
- advocate diversity - "we forget the movement for the community"
- speak to women's strength and pride as women
- offer concrete gains that speak to women's needs in realistic terms (we talk too much and don't do enough, especially need to work harder at actively bringing new women into the movement)
- need accessible organizations for women just entering the movement (problem is R.E.A.L. women are causing cuts to women's centres which function well as transitional social, support centres)
- need to balance a politics of love with a politics of anger

Challenge: Take the strengths of our politics and infuse message of support for "family" (all types)!

* Problem is we don't have a language for family politics

34. FROM WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT TO FEMINISM AND DEVELOPMENT: MATCH'S NEW DIRECTION

MATCH - feminist development organization based in Canada

- founded in 1976 in response to Third World women's marginalization in development
- sponsored cooperatives, projects

1987 - analysis broadened: strategic, rather than basic, needs focusing. Development of support groups and projects to...

1) increase women's access to decision making

2) mobilize women around key issues

3) influence popular theatre/ education

4) produce publications

-Promote connections between women in Canada and Third World Women in terms of...

-violence against women, as global issue

-promotion of women's words and ideas (e.g., collaboration with Sister Vision Press)

-promotion of feminist development theory

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: (2 groups)

1) How do we as Canadians make/ develop a relationship of equality with Third World Groups?

2) How do we go beyond what MATCH is doing to develop a global feminism?

3) How do we make global feminism relevant to our lives/ experience/ work/ skills?

GROUP REPORTS -how to build global feminism

1) -what we need to make it a broader movement

-what is common denominator to connect women

-things that divide us: racism, homophobia

-Canadian women's movement not as broadly-based/ grassroots as many Third World Women's Groups

2) -alliance building: -among Canadian non-governmental organizations

-between development community and women's community

-how do we deal with organizations that don't define themselves as feminist (but may be taking actions that are feminist)

-sensitivity, common language needed

35. FEMINISM AND POLITICAL ECONOMY: GENDER AND CLASS

- importance of relating research, theory and forms of action
- class as a category is rejected in favour of class as a relation

PROBLEM: It is not working class or native women who make theories. Theory is in the hands of a very privileged group -we spend so much time studying "people at the bottom" but we do not spend time exposing the people at the top.

Is feminist theory struggling to overcome this? Feminism can be about creating our own theories, our own empowerment, our own language and voice, instead of perpetuating the "theory treadmill"

WHO THEORIZES? ABOUT WHOM?

i.e., theory as a way of finding things out, encouraging communication as individuals and groups

-how do we learn to communicate difference?

-how do we learn to listen?

- theory/ academia has been co-opted, integrated and absorbed into patriarchal structure. Feminist theorists have challenged fundamentally oppressive structures in a revolutionary way but co-option has de-radicalized theory (i.e., change from within, change from without) so that it now perpetuates disempowerment.
- also theory is "stuck in our heads": we have other ways of being, feeling and knowing
- theory of action, theory grounded in goals of feminism (i.e., what we want to do and how we want to do it.)

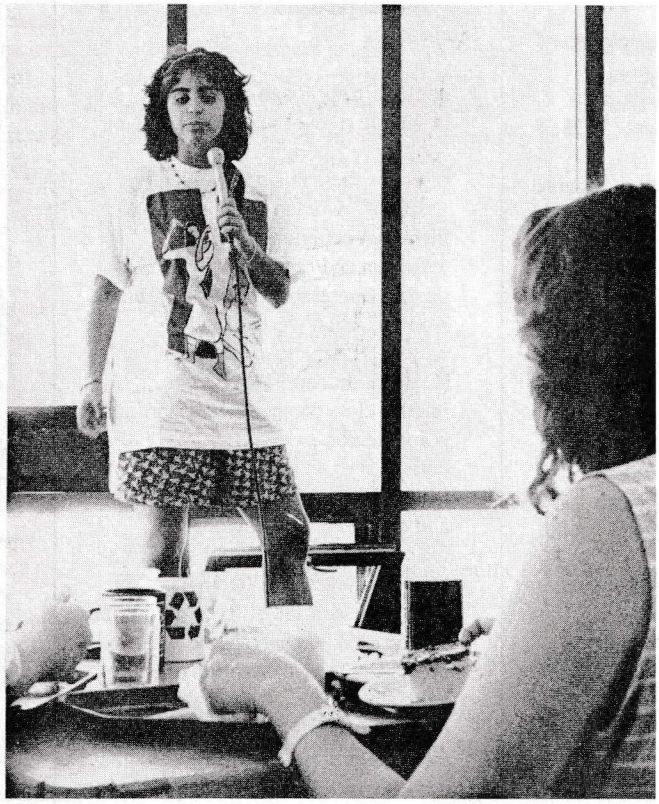
TO DO WHAT?
HOW DO WE DO IT?
WHO WILL DO IT?

36. CAUCUS

37. WOMEN AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Psychotherapy Centre for Women, Women's College Hospital, Toronto

- non-medical psychotherapy for women
- all female staff (x7) - somewhat varied but not greatly (i.e., European, white, different religious backgrounds, 10 year age spread, some married, some single moms - they try to be as up front about their own perspectives as possible
- serve about 150-200 women
- time-limited therapy - 16 sessions - that's what there was funding for - it's empowering to see the progress made within that time frame around specific goals, established at the outset
- employs a relational model of human development - focuses on relationships and how they provide a sense of self. (How do I view myself in relation to other people?) Looks at power dynamics in relationships.
- social and political context are considered - moves from microcosm of family into the cultural context in which she lives
- policy of not diagnosing - instead a mutual process of exploration and understanding is pursued by therapist and woman. This is one of the conflicts between a medical "illness" model, and a feminist "wellness" model
- promotion of self-care is an important component of their work. Self-help groups often develop out of the centre
- built-in evaluation - opportunity for anonymous feedback from "clients"
- they try to build time into the system for their own self-care, support and evaluation
- their therapy is not suitable for everyone - they begin with an assessment
  - not emergency service
  - can't offer long term support
- located off-site though affiliated with the hospital. Had lengthy negotiations about their role within overall hospital hierarchy/structure - now seen as autonomous - they hope! Their funding is not associated with the hospital, and this financial control gives them a lot of power.
- able to offer free service
- "clients" are racially-mixed, generally employed, and many middle class women and single moms use the centre
- problem - service offered only in English
- lots of community consultation
- they take self referrals - women don't have to come through a doctor - see this as very important - word of mouth networking very important



Q.: How do you deal with heterosexual therapists serving lesbians?

A.: We try to be as up front about our perspectives as possible; if women do not see therapist or therapy as meeting their needs, that's fine...

(The issue was kind of evaded).

The relational model, utilized at the centre, was challenged -

Q.: What about one's self outside of relationships?

A.: The centre is founded on these four primary values (which encourage a positive, more powerful sense of self):

- WELLNESS - focus not on pathology or illness but on individual strengths

- EMPOWERMENT - done partly through modelling -i.e., this centre for women is run by women

- COLLABORATION - importance of working together - sharing skills, knowledge, resources

- FEMINISM - incorporates a feminist understanding of therapy and wellness, and of structures and hierarchy.

38. EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT: ASSESSING POLICY

- Focus on pay equity and employment equity
- New Ontario Equity Legislation leaves out 1 million workers (50 % of female Ontario workers)
- Coalition accepted legislation because it is a start

PROBLEMS -small groups of working women are scattered and hard to unite

- hardest to get equity for jobs traditionally held by women.
- there have been some gains but also some dangers from accepting the legislation
- Women were forced to chose between defeat and accommodation *
- Free trade and the recession make the fight more difficult
- Vital need to include men in the struggle and get their support

Specific issues needing to be addressed:

-literacy/ education
-part time/ casual work
-minority languages
-racial discrimination
-gay/ lesbian issues
-health care

* Are we selling our skill or our time? Maybe all pay should be based on the number of hours worked -eliminating hierarchy

* Where will money come from for pay equity?

-Bosses' and managers' salaries- it's so simple!

39. THE CHALLENGE TO WOMEN'S STUDIES

What is equal opportunity?:

- traditional idea is naive and simplistic
- equality within the system is problematic
  - existing power dynamics
  - women are marginalized - women's socialized characteristics are devalued - nurturing
- male domain is structural

Assumptions:

- women are disadvantaged due to their own inadequacies
- male model is ideal

Further problems within Women's Studies:

- conflict in approach - traditional academic rigour (so called rational "objective" thought) vs. consciousness raising ("subjective wisdom" - women speaking from their own experience)
- tokenism and/or marginalization of doubly-oppressed women, e.g., black women, Asian women, native women, S.American women. (Courses that don't take white, middle-class perspective as starting point are non-existent!)
- elitism of university
- lack of programs at many institutions and erosion of existing ones
- the content and context of women's studies courses are often in conflict and because of the huge contradiction this poses this must change
- professors face the conflict of being in an authority role while also wanting/needing to break down that power hierarchy - yet while prof. may serve to nurture students and provide a positive role model it is not her place to be a friend and therapist to her students
- women not given credit for their life experience or work done outside the institution - which is often a lot more relevant to their studies than a research paper would be
- too few "doubly-oppressed women working in the institution (e.g., women of colour) - this is a problem as it perpetuates their marginalization

Ideas/Recommendations:

- women's studies must validate women's experience, thus women should be given a voice to name what their course material should be (that which is relevant to their lives)
- women's studies students should be encouraged to express their anger and passion on issues and the empowered to action and thus women's studies teachers must be willing to challenge the institution which works at blocking this - must deal with issues of class, race and sexual preference -now, not later!
- women's studies could address <u>all</u> people outside of dominant mainstream culture (to the extent that it addresses not only gender, but also race, class, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation) - to this extent it is or could be a great threat to those in power
- must be clearer as to what the mandate of women's studies programs should be - is it enlightenment? or action and change?
- challenge traditional qualifications of university teaching (i.e., Ph.D) - if our mandate is really action and change why not have non-academic activists teaching women's studies courses?

40. NATIVE WOMEN: FIRST NATION COUNCIL

Nora Bothwell, Chief of the Alderville Reserve, relayed her own story of how she became chief against outside/inside pressures.

- while it is true that leadership attitude matters regardless of whether you are male or female, women must work twice as hard to prove themselves.
- she does not consider herself a feminist but realizes women must fight hard to achieve what they want (change power structures)
- more women are getting into band government. (Her own band is all female staffed)

Question period:

Q. Are there specific women's groups?

A. No, they have an open door policy. But it may be a good idea to form a women's group, "to sit around and rap." But there are many obstacles to this happening:

- no facilities
- some women would get left behind - it is hard to get volunteers
- problem is many women are too busy with other organizations and subcommittees

Q. What effect has enfranchisement had on women?

A. Lots of people have come back and that brings the problem of ostracism. Returning individuals must build up their confidence and get involved in the community. They bring new resources as their experience in the "outside world" means they have experience they can apply to the community (didn't highlight any problems particular to women).

Q. How many social problems can you handle at the reserve,and to what extent do you rely on outside organizations?

A. Facilities and human resources on the reserve are low, but there has been some progress (e.g., adoption and women's issues can now be handled more adequately). A new staff person was just hired who will do some area networking. There is still a need for more community involvement, and more volunteers. Perhaps there is a need for a "friendship centre" to bring community together. The bi-annual newsletter urges people to get involved. But there is certainly still a need for outside networking.

Q. Are there problems with white vs. native women's involvement in the native community? And how do we solve that?

A. Yes, some native women do feel threatened by white women. But it depends on the structure of the community - when there has been more white involvement through intermarriage maybe there is more tolerance to white women/people getting involved in the community.

Q. Is the white women's movement seen as a negative infiltration of native communities?

A. Many native women need/want outside female support - through Bill C-31 much or most of the support came from white women's organizations across Canada. There is a need to educate people (mainstream Canadian society) about Native people. We need to communicate, and organize and work together in our struggles.

Q. What has happened to natives who were studying at the post-secondary level but were unable to complete their studies due to a lack of government funds?

A. Government is trying to divide and conquer saying education is not a treaty right. This has been rejected by native organizations who have their own agenda and need to define education rights and needs for themselves. Communities are thus creating their own policy.

Q. Is there anything about the native community/ women's movement that could be added to "MediaWatch" nationwide?

A. A network is certainly needed because the government is cutting financial support to network communication in the North. The whole goal is self-sufficiency - economic development planning - preparing for the day when all funding is cut and national support is needed in attaining this.

Q. What kinds of programs are available for urban natives?

A. There is a lack of funding for facilities for urban natives. But there is a movement towards networking between urban and rural communities (since reserve communities more often receive funding). What is severely needed in urban centres is preventative policies/programs (e.g., re.child welfare, incarceration, and education). And there is a great need for networking and community support in dealing with these issues. But foremost is the need of native peoples for self-government and thus the autonomy and control which they are lacking over all aspects of their lives.

41. PASSAGES: FEMALE LIFE CYCLE AND CREATIVITY

Questions addressed and participant responses:

What do women consider creativity to be? How does it relate to the stages or passages of your life?

- creativity is to form something out of nothing
- need to redefine creativity - it is the very fabric of our lives (cooking, making clothes, etc.)
- women are conscious on two levels when writing - for women have the responsibility of childcare and housework

How does public acceptance affect what we produce?

- you can be fuelled by your own desire or by the public's.

What is talent? People have the sense that talent is a gift from above, mysteriously given to you. Do you learn it?

What is good taste and bad taste in art?

A note from the note-taker:

- I did not feel that this was sufficiently covered. There was an avoidance of issues of race, class and sexual orientation. An artist not only needs a "room of her own," she needs the paper, pencil, computer... or whatever as well. "Good taste" in art seems to represent white, middle-class art. And talent isn't just a given - you need education and money to be educated in the particular medium. Creativity is often a privilege but it was not discussed in this way.

42. STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

- we must examine the way we communicate to women who aren't involved in the community ("US" to "THEM" exclusionary communication) - R.E.A.L. women by contrast work at a grassroots level
- Who is listening to feminism? - "THOSE" women (i.e., feminists!). "Normal" women are frightened off by feminist discourse
- we need to encourage outreach and inclusion of new women into the women's community. We need to make our movement, its expectations and its language more accessible and less alienating by orienting them around events (initially unoffensive) - then move onwards
- we are asking women to examine themselves very deeply and to make some pretty drastic changes. How do women who are not ingrained in feminism come to terms with all of the changes we are asking of them?
- change certainly is possible - within institutions such as universities and unions there has been an adoption of some feminist perspectives - however, in changing an institution we are at the same time enforcing its existence - do we feel comfortable continuing to do this?
- regarding social and political change within the state - do we work within the system through access-oriented lobbying or at a grassroots level through public education campaigns?

* On this, and most issues addressed in this workshop, there was little consensus. These are some of the comments:

- we should stay clear of political institutions and fight for social change solely at a grassroots level (vs.)
- we should familiarize ourselves with both tactics and utilize what is most effective in bringing about social and political change at any given time
- alliances must be formed in the bureaucracy (at least don't alienate them) - must work on coalition building over specific issues
- learn to work the system and develop better P.R..
- have to consider if we are too dependent on funding (issue of funding vs. lobbying)
- the most successful way to reach the public effectively, is through the mass media. However, the mass media would be almost completely unscrupulous if it weren't for the professionalism in journalism. Is this a system that we want to work within?
- for feminists to use the media we must become cool and approach it clearly and precisely - this is what the media wants. We must get away from 'movement talk' and make ourselves and our cause more accessible. R.E.A.L. women, for example, are precise, sensationalistic, confrontational and have captured the interest to the public. - Is this compromising our agenda???
- media manipulation should not necessarily be seen as a bad thing as that is how it works
- remember the alternative media, like the mainstream media, doesn't speak to all equally
- remember there is no one way to approach the media
- don't trust the media (in most cases you are being bought by the advertisers)
- while we have no long term goal of integrating into the media - we want to (and need to) use it.But women are afraid to use the media. This must change!
- but what is the result of feminist ideas going through the media? Do we want a professional campaign or a grassroots' struggle???

No final consensus was reached.

43. WOMEN AT WORK: CONCERNS OF QUEBEC/QUEBEC GOVERNMENT AND ITS WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

- "State feminism" and women's groups:
  - French women who are feminist are usually political as well
  - so that now Quebec government views women's groups as essential to implementing social programs/services/social reforms
  - in Quebec family policy is attached to employment/work policy

- what is Quebec government bodies'/ministries' definition of equality/equity?
  - unclear in the literature of the government
  - government programs (for women) are fragmented and separate (e.g., violence against women separate from sexual assault) thus it is impossible to get an overview of policies and programs
  - certainly women are more dependent on welfare and "equality" is not applicable in the home (where women are not equal - e.g., there is more violence against women)
  - capitalist economy contributes to a concept of equality in the job market - for even though their "real work" (according to the government) is in the home, they must compete equally in the job market thus becoming secondary citizens in reality
  - family policies attempt to address this and there has been minor success

Employment equity programs :

- are obliged to reach certain percentages of employment in government ministries
- however "employment equity" programs don't show how women are unequal in the home

- but government equity programs have happened along with family policies, which apply only to women not men
  - does this mean that the government is responding to feminist philosophy or to its own needs, i.e., placating women to continue doing 1, 2, 3+ jobs

What is "Family policy" ?

- implemented in 1987
- government programs (family allowance, income tax, daycare, housing, family law, secondary education) have increased to seduce women into having 3+ babies - provides a false security which doesn't usually work as the state expects
- (there is no consensus among feminists as to whether these policies contribute to, or spring from, Quebec nationalism)
- family policy refers not only to family allowance but also affects women and work
  - maternity leave - 18 weeks
  - + paternal leave - mother <u>or</u> father - 34 weeks
  - geared to make parenting responsibilities shared - supposed to affect men and women
- "institutionalized parenting" is supposed to reflect progressive trends
- HOWEVER, this discourse and policy speaks to public face only - doesn't reflect the reality of women's work and work distribution (e.g., the word "domestic" is not used in discourse - different from parental work - government only deals with more highly valued parental work
- where is the equity when women's wages are still lower and women are still dependent on the male's wage?
- <u>gender neutral language</u> masks reality in policy - the State <u>is</u> biased, e.g., against single mothers
- the State definitely favours a certain "type" of family - and certain types of babies
- women's first priority is thus still seen as being a baby producer
- thus "equality" under state programs is really a trap for women (women are usually the target of laws)
- State intervention is not particularly effective anywhere in the world. In times of national economic security birth rates increase, but not as a result of "fiscal incentives"
- no real debate as to whether a true "demographic crisis exists - Quebec needs a debate on this - it may be a red herring created by the government or just a misconception

Strategies for the 1990's?

- women's groups have been successful in getting demands and reforms made in family policies - women's groups do receive recognition and wield some power. Thus, while women's policy is still as addendum to overall policy, always orbiting around male-favoured political policy, women must continue to wield what power they can in bringing about change and true equity - for as it stands women are still lower-status citizens.

44. Caucus

APPENDIX D

Caucus Reports

Plenary Session

Last Community Meeting

(A) CAUCUS REPORTS

Lesbian Caucuses

Caucus 1:

(a) First, we want to compliment the conference organizers for including lesbian women in the workshop content. We also want to publicly acknowledge the lesbians of colour, differently-abled and differently-sized lesbians who were excluded and we want to stand in solidarity with all lesbian women. We want to work toward weaving lesbians into all content rather than tacking it on.

(b) We met as a caucus and collectively decided to :

- create a national mailing list originating from this conference (which will be called the National Lesbian-Feminist Network)
- to pass this list on to the National Lesbian Forum

Caucus 2:

Karen Andrews' keynote address referred to the issue of feminist support for lesbian issues and lesbian support for feminist issues. One of the things we would hope for in a '90's agenda would be exactly the challenge that Karen addressed. We have been supporting feminist issues for years - we've fought for shelters for battered wives, for the pro-choice movement, for accessible daycare - and now we would like you to help us. Help us in our fight to be accepted in the workplace, help us to receive spousal benefits, help us win custody suits, help us to fight the homophobia and heterosexism that is so deeply ingrained in our society, thus helping us to stay out of the closet in a more supportive, accepting world.

Women of Colour Caucus

Grievances

- workshops dealt with the "same old issues"
- we're tired of being confrontational - tired of people wanting us to keep quiet - must deal with conflict to move ahead
- problems with workshop/conference structure - non-whites were not asked
- where were the women of colour on the steering committee?

Who was this conference addressed to??? - white women!?

- women of colour and other minority women were marginalized to workshops on immigration, racism
- women of colour MUST be included in the whole conference, in all workshops, both as speakers and participants
- must communicate the results of this conference so that these mistakes are not repeated

White Women's Caucus

- white women must take responsibility for educating about racism - we should form consciousness raising groups to examine how we perpetuate racism
- no clear resolution came out of this caucus but it was decided that a group like this should definitely be held again

****

PLENARY SESSION

The Plenary Session was held at the end of the conference, on Sunday afternoon. Participants were invited to raise issues of concern and to make recommendations for action. The session was facilitated by on of the conference participants, Anne Bishop.

Comments, Recommendations and Strategies.

* A Recommendation to the Organizers of this Conference from Workshop #23 - *Violence against Women*

- that they establish a working group which will develop terms of reference for a federal inquiry on the Montreal massacre
- that this working group submit the terms of reference to the appropriate federal lobby (e.g., Departments of Justice and Health and Welfare) for immediate action and subsequent release of findings for public information

We would suggest that the group considers the following:

i) that the Honourable Madame Justice Bertha Wilson chair such an inquiry

ii) that the inquiry have as its terms of reference

(a) the actual occurrence itself (police actions, the actions of male students, Lepine, etc.), and

(b) underlying causes of the massacre, specifically societal factors influencing male violence against women (and children)

iii) it is critical that the research be conducted from a feminist perspective

iv) recommendations should be made on the possible members of the inquiry:

(a) representatives from the sexual assault and battered women's movements

(b) that representation on the task force include representation from across Canada, especially women from aboriginal and immigrant and non-white groups, in order to address the sociological aspects of violence

(v) that such an inquiry would be in the public interest

The following women are prepared to give input to the working group:

Bev Robson,
79 Kings Park Blvd. Toronto, On. (416) 461-3467

Gloria Geller,
329 Walmer Rd. Toronto, On, (416) 925-7926

Betty Carter,
R.R. #3 Tweed, On, K0K 3J0 (613) 478-5048

Steph Leman,
2506 McTavish St. Regina, Sask. S4S 0K8
(306) 585-0745

* our support is greatly needed by shelter workers and "front line" abortion workers - there is a very high rate of burn-out here

- very important that we spread information at this time as to the actual state and legality of abortion services

* regarding earlier comment that the inquiry into the Montreal massacre should figure out what the men were doing - we must be careful not to judge because we don't know what went on in that room

* in dealing with R.E.A.L. women we must become more political locally and nationally

* one woman responded to the notion that the same old issues were being addressed at this conference - these cannot be dismissed as already trodden upon ground as there are participants who had their eyes opened as this was the first time some of this information was available to them

* response by woman of colour - although we are learning new things we're tired of having the same old problems arise, i.e., that women of colour have been excluded from all workshops except those specifically set aside for that purpose and the focus has been kept white

* I want to walk away with the feeling that something has been accomplished here not just the creation of another bunch of notes - a working group or coalition is necessary

* acknowledgement and thanks to the steering committee for including native women in the conference

* request for action from the "Reproductive rights" workshop:

- must make women aware that there is still access to abortion through Bill C-43

- make an appeal to doctors (write them letters) asking them to make abortion services available

- recommend that doctors everywhere register themselves with women's health care centres stating whether they provide these services

* a comment on the statement that "the same old issues (e.g., racism, employment equity, pay equity, reproductive rights, etc.) keep coming back"

- these "same old issues" are still relevant and some have even gotten worse, like racism. What we need to do is to stop looking at these issues in isolation and must learn to incorporate them in all our struggles (especially incorporating an anti-racist perspective

* (another woman commented that she felt that) various issues were well-integrated in some workshops (e.g., racism and lesbianism were addressed in looking at trade unions)

* during workshops on racism needs of women of colour must be addressed as these needs are different

* in response to the problems that arose out of the racism workshop:

- we need to utilize both strategies, i.e., have workshops on racism to educate white women but also workshops on racism that speak to women of colour themselves

* we must fight racism in society at large not just within the feminist movement - we must all look deeply within personally and publicly

* there were holes in the panels (i.e., lack of analysis, etc.) that could have been filled had the panelists communicated before the conference to determine whether everything was adequately covered

* a lack of tolerance of difference is what was missing. We must learn to tolerate and respect difference.

* a big problem seems to be that we seem to be stuck on the notion that the women's movement must be a single unified one. The conference must allow for difference and the movement of both old and new. We cannot allow our differences to stop us.

* if we don't take care of inner problems, taking care of ourselves, we won't go anywhere. We need to focus our energy inward as well as outward otherwise we are making women (i.e., ourselves) invisible and creating an unsafe environment.

* we are communicators and we must be careful of what we communicate and thus perpetuate as we move forward. We need to make things safe for all women within the movement.

* Recommendation to future conference organizers: Need to include less-abled bodied women in our events by, for example, having ASL interpretation for deaf women. (One of the conference organizers clarified that the local deaf community had been approached, some deaf women did attend and those workshops were ASL interpreted).

* we must provide support for feminists organizing in the "third world"

* we need to work at creating a transformative rather than an issue-based movement and need to create a methodology for putting our issues to action

* we need to question our use of language and realize how important it is to us and our goals. We need to communicate to our children to educate and change their perceptions of "those women". We must realize how language perpetuates dominant culture and maintains the barriers between us.

*the conference t-shirts did not take into consideration women's size differences - the issue of fat oppression must not be lost within the women's movement

Some closing words from the participants:

love, solidarity, respect, visibility, anti-racism, invisibility, pleasurable, sweat, anti-authoritarian, unity, sisterhood, tolerance, change, difference, women, humour, challenge, responsibility, communicate, activism, improvement in communication, ongoing, movement, struggle ...

COMMUNITY MEETING

Peterborough June 26, 1990

This community meeting, held a week and a half after the conference, was an opportunity for local women to come together to discuss what their frustrations with the conference had been, what they felt they had gained from the whole experience, and where they would like to see the Peterborough women's community focus its energies in the future as a result of the conference.

Comments:

- "The attempt of organizers to be inclusionary ended up being exclusionary." (Named some women's oppression but not everyone's). By trying to do too much the conference was scattered, superficial and unclear in focus. For example, in talking about educating against racism, the organizers should have been clear themselves and communicated to the participants, that this workshop in essence was intended to educate white women against racism. "We need to learn to work with difference! We really need to analyse how we are going to do this."

- "White women need to examine and discuss their racism amongst themselves"

- "The reason you have trouble getting women of colour to come to your meetings, your conferences is because of institutional racism; you are who you are because you're part of a certain structure. It's very uncomfortable for women of colour to be in your space when we are different - you expect us to function in your way, your time, your place (you ask us to lose a part of ourselves in order to be part of your groups!)"

- "You (white women) have needs and that is what you have to look at."

- "We need to learn to respect each other and our differences - it will be a rough ride but we need to accept the challenges and grow with them."

- "Maybe in this society we spend too much time expressing our anger rather than listening to and respecting each other!"

Recommendations:

- ACT LOCALLY ON ISSUES - Here are some suggestions:

- a "Women and Racism" conference is starting to be organized by women at the Peterborough Rape Crisis Centre for next year
(contact Joyce Harley)

- we would like to see a support group of creative workers in Peterborough (contact Caroline Langill)

- we need to work on the justice system and how it doesn't meet the needs of women who have been assaulted. We need to form a group composed of women from relevant social service and political organizations, as well as from interested women in the community, to comprehensively look at how this community deals with violence against women and children. (contact Martha Comfort)

- create an anti-poverty network (out of the Social Planning Council) to be aimed especially at the needs of women

- need increased coalition building and political lobbying around specific issues locally

Action Plan

- We should work on forming a women's "umbrella coalition" which would act as a larger support network for a number of smaller groups working on specific women's issues

- different groups would take turns organizing the "umbrella" group meetings, but this does not necessarily mean that it would be solely an opportunity for that group to focus on its issues; it would be a space for the women's community to focus on priority issues, networking, and direction

- function with minimum amount of money and bureaucracy and spread the work around

- this coalition needs women with differences to be part of the process

- the issue of difference must be addressed

- to keep up the communication between the individual members of the "umbrella" coalition and to facilitate community outreach, a small women's paper/newsletter could be published (quarterly ?) using the facilities at Arthur, Trent University's student and community newspaper office (contact Joan Mann or Leah Buck, co-editors)

- also, to foster education, networking and communication, not only between women in the coalition but within the community at large, women's issue groups are encouraged to guest produce and broadcast a radio show on their particular issue as part of a new proposed women's programme to be aired on Trent Radio (96.3 FM) this fall (contact Joan Mann)