

# HYSTERIA



\$1.50

Volume 1, Number 2



# HYSTERIA

Box 2481, Station B  
Kitchener, Ontario

## We need women . . .

The *HYSTERIA* collective wants to create a vehicle for women to share our thoughts, feelings and experiences as well as providing a source of information about feminist culture, art, political theory, history and happenings.

If you would like to join us in putting out *HYSTERIA* by writing articles, submitting artwork, helping with production, selling ads, or contributing ideas, please write to us or phone 576-7016.

Prospective themes for later issues include:

- Women and the Environment
- Women and Sexuality
- Women and Children
- Women and Machines
- Women and Money

Send us your ideas!

All material submitted for editorial consideration must include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. *HYSTERIA* operates on a completely volunteer basis; we cannot afford to pay for contributions.

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Two members of the Hysteria collective shuffled along to the barricades through the snowdrifts of International Women's Day, March 8

## The next issue . . .

Our next issue will be about women and art. We will feature beautiful, original artwork, as well as articles by and about women involved not only in graphic art but in other aspects of the arts (music, literature, dance, etc.) We hope to encourage discussion of the impact of feminism on women in the arts.

We will ask such questions as: What is feminist art? Is it the same as woman-centred art? What kinds of statements can be made through the arts? What does a feminist analysis do to/for the artist? When is criticism appropriate? How do we support feminist artists without losing our ability to be critical? What is life like for a woman artist these days, compared to what it has been, or what it could be?

We need women to contribute graphics, experience and opinions to this issue.

# Hysteria

Volume I, No. 2 Women and Work

A feminist magazine by women in Kitchener-Waterloo

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Summer/Autumn 1980

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*Friends and contributors:* Crystal Catfish, Jane Cere, Diane Dawber, Margaret Leighton, Michal Manson, Lin McInnes, Alison Stirling, Shirley Tillotson, and Black Thumb Press.

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**Kate Freeman**  
**June Freeman**  
**Stephen Fast**  
**Hélène Pritchard**  
**Bob Davis**  
**Marie Symes-Grehan**

### Our Mistake

In our previous issue, we neglected to credit Wiz Long for her article "Bringing Up Mother" and Victoria Freeman for "Women Write".



## W.I.S.P.S.

by SIMONE DE BORRING



## Preface: Women at Work

Welcome to the second issue of *Hysteria*, "Women and Work".

In preparing this issue, we encountered many, often conflicting opinions about the nature of work and strategies to make women's work lives more satisfying. Some of this diversity is reflected in the magazine. Moe Lyons advocates working collectively to avoid the alienation that comes when you have to accept an employer's values along with his or her wages. For Bell operator Joan Rawski,

becoming active in a union was the route to improve her own and other women's working conditions. Kae Elgie's article urges a second look at women and management courses, a currently popular 'solution' to women's low-power, low-pay job syndrome, and Wiz Long takes us inside another so-called revolution, and concludes office automation won't improve the secretary's lot: on the contrary, it will make the job more boring.

There are other options which could

be discussed, such as women's cottage industries, wages for housework, and working in non-traditional fields. Perhaps you will send us your experiences and views.

This issue's "She's Just Being Hysterical" offers Crystal Catfish's account of sexual harassment on the job. Pat Foote-Jones' centrespread makes a graphic comment on the world of work by a woman who suddenly found herself no longer working for money. And a new feature, the Opinion column, presents a perhaps controversial view of women's work.

We look forward to your comments and supplements.

K.E.

## Letters, Letters, Letters, Letters

Dear Hysteria:

My first impression of the magazine is I wished it were longer, as I so enjoyed it. The graphics and layout immediately impressed me — although I am very greedy and would like pictures on every page. The editorial was rational, the goals and point of view quite in keeping with my own. The piece on Press Gang interested me as I had just been to a benefit for them in the spring and liked the people I met there. I'm presently fascinated with their anti-capitalist, feminist principles. Could an individual as arrogant and stubborn as myself work in a collective framework? Worth thinking about...

I particularly liked the first person account stories — like 'She's Just Being Hysterical' and 'Women Write.' As I note your next issue will be about women and work, it would be nice to see personal accounts of women working — fitting into or not fitting into non-traditional roles, women in professions like architecture as well as blue collar workers. (I could tell you stories about cab driving...) I wonder if you could find women who worked in construction or as mechanics or heavy equipment operators. I would also like to hear how women in traditional female jobs (nurses, teachers, clerical workers) who enjoy their work deal with the inferior status assigned to these jobs. For example, a woman wants to be a nurse because she enjoys nursing; she does not want to be a doctor even though she is smart enough to make it through medical school with no problem; but her friends are forever asking her: 'if you are so good, why not be a doctor?' I would des-

perately like to know how to deal with blatant but subtle sexism that existed at my previous job; I feel I was fired because the boss found me threatening in a professional sense and his wife found me threatening in a personal sense; I just sat there and watched their paranoia grow, feeling helpless to stop it; I know I learned from the experience but I'm still not sure what I learned.

I think it's OK to be radical but it's not OK to be a fanatic — anarchy is fine, but it must be founded on deep analysis and synthesis, not on pure emotion. This has been my argument with feminists that I have come across in the past. Unrefined hysteria does nothing in itself to change the world; it can be a great catalyst but in isolation it is more akin to the knee-jerk reactionary than it is to revolution.

Keep up the good work.

Maura Gatensby  
Duncan, B.C.

To the Editor of Hysteria:

Why on earth choose a name like *Hysteria* for a new feminist journal?

The women's movement was to seek, I had heard, credibility for women in the political, business and social worlds of our nation. *Hysteria*, by its name, surely takes women back to insular self-examination and pity.

Change your name and I'd probably subscribe.

Mary P. Zeldin  
Regina, Sask.

Dear Ladies,

Your magazine of March 8 was a most interesting find.

Obviously my philosophy is not quite that which pervades the first issue. I grew through my teens during World War II and felt that any career that I chose to pursue was open to me; in the last ten years I have been aware that teenagers today no longer feel that freedom.

After a degree in history and post graduate study in English, I pursued two careers with seldom any feeling that I had been held back by being a woman. Finally at 37 I married and became a mother and housewife. At present I do supply teaching, help my husband with his retirement hobby/business, and do a great deal of volunteer work.

I feel that women like myself who are not tied by the need to earn a living are the most fortunate of people because it the volunteer's work that is the most creative, most experimental and most rewarding work in our society.

I would disagree with material in the first issue on your evaluation of Adelaide Hoodless. As an executive member of the Women's Institute, I would suggest that for many women, particularly rural women, she was a symbol that women could get out and accomplish a great deal in their communities as volunteers — that women were not to be confined to their home when something needed to be done.

At the moment I feel that a great example of volunteer achievement is the 15,000 women of the "Yvette rally" organized by Louise Rolie and Yvette Boudin in Montreal in one week.

Elizabeth Audet  
Palmerston, Ont.



# The Lunar Woman

by Jane Cere

The primary astrological symbol of life on our planet is the dance of the Sun and Moon. Although it is easy to overlook this simple fact in the rush of modern urban life, the waxing and waning of Luna is the most dramatic and obvious of all rhythmic cycles.

For their replication of this approximate twenty-eight day cycle, women have long had a share in the lunar symbology. In the early matriarchal societies, women were revered for their knowledge of the mysteries of creation. The male's role in conception was not clearly understood and it was believed that the Moon, by correspondence, caused a woman's belly to swell. All religious festivals were timed by the moon, and thirteen-month lunar calendars were in use.

When men found out what caused babies, things just weren't quite the same. It is only now, after millennia of patriarchal over-compensation, that we are moving toward greater harmony.

As women are becoming freer in the expression of their unique sexuality, they may also understand the cycle which links them most closely with Luna: that is, the long-maligned menstrual cycle. The word stems from the Greek *men*, meaning moon; or to go further back, the Sanskrit root-word *mn* which means mind. From the same source we have such words as woman, mantra, human, mind, menstrual, mental and moon. It may seem a far-fetched connection, but if we consider Luna's traditional role as inspirer of poets we may see our way clear.

Our creative abilities are cyclical like the moon. These include such seemingly diverse things as reproduction and creations of mind and spirit. There is good cause to break down all our common human activities into curves of monthly ups and downs. This sort of thing is the basis of Biorhythm, although I feel the identification of the cycles is a little off. For a woman, though, there is an easy way to chart ups and downs using the menstrual cycle as an analogue. Many women pay attention to their period only with a view to



avoiding conception, but it can be a healthy and life-giving way to orient yourself with this most basic life-cycle.

There are two ways of doing this which do not involve great technicality. The first is quite simple, and stems from recent findings in the sociology of primitive peoples. It was apparently the case, at one point in our history, that most women had their period at the time of the new moon. Ovulation would occur two weeks later at the full moon, this being the safest time for our ancestors to mate since all the predators were out in the forest doing the same thing. This seems like a sensible adaptive measure, and we may wonder why it is so far from true today. Apparently the chief answer is the copious presence of artificial light.

If your period does not coincide with the New Moon, you can try a simple experiment which has been found to be very effective. Carefully screen your bedroom so that light levels are as low as possible. Then from the fourteenth to the seventeenth day of your cycle (counting day one as the first day of your period, whenever it falls), sleep with the light on, even a small night-light. This should help to trigger ovulation at this time and gradually adjust you to a twenty-eight day cycle. It is excellent for the woman who ranges from twenty to forty days between periods,

and will regulate her in a very short time. After regularity is established the period will gradually shift towards new moon. This method requires nothing more technical than a small light bulb and a calendar showing the phases of the moon.

The second method of discovering your own cycles should be used after you establish a fairly regular menstrual cycle, and you must know your approximate time of birth (within six hours). There should also be access to an ephemeris or an astrologer, for you must know the positions of the sun and moon at your birth. From them can be found your sun-moon angle, which is simply the lunar phase at the time of your birth. You may have been born at new moon, first quarter, full moon, last quarter, or anywhere in between. Whatever the phase, each lunar month this angle will be repeated, and for these times you will be at the peak of one creative cycle.

Recent research, particularly that done at the Jonas Astra Centre in Czechoslovakia, has established a connection between the ovulation of some lower mammals and a second monthly ovulation in women. The female cat does not have a regular ovulation cycle; the release of the egg cell is triggered by copulation. It seems this may occur in female humans as well, if coitus is close enough to the time their sun-moon

angle repeats. Thus, in addition to a woman's regular monthly ovulation, a possibility exists that she may trigger the release of an egg cell at another part of her cycle. Dr. Jonas used this principle in cases of infertility, with a success rate over 90%.

Women would do well to run a few simple tests:

- (1) Keep track of your menstrual cycle; how regular are you? This really is basic to your health.
- (2) Are you aware of how closely you are allied with the lunar cycle? It is not superstition, but a subject for more scientific research.
- (3) If you make yourself more aware of your monthly ups and downs, by charting mood and clarity of thought as well as the physical cycle, you can utilize your energies to greater purpose.

If your interest runs further, I strongly recommend the following books:

- Playfair & Hill, *The Cycles of Heaven*, Avon Books;
- Louise Lacey, *Lunaception*, Warner Books;
- Ostrander & Schroeder, *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain* and *Natural Birth Control*, both from Bantam Books.

Jane Cere is a practising astrologer who lives near Lucknow, Ontario.

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## Management Succumbs to Wave of Hysteria

National Echo (Malaysia), Nov. 26, 1978

Penang, Sat. — Mass hysteria continued successively for three days among women production workers on all shifts of a factory in Bayan Lepas here.

More than 10 workers in the production line at the factory were again gripped with hysteria at about 10:15 this morning...

Without strikes, without unions, without collective bargaining, Malaysian workers have regularly shut down factories for hours and even days at a time with spontaneous outbreaks of possession by spirits affecting hundreds of workers. "Spirits" provide Malay women with one of their few culturally acceptable forms of social protest. Their culture does not condone expressions of anger and strong emotions by women.

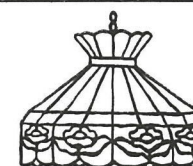
A possessed woman becomes "hysterical," going into contortions and often taking on a totally different voice and personality. In one possession which I witnessed, ten adults were needed to restrain a very slight teenaged girl. In another, a worker who was possessed in her hostel began to shout that she hated being there, hated working in the plant and

wanted to go home to her mother. Afterwards, she and others went to great pains to explain that it was not she who was speaking but a spirit who was speaking through her. Hence, she was not responsible for what she had said.

Mass possessions in the factories usually occur during times of high production pressures, changes in the production process or other generally recognized tension. Incidents commonly begin with one worker seeing a spirit in her microscope, often that of her mother. The vision sweeps through the factory floor, and suddenly several hundred women are hysterically weeping and writhing. Though management personnel try to remove the affected women from the floor immediately, the outbreaks frequently close the factory down in a subconscious wildcat strike. One Ameri-

can manager openly acknowledged the connection between possessions and working conditions: "If people believe management cares, there are no problems. Hysteria doesn't occur." Affected workers always receive a paid two-week medical leave in a further, implicit admission that possession is linked to working conditions.

Workers and management alike offer many explanations for the epidemics, usually revolving around unhappy spirits or ghosts. According to one theory, the spirits are ghosts of prisoners of war killed on the factory sites by Japanese during World War II. Management efforts to end the outbreaks have ranged from importing industrial relations experts from New York to hiring local spiritual healers, on a monthly stipend, to exorcise the spirits. But the possessions continue.



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## Opinion

# Hanging Together — Or Hanging Separately

by Mqe Lyons

There is no escape from work in this world: what is consumed must be produced. Those who live without being productive are living off the labours of others. The rest of us are workers, whether or not we have been trained to think of ourselves as such.

Much of women's work is hidden, unrecognized. All over the world throughout history, we have had the responsibility for the domestic sphere. Under tribal systems, and indeed in any pre-capitalist, pre-industrial socioeconomic arrangement when almost all work was centred around the home, the contribution of women to survival was more easily recognized. The men did the hunting and fighting, the women the gathering and tending to other needs. Under our current, virtually worldwide system of advanced capitalism, however, only waged work is recognized as being real work; women who work as wives and mothers rarely even realize the irony involved in their not being considered part of the workforce. A woman on Mother's Allowance is considered a welfare case, instead of having her contribution to the survival of the race recognized and valued.

Capitalism, disguised as progress and benevolent paternalism, is making great inroads into the Third World. A western, male-oriented perspective is imposed on age-old, integrated systems which evolved over the centuries to meet the needs of the people. Women in agrarian societies still do about 80 per cent of the work necessary for basic survival. Capitalism ignores this basic reality and effects massive technological changes so that the men become valuable producers serving the consumer ethic. Women's work does not pro-

duce a profit, as their work goes directly into the maintenance of life. They are thus considered a backward element, and their work and needs are ignored. Instead of introducing small-scale improvements which would make people self-sufficient, capitalism introduces so-called efficiency on a mass scale, destroying the ecological and social fabric, creating needs and forcing the people to become tied into the world economic system. Watching what is happening in "less-developed" countries, we can see what has been done to us.

Most people are alienated from their work. When we labour, we do not do so for the satisfaction inherent in accomplishing or creating something. We usually know about these satisfactions only from the experience of doing them for ourselves, because we need or want to. Usually work is something we do either for a wage or to maintain our self-esteem (i.e., out of guilt). "This isn't work, I'm doing it because I want to," is an expression often heard, but few of us stop to realize what this says about how the nature of work itself is markedly different from the nature of work under capitalism. When we are employed, the reason we work is to make money — for someone else.

Work traditionally done by men is paid a higher wage than that done by women because it is expected that a man will support a woman whose job it is to feed and tend both the current and future workforce. The nuclear family is a given. When women are resented for taking men's jobs, the underlying assumption is that it is a woman's place to be dependent upon a man. This assumption is also the rationale for traditional women's work being poorly paid. If a woman will not accept pity and poor wages



*Women and Environments*, June, 1980

for being on her own, she can expect scorn — or worse. Sexual harassment in its many manifestations in the workplace is only one of the more blatant ways men have of reinforcing their dominance in the waged realm, of defining women's function as primarily sexual and domestic.

A woman trying to make it in the waged workforce thus labours under what has been described as a double yoke. Before she can fight against the overall repressive nature of capitalism, she has to establish her right to be in the same starting place as the oppressed male worker.

The majority of women employed under capitalism are still in what have been referred to as "female job ghettos." Women and other oppressed groups are paid less wages than the privileged strata of society to do the work they do not want to do. Ideally, unpleasant work would be shared around equally. At the very least, those stuck with this work would receive rewards, at least in terms of status and appreciation, to compensate for the lack of enjoyment inherent in their tasks. Ironically, under a class/caste system, the opposite is true.

As women, we are especially well trained to accept our lot in life. From infancy, we are presented with a secondary status ("You be the nurse, I'll be the doctor..."), as well as an expectation that we will perform out of duty, out of a desire to be liked for being *nice*. In preparation for our primary role as the tenders of men and children, we are taught the most important thing for a woman is that she be loved. Having been trained to curry male favour, we find it very difficult to demand our rights and thus incur the wrath of our male co-workers and bosses. It is imperative

that we learn to give one another support, encouragement and love for being strong and standing up for ourselves and others, and to value the support of other women as much as, if not more than, the approbation of men.

Patriarchy and capitalism go hand in hand to achieve the oppression of women. These words may sound like rhetoric, but they are the proper names for the double-barrelled system under which we all labour. Both are about power ("Money is power"), and the nature of power as understood by those who currently possess it is that it is power over others, and thus can be held by only a few. It is no coincidence that the overwhelming majority of powerful people are men. Under any patriarchy, only a few men have power and the rest feel powerful by identification and by lording it over women and others they define as inferior. Under capitalism, a very few women apparently have power, but only if they work to keep things as they are; they have no real power to challenge and overthrow the system, or they would be removed as a threat before they achieved their goals. Everyone knows the way one makes one's way up a hierarchy is to be pleasing to those who have more power than you. Also, liberalism does not defeat its opposition by confronting it but by absorbing it. Thus, only women who identify with and are in some way pleasing to men (not necessarily sexually) can be successful in a system dominated by men. Women who are primarily concerned with and interested in women, or for whatever reason spend most of their time amongst other women, are in no position to know the people who can help them get ahead in this world.

There are, of course, a few roads out or some more pleasant paths for some of us who have the education and the priorities to find or create them. Some women find a niche in the liberal branches of the civil services, others do crafts, become involved in small businesses or co-operative enterprises, or find jobs where the work is intrinsically interesting. Still others do whatever work they can and become involved in union activity. Unfortunately,

however, it is difficult to find work which is inherently satisfying and well paid, too. There are a few such jobs — more, if your feminism does not include a critique of capitalism — but no matter how broad your category of desirable jobs, there are only a few such plums to be distributed among many women. Our interest must be in improving the quality of life for all. It is not wrong to want and to work for a good job that pays well, but it is a mistake not to realize the present system is going to leave most of your sisters behind. Of course you want the most you can out of your life, but an analysis which aims for and justifies the success of the few is a limited and self-serving analysis which will further isolate the women's movement within the middle class. Most women are stuck in dead-end jobs; office work, factory work, or service jobs of one sort or another, including marriage.

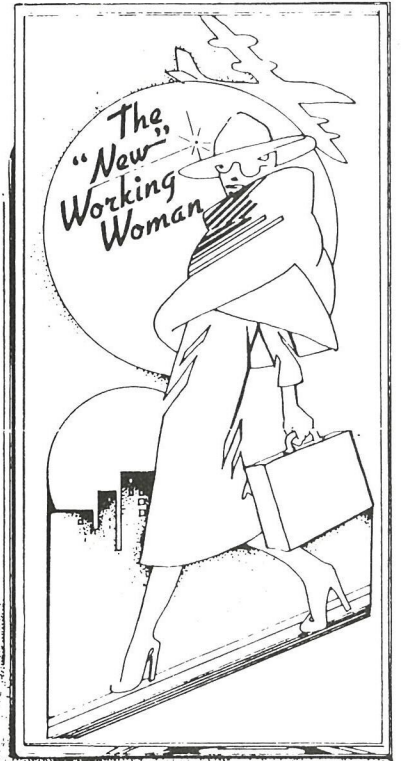
But there's no point in developing any sort of analysis unless we're willing to do something about the situation. It is everyone's responsibility to figure out what is wrong, and what can be done. We are up against a powerful and cohesive system, and we must act together and separately to defeat it. We have to develop our own definitions of power and define our own priorities. If we accept someone else's rules and definitions, we are beaten before we begin. We must take as a basic premise that neither patriarchy nor capitalism need exist; they are repressive and life-destroying systems under which neither we nor the planet can survive.

There is no point in wasting our energy hating individual holders of power. They did not create the conditions under which they thrive, even if it is in their interests to maintain the status quo. What we need to do is change the very system that gives that kind of power meaning. We need to develop concepts not bounded by what we have been taught. We must develop a whole, new, life-affirming way of thinking. We need to figure out how the world can work without being destroyed.

The only place to start is where we are, right in our own lives. Social change is made up of people acting together. Examining our own experi-

ence, we can see how our lives are shaped by what is happening in the world. Patriarchal capitalism arranges our time, shapes our self-image, affects our health, propagandizes our children, and entertains us, in an educational way, every possible minute of every day. The first step is to be conscious of it, the second is to be critical of it, and the third is to work together until it is changed — transformed to meet our needs.

It is time for us to take back our lives. We don't know how many tomorrows we have before it will be too late.



*Women and Environments*, June, 1980



# Home Safe Home

by Alison Stirling

Occupational health for the woman in the home is an issue often overlooked. Usually the focus of research on health hazards to women in the workplace concerns women's work *outside* the home, in both workplaces shared with men and in the female job ghettos.

Moreover, such research is usually concerned with women's capacity to bear children, that is, our sexual function. The effects of toxic substances and dangerous technology are studied in relation to possible children a woman might bear, not, usually, with an eye to our own safety and well-being — and this concern for unborn children has not led to the removal of unhealthy substances or situations but the removal of women of childbearing age from those workplaces. Such research fails to recognize hazards to the women themselves and is aimed at controlling the women, not the hazards. For example, the damage done to the reproductive system is not the only effect of lead poisoning; it's obvious that damage is done to the overall health of the woman.

The ill effects of working take many forms aside from reproductive interference: cancer, physical injuries, infection, disease and stress are among the potential hazards. Toxic substances found in workplaces and homes may have properties that are *mutagenic*, that is, potentially altering genes, chromosomes and fetal cells, affecting pregnant and non-pregnant women alike; they may be *teratogenic*, affecting a fetus, causing miscarriage, stillbirth or fetal abnormalities; or they may be *carcinogenic*, contributing to the development of cancerous cells. Physical injuries and exposure to infectious diseases are common problems of many workplaces. Nurses, health care workers, teachers, and houseworkers are all vulnerable to contraction of infectious disease, to injury and to ailments caused by toxic elements. Lastly, an increasing and little

understood occupational health hazard is stress, with its numerous physiological and psychological effects.

In the past few years Canadian and American labour groups and health activists have been looking into the multiple health problems related to work. Some excellent material has been put together on occupational health problems facing women, such as hazard inventories and recommended legislation for health and safety for particular workplaces, including textile factories and health institutions where the majority of workers are women. Hazard inventories detailing likely toxic substances and the effects and symptoms of them have proved to be valuable working tools for organized women trying to improve their workplaces. In a few instances, changes have occurred so that the worker is protected from a problem or the problem removed, but such examples are rare. In one occupation that women overwhelmingly predominate, virtually no research or attention has been given to the health and safety of the workplace — the home.

"Home Safe Home" is not the case. Both for the woman who works the "double day" of waged labour as well as doing all the housekeeping for her family and for the woman who works fulltime in the home, very little protection is available from the many unhealthy situations encountered in the house. Women who do housework come in contact with a large number of chemical and physical hazards. Serious injuries are not uncommon in the home, although little consideration has been paid to the house as a dangerous workplace. Let's look at some of the problem areas in this most common woman workplace.

Physical injury in the home is the best known hazard of housework. Slipping, falls, burns and electrical shock are serious accidents which may often be prevented by careful attention to the placement of furniture, appliances and lighting, and the

condition of electrical wiring. You may also suffer injury from lifting or moving heavy or awkward objects. Most women aren't taught to lift properly, using their knees, and thus are prone to severe back strain — particularly since many women spend many years carrying small but heavy children around. Varicose veins and other circulatory problems can also result from this sort of strain. Repetitive straining actions on tendons, wrists and joints can cause damage — women who knit and do certain other crafts run the risk of arthritic fingers later on in life.

Exposure to toxic substances by inhalation, absorption through the skin or ingestion can happen any day in the home. The *Household Pollutants* guide lists over 200 different substances commonly found in the home that are dangerous. Drain cleaners, for example, may cause serious burns. Many cleansers give off fumes which in combination with other fumes may form poisonous gases. Oven cleaners can cause blindness if they accidentally reach the eyes (on your hands or by splashing back from the surface you're spraying). Aerosol sprays, which irritate the lungs, are also dangerous to eyes and can explode if they become too hot. Many cleaning fluids and solvents have been found to be cancer-producing and even those without such serious side effects can cause skin problems (rashes and itching) and lung irritation. The list is long and it is frightening to realize that very few, if any, of these items considered necessary in most homes are tested by their makers to determine whether there are any safety and health hazards to consumers.

An unnoticed health hazard in the home is contact with infectious diseases while caring for sick children or other adults. Mothers are noted for not going to bed when they're sick — who else is going to do their work? In the long run this overwork can cause more serious health problems, particularly stress-related illnesses.

Stress is an underrated occupational hazard. For the houseworker faced with responsibility for other people's care, repetitive work, lack of job satisfaction and feelings of powerlessness (not to mention the lack of holidays), stress is a familiar experience. When a "women's work is never

done" and there is no chance of promotion, benefits, sick leave or an end to cleaning, stress creeps in taking its toll on the body and mind. Stress can cause biological changes such as fatigue, aching muscles and irregular bowel movements, as well as a multitude of emotional reactions. Chronic stress reactions can develop over time leading to ulcers, heart disease, kidney disease, migraine headaches and muscle tension. Stress is an insidious occupational hazard. It has been linked to the heavy use of tranquilizers by housewives, alcohol abuse, nutritional deficiencies and mental

and housework. A report from Saskatchewan points out the over-prescription of tranquilizers to women, and the increasing use of alcohol by housebound women. The result of these coping mechanisms is a dulling of the senses and a chance to forget the powerlessness and strains of everyday troubles. The attitude of the medical profession, like the removal of women from the lead plants to prevent reproduction problems, treats the woman as the problem, not the circumstances.

Two women in Waterloo Region have been confronting the frustra-

houseworkers work out the hazards of stress with the sharing and support women offer each other.

It is important that women working in the home, either fulltime or as part of a "double day", learn what dangers and hazards women are exposed to as houseworkers. It is not an easy job. Of the more than 15,000 chemicals in industrial and home use today, only a few have been tested for toxic effects. Those that are known to be carcinogenic or have mutagenic or teratogenic properties (such as benzene, found in paint strippers and rubber cement) have not been

removed from the market. The Nader Center for Science in the Public Interest has produced the first guide to household pollutants, providing an opportunity for the individual to check out problem areas in the home and to try to prevent hazardous situations. Where other workers such as factory or institutional workers may have the opportunity to act on the health problems to be found in their workplace by pushing for safer conditions through their union or through legislation, this avenue is not open to the houseworker at present.

The houseworker is in a unique position when it comes to occupational health hazards. She has to manage with stress, fatigue, pressure, possible injuries, exposure to harmful chemicals — all without benefits, sick leave, job security, worker's compensation, pension plan, income or holidays. There is a constant demand on her to take responsibility for others' lives, to make decisions and to carry extra loads. Many ways of "coping", such as the tranquilizer route, further threaten health.

What possibilities are there for healthy changes in work situations? Activists in the women's occupational health field, such as Jeanne Stellman, the *Organized Working Women* group

## WHEN DEPRESSION COMES DISGUISED AS ANXIETY.

A tense and visibly agitated patient blurts out a tale of sleepless nights, irrational fears and "bad nerves".

A straightforward diagnosis of anxiety? Perhaps. But in case after case, the final diagnosis goes deeper than that.

All too often, anxiety can be a frequent presenting symptom of an underlying depression.

And that's why it's important to know about LUDIOMIL, a highly effective antidepressant with anxiolytic properties.

LUDIOMIL gets underneath the disguise of anxiety to attack the problem at its source: the depression.

While it works to lift the depression, its sedative tranquilizing properties soothe and calm the patient.

The simplicity of dosage is also a key factor in the prescribing of LUDIOMIL. Where an agitated patient might have difficulty with a complex regimen, LUDIOMIL offers a simple once-a-day maintenance dosage.

When the problem goes deeper than anxiety, remember LUDIOMIL.

### LUDIOMIL

Treats the underlying depression—helping to relieve the symptoms of anxiety.

Women are often portrayed as the beneficiaries of tranquilizers; doctors are urged to calm their female patients with drugs such as the one mentioned in this ad.

illness. Jeanne Stellman, in her recent book *Women's Work, Women's Health* continually returns to the growing problem of stress for women at work, pointing out that it is an occupational disease that women must pay careful attention to.

The ways that women have coped with stress as houseworkers have not always been beneficial. Ruth Cooperstock and Henry Lennard reported that many women turned to tranquilizers, at their doctors' insistence, to help them live with the frustrations and conflicts of child-raising

tions and hazards of homemaking by sharing with other women their concerns and ideas on the occupation of housework. Wendy Lukachko and Linda Ross offered a course in spring 1980 through Conestoga College called "Occupation: Mother/Homemaker". It was a programme studying the feelings of isolation, loss of status and power and privacy, and the frustrations as well as the joys of working in the home. Discussions on stress were central to their sessions. The support of groups, friends and outside interests has helped many



in Toronto, and *Healthsharing* have suggested organizing into support groups, changing and humanizing work situations in the office, factory and home, fighting for benefits, for protection from health risks, and re-evaluation of the economic value of housework and traditional women's work.

Healthy workplaces do not develop easily, particularly where legislation and increased social services are required. It will mean work, but working for life rather than slow death.

### Resources

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Stellman, Jeanne *Women's Work, Women's Health: Myths and Realities*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1977.

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Women's Occupational Health Resource Center Fact Sheet: Household Workers, 320 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017.

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*Alison Stirling, a long-time activist in the women's health movement, is currently a member of the board of Planned Parenthood, Waterloo Region.*

## News from prison women

Like most women in this society, Bev Whitney is underpaid and her boss has too much power. Her work situation, however, is unique and her oppression is clearer than most.

Bev, a narcotics offender, has spent nine and a half years as a federal prisoner. She is the editor of *Tightwire*, the inmate publication at the federal women's prison in Kingston, Ontario. As such, she receives \$19.50 every two weeks. She is a grade 5, the highest employment category within the inmate populace. Grade 1s make \$1.50 per day.

She was given the job when the previous editor was summarily dismissed for reprinting material from the left.

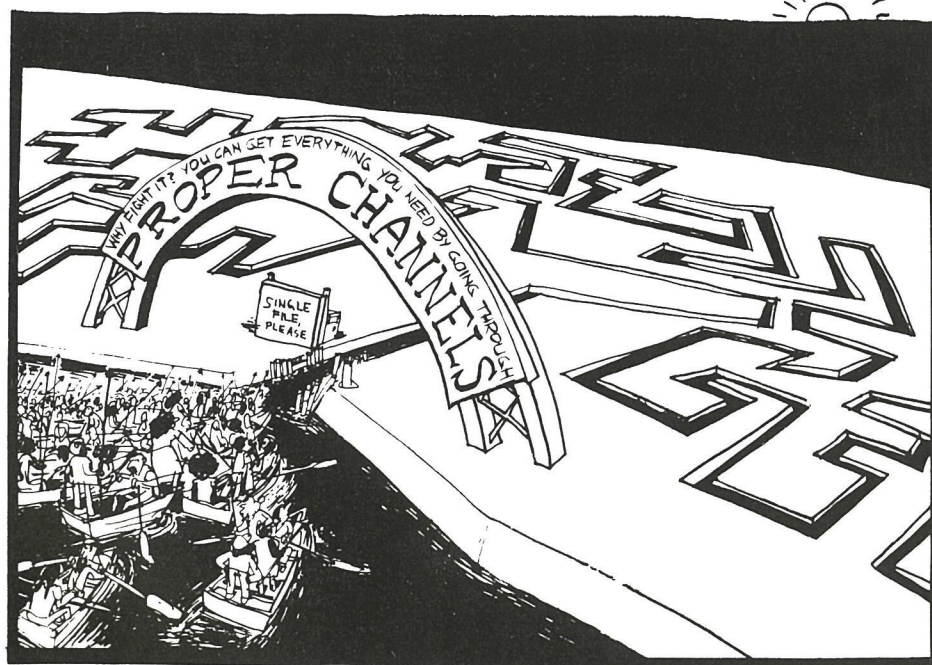
*Tightwire* has a strict set of directives under which it must operate. Under the heading "Restrictions", this document states:

- "No inmate publication shall contain
- a. material in the nature of private messages or greetings of any kind purporting to be from one inmate to another inmate;
- b. material that purports to describe occurrences in the institution that would not be of interest to subscribers generally;
- c. destructive criticism of the

- administration of justice or of other public bodies;
- d. partisan political or religious discussions;
- e. glorification or vilification of individuals;
- f. offence against generally accepted public standards."

As well as these specific restrictions, it says "Notwithstanding anything stated in this Directive, the Institutional Director may direct that any article or entire publication may be withheld from publication if, in his opinion, it is deemed to be in the best interest of the Service or institution that this should be done."

"Women in prison are scared to death of feminism," says Bev. Unlike most of them, she is conversant with and supportive of the women's movement. She has what could be considered a captive audience and is interested in making her publication not only entertaining and attractive, but as educational and relevant as possible to the women with whom and for whom she writes. Perhaps with Bev Whitney running their magazine, the inmates of the Kingston Pen will have the opportunity to see feminism as something which could be real in their lives. M.L.



New England Free Press

opf

## EUREKA

Thirty-four years of it  
Standing in the kitchen  
Slapping a brown scum  
Of peanut butter into a kid's lunch,  
Crouching in the bathroom  
Scrubbing another crust  
From a Saturday toilet bowl,  
Sweating in a winter coat  
Stuffing two toddlers  
Into three-minute outdoor playsuits  
So I can lie in the snow  
And cool my over heated brain  
That goes off like a flare  
Bright enough to see by,  
To see that I'm bigger than that,  
That I did it and didn't die  
With my tongue stuck  
To the roof of my mouth  
Or my head in the toilet bowl  
Or my mind melted clear through  
The ragged snows of two childhoods.  
I see it!

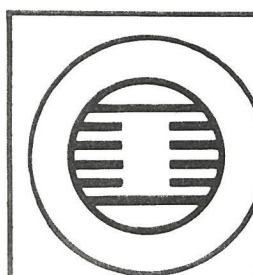
— D. Dawber

## ATTEMPT

On an April day  
It occurs to me that  
I am as old as my mother  
Will ever be  
And I try to go back  
To go from the suicide note  
To the pen to the hand  
(A small hand like my own)  
To the swollen brain  
And the faltering off-rhythm  
Of her body  
To the simple loneliness  
Of a city girl dying in the country  
Failing life and  
Hating herself and us for it,  
Letting it all spill out  
Like a blister breaking.  
Maybe she thought it would leave  
A clean place to heal.

— D. Dawber

Diane Dawber is a Kingston poet.



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bring your own container
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- thompson seedless raisins 1.70 lb.
- rennetless cheddar — mild 2.44 lb.
- natural peanut butter 1.10 lb.
- natural honey 1.00 lb.

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Fri. 10 - 7  
Sat. 9 - 5



# UP the Ladder of Success

by Kae Elgie

With a mixture of fear, disdain and curiosity, I lined up for the workshop "Achieving Personal Effectiveness in the Workplace," featuring Jean Wood, a self-described "manager with feminist values" who was intent on "being successful in big business."

How could I, or anyone else with high ideals, want to be part of the money-grubbing scramble for success, I sniffed. But what if it made sense to act like men in the corporate world? What if that was all that made sense to the 87 women at the Waterloo Motor Inn with me? Would I have to throw out my carefully practised ideals of honesty, equality and caring, and abandon feminism as old-fashioned?

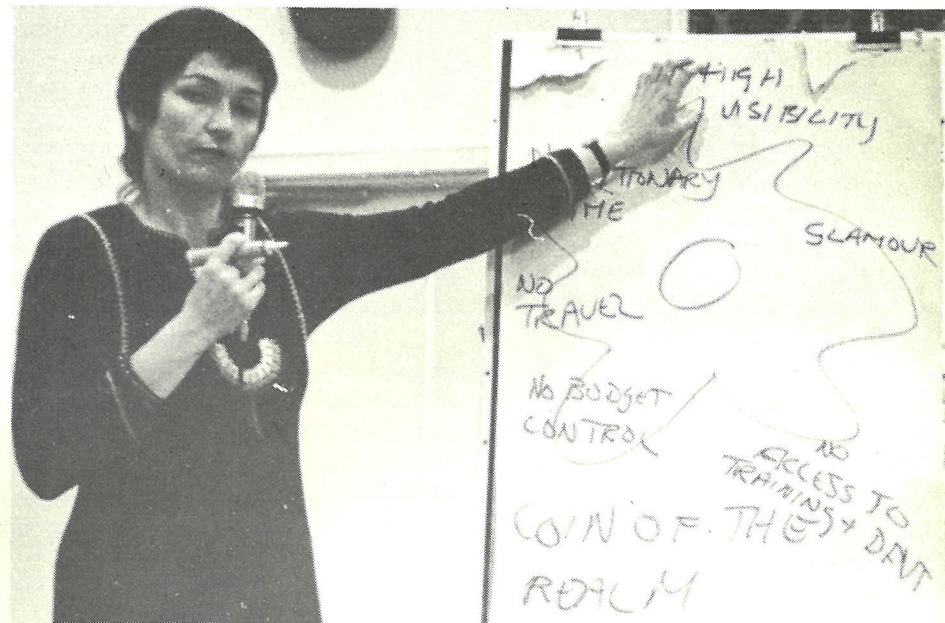
Fortunately, I could retreat to my more neutral reporter role and just listen. I sat down with two secretaries, a former tour guide and a researcher and waited for Wood, a Manulife vice-president in charge of US Group Pensions, to begin.

## How to get into management

The key to getting ahead or "being effective" Wood told us, is to understand how our organization works, who holds power in it, and why.

Our first workshop task was to discover what behaviours and traits our respective workplaces valued. We thought about people who'd just been promoted, people at the top or next in line to it, and drew their profiles. Surprisingly, we found companies often reward behaviours quite different from the ones they say they value. Manulife, for instance, advertises for "bright, creative, energetic" individuals. But on the job, creativity will be punished if it results in disruption of the slow, steady production line, and high energy employees can be an embarrassment.

Next, we listed behaviours women would reward if we were in charge.



Jean Wood helped women at the Waterloo workshop analyse the importance of their jobs to their organizations.

K. Elgie

Comparing our two lists showed us why we often fail to get ahead even when we feel we're doing a good job. What organizations want is often different from what women want and value. For example, Wood at first thought good performance was important and did assignments as quickly and thoroughly as possible, but her boss was irritated at having to deal with her work long before he was ready. So now she asks for deadlines which are usually two or three times longer than she actually needs.

Women who want to get ahead have to do what their employer thinks is important and not blindly adhere to values learned in other situations, Wood said. "Women who keep putting their feminist values on the line keep getting put down." For her, intelligence meant adjusting. She felt she could do this without changing her basic nature. She admitted, for example, that energy and hard work were important to her. "But I don't need to deploy them at work. I think it's incompetent to get things done on time if that's not what is required." Fitting into company timetables meant her work was more likely to be successfully

received, she said. So she finishes her work in the time she needs, and with agreement from her boss, works on personal projects the rest of the time.

Learning the rules and operation of power in our workplaces was the first step; Woods then showed how the fact of being female and the particular jobs we have interact with the overall power structure.

The right kind of job is crucial. She said it's important to be doing work the organization thinks is important, which usually means a job on the production line, churning out insurance policies, course enrollments or whatever determines the organization's success.

Jobs outside "the line," such as Wood's earlier post heading Manulife's task force on equal opportunities for women, may seem important, may offer great freedom of action, have loose budget and personnel controls and even be highly publicized, but they will lead nowhere. To be equally avoided by the upwardly mobile are jobs which have high influence but little real power over decision-making, traits common to many secretarial or

administrative assistant jobs. Women should investigate how their job fits into the organization and if it's in a non-promotion stream, they should leave it or abandon hope of advancement.

After lunch, Wood showed us a slide-tape production by American sociologist Rosabeth Kantor and associates which described four ways that women are stereotyped by the established, white, English-speaking, male majority. Women entering a previously male environment are apt to find themselves manipulated into "helper" (or "mother"), "mascot" ("cheerleader"), "sex object" or "militant" ("iron maiden") roles. Many women, conscious of the undesirability of the helper, mascot and sex object roles, opt for toughness, only to find themselves repeatedly given

the hardest assignments and most unpleasant tasks. Unless a woman wants to perpetuate any of these unequal power relationships, she must recognize and point out the stereotype and diplomatically refuse tasks which embody it, Wood said.

Learning the rules of the corporate power game can be difficult for women socialized for more passive, supportive roles, Wood said. Books like Rosabeth Kantor's *Men and Women of the Corporation* and Betty Lehan Harragan's *Games Mother Never Taught You* point out general guidelines. Wood also suggested finding a mentor, someone a generation older, securely established in the organization, who can teach a younger woman the ropes and drop a good word about her potential. Since senior women executives are rare

## Is It Worth It?

• "The health costs aren't worth it," a doctor friend said. "If those women knew how many male executives I see with heart disease, drinking problems, marriage breakups — middle-aged men who should be in their prime, but the stress is killing them. Why would anyone want that?"

But being poor can be stressful too, I thought. (A recent Maryland study found women who have clerical jobs, children at home and a blue-collar husband were likelier heart attack candidates than homemakers or other working women or men.<sup>2</sup>)

• "Playing by the system's rules makes women change too much, become competitive, cold and dominating, all those things we've criticized men for." Perhaps. Jean Wood said working in a male organization hadn't changed her basic feminist nature, but ten minutes later, she apologized for swearing so much and blamed it on her constant association with men at work.

• "You have to sacrifice too much. Few women can expect the kind of boss and flexibility Jean Wood has at Manulife. To spend most of your time doing things you think are irrelevant or even wrong, even if it does net thirty pieces of silver or a promotion, is too damaging to one's self esteem."

Betty Lehan Harragan disagrees.

You work only 40, maybe 50 hours of a total 168 a week, so you have ample time for more satisfying or meaningful pursuits, she argues.

But one has to eat, sleep, bathe, recreate and if one is a woman, probably also shop, cook and clean. My calculations for a single woman without hired help left a maximum 13 hours for a 50-hour worker's outside interests.<sup>3</sup> Not much time to be one's "basic nature."

• "I don't want power over other people. It's wrong. Power corrupts." More than any other aspect, the would-be manager's interest in power made many feminist friends recoil. Hierarchies prevent most women's growth and limit their freedom, they said.

Phyllis Chesler (*Women, Money & Power*) thinks fear is part of an aversion to power. She thinks women don't want the attention power and status bring because of their long history of being noticed — and punished — for things they didn't do (e.g. act feminine, do the last 5% of the housework) rather than rewarded for their accomplishments (the physics prize, the other 95% of the housework). Women fear the risk of trying for something better. Something worse may come instead — so they resign themselves to preserving the status quo.

and male mentors may provoke sexual gossip, other consultants stress networking, learning from experienced women in similar organizations and forming mutually supportive associations. Vancouverite Eileen Hendry sees her Women's Network, the first formally organized one in Canada, as an Old Girls circuit which can help women make contacts, land promotions and make business deals, the same way the Old Boys network has helped men.

Organizations are predisposed to think women incompetent and inferior, and any female deviation from the organization's accepted practices will reinforce that view, said Wood. It doesn't matter if women's responses make more sense. Often they do: for instance, women prefer to stay home for a day to defeat a cold and avoid spreading germs, while Manulife wants moderately ill people to come to work. But if the company rewards regular attendance and you want to be promoted, go to work. Harragan laid even more stress on adhering to the givens, even to abandoning beloved office space and furnishings if they don't parrot higher executives'. Both she and Wood said women have to learn to play on teams, knowing and accepting the organization's goals, whether they like them or not, then determining how they can best contribute to these goals.

## Is it worth it?

By this time, the independent streak in me was itching. So it's play by the rules or don't play at all, is it? This sounds strangely familiar... in the 50's and 60's the rewards were love, respect and a happy home, in the 70's and 80's they're power and financial independence. But the rule-makers and the demand for obedience are the same, I mused. Surely feminism aims for more than the right to choose a new set of orders?

On the other hand, my years of innovative, cooperative, egalitarian work outside the mainstream organizations had not, regrettably, brought me the financial resources to support a child, or build an energy-conserving home. Like Jean Wood, I wanted the rewards and choices



power and money could bring. What should I do?

I kept researching, talking and thinking.

### We can't afford to stay as we are

Worsening economic conditions challenge this resignation and aversion. In 1979, 34% of Canadian working women were still in the low-paid clerical jobs at the bottom of the organizational ladder, an even higher proportion than the 30% of 1962. No one can ignore tactics which promise to get women into higher paying jobs.

It's getting harder to be "poor and pure," to say we don't want the rewards the big system can bring us. As the economic situation tightens, grants for alternative workplaces have evaporated, and setting up and succeeding at small businesses has become more difficult. So more and more of us have to look to the mainstream.

After years of affirmative action and equal pay legislation, in 1978 the average 25-to-34 year old working woman earned \$8,100 annually, just over half her male counterpart's \$15,300. Not surprisingly, it's this age group which is showing the most determination to get into management, according to Toronto consultant Edita Kowalski.

The quest certainly is popular. For every woman at the workshop I attended, there was another on the waiting list. The low price, \$5, made possible by a special grant and Jean Wood's policy of charging lower fees for feminist groups, may have helped. Yet last year 800 women or their employers paid up to \$770 each to take similar courses at the Canada Management Centre, and Edita Kowalski's Women's Conference Institute recently held its third annual conference on professional development at Toronto's Inn on the Park, at \$385 a head. As well, community colleges, government departments and businesses conduct in-house women's management training courses and hold mixed "interface" sessions where men and women discuss new responses all must make to women's changing roles. Women's magazines regularly carry articles on the topic and how-to books like Harragan's

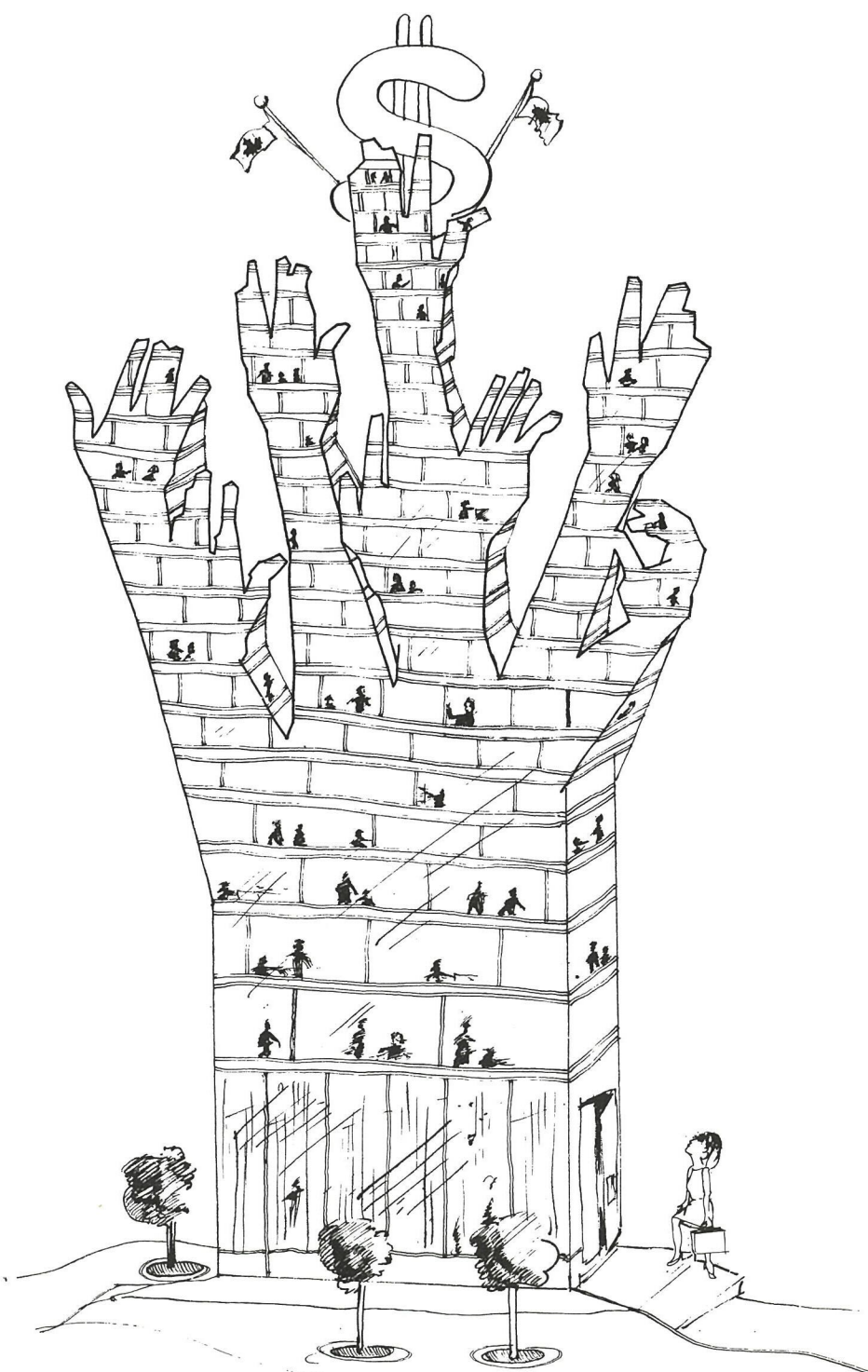
*Games Mother Never Taught You* sell thousands of copies.

### Will the tactics work?

Looking back, I'm glad I went to Jean Wood's workshop and I'd certainly go to others. I think her advice — her tips on analyzing the power system of an organization, and recog-

nizing the limitations of a person's job and sex — are excellent, and ultimately they can help women advance. But don't rely on them to get you into management.

For one thing, the odds are against you. There aren't many management jobs — by definition, hierarchies have fewer people at the top



P. Foote-Jones

## HYSTERIA

## HYSTERIA

than the bottom. According to 1979 StatsCan figures, only 5.1% of all working women had managerial or administrative jobs. Men's levels were higher, 9.2%, but still a small proportion, and it's hard to foresee more than one in nine or ten women ever making it to the upper level. In 1979 Kowalski estimated there were 8,200 Ontario women in the middle management, \$17-25,000 bracket, 1/2% of the total Ontario female labour force of 1,764,000.

In the short term, job renaming and redefining may make it seem women are advancing. With word processors and electronic mail making many clerical jobs obsolete (see the article on automation on page 18 of this issue), women may find themselves called managers, but just as ghettoized, blocked and discriminated against as before. Often, Kowalski has noted, middle management jobs become less desirable if women can fill them. In several government departments, men have left en masse once women started moving into "their" area. When women became bank managers in smaller centres, that formerly prestigious position suddenly had much lower community status, a real problem if there were financial competitors.

Furthermore, US experience suggests women will need more than individual effort, however canny, to get out of the low-paid job ghetto. In the 1960's the United States had good laws against sexual discrimination, but they were never enforced. It took the political pressure of the 70's — the growth of the National Organization of Women and the National Women's Political Caucus to 50,000 members each, and the wholesale entry of women into the Democratic and Republican parties — to effect enforcement of these laws and passage of even better ones.

The present Canadian situation is comparable to the United States in the 1960's. Most provincial laws are vague and untested. Government-created bodies generally have no formal authority and so must rely on voluntary action. Women's groups are still at the organizing stage, only starting to go after individual firms. Unions are 72% male and almost exclusively male-led. Organizations

which could be expected to exert pressure on institutions to end occupational segregation are, by and large, not doing it. Until this pressure builds, there's little incentive for companies to face the drop in morale and profits which have so far accompanied many promotions of women into management of banks and government.

Maybe you'll be lucky, be a Hortensia Alger story, and reach the top. But if you don't?

Even if one in ten women matched men's positions and salaries in management (in 1973 women managers earned only 57% as much as men), how would this help you, one of the other nine, likely stuck in a low-paid job? Some argue a woman president or vice-president would change some people's attitudes about women's abilities. But, as Wood said, attitudes aren't important, changed behaviour is. There's no guarantee a few high-placed women will be the start of a new capitalist era, not merely tokens temporarily inserted to suggest the system is changing.

Though Harragan ably makes the point that an employee who's proved her worth to the company can expect extra pay, the principle of a hierarchy is many low-paid workers at the base supporting a few high-paid ones at the top. No matter how many seek it, and no matter how cleverly, capitalism will provide real wealth for only a few.

Better, I think, to concentrate on structural rather than personnel changes in the system. The struggle for equal pay for work of equal value is an important example since it has the potential of minimizing discrimination arising from job segregation. So too would be a drive systematically to change the basis of recruiting, hiring, training and promoting employees — rewriting the rules of the game, as it were.

Working for structural change will require just as much study, planning and creativity as a personal quest for promotion. Wood's tips on analyzing the system of power and seeing what kind of behaviour makes things happen will be invaluable — whether for people who choose the outside-the-system route of lobbying or political pressure, or for those who

concentrate on getting right-minded persons into powerful positions inside the political or business organization. You can't fight something you don't understand.

Both inside- and outside-the-system routes are needed. In fact it's hard to imagine one tactic succeeding without the other, though none of the management consultants I heard or read mentioned this.

In sum, read Harragan, Kantor, hear Wood, Kowalski *et al.* Learn the rules of the game — we're all part of it whether we like it or not — and learn to play as well as you can. But don't forget it is a game, and the rules can be changed.

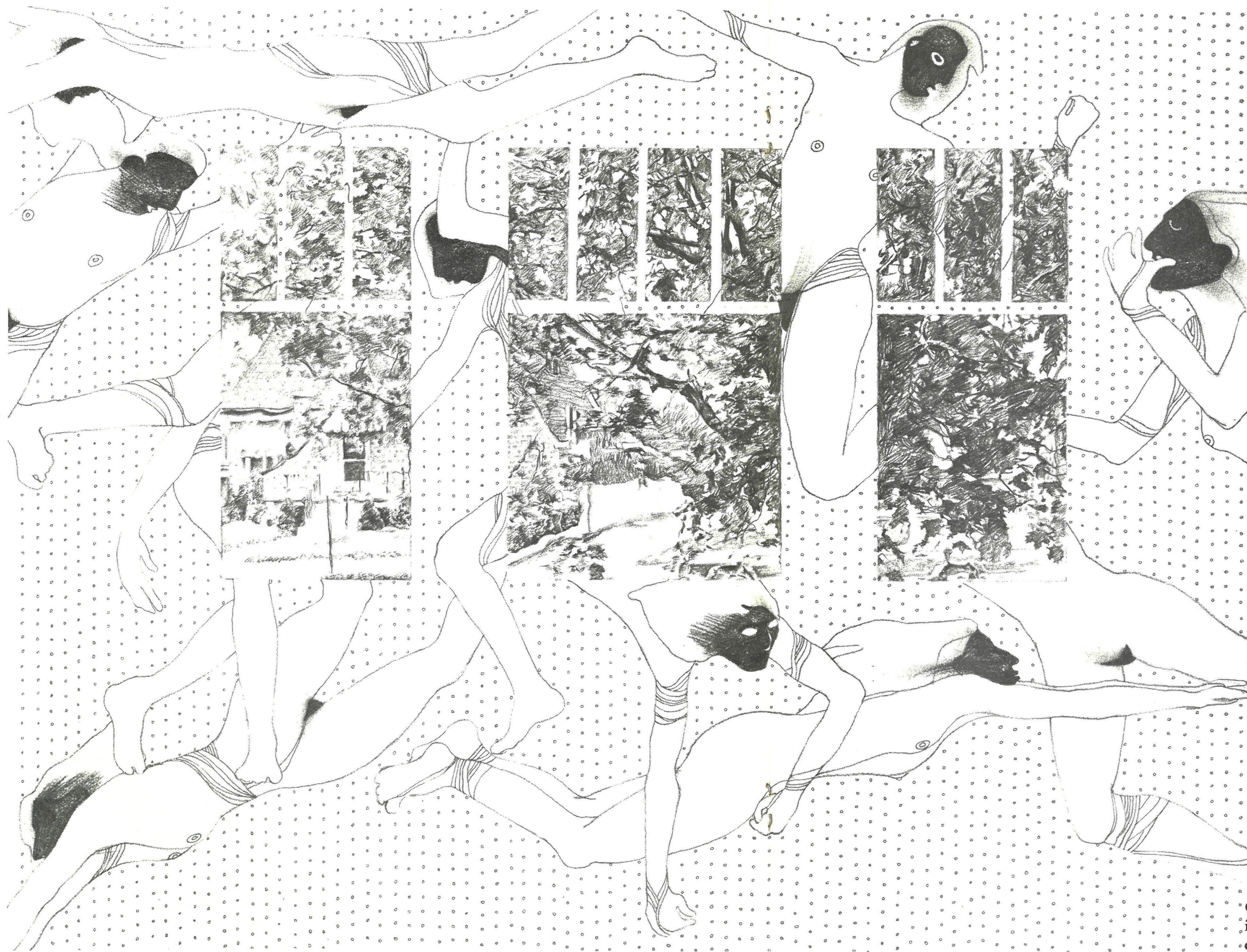
### Footnotes

1. For other consultants' advice, see *References* and look under Women in Management in periodical indexes and library book catalogues.
2. Damude, Earl, "Heart Attacks and Working Women," *Chatelaine*, July 1980, p. 8.
3. My calculations allowed for *eating*: 21 hours a week (1 hour x 3 meals x 7 days); *cooking and shopping*: 10 hours/week; *fitness/recreation*: 7 hours; *clothes, laundry, personal hygiene*: 8 hours; *sleeping*: 56 hours; *housework*: 5 hours and *working*: 40 or 50 hours a week.

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# The Window

by Pat Foote-Jones

Outside the world, inside the house  
inside the body, outside the in  
outsider, inside the out, outsider...



How Revolutionary is the "Computer Revolution"?

# The Office Robot is a Woman

by Wiz Long

Sometimes when I sit down in front of my Volker-Craig 404 terminal and 'talk' with someone in Paris, or update a file, or edit a document, I feel like a character out of a sci-fi novel. But then I remind myself that I am just doing a job that someday soon every secretary will be doing — that is, the 'lucky' ones who still have a job.

During the 1980s many jobs will be taken over by computers. According to an article in the *Toronto Star* (June 22, 1980), a large number of manufacturing industries will be affected by automation. The following are just some of the jobs which may be eliminated or taken over: accountants, secretaries, key-punchers, cashiers, filing clerks, sales clerks, telephone operators, textile workers and bank and insurance employees. Although specialists in the field of computers have hidden their heads in the proverbial sand for a long time, some of them are beginning to be concerned about the sociological consequences of automation.

Many of them sound more like prophets of doom than visionaries of a utopian society. Eric Manning, Director of the Computer Communications Networks Group at the University of Waterloo recently stated that, "In manufacturing, the effects (of computerization) will be profound, and, in the absence of a concerted national effort, disastrous. . . . During the last wave of production automation, services took up much of the slack in Canadian unemployment, with large numbers of people moving from the manufacturing sector to the service sector of the economy. This time, unfortunately, it appears that employment in services will be slashed by the micro-electronics revolution." (A lecture in honour of Walter L. Gordon, March 26, 1980)

A secretary works in an office. An office deals in one product — infor-



P. Foote-Jones

mation. This product becomes tangible, useable, measureable, when committed to paper. Office workers (clerks, secretaries, etc.) perform essentially five tasks: they collect, store, produce, process and communicate information. Office automation can eliminate much of the paperwork which has been the bane of offices since information can and will be handled increasingly by electronic means. However, women constitute the bulk of those who process information in offices. If much of the paperwork is eliminated, won't many of the jobs women hold also disappear? There are some computer firms who are trying to put terminals on every middle manager's desk (and all the way to the president). If these companies have their way, then data entry will be done by middle management and not by their secretaries. Actually, there are quite a few people in the trade who are more concerned with making management more productive than making typists more efficient.

Women's participation rate in the labour force has grown substantially. The seasonally adjusted rate in January 1979 was approximately 48.8%. The government had predicted that this figure would not be reached until 1986. What this means is that there are 161,000 more women in the labour force than expected. And more women continue to enter the labour force every year. Will they go into clerical and secretarial jobs which may be eliminated or will they have the education needed for the technical and managerial jobs which industry is now demanding?

Technological change produces structural change. The introduction of process control by computers in the U.S. steel industry resulted in more than one half of the new managers and technicians being coordinators of computers, systems analysts, engineers and procedures analysts. The remainder were key-punch operators. Employment increased in managerial and technical occupations while it remained the same

in operating occupations. How many of those new jobs went to women?

But even for those that remain in the operating occupations, the work activities of some operators change. Mel Brodie, telecommunications manager at Union Gas in Calgary, recently installed a computer-controlled switchboard system. The installation of the SL-1 system meant that the company now employs only one switchboard operator rather than the two they had previously employed. However, a computerized switchboard system required training individuals in the use of her or his telephone. So, while the company eliminated one operator, a new job category was created, that of service advisor. Some activities change, some activities disappear and some new work is generated. Keep in mind, however, that the change will require more technical skills.

Management will restructure the internal organization of an office in order to optimize productivity. A word processing centre is the

updated version of the typing pool. Essentially you have a small group of women working at terminals. They sit for seven or eight hours every day punching in data, editing material and retrieving stored files. It's boring, monotonous, and dehumanizing work. Human contact is reduced because a letter or a report can be dictated over the telephone. The emphasis is on productivity. The work comes in, it is assigned and the work goes out — hopefully, in record-breaking time. You are merely an extension of the computer and are often treated as such.

Office automation does not change the powerless position that secretaries have always had. In the final analysis, the position of a typist or secretary in a hierarchical, authoritarian structure won't change. Office workers will continue to be undervalued and underpaid because they have no corporate power; they have no or little input into decision-making. You may change the equipment but you won't change the power base.

## Office Technology Sends Out Shock Waves

In the strange new world into which we are about to be propelled, human beings do not work with one another; they interface. They do not have meetings, they conference. Things do not influence other things; they impact on them. Information is accessed, projects are finalized, items are prioritized, language is brutalized.

Behind the new interest in office automation lies a growing realization that white collar work is as inefficient as it is costly. U.S. studies have concluded that secretaries and clerical workers may spend up to half their time in unproductive activity, while managers and professionals spend as much as a quarter of their own time on clerical and support tasks.

If present trends continue, studies suggest that by the end of the decade the numbers of people handling information will be three times greater than numbers actually producing things, while annual office costs in North America will have risen to something like \$1.6 trillion.

The effects of the automation revolution will undoubtedly make themselves felt at all levels of business life, but nowhere more than at the management level. [The *Globe* keeps the stress on changes for management; what about us workers?]

As the costs of traditional white collar work continue to eat up greater and greater percentages of business resources, they feel confident that companies will be driven to automation. If they are right, the typewriter and the filing cabinet and the appointment book and the mailing equipment will soon be museum pieces, cast into oblivion by electronic integration and the desk-top terminal. . . . [along with the people who did all these tasks].

from the *Globe and Mail*, August 2, 1980.

## GRAPHICALLY SPEAKING

By Rosemary Allison et al.

Every year women have written saying they loved the illustrations in the *EVERYWOMAN'S ALMANAC*. *GRAPHICALLY SPEAKING*, a collection of graphics and cartoons from the past five almanacs, gathers together the best of these poignant and funny drawings. The book, through illustrations, describes the joys, concerns and problems of women during the last decade and now. Drawings have been organized under a number of headings including "Growing Up Female", "Breaking Out of the Mould", "Working" and "Speaking Out". The original illustrations are not only attractive but thought-provoking. Striking in black and white, these graphics present in very real terms what the women's movement is all about.

\$2.95

64 pages

## EVERYWOMAN'S ALMANAC 1981

Appointment Calendar & Handbook  
By The Everyday Collective

Since its inception six years ago the *EVERYWOMAN'S ALMANAC* has attracted readers from all over the world. The reason — this attractive calendar/datebook/handbook focuses on themes which attempt to reflect common concerns of women everywhere. The *EVERYWOMAN'S ALMANAC 1981* is no exception.

The theme this year, "friendships", speaks to all of our friendships in their many and varied forms. In *EVERYWOMAN'S ALMANAC 1981* women explore their friendships in the workplace, the personal ties that have grown out of crises, their friendships with men, and with women of older and younger generations. In total we are presented with the intricacies and realities of friendships and with an understanding of their impact on our daily lives.

To supplement the interviews, descriptions of support services for women are included, as are listings of women's centres across the country. Original illustrations add to make the *EVERYWOMAN'S ALMANAC 1981* an attractive companion for the entire year.

\$5.95

208 pages



# No Bosses Here

by Moe Lyons

I like my job. I've been here four years — me, who once scraped through a year of consecutive employment to prove that I could, and swore then that I would never do it again.

I'm a typesetter. A larger term than it sounds, it means I not only set type, I proofread, run the computer, do pasteup and design and some camera work, as well as have some participation in the administrative details of the shop in which I work.

It helps that I like what we do, but it's the way we do it and reasons why that keep me intrigued.

Our shop is organized as a collective. It is owned by the employees' association, which consists of whoever is employed here at any given time. No equity is required to join, and none can be taken away on departure. People are hired by a hiring committee composed of whoever's interested and currently employed with us.

All major decisions are reached by consensus, each person's opinion being as valuable as another's. Differences or confusions are discussed and resolved (hopefully) before any move is taken.

Many people have experience of collective organization from their university political days, or from association with women's centres, transition houses, rape distress centres and the like, many of which work with some sort of collective model. Some people find a collective structure extremely frustrating. Two criticisms often levelled at collectives are that their process is cumbersome, and that they destroy individual initiative.

I am reminded of the team of American efficiency experts who went to China to make suggestions about improving productivity in the factories. Imagine their horror when every time they attempted to introduce a new procedure, all work ceased while the workers held a collective meeting, sometimes lasting for hours, to discuss the ramifications of

## Working Collectively Under Capitalism



Two women collaborating on a layout design.

E. Moore

the change and whether it was acceptable.

Everyone here is subject to that sort of frustration some of the time. Sometimes the temptation is just to do it and get it over with, or to avoid prior discussion of something one could present as a *fait accompli*.

Once people are used to a collective decision-making process, however, most matters can be dealt with fairly efficiently. Aside from production meetings when necessary to discuss scheduling problems, we make almost all our major decisions in a three-hour meeting every two weeks. Given that we work 72 hours in that period of time, each individual spends less time involved in decision-making than in eating lunch.

Would that last statement were true. Actually, most of us spend very little time eating lunch, although our union contract states that we have an hour off for which we are paid. It's not that we can't take the time, but it's difficult to loll about when everyone else is running around working like mad. Frequently we eat on the run, and unless it's an extraordinarily slack day, we are drawn back into the

workstream before an hour is up. There may be an element of peer pressure here — sometimes that's what makes things happen in a collective — but mostly what drives people to work is the feeling of identity with the shop and a sense of shared responsibility for getting the work done.

The dark side of this phenomenon is that people exploit themselves and each other in a way they would never agree to do and indeed would fight against in a different work situation.

Balanced against this concern is the recognition of a certain looseness here that exists almost nowhere else. For example (still on lunch), when any one or a number of people go out to eat or run errands on their break, it is almost unheard of to make it back within the hour. Also there is fair amount of socializing, both among collective members and with others who drop in, food is provided, and people take whatever spontaneous breaks they need throughout the day.

We have a commitment to creating as humane a working experience as possible under capitalism, but all our experience is shaped by the fact

that we have to produce a reasonable quantity of good quality work to survive. We respond as much as we can to one another's needs: people can arrange their own work schedules (as long as the work is covered), sick leave is unlimited, and we have instantaneous stress leave for when people cannot stand to be in the shop one minute longer. All these benefits (and many more) are outlined in our union contract which is intended to be a model contract. Last year we added a lesbian and gay rights clause, this year we are writing a sexual harassment clause.

Often the needs of production take precedence over everything else. While it is possible to get so involved in the work that little else matters at the time, sometimes the human factor seems to be lost. We would, of course, like to feel good about ourselves and the others all the time, but sometimes one finds oneself resenting another's failure to see production as more important than their immediate needs or desires; the other side of this experience is feeling you would rather be anywhere else but knowing your co-workers would be frustrated and angry if you left. Particularly confusing are those occasions when what is being produced is of dubious value. It's difficult to imagine putting together advertisements as more important than almost anything, but this work too must be done or the shop will not continue to exist.

To some degree we have to make our peace with capitalism. To survive as a business, we must compete in the marketplace. We're pleasant to people we'd sooner not talk to (only for awhile — we have been known to drive them away); we do work that bores us to distraction (it does, you know — we make many more errors on boring copy); we often fail to deal well with one another because of the pressures of work.

What surviving under capitalism means here, however, is not only that a certain number of persons have employment, but also that we have under our control a powerful political tool. Sometimes this shows up in our daily work, as on the occasions we have refused to set sexist copy, explaining why to the customer. We



## Women's Education Program

In recent years women have been bombarded by changes — changing images, concerns, values, and responsibilities in a changing world.

Sometimes, it's difficult for an individual woman to pull it all together — and make sense of the changes as they relate to her.

The WOMEN'S EDUCATION PROGRAMME at Conestoga College is aware of the changing role of women in today's society. We hope to deal with everything from mothering to careers, assertiveness to health, communication to growing older.

Join the women who join us to meet their ever-changing needs. This Fall may be your time to change and grow.

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of Applied Arts  
and Technology

*We've got a lot to share.*



also do a reasonable amount of work for political groups, and we are partners in a small, left publishing company, for which we do all the book production.

The other way the shop is used is virtually unique among businesses. For cost of materials and an overhead charge, organizations we are interested in supporting can use our facilities to produce printed materials. This arrangement is what enables us to produce this very magazine. (In case you were wondering how we could afford to do this — look, ma, no grants!) We can respond immediately and effectively when there is a need. For example, when the Right to Life organizations paraded around K-W hospital last year, we decided to hold a counter protest; Thursday night people furiously wrote copy and gathered facts, Friday night we designed, typeset and put together a four-page booklet, then shot the negatives; Saturday we made a plate and printed it; and Sunday people folded the pamphlet before we went to the hospital. With a fairly small number of people, we received nearly as much publicity as the highly organized official march. And we had the only literature!

The volume of political material that has been produced here over the nine years we have been in existence is staggering. And some of it we even get paid for!

These sorts of activities are the overtly political aspects of the shop. They're what you can show people and talk about easily. The way the organization of the work is political is less clear, as interpersonal politics always are.

Working collectively is a political act no matter in what context it occurs. No doubt there will be considerable exception taken to this statement. In some situations, such as are not uncommon in Quebec, workers are encouraged to take over marginal industries which feed into larger corporate structures. Many people are very critical of this arrangement, because not only does it draw away from the labour movement many who might otherwise be active, it means that the large companies still have the benefit of the goods pro-

duced, without the responsibility for the workers, who can be counted on to exploit themselves in what are perceived to be their own interests.

There are reasons, however, why those who might be active in the labour movement are instead active inside these collectives. Some of the people who are concerned with the quality of work and work relations must work together in order to explore and develop processes which are viable and visible alternatives to the overall hierarchical arrangement of work in this society. If people ask, "How else can it be done?", those of us who work in collectives can discuss another way.

We are often disappointed in ourselves. Like all idealists, we cannot always live up to our expectations. When we set out to work this way, we didn't imagine that we'd all died and gone to heaven where everything would be perfect forever. Sometimes the learning process is slow and painful, and sometimes you wonder if it's happening at all. People question the validity of the shop's existence, some leave in anger, others more in sorrow, but everyone recognizes that they have been involved in a unique experience which will affect them throughout their lives.

### Friends

our landlord kicked us out  
we had  
his moral system so upset  
he couldn't eat his cornflakes  
we had  
such sleep-dishevelled health  
our glossy fur  
rose mallow breath  
fast action feet  
cantatas on his ceilings  
we danced him to a fury  
we had  
his shadow on our flat bellies  
he saw when we sunbathed  
in the nude he thought us rude  
we had  
four eyes — two chicory blue, two brown  
which stroked him as he ran  
from us, his shadows —  
we had  
the sky the earth why not  
he had the house  
and so  
in self defense  
the silly man

Shirley Tillotson

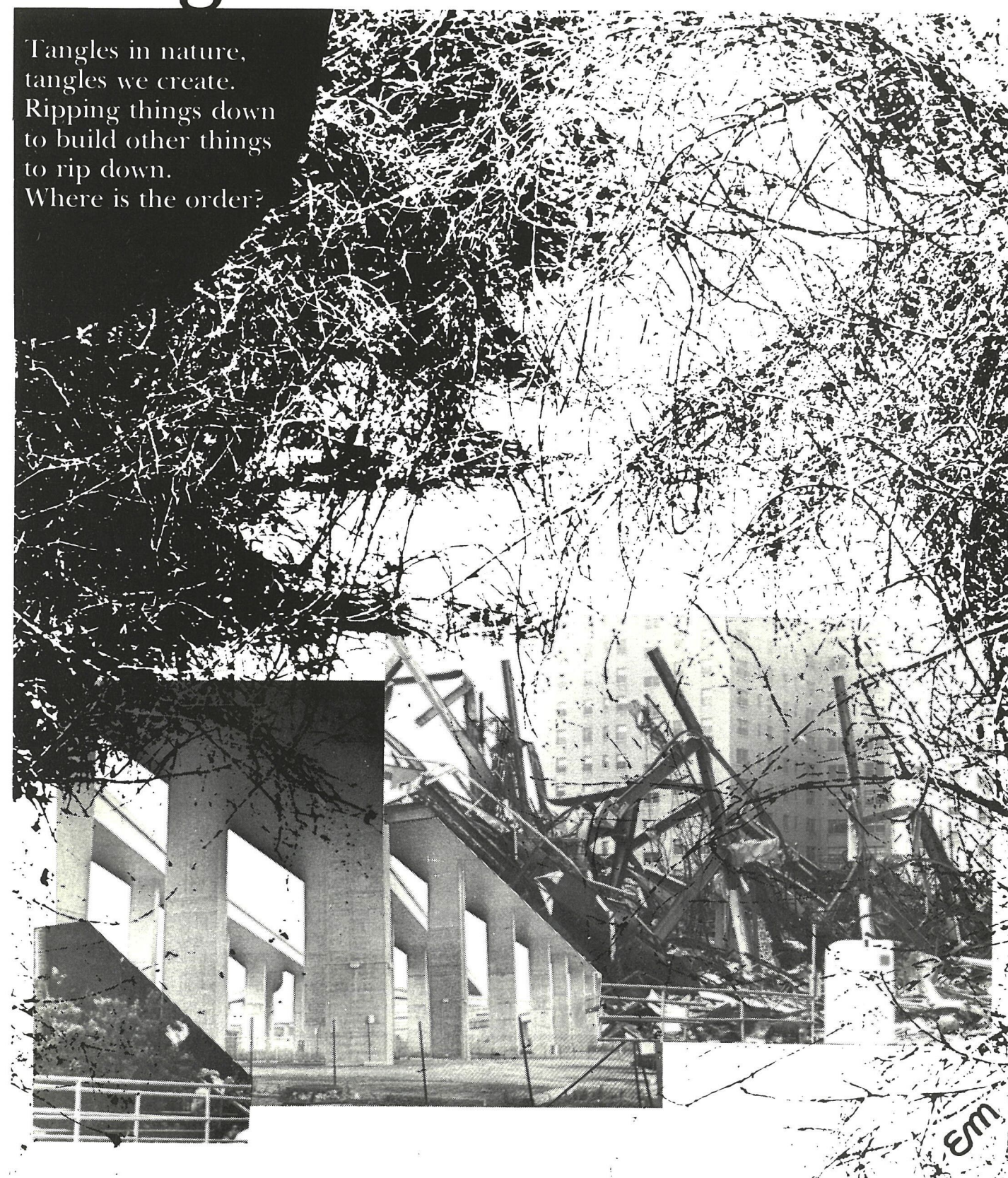
To say that people, especially women, hide out in collectives in order to avoid individual responsibility and initiative has not proved true in our situation. Speaking from my own experience, my personal growth here has been tremendous. Not only have I learned many of the invaluable arts of cooperation, but I have gained skills of organization, communication and personal effectiveness that I was never able to achieve in another context. These phenomena could be dismissed merely as manifestations of unrecognized leadership, except that they happen to almost everyone who has stayed with us for any length of time. Even those members of the collective who are less vocal than others within the shop context are able to speak out in other circumstances, because they have had the experience of being heard and considered in the workplace, and can no longer settle for anything less in the rest of the world.

It is not perfect here. Life is a process and we are very much alive and part of the struggle to survive. But survival alone is not enough. We want our lives to be as beautiful as possible. We may fail as often as we succeed, but we continue to work together for a better way.

# Tangles

by Eliza Moore

Tangles in nature,  
tangles we create.  
Ripping things down  
to build other things  
to rip down.  
Where is the order?





Joan Rawski goes union

# Cracking the Bell

by Kae Elgie

Joan Rawski interrupted our conversation to turn around and stick out her tongue at the grey-haired woman disappearing into the quietly marked Bell Canada office on Kitchener's Water Street. "She's scabbing. She's a first level manager and doesn't have to cross our picket line." Then she turned to the other picketers now milling closer and said it more loudly. "Yeah girls, I just found that out. They've been telling us 'Oh we support you in our hearts, but we'd lose our jobs if we refused to work during the strike.' Well, it isn't true. Just wait till we get back in there and they feed us that line — just tell them to kiss off. You know if we get a raise they'll get one too. It's unfair."

Two and a half years ago, Joan Rawski graduated from high school, got a summer job as a Bell Canada long distance operator and tried to figure out her career goals. When September came her friends entered university. She didn't: she still didn't know what she wanted, she hadn't enough money, and she liked the apartment and personal freedom the job bought her.

A year later, her friends were brimming with ideas and a sense of direction while Joan felt she was stagnating in a dead end job, taking home \$115 a week. Oh, the job had its moments, such as when she reunited a brother and sister who hadn't seen each other for 25 years, or talked a suicide out of slitting his wrists, but



Joan Rawski, chief steward, Local 44, Communication Workers of Canada, at a support rally on International Women's Day, March 8, 1980. K. Elgie

generally it was the same fast-paced thing: "credit card number, please," "person-to-person to whom, sir?" write down the number on the computer card, file it and grab another. When the new Traffic Operator Position System (TOPS) came in a year or two, things would get worse — a whole day in an isolated cubicle, key-punching and watching numbers flash across a video screen without even the occasional joke from a neighbour to sustain her.

"I had a lot of personal problems then," she told me. "People can really bring you down. Sometimes customers would talk to me as if I were nothing and it really hurt. They had no

idea how much skill and knowledge was involved or how hard all us Bell operators worked."

It wasn't just customers who could turn a pleasant morning into a pressured one. Supervisors constantly paced up and down behind the board and when things got really busy she'd hear them jag operators with over 30 years experience about the most elementary details. The computer at the end of the room scanned the board relentlessly every tenth of a second, and printed out how long it took each operator to answer and complete her calls. At any time, too, Rawski knew the manager might be listening in on her phone conversations to see if

she had the Bell smile in her voice and was recording all the little details correctly. Every error or failure to meet quota would be written on her Personal Performance Record for possible disciplinary action. If she and the other operators passed the tests, the performance standards would likely be raised: it had happened before.

Perhaps worst was the way the job ran her life. For two weeks of every three she was on flexible shifts, which meant she might start work at midnight one day, 4 pm the next and 11 am the next, anything, so long as there were nine hours between the end of one shift and the start of the next. Once, she managed to get four months of straight days and she immediately signed up for a night course at Conestoga College to reassure herself she could still think. But she never got that lucky again.

Joan was at that critical one-year point when most Bell operators quit. She applied and was hired for a job at the public library, until she found it paid even less than the Bell and less than she needed to live on her own. She thought about quitting and going back to school to study law, but it would have meant giving up her apartment, writing off her time at the Bell and starting all over, only a few hundred dollars richer than she'd been at high school graduation. She knew Bell had excellent employee training courses, she had the perfect

job performance record needed to qualify for a transfer, and she had the energy to study nights, go back to school, anything that could get her off that board. So she applied to the engineering department where the work seemed more challenging, more like a "real job" to her.

Her manager told her it would be at least six months before the transfer came through. After six, seven, eight months, she started hearing how Bell preferred to hire new university graduates off the street rather than train their own employees, and how it wasn't what you knew but who you knew that got you a transfer.

One day last summer a co-worker gave her some papers about a new union, the Communication Workers of Canada, which was trying to raid the operators' company union, and asked her to join. She felt confused. Like most people she'd been brought up to believe management was what people wanted, especially if they were a little smarter, a little better at the job, or wanted a career.

The next time she had dinner with her parents, she complained to her dad how the CWC people kept bugging her to sign up and how she didn't understand what they were talking about. Mr. Rawski had little sympathy. "Don't you complain to me about not understanding this stuff when you haven't even been to a union meeting yet. You get your butt

to a meeting, see what they have to say and then you can come back and complain to me." Joan's father was a long time trade unionist.

\*\*\*\*\*

"I think people were surprised when I ran for chief steward after the CWC got certified last summer," Rawski said, lighting a cigarette. "Around the office people probably thought I was quite a shy person, certainly not one of the more outstanding people in there. But there comes a point in your life when you're either going to stand up and do it or you're not. It seems as if it was something I was looking for. I figured I had nothing to lose. If I got fired, too bad, I was willing to take that risk."

"Sure I was nervous at first. I'd never done public speaking before and there I was in front of 200 people chairing union meetings. But you get over that. If it's worthwhile, you'll do it." With no previous experience, not even in student organizations in high school, Joan had to learn everything about union work on the job, with help from the CWC's three-day stewardship training course and Canada Labour College correspondence courses in economics, sociology, and graph interpretation she took on her own. Before the strike, she was spending 15 to 30 volunteer hours a week on union work. She used her free time during the strike to get an A- on her Canada Labour College course.

"I got really angry once I found out just how badly we operators had been treated, as compared to other employees in the company or outside the company. Why, bank tellers are better paid." Once in the union, Rawski discovered other Bell employees didn't need permission to go to the washroom or get phoned at home to make sure they were really sick. She also liked the people she met at the CWC. Her union colleagues, the craftsmen, were full of tips they'd learned from their successful strike against Bell in summer 1979. "I'm not going to defend all unions but mine is honest and run very democratically," she told me. "Not one cent goes in or out that members don't know about — or if they don't, it's their own fault."

\*\*\*\*\*

It was mid-morning, every line on the switchboard was ringing and

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Bonnie Steinman



operators were pushing through calls as fast as they could talk their customers into it. Halfway down the board a yellow card went up, a signal that an operator was going on a washroom break. The manager stormed over. "Sit down and answer those calls until it isn't so busy. Then you can take your break."

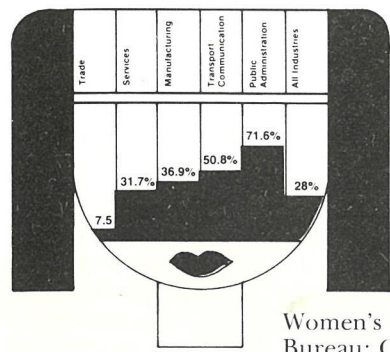
It had happened lots of times with the company union, but this time Rawski, the new union steward, didn't stand for it. "You don't have any right to tell her that. If she's got to go, she's going to go. I don't care if five people have to go at the same time, they're going to go if they have to." She marched out of the room and filed a grievance.

One week and a few more grievances later, Joan suddenly got her transfer offer, to the business office, \$40 more a week and permanent day shifts. Four months earlier she would have snatched it. But now she knew she'd been centred out of other applicants with more seniority, and she knew several others active in the union had just as suddenly been given similar offers. It made her mad. She turned it down.

"They've got me here to stay now. I won't leave till this contract is settled and I've got things set up so someone can step into my shoes and know what she's doing," she said.

How many Joan Rawskis are there, I wondered, at Bell, Mutual Life, the General Hospital, or even Joe's Self-Serve Sunoco — energetic people who want a challenge and the satisfaction of meeting it. When Joan's job didn't supply this, she looked to the union. If CWC certification doesn't change things substantially for her at Bell, she said she'll probably quit after a couple of years and train to be a law clerk.

Percentage of Women Unionized within each Industry



Women's Bureau: CLC

"I want a career in life. If I can get a job with the CWC national and they'll pay me for it, it'd be a dream come true. I'd be working for something worthwhile, something I believe in. Nowhere else could I get such a job without ten years union experience or university, but this union is willing to hire young people who have experience with the company and the union, who they can trust, who've worked hard and put in their own time.

"Now there's lots, like George Larder on our bargaining committee, who've been offered job after job with the union. 'I won't be management for Bell and I'll be damned if I'll be management for the union,' he says, because he feels he's most effective on the job as chief steward in Toronto. But I feel

### A Sleepless Night

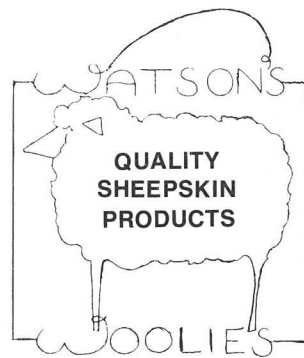
Deserted midnight sounds hurried steps through leaf scattered sidewalks the screech of tires, then silence once again and the pattern repeats itself.

Margaret Leighton

you have to have effective management for anything and that's where I want to go.

"Personally, I've never been happier than since I've been involved with the union. I've learned so much in six months — no way I could have gone to school and done that, no way.

"I always tell people: if something will come of it, I'm more than willing to study and work hard so I can do a proper job."



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# News Shorts

## Domestics Shafted by Government

Some of the most shamefully exploited workers in Canada are immigrant domestic workers. Not only are they at a legal disadvantage, as the article below shows, but their situation becomes even more intolerable once their visas run out. Reluctant to return to their impoverished homelands, many stay and work in the country illegally. This action puts them completely at the mercy of their employers, who can threaten to turn them over to immigration officials if they give any trouble. The following article is borrowed from the *Wages for Housework Special Issue on Domestics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 1979.

Most domestics are in Canada on work permits issued by the Canada Employment and Immigration Centre (CEIC). CEIC has a form titled, "Offer of Employment," which lists the details of the employment offered (i.e., number of hours, duties, pay rate, etc.). This form is signed *only* by the employer and the immigration officer. As such it is called a "pseudo-legal" document by CEIC, since to be "legal" it would have to be signed by the employer *and* the prospective employee. Often the domestic mistakenly thinks she is covered by a legal contract, only to discover that she is at the mercy of her employer.

A comparison between the average wage received by a domestic worker in Ontario as suggested by CEIC, and the wage she is entitled to under the Employment Standards Act demonstrates the super-exploitation of domestic workers. In the CEIC contract a domestic worker is paid an average of \$270 per month for a total of 192 hours of work. That is 8 hours a day, 6 days a week. This includes room and board.

Under the Employment Standards Act a worker is entitled to a minimum of \$3.00 an hour. The

working week is presently 44 hours up to a maximum of 48 hours, but those 4 extra hours must be paid time and a half. No such time and a half exists in the Manpower contract for domestics.

If, then, an individual works 8 hours a day, 6 days a week his/her monthly wage would be \$624.00. The Employment Standards Act also allows a maximum rate for room and board of \$35.00/week for a monthly total of \$140.00. If the room and board were subtracted from the monthly rate of \$624.00, the total monthly rate for a domestic, if included under the Employment Standards Act, would be \$484.00.

In comparing the wage of a domestic worker to that of a worker covered by the Employment Standards Act there is a difference of \$214.00. This is a difference practically equal to the monthly wage itself! It is incredible that the Employment and Immigration Centre would encourage employers to pay a wage so far below the standards of ESA. It is even more incredible that they would deceive immigrant women workers by using this "pseudo-legal" contract. Since the contract is not binding, an employer is free to pay even less — and usually does.

	Monthly Wage including Room & Board	Net Wages per Month	Difference in Salaries
Employment Standards Act — minimum wage	\$624.00	\$484.00	\$214.00
CEIC "pseudo-legal" contract	\$410.00 (\$270 plus \$140 for room & board)	\$270.00	

## Nestlé Boycott Continues

Despite world-wide efforts to control the distribution of breast milk substitutes, Nestlé continues to promote the use of its baby food products in the Third World. In many of these areas people are too poor to afford enough formula and conditions are too unsanitary to make its use safe.

The Nestlé boycott is still on, and likely to remain so. The following is a product list of Nestlé and its subsidiaries (growing all the time as Nestlé expands):

### Chocolates

Nestlé's Crunch; Toll House Chips; Nestlé's Quik; Hot Cocoa Mix; Choco'lite; Choco-Bake; 100,000 Candy Bar; Price's Chocolates; Go Ahead Bar

### Coffees and Teas

Taster's Choice; Nescafé; Nestea; Decaf; Sunrise; Pero; Tetley Tea

### Wines

Beringer Brother; Los Hermanos; Crosse and Blackwell

### Cheeses

Swiss Knight; Wispride; Gerber Cheese; Old Fort; Provalone Lacatelli; Cherry Hill; Roger's

### Packaged Fruits, Soups, Etc.

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## Film Review

## Are They Foxes or Little Darlings?

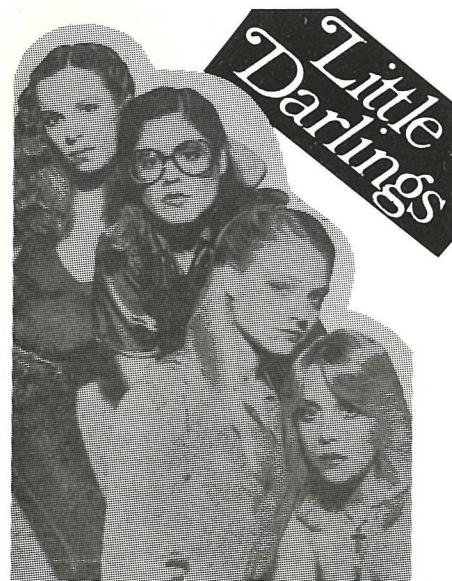
by Victoria Freeman

*Little Darlings*, a Paramount picture, produced by Stephen J. Friedman and directed by Ronald F. Maxwell.

*Foxes*, released by United Artists, produced by Gerald Ayres and directed by Adrian Lyne.

"Older women can't be seen merely as sex symbols any more. So it's easier to project the male fantasy onto younger women who are not yet politicized." This was one movie executive's explanation of the recent wave of movies about teenage girls. "Daring to do it!" the ads said of the girls in *Foxes*; "Not recommended for pre-teenagers," they said about *Little Darlings*. I stayed away; I wasn't interested in soft porn or smuttier imitations of *Meatballs*. But curiosity about what Hollywood had to say about female adolescence eventually overcame my repugnance. Surprisingly, *Little Darlings* did not live up to the banality of its title, and *Foxes* proved to be a misnomer for a serious film about growing up which was only peripherally concerned with sex. In both films, there is much material of interest to feminists.

The plot of *Little Darlings* is an old cliché with the traditional roles reversed. All the girls at a summer camp lay bets while two fifteen-year-olds race to lose their virginity in



a contest instigated by a catty young demagogue who makes them believe they are the only virgins in their cabin. Ferris, a little rich girl played by Tatum O'Neill, uses feminine wiles to try to seduce the swimming instructor, an older man. Streetwise Angel, played by Kristy McNichol, aggressively pursues a boy from the camp across the lake and wins the contest.

As with lady mud wrestling, the film exploits the shock value of seeing women behave in ways which are taboo by traditional definitions of sex roles. Women throw food at each other, brawl at the slightest provocation while the all-female onlookers cheer them on, swear at every second word, play one-upmanship and all the mercenary courting games with men that men usually play with women. These reversals are often funny, for example when some girls steal a condom dispenser from a men's public washroom, hack it open with an axe and run off into the woods with their pockets full of condoms, but for the most part it's not very realistic and often insulting — the girls at the camp are portrayed as mean-mouthed, competitive bitches who are solely concerned with sex.

Most of the characters in *Little Darlings* are crude stereotypes — a fat girl who wears bullhorns on her head, a hippie-child whose parents won't let her play competitive sports — they're there for cheap laughs and not much else. But Angel is a marvelous character, superbly acted by Kristy McNichol. She's a real heroine, a strong, tough antidote to the usual portrayal of women in films and she totally steals the show from the cute superficiality of costar Tatum O'Neill, whose coy, helpless act with the swimming instructor is so amateurish it's just boring.

Angel captures the imagination. She steals the camp schoolbus and goes speeding off in search of her man; she paddles across the lake to the boy's camp and takes Matt Dillon off into the woods to seduce him. She kicks a boy in the groin when he harasses her; she makes sure she's got birth control. She talks tough, keeps

her troubles to herself, but is still a sensitive person who grows up painfully.

She's not unrealistically liberated. She still worries about whether she's a "real" woman and when she doesn't enjoy her first sexual experience concludes that she's not. Although she's verbally aggressive, she's still afraid of sex. But she's miles ahead of the other girls at Camp Little Wolf who tell her that some day she too might succeed in being a sex object. Angel doesn't play those games.

While Angel's reactions to her first sexual experience — that it wasn't what she expected and that she's not ready for more — are certainly in character, they also rather

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blatantly serve the interests of the filmmaker. The happy ending of the film is that all the girls decide the contest was a big mistake, that they are too young for sex, and that they'll just go on being kids for a while. They even stop swearing and become friends. It's a comforting ending perhaps, but wishful thinking, as the current epidemic of teenage pregnancies indicates.

*Foxes*, on the other hand, takes a much grimmer view of the perils of adolescence. The setting is not the sheltered holiday atmosphere of summer camp but the gruelling insanity of post-sixties Los Angeles. The contest there is to survive in a world of fractured families, bewildered parents, drugs, menacing subcultures and terrifying freedom. Sex is important but it's the least of their worries: "I slept with a couple of guys in ninth grade because it was new, but I'm no Suzie Slut or anything," says Jeannie (Jodie Foster). The real challenge is to hold on to one's sanity and become an adult in a crazy world, with few role models and less guidance.

The four main characters have different survival strategies and different understandings of what it means to be an adult. Madge (Marilyn Kagan) tries to become an adult by playing housewife with an older man. To Deirdre (Kandice Stroh), adulthood means sexual freedom and playing the vamp; she uses her sexuality to manipulate men. Annie (Cherie Currie) never seems to have any vision of adulthood other than getting away from her father, dulling the pain of her life and having a good time. To Jeannie, adulthood means accepting the reality of suffering and not running from it; it's also taking responsibility for oneself.

The action of *Foxes* focuses on the efforts of Jeannie and her friends

Madge and Dierdre to rescue Annie from her crazy cop father and her own self-destructiveness. Annie runs from her father to the streetlife of L.A. and a gang of crude macho bikers who encourage her drug-taking. She exemplifies the victim stance of many women — she doesn't know how to fight against the forces which destroy her and refuses to take responsibility for herself, preferring instead to dull the symptoms. Annie's death in a car accident is a convenient way to put her out of her misery but the film would have been more horrifying and probably more realistic had she continued to live a wasted, painful life.

Jeannie emerges as a character as strong and inspiring as Angel in *Little Darlings*. She's a mother to just about everyone, including her own mother, but she learns the hard way that she can't be endlessly supportive; she finally gives Annie an ultimatum to start fighting her problems or suffer them alone. She's streetwise and tough, but not crushed by the ugliness she sees around her, and is the only one of the four who goes to university. She's a realist with a dry sense of humour. Driving appears to be the new symbol of the liberated woman in both these films — just as Angel raced through the countryside in a schoolbus, so Jeannie deftly handles her pickup truck.

While feminism has obviously been an influence in both *Foxes* and *Little Darlings*, neither film uses the rhetoric of feminism or refers to the women's movement in any way. Does this mean that teenage girls don't know about feminism, can't relate to it or don't need it because they are already liberated? It's true that the organized women's movement consists mainly of older women who, as a recent article in *Perception* indicated, have been so preoccupied with the

fight against sexism, job discrimination, inadequate daycare, etc. in their own lives that they may have failed to pass on what they have learned to the new generation of women; so the absence of conscious feminism in these films may be realistic. However, it's also likely that the filmmakers, who are cashing in on the sex appeal of teenage girls, don't want to alienate those who came to see foxy young women "daring to do it." There is a streak of trendy feminism in this film, but it's feminism safely laundered of its controversial content.

This seems to be the case particularly in *Foxes*. A scene where the girls have to bathe baby dolls in a high school family education class makes the class seem so ridiculous that the girls are impervious to the attempted socialization; actually these classes are more insidious. Also, there is no attempt to show why Dierdre uses sex for power or why Annie seeks out violent macho men. It's as if the filmmakers believe that if these women are not already liberated, it's their own personal problem.

I found it disturbing that none of the girls seemed concerned with achievement — the emphasis was entirely on their relationships. There were no discussions of careers or university — while the main male character in *Foxes* had a part-time job, the only reference to the girls working was a comment that they'd never be able to make enough money to pay for the damage their party had caused. The contrast with *Breaking Away*, a film about a teenage boy whose main struggle is to prove to himself and to others that he can be a great bicycle racer, shows that at least in Hollywood's assessment of female adolescence, not much has really changed, even if the girls are talking tough.

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## Book Review

# But Which Two?

Joanna Russ,  
*The Two of Them*,  
Berkley Books 1978, 181 pp.

Here we have another Joanna Russ novel about violent women in space; or in alternate realities, or in probable worlds, or wherever they are — Russ isn't telling. It is a book that begs the questions "Is this the second book of a trilogy? Is all explained elsewhere?" Russ refuses to satisfy our curiosity on such mundane points as why and wherefore, opting instead for frustrating hints and allusions. The novel reads as if it were written in haste, or unfinished; despite the vivid and sometimes brilliant character studies, the book as a whole remains unsatisfying.

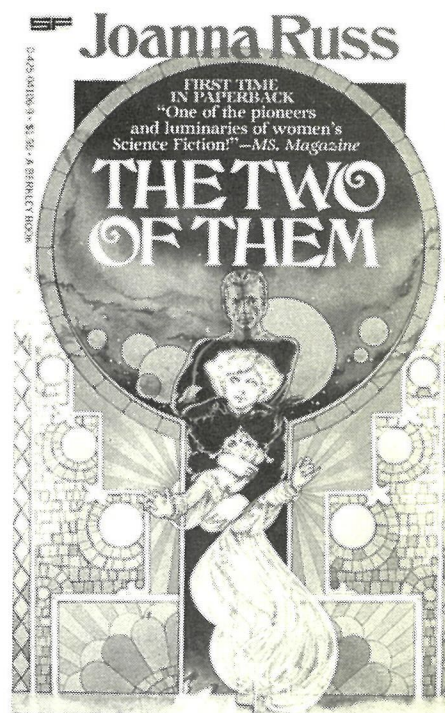
The particular woman here is TransTemp agent Irene Waskiewicz, who is doing that undefined something for some undefined people on the improbable planet Ka'abah, a sort of underground Islam, notorious for maudlin epic poetry and the pernicious harem. She arrives in company with her partner, mentor, lover and "conscience", Ernst Neumann, so that they can do that whatever-it-is to the planet's computer system. They lodge in the house of Alec son of Bekkar, whose sequestered women-folk attract the attention of Irene. These women are unfortunately plagued by what is madness in terms of Ka'abah — the insatiable desire to trespass on the male prerogative of writing poetry. Irene eventually decides to rescue the charming daughter of the house, twelve-year-old Zubdeyah from the repression which is about to come her way. In the course of the escape, Zubdeyah ("the baby oracle") manages to raise Irene's consciousness by such remarks of pith and moment as "The gentlemen always think the ladies have gone mad." Irene reflects that 'The Gang', for whom she (maybe) works, is not an equal opportunity employer. Ernst, abruptly revealed as a force of interstellar chauvinism, makes plans to return the increas-

ingly intractable Irene to space base, or whatever it is, for re-indoctrination. At one point, Irene has some vague plans of her own for TransTemp, or The Gang, but ditches them in favour of killing Ernst and making off with the Arabian Nights princess for Albuquerque, New Mexico, of all the pointless places.

Russ has used the "TransTemp" scenario before (*Picnic on Paradise*), but it isn't any clearer there. One wonders why she writes science fiction, a genre which thrives on explanation. When your readers could be anywhere in the imaginative universe, a few clues to help them along the way are a necessity. Russ' talents are evocative rather than explanatory. She is capable of writing powerfully, as in the section on Irene's high school days in the fifties, and she brings her characters vividly to life, but then tends to abdicate responsibility for them.

The political message is just as patchy as the plot, leaving us with vital unanswered questions. Why does Irene kill Ernst? How is it that a fine man such as himself can be a dangerous enemy as well? Russ, who has given us pieces of understanding about him apparently loses interest; she simply reveals him as a villain and deserts him. Irene, who has become real to us as a forceful and powerful woman, is about as forceful as a pancake in terms of what she actually does. By leaving the background so confused and incomprehensible and 'The Gang' as a mere allusion, Russ reduces the conflicts to the personal, where they fail to make much sense. An energetic woman is once more releasing that energy fairly harmlessly, into deep space. If this is speculative fiction, then Russ speculates that even in alternate worlds, women will be betrayed by men they love and will refuse to attack the root of the problem (Gang Headquarters) in favour of oblivion in Albuquerque and the Mary Tyler Moore Show. We were led to expect more of Irene.

by Elizabeth Edwards



## Readers, take note!

**VANCOUVER, B.C.**—Members of the Canadian Library Association considered the many aspects of power at their 35th Annual Convention June 1980. The following resolution, sponsored by CLA's Gay Interest Group and approved at the Annual General Meeting and by the Association's Council, addressed one specific area in which lack of information has resulted in powerlessness:

Be it resolved that the Canadian Library Association, recognizing the need for information pertinent to the understanding of human sexuality, urge that libraries provide materials which promote this understanding, including more information which will improve the understanding of homosexuality, and that the Association publicly support the need for such information.

Patrons exert *your* power. Access to information is your basic human right. Insist on it!

# Resources

## Women in Crisis

A group of Guelph women ranging from their 20s to their 60s have formed the "Women in Crisis" collective. Founded in February, 1977, the volunteers answered a 24-hour crisis line open to victims of rape and sexual harassment. This soon broadened into support, counselling and referrals to aid the abused women.

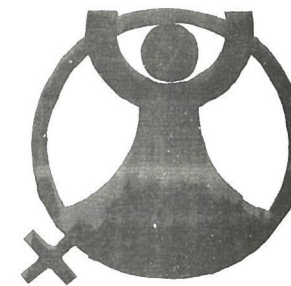
Throughout 1977 the centre's goals grew and changed in response to the increasing number of calls involving domestic assault. In October of 1978 a one year, non renewable federal grant enabled the collective to open a transition house. According to the collective, *house* is too generous a term for their tiny but well-used basement apartment — the smallest of all such facilities existing in Ontario.

As usual with transition houses, the location is secret to protect the women seeking shelter. Referrals are made by local legal and social authorities, women can seek direct

help through an emergency number constantly advertised in the *Guelph Mercury*. The apartment gives immediate shelter to women and children and a breathing space to assess the future. There are 3 paid staff members from the collective to insure continuity to the home. Other collective members volunteer time and services.

A crisis line and a transition house offer immediate aid. But the long-term prevention of assault against women must come through public education. This view has led the collective to lobby and prepare briefs in attempts to change the laws; to provide speakers for any interested audience and recently to create a video tape on domestic violence entitled *Family Violence — A Circle of Fear*.

Like most volunteer collectives seeking to help women, "Women in Crisis" is in need of immediate and future financial support.



## IF YOU WISH TO HELP

BECOME A —

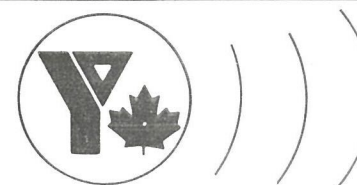
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