

# women's rights bulletin



ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR  
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November 1980

## FEATURE STORY

### THIRD OFL CONVENTION WOMEN'S FORUM

For the third successive year, the OFL Women's Committee is arranging a special meeting for women at the OFL Convention. Several years ago it became evident that the primarily male convention was not the easiest place for women to make their demands known. The unfamiliar and seemingly inexplicable workings of a large convention, where everyone seems to know what's going on except you, made it necessary to provide some brief respite from the jostling, bustling atmosphere through a chance to meet one another, exchange ideas, and learn how to caucus around issues. The Women's Forum provides this service. Come this year and soak up some information about affirmative action: what unions and companies are and are not doing to promote equal opportunity for women. You will also get to discuss the resolutions important to women.

OFL CONVENTION WOMEN'S FORUM  
CIVIC BALLROOM, SHERATON CENTRE  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1980, 8:00-10:00p.m.

ALL WELCOME

### A YEAR TO REMEMBER

by shelley acheson

Anyone who thinks this year hasn't been a monumental one for women, hasn't been connecting with the right people. Certainly the reports still abound on the unequal pay of women, the discrimination against us in hiring and promotion, the insidious humiliation we suffer through sexual harassment, and our chattel status in the home. And these situations are likely to exist for some time to come. But at the rate women have been organizing, fighting back, working together, and using their unions that "some time to come" will be much shorter than anyone might have predicted 10 years ago, or even 5 years ago.

If you still think I'm a wide-eyed idealist, you haven't been speaking to Jean Beauvais, one of the Fotomat strikers, who says that the Steelworkers just won't be the same once she and the other girls start shaking things up. And perhaps you haven't met Susan Giampietri, a federal clerk, who says the federal civil service women will never be the same after their recent strike. Maybe you weren't around when the women at



It's people working together that makes the difference.

Bell Canada walked their cold picket line to fight paternalistic management. You might have missed hearing about the Labour Board decision that finally put the screws to Radio Shack and proved those courageous women right at last. And you might not have connected the struggles of these and other women strikers with the eventual winning of union security legislation in Ontario. But they are the ones that really did it.

The power of women working together backed by the power of a union came through strong and clear this year. Talk to Debbie Field now working in the coke ovens at Stelco in Hamilton about that, or to Carol Hamell at Fleet Industries in Fort Erie, both of whom are fighting hard with their unions, USWA and IAM, to get women hired into industry.

And women and unions have joined forces to demand equal pay for work of equal value (remember the public hearings and rallies in January?), and to demand universal quality child care. The day care movement and the union movement are merging as powerful allies to achieve this goal.

It's hard to forget that great feeling of solidarity as we marched with our non-union sisters on International Women's Day and listened to Pat Schulz, the keynote speaker, salute our women on the picket lines for being the defenders of women's rights in 1980. Nor will we soon forget the feeling of pride as we listened to Sylvia Porter at the CLC Convention courageously speak out against sexual harassment.

This year women's committees have been cropping up all over, labour schools are teaching about women's issues, more and more bargaining agendas include paid maternity leave, equal pay for work of equal value, or allowances for child care. More women are being unionized and more women are being elected to union office.

And these are just some of the good stories. You all have your own, you all know women who are out there fighting individually and collectively for equality.

It's been a good year. The nicest think of all is that next year will be better.

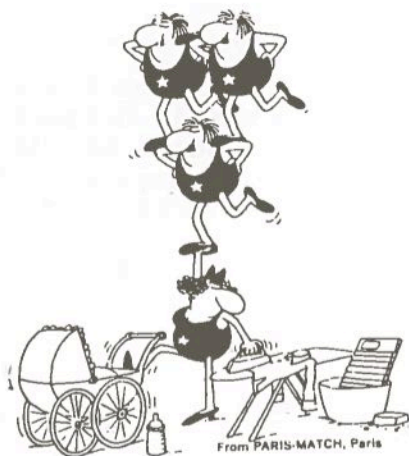
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REPORT TO UAW LOCAL 1535 ON  
THE OFL DAYCARE CONFERENCE

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by debbie paterson

I would like to thank the local for the opportunity to attend this excellent conference. The OFL Women's Committee put together an interesting, informative and productive agenda. During the course of the conference we heard the various aspects of the child care situation from seven different speakers. They were Cliff Pilkey, President of the OFL, Pat Schulz, a long time women's activist and women's social



historian, Michael Cassidy, the leader of the NDP in Ontario, Mary Eady, CLC Women's Bureau, Julie Mathien, a Toronto Board of Education daycare consultant, Larry Katz from CUPE Research Department, and Bob Nickerson, co-chairperson of OFL women's committee. These speakers and a discussion paper the OFL women's committee had prepared were used to stimulate the exchange of ideas in the eight workshops into which the group of 130 delegates were divided. The first workshop was on "Caring" which looked at the needs of the children, the parents and society as a whole. The second workshop "Sharing" examined the options for sharing the responsibility of child care. The third and final workshop was on "Strategy" where the ideals were established and methods for bringing about change suggested. The delegates met as a group once again to hear the reports from each workshop and further comments from some individuals. It is now the task of the OFL Women's Committee to consolidate the results of the conference into a paper to be presented to the OFL Convention for immediate action. It is impossible to

summarize all we discussed in a short report but I would like to convey the most important resolutions as I see them.

Child care is not just a "women's" issue but it should be considered as the universal right of all Canadians to quality child care at reasonable rates. Also the responsibility should not be only with the parents but with the government at all three levels, with the corporations and with every Canadian because the future of our country lies in the minds of our children.

The following are my recommendations on how Local 1535 might approach the day care issue:

- I would like to see a questionnaire or survey of our members' needs and views on day care.
- I would like to see some contact with the local in the plant on this subject.
- I have a variety of excellent material from the conference which I urge people to read.
- We should bring political pressure to bear on all levels of government through letters, petitions and public questioning.
- Since we are approaching negotiations the possibility of introducing child care into the collective agreement should be explored.

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MORE WOMEN'S COMMITTEES

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The United Electrical Workers, Local 524 at G.E. in Peterborough have recently formed their first women's committee. It is chaired by Judy Maynard, who herself has fought a long two-year battle through the grievance procedure (where she lost) and then through the Human Rights Commission, where she finally won her right to be promoted to a traditionally male job. Their first meeting was attended by Mary Eady of the CLC Women's Bureau who advised them of possible procedures and programmes.

\* \* \* \* \*

And the Radio Shack Women (remember them?) now members of USWA Local 9011, are taking their union membership seriously. Their militancy and courage is now being mustered to start up a Women's Committee in the Barrie area under the auspices of the Barrie and District Labour Council. Lisa Devoe is the Chairperson of the Committee, and she is concerned about getting women more politically active, aware of their rights and ready to fight for quality day care in the community.

\* \* \* \* \*

Members of the United Steelworkers Local 1005 newly appointed Women's Committee met recently to elect a Chairperson and a Secretary and to formalize their structure.

The Committee Chairperson is Debbie Field and the Secretary is Dani Robins.

The appointment of this committee was duly presented to the membership as an executive recommendation last July and is therefore an official committee of the local.

It is an off-shoot from the committee that was formed as the "Women Back Into Stelco Committee" last summer and met with success forcing the Stelco hand to hire more women.

Since then Stelco has hired better than 10 percent female employees from the total number of applicants. The Steel Company has also placed women in jobs as summer students to the extent of 25 percent. The company has indicated that it is satisfied with the female workers, who perform all functions of the job.

This is an historic step for Local 1005, in the fact that it has structured what is believed to be the first Steelworkers Women's Committee in Canada, formalized as an active committee of the union.

The committee will meet on a regular monthly basis to ensure that there is a smooth integration into the workforce, for those female workers already in the plant as well as an agency for the new hires of the future.

EQUAL PAY ?



AVERAGE FEMALE EARNINGS AS A PERCENT OF AVERAGE MALE EARNINGS IN 19 OECD COUNTRIES, 1968 AND 1977



Source: The OECD Observer, No. 104/May, 1980

NEW DEMOCRATS PROPOSE THE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EQUALITY ACT

by marianne holder

Three private member's bills introduced by the NDP at Queen's Park this session challenge the Conservative government to take action on the pressing economic issues of unemployment, layoffs and women's equality in the work force. A Full Employment Act, a Job Security Act and a Women's Economic Equality Act together constitute a charter of economic rights for Ontario men and women.

The Women's Economic Equality Act establishes an Equal Employment Office to which all major companies must report the number of men and women in all occupational categories. Then, if women are shown to be under-represented in any one job, the employer is required to draw up an affirmative action plan, with the assistance of the Equal Employment Office. If the company does not live up to its plan, which must include targets and timetables for female participation, it can be fined, and further action can be taken to correct the situation.

The Act also provides for the government of Ontario to develop a comprehensive skills training and apprenticeship program. Ontario is well behind in the area of training its workers. The Economic Equality Act seeks to ensure that as we begin to train people to meet the occupational needs of our work force, women will get their fair share of opportunities, and begin working in jobs from which they have been excluded in the past.

Getting a job is one thing, and getting paid a fair wage is another. Equal pay for work of equal value, as determined by a total point system of skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions, is therefore central to the NDP's Economic Equality Act. The NDP is determined to keep up the pressure started by MPP Ted Bounsall's Bill 3, calling for equal pay for work of equal value, which cleared a committee of the Legislature earlier this year, but which the Davis government refuses to enact. Instead it launched an advertising campaign to tell

women they are already adequately covered by the present law, in spite of the fact that only eight out of Ontario's one and a half million women received equal pay compensation in the year 1978-79!

A major barrier to women's equal participation in the work force is the lack of supervised day care. Too many parents are forced to put up with unsatisfactory arrangements in order to earn a living. Many others are prevented from taking jobs or training. The new NDP bill recognized a public system of quality day care is essential to women's economic equality.

Sexual harassment is another barrier which affects women's job security and advancement opportunities. The Economic Equality Act therefore includes a section which protects the dignity of women in the work place, to be enforced under the Employment Standards Act.

*"If someone who is an expert on justice or finance only is not considered a one-issue candidate, why should it be said of someone who concentrates on the multi-faceted concerns in women's issues?"*  
—Rosemary Brown

SEXUAL HARASSMENT INCREASINGLY COSTLY

More and more complaints about sexual harassment have come to the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Here is one example:

A 22 year old woman filed a complaint on the ground of sex in respect of herself and several other female employees of the respondent company.

The complainant alleged that shortly after commencing work as his secretary, the controller of the company offered her a ride after a staff meeting. Despite her protests, the respondent drove her to a parking lot where he proceeded to make sexual advances. The following week, he began to harass the complainant on the job, criticizing her work and accusing her of receiving

personal phone calls at work and leaving early.

A few days later, after explaining the situation to the president of the company, the complainant was dismissed. The reason given to her was that her continued employment would be an embarrassment to all concerned.

Investigation showed that two other female employees who alleged positioning by the controller were also dismissed after undue scrutiny and work pressure. Statements of other witnesses supported the allegations of sexual harassment by the controller.

The settlement agreed upon was \$3,800 each to the complainant and a major injured witness, this amount including special damages with six percent interest and general damages. Five subsidiary injured witnesses received \$200 each. The controller was fired by the respondent company. Altogether, his indiscretions cost the company \$8,000.

Reprinted from Affirmation Sept. 1980

#### RITA MacNEIL

Why are you angry woman? Why do you rise?  
You've appeared in the hist'ry books of men,  
There you were in the shadow once again.  
There's a very good chance you'll appear once again,  
If there's room between the lines.

Why are you angry woman? Why do you rise?  
You've typed the letters for him to sign,  
And you served him coffee with a winning smile.  
There's a very good chance when tomorrow comes,  
You can do it all over again.

Why are you angry woman? Why do you rise?  
You say these walls a prison make,  
And you're confined in so many ways.  
There's a very good chance you'll learn to survive  
If you close the door on your searching mind.



#### CHAMBER OF COMMERCE POSITION ON WOMEN ANGERS LABOUR

The Women's Committee of the Ontario Federation of Labour responded angrily to a resolution passed at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's annual convention in Quebec City at the end of September that suggested unemployment insurance benefits be cut for sick and pregnant workers.

Ontario Federation of Labour Human Rights Director Shelley Acheson said the resolution put forward by the Toronto Board of Trade "is sadly typical of such a male dominated body isolated from the real problems of working people and specifically working women. Acheson noted the resolution had been opposed by the handful of women delegates to the Chamber of Commerce convention.

With only a quarter of the labour force organized, and only a quarter of those organized being women, there are very few women who have the benefit of union protection. At a time when women are striving to increase maternity benefits the Chamber's position is reactionary in the extreme.

"I think the Chamber of Commerce suffers from a time lapse," added Acheson. "Everybody else's clocks are moving forward while they're turning theirs back. They may find they've gone backwards too far this time. The growing numbers of single mothers and married working women don't like being slapped in the face these days. The UIC system has been tampered with and watered-down enough. We call a halt."

#### STEELWORKERS START WOMEN'S COURSES

The Steelworkers began their educational program on women in the workplace with a week-long seminar at Chaffey's Locks, Ontario, in November. The dozen women who participated represented a cross section of ages, regions and jobs with about half the participants working at industrial jobs.

The course covered a wide range of subjects including equal pay for work of equal value, affirmative action and equal opportunity, sexual harassment, child care, history of trade union women, public speaking and parliamentary procedure.

The women gave high praise to the school in their evaluations. Diane Winter from Snap-on Tools in Toronto says, "Overall the course taught me a lot and I am going to put what I have learned to work." Doris McGuire from Canadian Appliance Manufacturing also in Toronto wanted men involved in the course.

A joint session was held with the participants in the occupational health and safety school attended mostly by men. Keith Rothney, chairperson of Local 6500's health and safety committee led a discussion on reproductive hazards on the job.

The course was co-ordinated by Steelworkers staff representative Deirdre Gallagher, and Mary Eady of the women's bureau of the CLC and Marsha Zakowski from the Steelworkers international civil rights department also taught at the school.

## PROFILES

#### WOMEN IN THE UAW

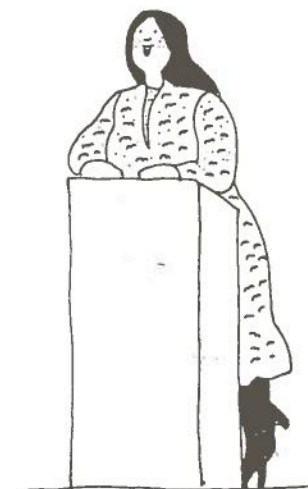
#### Bonnie Armstrong

"Being a UAW member for me," says Bonnie Armstrong an alternate committeeperson at Crown Electric, Local 397, in Brantford, "means belonging to an institution which can change your life but which you have some say in.

"It's a lot more than a night out or a meeting for me. It's my future."

Last year Bonnie was chosen Brantford's labour citizen of the year and was the area co-ordinator of labour's parallel campaign in the last two federal elections. She administered the labour council's unemployment help centre for a year and is presently secretary of the labour council.

Bonnie who also heads up the labour council's organizing committee, was deeply involved in organizing the TRW plant in that city this year, which saw more than 500 workers become UAW members, 85% of them women. "I think having a woman in the drive really helped," she says. "I'm a working mother who's holding down a job just like them, has kids just like them but who is still involved in the union and the community. I think I helped break down their stereotype of the 'union' or 'activist' woman."



#### Carol Aitken

For Carol Aitken, local union discussion leader and chairperson of DeHavilland's office workers, equal pay for work of equal value is the key issue for women workers. And she is going to put it on the bargaining table in this set of aerospace negotiations.

"We have about a 50-50 split between men and women workers in our office," explains Carol, "but the women are for the most part in the bottom half of the wage scale and the men in top half.

"Even with the new technology like video units, which are making women's jobs harder, our wages are falling further and further behind the men's."

Carol doesn't think the problem is with male workers. "They know that this isn't fair. It's the company we'll have to convince.

"The company says that women aren't skilled enough to do the senior jobs, but I'm convinced that much of the work being done by women in that office is as difficult as the work being done at the higher pay levels."

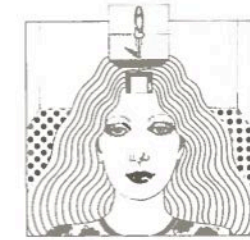
Reprinted from  
Solidarity Sept. 1980

HAZARD	WHERE FOUND	EFFECT
<u>Stress</u>	All offices - demanding, repetitive jobs requiring close attention to detail, lack of job satisfaction, discrimination, sexual harassment, the double day, etc.	Anger, frustration, under-mining of self-worth, fatigue, reduced appetite, chest pain, ulcers, rashes, headaches, high blood pressure, heart disease, etc.
<u>Noise</u>	All offices, particularly print rooms, open area offices, keypunch rooms.	At high levels can cause noise deafness; at lower levels, annoyance and interference with work; also a stressor.
<u>Poor Lighting</u>	All offices -- lighting too bright, producing glare; too dull; not adjustable.  Cathode Ray terminals.	Eyestrain, sore or swollen eyes, loss of visual clarity, headaches, fatigue, stress.  As above, but more commonly has these effects due to constant strain on the eyes.
<u>Air Conditioning</u>	Many offices - improperly regulated temperatures.  Contaminants such as asbestos, bacteria, and spores.	Fatigue, colds, dry skin, general discomfort.  Asbestos causes cancer; other contaminants may cause allergic reactions or disease.
<u>Toxic Substances</u>		
<u>Ozone</u>	Around copying machines, produced from oxygen by electrical discharge in air.	Throat, nose irritation, cough, headache, breathing difficulties, chest pain, drowsiness. A suspected animal mutagen. Exposure should be minimized and local exhaust vents installed near machines.
<u>Methanol and Ammonia</u>	Duplicating machines.	Irritating to eyes, nose and throat. Chronic exposure can lead to headaches, giddiness and insomnia.
<u>Organic Solvents</u>		
a) Benzene	Rubber cement and some cleaners	Leukemia, anemia, other blood disorders. Benzene should not be used.
b) Toluene	Stencil fluid, copy machine toner, liquid erasers.	In high concentrations leads to a feeling of drunkenness.
c) Other organic solvents	As above.	Drunken feeling, drowsiness, may cause liver damage.
<u>Non-Ionizing Radiation</u>	Photocopiers, cathode ray terminals.	Temporary eye damage; long-term effects not known although has been linked to cataracts.
<u>Fatigue Muscles</u>	All offices, boring jobs, writing, typing, sitting or standing for long periods of time.	See 'Stress'. "Writer's cramp", tenosynovitis, inflammation of the tendons of the wrist, low back pain from sitting in poorly designed chairs.
<u>Excessive Sitting or Standing</u>		Varicose veins, pooling of the blood, stress on the circulatory system, lower back pain.
<u>Safety</u>	All offices, slippery floors, crowded offices, obstructed passages, improperly secured equipment, poorly designed work flow.	Slips, falls, bruises, scrapes, cuts, strains and sprains.

# CERTIFICATIONS

NOT JUST ANOTHER PRETTY FACE

by alex muselius



Barbara Klunder

Steel is taking on a new complexion. Seventy women and nineteen men employed at Max Factor cosmetics were certified as Steelworkers on June 5, 1980. Eighty percent had signed cards within only six days of forming an organizing committee.

Not until given official notice of the Union's application for bargaining rights, did the Company come to the realization that "their girls" had engineered a turn-around in the master-servant relationship.

An interesting feature of this certification is the very high participation rate and speed with which employees signed up in the absence of any particular act of provocation by the Company. Discussions at membership meetings and exchanges made across the negotiating table suggest the push came from the employees themselves. The wages have always been lousy. The management has always been slick and paternalistic. The women have always been given the "women's work".

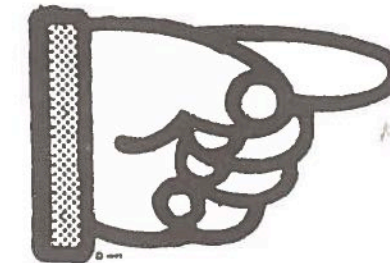
The women at Max Factor aren't wild-eyed Amazonian crusaders but are a fairly representative cross section of working women who have collectively come to an understanding. They are fed up with not being taken seriously. They don't see themselves as putting in their hours in exchange for "pin money". They work for their daily bread - for themselves and their dependents.

They need their jobs. They need their wages. They don't need the hassle of second class status. Therefore, they are in the process of securing for themselves a vehicle for expression and action over which they can exercise control - a collective agreement.

As a microcosm, this particular case is noteworthy for at least two reasons. First, it supports the argument that women's liberation is not

solely an avant garde activity, but has filtered down, whether by osmosis or consciously, to the grass roots and is taking hold. Secondly, it is an encouraging indicator that the large pools of industrial working women are coming onstream for union organizing. These developments imply both a wind-fall and a challenge to the Unions. The additional membership will provide much needed relief against losses due to shutdowns, layoffs and technological displacements. On the other hand, the special needs coupled with the assertiveness of this new membership will challenge the Union's flexibility and vision.

In order to maintain and enhance the Union's base of support, it will be necessary to make a real accommodation between the labour union infrastructure and the women's movement with a view to integration. It will not suffice to merely pay lip service to women's issues in the hope of assimilation. Working women are a force to be reckoned with.



NEWS  
FLASH

WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT THIS  
BARGAINING UNIT IS NOW ON STRIKE!

YOU MAY BE ASKED FOR SOLIDARITY  
SUPPORT!

STAND BY FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

# STRIKES

WOMEN vs GOVERNMENT

by susan giampietri

Women who had never contemplated striking, started to attend rallies. Women who had taken years of frustration in dead-end jobs decided to put down their pens and pick up their pickets. Women who working lives had been confined to offices, with all of their inherent drudgery came to realize that only through collective action could they improve their lot.

Why?

The answer lies not only in the members' wish for increased pay and benefits but in the far larger areas of job satisfaction, job "ghettoization", latent sexism and poor working conditions.

A history of government actions (or more correctly, inactions) towards its clerks (women) is not at all flattering.

- Prior to the strike in September - October 1980:
- there were seven levels of clerks, however 86% earned less than \$14,200 per year.
- 20% earned less than \$10,200 per year.
- in 1977 their raise was a whopping 6% - in 1978 it was 7.5%.
- there had been no raise since November 1978.
- negotiations commenced in September 1979 but government offers remained at or about 4% throughout the negotiation period.
- following the expiration of the clerks' contract in November 1979, the government made no wage offer at all.
- government negotiators were unwilling to discuss lessening work hours by fifteen minutes per day to bring the clerks in line with private companies.
- intimidation tactics employed by the government included withholding cheques, interfering with the conciliation board report, and withholding union dues check-offs; and
- finally the government turned down the conciliation board report which recommended a modest 19% increase over 2 years.

Over 75% of the clerks, Canadian wide, voted to strike. On September 29, 1980, 46,000 government clerks walked off the jobs. Only the barest minority had ever been part of a strike. Only the barest minority had ever previously been involved in any union executive. Yet the strike, once begun, quickly became an instrument of sisterhood. Every government office was picketed!

After two weeks on the line the clerks gained a new two-year contract with a 25% increase in pay, a bonus clause for the lower classifications, improved maternity benefits, and paid leave for caring for sick family members.

Militancy among the clerks has arrived. Its ramifications extend throughout all government workplaces, throughout a previously complacent union executive, and may well alter the tenor of all future government negotiations.

The PSAC has also learned that it can no longer deliver poor contracts or expect little criticism. Women will not accept this anymore. They want to belong, they need each other, and they will achieve everything in their power.

In this regard, the clerical strike was an unqualified success.



FOTOMAT FLASH

The Fotomat strikers, On October 24 were rewarded for their long fight by a Labour Board decision finding the company had flagrantly bargained in bad faith by withdrawing their monetary offer on the very day Bill 89 on union security became law.

The Board ordered, among other things, that the company call a meeting with the unit and table the illegally

withdraw offer, pay all the employees damages for their lost opportunity to achieve a collective agreement and reinstate all strikers in their employment even if scabs have to be fired.

This is an important victory for the labour movement as a whole which should lead to a contract in the near future.

The company has announced that it is taking the Board decision to court but the Steelworkers are taking steps to enforce the order in the meantime.

## BOOKS/FILM

BOOK DE-MYSTIFIES DIVORCE

by bonnie alter

If you have a fight with your husband or boyfriend--that's one thing, but coping with the legalities of separation and divorce--that's another. "What every Woman should Know about Marriage, Separation and Divorce" by Lynn King is about the legal rights and procedures concerning marital break-up, separation, divorce, property division and support. But it is also about the anger and bitterness surrounding the break ups of relationships and how the law attempts to translate these very emotional issues into practical solutions and settlements.

King's approach is based on the premise that women are at a distinct disadvantage because of their lack of experience in the business world and their weak economic position. Women go into marriage thinking that it is a form of partnership--but in fact they are very often unequal partners. In too many cases women don't know what they are entitled to, or they have been misinformed. The book gives tips on how to find a good lawyer who represents your interests and outlines different strategies that lawyers use in pleading cases. It is very practical, informative and easy to read. King is no user of legal jargon.

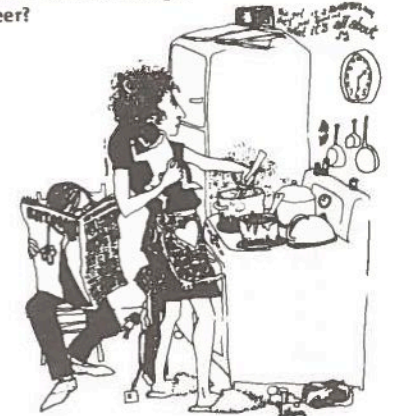
There is an enormous body of legal principles and precedents which

supposedly guide judgments but it is surprising how random and arbitrary the interpretation can be, depending upon the judge and how enlightened or chauvinistic he is. The infamous Murdoch case is a good example: a married couple had worked on their farm together for years--"I worked outside with him, just as a man would, anything that was to be done". They split up and she got nothing because the judge said that she did just what any farm wife would do.

There is a real push now towards urging professionals to become more accountable to their clients. People want to understand and participate more in the decisions which affect their lives. This book is an excellent step in the de-mystification of the legal field in this area.

"What Every Woman Should Know About Marriage, Separation and Divorce"  
Lynn King, James Lorimer & Co., Toronto, 1980, \$8.95.

How come nobody ever asks a man how he manages to combine marriage and a career?



TO ERR IS HUMAN

The Editor apologizes for omitting important information concerning the last book we reviewed Women and Unions. The author is Julie White, and the book is available in both French and English for \$2.95 from the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 151 Sparks St., Box 1541, Station B, Ottawa, K1P 5R5.




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"SHUT-DOWN" an EYE-OPENER

by bonnie alter

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In many industrial towns across Ontario, "shut-down" has become a household word. Because of our dependency upon the whims of american multi-national economics, canadian auto and industrial branch plants are closing down monthly, leaving thousands jobless.

"Shut-down" is a new National Film Board film, directed by Laura Sky and made in co-operation with the United Auto Workers. It is available for free rental through the N.F.B. (369-4092).

It is the story of the shut-down of the Prestolite plant in Sarnia which made electrical auto parts. The workers of the plant are the actors and actresses, filmed during the course of the closing and afterwards. We see them leaving the plant on the last day, some after 17 years there, some crying, some refusing to leave. The director interviews union leaders and workers (management refused). The women are strong and smart; one woman, when asked why she took a man's job said she "needed the money...and the rest". Some of the interviews are very emotional and painfully intimate when people talk about their bleak futures, the lifetime they have put in for the company and their bitterness towards the government. Everyone understood perfectly both the political reasons for the shut-down and the lack of political support in this country for the obvious solutions.

The director, Laura Sky, felt that the people in this UAW local agreed to relinquish their anonymity and be filmed at such a personal moment in their lives because they wanted to tell their story to the world and have people understand.

Robert White, Canadian Director of the UAW, has spoken of the need for artists and the labour movement to work together because artists have the skills "to help us say it better than we can ourselves". The UAW, the NFB and Laura Sky are to be congratulated on this joint effort that is moving, as well as being an important educational and political tool for the labour movement.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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CLC "Our Fair Share...Strategies for Equality" Conference, December 4-6, 1980, Banff Springs Hotel, Alberta. For information contact Mary Eady. (613-521-3400)

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THANK YOU

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Thanks again to all those who contributed to this third issue of the Bulletin, and to those who continue to send in supportive and thought-provoking letters. (Please be advised that we reserve the right to publish letters.)

Please note that all articles in the Bulletin can be reproduced without our permission, but please give credit to the Women's Rights Bulletin.

S.A.  
Editor

