

Breaking the Silence

May 18.82

a newsletter on feminism in social welfare
research, action, policy and practice

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Introducing the first issue...

Despite what history books leave out about us, women are great at pioneering. We've had to create new ideas and possibilities midst serious conditions of oppression. In this era, it is the contemporary women's movement that has exposed the hidden underside of women's lives and worked on a myriad of issues from battered women, incest and rape to abortion, poverty and "madness". We broke the silence. We turned seemingly private, personal experiences into public, political issues.

Now, a feminist group, in Ottawa of all places, is launching a newsletter designed to encourage women involved in a wide variety of settings to connect with one another. Five or ten years ago, that would have seemed improbable to say the least.

The plan is to develop a network of women who are front-line social workers, program administrators, researchers, consumers of service, policy analysts, teachers, students and political activists etc. The idea is that women concerned with social welfare issues - broadly defined - get to know each other, share information and act on matters of common interest.

Whenever a handful of women or more come together to share ideas, experience and resources, there's usually excitement and challenge ahead. Whenever we acknowledge it's not a question of "us" (the experts) and "them" (the consumers of service) but we as women, the connections can create new "visions of the possible".

Newsletters and networks often begin a significant personal and political process. As a feminist and as a social worker, I want to say to the group of women who are acting upon what some of us have only been thinking about - my thanks and appreciation for starting to break yet another silence among women.

By Helen Levine

(Helen is an active feminist and a professor of social work at Carleton. She is frequently invited to speak across the country on feminist counselling as well as the politics of motherhood.)

How do I join?

To find out more and indicate interest in the network, please see the last page.



Breaking the Silence

Breaking The Silence is a project of the Feminist Caucus of the Carleton School of Social Work. The newsletter has twin aims: to raise the level of women's awareness of social welfare issues and to promote and strengthen a feminist perspective among those working in the field of social welfare.

We feel strongly that there is much work to be done to advance the cause of women throughout the social welfare system and social policy in general. We hope that this newsletter will provide information that will be of help to those working both within and outside the system.

At present, women constitute the vast majority of users of social services. Women also outnumber men as providers of direct services. In spite of this, the social service delivery system and the design of social programs and research often operate to the detriment of women. Not only do they fail to respond to women's real and immediate needs and redress the existing disparities between women and men but they often succeed only in exacerbating already intolerable situations.

Social welfare issues cannot be considered in isolation. They reflect the inequality that pervades all aspects of women's lives and are intimately connected to the structures and institutions that shape women's reality. These include the legal system, the family, marriage and motherhood, paid work etc. Consequently, work for change must proceed simultaneously on all fronts. And we must all work together.

The Feminist Caucus is aware that there are many women, individually and in groups, working actively in many settings in the community to alter sexist policies, programs and services.

Publishing this newsletter will be a first step towards:

- finding support for those feminists working in isolation in agencies or bureaucracies
- establishing links between workers in different settings, with different job functions and interests but common goals
- providing more useful information about resources, feminist research, policy developments, events, and actions
- developing feminist analyses and strategies around key social issues of concern to women

The Feminist Caucus

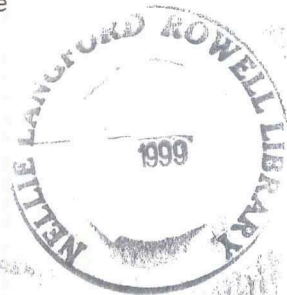
The Feminist Caucus is a collective of women who meet regularly around issues relating to women and social welfare. Students form the core of the group but we welcome all interested women to our meetings.

The group is concerned with:

- the impact of social policies and programs on women
- women's issues in general but particularly social service issues
- the conditions of women's lives that lead to their disproportionate use of the social services
- the unequal status of women as providers, educators, policy-makers and administrators in the social welfare field.

Some of the activities of the group include:

- sharing and discussing new feminist research by members
- preparing and presenting briefs to government committees and hearings
- supporting the actions of other groups
- exchanging information
- action on particular issues
- promoting the Carleton School of Social Work as a centre for feminist research, action, policy and practice in social welfare.
- supporting each other in our efforts to maintain and use a feminist and structural approach in our work with women and in the social welfare field



NEWS IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

After a year-long student-run and feminist-inspired campaign to make women's studies central to the social work curriculum at Carleton, Carleton can finally claim the distinction of offering required courses on Women and Social Welfare. Beginning in the fall of 1982, all students, women and men alike will be unable to leave the school without studying material on women's

status in society and their relationship to the social welfare system. The four women who initiated this idea produced an 120-page paper setting out the rationale for the actions taken. A shorter paper which included a description of strategies and tactics used was presented at the CASSW conference in Halifax in June 1981. For more information or a copy of the paper please contact Sherry Galey, Elizabeth Shein or Candace Woolley at the Carleton School of Social Work.

Community Action

On June 1, 1981, the Government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, announced a policy change which would see the transfer of those sole-support mothers presently receiving Family Benefits Assistance to General Welfare Assistance (Integration Project).

The Ad Hoc Committee for the Survival of Women on Public Assistance was formed in November 1981, by a group of ten students and one faculty member from the Carleton School of Social Work around the following concern: that sole-support mothers would be forced to seek employment at a time when unemployment is rising, when traditionally female jobs in the service sector are decreasing, when support services such as day care and job training continue to be inadequate.

We were made aware that representatives of the Ministry of Community and Social Services have tried to reassure some consumers of service. However, other sources believe that it will be more difficult for a sole support mother to obtain in the future current Family Benefit rates. Nobody seems to know anything for sure.

Will the rates be lowered so that all "able-bodied persons" (as Frank Drea, Minister of Community and Social Services put it) will acquire and/or maintain the incentive for work? (Read: so that, as the welfare bum ideology would have it, women who are lazy and having a free ride on welfare, will be forced to compete for very low-paying jobs or nonexistent ones).

What this means is added misery for families who are struggling to pay rent and buy food. It also means blatant discrimination and sexism against women who are poor. Not only is the state not providing sufficient income to ease poverty in a significant way, it also doesn't recognize the sole-support mother's important work of raising children. Still today, women are defined as adjuncts to men and penalized when they don't fit the mold.

The Ad Hoc Committee, in concert with advocacy groups and a consumer group in the city, organized a public meeting of FBA recipients in the Pinecrest-Queensway area on March 3, 1982 with the goal of informing sole-support mothers about the activities of the Citizens Advocacy Committee and Ottawa Council for Low Income Support Services groups. They were able to raise questions about the upcoming government policy concerning them, and to join forces with the recently formed consumer group P.O.W. (Prisoners of Welfare).

Support the women strikers of Union du Canada life insurance company! They have been on strike for a first contract since October 5, 1981.

Management has offered an average increase of 13.42% which will bring the wages of one-third of the employees to less than \$10,000. Workers want decent salary increases, a seniority clause, a fair classification system and flexible hours. Many of the women have been working for the company for years and still earn pitifully low wages (\$8,800 for a clerk with 9 years services).

The company has hired strikebreakers to undermine the struggle of these women. But their spirit and morale is still strong and they are receiving a lot of support from the labour movement, franco-ontarian groups and women's groups.

What you can do:

Join the picket line Wednesdays at noon at 325 Dalhousie Street.

Write letters of support to the media and to the President

M.C. Desjardins

325 Dalhousie

OTTAWA K1N 8R7

with copies to the strikers

Contribute to the strike fund -
(Strike pay is only \$30.00 per week)
c/o Michelle Plouffe
OPEIU Local 225
150 Blvd Grebe Apt 202E
POINTE GATINEAU, Quebec
J8T 3R9

Resources

This section on Resources will describe organizations, information centres, kits and information packages, publications, bibliographies, directories and films which could be of use in work with women.

CANADIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

CRIAW is a non-profit organization which seeks to encourage, co-ordinate and disseminate research into women's experience.

The aim of the organization is to promote the advancement of women, to encourage and facilitate communication among academic women, community workers, women's groups and concerned individuals. A current project is establishing a computerized bibliographic retrieval system to access research on women.

4

CRIAW offers:

- a talent bank of researchers (a computerized bank of resumés listing researchers from all disciplines committed to the advancement of women)
- research grants-in-aid (limited financial assistance to innovative proposals)
- the CRIAW papers (a published series of research documents)
- a quarterly newsletter
- annual prizes awarded at national conference (Marion Porter prize for the best feminist article and the Muriel Duckworth award to the Canadian woman or women who best communicate feminist ideals through any medium).

Individual memberships are \$10.00. Donations are appreciated. The current President is Margrit Eichler, well-known for her work on women and social policy.

CRIAW is located at
415-151 Slater Street
OTTAWA K1P 5H3
563-0681

It's Just Your Nerves is a new resource kit from Health and Welfare Canada which deals with women's use of minor tranquilizers and alcohol. The kit is intended for small groups to use in workshops and meetings and is available in a limited number of free copies in both official languages. It contains a guidebook, an information flipchart and a short film. It is based on the premise that "women have needs and experiences which are different from men's - a fact that traditional research and education on tranquilizers and alcohol use has too long ignored." Information can be obtained from: Health Promotion Directorate
5th Floor
Jeanne Mance Building
Tunney's Pasture
OTTAWA K1A 1B4
996-4505

The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women has established a clearinghouse on women and pensions. The Council will publish a monthly newsletter on the subject and a number of pensions documents can be obtained from the CACSW office.

Call:
Dolores Backman
Pension's Co-ordinator
CACSW
151 Sparks Street
Box 1541, Station B
OTTAWA K1P 5R5
992-4975

Hot Off the Press

The Power Politics of Motherhood: A Feminist Critique of Theory and Practice
by Helen Levine and Alma Estable

A key paper in its use of a feminist perspective to analyze motherhood - the institution and the experience - and to relate this to social work practice with women. The authors examine how economic conditions and men's power shape both the internal and external experiences of women. Concrete alternatives to current ways of defining women's struggles and working with women are explored. A must read for all those in the field working with women. Copies are available from:
Centre for Social Welfare Studies
School of Social Work
Carleton University
OTTAWA K1S 5B6
The cost is \$2.50 plus \$0.50 postage.

New Research

Abortion: A Policy Analysis
by Suzanne Pilon
Carleton School of Social Work

This paper is a critical analysis of current canadian policy on abortion. It discusses both the law on abortion and its application. Included are a description of the socio-political context surrounding the 1969 abortion law reform, and a consideration of goals, eligibility, accessibility, federal-provincial jurisdiction as they relate to the current policy. The paper adopts a feminist position and analysis in examining how and why the state regulates women's reproduction by controlling access to abortion. The argument is made that women should have the right to total control over their bodies and reproductive capacities. The paper concludes with recommendations for change.

CEIC Policies on Women and Non-Traditional Work
by Wendy McKeen
Carleton School of Social Work

After looking at occupational segregation by sex and the need for women to move into non-traditional fields such as the skilled trades, the author argues that current policies are inadequate and ineffective in achieving this goal. She outlines concrete improvements needed in employment training policies.

Female-Male Wage Differentials among Public Sector Social Workers in Canada
by Kathy Steinhoff
Carleton School of Social Work

This paper uses government statistics to document the extent of male-female wage disparity among social workers employed by federal and provincial governments. It shows conclusively

that females are almost always concentrated in the lower classifications of both administrative/supervisory and direct service positions and reveals that the average female social worker, regardless of job level, earns less than an equivalent man in almost every case.

Womanhealing and Manmedicine: Some Thoughts on the Women's Health Movement
by Alma Estable
Carleton School of Social Work

This paper begins with some history behind the current feminist analysis of health care. It focusses on where the Canadian women's health movement is today, with sections on woman as patient and woman as healer. Four specific areas in which women have been reclaiming our power are analyzed: self-knowledge and self-help; abortion; contraception and reproduction. A section on male-defined medicine specifically analyzes gynaecology as violence against women. The paper suggests some directions in which the women's health movement is going, for the women's movement as a whole.

Wife Assault: A Study in Power Relations
by Alma Estable, Lesley Silver and Denise Stone
Carleton School of Social Work

The authors have been working collectively to develop a feminist analysis of wife assault. Our society's lack of adequate solutions to the problem has been documented and the authors are developing a framework for understanding based on the interplay of violence, sex and power in contemporary Canadian society. The paper presents an overview of current Canadian policy on "battered wives". Then the inadequacy of existing approaches is revealed through an examination of the latent objectives implicit in policies and programs, which make it impossible for these to succeed in eliminating the violence of men against their wives. The paper outlines a comprehensive program of reforms and change required to redress the issue of wife assault. A brief based on this work was submitted to the recent Parliamentary Committee on Intra-Family Violence (a subcommittee on the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs).

SOCIAL WELFARE AND WOMEN IN THE EIGHTIES: CRITICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN AND MEN IN SOCIAL WORK

This was the title and theme of the 1981 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work held in Halifax in June.

Among the excellent papers presented on women's issues and social work were four from Carleton.

The Power Politics of Motherhood: A Feminist Critique of Theory and Practice
by Helen Levine and Alma Estable (faculty and student)

Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast: The Centrality of Women's Studies in Social Work Education
by Sherry Galey, Elizabeth Shein and Candace Woolley (students)

An Analysis of Some Male Responses to Feminism
by Mike Brake (faculty)

The Responsiveness of Provincial Day Care Policy
by Jim Albert (faculty)

Focus on the Region

The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton has established a 19-member Task Force to oversee a study of day care needs and services in the region. The objective is to provide information that will enable planning for the future. The Task Force has broad representation from education, labour, industry, public health, professions and the users and providers of day care services. Ross Langtry is the chairperson of the Task Force and Mary Hegan is the co-ordinator of the study. The final report is due August 31, 1982.

In February, the committee asked for public input to identify key day care issues and concerns. We must stress to the committee how crucial increased and improved day care services are for women. Contact Ms. Hegan at 563-2914 or 495 Richmond Road, OTTAWA, K2A 0G3 for more information or to express your viewpoint and concerns.

Conferences

THE FUTURE IS NOW-WOMEN AND THE IMPACT OF MICRO-TECHNOLOGY

Ottawa, Carleton University June 25-27, 1982

Speakers and workshops will deal with how to fight the potential adverse effects of the new technology and how to use it to our best advantage as women. Specifically, the conference will examine:

- training and retraining
- changing employment patterns
- the automated office
- health and safety
- privacy and confidentiality
- quality of life

Registration is limited so call or write P.O. Box 236, Ottawa, K1P 6C4 or 563-0681. The Conference is being sponsored by CCLOW, CRIAW, NAC and CFUW.



6

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH
AND TEACHING RELATED TO WOMEN

Montreal, Simone de Beauvoir
Institute, Concordia University July
27-August 4, 1982.

For more information, contact Mair
Verthuy, Principal, Simone de Beauvoir
Institute MU Annex, 1455 de
Maisonneuve Blvd., W., Montreal, H3G
1M8, (514) 879-8521.

SEXISM IN RESEARCH AND ITS POLICY
IMPLICATIONS

Canadian Research Institute for the
Advancement of Women, Annual Conference

Ottawa, November 19-22, 1982

Jill Vickers, a Carleton University
professor of political science and
conference convenor, has put out a
call for papers. The conference theme
is based on the premise that sexist
research ought to be the concern of
all citizens and decision-makers
because it so distorts the base on
which policy decisions are made that
they are incomplete at best and
counter-productive at worse. She is
looking for 250-word abstracts or
proposals for papers, panels or
round-tables from researchers,
policy-makers, scientists, lawyers and
people whose work is in the grass-roots
application of policy.

Submit proposals to:
Jill Vickers, Conference Convenor
c/o CRIAW Box 236
Station B
OTTAWA, K1P 6C4
by April 15, 1982.

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF
SOCIAL WORK, ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Ottawa, Ottawa University
June 1-4, 1982

The theme of the conference is
"National Trends and Issues in Social
Work Education, Social Work Practice
and Social Policy"

The Program includes many interesting
workshops with several focussing
directly on women's concerns:

Non-Accidental Injury to
Children-Blaming Wives and Mothers by
Jo Sutton, University of Bradford,
England

Violence Against Women:
Pornography and Patriarchy by Candace
Woolley, Carleton University

Ideological Perspectives on
Sexual Assault by Mary Valentich and
James Gripton, University of Calgary

Social Services for Single
Parents in an Era of Cutbacks by Chris
McNiven, U.B.C.

Welfare: A Feminist
Re-interpretation by Diane Chalmessin
and Mark Holmes, Carleton University

For registration information, contact

CASSW
151 Slater Street
Suite 909
OTTAWA, K1P 5W1

ON-THE-LINE CONFERENCE

Ottawa, Carleton University
May 27, 1982 - 8 p.m.
May 28, 1982 - 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This conference, organized by
practicing social workers in the
community, is designed primarily for
front-line workers wanting to explore
social action issues in the provision
of services to children and families.
Stephen Lewis is the key note speaker
on Thursday evening. Friday workshops
topics include:

- social service cutbacks
- client advocacy
- life on a low income
- community networking
- unions and professional
associations
- the politics of motherhood

The cost is \$40.00 and registration is
limited to 120 participants. For more
information, write:
On-The-Line Work Group
804 Grenon Avenue
OTTAWA, K2B 6G2

On the Policy Front

Lloyd Axworthy has put forward federal
proposals to change the Adult
Occupational Training Act. Federal
training policies and priorities are
changing and so, therefore is the
financing attached to training. The
Canadian Congress on Learning
Opportunities for Women reports that
we need to assess these proposals
carefully for their impact on women.
They are working to develop a position
paper on this issue as well as
proposed cutbacks to post-secondary
institutions.
Contact CCLOW at:
692 Coxwell Avenue
TORONTO, M4C 3B6
(416) 461-9264

For copies of the background papers
contact:
Gordon Hubley
Phase IV, Place du Portage
HULL, K1A 0J9
994-3684

OTTAWA WOMEN'S BOOKSTORE

The future Ottawa Women's Bookstore is alive and well and working towards opening this year. Lee Fleming and Peggy Harris have been working toward this goal for the past 18 months. A number of fund-raising events have been held to raise start-up funds, including dances, calendar and poster sales and a bus trip to view Judy Chicago's masterpiece in Montreal, The Dinner Party.

A great deal of support has been received from women in the Ottawa area. A questionnaire distributed in 1980-81 indicated a clear need and desire for a bookstore selling women's publications. A more detailed study is now underway as part of a business plan. In spite of the paucity of start-up funds Peggy and Lee are close to their goal and hope to be opening in some form in the near future.

Rants & Raves

I recently reviewed 43 articles concerning women in management. In no article, however supportive of the notion of women's equality, was the female noun or pronoun ever given precedence over male nouns or pronouns. All articles always used the primary-secondary ordering of man-woman, his-her, he-she. This male precedence gender-ordering was also evident in all the titles denoting gender.

It is noteworthy that social science researchers, whose training has given them some knowledge of the ability of language to structure attitudes and whose own research results have shown "no significant difference" between the sexes, cannot overcome their internalized 'male-first' mythology and reverse the gender-ordering at least half the time in their own work.

Now that researchers are overcoming their long-held bias against studying women in their own right, the time has come for them to reverse the gender-ordering in order to give credence to their findings of 'no significant sex difference' and to

The grants programme totals more than \$3 million annually and covers the costs of newsletters, conferences, community workshops and special projects. Grants go to groups working to increase women's understanding of decision-making structures, are building communication links with other groups for concerted action on mutual concerns or assisting women to acquire skills leading to community action.

Information packages are prepared by the directorate which also publishes the quarterly Resource Bulletin - a description of activities, resources and conferences.

Also, you may request their Listing of Women's Groups, Canada, 1981.

It lists and provides addresses for national women's groups, local and regional women's groups, women's centres, rape crisis centres and transition houses across Canada as well as federal and provincial Advisory Councils and government programmes for women.

The National Office is located at:

15 Eddy St. Room 11A 15
Hull, Quebec
K1A 0M5
994-3190

The Regional Office is located at:

207 Queen St. Suite 312
Ottawa, Ont.
996-5977

Upcoming Events

April 30 and May 1 - Women and Pensions seminar - call Janice Tait at 996-3664 or Dolores Backman at 995-8284 for further information. It will be held in Ottawa.

May 4, 1982 - Meeting of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women's Ottawa chapter - Northcote Burke room of St. John's Anglican Church, 154 Somerset West, Som