

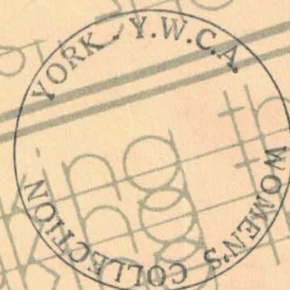
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fall issue 1984

Vol. 3: 4

breaking the SILENCE

a feminist newsmagazine on social issues



in this issue ...

Sexuality and the State

Four authors examine women's sexual slavery in Canada and on an international scale.

Feminist Organizations Part II

A look at conflict and change and ways women's groups deal with both.

opinion

on the courts' treatment of the Vancouver Five

Gender Gap Politics

plus ...

articles on women and unions, the Pope's visit, using the civil courts to prosecute rapists, book reviews, upcoming events, reports, resources, rants and raves ...

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collective for this issue

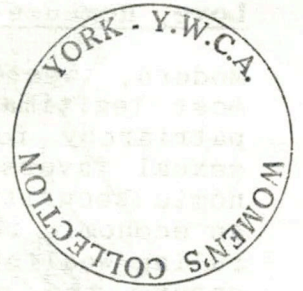
Joan Holmes, Joan Riggs, Ellen Adelberg, Wendy McKeen, Cheryl Boon, Gabrielle Nawratil, Sherry Gale, Suzanne Pilon, Alma Estable, Joanie Flynt, Marie O'Shea

About Breaking the Silence

breaking the silence is a quarterly newsmagazine published by a collective of Ottawa feminists. Its aims are to inform women about social issues from a feminist perspective, and to inspire women to join in the struggle against patriarchy. We encourage all women to become involved in the newsmagazine by sending in information about special events, sharing ideas and suggestions for articles, and especially by writing about your concerns. We welcome submissions although we cannot promise to publish everything we receive.

The views expressed in articles are those of the author's alone, and are not necessarily shared by the collective, even if the byline belongs to a collective member. Views of the collective are expressed only in editorials and articles signed by the collective.

on the policy front sexuality and the state



Prostitution

by Joan Riggs

Prostitutes are women. They are our sisters. They have the same expectations placed upon them and the same limited opportunities for choice as all women. Prostitutes are exploited as all women are.

As women, we all live in a sexist, racist society created by others. A society that perpetuates economic inequalities, and that transforms every experience, person and thing into a commercialized commodity to be bought and sold.

The Economics of Prostitution

Andrea Dworkin claims that "women's work, first is marriage... Women's work, second, is prostitution, sexual services outside marriage for money."

Under patriarchy, women's social significance and our subsequent work is based on the premise that women only provide sexual services and women bear babies. Work performed by women other than marriage or prostitution is underpaid, stagnant and sex-stereotyped.

Most women are poor at some point in our lives. So why are we surprised when research reveals that poverty is the most powerful inducement to women becoming prostitutes? Why have we been deluded into thinking that there is no connection between our economic oppression and the type of job options we can have?

Three Canadian studies cited in the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women's recent book "Prostitutes in Canada" found that prostitutes tended to be poor, from

the working class. In one Vancouver study 100 women charged with prostitution were all on welfare at the time. Few had completed high school, and any previous jobs held were low-paying and sex-stereotyped.

How can we not expect women to turn to prostitution for their economic survival? Sixty years ago, feminist anarchist Emma Goldman observed that "Nowhere is a woman treated according to the merit of her work, but rather as a sex. It is therefore almost inevitable that she should pay for the right to exist, to keep a position in whatever line, with sexual favors. Thus, it is merely a question of degree whether she sells herself to one man, in or out of marriage, or to many men. Whether our reformers admit it or not, the economic and social inferiority of women is responsible for prostitution."

How much choice do women have under patriarchy? In our society men have power over women and create the structures of sexual and economic oppression (whose most recent development is capitalism) under which we must live. To survive within those structures we all, at some time, in some way or another, sell ourselves to men.

For the prostitute the choice is obvious and the exchange is clear. She is selling the use of her body for a short period (usually not more than 15 minutes) for a small amount of money.

The woman in marriage is also contracting for the same economic survival, but she ends up giving much more.

Love, Romance and Marriage

Modern, western marriage is the most legitimate institution within patriarchy for women to sell our sexual favors in exchange for economic security. Marriage began as an economic relationship within the ruling/wealthy classes, as a way to ensure the perpetuation of upper class lines of breeding and money. It was explicitly an economic relationship.

But let's face it, none of us today see marriage as an economic exchange, right? We don't get married to have economic security - we get married out of love. But why do love and marriage have to be connected? Love and marriage need not be synonymous. However, the powers that be have an investment in maintaining the institution of marriage.

Romanticized notions of love and marriage have institutionalized women's oppressions more than any other forum. Romanticism has made women's exploitation appear not only legitimate but "natural". It is "natural" for women to have only one male sexual partner for her life. It is "natural" for all women to want to have babies. It is "natural" for all women to want to be heterosexual. It is "natural" for women to be underpaid, in segregated and degrading jobs. It is "natural" for women to want to clean, cook and serve their families, their bosses, and any other man who may need tending to. It is "natural" for us to want to be exploited. All of these images of women are reinforced within the institution of marriage.

It is not "natural" for women to be independent, strong, love women, decide not to have children, be economically self-sufficient and the list goes on. So, how can economic survival not be a consideration for women when we ponder marriage in a society that cannot tolerate equal relationships between men and women and forces us to use a love relationship as a

form of economic livelihood?

Marrying the Welfare Department

For the woman on welfare the relationship between economic survival and her sexual service is especially obvious. One woman quoted in ISIS saw welfare as a back-door marriage..."After my husband left me I had to get married again, only this time it was to the welfare department. At least I didn't have to sleep with the department although I always felt that I was being screwed."

The welfare system has instituted laws that penalize women if they sleep with a man. It is expected that, if a woman on welfare sleeps with a man, in exchange he must provide her with economic support. To the welfare department there is no differentiation between sex for love and sex for money. If you are a woman, then you are expected and it is demanded of you, to use your sexual service for economic survival.

These patriarchal institutions (prostitution, marriage, welfare system) have separated women from women. By creating a legitimate form of sexual exploitation, women have been deluded into believing that they have no relation to, and no commonalities with the women on the street, "that prostitution is a deviation from the social-sexual norm, rather than the most blatant manifestation of the norm itself. By creating a class of women for other women to despise, the patriarchy blinds the rest of us to the reality behind our own conditions." (ISIS) It is time to wake up to our commonalities. It is our only survival.□



La Prostitution

par Diane Chalmessin

La prostitution existe à cause de deux facteurs: d'abord, parce que les hommes définissent les relations sexuelles à travers l'idéologie de commodité et de consommation; en deuxième lieu, la prostitution est une relation économique ou notre société y fournit les conditions propices, c'est-à-dire le chômage et le sous-emploi, la pauvreté, de trop bas salaires ou de mauvaises conditions de travail.

Chacune de nous, à sa façon, s'organise le mieux qu'elle peut dans le monde patriarcal. Certaines femmes se prostituent pour survivre; beaucoup cherchent à se marier dans une "bonne famille", c'est-à-dire qu'elles cherchent un parti qui promette une certaine sécurité financière. Enfin, nous sommes toutes soeurs dans le "métier".

Dans un monde qui ne tolère pas l'égalité entre les sexes, comment ne pas donner d'importance au facteur économique dans nos relations avec les hommes?

Pour la femme vivant des prestations du Bien-être social, la relation entre sa survie économique et ses services sexuels est évidente. Elle est pénalisée si elle couche avec un homme. On s'attend que, s'il couche avec elle il doit, en échange, la supporter financièrement. Au département du Bien-être, il n'y a pas de distinction entre le sexe pour l'amour et le sexe pour l'argent. Etant femme, c'est un acquis que nous devons nous servir de notre corps pour survivre économiquement.

Quand la morale se mêle dans la prostitution, ce n'est pas parce que la femme échange ses services sexuels pour de l'argent. C'est parce qu'elle le fait en dehors des liens du mariage. □



Vincent Liyanage
Compassionate and Free
by Marianne Katoppo,
WCC, 1979.

Female Sexual Slavery: A Global Issue

by Sherry Galey

I approached this book with trepidation. I read it with a mixture of horror and fury. Then I felt compelled to write about it.

It brought home to me again, and in a very forceful way, that we are not free women. We are not free to control our own lives and bodies. And this applies not only to women in prostitution but to any woman anywhere who has to depend on a man or men for survival.

Prostitution is a difficult issue for many feminists, but with the Fraser Commission scheduled to release its recommendations on prostitution and pornography sometime this fall, one we have to be ready to deal with. We have to be prepared to counter any proposals that would hurt the women in prostitution or bolster the sex industry.

This book is unique and useful in

that it offers fresh insights on sexual slavery, situates it in a global context (too often we in the West forget there are other women in the world), and sets forth concrete strategies to deal with it.

I begin with one woman's pain and anger-filled voice:

"Every day hundreds of my countrymen, (Japanese men) lecherous tourists on chartered sex tours, force their way into Korea with large wads of money which they use to violate women in our neighbouring country."

Yayori Matsui went to an international workshop in Rotterdam in 1983 to share her outrage with her sister feminists at the way women are, the world over, abused, violated, controlled and enslaved on the basis of their sexuality. She also went to seek solidarity and support. Women from countries as diverse as India, Egypt, Japan, Thailand, Brazil, Switzerland and the U.S. came together to tell stories of how the sexual and economic control that men have over women translates into daily experiences of violence and exploitation for many women. The workshop resulted in the formation of an international feminist network to take coordinated global action against these atrocities. A book entitled International Feminism: Networking Against Female Sexual Slavery was compiled in order to provide background and analysis of the issues and to describe the organizing of the network but ultimately, in the words of the editors, the purpose was "to outrage - by describing...the various forms of sexual slavery and indicating the way these practices have been ignored...though they constitute criminal activities of major proportions". The editors hope that a vivid picture will mobilize more people to take action, to talk about and oppose these abuses and to create space for women who are victims to speak out, find ways to escape, and ask for help.

What is sexual slavery?

Kathleen Barry, author of the ground-breaking book Female Sexual Slavery, offers a helpful definition in the opening paper that sets the tone of the book. She makes the intimate connection between the sexual and economic exploitation of women explicit and recognized that bringing an end to female sexual slavery requires dealing with both. A feminist definition of the problem sees sexual slavery as being present in all situations where women or girls cannot change the immediate conditions of their existence; and where, regardless of how they entered those conditions, they cannot leave; and where they are subject to sexual violence and exploitation. Barry's conception of sexual slavery includes women who are victims of sex tourism, women who are abducted and shipped to a foreign country to be sold as prostitutes, women who are sexually tortured as political prisoners in totalitarian regimes, and women who are enslaved in their own homes.

The violation of women in sexual slavery is global and international: it happens throughout the world though its forms may vary from region to region and culture to culture and it involves the trafficking of women from one country to another.

Some examples of sexual slavery:


In Thailand, there are agents (pimps) who procure virgin girls of 12 to 14 from poor families. They are taken to Bangkok where customers pay \$150.00 to "break" them. The girl gets about \$15.00. Sex tours are packaged vacation plans offered to Japanese and European men which are primarily built around providing women for unlimited sexual use during their stay. Sometimes there is an opportunity to purchase the women and take them home under the guise of marriage. The appeal of sex tours is that women in Manila, Bangkok,

and Sri Lanka are more submissive, content to cater to men's needs, and be their "sexual slaves". Sex tourism provides considerable economic support to the countries which permit and encourage it. It is estimated that 200,000 of Thailand's 700,000 prostitutes are used for sex tourism.

In the Devadasi System in India, each year approximately 5,000 girls between the ages of eight and ten are dedicated by their families to a temple, who are paid a fee by a brothel owner. The girls are then taken to other parts of India for prostitution. According to religious mythology a Devadasi is a slave of god but in reality she becomes a sexual slave of men.

Prostitution has proliferated around military bases and ports for many years. Women forced into military prostitution become dependent on the base and their relations with the rest of the culture are destroyed. This kind of prostitution is exacerbated during war. In Asia, mobile field brothels were funded by American dollars during the war in Indochina and there was practically a prostitute for every GI. In the Philippines today, with its American military bases, American soldiers constitute the largest group of customers of prostitutes.

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Sexual Slavery: the thorny issue of free choice

As feminists we have to deal with some tough issues around prostitution. The way we answer these questions will determine our strategies. We need to know whether to

work for the prohibition, the regulation, the legalization or the decriminalization of prostitution. We need to know how to work with and support prostitutes and their organizations.

We can legitimately ask: if most of women's labour is exploited, isn't prostitution just another form of work for women? If we condemn prostitution, aren't we playing right into the hands of the patriarchal system and blaming the victims - the prostitutes? Can prostitution not be seen as a valid and free choice on the part of a woman? Shouldn't women have the right to use their bodies any way they choose?

A feminist position as advocated by Barry distinguishes between the individuals and the institution of prostitution. Prostitution, regardless of whether women voluntarily choose it or are forced into it, is a capitalist business which commoditizes women's bodies and profits off the sale of sex. It is controlled, not by women, but by men who are pimps, procurers and customers. Feminists are often hesitant to question the institution for fear of condemning prostitutes and subjecting them as victims of patriarchy to female contempt as well as the male contempt they already experience. But to accept the institution means that we accept its premise, that sex is a male right, whether it is bought, sold, seized as in rape, or more subtly coerced as in sexual harassment. And the logical conclusion of this line of thinking is that sex should be packaged as a commodity and sold to the men who want it. As feminists, we must reject this assumption. The notion of sex as a male right keeps women in servitude and is the core of all forms of sexual violation and exploitation.

With regard to the issue of "free-choice", Barry argues that as long as a woman is truly free to leave prostitution any time she chooses,

if she is really in control of her fate, then the state should not intervene and prevent her from working as a prostitute. But Barry goes on to suggest that, in a male-dominated society, what appears to be "free choice", is not so free after all. She says that many women in prostitution have been victims of prior sexual abuse and suggests that their "free choices" are to a large extent shaped by their early experience of degradation and abuse. She asks whether a woman faced with the "choice" between severe poverty or prostitution has any real choice at all.

Some people argue that there is no difference between a woman forced to choose prostitution over destitution, and a woman who chooses prostitution because it allows her to make large amounts of money faster than in any traditional "woman's job". To Barry, this represents the ideology of male domination, whether it is expressed by men, feminists, or prostitutes themselves. She warns against it because it does not question the actual experience of prostitution and eliminates the concern for what this work does to the self. It does a disservice to women because it takes away from us the responsibility for our choices. She is careful not to impose this judgment on women who have no real choice but to enter prostitution. Barry also dismisses the idea that prostitutes are at least more honest and up front about exchanging sex for money, than most women who do the same thing in marriage in exchange for economic security. The logical conclusion of this argument is that "all women are whores". The bottom line is that "viewing prostitution as woman's choice is a way to reduce all women to the lowest and most contemptible status of women in any male-dominated society" and that our feminist politics must clearly oppose any patriarchal institution designed to serve men through the exploitation and subordination of women.

The strategies that emerge from this approach revolve around fighting the institution without penalizing the prostitute. They must focus on exposing and bringing an end to the sex industry, and not on limiting the rights of women.



Legal action should reflect this. Legal prohibition of the act of prostitution is not the answer because it treats women as criminals and punishes them and lets the pimps and customers go free. However, there must be strong laws against pimping, procuring, and otherwise profiting off prostitution and the traffic in women. Nor is legalization the answer because it legitimized the view that prostitution is inevitable and that men have a right to women's bodies. Both prohibition and legalization increase the dependence of prostitutes on pimps - either individual ones or the state - and on the police who have power over prostitutes. Decriminalization is the the solution called for in the 1981 United Nations Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

The international network also advocates that there be international recognition of the right of a woman to determine the nature and extent of her sexual activity as a political right. Any woman seeking to escape from sexual violence or enslavement should be recognized as a political refugee and afforded protection as such. We must expose the international trafficking in women in the sex industry, and procurement practices - such as deceptive advertising for employment and phony marriages. We must also enlist the support of human rights and church groups in confronting the transnational institutions which invest in trafficking directly and control development options in the Third World which contribute to women's vulnerability.

And finally, among many other excellent recommendations listed in the book, these are ways women can take action at the local level. We can create awareness - particularly among peace, labour and political groups - of the connections between sexual enslavement, violence, militarism and torture of women in jails by police or terrorist forces, as prostitutes in refugee camps, in military settings and on the job as workers. We can bring international attention and pressure to bear on cases of female sexual slavery, provide a feminist interpretation and, mobilize petitions and support. We can provide humanitarian services to women in exploitative situations and challenge local agencies and governments to provide for these. Ultimately, in all our work as feminists, we will be bringing an end to sexual slavery if we struggle against militarism, economic, racial and sexual exploitation and the patriarchal system that sustains all forms of domination. □



A Man in the House: A Woman's Right or a Woman's Crime?

By Ellen Adelberg

Barbara is a 29 year old single parent in receipt of Family Benefits Allowance. Her daughter is 5. In November Barbara faces a court trial for fraud. If she is found guilty, and her lawyer advises her that this is a strong possibility, she may be sentenced to three months in prison.

One might assume the fraud charges occurred because Barbara was suspected of forging someone's name on a cheque, pretending she was another person or falsifying the amount on a money order or cheque. However, Barbara did none of the above. What she did do was fall in love. And falling in love, if you are a single mother on Family Benefits in Ontario, is a dangerous thing to do.

Family Benefits Assistance (often known as "mothers allowance" or FBA) is available to a single parent with no other means of income only if she/he is "living as a single person". Although this rule applies equally to men and women, there are 59,792 women compared to only 602 men currently in receipt of FBA.

If a woman on FBA develops a romantic relationship with a man which involves sex, whether or not he is financially supporting her, she is usually considered as ineligible for further benefits on the unstated but implicit grounds that it is his "duty" to support her. FBA administrators have developed a long set of guidelines which are used by specially trained investigators in determining (behind women's backs and with no due process) whether or not recipients are "living as man and wife". If it is decided that a recipient is "living as a wife", i.e.: having a man stay in her home, her benefits are cut off. She is advised by

letter that she is "no longer eligible" for assistance, and has ten days to appeal this decision. The appeal is heard by the Social Assistance Review Board, a government-appointed body. Approximately 88% of appeals for re-instatement of benefits are denied.

In Barbara's case, the man she fell in love with is someone she originally let stay with her as a boarder. He ran out of money, they developed a relationship and she let him stay on without paying rent. He occasionally bought a few groceries. Within a few months she got her letter, and six months later the police knocked at the door and informed her she was under arrest.

Barbara's case is not the first of its kind. In fact it is typical of many such cases that have occurred in recent years. Although figures on the number of "welfare fraud" charges are unavailable, it is well known that they are laid regularly, and that several hundred women in Ontario each year are cut off mother's allowance for not "living as a single parent".

An Attempt to Change the Rules

Women for Justice (W4J) is an Ottawa-based group working towards changes in the criminal justice system that will benefit women. The group laid a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission in June, stating that Regulation 454/82, stating that recipients must be "living as a single person" discriminates against single mothers on FBA. The group's main rationale is that FBA mothers are not granted the same privacy in their personal lives as any other single mother in the province. Therefore they receive discriminatory and derogatory treatment. In a 12 page brief W4J outlines in detail why Regulation 454/82 is unfair, and how its application results in deprivation and misery for many FBA recipients and their children.

At the same time as the W4J complaint was laid with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Richard Johnston (NDP social services critic), presented a petition with over 1,000 signatures collected by the members of W4J to the Ontario House of Commons. The petition outlined the unfairness of the "man in the house" rule and demanded its repeal.

At the time of this writing, W4J has received no word from the Ontario Human Rights Commission as to how it will treat the complaint. The Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services has not indicated any plans to either review or revoke the "man in the house" rule.

What Needs to Be Done Next?

Surely it is time for all of us concerned with justice for women to speak out on the "man in the house" issue. It appears that the only way the rule will be revoked is if all of us make it clear we will no longer accept government policy which treats women in such a patriarchal and derogatory manner. If you want to get involved:

- Contact your MPP and urge him/her to raise the issue in the House of Commons
- Organize a meeting in your area to discuss the "man in the house" rule and how to bring about its repeal
- Write letters about the "man in the house" rule to the editor of your local newspaper
- Write to the Ontario Human Rights Commission to ask what they are doing about the issue
- Contact Women for Justice and offer your support and ideas for future lobbying. The group's address is:

Women for Justice,
P.O. Box 3187, Station D,
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 6H6

□

justice

Using the Civil Courts to Prosecute Rapists

by Sharon Batt

"Give your evidence" the King repeated angrily, "or I'll have you executed whether you are nervous or not."

from *Alice in Wonderland*

Recent cases in which two women were sentenced to jail terms for refusing to testify against an accused assailant (*Breaking the Silence*, Winter, 1983) remind me of the bizarre trial in *Alice in Wonderland*. Intimidation of witnesses, rules invoked at the judge's whim, and outcomes contrary to any commonsense notion of justice are impressions left by the handling of these cases. The judgments will not encourage victims of sexual violence to report assaults and they reinforce the scepticism many feminists have of the legal system as a recourse for women who have been sexually assaulted.

Rather than abandoning hope for a just legal system, I think we should be more radical in our criticisms of the system than we have been and more imaginative in proposing changes. The criminal law is designed to represent the interests of the state and it is inherently contradictory to talk of women "using" this system to obtain personal justice for a sexual assault. In criminal court, the victim of a crime is merely a witness for the Crown; it is the Crown that uses the victim to win its case. Thus the victim may be held in contempt of court if she refuses to testify or -- an equally grave affront to the victim -- she may be prevented from testifying when she wants to give her version of the assault.

Feminist debate of rape and the law seldom includes discussion of the civil law remedy available to victims of sexual violence. Under civil law, any victim of assault can sue an assailant, so a rape victim has a right to sue a rapist for the harm (physical, emotional or financial) she has suffered as a result of the assault. She can also sue for "punitive damages", a type of award designed to punish the offender for intentional, outrageous behavior. In the United States, since the mid-1970's, civil suits by victims of sexual violence have become less and less rare. Some startling precedents have been set, including judgments exceeding one million dollars, awards to victims of incest, and decisions in which property owners have been judged responsible for an assault which took place on their premises. A civil suit is initiated by the aggrieved individual, not the state, so it was the woman in these cases who decided to take legal action, hired a lawyer, and acted as protagonist in the courtroom. Feminist lawyers prepared many of the successful American suits and expert witnesses knowledgeable about the emotional devastation suffered by rape victims provided evidence that contributed to some of the precedent-setting awards.

In Canada we have not had an increase in civil suits by sexual assault victims comparable to that seen in the United States. I have found only seven cases documented in Canadian legal reports since 1900. Awards in the three most recent of these cases are very small in view of the harm done to the victims: \$2,000 to the 51-year-old victim of rape in Manitoba (1957); \$1,500 to a

51-year-old widow who was sexually molested and beaten by a trusted friend (Ontario, 1970); and \$2,400 to a woman taken forcibly to a hotel and raped by two men (Quebec, 1976).

These inadequate settlements are one ground for criticizing the civil remedy but I don't believe they are sufficient reason for dismissing it. In fact I think that a system in which the victim, not the state, initiates the action is probably the only type of system in which women who have been sexually assaulted can hope for decisions that are personally meaningful. By suing her attacker, a sexual assault victim can gain control of the combat which her assailant initiated at the time of the assault. By carrying the suit through to satisfactory conclusion, she could free herself from the state of victimization. The civil suit permitted under civil law in each province offers a clumsy mechanism for achieving this liberation; the criminal trial offers the victim nothing at all.

One Canadian rape victim described her frustration as a witness in the criminal trial of her case as follows: "I wanted people to know what had happened. I wanted to say in court that he did it. It [the criminal procedure] had nothing to do with me. It wasn't the Queen who got raped. It was me. But it was totally out of my hands."¹ This account illustrates the powerlessness of the victim in criminal proceedings. Unless we challenge this aspect of the judicial procedure, our analysis is superficial. Until victims have some genuine power in court, trials for sexual assault will hold as little meaning for women as the trial presided by the King of Hearts held for Alice.

1. Quoted from *Report on Sexual Assault in Canada*, by Dianne Kinnon. Published by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Ottawa, 1981. □

opinion

Crime and Punishment: The Mistreatment of the Vancouver 5

by Wendy McKeen

The trials ended in June for the individuals popularly known as the "Vancouver Five". The group, which called themselves Direct Action, were convicted for conspiracy to rob a Brinks guard and possession of weapons, bombing at the Litton Systems plant in Ontario, the Cheedye-Dunsmuir hydro substation and the fire-bombings of Red Hot Video pornography outlets in Vancouver. Doug Stewart, Gerry Hannah and Brent Taylor were sentenced to 6, 10, and 22 years respectively for charges related to these actions. The two women from Direct Action were also members of an all-woman resistance group -- The Wimmin's Fire Brigade -- which actually carried out the fire-bombing of Red Hot Video. Julie Belmas was given a sentence of 20 years for her involvement in the Litton bombing, the Brinks conspiracy, attempted arson of the porn video outlets, and several other charges. The judge justified this severe sentence as being a "necessary social deterrent", although he still maintained that this was a criminal case not a political one. Ann Hansen was given a life sentence. She was charged with conspiracy to rob a Brinks guard, possession of stolen property and car theft, possession of explosives and weapons, arson of North Vancouver Red Hot Video, and the bombing of a B.C. hydro substation, and of Litton Industries. In sentencing the judge called Ann a "menace to society" and "a real threat to our

Canadian way of life". In his view Ann had "abandoned all (her) moral principles".

In contrast, Ann Hansen has clearly stated that the actions of the group were based on their sense of moral responsibility to stop the crimes committed by businesses like Litton, B.C. Hydro, and Red Hot Video. To quote Ann, "I felt I had a duty and responsibility to do everything in my power to stop the arms race, violent pornography, and the destruction of the earth. This moral responsibility far over-rides any obligation to adhere to man-made laws (p. 9 Kinesis, July/Aug. 1984).

Clearly, Direct Action acted on the basis of moral principles. These principles rested upon a political understanding of the links between militarism, sexism, environmental destruction and corporate imperialism. "We saw that all these problems are rooted in the value system and way of thinking called capitalism and patriarchy" (Ann Hansen, p. 9 Kinesis, July/Aug. 1984).

However, the legal system was not interested in their political statements. The group members were treated like common criminals acting out of self-interest. The judge's statement about the lack of moral principles of the Vancouver Five was based on a narrow individualistic interpretation of morality which obviously did not allow for the type of larger scale politically-guided morality which motivated the group. Consequently, Direct Action were painted as "terrorists" and members of a "lunatic fringe". The political content of their actions went unacknowledged and was reduced to individualistic crimes for which they were supposed to feel remorse and repentance. The judge viewed the fact that Ann Hansen remained faithful to her political beliefs throughout the trial as an act of defiance, and evidence that her rehabilitation "had not even begun". The trial shows that there

can be no justice where there is no harmony between the values, morality, and political perspectives of the legal system and the grander and more valid ones of those being judged for their actions.

The issue of using violent methods in our society to achieve political ends is an important and complex one, however it is not within the scope of this article. Whatever view one may hold it does not alter the significance and value of the political statement made by Direct Action and the Wimmin's Fire Brigade. Their targets were industries or businesses which profit from terrorizing women, destroying our environment, and threatening to annihilate all life on this planet. They included an industry which produces parts of nuclear weapons, one which produces energy while killing the environment, and one which is based on the sexual degradation and violent treatment of women. This political analysis is one which most of us also share.

It is therefore crucial that we show our support for these individuals who are being punished. They can be written at the following addresses:

Ann Hansen & Julie Belmas
Prison for Women
P.O. Box 515
Kingston, Ontario
K7L 4W7

Gerry Hannah
Matsqui Prison
Box 4000
Abbotsford, B.C.

Brent Taylor & Doug Stewart
c/o The Free the Five Defense
Group
Box 48296
Bentall Station
Vancouver, B.C.
V7X 1A1 ☐

Gender Gap Politics:

Pitfalls and Possibilities

by Linda Archibald
and Lynn Jamieson-Clark

Canadian and American politicians are courting women. On the positive side, for the first time since women won the vote, we constitute a major segment of society capable of forming a voting block. However, it gives the dangerous impression that feminist concerns are being treated seriously and that a few additional women Members of Parliament will bring the end of our oppression. In short, this trend oversimplifies the massive oppression which women have born under patriarchy for countless centuries and will continue to bear until every vestige of male supremacy is dead and buried.

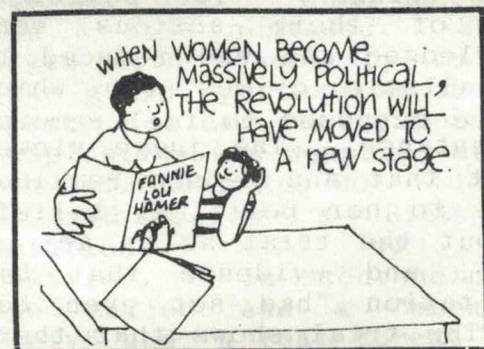
Studies of the voting behavior of women and men in the United States and Britain indicate a growing tendency among women to vote against the status quo (Republicans in the U.S., Conservatives and Labour in Britain). They also show that women are more likely than men to support peace initiatives and minority rights and less likely to support increased defence spending, nuclear arms and cut-backs in social services. In Canada the data on party preference is less conclusive. However, it suggests some interesting differences about the way women and men view issues. In June 1983, 20% of the women, compared to only 13% of the men polled believed that the Prime Minister should lead the country towards socialism, and in August 1983, 27% more men than women supported testing Cruise missiles.

Gender differences appeared to be less marked with regard to social and women's issues. In spite of the lack of concrete evidence that a significant gender gap exists in

Canada, all three political parties actively sought the support of women voters in the recent federal election campaign. Clearly the notion of the gender gap is influencing the behaviour of politicians. The nomination of Geraldine Ferraro as the Democratic vice-presidential candidate in the United States, and the national leaders' debate on women's issues during the Canadian election, both provide concrete evidence that politicians are beginning to acknowledge the importance of women's voting power.

The onus is on women to take advantage of the potential offered by this turn of events. If the political parties see women as a voting threat, we must be able to deliver or withhold a sufficient number of votes at the appropriate time to make the threat real. Women have the skills to accomplish this, but we have more experience with one-issue campaigns than with sustained, long-term efforts. A recent example of successful, grassroots organizing was the 1981 campaign for reinstatement of equality rights in the Constitution.

We can apply our collective knowledge, experience and skills to develop a new comprehensive strategy. To succeed, we need identifiable national spokeswomen to speak with authority on behalf of Canadian feminists. This authority would be granted to women we elect. The National Action Committee, representing 290 women's organizations could perhaps perform an authoritative advocacy role if certain changes were made to the



Peg Averill/LNS

organization to make it more representative of all women. Or the situation may require the birth of an entirely new and different organization. While a move in this direction must be preceded by a long series of discussions involving feminists and feminist organizations, the need for a strong national organization is greater than ever.

The challenge and the dilemma which confronts feminists in the 1980s is how to turn political rhetoric into action, without allowing token or illusionary progress to dull our commitment to radical social change. Governments may pass legislation which will benefit some women (for example, equal pay for work of equal value). This increases the likelihood that the women's movement will be co-opted and then discarded as passé.

If this is the case, the voices of radical women will be important and necessary reminders of the ongoing struggle. Radical feminists must uphold the integrity of the movement. At the same time, women working within the system could play a significant role by facilitating the incremental changes that are necessary to translate broad principles into practice.

We are entering a new stage in our political struggle for women's rights. We need to develop overlapping strategies and coordinate the efforts of radical feminists, socialists and even liberal feminists. We need to be as active and vocal as possible. And finally, we must not degenerate into internal chaos over differing philosophies. At this critical time, we should consolidate our gains and actively pursue concrete change to fulfill the promise of the feminist movement. □

focus on the region

The Pope is Coming to Town

by Marie Lacroix

In a few weeks the Pope, head of the Catholic Church, will be in Canada. Amidst the festivities, the planning, the tremendous expense and the feverish atmosphere which has settled in some circles, there are small pockets of women angrily contemplating the meaning for us of this "historical event".

For women the Catholic Church has been a major institution in our oppression. As women, Catholic and non-Catholic, we should be concerned about this visit. It demands a reflection of the place of women within the Catholic Church. Non-Catholic women should

be concerned since the philosophy behind the Catholic Church has penetrated every area of our lives: the judicial system, our educational system and the very fabric of our social mores. It is part of the backbone of the patriarchal structure which has oppressed women since time immemorial.

Certain themes remain consistent between the Church and patriarchy. The Church preaches obedience and passivity, to our Lord, our male god and to our fathers and husbands. By having us believe that there is a "better life after death" the Church has kept us in

our place. We have endured and sacrificed, in the name of a better life beyond. As Simone de Beauvoir wrote, "The passivity enforced upon women is sanctified... There is no need to DO anything to save her soul, it is enough to LIVE in obedience."

The Church has reinforced the notion that women are naturally inferior. As Mary Daly has pointed out, women have identified with the image of Mary - the woman kneeling before her son, fully accepting her inferiority before him. We should remember that we were the ones who had to cover our heads when entering the Church. We were the ones who had to show respect to our male god.

The moral teachings of the Church have been especially denigrating to women. Hand in hand with the patriarchal structure, no other set of moral dogma could have been more efficient in defining women... we are virgins and whores. When a woman weds she must be a virgin, she must be pure and intercourse is for the sole purpose of procreation. Here lies the execrable hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. Woman can never be pure as she is a sexual being, bound to nature. She is the temptress, the one St. Paul

warned men against lest they sully their souls and their bodies.

The Catholic Church has relegated woman to a subservient position as issued from a profoundly anti-feminine doctrine. How can we excuse the philosophy of a doctrine which preaches charity and love while oppressing half of humanity by relegating women to a subservient position, unworthy of full participation in the holy orders?

As this patriarch makes his speeches, we should keep in mind that he will touch upon issues which have become central to the women's movement; our fight for legalized abortion, our fight against pornography, our fight for day care.

And let's not forget who is endorsing and paying for this patriarch's trek to our country. The state's open arms represent their support for the Catholic Church's misogyny. But let's make no mistake, there will be repercussions.

Women in the Ottawa area are preparing an action for around the time of the Pope's visit. If you would like to get involved please call Joan R. at 230-0590.□

feature

Feminist Organizations Part II: Conflict and Change

by Joan Holmes and Joan Riggs
with assistance from the Collective

Introduction

As feminists, conflict and change are familiar parts of all of our lives. Much of the conflict and change that arises around us is a result of our being politically

conscious people revolting against a patriarchal, capitalist and all-round oppressive world. When we step into a women-centered organization, we breathe a sigh of relief and expect life to get easier. Well, often it doesn't. In fact, this is where the real work begins. We are no longer just reacting, we are starting to build

new structures and processes that are important to us as feminists.

In Part I of this article, we indicated that conflict and change and the ways they are dealt with greatly affect a group's structure and process. The authors of this article feel that addressing the issue of conflict and change would be very useful to all women's groups. The questions we ask are:

- what are common sources of conflict for feminist organizations?
- what methods have we devised for dealing with them?

As feminists, we believe it is our responsibility to tackle these issues in as constructive a manner as possible. It is our belief that resolutions must be based on reduction and positive movement that will steer us in the direction of a woman-defined, feminist world.



Common Forms of Conflict

Collective vs. Hierarchy:

Probably the most popular feminist institution is the collective.

Feminists like collectives. In fact, some of us love them. In Part I of this article all 10 organizations stated that collectivism was the goal to work towards, and most of them tried to work within collective structures. Yet many groups developed more hierarchical structures in which they incorporated a board of directors, coordinator or other positions that gave increased responsibility to some members at the expense of others. The most common rationale given for the move away from collective structure was that collectives are inefficient and cannot effectively resolve conflicts that arise. Nevertheless, many other groups have managed to retain collective structures and continue to rely on consensus to resolve conflict. While they point out that this is a difficult process, several groups felt that it did not interfere with their ability to function effectively and to achieve the goals of their organization.

It is important to recognize that feminists are committed to collectives because collectives are based upon a set of values that are compatible with feminism. They both speak to the integrity of human beings - to people being responsible, able to control their own lives and make decisions. Both recognize power and the consequences of structural oppression. A collective attempts to eliminate the structural imbalances of power: there are no authority figures, no formal lines of accountability. Both attempt to recognize informal power - the personal power that comes from having more information, being able to communicate articulately, being sexually attractive, coming from a privileged background, etc. Feminism, as a movement, is humanitarian and so is collectivism. Both make a basic commitment to thoughtful, honest and clear communication, which facilitates new approaches toward resolution of conflict.

External Pressures:

The most common source of conflict is both an external force that pervades our society as well as a tendency we have all internalized. The dominant institutions in our society are hierarchical: families, schools, government and work places are all based on hierarchical principles within which we learn to operate. Our training and socialization has taught us to give power to authorities and to seek their direction and approval. We are taught to pass responsibility onto others and expect to be powerless. When we choose a collective structure we empower ourselves, taking responsibility on our own shoulders. Together we must make the decisions and we must all be responsible for carrying them through. There are no subordinates to do our bidding or cope with the practical implications of our decisions.

Collective, non-hierarchical structures are clearly at odds with all our previous training. We have few models to copy, few codes of behaviour to follow. There are no set patterns for dealing with conflict or for problem-solving. This poses a creative challenge for every group that establishes a collective. Every member must work within the group and within herself to create new approaches to group process and problem-solving. We are always breaking new ground.

The fact that collective structures are unusual in our society causes problems when we have to deal with institutions outside of the group. The pressures exerted by outside influences can cause conflict within the group. To receive funding, we often have to establish a board of directors or appoint a single contact person or spokeswoman. These requirements imposed by outside institutions can undermine the collective process by giving greater responsibility to particular women. Power and authority given only to certain women runs contrary to collective princi-

ples. Some groups use information-sharing and rotation of imposed formal positions in order to minimize outsiders' efforts to have us adopt more hierarchical forms of structure and practice.



Decision-making:

Decision-making within a collective structure can be cumbersome and time-consuming. Some groups have found that working by consensus and striving for unanimous agreement interferes with their ability to make decisions and take action. The groups we surveyed generally dealt with this problem in two ways. The first was to incorporate more hierarchical methods into their organization. Some groups opted to have one person make final decisions and resolve disputes the group could not handle. Others decided to vote on issues and abide by the majority decision. Both of these methods are traditional and run the risk of alienating those holding minority opinions, which can create resentment and subsequent lack of cooperation. Any process that unsettles the power imbalance within the group undermines the basis of collectivism.

Other groups have approached the difficulties of decision-making in alternative ways. Some hold discussions until they reach a decision or compromise that everyone can live with. This process is, of course, very time-consuming. The group must accept that they may miss opportunities to take action or participate in some events. The decisions reached in this way, however, tend to be more satisfactory to all members. This approach to decision-making seems to be adopted by groups that place a very high value on process - that believe how decisions are made is critical to the functioning of the group. It is unsuited to groups that are very task oriented and value expediency above all else.

Knowledge is Power:

All women's groups come together to perform work, be it personal or political. Often as a result of a member's continued commitment, she develops knowledge and skills beyond those of most of the members of the group and a power imbalance is created. This could potentially create difficulties in maintaining equality in decision-making. Conflict arises when especially knowledgeable individuals use their position to force decisions or impose their will on the group. Others begin to feel powerless or not qualified to make decisions, and so become easier to manipulate. This is a very real danger, especially when new members are introduced into the group. Most of the groups surveyed were aware of this, and had established procedures to counteract it. For the sake of efficiency, several groups assign particular tasks to individuals and accept their guidance and advice in making related decisions. Often groups choose to rotate functions so that over time, knowledge and skills become equalized throughout the group.

Building on Differences:

Different ideas, backgrounds and philosophies can create disagreement over political decisions.

Many groups pointed out that openly stating political philosophies helps to avert conflicts of this type. Common goals and principles were recognized as essential to smooth decision-making.

A few groups have used facilitators or resource people to lead discussions and workshops to help raise the consciousness of all members to a common level. They felt this process minimized antagonism within the group and helped women to reach a common understanding.



Personal Power:

Within hierarchies and traditional structures, power is inherent in positions. In collective structures, all members are theoretically equal and have the same power. In fact, however, women have different degrees of personal (or informal) power, because of class position, more information, better communication skills or a forceful presence. Unlike more traditional structures, there is no formal way of recognizing this kind of power. Unrecognized personal power can be oppressive in a group. If unchecked, it can silence other members, cause resentment and undermine the collective spirit of equal participation. It is important then that personal power be recognized and acknowledged. The particularly powerful woman must recognize her disproportionate power in the group, must be more conscious of listening to others and treating them with respect.

It can be very difficult to curb our assertiveness when it is a quality we have struggled so long and hard to learn. We have all been raised as individualists and it is difficult to put our own interests aside for the benefit of the whole. There are times when individual women must forfeit their ideas - in part or in whole - for the sake of the collective. There can be no gain in being a woman alone, pushing a group beyond its consensual limit because you have the power to intimidate. It becomes disrespectful of individual women and group process, and can ultimately drive women out of the group.



Evolution of Groups:

Within any group, it is always possible that a major issue cannot be resolved - that the members can't come to any acceptable agreement or compromise. A split occurs. Several of the groups we surveyed have experienced such divisions. Sometimes an individual member leaves. In other cases, part of the group has decided to leave or has been forced out.



Separations are often filled with anger and resentment. Women become hostile and hurt. Not only does this type of split hurt individual women, but it also damages the women's movement.

We believe it is not necessarily a negative development when a group divides. As women, each of us have different physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs and abilities. We don't all work well under the same conditions. We should be able to openly acknowledge our differences without placing good and bad judgments on them. Women can agree an association is no longer beneficial and move on amicably.

Moving in and out of different groups and forming new groups is a natural evolution that expands the women's movement and provides a wide variety of women's services. We can approach divisions in a complementary rather than competitive spirit. There has to be room for all of us to express ourselves and to get services that suit our needs and inclinations.

Experiencing divisions with a group can lead to positive development for the group itself. Several groups found that splitting made them more conscious of their real goals and philosophies. It forced them to clarify the basic premises underlying the group and to state them more openly and concretely.

Techniques for Resolving Conflict:

An important goal for feminists struggling to resolve conflict is to reach resolution without creating winners and losers. Clear and honest communication and exchange of information are crucial to reaching a compromise. Unfortunately, none of us have much practice in these areas. Below are a few popular techniques used by feminist organizations for resolving conflict.

A. Constructive criticism is based on the premise that criticism is a form of education that can be done in a gentle, non-abusive manner and towards a goal of positive change.

1. Before you start to offer a criticism, ask yourself why you want to do this. What is your goal? Is it your right? If you can't begin with a desire for unity and a mutually beneficial resolution then it isn't constructive. Remember, there is truth on both sides of conflict and you should be prepared to do a lot of work.



2. Begin by asking the other(s) involved, can you handle this? Are you ready to hear my concerns? If she/they want to hear them, then continue. If not wait for another time.

3. Be concrete. Present the facts and not a subjective analysis of the facts.

4. Describe your feelings about the problem. Don't presume to define their motivation and feelings.

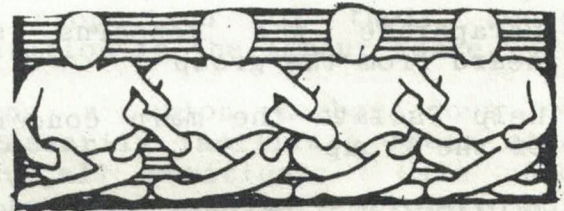
5. State what you want her/them to do.



6. Now is your opportunity to analyze. Explain why you think there should be some change. You have initiated this process and so you have to explain why you think there needs to be a change.

7. Don't just jump into the discussion. Ask the individual or group to repeat what you have said in their own words. You may be operating under different understandings. Your listeners may have incorporated their own analysis - and many of their own insecurities - into what they think you have said. Make sure the two are distinct.

8. Be prepared for defensiveness. You have initiated a process of change through education. Some people may not be able to listen immediately. Be patient and supportive. Reinforce the idea that you are not demanding a change but stating a need and that power still remains with them as to whether they change or not.



B. Consensus is used primarily to ensure that every woman will have a voice in every decision. Consensus is reached once all members have stated their views and have reached a mutual decision which they can all understand and support.

Guidelines:

1. Allow every woman to state her views on the subject.
2. Listen carefully to learn new information which will help you make your decision.
3. Only support an idea you are confident you understand and believe is feasible.
4. Accept that sometimes consensus cannot be reached. There are

alternatives. Continue talking or adopt the most acceptable compromise. Avoid resorting to voting and other forms of majority rule decision-making.

C. Using a facilitator

A facilitator is often used when communication has broken down within a group. A facilitator can be introduced informally or formally into a group.

In many groups one person acts as an informal facilitator. She clarifies communication, diffuses potentially contentious discussions and generally maintains open and clear communication lines.

A formal facilitator is often invited into a group when the group can no longer work together to resolve an internal conflict. The facilitator's role is to:

1. hear every woman's concerns on the issue
2. paraphrase the concerns she heard from the group
3. help isolate the main concerns of the group
4. provide the group with some direction, focus and support in reaching a solution to the problem
5. if need be, help the group to realize that one potential resolution is for the group to split amicably.

D. Checking in and out

Checking in and out is a concrete attempt to acknowledge the personal and political. Work is best done when we aren't distracted by other aspects of our lives. A check-in at the beginning of the meeting provides each woman with an opportunity to state how she is feeling and to get some support for her as an individual. It also helps other members of the group know how to relate to that woman for the meeting.

Checking out is a chance to evaluate the meeting at a personal level. It is also a time to discuss any problems that may have arisen from the meeting but weren't dealt with adequately.

Contact List

Amethyst House	
Sharon	728-3754
International Women's Week	
Joanie	233-5880
Monique at Learner	
Center	238-4659
Interval House	
Toby	234-5181
Rape Crisis Centre	238-6667
Sexual Assault Support Centre	
.....	234-2266 725-2160
Women's Action for Peace	
Anne	731-4997
Women for Justice	
write...P.O. Box 3187	
Station D	
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6H6	
Breaking the Silence	
Sherry	232-6042
Joan	230-0590

Further Reading

Brian Nuvine et al., A Manual For Group Facilitators, from the Centre for Conflict Resolution, Wisconsin, 1978

Michael Avery, Barbara Streibel, et al., Building United Judgment: A Handbook for the Consensus Decision Making, from Centre for Conflict Resolution, Wisconsin, 1978

Gillian McCreary and Lenore Rogers, Feminist Organizational Manual, from Saskatchewan Secretary of State, Canada, 1983

Karen Brandow and Jim McDonnell, No Bosses Here: A Manual on Working Collectively and Cooperatively, for Vocations for Social Change, Boston, 1981

women and unions

Affirmative Action

by Peggy Kelly

Affirmative Action fever is sweeping the Canadian labour movement! The women in the nation's unions are enthusiastic about affirmative action programs. Male unionists don't seem nearly as receptive.

This became clear during the first Affirmative Action course taught in Canada by the Canadian Labour Congress. Thirteen Ontario women and one from the Northwest Territories met at the Donald Gordon Centre in Kingston, Ontario from February 27 to March 2. One man was present at the opening session. He appeared to be approaching retirement age. Before we began he asked to be switched to another course. "I think my local registered me in Affirmative Action as a joke or a trick. I believe in women's equality, but there are some jobs women just can't do."

Teachers Carol Aitken and Gaye Lamb countered this view throughout the course. They used height and weight restrictions as one example of systemic discrimination, that is, discrimination which is unintentionally built into the employment system. Height and weight requirements exclude women and the physically handicapped from jobs they could perform.

Gaye Lamb told us about her employer Cooper Tool. This Ontario plant manufactures small tools such as Weller Soldering Irons and Lufkin Tape Measures. Before starting her job, Lamb passed a test requiring her to lift fifty pounds. During the course of her daily work she may have to lift a

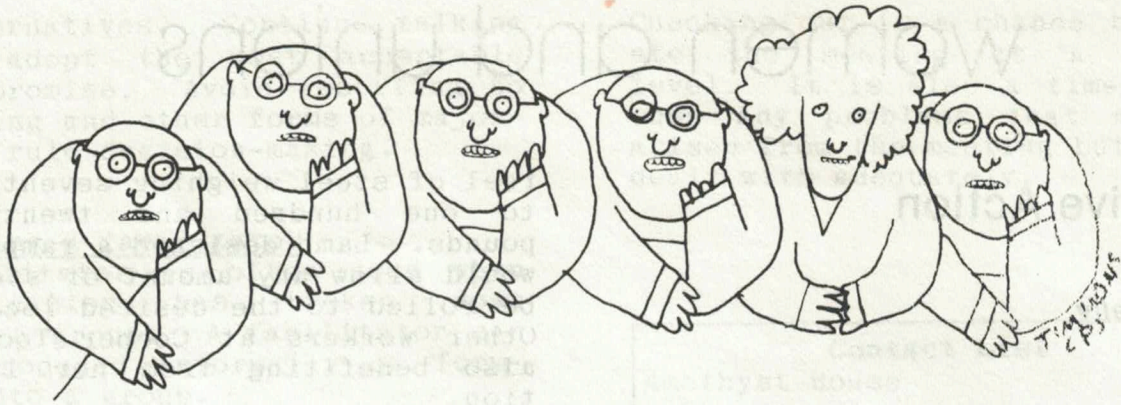
reel of steel weighing seventy-five to one hundred and twenty-five pounds. Lamb designed a ramp which would allow any amount of steel to be rolled to the desired location. Other workers at Cooper Tool are also benefiting from her innovation.

Lamb's point was that an Affirmative Action Plan would eliminate minimum weight standards and encourage employers to install labour-saving devices. Her common sense told her that no worker should be expected to lift unreasonably heavy loads. The man who left the class failed to see that affirmative action could also benefit him.

Affirmative Action programs aim to increase the representation of women and minorities across all jobs in proportion to their representation in the labour force.

Being a union member does not necessarily facilitate their entry into all positions. Male union members as well as employers hold discriminatory attitudes towards women in the workplace.

These problems can all be addressed by affirmative action programs. The first step is to set up a Women's or Equality Committee. Include sympathetic men and a member of the local union executive. Then, an analysis of the workplace must be undertaken. This is a mammoth job. To compile a useful report, the committee must know the number of men and women across all classifications and job levels, their salaries, benefits, education and seniority. Access to personnel records is usually necessary. Gaining management co-operation for this in-depth research may require negotiating a preliminary clause in the union contract. It could contain a



policy statement on affirmative action and guidelines for a joint employee-management committee. If this is the case, union members must ensure they have equal representation on such a committee.

Once the Affirmative Action Committee identifies the barriers found by female workers, remedies such as temporary hiring and promotion advantages can be proposed. Targets for promotion can be established. This means that within a specified time frame the employer is committed to promoting a certain number of women more than men in the targetted department. Bridge positions can be set up to train women and minorities on the job. They are intermediary positions which disappear after the target number of disadvantaged workers has been trained and promoted.

Support systems such as career counselling, child care and paid education leave are also part of any Affirmative Action program. Other simple changes would require employers to hire from within. Many Canadian unions have already negotiated such clauses into their collective agreements. However, the posting of detailed job descriptions of upcoming vacancies is not a widespread practice. These measures could become part of an affirmative action program with minimal inconvenience to the employer.

Goals and timetables are essential to any affirmative action program. Goals make clear the number of

women working in each area of the company for equality to exist. A timetable ensures that the employer does not backslide on commitments. The ultimate goal is to have women working in every occupation equal to their representation in the general labour force. This would signal the end of womens' ghettoization in the lower-paying clerical, sales and service occupations.

Besides negotiating Affirmative Action Plans with employers, unions in Canada should also be instituting affirmative action internally. One-third of union members are women. In spite of this, national unions and labour affiliations are sadly lacking in female representation at the executive level. Male unionists claim this is a natural result of women's lack of involvement in union affairs. However, women are well represented on local union executives and committees where the essential grass-roots organizing takes place. Unresponsive unions can't expect one third of their membership to contribute talent and energy to labour organizations which have nothing more to offer than the same ghettoization and lack of power which has been women's lot since the industrial age forced itself upon us.

Peggy Kelly will explore this issue in a future edition of Breaking the Silence. □

Peggy Kelly is a tape and sound editor at CJOH and is active in her local of NABET.

Organized Working Women: Women and Economic Survival

By Joan Riggs

All women are workers. We are not always paid for the work we do (housework, childcare, etc.) and when we are paid, most of us do not become members of unions. With this in mind, I attended an Organized Working Women's (OWW) conference on "Women and Economic Survival" in Toronto, wondering what they could offer.

OWW is open to all working women who are covered by a collective bargaining unit. "It is our purpose to facilitate the full participation of women in the union movement and to improve our condition as women and strengthen our individual unions."

My initial reaction was pleasure at finding the presentations not as limited as the general mandate of OWW would suggest. There was an attempt, particularly by the keynote speakers, to integrate women's personal lives, responsibilities, unpaid work, women's community, and women's waged work into an overall vision of women's economic position. What was particularly inspiring was the strength and conviction of these women who, for the most part, spend their lives working with men: both in the workplace (as do the rest of us) and in their free time, in male-defined unions in order to bring about positive change for women.

Monica Townson's presentation, "Economic Alternatives, Planning an Egalitarian Program," which came on the third day of the conference really set the stage for understanding exactly where we are working from as women. The climate being set up by the government today is that women have been taken care of ... "we've nurtured and supported you for the past ten years, now it's time for you to fend for your-

selves." We are expected to compete, as all other minority groups are, for the infamous "limited resources." The fact that competition is in contradiction to what we have been advocating is seen as irrelevant. It appears to be beyond the patriarchal, capitalist mind of government to construct an economic plan that harmonizes and integrates a personal value system with the maintenance and the survival of our society and world.

Issues that ran consistently throughout the conference were part-time work, pensions, the impact of technology, and health and safety on the job.

Technology

Of particular importance to us, as social workers, is the new technology being introduced in many of our workplaces. As Sue Craig of the Toronto Star and other presenters suggested, the smugness of white-collar security is quickly being eroded with the advancement of computer technology. With computers, jobs are becoming streamlined, less specialized, less personal, more isolated (many jobs can be done in the home) and are requiring less personpower. The result has been the elimination of many white collar positions and the gradual realization by these groups of the importance of collective power and protection that can be found within a union.

Pensions

Another pressing issue is pensions. As Monica Townson points out, the new homemaker's pension doesn't apply to most of us. Since most women are in the labour force either part-time or full-time (see box), we are not considered homemakers: a ridiculous idea considering the extensive documentation establishing the double job most women perform. The result is that many working women (most of them not able to afford private pension plans) will continue not to receive

any pension benefit when they are older. On the other hand, those women who can afford domestic servants and who do not work outside the home could potentially receive benefits since they are defined as "homemakers." Monica argues that pensions are beyond an individual union's mandate, "pensions should not be viewed as an alternative benefit, like daycare." Pensions are a basic right for economic security in a woman's later years. For unions and women's groups the message was clear: fight for that right.

Organizing

Perhaps the most refreshing voice heard was that of Joan Kuyak, a community organizer who helped organize the women during the 1978 Inco strike in Sudbury. In both her workshop and as part of the panel discussion, "Women as Survivors," Joan reminded us of the way Canadian society is run and its denial of the human values and feelings that are integral to women's lives.

"Capital (individuals who own and control the vast majority of money, property and resources) has decided the way our lives will be run and it's based on a cost-benefit model." In our private lives, "they define the needs we have, the way services and goods are delivered." Housing is an example, where capital has developed units that are cheap and efficient to construct but for those of us who must live in them, they are inefficient and expensive to maintain. Capital has done the same with our workplaces. "There is a 'corporatization' of workplaces, including those providing human services (i.e. hospitals). These corporate structures define and control women's lives much more than any union contract that provides them with benefits."

From that perspective the battleground becomes much greater than the union. "Women have to understand the limitations of the traditional trade union movement." Capital and its accomplices, government and the media, have created an image and a definition of labour which is essentially limited and derogatory. By legislating the processes unions can rely on for change (collective bargaining strikes, etc.) government has essentially eroded the collective potential of unions. By focusing on their primary task (negotiating and maintaining a contract with the essential guidance of legal council), unions have effectively separated workers from their own negotiations until the near completion of the task (the vote). But worse yet, capital has effectively limited the union movement's understanding of its own mandate to the point where the unemployed become a potential constituency only after the dramatic loss of waged members in some unions.

For Joan, the issue for unions shouldn't be whether "women are paid or unpaid workers, but the distribution of wealth." It then becomes obvious that women are a major group to organize. For many of the women in the workshop (most of them social workers), it was clear that was what they wanted to hear. They want a role in organizing the appropriate vehicle for change.

Finally, there is nothing more suffocating than hearing women extol the virtues of unions while, at the same time, we have to recognize the limited support the union movement has provided us with by addressing only our relation to paid work. Fortunately, that was not the gist of most of the presenter's ideas and I, and I'm sure I speak for other women, am grateful for the steps they took in moving us forward. □

- . In Canada women make up thirty-nine percent of the labour force
- . Women are concentrated in the clerical, sales and service sectors
- . In 1981, women comprised 78% of the clerical workforce
- . In 1978, a male clerk made fifty percent more than a female clerk
- . In the same year the average man's income was 105% higher than the average woman's
- . Today women make 62% of the average male salary
- . Seventy-five percent of all minimum wage earners are women
- . The average salary for a female university graduate is no more than the average salary of a man who has a high school diploma
- . Furthermore, the majority of employed women find themselves stuck in dead-end jobs with no opportunity for advancement

Facts On Women In The Labour Force

- . in Ontario, 73% of all women between the ages of 25 and 35 were in the labour force
- . the primary age for collecting maternity benefits under UIC is 27 years
- . fertility rate is 1.7% in 1982, 48% of all women in Canada with a child under 3 were in the labour force
- . after 1980, 40% of all women will pass through single parenthood
- . of those single parent families headed by women, 45% will be below the poverty line

General Picture

Most of us, as women are having only one child and are working fulltime while we are raising our child. Close to half of us are raising our children alone. Of this group 45% are living below the poverty line.

hot off the press

Voices from the Shadows: Women with Disabilities Speak Out

by Liz Lamb

This book presents personal accounts of the situations and difficulties of women with disabilities. It is the first book of its kind to be written about Canadian women and it reminds us of how the experiences of all women, and especially women who are doubly oppressed (by race, age, sexual orientation or disability) remain invisible and ignored by society. The history of the book itself tells the same story: after writing a commissioned report for the Nova Scotia government on the special problems faced by disabled women, the author was denied publication and given a list of excuses. It was only after going to the press that Matthews received an invitation from Women's Educational Press to tackle a book on the subject.

The content of the book, as the author notes in her foreward, is "a somewhat informal mixture of interview and autobiography" and this is both its charm and drawback. The book, at some levels, is a readable selection of vignettes about women's lives which can make us smile, grimace or cry. The chapter titles help set the tone of the book and delineate the major concerns: 'The Awakening' - the story of the author's own disability told with deep emotion and the implicit message of our own vulnerability; 'Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic - about education and the trouble women with disabilities have, and have had, gaining access to this fundamental right; and 'Lovers and Other Strangers' - about relationships and sexuality and the lack of information or understanding, especially from professionals. In

addition there are chapters regarding childbirth, institutional care, accessibility, employment and social assistance.

The book concludes with a Resource Guide including a bibliography and list of Canadian Self-Help and Advocacy Groups.

Matthews has some trouble integrating the experiences of other women with her own and some chapters appear a bit stilted or segmented for this reason. This is the drawback in her chosen format of style. Further, the book lacks analysis by the women or Matthews herself regarding the aetiology of the concerns and issues raised. There is little attempt to examine how the nature of our society contributes to restrictions on all women as well as to barriers against women with disabilities. This book is certainly based on personal experiences but for those of us who are aware that the personal is political, the link is lacking.

Nevertheless, this book makes important, if somewhat implicit statements and requests. We all have to fight for reproductive choice and access to education and reject definitions of ourselves based on physical characteristics. In addition, the special realities of women with disabilities must be taken into account, especially by feminists and the women's movement. Along with child care arrangements and sliding scale fees, there should be wheelchair accessibility, arrangements for the hearing impaired and braille copies of written items at all women's movement functions.

Matthew's book makes a start at urging us to recognize the womanhood of women with disabilities. We must move on from there. □

Falling From Grace

Breast cancer and mastectomy are subjects that many would prefer not to think about. Yet one woman in eleven will get breast cancer; the other ten will know someone who does.

Elly Van de Walle was a twenty-eight year old mother when she learned that she had cancer. After mastectomy, she had two more children and went on to rebuild her life on new foundations. In her first book of poetry Elly offers "a new language to speak of this experience." Her poems testify to one woman's survival and subsequent growth as she explores in particular the joys and uncertainties of pregnancy and childbirth following mastectomy.

Falling From Grace speaks to the suffering of countless women who have endured mastectomy in silence. Elly has the courage to voice thoughts which many have experienced but never put in words. Like Audre Lorde's Cancer Journals, Falling From Grace is evidence that women will no longer let this painful experience be driven inwards.

Available in paper from Press Gang Publishers. Included in the book are a foreward by Dr. Rebbeck, distinguished breast specialist, and a short selection of readings on the subject of breast cancer. □

reports

Women and War

by Helen Durie and Joanie Flynt

The Canadian War Museum opened its Women & War exhibit on July 26. The exhibit is one of the most costly and the longest running - closing in the fall of 1985 - that

the museum has ever undertaken. The purpose of the exhibit is to recognize the contribution that Canadian women made during the two world wars.

The exhibit itself was well researched and displayed, though many of the titles and much of the written information on the wall plaques could be interpreted from more than the obvious angle. One title reads "Materials of War" and the picture shows women and mortarshell cases in a munitions factory...

Facts are simply stated and the observer is left to make her own conclusions.

"Nursing was one of the most visible and widely accepted wartime roles of women... Forbidden to serve openly as combattants... they worked at cooking, laundry, sewing; tasks that made the men's job easier..." Women are also depicted in leggy chorus lines serving as "morale boosters" for the men.

"In 1917, an estimated 35,000 women in munitions factories in Ontario and Quebec...worked between 10 and 16 hours/day... Women in munitions were receiving 83% of the wages paid to their male counterparts".

"Nursing sisters were the first women in Canada to be given the vote in a federal election... enfranchised under the Military Voters Act of Sept. 1917".

Out of the whole exhibit, two plaques show women's resistance in a time of insane patriotic fervor. "In spite of hostility toward the peace-minded... some women were active as protesters."



The exhibition is hailed as the War Museum's contribution to the International Decade of Women. Once again, as during the war years, women must pay a price for every crumb that a male-controlled society throws our way. For every part of us that wants to celebrate the previously unrecognized work of women, that pleasure is spoiled by the knowledge that these women were

being used by men and, in the context of this exhibition, to help carry out men's most vicious and senseless work of all, war.

The most truthful words in the War Museum are those of the maxim that greets you on entering the main doors:

"Peace is the dream of the wise;
War is the history of man" □

conferences

MATCH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MATCH's annual general meeting this year features as its invited guest speaker, Dr. Alba Zizzamia, one of the principal organizers of Forum '85, a conference of non-governmental organizations to be held parallel to the U.N. Conference on the End of Decade for Women in July, 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The meeting will be held from 9 am to 5 pm on Saturday, September 22, at Ottawa City Hall, 111 Sussex Drive. Individuals interested in MATCH and women in development issues are encouraged to attend the annual meeting but people are also welcome to attend just the luncheon and speaker. Registration fees for the annual meeting are \$10.00 and \$5.00 for students, seniors and unemployed. Those wishing to attend the luncheon must pre-register in advance and the cost is \$10.00

The luncheon, catered by Many Hands, begin at 12 noon and Dr. Zizzamia will address the gathering at 1:30 pm. Simultaneous translation will be available.

MATCH International Centre is a non-profit, non-governmental agency devoted to the support of community programs initiated, developed and carried out by women in developing

countries. It is also dedicated to promoting an understanding among Canadian women of global women's issues and the concerns and aspirations of women in the Third World. MATCH relies on the membership and financial contribution of women across Canada and has an extensive network of individuals and groups who sponsor projects and who generally support the work of MATCH. For more information, please call MATCH at 238-1312.

By: Sherry Galey

The Inuit Women's Association is a newly formed organization that is planning its first major event. It is organizing a conference on "Inuit women and Economic Development" to be held in Igloolik, N.W.T. from Nov. 19-25. For more information call Joan R. at 234-8532.

Preventing Child Abuse: A Community Responsibility

The Fifth International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect September 16-19, Palais des Congrès, Montreal, Que.

Contact: Child Abuse Congress Secretariat, 3450 University St., Montreal, Quebec, H3A 2A7. (514) 392-6744.

Ten Years On: Perspectives on Women, Gender and Family

Twentieth Annual Conference of Canadian Association for American Studies.

October 11-13, University of Ottawa, Ottawa

Contact: Virginia Rock,
Dept. of English,
York University
4700 Keele Street
Downsview, Ont. M3J 1P3
Ph: (416) 667-2452

Or

Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin
(613) 231-2345

Women and the Charter,

October 19-21.

Concurrent conferences held in provincial capitals across Canada.

Contact: The Charter of Rights Coalition

184 Roxborough Drive
Toronto, Ont. M4S 1X8
(416) 961-7744

Women, Models and Images

Annual Conference of Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. November 9-11, University of Quebec at Montreal.

Contact: CRIAW

151 Slater Street

Room 415

Ottawa, Ont. K1P 5H3

(613) 563-0681

There will be a National Women's Groups meeting to be held in Ottawa on Oct. 16 to 19. The meeting is designed to bring national women's organizations together to discuss mutual interests. For more information call Camylle Trembley-Choquette at (613) 749-0050 or write CAMYLLE Enterprises

P.O. Box 7008
Vanier Station
Ottawa, Ontario
K1L 8E2

upcoming events

Women's Action for Peace has initiated a **Pornography/Rape/War Campaign** to culminate on Oct. 13 with a day of action. The goal of the campaign is to link the common mentality between pornography, rape and war, and to establish their role in maintaining a society based on domination and violence.

They are planning activities up until the day and need women to be involved. If you are interested or want more information call Monika at 833-2563 or Pashta at 722-4610.

The **International Women's Week** committee is gearing up for a big year in 1985. It will be the closing year of the United Nations decade for women and we want to remind the patriarchy that they can't forget us yet! We would like to encourage all women to become involved. The first meeting will be held on Sept. 13th at 7:00 p.m. at Jack Purcell Community Centre,

Room 24. This meeting will focus on the direction that 1985 activities will take.

An organizing weekend is planned for Sept. 21-23 at Harris Farm. There we will have an opportunity to come together as a committee to discuss: collective process and structure, the history of IWW in Ottawa, the tasks involved in putting the week together, etc. If you require childcare please contact us as soon as possible. For more information call Joanie Flynt at 233-5880 or the Learner Center at 238-4659. (ask for Monique)

Take Back the Night will be held on Sept. 21 this year. Women are urgently needed to help with this year's activities in reclaiming our right to walk the streets safely. For more information or if you would like to get involved call SASC at 725-2160 between 9 and 4 or 234-2266.

The Pope will be visiting Ottawa on Sept. 19 and 20 and women in the area feel compelled to educate the public to the capitalistic and misogynist ideology perpetuated by this man. If you would like to get involved in the planning please call Joan R. at 230-0590 or 234-8532. Look for posters on an action to be held Sept. 18.

The integration of Family Benefits Allowance (FBA) and General Welfare has been slowly seeping its way into the welfare system without much attention by the media. Presently FBA is paid by the province to women who are raising their children as well as other "unemployables" such as the handicapped and the elderly. For women raising their children alone the benefits are inadequate but there is some ideological recognition that raising children is a job!

Well that is to be no more. The Ontario government, in it's infinite wisdom, has decided that FBA mothers are employable. The result is that the responsibility for these women falls to General Welfare which is the domain of the municipal government. If FBA becomes integrated with General Welfare there will be a reduction of benefits because the municipalities are just barely surviving with their limited revenue base. Worse though, women will be expected to find jobs, any job in a society that has one of the highest unemployment figures in its history. As Frank Drea, Minister responsible for Social Services puts it, "participation is to be voluntary but all recipients will be expected to participate". No coercion here!

"What it comes down to, with the combining of General Welfare and FBA, is that women raising children will not even have that vague security of receiving a monthly income. What the government really

wants is to get all women on Family Benefits out in the work force - no matter that there are no jobs and waiting lists of 800 for the subsidized daycare. Motherhood seems to be a dirty word to the province, and that is why mothers must rally to protect their rights."

Excerpt from OCLISS Newsletter
by Nancy Beauchamp

A rally against integration is taking place October 25th at Queen's Park in Toronto. For more information please call: OCLISS at 232-2677.



The **Sexual Assault Support Centre** of Ottawa presents a film and discussion series on the following topics:

Sept. 12 - "Contempt of Court"
Sept. 26 - Sexual Harrassment
Oct. 10 - Rape and Self-Defence
The evenings will run from 7-10 p.m. at the Dalhousie Community Centre, 755 Somerset St. W. They are free of charge and contributions will be made toward child care. For more information, contact 725-2160 between 9 and 4 p.m.

Feminism and Social Welfare. We're back again! We would like to invite women to a meeting to discuss the possibility of a conference on Feminism and Social Welfare. The meeting will be Sept. 18th at 7:30 p.m. at 144 Broadway St. (just off Bronson). For more information call Gillian Walker at 231-3677.

Women's World '84. A Marketplace of information for women will be held Oct. 12, 13 and 14 at the Ottawa Congress Center. There will be three days of exhibits, lectures, workshops, demonstrations and sales. On Friday, Oct. 12 there will be a lunch and discussion with Judy Chicago.

For more information call 729-1855 or write Women's World '84, 606 Tillbury Ave., Ottawa, K2A 0Z8

Ottawa Women's Bookstore

The Ottawa Women's Bookstore is celebrating its second anniversary on Saturday, September 8, with an

in-store celebration and dance the same evening.

Plans during the day include book and gift certificate raffles, a store-wide discount, selected sale books, a wine and cheese board and readings by local poets and authors (including Vaughan Jeliffe, Nan Cormier and Isabelle Huggan). As well, Marion Silver will be displaying her art.

We invite you all to drop by for a glass of wine and a chat.

By: Peggy Harris & Lee Fleming

resources

DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN

With the United Nations Decade for Women drawing to a close next year, interest in research related to women is becoming an increasing occupation of development agencies, especially in view of the loss of power and impoverishment women are experiencing as a result of national and international development



programs. The International Development Research Centre's July 1984 issue of its periodical Reports attempts to describe new research related to women and what it reveals about development. It recognizes that concern for women's issues cannot be limited to one decade or divorced from the complex process of development as a whole. Reports concludes that a better understanding of the role and status of women will contribute to a more equitable development for all.

By: Marie O'Shea

REPORT OF THE WOMEN'S SELF-HELP AND ADVOCACY NETWORK

The Women's Self-Help and Advocacy Network focussed on several single-industry resource towns of northern Vancouver Island. It represented a unique application of self-help alternatives and women's resources in the social welfare field with a view to demonstrating the viability of a women's services network to combat the isolation and stress of rural life. Close to 1,000 women worked collectively to effect positive change for themselves by communicating their experiences and concerns to each other, developing analysis and responses to these concerns and providing mutual support for work in the community. A Women's Self-Help Kit (\$25.00) and Final Report (free) are available from:

North Island Women's Services
Society
Box 3292
Courtenay, B.C.
V9N 4N4

By: Marie O'Shea

WOMEN & PHARMACEUTICALS

Have you ever wondered how much the pharmaceutical companies control our lives? Why they are so interested in feeding women all sorts of drugs under the guise of helping us?

Well, Interpares is going to give us some of the answers in a play they have designed for women's development and health groups at the local level. The play challenges the existing medical system and the profit-oriented pharmaceutical companies which support it. The play encourages women to take control over their bodies and the health system.

The play is flexible and portable and can accomodate any stage. The play begins its national tour in October, 1984, in the Atlantic Provinces. In the Spring of 1985 it will be in Central and Western Canada.

For more information on the play, Women's Health Interaction, and on booking the tour, contact Karen Seabrooke or Maryanne Haywood at WHI, c/o INTER PARES, 209 Pretoria Avenue, Ottawa, Ont. K1S 1X1 (Tel: (613) 563-4801).

THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES (CCPA)

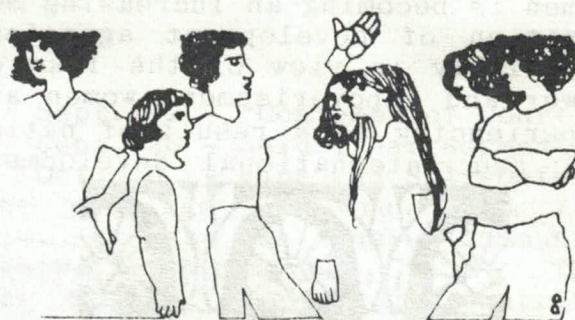
"The CCPA is an independent, non-profit organization devoted to examining and encouraging understanding of genuinely progressive alternatives to current social and economic policies in Canada. The Centre sees its goal as providing high-quality research and educational materials to all concerned Canadians involved in social and economic change" - so states CCPA's brochure.

Up until now, women have not played a major role in the CCPA, though after the recent March election when five women were elected to the

Centre's Board of Directors, this may change. According to one, Trish Blackstaffe, who is also the national researcher for the Communications, Electronic, Electrical, Technical and Salaried Workers of Canada, the Centre is interested in publishing research and public education materials written by and for women. The Centre would also like to involve more women in all its committees, particularly the publications committee and the newsletter committee.

If you have written something that relates to women and social and/or economic policy which you would like to see published, you are encouraged to submit it to the Centre for consideration by the publications committee. If you are interested in sitting on a committee, Trish Blackstaffe suggests that you contact her at (613) 236-6083 for more information.

By: Ellen Adelberg



BEYOND THE IMAGE: A GUIDE TO FILMS ABOUT WOMEN AND CHANGE 2nd Ed., has just been released by the National Film Board of Canada with the collaboration of the Federal Women's Film Program. The catalogue includes films distributed by N.F.B. as well as DEC films, Idera Films, Women in Focus, and a number of others. The Catalogue may be obtained from N.F.B., P.O. Box 6100, Montreal H3C 3H5.

REACHING OUT...SHARING RESOURCES

The Canadian Women's Mailing List, (CWML) a project of the Women's Information Exchange (WEB), has recently been established to provide a communication tool for women and women's groups. The organizers are hoping to sign up 10,000 women by the end of 1984 who are interested in receiving mail on various women's issues and events. The CWML will then provide mailing labels at cost to women's organizations, groups or individuals.

This is a non-profit project which depends on donations from network participants. A donation of \$3.50 is requested from each individual to join and donations of \$10.00 or more are being sought to help cover publicity costs for the project. Interested participants who cannot afford to contribute are encouraged to register at no cost. For more information, or to register contact:

WEB Women's Information Exchange
9280 Arvida Drive, Richmond, BC,
V7A 3P4
(604) 272-5335

THE CANADIAN DAYCARE ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION (CDCAA)

Founded after the Second National Day Care Conference in Winnipeg in September, 1982, the CDCAA is essentially a lobby group. It is an incorporated non-profit organization whose primary goal is to work for the establishment of an expanded and improved daycare system. The organization's activities include preparing a newsletter, developing a position paper on daycare funding, preparing a campaign strategy on daycare for the federal election and building local and national daycare coalitions.

The CDCAA provides guest speakers for groups and organizations. It is also looking to individuals, daycare centres and other organizations to join and support its aims.

For more information contact:

Larry Katz
c/o Canadian Union of Public Employees,
21 Florence Street, Ottawa, Ont.
K2P 0W6 (613) 235-5994
or
Ken Pierce
c/o Holland College
Charlottetown, P.E.I.
C1A 4Z1

By: Ellen Adelberg

CONNECTIONS - A NEWSLETTER FOR WOMEN IN SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK

Connections is a useful periodical for women interested in a feminist perspective on a variety of human service issues. Begun in 1977 by the Women's Caucus of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work, it has been edited on a rotating basis by collectives at a number of Canadian Schools of Social Work. This year, 1984, Connections is being published and distributed through the School of Human Justice and the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina.

The basic objectives of Connections are to connect women in social work education and to promote non-sexist attitudes in social work education and practice. The current collective's intention is to promote these goals to a broad readership. The latest issue, Spring, 1984 focussed on the violence of the patriarchy. The next issue scheduled for the fall will take as its theme, women and work.

For more information on Connections, please contact:

Connections Newsletter Editorial
Collective Faculty of Social
Work
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0A2

By: Sherry Galey

help

SUPPORT NEEDED FOR INTERCEDE BRIEF

Last November INTERCEDE presented Ontario Labour Minister Russell Ramsay with a brief calling for immediate changes in provincial labour laws affecting domestic workers, who historically have been among the most exploited workers in Canada. Although the Minister assured INTERCEDE that he would study the recommendations carefully, he has not yet responded. Two key recommendations are raising the minimum wage of domestics up to the level of other workers and including domestic work under the hours of work and overtime provisions of the Employment Standards Act. INTERCEDE has launched a province-wide drive to pressure the Ontario government to act without further delay. Letters of support for their recommendations can be sent to Russell Ramsay, Minister of Labour, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario.

For more information, contact INTERCEDE (address in the Resources section).

By: Marie O'Shea

bits and pieces

DANDELION COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE

At the end of August, Dandelion Community Co-op held its fifth celebration of "women in community" and brought women together to explore how communal life can benefit women.

Dandelion is a small group of people (men, women and children) who live communally on a 50 acre farm near Kingston. They share skills, work through a labour system, make decisions collectively and support themselves with their worker-managed craft business and farm.

Dandelion wants to attract more woman energy and is very conscious of the importance of striving to create an anti-sexist alternative community. They write that theirs is a safe, non-violent environment where all work is valued equally and available equally to men and women. Members continue to struggle against assumptions that we have all learned through our socialization. They realize that it requires a special effort on their part to help make it possible for more women, including single mothers, to find a home at Dandelion. As a whole community they continue to explore feminist issues and support each other to change and grow. Women wishing to visit are encouraged to contact Helen Forsey at:

Dandelion Community
Cooperative, Inc.
R.R. 1
Enterprise, Ont.
KOK 1Z0

(613) 358-2304

rants and raves

A GIGANTIC THUMBS DOWN:

To Prime Minister John Turner for his bottom patting habit. Worse still, he's decided we don't mind! (Remind you of your male gynecologist, psychoanalyst,...?). I wonder how he would like it if women greeted him with 'friendly' pats on the crotch? (Try it - he won't mind). What's the matter John? No sense of humour??

In reaction, the Kitchener-Waterloo Status of Women group have come up with a poster board 'bum (w)rap' called the "Turner Shield". The device ties around the waist and covers the bum; one has been sent to each female Liberal candidate.

By: Suzanne Pilon

ANOTHER TURNER RANT:

Elections have been called for the fourth of September this year. The Liberals (along with the other two parties) have been making a great to-do about how sensitive they are to women's needs and concerns. Well, the fourth of September also happens to be the first day of school, and hundreds of thousands of voting mothers will probably be very busy that day trying to reorganize children's and families' routines around the first day of school. It won't be impossible to vote, but it would have been nicer to have less to worry about on that one day. Thanks for your great sensitivity, Mr. Turner. I, for one, will remember it while I dash off to the poll in between packing school lunches and accompanying my five-year-old to his first day of kindergarten.

By: A. Estable

RANTS:

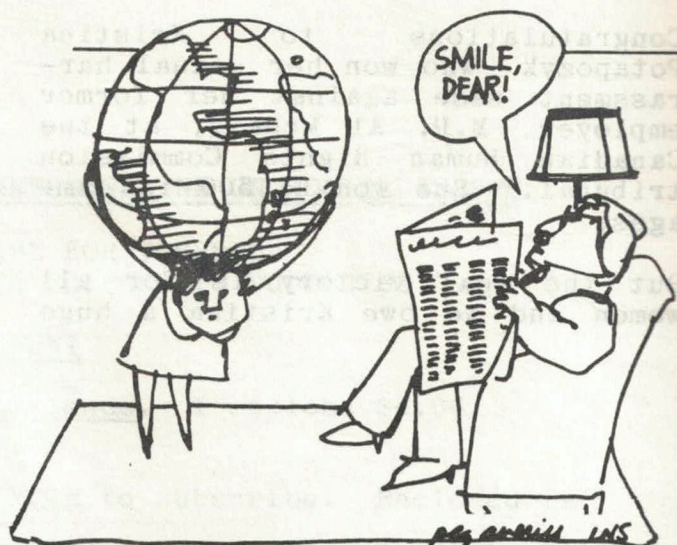
The New Right preaches the old wrongs...

After viewing "Your Private Body", an educational video about sexual abuse of children, the Catholic School Board of Kingston decided to forbid showing it in their schools. One member of the Board - who walked out of the showing - said:

- she couldn't endorse a film sponsored by a "pro-choice" group (the Sexual Assault Crisis Centre);
- innocent children didn't need to be exposed to "pornographic" videos;
- this type of education should not take place in school, but should be done in the home, by parents;
- prayer and God would help the children who have "suffered".

All who thought the Religious New Right was an American phenomenon, take heed.

By: Betty-Anne Howard



RANTS:

Whore or Madonna? Patriarchy has two classes of women as Vanessa Williams, former Miss America, so quickly found out. It appears that the patriarchy even differentiates between various forms of sexual exploitation.

It's O.K. to sell yourself with some of your clothes on (there is the bathing suit contest) and still be classified as "pure". It's not O.K. to be a nude product.

Vanessa lost her title, scholarship, prizes and reputation while those men (Penthouse and the photographers) who exploited her position as a woman continue to profit at her misfortune. Let us hope that the days are numbered for both forms of patriarchal oppression (pornography and Miss America).

By: Joan Riggs

A HUG TO:

Debra Barnabee, 28, of Tuscon, Arizona, who was fired from her job for refusing to sell the Penthouse magazine featuring Miss America, Vanessa Williams. Said Ms. Barnabee, "I felt I couldn't be a part of destroying a woman who didn't want this to happen." Now that's sisterhood! (Boo, hiss to Circle K, who fired her).

By: Suzanne Pilon

APPLAUSE TO:

Congratulations to Kristina Potapozyk who won her sexual harassment case against her former employer, M.P. Al McBain, at the Canadian Human Rights Commission tribunal. She won \$1,500 in damages.

But the real victory is for all women and we owe Kristina a huge

thanks! Her case has been the impetus for the clarification of the definition of sexual harassment. The tribunal ruled that "Simply making the work environment unpleasant for women because of their gender now constitutes discrimination on the basis of sex."

By: Joan Riggs

plumes de femmes

I have only seen your latest issue of BTS and I'm really impressed - you make it so useful and so exciting. I love the review of Born in Flames - Fireweed should have that for its theory and vision issue.... I would like to know how you started - not just that you started as a feminist information sheet - but all the juicy bits, plots and personalities....Thanks for your work.

In sisterhood,

Patricia Brennan Alpert
Antigonish, N.S.



BREAKING THE SILENCE: A FEMINIST NEWSMAGAZINE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

YOU'LL WANT TO SUBSCRIBE FOR YOURSELF
YOU'LL WANT TO ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS TO SUBSCRIBE

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

- ☐ I want to subscribe to Breaking the Silence. I enclose \$4.00 (individual rate).
- ☐ My group/organization/library would like to subscribe. Enclosed is \$10.00 (institutional rate).
- ☐ My organization publishes a newsletter/periodical that we'd like to exchange with Breaking the Silence.
- ☐ I'd like to support Breaking the Silence with a contribution. I enclose \$10.00 or more \$_____.
- ☐ I'd like to subscribe but finances are tight. (Check here to receive Breaking the Silence free)
- ☐ Please send a gift subscription to _____.
Please sign the gift card _____.
I enclose \$4.00
- ☐ I want to order more than 5 subscriptions at \$3.00 each per year. I enclose \$_____ for _____ subscriptions.
- ☐ I'd like to add my name to your network of women interested in bringing feminism into social welfare.

Name (individual/organization/library) _____

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ISSN 0713-4266

Date of Issue—September 1984