



MAKING THE CONNECTIONS - the theme of International Women's Week 1982 in Ottawa - is probably the biggest challenge for women working for social, political and economic change in Canada and throughout the world.

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS means sharing information, resources, experience and contacts so that we can build on our strengths, learn from, rather than repeat, the defeats of others, take courage from our common struggle and share in the triumphs of women in our communities here and far away.

The topics of the events planned for March 6-12 are diverse: a "Celebration" with music, dancing and food, a Health and Survival Fair bringing together more than 40 women's organizations in Ottawa and the area, a farm tour for urban women to learn more about the lives of the women who produce our food, a seminar by the Ethnic and Immigrant Women's group on co-operative development, film nights, and an exhibition by Women Photographers of Eastern Ontario.

A common thread throughout the week will be **MAKING THE CONNECTIONS** between women in Canada and women in Third World countries. Differences of class, language, race and culture divide women and can be barriers to collective action. But looking beyond the obvious differences that separate women from each other and focussing instead on the realities of our daily lives, we find that there are many connections binding us together.

HEALTH . . .

Millions of women around the world are used as guinea pigs by multinational drug companies, the medical profession and governments:

- . 10 million women in over 80 Third World countries are given Depo-Provera, a long-lasting injectable contraceptive that has been linked with cancer. Recently, three mentally handicapped women in Ontario institutions died of breast cancer after having been given Depo-Provera.

- . Mothers in Canada and the Third World were told that infant formula would improve the well-being of themselves and their babies. Its use, particularly in the Third World, is resulting in thousands of infant deaths.

WORK . . .

Women around the world try to juggle the loads of full-time career, managing a household and caring for the family - and frequently do so under discriminatory and exploitative conditions:

- . Women in Southeast Asia working in unskilled jobs earn between \$3-\$5 a day, 40-60 per cent less than men earn and well below the poverty line for that country;

- . Women in Canada earn an average of \$7,308 a year, 55 per cent less than men (\$16,264) and the wage disparity is increasing.

RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS . . .

Women around the world lose their rights and freedoms because they are women or because they are seen as deriving their status from the men to whom they are attached:

- . 15,774 Native women now living in Canada have lost their aboriginal rights because they married men who were not registered as "Indian" by the federal government;

- . 57,000 people have also lost their aboriginal rights because they are the living descendants of all women who have ever been affected by this discrimination;

- . Women in South Africa who are widowed, separated, divorced or abandoned by men are subject to exile, often forcibly, to a Bantustan (reserve).

WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY?

(herstory from Kitchener-Waterloo International Women's Day Committee)

On March 8, 1908, women garment workers in New York's Lower East Side marched in the streets to demand an end to sweatshop conditions after 128 women were killed in a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. In Copenhagen at an International Socialist conference in 1910, March 8 was set aside as International Women's Day to commemorate this event. In 1911, March 8 was observed for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, and thousands of people (30,000 in Austria alone) took to the streets. The most dramatic demonstrations occurred in Czarist Russia in 1917 when 90,000 people turned out to march together.

IWD eventually became fairly routine in Europe, turning into something not unlike Mother's Day. Its celebration, however, has changed somewhat in recent years, reflecting the significant changes in women's lives since the resurgence of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Women's contributions to the community and to the over-all culture are becoming recognized and valued. Women's issues such as day care, wife battering, sexual harassment, birth control and abortion, equal pay for work of equal value, control over birthing, sexual preference, rape, health and others have become important to the entire human race because these issues and others directly affect half of it.

The world is changing because women are thinking about our place in it and developing a sense of our rights and our effectiveness to achieve what we need. No one woman can do everything, and no one course of action will appeal to all women.

Hopefully for Ottawa women, March 6-12 will give women the opportunity to join together, put aside political, social and economic differences, and become aware of one another and work together.

WHO WE ARE

The Ottawa International Women's Week committee is an ad hoc group of women who joined together to organize a week's worth of events to celebrate International Women's Day (March 8).