

NEW FEMINISTS - TORONTO, ONTARIO

The New Feminist organization was started by a few women in the Toronto Women's Liberation Movement who decided to break away and form their own group because of a difference in their way of thinking. The philosophy of the Women's Liberation Movement was basically Marxist (until society changes women can't change - i.e. a revolution is necessary). The splinter group who formed the New Feminists were feminists essentially, rather than being primarily concerned with politics. In short, Women's Liberation said the revolution came first: New Feminists said feminism came first. We believe that the attitude of society, that women are inferior to men, is basic; that as long as women are considered inferior we will never really make it, no matter what kind of Political system the country may have.

The first meeting of the New Feminists was held early in April, 1969, and there were about seven people present. For the first few months we were busy organizing and we met in various people's homes. We have tried to avoid having leaders or a ~~highly~~ highly structured organization; just what was necessary to carry on, with the minimum of red tape. In December, 1969, we moved into a house at 67 Huntley Street (which has since been demolished) and settled down into a program similar to that of the radical feminists in the U.S., with consciousness-raising in small cells. About the first of November, 1970, we moved from Huntley Street and we are now located at 43 Davisville Avenue, but we are still keeping P.O. Box 597, Station A, Toronto 116, as our permanent address. Currently, we have a very flexible type of operation, with new members forming

cells, or older members returning to cells again if they feel the need to do so. People interested in a particular project may contact other members and work along with them on whatever it is they want to do.

About the end of May, 1970, a group broke away from the New Feminists and formed the Toronto Women's Caucus. Our main difference here was that the New Feminists wanted to remain fairly small, working in cells, with a small core group. Although we were interested in doing some 'actions' we felt some analysis was still necessary, especially for new members. The splinter group was interested in a mass-movement, action-oriented type of organization.

The New Feminists had just barely started to organize their own group when they decided to do their very first 'action' on May 1, 1969, in front of the Maclean-Hunter Building, to protest the cover story in Canada's National Magazine about the book by Lionel Tiger. This article was entitled "The Natural Inferiority of Women" and was really bad. Charles Templeton was the editor at this time and it is interesting that his secretary, (who has never been one of our members), came down and joined our demonstration. One of the newspapers thought our action looked very 'professional'. In fact, it was very hastily put together, the first thing we had ever done, and I guess the most professional thing we did was to alert the media that we were going to do it.

Since that first demonstration we have done many things on our own or in cooperation with other with other organizations. These things include: (1) appearances on many T.V. and radio programs, especially T.V.; (2) a demonstration at noon, November 27, 1969, at City Hall on behalf

of an Equal Pay program ~~demanded by~~ the nursing aides at Greenacres Home for the Aged; (3) Demonstrations at beauty contests; (4) participation in the Abortion Cavalcade that went to Ottawa in May 1970; (5) cooperation in preparing the brief presented to Premier Robarts to have the word 'sex' included in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Currently a few of our members have had some success in trying to break the custom of 'men only' at the noon luncheon in two of Toronto's better known hotels. Various members of the New Feminists have also actively supported day-care centre proposals. There are probably some things that I have missed, but these are the things that come to my mind at the moment.

Our main source of income is from speaking engagements. A lot of this is done in schools (although we do not insist on being^{paid} there because we feel that education is such an important field). We speak to people in libraries, churches, business meetings, teachers conventions, political meetings, Board of Education meetings, Jewish organizations; wherever we ~~think~~^{think} it is worth doing. Our main goal is to make people aware of the oppression of women and to make women themselves reject a secondary position in society. We believe that this direct contact with people is very important. We have many requests for speakers, and our trouble is that we do not have enough experienced people to fill all our requests.

New Feminists have been putting out a little magazine, The New Feminist, since November, ~~1968~~ 1969. This is published bi-monthly and sells for \$3.00 for a yearly subscription (\$1.50 for students) - or 50¢ per copy.

We are establishing a reading room at 43 Davisville Avenue and people may come in to use this room at certain times when the librarian is there. The phone number at 43 Davisville is (416) 489-4691.

- Val Perkins

Corresponding Secretary

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Toronto, Ontario