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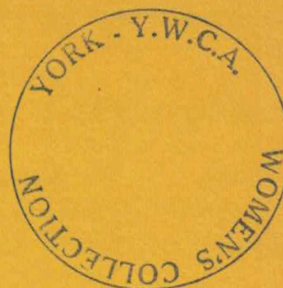
Y. W. C. A.
RESOURCE CENTRE

PRIORITIES



Vol. 3, No. 3.

March 1975.



" It is most necessary for any government that those in charge of various departments shall be competent and capable of absorbing new ideas and techniques. No matter how good legislation is, if those in charge of administering it are unsympathetic or incapable of a new approach, little good will come of it."

Tommy Douglas, M.P.

A Publication of the
N. D. P. Women's Committee

Priorities* * * * *in this issue

Priorities is published monthly by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights of the B.C. New Democratic Party. Its intent is to provide a means of communication and discussion for NDP women in order to further the interests of the women's movement and of democratic socialism.

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Priorities welcomes submissions from its readers. All such submissions must be signed, although names will be withheld on request. Where necessary the editorial committee will edit for clarity, brevity and taste.

Correspondence and subscriptions to:
Priorities
c/o 3485 West 15th Ave.,
Vancouver, B.C.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Margaret Beardsley, Melodie Corrigan, Cynthia Flood, Marianne Gilbert, Ruth Houle, Judy McManus, Judy Paterson, Linda Story.

All unsigned articles are the collective responsibility of the editorial committee.

If you are willing and able to help on Priorities please phone Shelly at 253-7521 or Melodie at 733-5990.

WE ESPECIALLY NEED HELP ON WORK WEEK-ENDS WHICH FALL ROUGHLY THE MID WEEK-END OF EACH MONTH.

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" The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are integral to the development of a democratic socialist society. The NDP actively encourages and provides support for women organizing around the demands of the women's liberation movement and commits an NDP government to creating the legislation necessary to realize these demands."

(From the B.C. NDP policy on women's rights)

Priorities has been typed and laid out by volunteer labour and is printed in a union shop.

If you are moving please submit a change of address the month before to Priorities, 3485 West 15th Ave., Vancouver.

BUY A SUBSCRIPTION FOR A FRIEND OR
FOR A LOCAL LIBRARY OR SCHOOL!

EDITORIAL * *



March has indeed come in like a lion, and at press-time the Priorities staff has no confidence whatever that it will go out like a lamb. The production of this issue has been fraught with even more crises than usual; we long to return to our normal state of emergency. Not surprisingly, crises and emergencies alike are rooted in the fact that the Priorities staff is female. Capitalism decrees that such persons must cope with childcare problems, housekeeping problems, childcare problems, financial problems, and childcare problems. (Also pregnancy problems.) There are in addition a few trivial matters like full-time (i.e., 16 hours/day) jobs, business trips, illnesses, political meetings, etc...in fact, all a very normal and usual and conventional state of affairs for women.

Some of the unfortunate side-effects of all this in the past few months have been:

(a) a tendency to operate on an extremely ad hoc basis in putting out the magazine (where the hell are the fillers; we have to put something on page 18; I thought that article would be four pages long and it's only two, now what do we do; if only we had time to do a really thorough study on this)

(b) a tendency for the writing of major articles to devolve upon a very few of the staff, month after month, simply because the rushed and ad hoc state of things generally means that such articles can only be churned out fast by an experienced churning

(c) a failure to develop the writing ability of all members of the staff--ideally, everyone should write as well as type and do Letrasetting and

proofreading and layout and all the other myriad activities that go together to produce Priorities.

(d) a failure, overall, to make the magazine as good as it should and could be.

We think there are several things that can be done to improve this situation.

The first essential is for more women to become involved in the writing and production of the magazine. We urge any readers in the Lower Mainland who would like to do so to attend the Lower Mainland Women's Committee meeting (see ad elsewhere in this issue), and connect with the Priorities staff there. To those living outside this area--in other words, the bulk of our readership--we say: This is your magazine; contribute to it.

Write letters. Write responses to articles you disagree with (or agree with, for that matter). Write an account of what's happening with NDP women and the women's movement in your constituency/town/city/region. Write about your job--about what it's like for a woman to be a teacher, waitress, clerical workers, mother, factory-worker, librarian, letter-carrier. Write about personal events, discoveries, awakenings in your own life. More of this kind of input is really needed if Priorities is to be the magazine you want it to be. Let Priorities--and therefore hundreds of readers around the province--hear from you.

The second essential, once given an enlarged staff in the Lower Mainland and more input from all other areas, is for the Priorities people to clean up our act and get organized. There are a number of things we would very

much like to do:

- to plan ahead
- to ask various people to write articles one or two months (not one or two days) ahead
- to work out a schedule of topics for the continuing series on socialism and feminism
- to do better distribution (more bookstore sales, more sales at meetings and conferences)
- to build up a bank of cartoons, fillers, ideas for articles, etc.
- to improve the design and layout of the magazine

All these ideas presume a careful and thoughtful division of labour...which cannot happen without a larger staff ...which takes us back to Square One. Priorities needs more woman-power.

So...it's partly up to us, and partly up to you. WE will try to get things more organized (and meanwhile go on dealing with kids and getting jobs and losing jobs and going to meetings), and YOU will write letters and articles for Priorities (and meanwhile will go on dealing with kids and getting jobs and losing jobs and going to meetings...).

We hope all this works out, because we think Priorities is important. Of such nuts and bolts and plans and details is a good and successful magazine created. And the better it is, the more it will be useful to you in your constituency... among your friends...in your women's group; the more subscriptions you will be able to sell; the more women will want to work and write for Priorities ...and the better, we hope, the magazine will be.

NEXT WORK WEEKEND IS 12-13 APRIL/75.
LOCATION UNCERTAIN SINCE PROVINCIAL
OFFICE IS MOVING: PHONE 733-5990 OR
255-7820 FOR INFO.

*Priorities Classified: **Fantastic Careers 306***

FAMILY COORDINATOR AND ADMINISTRATOR

In charge of finance, purchasing and upkeep of one unit in small physical plant. Directs personal development and interpersonal relationships of members.

STARTING TOMORROW YOU CAN..

- * Earn nothing with guarantee of absolutely no wage increases in the future!
- * Enjoy no job security, no pensions, no UIC or workers compensation benefits!
- * Avoid paid holidays and possibly avoid any holidays!
- * Participate in fulfilling 24 hour work day, 7 days a week.

You may work for 20 years in this fantastic career and be guaranteed by law no share in unit production. All that you gain financially will be given as if by charity! It's fun! It's creative! No restrictions on job--wash the floor, iron the clothes, bandage wounds, variety of chores and challenges!

YOU DO IT ALL!! You may be asked to rise at 6 a.m. You may be called for to attend to job at 2 a.m.

**Note: Ring usually included as bonus.

CONGRATULA- TIONS TO

Priorities,
British Columbia,

Dear Friends,

I thought you might be interested in the enclosed Newsletter--a modest effort when compared to Priorities but hopefully a start. I am sending it to as many of the women party members in Saskatchewan that I can and hope to generate some exchange of expressions.

If there is anything in this you feel like using please feel free and please let me know if you would like me to send you future copies.

As you can imagine we are delighted with Rosemary's news.

With sincere best wishes,

Margaret Fern,
Saskatoon, Sask.

*Look for article from Sask.
Women's Newsletter in this issue
of Priorities.

OUR SASKAT- CHEWAN NDP SISTERS!

LETTERS great

Dear Priorities:

I think that it's great that you are doing articles on capitalism and socialism, a subject which I certainly need to know more about. For other readers who feel the same way, I would like to tell you about a weekly journal which we recently got a subscription to, and which I really enjoy. It's Intercontinental Press (Box 116, Village Station, New York). Unlike some Socialist papers, it's not full of slogans and rah-rah-rah--it's news selected and analysed from a socialist point of view, which is great after having to depend on the daily press, which of course selects and analyses news from a capitalist point of view. I find it very easy to understand--again unlike most leftist literature--so I can sit down and relax with it, the way I do with Priorities the first opportunity after it arrives.
Happy reading!

Beth Mares,
Salmon Arm

eager

Dear Priorities:

Thank you for your prompt sending of Priorities! I've already enjoyed the first two '75 issues.

Thanks a lot--and I'm eagerly awaiting next month's issue!

Johanna den Hertog,
Richmond



Feb. 14, 1975

Honourable Otto Lang
Minister of Justice
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario

Dear Mr. Lang;

Thank you for the letter of January 21/75 written on your behalf by your special assistant, Miss Marion Hooge.

I wish to make a comment regarding the statement, "In response he has often said, since becoming Minister of Justice, that the Government has no intention of changing or widening the law on abortion".

I was under the impression that the decision to change or widen any Canadian law was a decision to be made by the citizens of Canada through their elected representatives.

The government of Canada has repeatedly inferred that the present laws on abortion are under constant review.

In this context I find it difficult to accept a decision seemingly made by one elected representative without any attempt to accurately measure the majority opinion of the citizens of Canada.

I would appreciate YOUR comments on this.

Yours sincerely,
Diane Edmondson (MS.)

WITH PLEASURE

Dear Priorities:

Please send information about your publication... We are interested in giving our high school students a fair coverage on the topic of women in our day.

Yours sincerely,
Isabel Kaldor,
Librarian,
Prince Albert Technical
High School,
Saskatchewan

A COMMON OCCURENCE

Dear Friends,

I read Donna Sacuta's letter in the latest issue. Her experiences are far from unusual. Out in the rural areas of the province, progressive thinking in the party precincts is terribly lacking in regards to a woman's contribution.

From my own experience: Harry Olaussen was the member of Parliament for Coast Chilcotin. He met with our local association one evening in Pender Harbour. He was telling us news from the Gibsons Club and the recent area elections. He named off the president, the vice-pres., the treasurer and an officer or two, all by name. All of them men. Then he said, "They elected a secretary, too. A nice girl, but I can't remember what her name was."

It is, of course, a trifle, but there is nothing so important as trifles.

We elected an executive of three for our club. I was quite blunt about not wanting to be secretary. Our club being small, we finally decided that three executive members could share the total work load without dividing the positions into the traditional president, treasurer, secretary capacities. It only took a week before I was asked, as one of the executive members, to dash off a letter to someone. Then to collect correspondence that came, and on, and on.... you guessed it! I was the secretary!

Anyhow, the reason I decided to write was to tell you folks just how much encouragement and courage you give to women in the boonies. We need you very much, appreciate the strength and energy you circulate to us every month, and we want you to know it. Love to you all.

Affectionately,
Kristin Krimmel,



P.S. What do men want?

Dear Priorities,

In response to Vera Kristiansen's article in the Democrat, "What do Women Want?"

I'm really upset about the "special status" Vera claims the women's committee had at the last convention. One hour of three days of convention--to try to convey to all members the inequalities that do exist. No woman I know wants more than equality with men and the socialist women I know want equality for all--for all men, all women, and all children. I feel the NDP government has made an excellent start in many areas. The areas I'm a bit aware of are in the Dept. of Human Resources, Landlord's and Tenants Act, for example, and these changes benefit women and men. But an example of how far we haven't got is very blatant in such a thing as the January, 1975 issue of the British Columbia Government News. It looks like "men" running things for "people" (i.e. 9 photos--8 men, one "Queen of Surrey").

Yours truly,
Leni Hoover,
Victoria

P.S. What do men want?

Women on T.V.

Dear Sisters,

I want to see more women on TV for International Women's Year.

"Viewpoint" is a public participation programme seen five times a week after the National News on CBC. I have written to the producer of this programme asking that three "Viewpoints" be given by women every week throughout the year.

If this project is to succeed, women must send in their "Viewpoints." The producer

must not have the excuse that women did not send in material for the programme.

I am asking you to send in your "Viewpoint" on a topic of your own choosing. Encourage your friends to send in their "Viewpoints". Do it now and for the rest of the year.

Viewers need to see women expressing their views, demonstrating their knowledge, and widening the scope of awareness of all viewers.

When you have sent in your "Viewpoint", send me the date and the topic of your contribution with your name and address. I would like to be able to confront the producer with evidence that indeed he is able to comply with my request.

Here is what you need to know about "Viewpoint":

- 1) "Viewpoint" is four and a half minutes long.
- 2) Choose a topic of deep concern to you so that your feelings come across.
- 3) Use language that is spoken rather than language that is for silent reading.
- 4) Practise it aloud and time it.
- 5) Send in your typewritten, double-spaced script to:

Ian Murray
Producer of "Viewpoint"
CBC
Box 500
Terminal A
Toronto, Ontario.

- 6) If you live beyond the range of CBL Toronto (and most Priorities readers do), phone your local CBC station for details of procedure.

Hoping to see you on TV,
Vi Thompson,
22 Denton Pk Ave
Toronto, Ontario M4C 1W7



THANKS

Dear Priorities:

My grateful thanks to the friends who placed my name on your mailing list.

I am enclosing a cheque for my years subscription and the remainder to be used as you see fit in support of your very fine publication.

In Sisterhood,
Alice Mitton

inVIGORating

Dear Priorities Staff,

I have just returned from the Terrace Women's Organization's workshop on Women and Politics, at which I had a chance to pick up some back issues of your magazine. I have found them so informative and invigorating that I have enclosed money for a subscription for me and also one for my sister who I know will also enjoy it. Thank you for your worthwhile publication.

Regards,
Jan Veenendaal,
Prince Rupert

someone up there likes us

Dear Priorities;

All The Best.

Keep up the good work.

You and your committee are doing a great job.

Jim Gorst,
M.L.A., Esquimalt

STANDARD QUESTION

Dear Priorities,

Several months ago I wrote another letter to Otto Lang (with multiple copies) re that dreadful subject - Abortion. It was just a standard (concealed) hate letter from a feminist to a questionable M.P. So I won't bother to repeat it. The answer I received, however, was very interesting and should not be seen by my eyes alone. Assuming that you'll agree, I'm also enclosing my answer to the answer!

I wonder if this is indicative of where we're "at" or was this letter just churned out unthinkingly to keep me happy (?) (and quiet).

I really enjoy Priorities, when the periodicals and newsletters start to pile up, somehow it gets read. Please accept this tiny donation along with my /75 renewal.

Happy International Women's Year,
Diane Edmondson,
Trail, B.C.

AND ANSWER

Dear Miss Edmondson:

I am writing on behalf of the Honourable Otto Lang, Minister of Justice, to thank you for your recent letter.

We realize that many Canadians have very deep and personal convictions about this issue. This is why Mr. Lang is interested in your views and appreciates having them. In response he has often said, since becoming Minister of Justice, that the Government has no intention of changing or widening the law on abortion.

Yours sincerely,
(Miss) Marian Hooge,
Special Assistant.

FEMINIST LIBRARY

Sisters:

We are in the process of setting up a women's library, and feel that women's periodicals are a vital part of this centre.

Could you please send us the first copy of your periodical with a notice of rates. Thank you very much. Looking forward to reading your paper...

Jill Campbell,
Information Person,
Edmonton Women's Place,
9917 - 116 Street,
Edmonton, Alberta

LIFE IN IRAN

Dear Priorities:

Have been receiving Priorities regularly, and first-class. Thanks very much; I appreciate your taking the time and trouble. The recent issue with the Morgentaler supplement was excellent, or should I say, more excellent than usual. Keep up the good work, you volunteers--it is greatly needed, and appreciated. It's just too bad that this sort of thing must be done by volunteers--you should be paid, of course. But it seems in this dollar-dominated, growth-mad, capitalistic society of ours, that any human service must be volunteer. Working in children's wards in hospitals, cheering old people in institutions,

providing social services such as yours--all these are "unimportant" compared to the production of "things"--more and more things for the consumer, so that the high growth rate will be maintained and the corporations will continue to make giant profits. My husband and I find it very depressing at times--the whole rotten situation that the world is in--but seeing such efforts as yours, is heartening. If I lived in Vancouver, I'd certainly be helping you.

Your December issue on books written by women was interesting, and prompts me to suggest another excellent book, this one by a husband and wife team. It's called Open Marriage; A New Life Style For Couples by Nena and George O'Neill (published by M. Evans and Co. N.Y., 1972). I think every married or about-to-be married couple should read this; it shatters the old traditional closed marriage concepts, which are so stifling and narrow, and replaces them with workable, sensible guidelines for happy, productive marriages and individual growth. Some subjects dealt with are: privacy (individual), communication, fighting, role flexibility, companionship, equality, identity, and trust. It's also particularly appropriate for Priorities readers because it stresses equality, strong individual identities, and role reversal and role exchange. Open Marriage and Priorities have both done a lot for me, and for my marriage, by making me (and my husband) more aware of the common put-downs that women face, the role stereotyping, and the lack of a feeling of personal identity that women face.

(Some observations about Iran itself...)

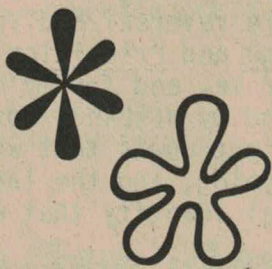
Women are also treated little better than beasts of burden. They do nearly all the work, often while men lie around and watch and receive little more consideration than donkeys (which certainly isn't much! Animals are very poorly treated.) Men say that women have "little minds". They have little in the way of rights, although I think that now a man must get permission from his first wife to take a second. A man used to be able to divorce his wife

by saying "I divorce you" three times. This is no longer the case, and women may now start divorce proceedings. A lot is said about the progressive governmental policies in this regard, much of them thanks to Empress Farah, but we see very little evidence really, of significant change. The educated Iranians are some-what more liberated, but the rural peasants and tribeswomen are not, and this is the great bulk of the population. Most women wear the chador, a long cloak-like cloth which covers the head and falls in folds to the feet. Some young girls don't wear it. That's about it re women--their lives are very hard, and not likely to improve as long as the Shah wants increased population growth. There are many small children and pregnant women everywhere, as well as children of all ages. The population is 33 million, with a growth rate of 3% a year which means a doubling in about 23 years. The average life span is 40 years. More than 40% of the population is 15 years old. About 95% of the people live in poverty and filth. The shortage of water leads to a lot of unwashed bodies, flies and disease.

Best wishes for continued success,

A reader from Tehran, Iran.

Growing Pains



Growing Pains is a newsletter for everyone with an interest in childcare. It is organized out of the Childcare Federation. Supported by a grant from the Secretary of State this informative and useful publication provides such things as lists of resources for those wishing to get a childcare centre started and articles on childcare in other places.

For information write to:
Growing Pains, c/o Childcare Federation,
1726 West 7th Avenue, Vancouver. 731-6571.

from a COMMONS DEBATE on ABORTION

Monique Begin, A Quebec MP, raises the third issue of whether a predominantly male parliament can or should resolve a "woman's issue", or is indeed abortion is a matter concerning only women.

"My male colleagues," she says, "often end a conversation on abortion by saying, 'fortunately, this does not concern me. I have nothing to do with this problem!'"

"I always remind them," she continues "that it usually takes two to make a baby. Even though in my opinion the decision concerning abortion involves only the woman since she alone must give birth and, unfortunately, too often raise her children alone, changes in the Criminal Code are the responsibility of the legislators of this parliament, which includes 96.5 per cent men."

Finally, Begin on the related and neglected issue of family planning:

"The words 'for' and 'against' abortion are very inappropriate, not to say irresponsible, words. Nobody is 'for' abortion. There is not one woman in Canada who would want an abortion just like that, on impulse and out of sheer wantonness. Women can give life: they are for life, not 'for' abortion. However, contraceptive methods that would be absolutely safe and available, that could be used by any woman without after-effects simply do not exist at the present time. There will be for a long time, surely too long a time, a great many cases of dangerous or intolerable pregnancies and frequent recourse to abortion.

"Birth control centres should be very varied in their form," she advises,

"as well as in their information techniques and population services. However, they can obtain federal aid only if they request it. In 1972-73, only \$991,541 were allocated to this field for all Canada. In 1973-74, this figure increased to \$1.25 million. Our own federal government reserves for its part one cent a year per woman of procreative age for publishing information on birth control. We should definitely re-think our priorities," Begin concludes.

(The above quote is from a speech delivered January 28, 1975 and was provided courtesy the Western Canadian Women's News)

ORGANIZING WOMEN

Dear Priorities:

Further to my telephone conversation with you of 6 March, we would like to request that you agree to mail out our newsletter with Priorities.

Service, Office and Retail Workers Union was formed in 1972 to organize unorganized workers--mainly women--in clerical and restaurant jobs. We are an independent Canadian union, and our executive is entirely made up of working women.

In the last few months, we have signed a contract with the Vancouver Resources Board for ten women employees at Transition House, and we have two certifications pending for the staff at the Vancouver Opportunities Program and at South Hill Daycare.

We feel it is important that your readers know what we are doing, and would very much appreciate your adding our newsletter to your mailing. However, if this is unacceptable, perhaps you would use our newsletter as a press release, and let your readers know of our activities in that manner.

Thank you for your attention.

In sisterhood,
Elizabeth Godley,
President, Local #1.

Note: The Editorial Committee of Priorities regrets that we are unable to include other newsletters etc in our mailing but we would be pleased to print articles and information on the Service and Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada, Local #1.

For further information on the work of this union or organizing women contact Elizabeth Godley at 253-5059.

**BOYCOTT
CKLG.
SUPPORT
CUPE LOCAL 686**

On February 1, 1975, 27 employees of CKLG radio station walked off the job in the first strike of any major radio station in Canada.

Moffat Communications Ltd., which owns CKLG and several other radio and T.V. stations in Western Canada responded to a federal conciliation report recommending that CKLG workers receive a raise in pay and better job security, with a flat rejection.

Union organizers at the station have been harassed and fired over the last year, while lately management has imported scab labour and with the help of the Canadian Broadcaster's Association has censored all recent news of the strike from the media.

BOYCOTT CKLG!! SUPPORT CUPE LOCAL 686!

ONCE MORE 'ROUND THE DECK

A letter from the Premier last September informed the Women's Committee that Marc Elieson would be co-ordinating and making recommendations to the government concerning programs for International Women's Year, and asked that we forward suggestions. As a result of consulting with N.D.P. Women's Groups, the Steering Committee prepared a "Calendar of Legislative Action."

On Friday, February 14, nine representatives of the Women's Committee met with a cabinet committee in Victoria to present the calendar, to explain in detail our position, and to discuss our proposals. We attempted to find out what concrete legislation the government is planning for this legislative session and what financial support for on-going long term programs could be expected.

Five of us travelled to Victoria representing Kamloops, Coquitlam and Vancouver, and also representing interests in the B.C.F.W., Education, Health, the Women's Studies Association and individual Women's Groups. On the ferry we discussed our proposals and worked out tentative means of presenting the calendar. We met with the Victoria women to discuss this further. Terri Ash made opening remarks contained in a paper she had prepared, and each of us spoke to one or two of the areas outlined in the calendar. Eileen Dailly, Bill King, Phyllis Young and Dennis Cocke represented the Cabinet and their departments; Education, Labour, Consumer Affairs, and Health. Also present were Marc Elieson and Gene Errington, recently appointed Provincial Status of Women Co-ordinator, and three Victoria women.

We were determined to present and discuss each proposal and in this we were rather pleased that this was accomplished. Everyone seemed to relax and carry on fairly open discussion. The Cabinet Ministers were willing to have the session taped.

However, near the conclusion of the meeting the Chairwoman of the Women's Committee, Terri Ash, was still asking, "I am wondering what the government is proposing for I.W.Y? Would it be possible for us to have a written response to this meeting?" We realized

that we could only see "two itchy bitsy pieces of legislation" emerging.

Marc Elieson replied, "There is reference in the throne speech to legislation in this area," and "...the government still has to make a policy statement on I.W.Y."

And there has been a reference in the throne speech: miniscule and totally non-specific! We are still waiting for any policy statement. We have perused the Throne Speech and the Budget and find only the shortest possible mention of legislation for I.W.Y. We had to search the papers and what we found was well hidden on the inside pages.

We looked hopefully for references to funding in the budget and were similarly disappointed that there has not been any mention of funding programs for Women's Centres, Birth Control Clinics, breast cancer screening, 24 hour child-care, or Women's Studies programmes.

Our conclusions are that the government is not doing anything that is visible. It is important that what the government is doing be visible, that leadership in combatting sexism be evident.

"ANY MINISTER HAS THE
AUTHORITY THEY WANT.
AT THE MOMENT I CAN
CHANGE THE LEGISLATION
OVERNIGHT. BUT I WANT
TO BE SURE I AM ON
SAFE GROUND."

HON. EILEEN DAILLY

This is not to say that nothing is being done at all; but what is being done is not addressing the specific problem or saying that Women's Rights are important in this society.

The statement made by Marc Eliesen exemplifies the Cabinet's attitude to its role in providing leadership in the area of Women's Rights: "I would regard legislating attitudes as a last resort. Surely initially to try your carrot approach, your incentive approach in cajoling people is desirable."

It follows that government would not make laws against murder, but reward those who do not commit violent acts. Perhaps this could be the candy approach, and this might encourage good attitudes. Is this the approach responsible governments would take toward acts which harm members of that society?

Yet, through the Land Act Bill and the Mining Bill the B.C. government brought down legislation which caused controversy and which made people aware of existing conditions, which forced people to think about these problems and make decisions. This is what has changed attitudes. Our position is that until socially significant legislation and legislative change is made in areas which would provide equal opportunities for women, existing attitudes will be perpetuated in employment, training, education and health.

An Office of Equal Opportunity was announced last November. Its structure and staffing are being worked out now. We understand that Gene Errington does now have an actual office and one secretary. This Office of Equal Opportunity operates only within government departments. Five government departments also have "affirmative action" type programs. Over and over our position at the meeting in Victoria was

that positive aggressive initiative is essential on the part of government. Establishment of an office which operates within the government only is not Affirmative Action in our view. It is very important that Affirmative Action go beyond government departments and not be merely policy but legislation to force employers and workers to deal with the problem and identify the causes.

The government relies on the Human Rights Office to solve problems of discrimination against women. True, eight new staff have been hired but this is for all of British Columbia and for all types of discrimination. To initiate action to make the Human

"WE ARE TAKING THE
CARROT APPROACH.
THE CREDIT GRANTERS
CLAIM THEY DON'T DIS-
CRIMINATE. WE WANT A
WRITTEN COMMITMENT
FROM THEM."

HON. PHYLLIS YOUNG

Rights Code effective re-quires a deep understanding of the problem of sexism, time to do careful research, and the conviction to do it! Yet, Mr. King does not per-ceive shortages of personnel. Some 60 Industrial Relations Officers are expected to do the job. Mr. King recognizes in a limited way the problem in training and obtaining people with this wider

philosophy. Only half a dozen of these officers are women. Mr. King's reply was, "In my view these problems can be worked out, and the alternative of creating another bureaucracy is foolish in my estimation."

We went into every area of the calendar in detail. It would require several articles to analyze the responses made by the Ministers, because some things are being done - pensions, daycare for 22,000 children, \$ 250,000 for five transition houses and counselling programs, an advisor here and there. But these do not reflect the needs. Every day-care centre is filled and has waiting lists. Seventy families a month have been turned away from transition houses in Vancouver. There are no Women's Studies courses in high schools. The initiative is not being taken to begin

CONTINUED page 23



M.L.A. ROSEMARY BROWN

Candidate for N.D.P. Federal Leadership

Women's Committee Supports Rosemary Brown!

her background

PRESS RELEASE--12 FEBRUARY 1975

"The BC NDP Women's Rights Committee has pledged its full support for Rosemary Brown's candidacy for the leadership of the federal NDP. In a press release today, Chairwoman Terri Ash said, 'Rosemary Brown has the full backing of the Women's Committee. The Committee will be working hard to elect Ms. Brown to the federal leadership of the New Democratic Party. The BC NDP Women's Committee feels that Ms. Brown will represent the voice of women and men in the party who see the struggles of the women's rights movement as the focal point of our efforts to present a program of change towards a socialist society, change which will improve living conditions for the poor, native peoples, the working person and women, all of whom have not received their share of Canada's wealth in the past.'"

SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN

If you are really serious about wanting a strong socialist candidate... if you really want a strong woman candidate, we ask for support. Please write your MLA expressing your support for Rosemary...write your local and party newspaper...talk to other members of the NDP and ask them to vote for delegates who will support her. Contribute to the Campaign Fund: send cheques to

ROSEMARY BROWN CAMPAIGN
c/o 2121 St. George Street
Vancouver 10
British Columbia

Born Jamaica, West Indies in 1930... came to Canada in 1950...resident of Quebec 1950-55...B.A., McGill University 1955...M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1964...married with three children...Social worker: Children's Aid Society of BC, Montreal Children's Hospital, Vancouver Neurological Society...Ombudswoman, Status of Women Council of BC, 1970-72...Counsellor, Simon Fraser University.

Rosemary Brown was elected to the BC Legislature from Vancouver-Burrard in August 1972. She is chairperson of the Select Standing Committee of the Legislature on Health, Education and Human Resources...a member of the Select Standing Committee on Labour and Justice...a member of the Select Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs...a member of the Special Select Standing Committee on Property Assessment and Taxation.

Rosemary Brown was awarded the United Nations Human Rights Fellowship in 1972, and the National Black Award of Canada in 1973.

"IT IS MY INTENTION TO RUN A STRONG CAMPAIGN BASED ON A COMMITMENT TO SOCIALISM, FEMINISM, THE PRESERVATION OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES, THE PROTECTION OF OUR ENVIRONMENT AND FOR THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS AND ALL PEOPLE."

Rosemary Brown
13 February 1975

PLATFORM

To be a feminist in the NDP is to be a socialist. The oppression of women cannot and must not be regarded as an accident of history, an unfortunate mistake. Rather it must be understood as a consequence of the capitalist system. Capitalism denies the right to life itself to millions of people, lays waste and squanders the resources of the earth and feeds upon injustice, oppression & inequality. That is why the NDP must present a clear alternative based not on reforming or patching up their old-line structures but on structuring and designing a new system. Feminism like socialism calls for a new human community based on the creative and co-operative use of power to create new social, economic and political forms.

natural resources

The resources of Canada, particularly the non-renewable energy resources which provide the bases of technology and are, therefore, of crucial importance in determining our economic future, must come under public ownership and control. Corporate deals like Syncrude and the Arctic Gas Pipeline proposal are against the interests of the Canadian people and must be vigorously opposed by the NDP.

environment

The husbanding of our resources must go hand in hand with a new perception of the real needs of people. This means an end to consumerism as a way of life and a recognition that human beings must live in a harmonious relationship with one another and with nature if we are to survive on this planet. The NDP must work to achieve a new system which totally denies the right to exploit the environment in the interest of private profit.

labour

The capitalist system is characterized above all by the exploitation and alienation of labour. Today, world inflation is rapidly reducing the real earning power of workers, while the corporate share of wealth produced by labour is increasing. Inflation, automation, job insecurity and unemployment affect not only industrial workers by office workers, teachers, and public service employees. The defense and extension of the rights of working people under the present system and the development of a new system of responsible workers' control must be a paramount goal of the NDP.

poverty

The one million women living below the poverty line and the working poor do not need to be told that the wealth of Canada is not being equitably distributed. The NDP must be very careful to distinguish between the Welfare State--which does not make fundamental changes in the social and economic structure--and genuine socialist solutions to poverty. The extension of social welfare programmes such as the Canada Pension Plan, child care support funds, Mincome, Medicare and Pharmacare, and housing subsidies must be accompanied by a continuing struggle of the NDP to achieve real equity in the distribution of goods, services and wealth, and to do away with poverty itself.

SEND IN:

OPINIONS ARTICLES

DRAWINGS LETTERS



VICTORIA REPORT

We continue to meet regularly and have been having good turnouts. Gene Errington attended our Jan. meeting. She spoke to us about her position as Co-ordinator, Status of Women for the Provincial Government. She will be co-ordinating on-going and planned projects for women within the government and will be bringing input from women's groups to the attention of government departments for proposed change and legislation.

Merran Twigg and Joan Eliesen prepared a brief on maternity leave, taking into account discussion from our group and the legislation that exists in the other provinces. This was submitted to the Dept. of Labour.

Shelly Dillon was present for our February meeting. She spoke about what her job has been and we all discussed the "then imminent" meeting with the Cabinet committee.

Our thanks to Betty Miller who hosted a lunch/meeting before the Cabinet committee meeting. And to Maria who babysat while the meeting was on, thanks.

We are fairly involved in the Constituency. Three of our members are on the Executive--Denise White, Bernice Packford and Candace Hanson. The Participation Committee which Bernice chairs has put much energy into, "Participation." Participation has arranged first a meeting with the constituents to find out our main concerns. The number one concern

here was housing. Last month they arranged a meeting with Hon. Mr. Nicolsen. He spoke on housing and then there was a question period. On the evening of March 24, Hon. Mr. Levi will be present (1303 Fairfield, entrance on Moss).

Some of our members attended the Island-Mackenzie Regional Conference last month. Our admiration to Kathleen Orton who stood up to successfully defend the Women's Committee.

We have written to Rosemary Brown, expressing our support in her running for Federal Leader. We have struck two committees to assist. A Research Committee chaired by Candace Hanson, 910 McClure St., 384-2294 and a Finance Committee chaired by Marnie Darnel, #20 - 129 Croft St., 385-5471. The research committee consists of women willing to search out information in specific areas. The Finance committee is seeking ways to raise funds. Anyone willing to assist in either or both please contact Candace or Marnie. Our group decided to donate \$25 at present, more to come. Individual donations have been and are being made.

Some members of our group plan on attending the NDP Federal/Provincial Conference, April 4, 5 and 6th; and also the Victoria Action, April 18th and 19th.

Denise attended the NDP Women's Steering Committee Mtg., March 9th. Denise gave a very full report at our March meeting, the next night.

Leni Hoover,
Victoria

GOOD NEWS

from

SASK.

Another N.D.P.

Women's

Newsletter

Congratulations to the Saskatchewan New Democratic Women who have begun a Women's Newsletter with a February edition. The Priorities Editorial Committee were pleased to receive a first copy. It takes stamina and determination to plan each issue, to write, and to produce each month.

LAW REFORM & PROPERTY IN MARRIAGE

Especially stimulating was the analysis of proposals of The Law Reform Commission on division of matrimonial property. The specified aim is Equal Partnership in Marriage, and the proposal is that legislation be passed to provide for co-ownership of the matrimonial home. In addition a second proposal is for legislation to adopt a scheme of deferred participation, which would mean that this would apply only to property of couples married after the law comes into effect! The Saskatchewan women hope that proposals will be revised to include all existing marriages.

LAW REFORM IN B.C.

The Berger Commission on Family and Children's Law will shortly

present its recommendations to the government. Draft legislation can probably be expected next fall. The Cabinet members with whom we met in Victoria February 14, expect that the recommendation will be for joint ownership and management of property acquired during the marriage, exclusive of gifts and inheritances.

Perhaps we can anticipate legislation in this area which will in fact make women equals in marriage, and legally entitle them to an equal share if marriage fails.

Priorities Editorial Committee.

SEX EDUCATION

A Policy Of Ignorance?

by Margaret Fern

It is very difficult to discover to what degree, if any, a sex education programme is carried out in any given Public School. Principals and School Boards are reluctant to get into any discussion on the subject because of fear of parental reaction. The Separate School Board in Saskatoon at least, has a most comprehensive and well adjusted programme included in their school curriculum, starting with simple life sciences and working through to give children a clear and intelligent knowledge of their sexual development. Contrary to prejudiced belief, adequate knowledge in this area does not promote promiscuity as indeed, neither does it prevent it! However, adequate knowledge can at least promote a healthy attitude towards sex and prevent many mis-

conceptions. I use the latter term deliberately with reference to children aged 13 years and on coming for abortions. The ignorance of most of these youngsters on sex, pregnancy--avoidance of pregnancy is mind-boggling but nonetheless they do become pregnant. Parents are NOT doing an adequate job of teaching sex education at home, mainly because many parents themselves are too embarrassed or hung-up to objectively explain the reproductive system to their children. The question of morality in relation to sex must be a separate issue and that I am inclined to feel is the prerogative of parents. The Saskatchewan government has appointed an on-going Advisory Board to study the whole area of sex education and birth control. Any recommendations that the Board has made to the government are not yet public but hopefully, they will recommend a realistic and sensible attitude be adopted by government departments concerned in this whole area, and new, innovative and comprehensive programmes will be implemented to meet needs that are most definitely not being met at present.

Reprinted from Saskatchewan New Democratic Women's Newsletter.

Programs

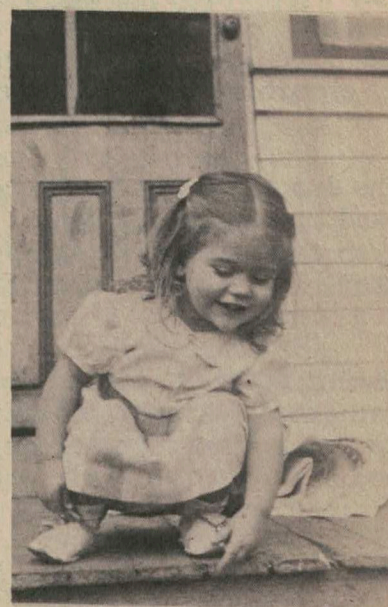
Minimal in B.C.

We were gratified to read this article on Sex Education in Saskatchewan Public Schools, because we encountered similar reaction in discussing this with Eileen Dailly. She recognizes the need for sex education but is extremely reluctant to even get information on sex education and birth control into the schools.

What stands in the way? Fear of parental reaction and local autonomy of school boards. Thus there is the ridiculous situation of the Minister of Health authorizing publication of a very informative booklet Rhythm and Blues, which really appeals to teens, cartoons, drawings and all, but the Minister of Education is unwilling to use her authority to place it in the schools. Eileen Dailly commented, "Mothers are pirating materials into the schools."

MORE POWER TO MOTHERS

Some people have commented on how young the B.C. Women's Organizer Shelly Dillon is. Although she's not as old as some of us she's no spring chick. It just so happens that she looks younger than she actually is. To show you what we mean we include a photo of Shelly in one of her quieter moments. Although this picture was not taken since Shelly became the Women's Organizer it is a true portrait of her and shows her sweet and happy nature to good avail.



Shelly Dillon, B.C. Women's Organizer in a moment of repose between meetings.

"Who will mind the baby when the mother goes to vote?" cried one of the public men in agony.

One woman replied that she thought she could get the person that minded it when she went to pay her taxes.

*In Times Like These, Nellie McClung
University of Toronto Press, 1972.*

My day begins with waking to the sound of the alarm, signalling the call to work. I punch no time clock as I stagger to the kitchen to prepare breakfast and give the call to the children. They respond with a bewilderment similar to my own, as they sleepily perform the dressing routine and as automotons walk to the kitchen to prepare their lunches for the day. It's 7:45 a.m.

Fifteen blocks away the daycare centre is open and Ilana is already at "her legally classified place of work." She is preparing tables with clay or paints or puzzles, watching, tending the children as they appear one-by-one. She's thinking about snacks for mid-morning.

At home, I'm thinking, will it be wheat-abix or will I take the time to fix bacon and eggs - always poached - aware of the nutritional advantage, something about two proteins. Something I've read. Something I've forgotten. Something about the body absorbing protein before 11:00 a.m.

Check the lunches - "Yes, Eliot, peanut butter and mayonnaise is fine. Okay, Ollie, you can have liver sausage - here's the butter. I'll pour your milk into the thermos."

The kids are settled, eating breakfast, and I get dressed. What to wear? Put on the same thing I wore yesterday - it's handy and still on the chair where I left it last night, not too soiled, not too wrinkled. Oops, forgot to wash my face, brush my teeth. On the way to the bathroom, I ask the kids to hurry.

Coats on. Ready to go to "my legally classified place of work." Check to make

sure Eliot has his keys - "No, I won't be home until 5:00. Yes, you can go to Megan's after school. But call me." One latch-key child off to school. The other goes with me in the car. Zipped up, in the car. Yeah, there's enough gas.

Arrive at the daycare centre, pushing 8:30. Ollie goes in, gets Lisa and David. David and Ollie play banana-telephone and call each other across the front seat. Start singing, "I've got my banana in my lunch for a banana brunch." Elaborates to crunch, munch. I smile, thinking about how great kids are.

Arrive at Kindergarten, Ollie undoes his seat belt, points its tip to me and says, "Alligator belt says good-bye." We laugh - I tell him to have a good day. He reminds me to lock my door so I don't fall out. "See ya later alligator."

"After while crocodile."

I watch as the kids go into the school and drive to work. Seven hours to spend there plus 1/2 hr. for lunch. I think of myself as lucky to be doing a job I enjoy, getting good money for it and being appreciated by my fellow-workers and boss.

THAT NIGHT I think about the daycare centre - about the workers, the kids, the transfer of socializing and caring for my son. They take the second shift. Moving the socially necessary work of mother into group childcare.

Seeing the dual character of women's oppression - the sense in which I

need childcare to release me from my responsibility and the sense that other women are performing the traditional rearing-of-children role.

We live in a trap. For just as the family has been "separated off" from the rest of society, providing an emotional haven where one is accepted for herself or himself, SO TOO does it create personal torment with forced isolation. Daily conflict/daily highs - gestures of appreciation and love/it's your turn to do the laundry - noise intruding on one's space/silence when the children sleep - alone with the children, alone with pleasure and pain, love gets lost. Part of a family but isolated. Forced isolation within the family is the backbone of women's oppression.

Since women bear children, it is generally assumed that women have a maternal instinct and a natural inclination for raising children. After all, we are well taught in this area; our goal in life is to marry well, and have children. It naturally follows that our children are our responsibility. That's the way it is and that's the way it has been extended, so that women are daycare workers; privately within the family and publicly within daycare centres.

Daycare worker's experience as wage earners is predicated upon the idea that women's real place is within the home, caring for children. Domestic labour of housewives, though socially necessary, is unpaid. Group domestic labour of childcare workers, though socially necessary, is poorly paid. The isolation and frustration that women experience alone at home is paralleled by the isolation and frustration that women experience in childcare work, particularly family childcare.

The contradictory truths of, on the one hand, a crying need for more and better childcare and, on the other hand, no government recognition of the value of the work these women do are daily miseries. These women know that without

their service, their sisters (primarily) would be unable to work and earn enough bread to keep the family fed. These women also know that any attempts at being paid a decent wage have failed miserably.

This sets up a vicious system whereby women and children need childcare, socializing children is shared by women, and the government counts on this need and its subsequent psychological responsibility of women one-to-another to operate childcare on a shoe-string budget.

It is, by far, the greatest shared oppression that women experience; to see that raising children is the most important job under a capitalist system (after all, how else do we keep the labour pool flowing?) and to see that it is predicated on the belief that raising children is valueless (under that same system that rewards workers in dollars-and-cents).

THE MOVEMENTS PEOPLE FORM ARE CRIES OF PAIN AND DECLARATIONS OF WAR !!

Feminists have brought the family and personal life into the arena of political discussion. Feminists refuse to ignore how the capitalist system affects "who changes the diapers, who takes the responsibility for the children, who is free to attend meetings, who buys the bread." Socialism, focusing so strongly on the question of the state and the control of the economy, leaves us with a feeling of betrayal. Feminist socialists will not accept the view that the family and the economy are separate, independent realms. WE KNOW the family cannot be transformed except as part of the general transformation and destruction of capitalism.

Marianne Gilbert,
Childcare Committee

**LOWER MAIN-
LAND
WOMEN'S CTEE MEETING**

~ !!! ~

WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL AT 7:30 PM

note changed location!

**VAC OFFICE
1111 commercial dr.**

for more info: cynthia flood 255 7620

see you there!

WHAT SIDE IS OUR GOVERNMENT ON?

The on-going saga of Research and Development and the Department of Education is not a happy one for New Democrats. But within the issue is an important lesson--a lesson which having been learned by previous social democratic regimes in this country (Saskatchewan 1944-64) was passed on by Tommy Douglas to the new government in B.C. in September, 1972. The crux of it is essentially that "It is most necessary for any government that those in charge of various departments shall be competent and capable of absorbing new ideas and techniques. No matter how good legislation is, if those in charge of administering it are unsympathetic or incapable of a new approach, little good will come of it." (From a speech by Tommy Douglas over twenty five years ago--quoted in "Essays on the Left" page 65.)

The problem in the Department of Education in B.C. is simply that the senior management people in that department are the very architects of the present educational system--one which the NDP pledged to reform when swept into power two and a half years ago. The government has changed --those who run education have not. Granted an NDP appointed deputy minister Jack Fleming, is allegedly in charge. But one could argue with good evidence that his meal ticket for the ensuing decade takes precedence over any suspected loyalties to party and government policies that he might have had upon taking office. To date, he has conveniently left the position of Associate Deputy Minister in charge of Finance (the arena through which Fleming with his IBM background worked his way into his present job) vacant. One could speculate upon his willingness to be shuffled

into that post again should the government be changed next year.

Why such cruel thoughts about the Deputy Minister? When Research and Development came into existence in September of 1974, the Division was established to report directly to the Deputy Minister rather than through any of the established senior officials of the Department. This reporting mechanism was intentionally set up to give the Deputy, and through him the Minister, effective control over the section. By this method some measure of accountability could be achieved in respect to implementation of government policies. The people recruited to the section through stiff public service competitions had the common quality of being progressive educators in basic agreement with government education policy particularly as laid out in the Education Minister's white paper of spring, 1974. Their job descriptions brought them into the Department for the expressed purpose of working on educational programmes related to implementation of the Minister's white paper.

The Deputy Minister in consultation or at least with the agreement of the Minister then abrogated his right to have Research and Development report through him. Instead, the division was to take all their proposals to the Management Committee--a senior level departmental committee dominated by the very conservative bureaucrats who ran the department under the Social Credit administration. This unprecedented move took place in early October after a one-month life span of the new Research and Development section. This decision, which meant by definition that no change would

occur in the educational system, was made for one of two reasons. The Minister, Eileen Dailey, was no longer committed to the policies she put forward in the white paper or the senior officials in the department had effectively isolated Research and Development through an organized parade into the Minister's office talking about "department morale being low" and their sincere desire to be an integral part of educational change in the province. Tactics such as the latter are well described in any "Bureaucrats Guide to Maintaining Control." If the first reason is the true one then Research and Development became scapegoats for a government policy retreat. If the latter reason is the case then the Minister must be found guilty of not only naivete but also blatant incompetence.

Faced with trying to convince the Management Committee that government policy should be implemented, Research and Development were placed into a no win situation. At best, they would have to settle for some watered down compromise. And that would only come if the Deputy Minister were willing to support Research and Development initiatives. That support was not forthcoming.

In meeting after meeting the people from Research and Development met with resistance to their "stated objectives of implementing government policy." The senior department officials with Fleming's concurrence would argue that the Minister's white paper was not government policy against insistence from Research and Development that it was. One R. and D. neophyte even asked why the Minister was not present at Management Committee meetings if it was going to make policy decisions.

The Management Committee proposed that R. and D. set out to prove that there was sexism, racism, and class inequalities in the school system rather than propose programs to help redress such serious faults. R. and D. was placed time and time again in the onerous position of

defending government policy. R. and D. argued that the government had recognized that these problems existed in the system and was pledged to solve them as stated in the white paper. It was very clear, that the Management Committee opposed not Research and Development, but the stated government policy.

At one Management Committee meeting several people raised serious and continued objections to R. and D.'s use of the term "working people" in one of their presentations. Can you imagine any social democratic government tolerating an objection to the fact that programs were needed which "addressed themselves to the needs of the working people"? The objections to this allegedly highly charged political term "working people" were incredible. The situation was clear. Government policy would remain in the form of a white paper--a safe distance from the school system it was written to change.

The rest is public knowledge. An exceedingly weak Minister with an opportunist Deputy and a highly entrenched conservative bureaucracy make for a situation in which little change is possible. If anything, the structures of authority and responsibility in the school system from the Minister to the student are as authoritarian and undemocratic as they were under the Socreds. And the complicity of the Minister in firing six competent, proven educators on one days notice is certain to strengthen the hand of those who hold the power in the system. In scuttling the Research and Development Division, the Minister was also complicit in destroying an effective working model of collegial* decision making -- a democratic model which if ever applied to the school system as a whole would alter substantially the questions of who makes decisions and for whose benefit. The purging of R. and D. from the Department of Education is only one border scuffle in the struggle to democratize and humanize the educational system in the Province.

The question that one immediately raises in respect to that struggle is "just what side is our government on"?

*Collegial decision making refers to a process by which decisions affecting the work of the staff are made collectively by the entire staff itself.

This article was written by a Priorities member in consultation with a number of the staff fired from the Research and Development Division.

Sexist Ads Not Illegal

"Although sexist advertising does not violate the letter of the Human Rights Code, it certainly conflicts with the policies on which the code is based," says Remi J. De Roo, chairperson of the B.C. Human Rights Commission.

De Roo's comments were in response to a letter sent to him by the Vancouver Status of Women (Media Action Committee), protesting what they considered to be an offensive and sexist advertisement.

"Sexist advertising is demeaning to women and contrary to the spirit of the Human Rights Code of B.C., which is based on the recognition of the dignity of all persons," says De Roo.

"We believe that a change in advertising policy would better serve business interests as well as conform to the policies underlying the Human Rights Code," De Roo concludes.

At present no agency has jurisdiction over sexist advertising and no legislation makes it an offence, although the women's movement despises it. The Human Rights Commission statements are the first of their kind to be made by

B.C. officials publicly, recognizing sexist ads as a problem.

Western Canadian Women's News Service.

Continued From page 11

new programs or to provide adequate funding for those already in existence.

Addendum: A recent press release announces that \$ 200,000 will be made available for I.W.Y.; \$ 100,000 through the Provincial Secretary and \$ 100,000 through Gene Errington's office. Once again this has not been widely publicized, nor is it clear whether it is intended for ongoing, long term programs or short term projects.

Margaret Beardsley,
COQUITLAM

"WE SUPPORT YOUR
POLICY IN ALL THE
FEDERAL AREAS."
DENNIS COCKE
MINISTER OF HEALTH
AND HON. EILEEN DAILLY

Pub Night

PUB NIGHT is held by the North Shore Women's Centre every second Tuesday.

That will be March 25, April 8 and April 22. Pub Night is held at the North Shore Neighbourhood House, 225 East 2nd, North Vancouver.

The Pub opens at 7:30 p.m. There will be an added feature at the March 25th meeting --- a discussion on Day Care on the North Shore.

MIDDLEMARCH

SCENE: 1857--AN APARTMENT IN LONDON, ENGLAND. SITTING AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE--A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MARIAN EVANS AND HER COMMON-LAW HUSBAND, GEORGE LEWES.

George: I'll take your Scenes of Clerical Life to Blackwoods Magazine today. Now, the name of the author...I know we've discussed this before ...

Marian: Indeed, I understand, though it goes against my wishes. We must use a male name or I won't be published. Very well, as agreed, I shall become George Eliot.

SCENE: FEBRUARY 1975--A SURREY HOUSE--WRITER SITTING AT CARD TABLE IN HER ROOM, WRITING ABOUT GEORGE ELIOT AND HIS MASTERPIECE (MARIAN EVANS AND HER MISTRESSPIECE?).

How do you tell about a brilliant writer who lived 100 years ago (1819-1880)? Scratch your head and pace the floor frequently. Read Middlemarch, read criticisms, pace the floor, drink coffee and try to find appropriate words. Simple, isn't it?

Marian Evans lived, unchurched, with George Lewes for 22 years during the Victorian era. A brother disowned her. The couple spent much time in Europe during their early years together to escape the pressures of their notoriety in England. Lewes, also a writer, had three sons from a previous marriage and they spent their 22 years together till his death in writing, raising the children and travelling.

Evans' marriage may have been unusual for that period. Her views were equally so. A major influence on her outlook was Ludwig Feuerbach, whose famous book Essence of Christianity she translated in 1854. "With the ideas of Feuerbach," she wrote, "I everywhere agree." Particularly his view of marriage. "...For a marriage the bond of which is merely an external restriction, not the voluntary contented self-restriction of love, in short, a marriage which is not spontaneously concluded, spontaneously willed, self-sufficing, is not a true marriage, and therefore not a truly moral marriage."

Feuerbach rejected idealism and embraced materialism. "I do not generate the object from the thought but the thought from the object." What he was saying is: People have created Gods in their own image or our religions are created by us and for us. Humans are the highest creation, and for their benefit should our philosophy be constructed.

Evans accepted the death of God. She accepted a world moved by laws of nature, heedless of humanity. The question became for her: How can one lead a morally meaningful life in an absurd universe? She found her answer in the views of humanism--that moral order which is above the natural order of the universe but interacts with it. Her humanism meant love and understanding of people and a belief that they would act for higher moral motives than just rewards or fear of punishment. "It is a pang to me to witness the suffering of a fellow-being, and I feel his suffering the more acutely because he is mortal--because his life is so short, and I would have it, if possible, filled with happiness and not misery." (Cabinet Edition of the Works of George Eliot, pp 52-3)

How did this humanism apply to women? In one of her letters she attacks "the 'intention of Nature' argument," which, she said, is a "pitiably fallacy." Not nature, not biological evolution which is indifferent to human suffering, but human feeling is the proper source of social goals. "As a fact of mere zoological evolution," she argued, woman has "the worse share in existence. But for that very reason I would the more contend that in the moral evolution we have 'an art which does mend nature.' It is the function of love in the largest sense, to mitigate the harshness of all fatalities." The mission of the human order is to "lighten the pressure of hard non-moral outward conditions" (The George Eliot Letters, Ed. Gordon S. Haight, pp 364-5).

One critic, Barbara Hardy, says she is not "a proselytising feminist" and, although in sympathy with Victorian feminism, she played no active part in the movement, and her books "make the feminist protest in a very muted way".

True. Her books are novels, written to entertain a Victorian audience at a time when feminism was neither the issue of the day nor the view of any respectable women; when life was stable

for many and capitalism a prosperous expanding system. Within this framework her writing is still feminist to the core. Muted? It may be muted to those who do not see the problem or who ignore it. To those who are aware, her writing is replete with the irony of a woman who sees the sterility and waste of sexism.

the heroines

The women of Middlemarch are, indeed, products of their environment. The two important heroines are Dorothea Brooke and Rosamond Vincy. Both are young.

Dorothea Brooke is attractive, warm, generous, public-spirited, serious. Her wish is to do something noble and useful with her life. To this end she marries an elderly clergyman who is plodding his way through life writing The Key To All Mythologies, a treatise on religion that is never quite ready for publication. She marries this humourless fellow with the intention of devoting herself to his great work. Marriage proves a disaster for both. Dorothea becomes aware of Casaubon's sterile intellectualism. Although she hides it from her husband, he knows that she has discovered his real worth--"And this cruel outward accuser was there in the shape of a wife--nay, of a young bride, who, instead of observing his abundant pen-scratches and amplitude of paper with the uncritical awe of an elegant-minded canary-bird, seemed to present herself as a spy, watching everything with a malign power of inference."

Dorothea sees the futility of her marriage but remains loyal and dutiful, reading to Casaubon when his eyes are weary and helping him sift through his endless notes. "Whether Providence had taken equal care of Miss Brooke in providing her with Mr. Casaubon was an idea which could hardly occur to him. Society never made the preposterous demand that a

man should think as much about his qualifications for making a charming girl happy as he thinks of hers for making himself happy."

Even this limited degree of mental activity in Dorothea is too much for her guardian, her uncle: "Well, my dear, this is pleasant, now," said Mr. Brooke, meeting and kissing her. "You have left Casaubon with his books, I suppose. That's right. We must not have you getting too learned for a woman, you know."

But Dorothea is irrepressible and in the same scene she expresses her view of life to Brooke: "...because you mean to enter Parliament as a member who cares for the improvement of the people, and one of the first things to be made better is the state of the land and the labourers. Think of Kit Downes, uncle, who lives with his wife and seven children in a house with one sitting-room and one bed-room hardly larger than this table:...That is one reason why I did not like the pictures here, dear uncle, which you think me stupid about. I used to come from the village with all that dirt and coarse ugliness like a pain within me, and the simpering pictures in the drawing room seemed to me like a wicked attempt to find delight in what is false, while we don't mind how hard the truth is for the neighbours outside our walls."

This scene is observed by her young admirer, Will Ladislav, who, though broad-minded for that time, feels "a chilling sense of remoteness." "A man is seldom ashamed of feeling that he cannot love a woman so well when he sees a certain greatness in her: nature having intended greatness for men."

About two years after his marriage Casaubon dies from a heart attack. Dorothea chooses to live alone in her hus-

band's mansion without even a female companion. Unheard of: as one of the town gossips expresses it, "It would be well for her to marry again as soon as it is proper...But I see clearly a husband is the best thing to keep her in order."

Dorothea has learned much since her marriage and widowhood. "I used to despise women a little for not shaping their lives more and doing better things. I was very fond of doing as I liked, but I have almost given it up." Ultimately Dorothea does remarry, this time the man she loves, Will Ladislav. She lives a happy and useful life with him, as a partner to his important and useful work as a member of Parliament. Sound familiar?

***"We must not
have you
getting too
learned..."***

Rosamond Vincy is very attractive but also vain, shallow, egotistical, materialistic and a social-climbing fortune-hunter. She meets the man she intends to marry, Dr. Tertius Lydgate, a young physician, and an idealist who wants to modernize British medicine through scientific research. Lydgate is looking for a

wife who will venerate "his high musings and momentous labours and would never interfere with them; who would create order in the home and accounts with still magic, yet keep her fingers ready to touch the lute and transform life into romance at any moment; who was instructed in the true womanly arts and not a hair's-breadth beyond." He married Rosamond thinking she was that woman.

Through the interaction of Rosamond and Tertius, Evans shows how two individuals, apparently raised correctly by society's standards, can meet, marry, and effectively destroy each other through sexual roles. They fall into debt because of her social ambitions and his poor judgment in money affairs. These characteristics have brought them to financial embarrassment, but Evans

carefully illustrates that they are also victims of circumstances. After all, Lydgate only wanted to have the best for his bride and to start married life well--it's poor economy to buy cheaply--why fault a man for good intentions? He thought he would earn more money than he did. He thought his wife would "create order in the home and accounts with still magic" instead of spending every penny he earned. They are a foolish and unhappy pair, but we never forget that they are human--that their predicament is universal.

Lydgate attempts to arrange drastic economies in their lifestyle. Rosamond thwarts him, quietly, relentlessly, and he thinks bitterly after one of these encounters that "what can a woman care about so much as house and furniture? a husband without them is an absurdity." Rosie thinks her husband a brute. "In fact there was but one person in Rosamond's world whom she did not regard as blameworthy, and that was the graceful creature with blond plaits and with little hands crossed before her, who had never expressed herself unbecomingly, and had always acted for the best--the best naturally being what she best liked."

Lydgate is wretched. He, naturally, is responsible for his wife's care. "When he left her to go out again he told himself that it was ten times harder for her than for him: he had a life away from home, and constant appeals to his activity on behalf of others. He wished to excuse everything in her if he could--but it was inevitable that in that excusing mood he should think of her as if she were an animal of another and feebler species. Nevertheless she had mastered him."

They move to London, he engages in a successful society practice and gives up research. He dies at the age of 50, a failure in his own eyes, but constantly loyal to the feeble and beautiful creature whose life he had taken into his hands. Rosamond, alive and well, remarries, this time to a wealthy and elderly physician.

the ultimate aim

Marian Evans wrote, "The ultimate aim of art is to reshape human consciousness and with it the structure of society...." Did she succeed? Who can say? No artist stands alone. Each is part of the tradition and style of a particular period. Marian Evans/George Eliot stands with giants--the Brontes, Thackeray, Trollope, Charles Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell, and George Meredith. All make their contribution and all succeed in their own ways.

If you don't find a feminist in Marian Evans--read her anyway. If there is a word in the English language that means witty, skilful, and deliciously filling then that is what her writing is.

Ruth Houle
DELTA

It is clearly absurd that it should be possible for a woman to qualify as a saint with direct access to the Almighty while she may not qualify as a curate.

Baroness Stocks

BUY A SUB
FOR A FRIEND
* * *
A LIBRARY
* * *
A SCHOOL
THE WORD NEEDS
TO BE
SPREAD

more on INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR:

The International Women's Year Secretariat had called off its plans for five regional IWY conferences which were drawing so much flack from women's groups across Canada.

There will instead be a travelling bus and a series of mini-conferences designed to place control of the year back on the grass roots level.

The decision of the secretariat came after many women's organizations, among them the B.C. Federation of Women and the Status of Women Council, voted to boycott the regional conferences on the grounds that the money was being wasted and local input was not being solicited.

The Peak, January 23, 1975.

canada

The government reorganized its \$5 million program to promote International Women's Year yesterday, abandoning plans to hold four regional conferences on women's rights and opting instead for a series of smaller public information programs.

The government will use \$500,000 of the budget, which had been allocated for a series of four regional conferences this year, to establish mobile information centres in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Newfoundland and the Yukon Territory.

Lalonde outlined the changed program at a government cocktail party for bankers, railroad, utility and department store

BUREAUCRATS AROUND THE WORLD RESPOND

executives, Crown corporation and government hiring officials and other big employers of women.

The Montreal Star, January 28, 1975.

U.S.S.R.

United Nations- Communist representatives advised Western feminists on the eve of International Women's Day that they don't need a revolution to gain equality.

All it takes to get a husband to help with housework is to "manipulate him," says Hertha Kuhrig, vice-chairman of East Germany's scientific advisory council.

In a discussion Friday at the UN, Dr. Kuhrig was asked how the large percentage of women trade unionists and skilled workers in her country eased the housework burden.

With men and technology, she answered. Using the example of a dishwasher, she said: "As soon as you invent a machine with electricity, the man gets interested in using it."

Soviet delegate A.G. Masevitch said: "I don't see why you need a revolution for a woman to know her own body, or to compensate for the burdens of pregnancy and motherhood."

(cont'd)

Mrs. Masevitch, an astronomer and vice-president of the Soviet women's committee was replying to statements by such Western feminists on the panel as Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer.

Greer said women are exploited by male politicians and physicians and should "rise up and take care of their bodies and of their fertilities into their own hands."

Margaret Bush Wilson, chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, said women already have "the use of the political process which I don't think we are using effectively."

Mrs. Masevitch said it shouldn't be too difficult for Western societies to organize the kind of child care programs that Communist governments provide to equalise conditions for working mothers. All it takes is money, she said.

In the Soviet Union, IW Day is the one day in the year when Soviet women get a little less equality but a little more liberation.

Men take over the household chores, give up their seats on buses and trains, supply flowers and gifts and hold open doors in honour of International Women's Day.

For the rest of the year, women are equal partners in the national economy, although as former premier Nikita Khrushchev once said, it is still mostly "the men who do the administering and the women who do the work."

Vancouver Sun. Mar.8, 1975.

Editorial Comment-

Looks like even in Russia housework is not part of the national economy. Once a year a little help with the housework--so much for the great Revolution.

The more things change- the more things stay the same!!



united nations

United Nations-

It's a man's world, this United Nations.

From the very beginning it has discriminated against women, in the Secretariat and in the delegations of its 138 member states.

Now with the advent of International Women's Year and with its conference opening in June in Mexico City, can one, at last, expect some movement away from the bias of this diplomatic stereo-type?

Ambassador Jeanne Martin Cisse, of Guinea, member of her government's policy-making central committee, and newly elected first vice-president of Parliament, has extraordinary credentials in the area of women's rights; and she is apprehensive.

The UN's failure to fund the conference with anything like the amount normally budgeted for such purposes is, she suggests, hardly a good omen. Is it, she asks, "just one more sign of that continuing resistance to the whole idea of equal rights for women?"

Gemini News Service. February 1975.

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B.C.
FEDERATION
OF
WOMEN

VICTORIA ACTION

18 19 20

APRIL

1975

BC FEDERATION WOMEN

A WEEKEND FOR THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The purpose of the BC Federation of Women is to draw together the strength of the women's movement throughout BC in order to achieve change directed towards the liberation of women. To this end, the BCFW Founding Convention in September 1974 voted to assemble in Victoria the largest possible number of women, to present our demands on many issues to the government and to press for legislative action.

The VICTORIA ACTION will therefore take place on the weekend of April 18/19/20, 1975, and will feature the following events:

CONVENTION OF THE BCFW which will discuss and vote on both amendments to/ expansion of existing BCFW policy, and completely new policy proposals. All women attending will have voice and vote.

MARCH through downtown Victoria and a **DEMONSTRATION** at the Provincial Legislature. (All MLA's have been invited to this event--find out if yours will be there!)

WOMEN'S FORUM featuring booths, exhibits displays, happenings, art, literature produced by women's groups of all kinds from all parts of BC.

SOCIAL EVENTS at which you can meet your sisters from all over BC.

BRING YOUR GROUP OR ORGANIZATION! COME YOURSELF! PLAN TO BE THERE FOR ALL THE EVENTS! THIS COULD BE THE GREATEST GATHERING EVER OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN BC.

THIS IS A WEEKEND FOR WOMEN-ALL WOMEN

WELCOME



FRIDAY 18 APRIL--Registration from 6 pm
Convention session on BCFW structure 8-10 pm. Social 6-10 pm.

SATURDAY 19 APRIL--Registration 9 am.
Convention sessions on policy 9:30-12:30 pm, 1:30-3:30 pm. Demonstration in Victoria 3:30-5:30 pm. Social 8 pm.

SUNDAY 20 APRIL; Women's forum 11 am to 4 pm.

* **CHILDCARE:** Quality childcare will be available Sat and Sun during the day; informal childminding Fri/Sat evenings.

WOMEN'S FORUM: If your group would like booth or exhibit space, please contact Harice Parkinson, 103-10025 Resthaven Dr., Sydney, BC, 656-4381.
=====

TO REGISTER:

Brochures have been mailed to all women's groups for which we have been able to find addresses. If your group has not received them, or if you want more, please contact:

MARY BARRETTO
BCFW ACTION ORGANIZER
1081 West 16th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V6h 1S7
733-9558

Please register soon!!!-----

CONVENTION SITE:

The Convention Site is

Esquimalt Recreation Centre
527 Fraser Street, Esquimalt, BC

REMEMBER THE DATES: 18-19-20 APRIL 1975

SEE YOU THERE!

steering committee meeting

On 9 March a special meeting of the Steering Committee of the NDP Women's Committee was held to discuss as it were the state of the nation of the Committee--where it's going, what it's trying to do, what it could be doing better, etc., etc. Members attended from Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops, Fraser Valley, Comox, and Courtenay.

It was a difficult meeting, and the infamous phrase "agonizing reappraisal" comes to mind. On the negative side, there was a very great deal of strong criticism of the actions and operations of the Committee, without--to my mind--very many concrete alternatives being presented. On the positive side, a number at least of specific questions which we should be asking ourselves did emerge. Some of these are: Given that the nature and activities of the various chapters of the Women's Committee vary so much, is it really possible for a "united voice" Steering Committee to make itself heard? Are there ways in which we could take up fewer issues but deal with them in greater depth than we have on occasion in the past? Is the system which several chapters use of alternating representatives to the Steering Committee meetings the best possible, or is the increase in participation which that allows for outweighed by the loss in continuity? Should we adopt a system of regional steering committees (Island, Interior, Lower Mainland)?

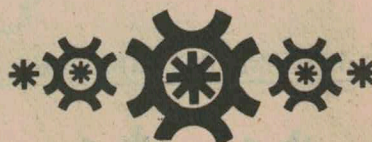
We did not even begin to arrive at conclusions concerning these and other questions, and as a result decided that members should take them back to the local groups for thorough discussion and consideration. The next Steering Committee, on 29 March, will then try

to pull together whatever recommendations seem to emerge, and take these to the May Provincial Convention for discussion at the Caucus Meetings there.

Behind these questions of structure and organization, however, there appeared to me to be some very basic differences on the nature and purpose of the NDP Women's Committee. Some feel that the Committee's main role is to serve as a "strictly political" organization: to speak out on all matters concerning women's rights vis-a-vis the Party and the Government, to provide a forum for action, education and discussion among socialist women, to develop new party policy concerning women's rights and to press for its implementation. Others, as I see it, feel that the Committee should act much more as a support group for its members, providing a space in which the kind of warmth and emotional solidarity we are so often denied can be obtained. It does not seem to me that the two are mutually exclusive, but it appears that at least a question of emphasis or focus must be resolved.

We ask that all NDP women's groups, and all Priorities readers concerned with these questions, consider them carefully in the next weeks and months. If you wish to, please write your thoughts to Chairwoman Terri Ash, 1835 Tranquille, Kamloops; or come to the next Steering Committee meeting, Saturday 29 March.

Cynthia Flood
VANCOUVER-CENTRE





THANKS



to the following people who have sent in donations to help
support Priorities:

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