

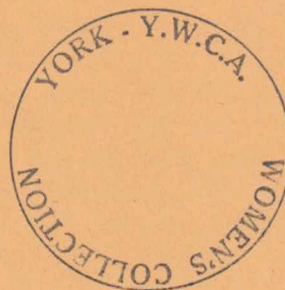
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Y. W. C. A.  
RESOURCE CENTRE

# PRIORITIES

Vol. 3, No. 5.

May, 1975.



We heed not the falsehood, the base innuendo,  
The laws of the universe, these are our friends,  
Our talents shall rise in a mighty crescendo,  
We trust evolution to make us amends!

May Kendall,  
The Canterbury Poets

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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All unsigned articles are the collective responsibility of the Editorial Committee.

If you are willing to work on Priorities please phone Judy at 261-8972 or Melodie at 733-5990.

WE ESPECIALLY NEED HELP ON THE WORK WEEKEND WHICH FALLS ROUGHLY THE MID WEEKEND OF EACH MONTH.

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" The issues and demands raised by the Women's Liberation Movement are intergral 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)

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

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

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# EDITORIAL



The B.C. NDP 1972 Convention was so invigorating and encouraging for the women who attended that it resulted among other things in the creation of a B.C. NDP Women's newsletter Priorities--first issue January 1973. We were optimistic about the role the B.C. NDP would play in changing the status of women in the Province. We had already some good policy on record--policy on which we'd campaigned during the '72 election. At the '72 Convention the Resolution for a Ministry of Women's Rights was passed. The party had thus acknowledged the serious and basic inequalities that exist in our society and the radical initiatives necessary to begin to deal with these inequalities.

Shortly after the Ministry resolution passed Premier Barrett announced to the press that to him such a Ministry was not a priority and that in fact he didn't agree with the concept of a separate Ministry. This instant dismissal of the resolution by Barrett is significant not only as it reflects his misunderstanding of the goals of the women's movement but also as a demonstration of his attitude--subsequently borne out by his actions--that conventions are mostly social events or p.r. sessions and policy making is the prerogative of the Cabinet not the party.

Since the 1972 convention there have been two other Provincial conventions, one Federal convention, a Federal election, and two by-elections. There have also been five sessions of the legislature.

At conventions the Women's Caucus has organized to present, defend, and pass policy on women's rights. In this we have succeeded. The B.C. New Democratic Party has probably got the most progressive and fundamental policy on women's rights of any party or province in Canada.

We have worked to elect representatives of the women's caucus--not as individuals but as is our philosophy as representatives of the caucus--to the Provincial executive. In this we have had some success. In 1973 four women who ran as representatives of the women's caucus were elected to the executive as members-at-large, one was elected as vice-president, and one as an alternate. This was a significant victory as it represented an informal alliance between the women, the left and labour.

We have participated at all levels of the Party from constituency organization, to policy committees, to activity on the Democrat, membership drives and election work. In fact the women's policy committee was one of the most active and the development of local women's groups to participate in policy formulation encouraged other policy committees in this direction. And all this energy to what avail?

Unhappily we have found as have many party members that policy considered a low priority or unacceptable by Premier Barrett may merely serve to fill white space in leaflets. We have defended the party publicly and insisted to non-party members that in the NDP the party makes the policy--it's a different sort of party. It's hard to keep saying this with a straight face particularly to other women--women who have well founded suspicions about political jargon and election promises.

All of us in the women's movement want change. In fact all of us who read Priorities who attend any women's groups associated or not with a political party or pressure group, want change. All of us who do extra-parliamentary activity or look sideways when the boss calls for coffee and makes a sexist remark want change. The questions that divide us are what kind of change, how much and how to get it. We in the NDP women's committee want a lot of change--not just for ourselves but for

society as a whole--for men and children--for the old and the young. We want economic and social changes.

We are under no illusions that change will come about swiftly or without much work. Most of us realized that the NDP as a social democratic party could never bring about all the fundamental changes necessary. However we did expect some sensitivity and commitment to the issues of women's rights. We are under no illusion that a Ministry or daycare or birth control information would eradicate sexism and bring about a socialist society. However we are convinced that at this point in history legislation is one means of making some changes and improving the lives of women. If properly presented such legislature could also help to educate men and women on the social inequalities that exist and the type of changes, social and economic, that are necessary to bring about socialism.

Until now there has been no serious actions by the B.C. government in the area of women's rights, most honourable members seem to have no understanding of the women's movement and little interest in finding out what it's about. In fact party women actively supporting NDP policy on women's rights are often looked upon by the government as more of a political adversary than the multi-nationals.

So here we are at another convention and for the first time in a number of years the women's committee has not prepared resolutions, talked about strategy, planned a slate. We will have some delegates but we have not concentrated our efforts on this. In fact many NDP women have been involved over the last months in work they consider to be more useful and meaningful, at this time. Some of us have worked on Priorities, some have worked with other women's groups to form the B.C. Federation of Women some have been involved in their unions, some have participated in Rosemary Brown's leadership campaign. We have worked organizing daycare, women's centres and health collectives. We do these things because they are enjoyable as well as being politically useful.

We must now ask ourselves if we are making the best use of our time and energy. As socialists and feminists we must share our concerns and understandings of what these terms imply and our role within and without the NDP. There is no easy answer. It is not pleasant to continue to struggle for women's rights within a party in which most of the elected officials have repeatedly refused to take these issues or us seriously. Even with the support of other women and the knowledge that historically the NDP was a different sort of party it can be a very bitter experience.

We are few. We travel a new road without maps. Relying only on our own collective experiences and intelligence for guidance. There are many hazards along the way, misleading road signs, cryptic notes from the past, false front streets and even plastic gardens like IWY. Sometimes the road seems to fade altogether. Our energies are limited. At times like these, and at all times, we must be ready to reevaluate the direction we are taking and our means of getting to our goal.

\* \* \* \* \*

# ANOTHER POLICY SWITCH ?

If there is a groundswell of support within the NDP for aid to independent schools, it has yet to surface. A few party members have in the past urged a change; MLA Hartley Dent (Skeena) has come out for it in the legislature, and MLA Peter Rolston (Dewdney) has been very sympathetic. Brian Campbell who ran under the NDP label

in the Vancouver civic election, has also been in favor of aid.

As recently as last November, at a convention dealing strictly with educational policy, party grass-root support for a change has been noticeably absent.

( Continued )

In the past, both Dailly and the minister's brother, Jack Gilmore, a Burnaby principal, have been visible in NDP battles against aid for independent schools. These days, though, Mrs. Dailly is in a poor position to oppose Barrett.

In recent months, the party has undergone some changes. It has generally been the party's leftwing that has opposed aid to independent schools--although the battle lines are sometimes fuzzy. The left within the party has viewed independent schools as institutions that contribute to class differences within the province.

But the NDP's left has lost power after Barrett and his centrist allies waged a quiet campaign to gain firm control of the party machinery. It seems likely that what the premier wants in the way of policy changes at the NDP's annual B.C. convention May 16, he will be able to get.

Arguments for and against public aid to independent schools are many. A person's stand depends, perhaps, most upon how he views the role of schools in society.

Proponents of one public school system have tended to see the school's job as one of providing unity in a pluralistic society. The schools are where children from different backgrounds meet as equals and all are enriched by the experience.

Many parents seeking aid for independent schools, however, maintain that the purpose of schools is to reinforce and hand on to children the culture and values that the elder generation holds. This cannot be done, they argue, in the public system.

The values parents are concerned about very often could be labelled religious. Not surprisingly, the majority of independent schools are connected, directly or indirectly, to religious groups.

Of the Federation of Independent Schools Association's 114 schools, a total of 74 (with 70% of the 23,000 students)

are operated by the Roman Catholic church; 15 belong to the National Union of Christian schools, and are run by groups of parents who often belong to the Christian Reformed Church; 15 are members of the Independent Schools Association, which include the private schools that often take boarders; and ten are a group of schools associated with a variety of faiths and include a Jewish, Menonite, and a Lutheran school.

Especially important is the distribution of votes that might be had by a party promising or granting aid. The issue appears to be more important in interior areas of the province where many independent schools are found.

The NDP in the forthcoming provincial election can use every vote it can muster in constituencies such as Atlin, Skeena, Omineca, Kootenay, Nelson-Creston, Dewdney, and Yale-Lillooet. As might be expected, the NDP MLA's in several of these ridings favor a change in party policy.

Given all these factors, it seems likely it will indeed be the NDP government that makes the significant change in the structure of education in the province.

\*\*The above article is excerpted from an article by Neale Adams, Vancouver Sun, May 2, 1975.

## *Film Society presents*

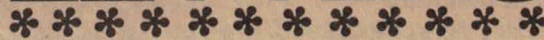
June 3

*ADAM'S RIB*, U.S.A., 1949, 101 mins. directed by George Cukor, starring Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. A hilarious comedy in which two lawyers, a husband and wife team, take opposing sides in a domestic court case. An interesting example of an early film that touches upon women's liberation. The film makes its point with a light touch. Accompanying shorts, *Luckily I Need Little Sleep* and *Would I Ever Love to Work* (National Film Board).

June 10

*GERTRUDE STEIN: WHEN THIS YOU SEE, REMEMBER ME*, U.S.A., 1970, colour, 89 mins. Emmy-winning producer-director Perry Miller Adato has successfully recreated the story of Gertrude Stein through an intriguing combination of photographs, rare films, paintings, and live reminiscences of friends.

# LETTERS



Dear Sisters,

I received your notice that my subscription had run out and I sincerely regret that I am unable to renew it.

I want you to know that your magazine has been very informative and has provided excellent reading in every issue. I will truly miss it. Unfortunately my income has dwindled to nothing (husband caught up in the unemployment rat race, first child expected any day now, etc.) So I have had to, shall we say, "switch my priorities."

Keep up the good work and I look forward to when I can once again join your mailing list.

Best wishes,  
A Reader

(Editor's note -- Any readers wishing to subscribe to Priorities, but not having the money, send your name and address in anyway, and send us the money when and if you can.)

## ART & WOMEN

Dear Madame,

I have been asked to select periodicals to form part of multi-media exhibits entitled "the Festival of Women and the Arts", an International Women's Year program which will take place at the end of May at Toronto's Harbourfront. Harbourfront is a new lakefront development for recreational and leisure time activities for the people of Toronto.

The committee in charge of this festival has decided to interpret "Arts" broadly, to include, for example, dress designing,

photography, creative embroidery and quilt-designing as well as the more traditional architecture, drama, the fine arts, literature and music.

If your magazine has recently featured articles on any female artist or any discussion of women in the arts I should be most grateful if you could send me a copy for inclusion in this exhibition.

Yours truly  
Margret Adair  
Librarian  
East York Public Library  
Toronto

## new arrival


Dear Priorities,

Enclosed you will find a cheque to cover one subscription and a donation.

I am happy to know that such a journal is existant, I am newly arrived within the province, and I would like to extend my sincere regards, acknowledgments for the work -- all the various processes that are involved in such an endeavor.

I enjoyed your April edition and look forward to your future volumes.

Sincerely,  
Donna O'Sullivan,  
Surrey

-----  
  
A diamond is forever.

# OTHER LETTERS

## tubal ligation

Dear Priorities:

Being a recent inhabitant of a maternity ward, I thought I would share the following information passed on to me (in casual conversation) by my gynaecologist. It may be of particular interest to any of our sisters who may have tried to secure a tubal ligation, especially a few years ago.

According to this doctor, the only criterion enabling a woman to be sterilized on her request in 1965 at Vancouver General Hospital was that she had borne 8 children ( 7 was not enough). More recently, in the past few years, the magic number "120" was the criterion, to be arrived at by multiplying the age of the woman times the number of children she had borne. Thus a woman of 30 with 4 children would be eligible, a woman of 39 with 3 would not, nor would a woman of 48 with 2. (Get it?)

Both these criteria have now given way to a consent process which MUST include the written consent of the husband. This contrasts with the criterion for male sterilization where, according to my doctor, a man, married or no, may secure a vasectomy by his own consent simply by walking into a doctor's office and taking down his pants (his own, that is).

By far the most interesting aspect of these criteria is, again according to this gynaecologist, the fact that all the criteria are purely arbitrary, determined by some shibboleth of the medical profession. In other words, there are no laws, no infractions of the criminal code involved.

Incredible.

Regards,  
Sharon Yandle,  
Vancouver

## b.c. fed. of labour

Dear Attorney-General Alex Macdonald:

The Executive Council of the B.C. Federation of Labour at a meeting held April 25th, 1975, endorsed the recommendations of the Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Family and Children's Law--Matrimonial Property, and called upon your government to implement these recommendations at the earliest possible opportunity.

Since this is a question of basic justice in an area where reform is long overdue and since the recommendations will have the support of a great number of citizens with opposition only from a small number of individuals whose vested interests might be threatened, we trust you will act expeditiously to bring in the necessary legislation in the next few months.

Yours truly,  
Len Guy, Secretaru-Treasure  
Secretary-Treasurer,  
B.C. Federation of Labour.

## women's ministry

Dear Premier Barrett:

The Executive Council of our Federation at a meeting held April 25, dealt with resolutions which were part of the unfinished business referred to the Council by our 1974 Convention.

Two of the resolutions which were adopted called on your government to establish a Ministry of Women's Rights and a Ministry of Fisheries. As you may recall, previous conventions have passed these resolutions and we have urged you to create these two much needed Cabinet positions.

We trust you will give serious consideration to these proposals at this time.

Yours truly,  
Len Guy ( As above)

# ROSEMARY BROWN FOR FEDERAL LEADERSHIP

View from the Lower Island

The Lower Island N. D. P. Women's Caucus is very actively working on the campaign for Rosemary Brown for Federal N. D. P. Leader. Everyone's been coming up with creative ideas for raising money to augment the "campaign till" and spread the word about Rosemary's candidacy.

Our children and their friends (with a little help from friend Leni) have produced a fantastic poster for the campaign. The poster's a conglomeration of pictures the kids drew one sunny Saturday. It's available in a light weight suitable for mailing or attaching to anything, and a heavier weight (for more formal occasions). You can colour it! It's black and white and looks great coloured. We will be supplying samples free to anyone and groups can reproduce the poster in any union shop nearby. We'll have more available at the Provincial Convention. We're getting ours reproduced at about \$30 for 500 copies--so think about selling posters in your community--it'll be a good fund raising project as well as publicity!

We will be holding a one-day happening (?) for Rosemary on June 15 (Sunday) at the farm of one of our members. It will be an Arts and Crafts Fair to raise money for the campaign and to send delegates to Winnipeg. We're all planting herbs (Rosemary for Remembrance, and Leader), crocheting, sewing, knitting, throwing pots, dipping candles, batiking, weaving, baking, etc. One highlight will be a "memorabilia" auction of interesting, if not useful, items donated by, "borrowed" from, or made by, M. L. A.'s of note, famous feminists, etc. Many surprises here. Supporters of Rosemary from outside the Lower Island area are also invited,

but please let us know if you're coming from afar by contacting Leni at the address below. We'll also have music groups, games, roasted hot dogs and marshmallows, beer.

We're hoping to hold a "Wine and Cheese" for Rosemary to meet with elected Federal delegates from the Island, some time in June.

Which brings me to the next, and very important, point:

## FIND OUT WHEN YOUR ELECTION FOR FEDERAL DELEGATES WILL

BE! Some ridings have elected already, and not everyone has known about the election meetings. It won't do any good for the "rank and file" to be overwhelmingly behind Rosemary if delegates don't get elected who support her.

We think we need functioning campaign committees for Rosemary in each riding -- to let all members know about Rosemary's dedication and philosophy. If you want to help with her campaign in your own riding, we urge you to contact Rosemary's campaign committee office in Vancouver. They'll send you campaign material and keep you informed. The campaign office is at:

1111 Commercial Drive,  
Vancouver  
Telephone: 354-7411.

You can get sample posters by contacting the campaign office in Vancouver, or in Victoria by writing to:

Leni Hoover,  
3125 Glasgow,  
Victoria  
Telephone: 384-5839.



# WOMEN UNDER CAPITALISM

## WOMEN BECOME

## part 2

### WAGED WORKERS

The basis for the moral superstructure of the Victorians was the capitalist mode of production. The airtight home was her universe where, like a brooding hen the Victorian woman hatched heirs for the rich or more "hands" for the poor. When industry needed workers for its period of expansion there weren't enough males to meet the need. Women were drawn into the labour market to work in the expanding factories and service industries. They also joined the ranks of waged labour to afford their own basic needs and that of their families. They were the first to be laid off in times of recession and the first to be rehired during an expansion of the economy. For better or for worse they were an irreversible factor to be reckoned with. As we shall see, for women, it was usually for worse.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, prior to the gradual introduction of mass production, the cottages of English workers and farmers were the centres of a domestic industry. Towns and villages and the countryside around them were almost self-sufficient entities producing all their needs within the home or small entrepreneur independently employed. Women had great responsibility and with the aid of her

daughters and often servants did the weaving, sewing, mending and made all the clothing and household linen. She had the responsibility for the dairy including the milking and care of the cows and the production of cheese and butter. Many women were noted for the fine cheese they produced. Such a person was a Mrs. Pike, a Berkshire dairy woman who in the early 19th century was famous for small cheeses about five pounds each "made in the shape and external figure of pineapples" which for their "peculiar richness and delicacy of flavour," sold at a considerably higher price than ordinary cheese (1). Women also had responsibility for chickens and egg production, for the kitchen garden and often for the rest of the land as well if her husband happened to be employed by a wealthy farmer in the district. She brewed ale, made soap and candles and baked bread daily. She usually had total responsibility for the education and care of her daughters and, to a lesser degree, her sons.

Added to all this was her role as family financier, advisor to her husband and sometimes the huge task of feeding additional hands if they were hired at harvest time. In addition to her work at home the poorer woman, living on small plots of land, hired themselves out by the day at peak seasons to pick, harvest, weed and help clear land.

( continued )

The surplus products from all this industry were regularly taken to market by the women to be sold for rent money and a few extras if they could afford them. It was an economy of hard work for both men and women but one in which women had responsibility and recognition for her vital contribution.

In Canada a similar development took place. Leo Johnson in Women At Work- Ontario 1850-1930 refers to the self-sufficient farming village economy as the "toiler" society in which households were self sufficient and each member worked.

"Within the toiler economic unit, the role of the woman was crucial. Not only did she labour directly, but she produced the children whose labour was absolutely necessary to the success of the unit. Within the toiler society, there was a clear division of labour between the men, on the one hand, and the women and children on the other. While the men worked in the fields or woods, or sold their labour power off the farm, the women and children worked as a production unit in the area immediately surrounding the house, garden and outbuildings. There they looked after the livestock, tended the garden, picked and preserved fruit and vegetables, spun yarn, wove cloth, made clothing, prepared meals and did the thousand and one tasks which existed around the home....In the toiler society, therefore, the role of women was both integral to commodity production and central to economic organization." (2)

The transition from domestic industry to mass production in factories was an uneven development. Some work, such as cloth production, moved to the public sphere before others. By the late 1800's the factory was producing most commodities and the woman's role

within the home became primarily one of reproduction and nurturing of future workers ( or legitimate heirs if she were wealthy). Great cities grew up housing the factories and the people who worked in them and in Western Europe the industrialists found themselves confronted by an ever growing "proletariat."

Also in Canada, during the last quarter of the 19th century the factory system of industrial capitalism replaced small manufacturers. This change according to Leo Johnson "fundamentally altered the political economy of women." (3)

"The key technological innovation of industrial capitalism lay in its organization of labour; particularly in the replacement of high-cost skilled labour by low-paid unskilled labour, and the replacement of muscle power by machine power. In this process complex skills were broken down into simple repetitive tasks that could be done by the cheapest available workers. For lower-class women this transformation created two new opportunities. First, an economic career other than that of wife-mother or servant became available. Second, for the first time women ( and children) became direct economic competitors (and potentially the economic equals) of men. Up until this transformation the rationalists who had rejected the biblical basis for the social inferiority of women, had explained her subordination on the grounds of her physical weakness and childbearing role. Now it appeared that the Industrial Revolution contained within it the solution to these physical limitations. There were, however, powerful forces working in opposition to such a 'liberation'." (4)

# WOMAN'S FUTURE from the standpoint of "WOMAN'S RIGHTS"

Complacent they tell us, hard hearts and derisive,  
In vain is our ardour: in vain are our sighs:  
Our intellects, bound by a limit decisive,  
To the level of Homer's may never arise.  
We heed not the falsehood, the base innuendo,  
The laws of the universe, these are our friends.  
Our talents shall rise in a mighty crescendo,  
We trust evolution to make us amends!

But ah, when I ask you for food that is mental,  
My sisters, you offer me ices and tea!  
You cherish the fleeting, the mere accidental,  
At the cost of the True, the Intrinsic, the Free.  
Your feelings, compressed in Society's mangle,  
Are vapid and frivolous, pallid and mean.  
To slander you love; but you don't care to wrangle:  
You bow to Decorum, and cherish Routine.

Alas! is it woolwork you take for your mission,  
Or Art that your fingers so gaily attack?  
Can patchwork atone for the mind's inanition?  
Can the soul, oh my sisters, be fed on a plaque?  
Is this your vocation? My goal is another,  
And empty and vain is the end you pursue.  
In antimacassars the world you may smother;  
But intellect marches o'er them and o'er you.

On Fashion's vagaries your energies strewing,  
Devoting your days to a rug or a screen,  
Oh, rouse to a lifework--do something worth doing!  
Invent a new planet, a flying machine.  
Mere charms superficial, mere feminine graces,  
But the knowledge of Newton will beam from your faces,  
The soul of a Spencer will shine in your eyes.

--May Kendall

A Victorian poet.  
From The Canterbury Poets,  
Women Poets, ed. William Sharp.



# HER SPECIAL SPHERE

The general rule in capitalist society has been to view women employed outside the home as an aberration. Only a young single woman or an unfortunate, a spinster or a widow, were granted the privilege. They were never considered a permanent part of the work force. They worked when they had to and married and stayed at home when able to. Their inferior natures meant they were equipped for unskilled work only. Since their employment was of a temporary unskilled character it was justifiable to pay them less than men. After all, in many cases they only worked to supplement their husband's income-- they were not the chief breadwinners.

Work was manly for men, unladylike for women. Marriage was the most honourable career open to her. If she must work then the best thing for her and society would be to move into family-related occupations such as domestic service, governess, nurses, teachers and seamstresses or lacemakers. This was their legitimate sphere. It also effectively segregated male from female in job competition. Leo Johnson calls this solution by capitalist employers "ingenious."

"...With the emphasis throughout society on the necessity of female purity, the purity issue offered a ready-made rationalization. Female workers were pictured as being both physically weaker and morally more corruptible than their male counterparts. In particular the 'mixing of the sexes' in the workplace was cited as a

source of moral and spiritual breakdown among female workers. Because men in both the capitalist and agricultural classes had reason to resist the rise to equality of women, males of the working class found ready collaborators among them. The solution discovered by the capitalist employers was ingenious to say the least. Although the appeals against the employment failed, the separation of sexes was achieved. Within the factory and office, an apartheid system was developed in which certain tasks were designated as 'women's work' and paid for with low wages. As a result, both male goals were achieved. For the capitalists, women still provided a source of cheap industrial labour, while for working-class men, there was a reduction of direct job competition from cheap female labour." (5)

The practical result of this solution can be seen in the following tables.

CENSUS RETURNS ENGLAND 1841	
	Over 20 years of age
Domestic Servant	447,606
Dressmaker, milliner	70,518
Cotton mfg. (all branches)	65,839
Laundry keeper, washer & mangler.	43,479
Schoolmistress, governess	27,754
Charwoman	18,019
Weaver	17,728
Farmer, grazier	15,392
Lace mfg.	14,394
Woolen and cloth mfg.	13,196
Nurse	12,476

These 11 occupations have the greatest number of women. Except for nursing, farming and charwomen the number of women under 20 are proportionally as high. (6)

OCCUPATIONAL BREAKDOWN OF  
THE FEMALE LABOUR FORCE IN  
ONTARIO IN 1914\*

Occupation	Number
Domestics	30,000 to 50,000
Factory workers	53,729
Saleswomen	12,000 to 18,000
Stenographers	26,000
Trained nurses (in private nursing)	2,000 to 3,000
Women who work by the day	5,000 to 6,000

Source: Report of the Ontario  
Commission on Unemployment,  
p.59.

\* This table only includes the  
six major occupations employing  
women in Ontario at this time.  
(7)

## DOMESTICS

From the above tables we see that the largest occupation for English and Canadian women was domestic service. In 1891 domestics accounted for 41% of the female labour force (in Canada): by 1921 domestics represented only 18% of all employed women but were still the second largest category of female workers (8). Because of the primitive household techniques availing servants were much in demand in Canada at the turn of the century and later. Even those of moderate means often required their services. Some assistance was a must for the average farm-woman. She would often house a young orphan girl to meet this need if no one else was available. Under pressure from wealthy Canadians immigration policy in the

early 1900's did much to encourage an influx of servants. Empty promises were made to gullible young women who signed work contracts for six months to a year with unseen employers.

Most women were reluctant to go into service unless forced to. We can see by the large numbers employed that this must have been often the case. Contrary to the blissful picture painted to immigrants of a situation being a home away from home the living accommodation provided was often small, ugly and poorly heated. Hours of work were long, often 16 to 18 hours at heavy labour. Low social status was another drawback. Her job was to serve and to obey and never to forget her menial position. Her existence was a lonely one, her time off very limited, and visitors to her room severely restricted. She may have lived in a family situation but was never part of it--always an outsider. Not that there weren't some advantages. Wages were often better than for factory work and there was always a roof over her head even when wages were low. Also domestic work was more akin to the home "skills" required of a wife and mother so provided good training for the young and was a natural for the older matron.

## TEACHING

Another occupation dominated by women was teaching. In Ontario in 1850 there were 2,697 male teachers and 779 female. In 1902 there were 2,200 male teachers and 6,297 females.(9) Why the notable female increase? A larger population was obviously a factor but only part of the story. More important was the growing need of industrial capitalism for educated workers who would receive

their instruction in a closely scrutinized system that instilled habits of obedience, thrift, punctuality and loyalty to the state. The young woman who choose teaching because it was considered a highly "respectable" vocation was well equipped to pass on to others the skills of obedience and subservience she had learned so well. Most important, these women could also be hired for about half the cost of a male teacher, something to be considered by the budget-conscious school boards. In 1900 a beginning female teacher in Toronto

earned \$314 per annum, a char-woman at the post office \$321, a street sweeper \$421 and a labourer at the stock yards \$546 (10).

Teaching conditions at the turn of the century were appalling--ramshackle cabins that held up to 100 pupils in some areas. In the country schools the teachers were expected to "board" with parents in the locality thus making her life an open book. In the classroom she was expected to carry water, tend fires and do minor repairs. She was not allowed to marry or she forfeited her right



BRIDGE OF SIGHS, AUGUSTUS EGG

to teach. It was not 'til World War II that school boards began to recognize the right of married female teachers to a job. The "equal pay for equal work" demand which originated early in the century also did not become a reality in most areas 'til the 1940's. In 1921 one delegate to the Annual Meeting of the Federation of Women Teachers Association of Ontario put the question very nicely: "the argument that men have more responsibility than women is a hollow one. Men are not paid on that basis (otherwise wouldn't the married lawyer with six children demand higher fees than his bachelor rival?) and besides, talk of responsibility is mere camouflage for a man's sense of superiority."

The "professionalism" of the female teacher impeded her progress. The idea that teachers were superior to the average worker was nurtured by the powers-that-be in their interest. A professional was modest, retiring, deferential. They abhorred trade unions and money demands as crude and unbecoming. It has really only been the last decade that this "professionalism" has begun to disappear and teachers are discovering their common ground with other "workers" and taking a more militant stance. The widespread strike actions by teachers in Quebec in the last few years are a good example.

## NURSING

At one time nurses were untrained semi-servants who spent long hours watching over the sick, usually in the home of the patient. As the state grew, the need for institutionalized health services grew with it. In Canada numerous hospitals were built at the turn of the century and with them the need for

trained nursing staff. When training programs were introduced at this time they were modelled after the famous (Florence) Nightingale School of Nursing. Her ideas, though revolutionary in some respects for her time, were conceived on the Victorian premise that the "professional" nurse should be of a humble, impeccable moral character with nursing skills secondary. This attitude is succinctly expressed in the motto for the first training school for girls: "I see and am silent." (12)

In these schools student nurses averaged 12 hour shifts of hospital training work with lectures coming after her stint on the ward. Indicative of the strain was a high rate of tuberculosis among them. They laundered, mended, cleaned the wards, supervised cooking and diets in addition to their nursing duties. They formed a free source of labour power for the hospital, a notorious practice that still continues to a lesser degree today. Local 180 of the Hospital Employees Union here in B.C. has finally succeeded in getting an apprenticeship training program for practical nurses ( R.N.'s do not come within their jurisdiction) in order to eliminate this. Use of the student nurse for patient care was so prevalent a few decades ago that graduate nurses went begging for jobs or had to go into private duty work, when available, a position with absolutely no fringe benefits and frequent lay-offs.

(Continued)



# OTHER WORKING WOMEN AND PROTECTIVE LEGISLATION

The plight of women working in stores, offices and factories was little different from teachers, nurses (some) and domestics with one exception. She usually worked in larger groups where social interchange took place unhampered by "professionalism." She often worked with or near men who had better jobs with much more money. With a few exceptions, women at the workplace did not take an aggressive role in fighting for better conditions for themselves, aggression being a male prerogative. Women were fearful of losing their jobs ( a fear instilled by the male boss who played on her feelings of inferiority) and fearful of appearing cheap and vulgar if they acted militant like men.

Those who championed women in the early years of the 20th century were often reformers of both sexes and, sometimes, male trade unionists and socialists. These people all viewed women's main job as that of wife and mother. Working conditions that undermined her ability to reproduce and care for her offspring and husband were deplored. It was proper for a woman to work ten hours a day at low wages bent over a machine provided she was given a stool to sit on thus lessening injury to her reproductive organs brought on by long hours of standing. To protect the prospective mother Factory Acts were passed. This "protective legislature" also covered children. The reason given

by one factory inspector for such legislation:

"When I tell you that today we have in this province (Ontario), women working in the foundries, machine shops, and breweries, some of the weaker sex, and not a few of their champions will be surprised. I do not mention this as meaning to say that labour for women and children is degrading but rather to show ample reason why they should be protected.... the effect of propagation by the present race and the degeneration of future generations." (13)

Another inspector, stressing the fact that factory doors had to be kept unlocked at all times, said:

"Woman is a helpless creature of impulse. Some would beat at the door vainly with their hands; others would faint away. Some would rush for the window and if there were any real danger, might throw themselves headlong into the street." (14)

Much of the legislation enacted in Canada, often valid protection needed by both sexes, became merely further means of barring her from job choices.

(Continued)





This mentality is expressed here in 1975 by Dr. Scott Wallace, a Conservative member of the Legislative Assembly who thinks that a pregnant airline stewardess would not be able to stand the stress of her job especially in the event of a crash. ( I refer you to the case of the two North Vancouver women laid off by Pacific Western Airlines last year while pregnant and presently being taken to court by the Federal Department of Labour.)

## CONCLUSION

This survey of women under capitalism and the first part appearing in last month's issue have been longer than many of our articles but not as long as they might have been. Bearing in mind that we are a popular magazine and not a theoretical journal, I have attempted to present the main characteristics of women's oppression during the last century, knowing full well that I have only touched the surface of the subject, the mere surface. I hope I have stimulated your interest sufficiently to fill in the gaps with your own reading. I apologize (that isn't the right word) for giving you statistics centered almost completely in Ontario but conditions here were certainly similar to the rest of Canada. Finally, I am indebted to the writers of a Canadian book about Canadian women: Women at Work- Ontario 1850-1930 (see foot footnotes).

Ruth Houle,  
Delta.



## FOOTNOTES

1. Ivy Pinchbeck-Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. page 15.
2. Women at Work-Ontario 1850-1930. The Women's Press, Ste.305, 280 Bloor St.W., Toronto. page 16.
3. Ibid, page 28.
4. Ibid, page 28.
5. Ibid, page 29.
6. Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution. page 317.
7. Women at Work-Ontario. page 69.
8. Ibid, page 71.
9. Ibid, page 200.
10. Ibid, page 192.
11. Ibid, page 196.



## THE GAP WIDENS

The gap in average earnings between men and women widened between 1969-1972 in half of the 74 selected occupations, the 1974 Federal Women's Bureau Report says.

In 27 of the 54 manufacturing jobs surveyed, the gap in pay has widened, a Federal Labour Department Survey shows. The differentials also increased for seven of the 10 office jobs, one of seven service occupations and two of three technical jobs.

In managerial jobs, where women are 14.3% of the labour force, average earnings for men are 107.4% higher than those of women.

Average pay for men in clerical work is 56.7% higher than that of women. About 72% of jobs in this category are filled by women. Earnings of men in sales jobs, which are 38.8% filled by women, exceed the pay to women by 167.9%.

"Although women workers still represent only one-third of the labour force, they do not occupy a place in the labour force remotely proportionate to their numbers, either in terms of occupational distribution or in terms of compensation" the report says.

# A TALE OF A JOB DESCRIPTION MEN CAN'T ANSWER PHONES

A tale just told to me by a friend, whom I'll call Jane....

Jane works for a downtown Vancouver company handling research and some managerial duties. She was recently given the task of hiring a clerk to replace a 19 year old woman who had quit.

She phoned an agency and said her company needed a "girl Friday."

"We don't call them that any more," Jane was told. "You must consider hiring 'persons', male or female." "Fine," said Jane, "as long as I find someone who is qualified."

The agency sent seven applicants--three women and four men. Jane interviewed them all, and chose one of the men. He was easily the best qualified, with office experience in government and all the appropriate skills for the position he was to fill. He was in his late thirties and had been out of work for nine months and living in a rooming house. He was Filipino but had no problems with the English language.

When Jane's supervisor learned of the hiring, he was somewhat shocked. The job had always been filled with pretty young "girls" and this departure was viewed with apprehension. However, the new man quickly proved he could do the job. After a few days Jane's supervisor told her: "He's fine. We're considering him for a promotion."

Jane protested. The new man, while quite competent in his present job, had no greater IQ -- in some cases less -- than the other people who had filled that job, all of whom had been women. And they were never offered a promotion. He was also far less skilled and adaptable than Jane. "Why not consider me for promotion?" she inquired.

Other problems have arisen. The new man isn't expected to make the

coffee, even though it was the task of his predecessor to do so. Other men in the office (engineers, etc.) avoid giving him menial work, such as running the Xerox machine.

The crunch came the other day when Jane was called into the office of the president of the company. After commenting on the new man's performance, which was considered good, the president added .... "but we don't want him answering the phones."

Jane explained that he only handled phone calls when the receptionist, a woman, was at lunch, for one hour each day. The president said that was still unsatisfactory, that only women should answer the phones.

"This women's lib stuff of yours has gone too far this time, Jane."

"Garbage," said Jane, who has been known as the office feminist since she started with the firm, because of her views and her tendency to wear pants and long skirts instead of mini-skirts.

If she had put women's rights first, she told her boss, she would have hired one of the female applicants to get one more woman into the work force.

"I simply chose the applicant I felt was best suited," she said.

The man wasn't moved, and he "suggested" that Jane should answer the phones when the receptionist wasn't there. Jane refused, pointing out it was ludicrous that her research job, at double the new man's salary, should be abandoned for five hours a week to do something that somebody else was hired for. Furthermore, she gave the company president an ultimatum (her first in 11 months of employment with the firm): either the male clerk is given all the duties included in that position's job description by May 1, or she will resign



# poetry

review by Shirley Miller

Reviews in Priorities have been a means of discussing 'women's art', drawing examples and insights to our attention which, considering the male-master syndrome of our education system, may likely have escaped our awareness. Hopefully many of you will start to jot down a few notes when you read, see or hear women's art, put them into a few paragraphs or pages, and send them on to Priorities. Also, if you would like to see more reviews, let us know.

One of my own particular interests is poetry. I write some myself which I show to almost no-one, and I am finding that this is the case with many other women. When a woman does decide to attempt publication and achieving an audience, a kind of reticence and fear and often FACT of unfriendly response continues to inhibit. Personal reticence is something which I feel almost all women know something about; it is a product of many things (i. e. oppression). In regard to the arts these might be summed in the unsubtle put-down, "Women don't do that... at least NOT well!" In Victorian times upper class women were often very well educated. But because of this unfair taboo there were MANY (I expect) potential Bronte's, Austen's, Woolf's that we will never know.

Have you been asked, "Yes, but can you name any TRULY great women artists...?" I remember hearing this in University before I had encountered feminist-socialist consciousness. And I nodded in ignorance and became even more private about my own writing.

In the past year I have been excited by reading the poetry of Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn MacEwen, two well known eastern Canadians. Neither profess to be feminist-socialists but both have a

consciousness of a full and growing person within herself juxtaposed with complexly repressive relationships with men and with society which would have her quiet, dependent and full more in the sense of pregnant. Perhaps in the next few months their poetry could be discussed in Priorities (any volunteers??). They are mentioned here by way of introduction to a Vancouver poet. I felt that if GREAT women poets were writing elsewhere in Canada, there were probably some in B. C.

I have discovered this is so, and Pat Lowther is one of them. She has three books published: This Difficult Flowering, 1968; The Age of the Bird (about Che Guevara), 1972; and recently Milk Stone. You will have difficulty buying a copy of the last book because, for some reason, no book stores in B. C. are selling it, including the Vancouver Women's Book Store. If you think you'd like to buy it, phone or write to a book store near you and ask for it. This problem of achieving the potential audience for women's art IS POLITICS!

Throughout Pat's poems I discovered a sense of being a woman which was sometimes baffling but intricately beautiful, powerful and instructive. In "Regard to Neruda", she concludes:

Often now I forget  
how to make love  
but I think I am ready  
to learn politics.

In speaking with her I learned of one of her political involvements which supported in practice the idea suggested in her poems of woman's ability to overcome soul-depleting struggles. She is the first 'chair-creature' (she mentioned being referred to as this--artistic for

chairperson??) of the Canadian League of Poets. This organization is "not quite a union" of poets who wish to help one another cope with the 'other' of publishing companies, book stores, sponsors for public readings..audience. Pat suggested that the League might become more of a union in the future. While drawing up a budget application for some on-going funding from the Canada Council involving some \$30,000, Pat received a visit from the Hydro Co. threatening cut off of service for a bill of something like \$30. Given our society's attitudes towards artists (who??) and women, how does she survive? Sometimes you just have to laugh, as we did. ...And act, as Pat is doing by writing good poetry, giving (I have heard from others) exquisite readings, doing C. B. C. interviews (i. e., to expose the poor poetry review situation in B. C., particularly in the Sun), and being the League's first chair-creature.

As in the poems of Margaret Atwood and Gwendolyn MacEwen, there is an awareness of being oppressed in Pat's writing. In the following excerpt (from "Letter to the Majority") a sense of power and frustration very much in common with that of Atwood and MacEwen is clear:

You send us casual  
directives--Eat me, Drink me.  
We brush your language  
from the pages of books.  
it is a momentary diversion.  
The only way you can  
speak to us  
is by speaking to the whole world.

By studying Pat Lowther's three poetry books, I began to form a picture of a female body/universe--webbed/emplosive; branched/ explosive; alive/ over extended; loving/ frustrated; solicitous/ angry. Reading her poems gave me a mental and emotional lift; through her images I felt more centred and admirable in being a struggling

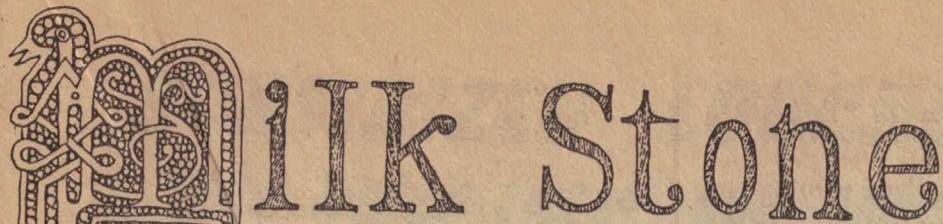
woman myself.

We are including the following long poem so you can decide if my experience is shared. Sometimes reading poetry can be intimidating, involving dictionaries and concentration. When this is the case with Pat Lowther's poems, the effort is well worth it. I looked up 'arras' for this poem (wall hanging or screen of tapestry) and a Greek and Roman Mythology Dictionary to refresh my memory about Penelope and Ulysses.

Ulysses is a legendary traveller. He was sent to Troy to help in the rescue of Helen and his return voyage, for many devious and wayward reasons, took about twenty years. Meanwhile his faithful wife Penelope was plagued with suitors who wished to claim herself and her kingdom. To off-put them she said that she would choose a husband when her tapestry was woven, and each night she undid her day's work so that she could escape such a marriage. There are conflicting renditions of the happiness resulting from the eventual reunion of Ulysses and Penelope. Pat suggests in this poem a poor reward for such faithfulness, with many implications for our woman's tendency to be 'devoted' as lovers, mothers, nursemaids.

Section one, two and three give her-story dimension to the mythical tale, the theme throughout being the beauty and truth of woman strained by gravity, society's pressures and moral over-simplifications, and a restrictive self image. (The poems and excerpts are printed curtesy of Borealis Press, Ottawa, Canada, the publishers of Milk Stone. Pressure for better distribution of the book should also be directed to them.)





# Milk Stone

## Penelopes

1

When we see the dancer  
move her slim form  
in speech purer than speech

we do not see the muscles strain  
and reach;

we do not think of years unlearning  
earth's hard facts.  
or of the sweat it takes  
to break the pattern the mind makes  
of stone and apple-fall,  
or how the will is set and firm  
in snipping the tough warp of gravitation

leaving space to conceive her body's acts  
of delicate free levitation.

2

Admiring a XIVth century arras,  
woven perhaps by some less faithful dame,  
we see a gentle fable of the time:  
virgin and unicorn on silken grass.

The shapely doll-house landscape stands bemused;  
the beast, a sublimate of darker gods,  
moves ceremoniously. Beyond the woods  
the hunter's hounds stand marble-still, confused.

Tracing the symmetry of peacock trees  
eyed with such fruit as gardens never grew  
we can be charmed and, half-amused, agree  
about that other time's naiveties

Yet, in the ancient stitched design, not see  
the twin duplicity depicted here,  
as maid and unicorn approach the hour  
which all their patterned lives would make them flee.

How stealthily the girl must loose her fears  
of horn, and of its fleshy referent  
and all imagining of brute affront,  
that innocence may be as it appears.

And how the timid unicorn, all taut  
with nerves that know the smallest shift of leaf  
must now renounce all learning of his life,  
and willfully walk forward to be caught.

3

When I was Penelope  
I lived  
for the one gold day  
in a winter's rain

unravelling every night  
what I had learned of pain

I searched for the faces of friends and lovers  
on buses  
in the street crowd

secretly

I was proud  
I could make one  
fat drop of sun  
burst its warm juices on my head.

So prized and lovely that,  
it could sustain  
my work of slyly tearing, thread by thread  
what I had learned

of enemies

and the heart's maze  
and the demon-perilled journey between  
first and second thought

4

So the old boy came home,  
burst brawling into the anteroom,  
interrupting forever covert yawns  
scurrilous anecdotes  
sweet songs —

the place at once a melee of kicked bums,  
hacked limbs,  
slimy with blood of those who hadn't been quick  
or didn't bounce far enough on the first kick —

Blood to the elbows, he howled:  
"Woman, where in hell's my towel? "

He believed her finally, and her slaves;  
examined the tapestry she wove and unwove;  
accepted her as loyal;

but there was distance in his eyes,  
veiled inattention she had come to recognize  
in suitors, begging her for loving looks  
while mentally counting vines and flocks.

He dozed over wine,  
made love indifferently;

his eyes kept turning, sucking, to the sea;  
he would start, "Did I tell you about the time —"

then shrug, and go out to gossip with his men.

In a matter of weeks  
he was off again

and Penelope, left with her flawed work  
had it to face:

She could have spun her hanging of her hair  
or made her bed a market thoroughfare —  
he didn't care.

And it came to a choice:  
whether to let her age-long labour fall,  
grow old and bitter, turn her face to the wall,  
or somehow to gather will,  
begin unpicking the pattern of her life,  
and weave again

designs

of innocence and disbelief . . .

Pat Lowther

# **SUBSIDIZED LUNCHES**

## **WHO NEEDS THEM and WHO GETS THEM?**

Hot nutritious food for pre-school children. Innocent enough one would think. But then the concept of collective care of children also appears innocent. Unfortunately the people who control the childcare structure do not see these as simple requests.

...And so there we were with our pickets and a hundred kids knocking on the doors of the Legislature.

Our immediate problem was nutritious food for pre-school kids (18 months to 5 year) at South Hill Day Care Centre. This east end centre has financial problems, and has had them since it first opened two and one quarter years ago. That's not the only problem they have either. South Hill was started because of the great demand for child care in that area, and this also included the desperate need for care of children under three.

Well to win that right (care for children under three) it took much negotiating with the day care officials and strong participation in an eleven day occupation of the Day Care Information Centre.

Next, South Hill hired some staff that were not card carrying supervisors, only competent child care workers. This staff also decided to operate as a collective. To make this possible they again spent much energy on communication with day care officials and finally instituted a law suite against the Minister of Health, Dennis Cocke.

But back to the food problem. Ever since South Hill opened it has been serving good nutritious food as a part of its program to give quality care to children.

Finally the financial situation became desperate. The rent increased from \$100.00 to \$325.00. Cost of food and supplies are increasing constantly. So

after much discussion, letter writing, phone calls, budget juggling, begging and demanding, we once again found ourselves making legislative sit-in signs for South Hill.

Women's Groups in Vancouver, New Westminster, and Victoria, sent representatives. Pooh Corner, Clark Park, Latch Key, and the New School came with some of the staff, kids and parents. South Hill closed up for the day and rented a bus to Victoria. We planned to sit-in at the hot lunch tax subsidized MLA cafeteria.

Working in a group with kids is a wonderful experience. It is still a natural process for them. They care about each other, as a group and as individuals. The majority of people present were children, they set the tone. The hysteria that is so often present on demonstrations was absent. This was very serious business, a job to do and to do well.

All of these kids knew children now in, or who had been in South Hill. They could relate to the problem of having no food. Children instinctively understand how important food is to their well being. They know that they eat better, more regularly, and much more comfortably in groups of their peers.

Kids who are up at 6:30 a.m. and rushed off to a day care centre, often can't physically manage to eat breakfast until a hour or two later. At this time they will devour their bag lunch and be crantically hungry until a tired parent picks them up at dinner time. But the parent must go home and cook before either of them can eat.

After we arrived in Victoria, we attempted to go to the MLA's lunch room. Two middle aged Sargent-at-Arms blocked the entrance. These fellows sent for help,

and two others arrived.

The physical result of four people halting the forward movement of 150 people is a lot of crushing. When it was apparent that these fellows didn't care what tactics they used, even kicking a four year old, the parents of the front called for a stop.

We then sat down and ate our bag lunches, in the halls of the legislature. During this time we were wooed by Allan Williams (Lib) and Big Bill Bennett (Soc), all who received the reply of "and what did you ever do for Day Care?!!", and so they left.

When Norm Levi sent word he would talk with us, everyone filed down to his board room. He discussed the impossibility of his budget and how you can't be all things to all people at all times.

Feeling very frustrated we decided to move on to discuss Mr. Levi's inadequate budget with Mr. Barrett. But he was nowhere to be found. Some one suggested that he would be in caucus and the group moved on to the caucus room.

The caucus was a little taken aback at our arrival, but grudgingly granted us five minutes to state our case. After two minutes they murmured, "send us a copy of your budget and we will see if we can help you manage your money better," (except for Colin Gabelmann, who read the morning paper throughout our visit).

Instead of leaving, we insisted on pointing out that children are EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY! To leave the problem of developing good child care in B.C. entirely to Norm Levi was irresponsible of each and everyone of them.

**WE'VE EATEN  
THANKS!**





The next day the daily press trashed all over us. Not surprising, but still infuriating. Actually, it is only a reflection of how our culture at large feels about women and children.

Neither are actually considered complete human beings. Both should be seen and never heard, let alone unite with one another and take to parliament!

Press reports talked of adults using kids, and wrote outright lies about children attacking guards. It was obvious that the guards were interviewed, but not one reporter tried to talk to any of us.

The kids who went on that demonstration from the New School understood the issue. They discussed the problem, debated tactics with one another, and each of them made a decision to join the protest trip to Victoria.

One of the immediate results of the trip was the demystification of government for the children who went. It was summed up very clearly by a six year old who turned to Levi, as we started to leave the interview we'd had with him, and demanded, "If you were me and I was Norman Levi, and I had just finished my subsidized hot lunch, and YOU had sandwiches in a bag; how would YOU FEEL?"

EPILOGUE: The children at South Hill are presently eating bag lunches. We hope they won't be doing this for long.

-Margaret Sigurgeirson  
Vancouver.

# women's history project

The Women's Auxiliary of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union has initiated a project to commemorate International Women's Year. We have obtained a small grant to research and write a booklet on the part played by women in the building of the trade union movement in B.C. This is an important aspect of our history that has long been neglected.

We intend to concentrate our efforts on the role of women in the trade union movement, whether actual union members or not. As a limited amount of research has been done in this area, we will be dependent on information from trade union files, personal recollections and data and public archives. And for this, we will need the aid and cooperation of trade unionists and interested persons throughout B.C. We will be travelling to areas of the province seeking information and going to the archives of various cities.

If you, your organization or your union can supply information, please contact:

WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT  
UNITED FISHERMEN AND ALLIED WORKERS  
138 EAST CORDOVA STREET,  
VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

PHONE: 684-1744 or 684-3254

LOWER MAINLAND NDP WOMEN'S MEETING--  
JUNE 4, 7:45 RM.201-1956 WEST BROADWAY--  
ALL NDP WOMEN WELCOME -----

TOPIC: WOMEN'S RESOLUTION PASSED AT 1974 CONVENTION.

# WHY we're here

???

In the past year I have been educated in humility, self defense and patience by the continued incredulous and inactive response of our Government to the Women's Policy Committee. On the other hand, I have gained a pride in the women who have not given up. I have not given up, but I have only been here for a year---the whole arena of political activity and education is still new and exciting for me. But there are a number of women in our caucus who have been struggling for the rights of all women in B. C. for many, many years, WITHIN the often discouraging confines of the N. D. P. Party. Hilda Thomas, one of these, mentioned at a meeting recently a comment by a woman telling others how to 'liberate' themselves: "We have to face it, it's a man's world" (i. e., 'and we have to compete on THEIR terms'). Hilda said she refused to face any such thing, and that's why she is still here. I agree. If it looks like a man's world now when over half the population are female, then some BIG changes are needed to create a balance. We don't need a new society of 'women AS men'; we need a new society of 'women AND men'. There's a crucial distinction.

I am troubled when I hear feminists comment that the problem is "individual", that with perserverance women should be able to achieve as much liberation as men in our society. Some of these women recognize that the position of men is often not very positive. I agree. So why put all out energies into this deficient goal? And why hedge at facing the common and

comprehensive oppression of women by patriarchy and capitalism? Our society requires radical change, and the nature of this change is being suggested by those of us who have a socialist perspective.

I have found that the privacy I protected before my politicization was so insular and insecure that my own growth and productivity were hampered. It was a surprising experience for me to talk about the parts of my life which hurt in a consciousness raising group (The Courtenay Women's Group), and to realize that these pains were NOT PRIVATE or inevitable through discussion in a political action group (The N. D. P. Women's Committee). I have found that this Committee is the ONLY outlet available through which I can participate in the necessary education, solidarity and political lobby to effect the kind of change I feel is crucial for women, and for men. So that's why, despite the discouraging deafness and hostility within the 'family', I'M HERE!  
by Shirley Miller

VANCOUVER FILM SOCIETY PRESENTS

## Women's Lives



May 27

A *DOLL'S HOUSE*, Great Britain, 1973, colour, 95 mins. The film version with Claire Bloom and Anthony Hopkins of Ibsen's classic play, one of the earliest plays to deal with woman's role in society. Accompanying short, *The Cree Hunter of Misstassini* (National Film Board).

CALL 266 2280, 929-3823, or 681-4452

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERIES,

Tickets are available from all Duthie Book Stores or by mail from

The Vancouver Film Society  
2555 W. 45th Avenue  
Vancouver 13, B.C.

# WHERE WE'RE AT

My own interpretation of where we're at in the NDP might begin seven years ago when at age 31 I realized I had not taken any part in political decision making in the Party. I canvassed in an election but knew little more about party policy after that election than I had before. This is a reality--girls and women have not been encouraged to take an active role in politics.

Or I might begin with the Federal Convention three years ago. I was impressed by the part women delegates played. The time ALLOWED at that convention for issues relating to women was the result of "militant" action on the part of women delegates insisting that there be one hour out of three days.

Or I might recount my disappointment three years ago when a large conference of women interrupted their proceedings to confront a member of our government. His reply to our call for action was, "Women's rights policies are not a priority with this government." I have had great difficulty understanding that response and have been attempting to do so for three years.

The opposition I have encountered in my own club and constituency when I have run for a position, introduced resolutions, or asked that Affirmative Action legislation be discussed illustrates the lack of understanding of many party and government members of the discrimination and economic realities that women encounter in every area of their lives at some time.

The kind of organization in my own constituency which has a number of clubs and a council made up of delegates from each club discourages new members from taking an active role. It does not encourage women to assume positions other than secretary, or treasurer, or membership chairman, or social convenor. It also acts as a barrier preventing policy discussion

reaching club members.

I am here because the things I have been involved in the last year have convinced me that legislative change is a priority with women in all kinds of women's groups in B.C. and other provinces, and that legislation can provide leadership for change. It is valid that we maintain our position on policy such as 24 hour free childcare because the basis for this policy is correct for women, men and children in our society. We cannot talk of social justice and overlook these policies.

Recently I was surprised to find that the Royal Commission on the Status of Women Report includes a Minority Report by one commissioner John Humphrey. It illustrates the lack of understanding that many men have:

"I have always defended the rights of women. For 20 years, indeed....."

"I do favor day-care centres...but..."  
"It is my firm belief that, in the kind of society into which we seem to be moving, the destiny of women is in their own hands."

He explains why he cannot support a number of the recommendations and they mirror the reasons I have heard from some party members.

The report itself analyses the role of women in political parties. "Women suffrage was won by public campaigns, but the election of women candidates depends on party structure and procedure. It is at this point that women have found it exceedingly difficult to progress toward a fairer representation. Women face two obstacles: a reluctance on the part of male party officials to take a chance on admitting women when they are not convinced that women can do the job as well as they can, and a certain reluctance on the part of most established women's organizations to abandon their position of non-partisanship in political affairs and to support qualified women for public office."  
( p. 345 Royal Commission Report)

We continue to work at what we believe is valid, willing to be "militant" or to "confront" and to analyse our decisions.  
\*\* Margaret Beardsley\*\*

# Adventures of a PRIORITIES Worker

One of the monthly tasks which must be done in addition to planning, writing, and typing each issue is the final task of doing the mailing. Now this job may seem rather routine, dear Priorities reader, but it affords satisfaction, mechanical as it may be, to feed seven to eight hundred magazines through the postage metre, and to attend to other small details such as sending the notices "This is your last issue!" and "your subscription ran out last month". The satisfaction comes from several things. Each month we note different names in various parts of B.C. and Canada and some of these names are familiar. Many of course are not and yet we cannot help with a publication like Priorities without sending personal warm feelings with each issue. Usually two or three of us do the mailing and it is a co-operative effort in which we share. It takes us to the Provincial Office where usually we see one or two other party members, who may or may not be subscribers. We are normally anxious to see how the issue looks, how the letter-setting turned out, the photographs and finally I personally can hardly wait to read articles or letters I may not have read during the work weekend.

There is the satisfaction of driving through the enormous automatic doors of the Post Office, up the steep ramp into another inside world of trucks of all sizes, backing up to an unloading dock and lifting out the boxes myself. No male rushes up to offer to do it!

The final satisfaction comes from

taking copies to a few bookstores around town which also stock numbers of women's books, and inevitably buying one or two, or more.

## Some recent acquisitions:

Room of One's Own Vol.1, No.1, Spring 1975. A Feminist Journal of Literature and Criticism. \$1.50

How enjoyable to take the first issue home and enjoy it on Sunday morning. The fiction, the reviews, and the poetry are good and show pictures of women's lives one does not encounter among the recipes and advertisements in the usual women's magazines. Nothing to offend the eye but much to lift the spirit and reinforce one's determination that women's lives shall be different.

I especially enjoyed "Spending the Morning in Paradise" by Nancy Thayer, a short story. Mattie Leonard is elderly, living on her own on her farm where she still looks after some animals and her life in spite of her children saying it is, "Too much work for you, mother". Nancy Thayer describes her animals as "old like her, friendly like her, lonesome like her". The author tells about the activities of one morning as reminisces about the birth of her first child, Mattie, and then thinks of her other children, "All the joy going on for years and years, after the first short sharp time of pain and fear. Perhaps, Mattie thought, death was like that."

How real, how like my grandmother and my mother, and other rural women, I thought.

Dorothy Livesay discusses her reasons for editing a book of poetry by Canadian women titled Forty Women Poets of Canada as a "kind of preface after the event" and includes three short poems, all of which leave indelible pictures in the mind. One, "Miscarriage" by Elspeth Strang is filled with feeling. This is a part of it:

blood flow  
    ing  
        down  
  
rushing  
deep river of  
    red  
deep in pained womb  
    tearing fearing  
my belly screams...

How important it is that women write and have the opportunity to publish.

Subscription \$5.00 per year from Room of One's Own, c/o Growing Room Collective, 9-2520 Prince Albert Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 3X1

## ***Branching Out***

Branching Out is a magazine being published every two months by a group of women in Edmonton. It is truly impressive in its style, quality and format. It is being printed on high quality glossy paper and includes fine black and white photographs, sketches, fiction, poetry, and articles. The advertisements do not intrude and are quite good but probably too few as the production is costly.

One of our readers suggested that we review it following our December issue when Shelly Dillon reviewed MS. and Chatelaine. At that time I was not familiar with it but found copies in the Women's Bookstore. I have read four issues including the November-December issue which is the first anniversary issue. I have to offer praise because I believe the women who are producing it are achieving their goal and not without difficulty.

The anniversary issue gives much background of how they began and the difficulties they encountered. They wanted to publish a regular magazine of quality rather than a newsletter, a magazine which would serve as a forum for the ideas of Canadian women. Their first issue cost \$4,000, much of which they financed through personal loans. They have received contributions from organizations and individuals and some funding. Their advertisers include bookstores, art galleries, the C.B.C. and the Alberta Government. They too are working on a volunteer basis in addition to having other regular jobs, and thus most of the work is done on weekends or in the evenings. They have sought contributions widely and yet are only able to pay small amounts as yet to those who contribute. How familiar it all sounds! They began with little experience in magazine work and attempted to avoid the usual hierarchal structure of a publishing organization but have in time regularized their organization developing committees for layout, for design and to handle business.

(Continued)

Buy a  
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# hi-lites \*

OF

## Branching Out

"Both Sides Now" is intended to serve as a forum in which women can discuss opinions. The Jan-Feb. 1975 issue printed a short article on treatment of female inmates who are completely ignored in Canadian prisons from the point of view of rehabilitation except for the Elizabeth Fry society. Female prisoners have histories of multiple abortions, children born out of wedlock, drugs, guilt and self-destruction. Many, the majority, are illiterate and poverty stricken and few live beyond age 35.

"Here and There" serves as a directory of women's organizations, publications, and upcoming events in the Women's Movement.

"People in this Issue" has sketches of the writers and artists who have contributed to the current issue. All are women. A good feature.

FICTION "Visiting Rights" by Peggy Fletcher in the Nov-Dec. '74 issue is a poignant short story of a mother visiting her young daughter who is perhaps 11 or 12 years old, and who lives with her father. "She is my child, my past ...something to hold on to" reflects the mother. "You are happy with Daddy, aren't you. I mean everythings okay, isn't it?"

The visit is a precious time but not easy. "Everything I do with my child is an effort. It does not come smoothly and easily like it does with most mothers. It never did." And gradually, subtly unfolds the story of a mother who did not enjoy pregnancy, or childbirth, for whom the pill

failed, whose family did not understand, and eventually she had an emotional breakdown. The accompanying sketch in grays shows her reaching out.

"Through New Eyes, 7000 Years of Nursing" by Carole Ten Brink (Jan-Feb. 1975) reviews nursing history from a feminist perspective. "Nurses are all women. They are the actualization of society's symbol for women.... self-sacrificing saints...sex objects." the author says, and through history actual physical care of the sick was left to slaves, attendants and women. The religious orders and sisterhoods offered women their first freedom of choice for a life which could be more socially valued and rewarding. In the second part of the article the author examines present day practice and nurses' approaches to professionalism and a different role.

Other articles have included "Women in the Soviet Union", an article about Margaret Atwood, and a sketch of Kathleen Shannon and the films she made for NFB, known as the "Working Mothers Series" as part of the program, Challenge for Change.

I feel I must praise this magazine but also add some critical comments. The editorial policy does not seem clear. What is the feminist perspective of the women producing the magazine? One editorial says, "It would not be useful to simply reiterate the arguments surrounding the most familiar feminist causes in Canada. If we can present them with new insight we will. If public discussion of these issues seems to be lagging, we will try to revive it." They say that issues like the Morgentaler and Murdock cases have already been extensively covered by other media (Nov-Dec. '74).



And in the March-April '75 edition "I am concerned that some of us are becoming professional feminists and separatists. By banding together in groups we've scored some much needed changes in the way of liberating women and shifting the balance in a previously male-dominated and oriented society.... Women's groups still have a legitimate role to play out, lobbying for daycare facilities, equal pay for equal work, and control over our own bodies....But I know too many women for whom these are no longer or never were problems. They have been educated to the level of their choice; they have jobs which are not sex-defined, they have freedom either within or without marriage and family....It's an individual problem."

We who have been writing for Priorities and working actively within a political party cannot agree that many changes which are basic to overcoming women's oppression have been scored. The balance has not shifted. It is not an individual problem. Many women do not recognize the discrimination they face each day of their lives. Government members have said that women's rights are not a priority within their legislative programs, and their actions prove this to be so.

I believe that it is essential that women writing in a publication such as Branching Out recognize the importance of a feminist perspective and also a political perspective. Many changes in our society will only occur through changes in the basic social structures and through political action.

Branching Out recently included a questionnaire asking for readers comments and suggestions. Answers varied from "because it's where I'm at," to comments such as "there are so many areas dormant which should be aired and fought over!" Margaret Beardsley.

# perseverance

Priorities is a lot of work and from the first issue, we on the Editorial Committee have seen it as a function of survival as well as good political strategy to replace ourselves. After all such delightful tasks as typing, letter setting, pasting and addressing should be shared by the greatest number. And "to each according to her need" means to us who are overworked and not paid long and frequent holidays. Or at least one weekend a year off!

With this in mind we resolved to throw the burning torch to others who would get Priorities out. More often than not unfortunately the torch has not been picked up and we find ourself back at the old typewriter. Not to be defeated we have decided to use biology to shape our destiny (in a positive way for a change). Within our first 18 months of operation Cynthia Flood and Sharon Yandle took up the challenge and produced two babies- female sex. One of them Isabel Flood has already become notorious by eating a cigaret butt at the '74 Convention. The second- Jessica- has already contributed to Priorities by adding her cryptic comments to an editorial.

We have had a male baby at some work weekends but true to fashion he has refused to do any typing. Not to be discouraged by the anarchistic tendencies of her first daughter Sharon has produced another- named Victoria. Melodie keeper-of-the books not to be outdone in anything but silence plans the birth of a child or water-mellon in June. These's one thing to be said about NDP women we may not always get results but we don't give up easily.

\*\*\*\*\*

Subscription: \$5.00 per year  
BRANCHING OUT  
BOX 4098  
EDMONTON, ALBERTA  
T6E 4T1

\*\*\*\*\*

dire needs of families - women's position in the labour force will not substantially improve. Employers will continue to be able to seek women workers to fill menial positions at low rates of pay.

Recommendation to bring women working in the home into the paid sector of the economy.

(1) Every person who is working either full or half-time at home caring for children has the right to X number of dollars per week, based on the estimated number of hours of work.

(2) Account should be taken for the extra time required for extra children. An extra child does not mean double time.

(3) Provision for upgrading child care skills and salary.

(4) To recognize that some people are giving up considerable income, provision should be made to ensure that no one receives less than a specified percent (75%) of the lost income up to a specified maximum, at least for the period in which large scale day care is not feasible.

(5) Some method should be found to give additional pay levels to persons who are single support, if for no reason other than the fact that the lack of a second income means fewer labour-saving devices, more effort expended in budgeting, meal preparation etc.

\* \* \* \* \*

1975 Federal Resolution for NDP July Convention: Salary and other related employment benefits for parent caring for his/her pre-school child at home.

WHEREAS the New Democratic Party is determined to eliminate poverty and is committed to ensuring that all of the workers in our country have adequate remuneration and employment benefits; and

WHEREAS the parent working at home caring for his/her pre-school children is both unpaid and without income security and other employment benefits; such as

sick leave, worker's compensation, vacation pay and pensions; and

WHEREAS this situation pushes many families and individuals into poverty, resulting in the need for many welfare programs that are costly both in budget outlays and loss of human dignity;

WHEREAS the 1973 Convention proposal for a "progressive movement toward a system of salaries for mothers or fathers who are making a full-time job of caring for their pre-school children" has been adopted as party policy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this convention declare early implementation of programs ensuring these workers adequate salary and employment benefits to be party policy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this convention urge our federal executive and provincial NDP governments to utilize their resources to see that full and immediate studies are undertaken and published showing the relationship between this lack of pay and employment benefits and the poverty levels in this country so that the federal government and the people of this country are made aware of the pressing need for such legislation.

\*\*\* We have published the above resolution to be presented at the Convention in the hope that delegates and other members will have an opportunity to discuss this controversial policy before the convention. The implications of such a policy should be thoroughly explored.

a tale *con't.*

and instigate charges under the Human Rights Act. "You wouldn't," the man asked incredulously.

"Just watch," said Jane.

She was still at work in mid-April and watching with interest as May Day approached.

- Bob Blakey





# THANKS



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

Mae Anderson..... Peachland  
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