

PRIORITIES

VOL. IX No. 4

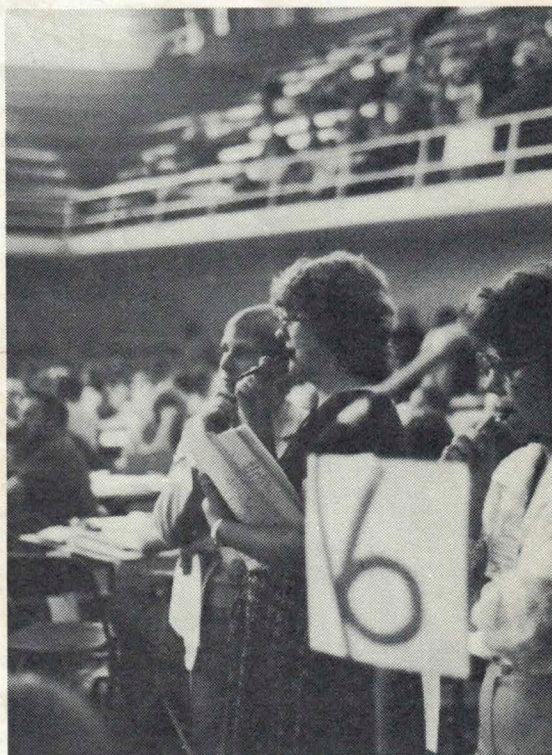
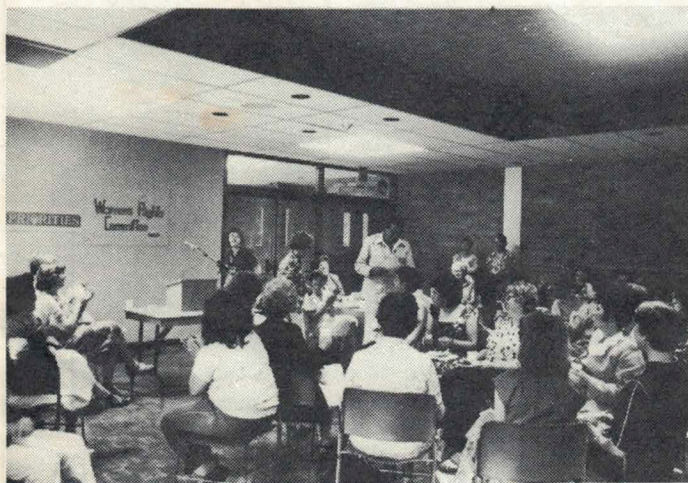
PRICE: 50¢

JULY - AUGUST, 1981

Convention '81



Participation of Women



A FEMINIST SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE

A PUBLICATION OF THE B.C. NDP WOMEN'S RIGHTS COMMITTEE

PRIORITIES is published six times a year by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights of the British Columbia New Democratic Party.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Individual: \$ 5.00 per year
 Institution: \$10.00 per year

PRIORITIES welcomes letters and articles from its readers. All submissions must be signed, although names may be withheld on request. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit all copy received in the interest of brevity, clarity, and taste. Submissions should be typed, 39 characters to the line, triple-spaced if at all possible.

Submissions and subscriptions should be mailed to:

PRIORITIES
 517 East Broadway
 Vancouver, B.C.
 V5T 1X4

"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."

— NDP Policy on Women's Rights

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Typesetting and layout by
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 1307 East 20th Street
 North Vancouver, B.C.



Printing by
 THE NORTH SHORE TIMES
 1422 Pemberton Avenue
 North Vancouver, B.C.



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Cover photographs by Linda Clark and Monica Jones

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Thanks to all the workers who have made the production and distribution of this magazine possible.



Gains and perspectives

In many ways, the 1981 convention of the NDP of Canada marks a turn in the lives of working and disadvantaged people. There were many signals of recognition that we live in a world dominated by the crisis of capitalism and its determination to make its exploited victims pay the price of bailing it out. There was recognition that we have to defend ourselves and be just as vigorous in aiding our brothers and sisters fighting the same battles in a far more brutal context in the neo-colonial world.

The new course was dramatized by the fact that we were celebrating the NDP's 20th anniversary. Speeches by party veterans recalling the battles fought and won, the progress made, all served to show that we have new battles ahead, new issues to tackle with new ideas and methods of struggle.

Guest speakers illuminated this further. Patty Holmes, a disabled young woman, working for the Canadian Labour Congress, telling us of labour's role in winning rights for the disabled. Note: not a strong, healthy man telling us these things!

Dennis McDermott, tying in the 25th anniversary of the CLC to 20 years of political action in the NDP and sharing responsibility for its future.

William Winpisinger, head of the International Association of Machinists in the U.S., telling us of new awareness of the need for an independent political party of working people in the U.S. and an end to reliance on "good intentions" in the big-business Democratic Party.

And, of course, our most prestigious guest, Guillermo Ungo, president of the Revolutionary Democratic Front of El Salvador, eliciting a hearty response to the need for solidarity with our embattled comrades in that country in the form of a collection of over \$4,000 and a strong resolution pledging NDP support and action for liberation in El Salvador.

Important emergency resolutions on equal rights for Native women, and for solidarity with the striking Postal Workers and Broadcast Technicians as well as with Grace Hartmann and other jailed CUPE leaders marked our sharing responsibility for the winning of these struggles. In this category, too, was the convention's adoption of a resolution in defence of the three women fired by Pratt & Whitney in Quebec.

After years of struggles for the recognition that issues of women's liberation must be a central feature of NDP activity, we can now say that we have, indeed, come a long way. The Participation of Women Committee resolution on Affirmative Action in the Party passed with little dissent, as did other resolutions on women's issues. Affirmative action in the party was confirmed, at least in B.C., with the choice of three feminists out of five B.C. candidates for federal council. Other provincial caucuses made sure, too, that women were included in their choices.

The debate on the Canadian constitution showed that the battle is clearly not over. The big question of Quebec's role in (or out of) Confederation was hardly touched.

So there are good perspectives for the future. But the real test, as always, comes on the battle lines. Next time round, CUPE and VMREU must win the equal pay for work of equal value demand, and NDP and labour muscle must ensure this. The present CUPW strike, highlighting maternity leave rights, provide a similar challenge. Policy on child care, the needs of older women and repeal of abortion laws need to be translated into action carried into every corner of the country. We must all strive to act wherever working people and the oppressed layers of society organize themselves to fight back, in Poland, in El Salvador and in Canada.

The Chairwoman's Report



Photo Hilda Thomas

by Elaine Bernard

With a successful conference and a federal convention behind us, the Women's Committee plans to spend the summer months evaluating and consolidating the work of the past year, and preparing for the provincial convention in October.

Looking back at what we have done since the last B.C. convention, we have reason to be proud of our accomplishments. The final report of the Task Force on Older Women, published just in time for the federal convention, is a tribute to the hard work of Gloria Levi, Mercia Stickney, and all the members of the panel which toured B.C. in 1980. It is also a testimony to the strength and endurance of the many women who submitted briefs and offered their own life experiences at the hearings. The Task Force is now drawing up recommendations for the provincial convention.

The Repeal 251 Committee is also busy, gathering signatures for a renewed onslaught on the federal government. An active committee on child care is continuing the work begun for your pre-convention conference, and a committee on family law has begun to meet on a regular basis. *Priorities* is winning increasing respect and recognition, both in the party and with the public.

All this work is necessary and vital to the achievement of our goal of equality for women. But it places a heavy burden on the Women's Committee. We need the support of women all over the province. Please help by carrying on the fight in your own constituencies, and by writing to us at provincial office to let us know about your ideas and activities, to offer your advice and criticism, or just to say 'Keep up the good work.'



Photo Monica Jones
Patty Holmes, addressing the NDP federal convention in Vancouver on July 3.

In this, the International Year of Disabled Persons, it seems that every level of Canadian society is "doing its bit" to help disabled people become full participants in all activities of daily living.

The labour movement is one of the many organizations giving their support to disabled Canadians as they struggle to overcome the barriers to a full life. However, the history of labour's involvement with disabled persons extends beyond the International Year as the movement has always paid special attention to any of its members who have become disabled, either because of a job-related injury or illness, or as a result of an accident or disease occurring outside of the workplace. Efforts have been made to ensure that any trade unionist overcome by disability is able to maintain the same standard of living that had been achieved prior to becoming disabled.

Co-ordinated plan of action

As the number of trade unionists becoming disabled each year began to increase at an alarming rate, it became obvious that there was a need for the labour movement to develop a co-ordi-

A disabled woman speaks out

by Patty Holmes

PATTY HOLMES, the writer of this article, is Project Co-ordinator on Disability Policy for the Canadian Labour Congress. She was a guest speaker at the federal NDP convention in Vancouver and also addressed the B.C. Provincial Council earlier this year.

Patty, herself disabled by cerebral palsy, is a political science student at Carleton University in Ottawa. She is on an 18-month leave from Carleton to work on her appointment to the Canadian Labour Congress in the Year of the Disabled.

The main focus of her work is the integration of the disabled into the workplace. She is working on a study of two categories of disabled people — those who have never worked, and those injured or disabled on the job. Her study aims to dispel prevalent myths about the needs and concerns of the disabled and to demonstrate the skills they offer.

A future issue of 'Priorities' will feature a discussion with Patty of specific aspects of problems facing the disabled drawn from "Obstacles," a report of the parliamentary Special Committee on the Disabled and Handicapped, published this year in February.

Anne Gilbert and Frances Burstein have been collaborating with Patty to obtain this important material for 'Priorities.'

nated plan of action which would give the necessary support to persons affected by disability. A formal request for the development of such a plan of action came in the form of a resolution adopted by the delegates at the CLC convention held in 1980.

In response to this resolution, a policy statement was put together by concerned members of the CLC and later adopted by the Executive Council.

The policy statement began by outlining the responsibility that the labour movement had for assisting its disabled members. It then goes on to acknowledge that trade unionists have always fought hard to bring about social justice for all Canadians, and that disabled persons should be no exception. Therefore, they must extend the same concern that they have for their members who are disabled to anyone in the community with a disability.

The support that the labour movement can give to disabled Canadians is far-reaching. Looking first to the workplace: no-one knows the worksite better than trade unionists. Therefore, they can be consulted as to how the workplace could best be modified in order to make

it accessible to disabled persons. Also, they can be called upon to make recommendations on how jobs may be restructured in order to accommodate the special needs of disabled individuals who have the necessary skills to perform the job in question.

Collective bargaining

In the area of collective bargaining, unions can negotiate such items as job retention and the right to an adequate rehabilitation program for workers overcome by disability — whatever the cause. Affirmative action programs and joint labour/management committees, if successfully bargained for, will facilitate the entry into the workplace of those disabled persons who are presently unemployed.

The needs of disabled Canadians are much broader than securing employment. In the same manner, the interests of the labour movement go far beyond the workplace. Trade unionists have frequently lobbied the various authorities in their communities for the purpose of bringing about a co-ordinated and adequate network of social services to be made available to all members of the



Social justice for the disabled

community. For disabled people, it is a matter of having the necessary support services that will enable them to live their lives as independently as possible. The services that are needed may include personal attendants, special aids or equipment, appropriate education and training facilities, and an accessible public transportation system, in addition to the necessary medical facilities which many people believe are the only support services that disabled persons require.

Developing political clout

Disabled Canadians have long been fighting for their rightful place in society. However, until just recently, they lacked any formal organization or knowledge of the political system, both tools which are imperative to any group which hopes to change the existing framework of society. The labour movement has both these tools in their possession and have used them in order to bring about the changes in Canadian society that they have to date.

It is here that trade unionists can be most helpful to the disabled. Not only will the labour movement be able to share its organizational and political skills, but also it can call on its 2.3 million members to give their active support to disabled Canadians as they lobby the various authorities in the community in order to break down the existing barriers to a full and secure life.

The activities of the labour movement in Canada in support of the disabled are of special interest to me for a couple of reasons. To begin with, I have been working with the Labour Education and Studies Centre of the Canadian Labour Congress for two years, first as a student while enrolled in the University of Waterloo Co-operative Political Science Program, and then as a consultant, beginning in September 1980. During this time, I have been assisting in the development of policies and programs that will enable the labour movement to meet its responsibility of assisting disabled persons.

To date, I am pleased with the attention that has been given to the problems and concerns of disabled persons by trade unionists throughout Canada. I am especially pleased with the labour movement's record of social action in the past, and I am sure that its previous activities will spur its members on to fight for the same degree of social jus-



Patty Holmes, with co-delegates, at the Federal NDP Convention. Photo Anne Gilbert

tice for disabled persons as they fought and won in the past for other Canadians.

The activities of the labour movement in support of disabled people are also important to me because of my personal experience with disability. As a woman with a disability I cannot help but draw

comparisons between the barriers which are preventing women and disabled persons from gaining their rightful place in society. Social justice for all can be achieved only through a commitment of all parties concerned — including the labour movement.

Transition House for Prince Rupert

by Edith Thomas

It was with a great deal of pleasure that I recently received a letter from a young woman who had suffered so tragically as a "battered wife" (*Priorities*, July 1978).

Feminists in Prince Rupert have, for many years, fought for a Transition House. This dream was finally realized and the *Maud Bevan House* was opened on International Women's Day this year.

Congratulations to all responsible for this undertaking which recognizes the needs of Prince Rupert women who are victims of violence in the family, and to Maud Rawson who was a victim and now is honoured by having this house named for her.



Maud (Bevan) Rawson (in wheelchair). On her right is Kathy Booth, Director and left, Sylvia Rickerly, Staff Director, and Susan Haley, Director. Standing at the back: Susan Crowley, Transition House Board Director; Susan Tickson, Board Chairperson; staff members Virginia White and Billy Long, and Directors Janet Northcott, Dena Helin and Ellen Little.



The housing crisis

Excerpts from a speech by Ellen Woodsworth, given on Housing Crisis Day, May 31, 1981.

I am speaking here today as Co-ordinator of the [Vancouver] YWCA Housing Registry. In our Registry, we see an average of 1,000 clients per month. Three-quarters of them are women. Some are single parents, some are married and some are pensioners. We have ten people looking for every one unit that we have vacant. Over 80% of those looking are from B.C.

Every day in our Housing Registry, we see single parents coming to us for housing, trying to find shelter. One woman has two children and she is trying to find a two bedroom apartment for the \$360.00 the Ministry of Human Resources allows for shelter. She is one of many. Two single parents camped out in front of City Hall for a week to try to find a home. I think in the future, we will see many more people desperate for homes, camping on the steps of government buildings.

Pensioner collapses

On Thursday, a pensioner collapsed at the Y. She needed a place for less than \$130.00. She needed a place to go where she could take care of herself. Today she is in hospital. How many more pensioners are being forced to sleep in the back alleys and under bridges?

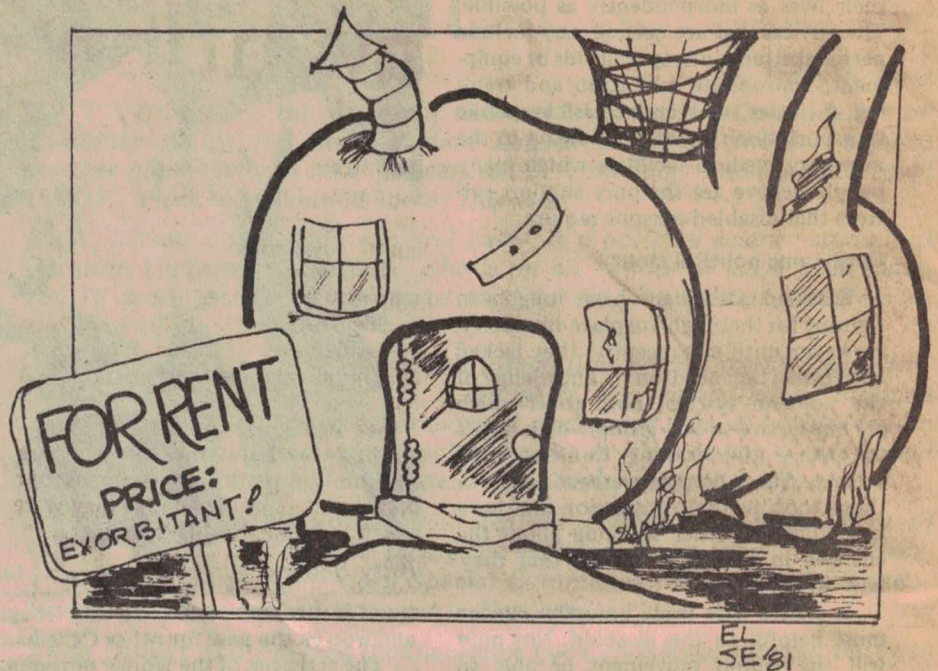
Racism...

Women of colour and immigrant women face daily racist discrimination. As there is less housing, it is worse because they cannot even find places to share. Landlords call us and try to list units that they don't want non-white people in.

Kim Beeston is a disabled woman, a victim of Thalidomide. She spent six months looking for a place to live, even with all the media attention she got. She was able to hitch-hike all over North America, yet we couldn't find her a place to live suitable for her handicap in Vancouver. Today she is back in Toronto.

Sexism...

Lesbians come in looking for a home where they can live openly without fear of eviction. Lesbians have to hide their relationships in order to get a place to live. Lesbians are having to fight to be



protected by both the B.C. and the Federal Human Rights Bill for the right to have a home.

... and poverty

All women live on low incomes. Where are we to find housing? Whether we live on welfare, as a housewife dependent on a man's wage, or have a paid job, none of us makes very much money. The gap between men's and women's salaries has increased to 40%. The economic crisis and the housing crisis hit us first and hardest. We always have to keep the home going for ourselves, our children, our families — yet we do not have the money for the work we do to maintain the home. We are here to fight back for the housing that we can afford. We are here to join the fight for low income housing. Perhaps we should follow the lead of Italian women who organized in their apartment buildings to fight rent increases. They said that the work they do to maintain the apartments was enough payment.

Women are forced by the laws of housing and the zero vacancy rate in Vancouver and in the rest of B.C. to be here today.

We are here to ask that the housing that gets built at B.C. Place and elsewhere be built for us. It is obvious that the people who design and build housing are not the ones who have to live in it. It is obvious that they have never raised children or had to cook most of the meals or do most of the cleaning. It is obvious that the people who build these units have not thought about the need for daycare centres for every building or complex. It is obvious they have no physical disabilities.

We are here to ask the City to have daycares as part of the regulations for building. We are here to ask that apartments be given permits when they provide units for children. We are here to ask that the City Planning Department design units with the help of women and people who will be using them and to force developers to use these models.

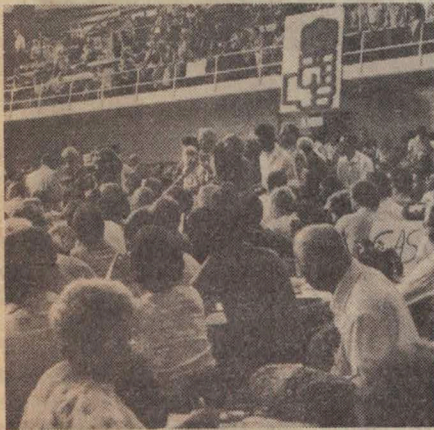
We think that the City and the Province should provide low income complexes for families, the elderly and the disabled, starting in '81.

We can't wait until the next B.C. election to make our voices heard. Women must start organizing for low income housing from the Province at this site now.



Some impressions and thoughts about the 1981 Federal Convention

by Rosalind Kellett (Vancouver-Quadra delegate)



Convention '81 — the biggest ever
Photo Linda Clark

On that glorious first weekend in July I was one of the 1366 delegates who attended the Federal NDP Convention at UBC. While familiar with other conventions (e.g. B.C. Teachers' Federation Annual General Meeting), I was anxious to experience my first real political convention.

For three-and-a-half days 69 policy statements out of a total 637 submitted were discussed, excluding the emergency resolutions. 64 of these were finally approved.

Speeches by guest speakers from the U.S.-based International Association of Machinists, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Democratic Revolutionary Front of El Salvador — along with the leader's address and tributes to David Lewis and Stanley Knowles — added variety to the convention agenda. But mainly, it was a hectic and intense time with fairly few procedural wrangles.

Family fight

The most exciting time for me was the Saturday "Family Fight" over the Canadian Constitution, led by Ed Broadbent and Allan Blakeney. Tension was mounting well before the call-to-order as the mikes were loaded with people saving places for "heavy" speakers. The

debate itself was excellent, with many good points made on both sides. I know delegates from my own riding who changed their vote as a result of it. The final vote of 769-453 (60%-40%) in favour of the Federal Council's proposals was greeted with loud applause and the singing of "O Canada" for which gradually all the delegates stood and sang.

Other highlights were some of the debates in other key policy areas. I was proud of our party and some of our knowledgeable speakers — that they were so "with-it" and enabled us to tackle numerous issues, a brief sample being:

North-South problems, El Salvador, Poland, federal-provincial energy policies, overcharging of past petroleum products, acid-rain, scientific research, patenting of seeds, transportation for the disabled, the housing crisis, job re-training for women displaced by micro-technology, etc.

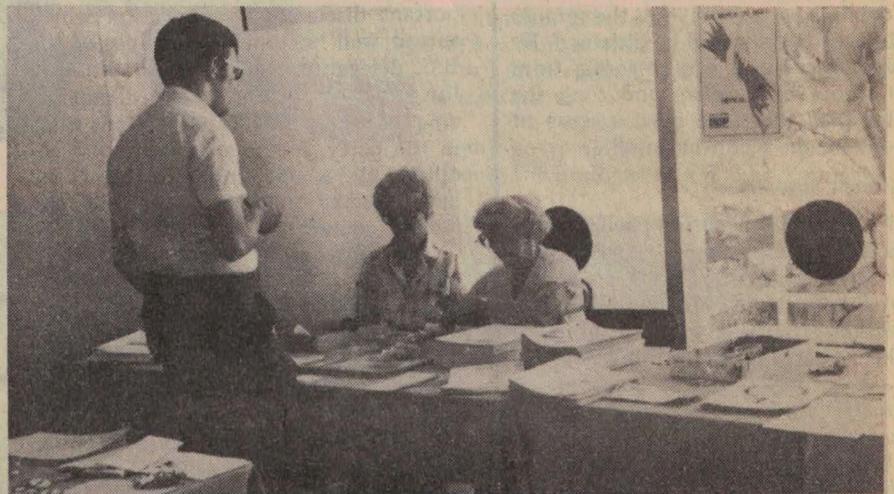
Some excellent comprehensive policies were approved.

Why no amendment?

A frustration and disappointment for me was the overall treatment of the

resolutions. Firstly, it seemed undemocratic to me that policies, or resolutions as they were called, could not be amended immediately from the floor. They could only be referred back to committee with specific instructions as to the changes required. There was great reluctance to refer *imperfect* resolutions, although the four that were referred got quick approval, with one exception. This was the resolution on uranium mining which passed by a solid majority, but only after lengthy and heated debate.

It was confusing to be first urged to favour referral in order to clarify and improve the resolution, and then be urged to reject referral, approve the "spirit" or "principle" of the main resolution and stop wasting time on details. I felt many voted against referrals, not because of the suggested improvements but because they didn't want to "waste time" and thus much in-depth debate was discouraged. Is this approving of "imperfect policies" good enough for a federal party that may indeed form the government one day? How can one tell from reading some of the approved policies which parts we concur



Women's table attracts male delegates

Photo Linda Clark



Up with the women!



Joyce Meissenheimer — a victory for the Women's Committee Photo Monica Jones



Mercia Stickney — a champion of affirmative action Photo Anne Gilbert



Joy Langan — for labour and women Photo Monica Jones

Some impressions and thoughts

are perfect and which aren't? It doesn't seem rational!

Secondly, some resolutions, or their parts, appeared unrealistic, even irresponsible. One resolution called for the equalization of transportation costs of any item "required or desired by all Canadians dwelling anywhere within our vast boundaries." Fortunately, this was defeated. Other resolutions that were approved called for the nationalization of Canadian Pacific and all its holdings; public ownership in developing primary-resource industries; Petro-Canada to take over Imperial Oil Ltd.; National Petition for Reduction of Interest Rates. The rather brief debates on these issues did not detail *how, where, etc.* the monies for these projects would be obtained. By Friday afternoon I was suffering from an overdose of idealism and took the evening off! Does one need a sense of humour for these conventions?!

Significant answers

Finally, the convention itself was significant for these times. It came up with some good answers — but I do worry about the health of confederation when we witness the split votes on uranium mining and the constitution patriation and the strong provincial outlooks. I personally need to become better informed on many of the issues covered and to better understand the nature of policy in a political party. Meanwhile, it feels good to belong to the NDP!

A Report on the B.C. Women's Right Committee in Convention

by Hilda L. Thomas

The caucus of B.C. delegates to the federal convention elected a slate of five persons to run for election to the federal council. Of these, three were women, who received as well the endorsement of the Participation of Women caucus, and the B.C. Women's caucus. Two of them — Joy Langan (for Vice-President, also endorsed by the Labour caucus) and Mercia Stickney were elected to federal council. The third, Joyce Meissenheimer, was defeated. But, as it turned out, Joyce's defeat became the focus of an intense, often angry, but extremely important discussion, a discussion which spread well beyond the confines of the B.C. delegation, and which should have the effect of opening up and democratizing the whole process of elections within the party. In the end, Joyce was co-opted by a unanimous vote of the newly-elected members to sit on the federal council.

This outcome is a vindication of the principles of open, democratic process and of collective action and accountability which have always been the watchwords of the Women's Committee. It is also a signal that delegates are no longer open to intimidation by red-baiting or personal vilification of candidates who have won their respect and confidence through hard work, consistency and competence.

On the floor and off

The hard work and competence of the B.C. Women's Rights Committee was very much in evidence at the convention, both on and off the floor. B.C. women spoke effectively on resolutions ranging from transportation and social policy to technological change and affirmative action; they were instrumental in bringing forward a resolution on the denial of equality to native women under the Indian Act; and it was the successful model of the B.C. Women's Committee, reinforced by the showing of our slide-tape presentation to the full convention, which led to the adoption of a resolution from New Westminster-Coquitlam calling for a federal Task Force on Older Women "to give them visibility, articulate the cares and concerns of these women and to focus on the development of policy to meet the needs of this target population."

In the lobby the B.C. Women's Rights Committee table was a hive of activity (no queen bees — only workers). The concrete evidence of our work on child care, abortion law repeal, and older women was displayed in posters, buttons, leaflets, the Repeal 251 postcard campaign, and *Priorities*. And, of course, samples of all these were presented to Ed Broadbent at the highly successful



Up with the women!



Jean Hinton (North Island) at Women's Caucus Lunch Photo Linda Clark

women's luncheon on Saturday. Even our belief in collective action was put to the test with the arrival on Friday evening of the final report of the Task Force on Older Women in boxes containing all 75 pages, uncollated. The solution: a spontaneous chain of volunteers, men and women, singing loudly as they circled the tables set up in the lobby, picking up the pages that had been laid out in order.

Ad Hoc decision

The decision to run two women from B.C. for federal council was not taken collectively by the B.C. Women's Rights Steering Committee. In retrospect this seems unfortunate. But it was to some extent unavoidable. The proposals put forward by the Steering Committee in its pre-convention meeting were based on the assumption that the federal Participation of Women Committee would take the lead in support of their draft resolution on affirmative action in the party and in the fight to move towards its immediate implementation by nominating a half slate. At the first meeting of POW, however, and again at the first women's caucus Thursday noon, it became clear that the POW representatives from outside B.C. were not prepared to assume a leadership role. They preferred to leave the whole question of women candidates to the regional caucuses, and even showed some reluctance about taking a firm stand on affirmative action. But it was also clear that there were many women who would support a much stronger line.

The decision to put forward the names of Mercia Stickney and Joyce Meissenheimer at the B.C. Women's

caucus, along with a motion that candidates endorsed by the caucus agree to be accountable to the Women's Rights Committee was an *ad hoc* decision made by a few women who believed that the B.C. Women's Committee must demonstrate its commitment to affirmative action and other women's issues by nominating women whose record as activists in the Women's Rights Committee and the party as a whole was widely known.

The election of Mercia Stickney and Joyce Meissenheimer by secret ballot as the top choices of the more than 300 members who attended the B.C. caucus was an affirmation of the respect which the Women's Committee has won through many years of dedicated and uncompromising effort.

Slander campaign

In spite of this vote of confidence, however, we discovered on Saturday afternoon that a whispering campaign against our women candidates was being conducted on the floor of the convention in the form of red-baiting, accusations that Joyce was anti-labour(!) that the Women's Rights Committee had stacked the B.C. caucus meeting, and so on. Efforts were made by Dennis Cocke



Collating Task Force Report Photo Heather Gilmore



Meeting of Participation of Women Caucus

Photo Linda Clark

and others to counter these slanders, but when the ballots were counted a candidate who ran after being defeated in the B.C. caucus drew off enough votes to bring about Joyce's defeat.

This action was met with outrage by the majority of B.C. delegates, who saw it not only as an affront to their intelligence, but also as a threat to the integrity of the B.C. caucus which could not be allowed to go unchallenged. After some heavy lobbying, with ranking members of the B.C. caucus taking the lead, an agreement was reached that Joyce would be co-opted to council at its first meeting after the convention.

The co-opting procedure (under the constitution) is not one which we can generally support, but in this case, it was used to rectify an inexcusable wrong. Moreover, it was accompanied by a strong indication from the incoming executive that they are prepared to re-examine the method of electing candidates to party office. The outcome was a triumph not only for the Women's Committee, but for the democratic process.

Hail and farewell

Sunday evening, after it is all over, we go to the airport to say farewell to Marg Livingstone, Vice-Chairwoman of the Women's Committee, who is off to Scotland for medical treatment. How we all wish Margaret could have been there to share our victory, as she has shared so many struggles (and been subjected to the same kind of attack) in the past. We reminisce about battles sometimes won, but more often lost over the years. Old faces mingle with new, tears with laughter, a little nostalgia with much hope for the future.

Come back soon, Margaret. We need you to remind us that each victory is only the prologue to a renewed struggle.



NDP Women's Rights C

by Kathie Robe



Above: NDP Leader, Ed Broadbent addresses luncheon for women delegates organized the the B.C. NDP Women's Rights Committee

Photos Monica Jones

Below: Shelley Rivkin, Chairwoman of the Repeal 251 Committee addresses the luncheon gathering.



One of the liveliest events, politically and socially, of the NDP Federal Convention was a luncheon sponsored by the B.C. Women's Rights Committee at UBC July 4th. The hopes of more than 200 enthusiastic women gathered in solidarity from across Canada were confirmed and strengthened within a brief hour. For the women's movement throughout Canada there was new evidence of increasing political influence in Ottawa and for the women of British Columbia, a special pride in knowing they lead the way.

The guest of honour, Ed Broadbent, was welcomed by the chairwomen of the four current working groups of the Women's Committee. Gloria Levi presented him with the first copy of the Task Force on Older Women report, *Our Story Must be Told*.

Joan Smallwood of the Child Care Committee gave him the new child care poster and button, saying that now child care policy has been confirmed, it will be sought as a priority at the convention. Amy Dagleish reported for the committee doing a study of Family Law with the final report to be circulated to constituencies at convention time. Shelly Rivkin entrusted him with over 2,000 postcards urging repeal of Section 251 of the Criminal Code to take back to Ottawa for us. And Hilda Thomas, *Priorities'* Co-ordinator, called on Ed to expand his support of women's issues and, pointing to the educational impact



Women's Committee Luncheon



Kathie Robertson

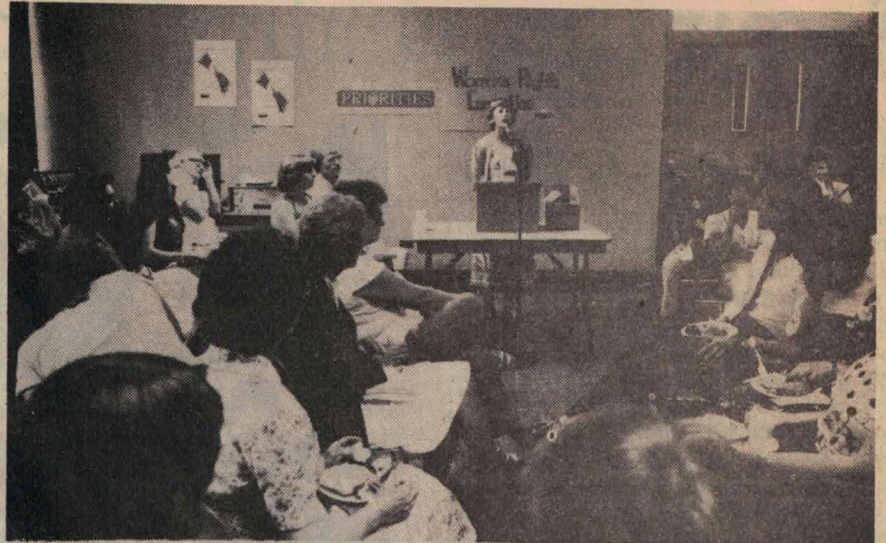
of *Priorities*, suggested he take out a subscription!

Responding warmly, Broadbent admitted needing education in "equality as a socialist issue." He said that he is grateful for the efforts of women's committees and assured us that their work "has filtered up to the top." He described the Task Force on Older Women as profoundly important work which he has recommended to the federal committee.

He also praised the work of three B.C. M.P.'s in particular, Pauline Jewett, Svend Robinson and Margaret Mitchell, for their efforts towards freedom and dignity for women. Acknowledging that B.C. women have led the struggle for equality, Broadbent pledged that in the next session, the federal party will make women's issues a priority; among the matters to be raised will be the outreach program, affirmative action and maternity leave.

Among the distinguished guests were Lucille Broadbent, Margaret Mitchell, Pauline Jewett, Daisy Webster, Grace McGinnis, Alexa McDonough (the party leader from Nova Scotia), Patty Holmes, MLA's Rosemary Brown and Barbara Wallace and several male M.P.'s and MLA's.

Congratulations to Margaret Birrell, Elaine Bernard, Edith Thomas, Mercia Stickney and all other members of the committee who ran the show with smooth informality.



Shelley Rivkin presents box of signed Repeal 251 postcards to Ed Broadbent for delivery in Ottawa.

Photo Monica Jones

Repeal 251

by Shelley Rivkin

In the fall of 1980, the Women's Rights Committee established the Repeal 251 Committee. The purpose was to work toward the repeal of that section of the Criminal Code that denies women the right to choose on the issue of abortion.

The Repeal 251 committee initiated a number of activities including a successful postcard campaign urging Federal M.P.'s to speak out on the need for repeal. Originally the campaign was to culminate in a mass mailing of cards to Ottawa on February 14th. The obvious interest in the campaign and the desire to make it a nation-wide activity resulted in the postcard campaign extending beyond this date.

Recent events such as the suspension of abortion committees at Surrey and Burnaby, the election of a pro-life board at Richmond, and upcoming board elections in the North Shore and Victoria convinced the committee that the public's awareness of the issue had to be heightened.

Shopping centre blitz

As a result, a shopping centre blitz was planned. Armed with information leaflets, postcards and buttons, five

committee members arrived at Guildford Shopping Centre on June 20. The response was fantastic. Prior to being asked to leave by a security guard, we had over 150 cards signed. More important was the obvious support and encouragement committee members received from Surrey shoppers.

Encouraged by this response, 6 committee members headed down to Granville Market the following day. Again the response was positive. Both men and women signed cards, discussed the issue and thanked committee members for taking this action. Two hours later, 400 had been signed. A third blitz was held the following Saturday. While the response was not as positive and people were less inclined to stop, another 300 signed cards were obtained.

Help needed

Over the next few months, the main focus of the committee will be developing a strategy to bring the issue into the House of Commons.

If you are interested in working with us, please call;

Margaret Birrell — 879-4601/73
Shelley Rivkin — 734-3865

Repeal 251 Campaign Poster displayed at Women's Rights Committee booth in the convention lobby. The booth also featured Repeal 251 postcards and buttons, 'Priorities,' the Task Force on Older Women, Child Care buttons and posters, and information on the Pratt and Whitney 3 Defence Campaign.

Photo Linda Clark



Feminism is alive and well. . .

by Angela Page

Returning to Britain for a few months last summer, I was struck by the increased visibility of feminism and the women's movement. Before, on shorter visits, I'd found old friends who'd radically changed their viewpoint from traditional to feminist, without much apparent change in the world around them. I'd rediscovered a young cousin, Victoria, last seen as a passive, silent teenager at family gatherings and now a fervent advocate of equality for women. She was trying to balance two worlds: to be married and to maintain an independent life of her own. She had rejected the idea of children; now she and Fernando were back in Chile visiting his family, very much aware that their humanistic views did not fit with the lack of human rights and the macho system.

This year, we found Lorna and Michael, long-lost friends living in Scotland. Glancing at their bookshelves, I found them overflowing with feminist books, and realized that we had much more in common than I'd thought. Lorna felt isolated from the women's movement, as Victoria had, because she was not prepared to abandon her marriage in pursuit of equality. She was presently unemployed because there was no job for her as a historian in a small university town, though she was exploring possibilities for miles around.

Publications forge new link

One link for isolated feminists in Britain is the magazine *Spare Rib*, now much more widely available than on previous visits. *Spare Rib* has had endless financial and ideological struggles, but has now passed its hundredth issue and looks likely to survive. It is very open to feedback from readers (meetings are occasionally held for them) and it is crammed with small ads from feminists in such places as Teesdale, Worthing or Barnsley starting new groups or looking for them. There are advertisements for meetings, therapy, contacts — men are not allowed to advertise in this one — jobs, accommodation. There are book, film, and theatre reviews, articles ranging over the entire feminist spectrum, news



pieces, and often an irreverent comic strip. There is usually fiction and poetry of a high standard; the emphasis throughout is on feminist-socialist thinking. *Spare Rib* is available in Vancouver at Octopus Books; or a subscription at the North America rate costs \$27.50 from *Spare Rib* subscriptions, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R OAT.

Another linking device for feminists in Britain is WIRES — Women's Information Referral and Enquiry Service — which is the women's liberation movement national information service, producing a twice-monthly newsletter, with details of conferences, events, meetings, campaigns and other activities of the WLM. Currently it is based at 32 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, but on a previous visit I had visited the office in York, sharing space with the York Women's Centre. I'd also looked in on Women's Place, 48 William IV Street, London WC2 which acts as a co-ordinating centre for feminists. When I last

heard, A Woman's Place was in danger of being evicted from its offices high up in an old hospital building near Trafalgar Square, but no doubt it will reappear somewhere else.

In London I went to my only feminist meeting, to mark the publication of *Alice Through the Microscope*, a collection of essays on the power of science over women's lives edited by the Brighton Women & Science Group and published by Virago. This is not *Alice under the microscope*, but *Alice looking through it*, covering such subjects as the attribution of sickness to women, female sexuality, scientific views of lesbianism, and technological control. The meeting was addressed by two of the authors, but there was disappointingly little interaction. I found the book hard going without a scientific background, and would have liked it to have had a wider appeal. But this is an area where we need to know much more, and the book breaks important new ground.



Feminism is alive and well. . .

The woman's perspective on television

On this visit, I noticed many more feminist-oriented books were available. Virago, the feminist publishers, had many reprints of forgotten books by women such as Rebecca West or Antonia White on display, even in conservative W.H. Smith's. Friends told me to watch the BBC television series *Testament of Youth*, based on Vera Brittain's book first published in 1933 and now a best-seller in paperback. (The five-part series was shown last fall on CBC and PBS; the book is sometimes at Duthies). This is the moving story of a young woman's experiences in World War I. It begins with her struggle to go to Oxford like her brother, her life as a nurse in England, France and Cyprus, and her loss of those she loved. Finally she returns to Oxford after the war, immeasurably older than the young people there, and eventually finds a friend, the novelist Winifred Holtby. The poetry in the book seems dated now, but it is a unique account of life during the war. Vera Brittain went on to write for *Time and Tide*, a weekly paper edited by Lady Rhondda, an early suffragette, and to work for pacifism and feminism. She became the mother of Shirley Williams, once suggested as Britain's first woman Labour prime minister, and now a defector from that party.

Another feminist experience, shared with my daughter, was Agnes Varda's film *One Sings, the Other Doesn't* on BBC TV. It celebrates the friendship of two women over many years, one a single parent, one a singer, with splendidly partisan songs. If we ever have another feminist film festival, this is a must.

On stage

And so to Edinburgh, where the Festival was in full swing, a smorgasbord of theatrical and musical delights beginning about 10 a.m. and going on until the early hours, with plays all over town in theatres, church basements, backs of trucks, or converted cow byres. There was the official Festival, beautifully staged and priced accordingly, and the Fringe, which is unofficial, enormous, spontaneous and more fun. We went to Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*, part of the official Festival, excellently done by the National Theatre with a

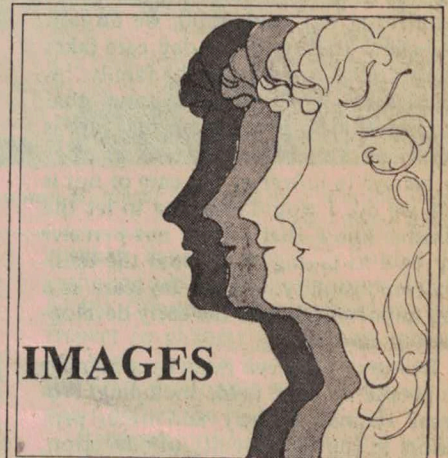
starry cast including Dame Peggy Ashcroft. It was written in 1940, as an expression of liberal American attitudes to the war in Europe: interesting, but not especially feminist.

Much more relevant, from my point of view, was John McGrath's *Blood Red Roses*, put on by the 7.84 Company. 7% of the population owns 84% of the wealth, hence the name of this socialist-oriented theatre group which tours remote corners of Scotland, bringing radical plays such as *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, about the take-over of the North Sea oil industry. *Blood Red Roses* is the story of a strong young Scotswoman, played by Elizabeth MacLennan, who becomes a union organizer in Glasgow. Her marriage breaks up because union activities take up so much of her time, she loses a friend to untreated breast cancer, but at the end she is happily pregnant by a young man she does not intend to marry.

Another feminist play, but from a different viewpoint, is Marcella Evaristi's *Hard to Get*. Evaristi is an Italian Glaswegian who began to write a Ph.D. thesis on women in theatre at the turn of the century. She was struck by the absence of women dramatists at that time, abandoned the thesis and began to write plays herself. *Hard to Get*, which I hope will reach Vancouver one day, is the story of two marriages. It focuses sharply — and painfully — on sexism. It is often very funny, but we recognize

ourselves. The two women, Anna and Jess — at first she calls herself Jess the Yess — slowly grow and change as they try to break away from the men. At one point Anna sums up the whole situation of women as she says, "we have to reclaim the night. And as soon as I've done that — I'll reclaim the day."

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KOOTENAY WOMEN'S PAPER

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V1L 5R4



Mary McLean

We were all saddened by the death of Mary McLean from a heart attack on June 15th.

A consistently hard worker for the NDP, this warm, cheerful Scottish lass will be sorely missed in the Vancouver South Constituency, at Hillcrest Hall, and by the Women's Rights Committee, as she always put Party people first in her thinking.

A true friend, a loving wife and mother, Mary leaves behind a grieving husband Ron, two daughters, Elizabeth and Moira, and a big family of relatives in Scotland, Australia, and Canada.



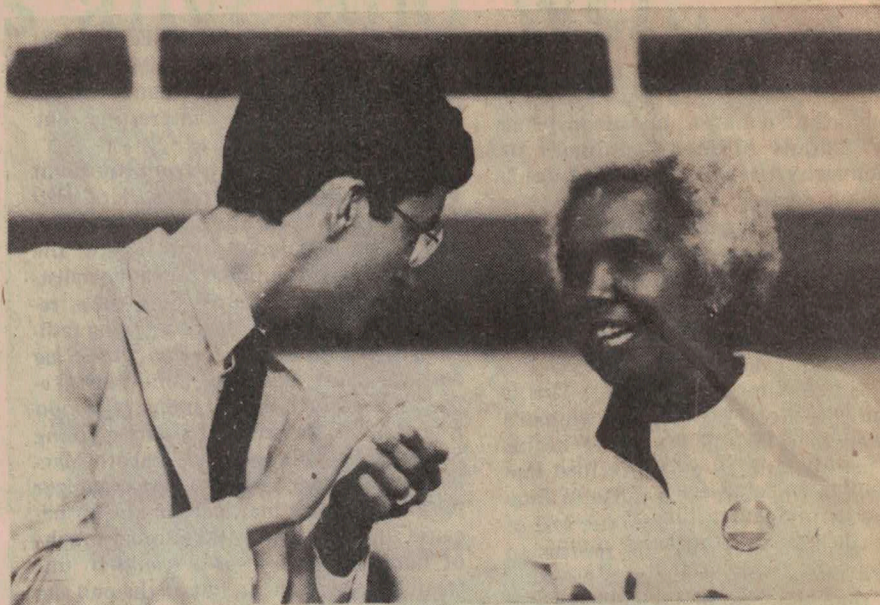
NDP Child Care policy

The following statement on NDP child care policy by Rosemary Brown is reprinted from 'Hansard,' June 3, 1981.

The final issue which the minister raised yesterday and which I would like to respond to very briefly was her comment — and I'm going to quote from it — where she said: "Our government's position on day care is very clear; our response as to whether or not we believe in universal day care is no, we do not. We believe that universal day care takes responsibility away from the family." I would like to let the Minister know that the opposition's position on day care is very clear. Our response as to whether we believe in universal day care or not is that we do. I would also like to let the minister know that we do not perceive day care as taking away from the family's responsibility. We see day care as a very important part in the early development of the child.

Research has been done by a number of people in this field, including Professor Hannah Polowy and other professors in the UBC faculty of education, where it has been found that children who participate in a group day-care program are enhanced in terms of their cognitive development and also in terms of their social development, in terms of how they relate to each other. Day care is not designed to meet the needs of parents, Mr. Chairman; day care is designed to meet the needs of children. That's what day care is designed to do. Day care is also a preventive program. As the minister herself should know, the child abuse program at Vancouver General Hospital used day-care facilities extensively. They found that it decreased the amount of abuse of children by their parents, simply by removing the child from continual contact with the parent; placing the child in group day care gave the parents a rest and certainly gave the child a different environment in terms of its own development.

We do not see day care as a baby-sitting service. We do not see day care solely as a means of allowing people to work. We see day care, first of all, as part of the early development of the child — a very important part of the early development of the child, especial-



MP Svend Robinson (Burnaby) and MLA Rosemary Brown (Burnaby-Edmonds) exchange views at the federal convention. Photo Monica Jones

ly in those instances where we're dealing with an only child or where it's a child that does not have access to the company of other children — children living in apartment blocks, for example. But it is a very important part in the cognitive,

psychological and social development of the child. Day care should be available to all children, not just to those children whose parents have to work. We feel very strongly our commitment to universal day care.

ATTENTION: WERE YOUR CHILDREN AT THE FEDERAL CONVENTION DAYCARE FACILITIES?

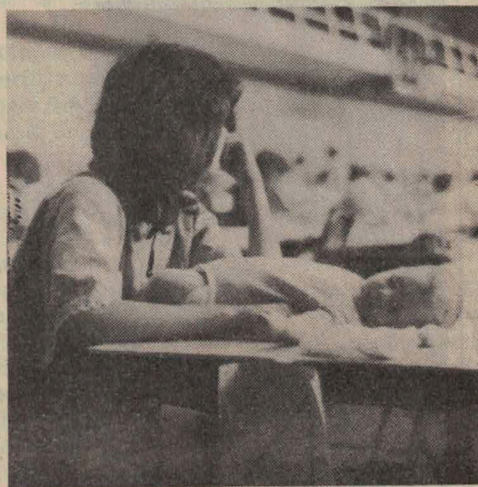


Photo Linda Clark

In response to parental concerns Robin Sears, retiring Federal secretary, wants to know more about the Gage childcare arrangements from the parents of children using the set-up.

Please write to him about your concerns, both *pro* and *con*, to ensure that the daycare arrangements for the Regina convention in 1983, will be satisfactory for all ages and numbers of children.

PLEASE WRITE TO:

The Federal Secretary
Re: Convention Daycare arrangements
Federal NDP Headquarters
301 Metcalfe Street
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1R9

(as soon as the postal strike is over!)



Pre-convention Women's Conference

by Hilda Thomas

More than 100 women from all over B.C. crowded into the Construction Labourers Hall on May 23 for the one-day conference of the B.C. Women's Rights Committee held in preparation for the federal and provincial conventions.

The conference opened with a session on rules and procedures conducted by Yvonne Cocke. This had a twofold purpose: first to adopt the conference agenda and decide some substantial questions; and second to give women the confidence that comes with understanding and practice in speaking at the mike. Amid much hilarity, Yvonne led the delegates through amendments to amendments, referral and tabling motions, and challenges to the chair. All participated freely in this mock parliamentary exercise, with the result that (after a little urging) less experienced women joined with the old hands in discussing the resolutions put forward from the workshops in the afternoon session.

There was unanimous agreement on the value of this kind of experience in preparing women for the role of convention delegate, and many women expressed the hope that if for no other reason the pre-convention conference will become an annual affair.

Workshops

A significant decision to admit male members as observers at the conference was made in the first session. This was in keeping with the resolution passed unanimously in the afternoon that child



Women's Rights Committee Vice-Chairwoman Margaret Livingstone chairs the Family Law workshop. Photo Elaine Bernard

care in future no longer be considered a women's issue, and that a new policy committee be established to deal exclusively with the needs of children.

The second part of the morning was devoted to workshops on child care, family law, older women, and affirmative action in the party. Reports and recommendations from these workshops took up the first part of the afternoon, followed by a session on the politics of slates and priorities led by Joyce Meissenheimer.

Here again, one of the objectives was to do away with the mystification and confusion that can have the effect of intimidating convention delegates.

Jewett speaks

The conference concluded with a highly successful dinner at which guest

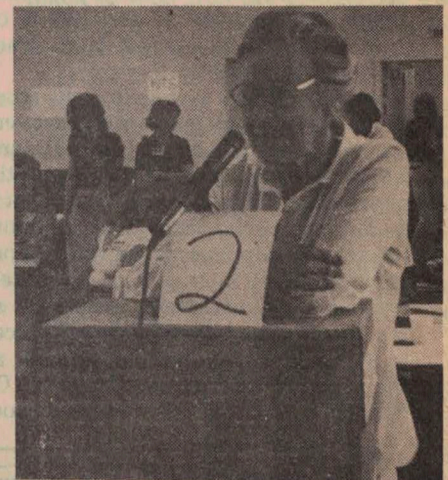
speaker Pauline Jewett informed the gathering about proposed amendments to the Criminal Code, particularly with respect to changes in the laws concerning rape. Jewett was highly critical of the draft proposals, which have not yet come before the House.

Recommendations from the conference will be forwarded to the provincial convention by the Women's Rights Committee. We urge all members to bring these resolutions up at their own constituency meetings for discussion and endorsement. Women's Rights policy is a priority area at this year's convention, and we want a full and informed discussion of our recommendations.



Doris Fineday (Nanaimo) at microphone, and Ronda Larmour (Van.-Point Grey)

Photo Victoria Ellis



Amy Dalglish (Vancouver-Point Grey) at the microphone.

Photo Victoria Ellis



Bleeding Heart by Marion French. Summit Books, 1980. \$12.95

The first response engendered by seeing a new Marilyn French novel on the shelves everywhere we look is, for most of us, a complete mixture of surprise, interest, and dread. It never occurred to me that French would write another novel after *The Woman's Room*. That first novel seemed so intense, so personal, and so bitterly disillusioned that no woman could possibly recover from the experience of writing it and begin a second work. Can anyone go through that twice? Furthermore, I consider, surely French, a well-educated woman, realizes that the first three-quarters of *The Woman's Room* was well written and tightly knit, but that the story got totally away from her by the last section and dribbled away to a fanatical and unconvincing finish. Why, I pondered, would she wish to pick up those strings and carry on? I, for one, had no wish to pick up where she left us in *The Woman's Room* even though I read the book three times and identified strongly with it, and was deeply influenced by it, and spent hours renewing old friendships and beliefs through discussing it.

I didn't get any time to be reluctant though. One day I felt the need to read, and someone handed me *Bleeding Heart*. I sat down for three days and read it. Since then, I've been recommending it to all my friends. Few of them are ready to handle another Marilyn French novel yet, but those who are manage to struggle through the four hundred pages in about three days, non-stop. This book is number two on the best-seller list, yet I meet few of my novel-reading friends who have read it. I wonder how many people have bought it and left it on their shelf, to be opened later, when thoroughly primed?

Bleeding Heart is a very tight story which depicts the relationship between Victor (meaning obvious) and Dolores whose heart continually bleeds for the poor and suffering and oppressed. There is nothing particularly unusual about this relationship, except the way the protagonists react to it. It's an absolutely typical, sexist, uncertain, temporary affair between two people who are forced to compromise all their principles, all the time, in order to stay together. On one level, the first and most obvious

Bleeding Heart

Reviewed by Leslie Dixon

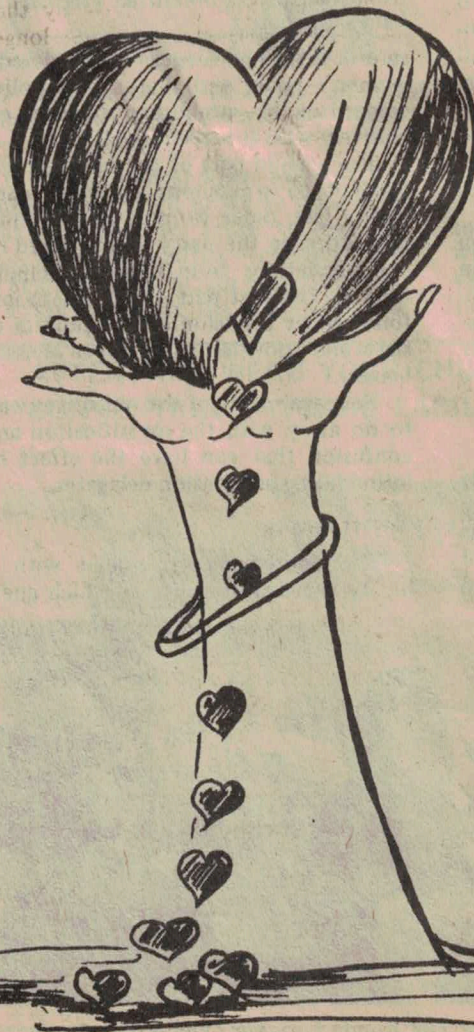
level, both these two are copping out and betraying all they profess to believe in. But on another level, they are attempting, mutually, to express, to listen, to respond, and to adapt. Both are actively seeking, in their forties, to use the painful lessons they have learned in the past to create something that will be real enough to save them from their bleak futures. Their relationship is temporary, but the personal changes they go through during this period of love

and support will be permanent. Dolores must learn to love without suffering. And Victor must learn to love without power.

Although on the surface, French's plot seems standard, there are some very significant developments. The most noticeable difference is that both Victor and Dolores are trying to contribute to the relationship. Like many novels which present a strong woman's point of view, *Bleeding Heart* gives us a complex understanding of Dolores. It carefully presents her fears, anxieties, guilt, anger and powerlessness. We identify strongly with her, even if we are frustrated by her enigmas and suffering. But unlike many feminist novels, this story also presents a fairly convincing argument in support of Victor, no mean feat when we consider that he is the prototype of the all-powerful, egocentric male. He too, we discover, has a strong sense of fairness, of honesty, of commitment. He too has suffered, been denied, made grave errors, and learned to live with guilt and defeat. He too gains our sympathy, and our respect. We understand why she is able to love this man when she has been utterly unable to love a man for five years.

With both Dolores and Victor created as close to equal as it would be reasonable to get in 20th century Western society, French then turns to the problem of defining the man-woman relationship. Her vision is a departure from the standard conception. She tries to express, in concrete, day-to-day terms, the view that a relationship is a process, based on change, initiative, and learning. Both Dolores and Victor have done time in stagnant, circular, destructive marriages, and both are willing to strive at all costs to avoid going into a dead end. The struggle is not easy, but it is shared, and undertaken willingly.

For Victor and Dolores life has not been too easy, and the future doesn't look much better. Although they are both successful and financially secure and following safe, comfortable careers, they have lived lives that are steeped in violence. Suicide, accidents, disease, and mental instability seem to play a very



LETTERS

'Priorities' severely criticized

May 14, 1981

To *Priorities*:

We are writing to give you our opinion as to the articles written in the March-April issue of *Priorities* by Daisy Webster and Angela Page.

These articles are really put-downs of the aging, elderly, handicapped and unfortunates. They are made to look as though Webster and Angela are truly concerned and because they are subtle in their writing, some may believe they are concerned, but the articles are really abrasive and very misleading.

They do not encourage the younger generation to love and look up to the aging, elderly, handicapped or unfortunates, who may have and in most cases have contributed more to our Society than anyone else. The aforementioned group is made to look like snivelling weaklings and failures who have never had any initiative or resilience at all.

In fact, under the guise of compassion and understanding you people are actually waging a war of attrition against the aforementioned groups.

Bleeding Heart

large part in their lives. This pre-occupation with tragedy was very hard to accept at first, and I kept wondering if French wasn't going "overboard" and creating a soap opera. But I also began to think of tragedy in my own life, and in the lives of my friends, and count up events, and consider consequences, and periods of recovery, and I began to see that French does not exaggerate. In fact, she is taking another bold step, and trying to tackle a traditional love story and explore all the aspects, good and bad. Violence, particularly domestic violence, is a widespread phenomenon in our culture, and French is too honest to sweep it away.

Many people will be dissatisfied with this book because it shows a compromise of feminist principles. Many will be contemptuous because it is based on the assumption that a need still exists in individuals for that same old standard man-woman relationship, inevitably unequal. But others will see the beginnings of some new approaches to values and needs, and for some it will provide a spark of hope and interest in an area that most of us treat as cynically as Dolores does.

Are young wives the only ones who contribute by caring for their ailing husbands. . . ?

Are the working middle and upper classes who obtain real high salaries contributing more to Society that they should obtain fat indexed pensions when they are older and live as good if not better when they are old as they did when they were young?

The proletariat is still only the proletariat, only more controlled than ever before, while the middle and upper classes gain in strength, power and money, and after all, that is really who you support, isn't it?

You actually contribute to the class distinction; no wonder the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer.

You guys have all your priorities screwed up. . .

Why don't you give credit where credit is due? The families that are now grown up did not get grown up by themselves. They were kept alive by their parents who worked longer, much longer hours under much more difficult situations and could not fall back on welfare because there was no welfare and later very little welfare. The laws were much more stringent and did not allow for too much change in jobs, lifestyles, education or daydreaming. . . By daydreaming we mean you could not spend your time putting your well-developed imagination to work (if you had one, that is) because the bread-and-butter issues came first.

Now you guys put down the very people who built your party and our party. . . We sure wish we knew what you guys are trying to accomplish because it certainly isn't helping the poor or the unfortunates. . . You guys have, in fact, lost touch with the working poor.

Sincerely yours,

Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Pollen

P.S. If you want to know what real poverty is just become a pensioner from the working class with no other financial base to draw on. . .

3067 Knight Street
Vancouver, B.C.

Women locked-out in Squamish

June 1, 1981

A message regarding our picket line

Dear Friends:

The employees of Glacier Athletic Wear Ltd. at 37828-2nd Ave., Squamish,

B.C., have been locked out since May 7. Most are members of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, Local 178.

These employees contacted the Union in late March. They were tired of being yelled at if they visited the washroom during working hours and tired of being forbidden to speak anything except English at work. They wanted a little dignity on the job. Seventy-five percent of them joined the Union.

On May 1, the certification was granted automatically. The day after the application for certification was made, five of the eight Union members were laid off. Six days after the certification was granted, all but one of the remaining employees were told they were terminated.

The shop is still operating, doing designing and cutting. The sewing is now being contracted out.

One negotiating meeting has taken place. The employer's position is that there is now only one employee, the cutter, who is not a member; that whatever contract is negotiated will only cover her, and that, for reasons of health and economics, the shop will now do only designing and cutting.

The Union's position is that the contract, once negotiated, will cover all 12 employees as specified in the certification. A raise of 50 cents an hour for each employee has been proposed. (One ber was making \$4.00 an hour; the remainder were making \$3.65). The Union finds it mighty coincidental that the employer's health should deteriorate so much so soon after the certification was granted. As for the economic reasons for the lock-out, it is more expensive to contract out than to do the work at Glacier. The lock-out can only be caused by the employer's anti-union animus.

We will continue to picket Glacier and stores which retail Glacier goods (such as Roadrunner) until a first agreement is signed and all the employees have returned to work. We need assistance, however. If you are willing to help, please phone 685-8595 or 669-4721 any time.

In solidarity,
Donna Mottershead
Organizer
A.C.T.W.U., Local 178

(See next page for list of working regulations at Glacier Athletic Wear Ltd.)



Work rules at Glacier Athletic

- A. Work hours at Glacier are from 8 a.m. till 4:30 p.m. with a 10 minute coffee break at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and a lunch break from 12:30 p.m. till 1 p.m.
- B. You are expected to be at your machine at 10 minutes to 8 to clean and prepare your machine for a prompt start at 8. Wipe your work-surface every time after coffee and lunch breaks for dust and oil and every night you must clean your machine, wipe underneath all ledges, cover your machine with dust-cover and sweep up around your work-area. Your machine is YOUR responsibility, read your manuals and learn to thread your machine and adjust the tension.
- C. Please use our washroom facilities IN YOUR BREAKS.
- D. NO personal phone calls are allowed in work hours, except in emergencies.
- E. There will be NO time off without doctor's note or prior consent. NO doctor's or dental appointments during work hours, make these before or after work or on Saturdays unless an emergency.
- F. When you use charts, labels, braid, elastic, thread or threader, return at all times to place of origin.
- G. READ YOUR ORDERS. Don't call us unless you're sure something is wrong with your order, but be sure first.
- H. During work hours you are expected to speak ENGLISH at ALL TIMES.
- I. A pair of scissors will be supplied at the start of your employment and deducted off your first pay-cheque.
- J. You are legally entitled to 2 weeks holiday after 1 year of employment. Glacier will give 1 week after 6 months.

Support Nicaraguan women

June 5, 1981

Dear Sisters:

Would you join us in supporting our sisters of Nicaragua in their fight for liberation?

We recently went to Nicaragua and were both impressed by the decisive role that Nicaraguan women played in the revolution, and are now playing in the building of a new society.

Among many other activities, they are involved in women's battalions, women's production cooperatives, day-care pilot projects, the health campaign, the revival of their culture and an on-going fight against sexism. They are also playing a prominent role in local defence committees (CDS), and other organizations, such as the agricultural workers association. Also, they have their own organization, AMNLAE.

However, they face many difficulties. Lack of resource materials, inadequate support facilities, limited funds, etc. Fundamentally, there is no guarantee that the gains they have made will be long-lasting. The tense situation in Central America and the possibility of a right-wing coup and/or external military intervention in Nicaragua pose a serious threat to further social change and women's emancipation.

For these reasons, support for Nicaraguan women's struggles is crucial. We would like to see all women's groups in B.C. united in:

- educating ourselves about the situation of women in Nicaragua;
- support activities, such as allowing *La Voz de la Mujer*, AMNLAE's newspaper to be published again by subscribing to it, or just sending contributions;
- organizing a delegation of B.C. women to Nicaragua. There will be a group going next winter, December 19 - January 3.

Other ideas have also been suggested. We have already asked AMNLAE to send us information about the health campaign. We would like you to consider this information and, if you are interested, please contact us as soon as possible.

Yours sisterly,
Jeanne and Katherine
Phone 525-8136 and
731-1454

1526 7th Avenue
New Westminster, B.C. V3M 2K3

Senior's pensions cut

Dear Members:

I am 78½ — a widow — have a few dollars in the bank from my savings. So I put this money in the bank on high interest rate so as to be able to pay my tax which was \$1,400.42 after home-owner's grant taken off.

Now as soon as they found out I got \$800 a year interest, which is 12%, Victoria cut me down from \$19.88 to \$4.88, and the other federal pension cut down instead of being raised for April.

It seems that when one is old and unable to work and make money they think our wants and needs don't count.

I wear all my old clothes and look after myself and have my bills — telephone, light, oil, and presto logs for an old wood stove. I have arthritis so have to take pain-killing pills — the only thing that is free.

I have lived in Canada 75 years and worked on a farm in Saskatchewan till 1930 when we moved to B.C.

My husband passed away 17 years ago. My son, married, moved to Winnipeg. He is a concert violinist with the symphony orchestra so I am alone, looking after myself. I think Canada is the best in the world.

But I would like a few more benefits. Because we happen to get old is not saying we are not supposed to have any enjoyment at all.

Please excuse writing as my hand is numb.

By the way, I have voted CCF since around 1933.

Yours sincerely,
Eva Polson
North Burnaby

Mamonova tour

June, 1981

Dear Priorities:

On behalf of the Mamonova Tour Committee, Vancouver, I would like to express our thanks for both your endorsement and assistance in making the Mamonova visit to Vancouver a success.

Over 300 people attended our public meeting and she continues to generate interest here!

Thanks again,
Ann McCracken
Vancouver

THANKS

to the following readers of 'Priorities' who have made donations

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NOTICES OF NEW PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST TO FEMINISTS

Barred From Prison: A Personal Account by Claire Culhane.

245 pages, illustrated. Obtainable from the publishers: Pulp Press
572 Beatt Street, Vancouver V6B 2L3

Price: \$5.95
Special rate \$4.00 each for prisoners' copies.

Jerry Falwell: an Unauthorized Profile (Falwell is a leading spokesman for the Moral Majority)

By Dr. William R. Goodman Jr. and Dr. James J.H. Price

Obtainable from the publishers:
Paris & Associates Inc.
Dept. JFB

Box 3321, Lynchburg
Virginia 24503
Ph. (804) 528-0059

Price: \$6.95 plus \$1.50 handling costs

From Persephone Press
Box 722, Watertown, Mass. 02172

Two publications:

This Bridge Called My Back
Writings by radical women of colour
and

Lesbian Poetry

4 Feminist Stamps

Canada Post has issued four 17 cent stamps in honour of

Henrietta Edwards
Louise McKinney
Idola St. Jean
Emily Stowe

Edwards and McKinney were two of the five women who fought and won the "Persons" case. Saint-Jean and Stowe were Quebec and Ontario suffragettes respectively.

The Women's Legal Resource Bank

A collection of articles, research papers, source books, pamphlets, and bibliographies from private and government sources.

This bank has been compiled by the National Association of Women and the Law, an organization of lawyers and lay people interested in legal issues as they affect women. The Association will be preparing and circulating a bibliography of material in the Bank.

Readers are asked to contribute any material they may have to help build the Bank.

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