DEC./JAN. 1990

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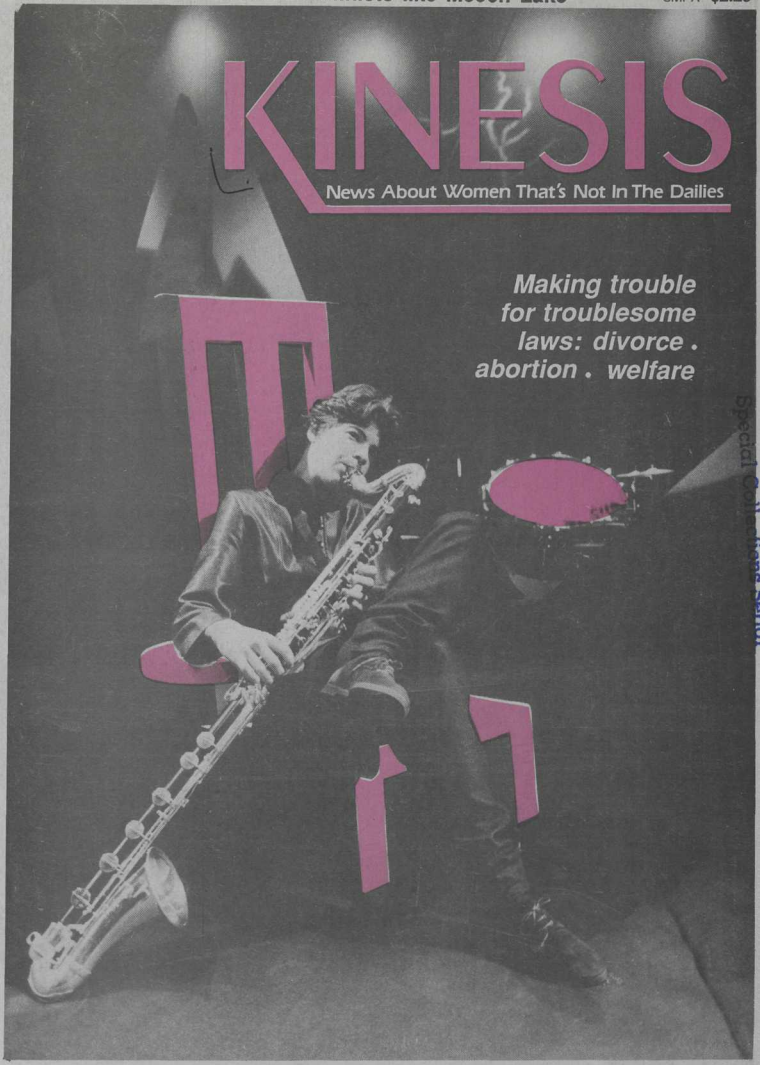
KINESIS

News About Women That's Not In The Dailies



Making trouble for troublesome laws: divorce . abortion . welfare

Special Collections Serial

Kinesis welcomes volunteers to work on all aspects of the paper. Call us at 255-5499. Our next News Group is Tues., Jan. 9 at 1:30 pm at *Kinesis*, #301-1720 Grant St. All women welcome even if you don't have experience.

PRODUCTION THIS ISSUE: Lisa Schmidt, Jackie Brown, Terrie Hamazaki, Gwen Bird, Sandy Jones, Tarel Quandt, Susan Prosser, Chris Meyer, Faith Jones, Nancy Pollak, Joni Miller, Winnifred Tovey, Colleen Penrowley, Noreen Shanahan, Susan Dyment

FRONT COVER: Lori Freedman and her bass clarinet—soon to appear at the Women In View Festival. Photo courtesy of Women in View

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Views expressed in *Kinesis* are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect VSW policy. All unsigned material is the responsibility of the *Kinesis* Editorial Board.

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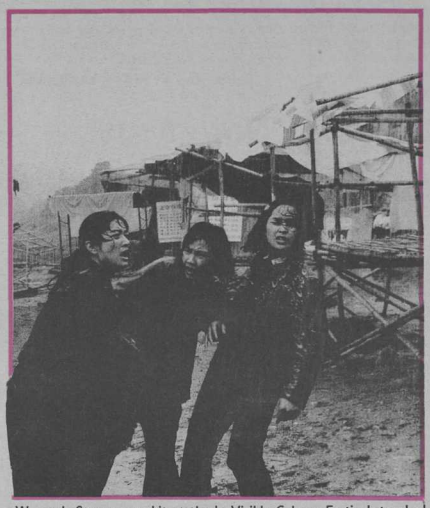
KINESIS

News About Women That's Not In The Dailies

MEANS MOVEMENT



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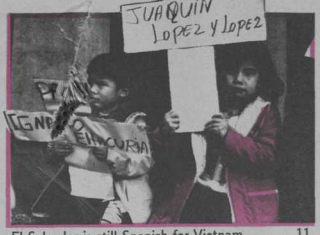

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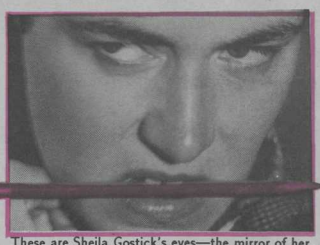

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MOVEMENT MATTERS

Movement matters listings information

Movement Matters is designed to be a network of news, updates and information of special interest to the women's movement. Submissions to Movement Matters should be no more than 500 words, typed, double-spaced on eight and a half by eleven paper. Submissions may be edited for length. Deadline is the 18th of the month preceding publication.

Ragweed sold to P.E.I. publisher

Libby Oughton has sold Ragweed Press/gynergy books, the Prince Edward Island publishing house, to Louise Fleming of Charlottetown. Ms Fleming says she plans to keep the press in Charlottetown and to continue to build on "its national reputation of literary quality and diversity."

Ragweed/gynergy specializes in books by and for women, children's books, Canadian literature and Maritime history. it has a backlist of over 100 titles including *Don't: A Women's Word*, Elly Danica's story of incest and recovery.

Child sexual abuse video

The Montréal New Film Group has released a series of three 28 minute videos on the subject of child sexual abuse within the family, entitled *Counselling the Sexual Abuse Survivor.*

The first video provides a forum for authors such as Florence Rush (*The Best-Kept Secret)* and Louise Armstrong *Kiss Daddy Goodnight)* to discuss the social factors influencing the abuse, including the freudian "cover-up." The second video, featuring Norma McCormick, Diana Russell, Lucy Berliner and David Finkelhor, deals with the extent of child sexual abuse, the sexual traumatization of abused children, and treatment strategies and targets.

In the final video, survivors of incest are the focus of feminist perspectives on therapy presented by Sandra Butler (*Conspiracy of Silence)* and therapist Linde Zingaro.

A facilitator is available to lead group discussions of the material. The series is available on VHS or Beta format at a cost of $150 plus sales tax from: The Montréal New Film Group, 3603 boul. St-Laurent, Montréal, PQ H2X 2V5 (Telephone: 514-844-7740)

Red Eye and repro tech

The Politics of Reproductive Technology will be the focus of a five part series, from December 2 through January 1990, on the RedEye show of Vancouver Co-op Radio, 102.7 fm.

The series will critically explore reproductive issues and attempt to unravel some of the global, historical and social implications of reproductive technology. Who controls the development and discussion of repro tech? To what extent are artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, and embryo transfers actually been used to legitimate the control of women's reproductive processes by medical/legal "experts?"

RedEye airs on Saturday mornings between 9 am and noon.

New mags to note

Afrekete is a new German-language magazine published by Afro-German women. They have put out a call for information on the activities of Black women and women of colour, and are interested in setting up exchanges with other feminist publications.

Write to *Afrekete* c/o E. Jank and E.v. Pirch, Hagazussa e.V., Friesenstr. 12, 2800 Bremen, Germany.

And from Québec, *gasp*. Published in English by a Montréal-based group. *gasp* "intends to break away from all narrow definitions of feminism by covering a wide range of topics and by presenting them in a funky format." The fall 1989 issue included articles entitled "R.E.A.L. Women and Panic Feminism," "Elementary environmentalism," and an interview with filmmaker Pratibha Parmar.

gasp's publishers describe the magazine's future as "uncertain" but are aiming to produce a quarterly with a national audience. The cover price is $2. Write to and for *gasp* at 3549, rue Dorion, Montréal, PQ H2K 4B7

Call for IWD videos

The sixth annual International Women's Day Video festival in Boston is inviting women to submit videotapes that explore the theme of what women want as we head into a new century. Entries in languages other than English are welcomed (with written translations if possible.) The Festival will take place in March 1990.

In addition, women all over the world are encouraged to video sets of one-minute interviews, using the following guidelines: a) Choose a place where women gather (anywhere); b) Interview five women at a time; c) Ask each woman to introduce herself and answer the question, 'As a woman, what is the most important issue for you as we enter the 1990s?'

Through this project, women of all ages and paths of life can make their voices heard. The one-minute interviews will appear as a thread throughout the festival.

Deadline for entries in January 1, 1990. Tapes may be in any format (PAL and SECAM in 3/4" only). Include a return envelope and postage. For entry forms and more information, write: IWD Video Festival, PO Box 176, Boston MA 02130, or telephone Abigail Norman at 617-628-8826.

Correction

In November, *Kinesis* published a story about the Prince George Sexual Assault Centre ("A busy centre in a northern city"). To our distress and anger, we have learned the author of the article is a man with a history as an abuser. The article was submitted with a covering letter which implied the author worked at the centre and was writing with the centre's authorization. In fact, the centre had no knowledge of the article; the man has an association with the centre as a participant in a male survivor's group.

We apologize to any readers who may have been troubled by the article. In the future, we will routinely confirm the identities of the authors of unsolicited stories.

VSW Thanks

Our sincere thanks to the following supporters who have generously contributed to VSW in November during our autumn donation campaign. In this time of government cutbacks to VSW, donations are deeply appreciated. Donations are vital to our financial health and, as importantly, they are a concrete vote of confidence in VSW's efforts on behalf of women's rights.

The majority of our donors live in Vancouver, but supporters from across the country also sent contributions. From all of us here at VSW—board, staff and volunteers—our thanks for your support:

• Kate Braid • Ruth Bullock • Gail Cryer • Frances Marr Darling • Janine Duprey • Elsie M. Eccles • Maureen Fraser • Stan Gabriel • Baylah Greenspoon • Donna Hagan • Jody Hawley • Ann Henrich • Shelley Hine • Leon Hurvitz • Faune Johnson • Jennifer Johnstone • Barbara Karmazyn • Linda Kell (Confer) • Dorothy Kidd • Heather Leighton • Fraidie Martz • Iris Minnie • Diane Mercy • Margaret Norman • Joan Parkinson • Nora Patrich • Virginia Patrick • Tracy C. Potter • Robin Rennie • Ronni Richards • Hulda Roddan • Sandra Seigrist • Sally Shamai • Eva Sharell • Mary Woo Sims • Margaret Slight • Helen Sonthaff • Judi Walker • C.M. Waymark • Linda Werklund

New and Renewing Members

Our thanks to all of our VSW members, who support us year 'round with memberships and donations. Our appreciations to the following supporters who became members or renewed their membership in November:

• A. Carol Anderson • Dorothy Behesti • Mary Carlisle • Susan Crawley • Jane E. Duff • Cameron Egyeda • Marion Gilmour • Penny Handford • Candice Harrison • Deborah Honeyman • Angela Kelly • Leslie Kemp • Alex Maas • Barbara A. Monita • Margaret Ostrowski • Laurie Robertson • Sima Sharifi • Catherine Souch • Mildred Tremblay • Karen White

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SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL WOMEN'S PRESS

Women at *Kinesis* were very saddened by the death of Lea Dawson in November. Lea had worked on staff at the Vancouver Status of Women up until the spring of 1989 and she had been a fairly regular contributor to the paper. Lea wrote stories on daycare and child custody, prostitute's rights and AIDS. She also just loved to poke her head in the production room and find out what was cooking: we knew that Lea really liked *Kinesis* and we really liked what she contributed. It's still hard to believe she is gone.

We recently got a glimpse of the power of the feminist press. Elaine Cook ("Sex discrimination at Eatons," *Kinesis,* Nov. '89) was offered a commissioned sales position in the furniture department of the Eatons Warehouse store in East Vancouver. She's thrilled, and we'd like to think our story had something to do with Eatons' sudden generosity.

Abortion recriminalized?

Once again, without feeling

by Nancy Pollak

Regardless of whether parliament passes, amends or rejects the Conservative's proposed bill to criminalize abortion, Canadian women will have a very old fight on their hands: the fight for control of their reproductive lives.

In a move widely regarded as politically cowardly and, by feminists, as manifest evidence of the Tory's fundamental carelessness about women, Justice Minister Doug Lewis introduced the criminal code amendment on November 3—and promised it would be law before the new year. As *Kinesis* goes to press, Bill C-42 is passing into the parliamentary committee stage where it will likely undergo amendments.

In its original form, C-42 is heartless in its simplicity: abortion is a criminal act unless performed by a doctor who believes the health of the women seeking the abortion is threatened. Health is broadly defined in the bill as including "physical, mental and psychological health."

In short, a woman must find a "sympathetic" doctor to whom she must prove some manner of incapacity, in order to obtain a legal abortion.

The proposed act provides for a maximum two years imprisonment for anyone inducing or providing the means of inducing an illegal abortion.

Reaction to the proposed law is sharply divided. Anti-choice MPs and their supporters have denounced the bill as virtual "abortion on demand," while the pro-choice movement has declared the bill demeaning, unnecessary and unfair.

The pro-choice movement has argued against the re-criminalizing of abortion since January 1988, when the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) ruled the old criminal code section was unconstitutional. If passed, Bill C-42 will almost certainly face constitutional challenges, too.

"This bill makes no attempt to address the problem of access to abortion, which the Supreme Court had identified as the [old law's] major problem," said Hilda Thomas of the Everywoman's Health Centre in Vancouver. While the new bill does not stipulate the facility in which abortions may be performed, access to abortion now means, at the minimum, access to a cooperative doctor. Besides being an insult to women's autonomy, this dependence on the medical establishment condemns many Canadian women to no access at all.

And the situation would likely worsen under C-42: "This bill will have a chilling effect [on doctors]," said Norah Hutchinson of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League, referring to the possibility that anti-choice groups may push for criminal charges to be laid against doctors who perform abortions "too freely."

"The bill sets up the "bogus patient" right-to-life types [who provide] false urine samples, schedule procedures and then cry foul," said Hutchinson, citing entrapment methods the anti-choice movement has used in the United States.

Feminists are still hammering out the possible consitutional arguments against a bill such as C-42; the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) are developing a position which will be released mid-December.

Challenges will probably hinge on sections 7 (the right to life, liberty and the security of person) and 15 (equality) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Recent Supreme Court rulings may have provided fresh tools. The SCC decision on *Andrews* signalled an interpretation of s. 15 that recognized the disadvantages faced by certain groups in society—arguably women who, under a law such as C-42, would lack control over whether or not they reproduce.

As well, the SCC decision on *Brooks* acknowledged for the first time in Canadian history that discrimination on the basis of pregnancy is discrimination on the basis of sex.

There is no certainty, however, that the bill will clear the house of commons in any form.

Liberal MPs and Conservative backbenchers are being permitted to vote according to their "consciences;" Tory cabinet ministers are being required to accept the bill (producing the spectacle of declared pro-choice ministers such as Barbara McDougall and Kim Campbell selling out choice in favour of cabinet status); and the NDP will, as a block, vote against the bill.

Anti-choice MPs on the parliamentary committee are widely expected to push for major revisions, including narrowing the definition of health to physical health and imposing gestational limits. Some observers believe C-42 will emerge "unpassable"—which would leave the Tories in a "hey, we tried" position—and Canadian women with no clear right to abortion.

While the proposed abortion bill has been no cause for celebration, November did bear a few pieces of good news on the reproductive rights front. The Supreme Court released its reasoning in the Daigle decision and confirmed two strong points: at the present time, there exists no basis in anglo-Canadian or Quebec law for "fetal rights," and no husband or boyfriend may seek a civil injunction to prevent a woman from obtaining an abortion.

Locally, the Everywoman's Health Centre, BC's only free-standing abortion clinic, was elated to receive an anonymous donation of $180,000 (in $20 bills, no less). Pressure to repay their mortgage has been relieved, but the centre still requires major ongoing financial support due to the Socred's continued refusal to provide funding.

photo by Jan

No excuses for child abuse

by Chris Meyer

More than 300 people standing outside the Vancouver courthouse let out a collective wail of rage against child sexual abuse and demanded that a judge who called a three-year old girl "sexually aggressive" be removed from the bench.

"Justice" chanted the demonstrators on November 27th as they huddled under umbrellas, some faces displaying intense anger and others streaming with tears.

The women gathered three days after Vancouver media reported that county court Judge Peter van der Hoop gave a suspended sentence to Delbert Leeson, 33, who admitted to sexually abusing the girl.

The judge stated, "The circumstances are unusual, in part, because it appears that this three-year-old girl was sexually aggressive." Van der Hoop also took into consideration that the man was "under the influence of alcohol to a fair extent at the time" and that he was tired.

As Colleen Smith of Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) read the judge's statement out to the crowd, there were boos and chants of "No excuse for child abuse" and "Don't blame the victim."

The message became clear as female victims of child sexual abuse took turns at the microphone to tell their stories. Their words were haunting reminders that the van der Hoop decision is not an isolated incident.

"We notice this case," said one survivor, "when hundreds of other cases go by unnoticed."

WAVAW, who organized the demonstration, sees this case as just one graphic example of day-to-day violence against women. Staff worker Ruth Gillings says, "We see it more than in the context of just a three-year-old being labelled sexually aggressive in one case. It's part of a continuum of experiences that women have when they are abused as children or beaten by their husbands or raped as adults."

Gillings says she's particularly concerned about how issues of sexual abuse against women and children are treated in the courts.

"We see women who have gone through the criminal justice system after being raped and they describe their experience in that system as almost as bad or worse than the actual sexual assault," says Gillings.

WAVAW is concerned that Judge van der Hoop's comments help to trivialize issues of child sexual abuse in the courts.

Regula Baer of the Vancouver Incest and Sexual Abuse Centre Society (VISACS) said the judge's decision, "clearly indicates his willingness to hold children responsible for abuse, when obviously it is the adult's responsibility. The use of alcohol does not lessen the offence."

WAVAW is circulating a petition calling for Judge van der Hoop to remove himself from the bench or to be removed from all cases where child sexual abuse is an issue. They are also demanding that the judge "educate himself on the realities of child sexual abuse."

But the speakers and outraged demonstrators demanded education and awareness on everyone's part to put an end to sexual abuse.

Letters of complaint should be sent to the following: 1) The Secretary, Canadian Judicial Council, 717-130 Albert St. Ottawa ONT K1A 0W8; 2) Mrs. Val Gosnez, Attn: Chief Justice, Counter 211, 800 Smithe St. Vancouver, BC V6Z 2E1; 3) Judge van der Hoop, County Court Chambers 800 Smithe St. Vancouver BC V6Z 2E1

Charter challenge to "disrespectful" law

by Chris Meyer

In one of the first Canadian charter challenges dealing with poverty, the BC government will be called upon to defend the constitutionality of its Guaranteed Available Income for Need (GAIN) Amendment Act.

Two single mothers and the Federated Anti-Poverty Groups of BC (FAPG) filed a claim against the act to the BC Supreme Court in mid-November.

The act, proclaimed in 1988, forces single parents on welfare who are eligible for maintenance payments to participate in the Ministry of Social Services & Housing's Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP).

The plaintiffs and their lawyers, Gwen Brodsky of the BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Carolyn McCool of the Legal Services Society of BC say the act harms one group in particular — single mothers on welfare.

"The BC legislation is particularly violative and disrespectful of the equality and autonomy of women on welfare," says Brodsky. The lawyers say the GAIN Amendment Act violates two sections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: section 15, which guarantees individual equality before the law, and section 7, which guarantees the right to life, liberty and security.

Brodsky says that under the act, "Women are required to make a choice between liberty and security. If they choose the security of having welfare, they give up their liberty to decide how they will deal with family concerns. But if they want the liberty to make voluntary choices, they risk giving up the security of welfare."

One of the plaintiffs, Karen Farrell of Vancouver, is facing this choice. Farrell, the mother of two young boys, prefers to make her

See **Charter** page 4

Discrimination legal under BC tenancy law

by Candice Harrison

Women in Vancouver are feeling the housing crunch.

Especially vulnerable to affordable housing (or lack of it) are single parents.

Many rental properties in Vancouver are changing their tenant policy to "adults only," and women and children are being forced out into the streets.

To discuss this major problem, the Vancouver Status of Women hosted a community information forum at the First United Church on November 20.

The panel included Carolyn McCool of Legal Services; Rita Chudnovsky, the Children's Advocate for Vancouver; Noreen Shanahan, of the Tenants' Rights Coalition and Bernice Saunders of South Vancouver Neighbourhood House.

The media made a strong showing—CBC, BCTV, CKVU—housing is a *hot* issue. Unfortunately, their presence may have contributed to the air of political controversy which seemed to take over the meeting. This wasn't really a networking between the concerned participants.

Noreen Shanahan pointed out different ways landlords manipulate prospective and current tenants. Between January - July of this year, 1,000 rental units were lost to demolition. Other forces at work are evictions made under the pretense of renovations, rent increases of up to 80 percent and tenants who won't ask their landlords to make necessary housing repairs for fear of eviction.

Economics become very apparent when discussing single parent housing and yet even when the person can pay top dollar for rent, the "problem" of having children comes into play.

Five years ago, a rental apartment complex in Richmond segregated families in one building and had two buildings for "adults only." When one couple found they were expecting a child, the management stated they could stay in the "adults only" building until either a unit in the "family" building came open, or other tenants surrounding them complained of the noise associated with babies.

In 1986, Census Canada reported Vancouver had approximately 40,000 households with 1 child under 18. Out of that number, 40 percent used rental housing.

Rita Chudnovsky, the Children's Advocate for Vancouver, continued on to say that, in 1986, 70 percent of households were spending more than 30 percent of their gross incomes on rental costs.

In June of this year, 65 percent of available rental units listed at the Vancouver Housing Registry stressed "no children."

Even in a strata style housing, children can be prejudiced against and many units are sold specifically to adults only.

"There is no evidence that I can see that children make poor tenants," Chudnovsky continued. "Something city council could do is seek covenants on lands to ensure families will be allowed access."

Mid-November, in response to a recommendation Chudnovsky put forward as Child Advocate, Vancouver city council agreed to lobby the provincial government to amend the province's Human Rights Act. The proposed amendment would add age, family status, source of income and sexual orientation to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination.

With these additions, the Human Rights Act could be used to prevent age and other restrictions presently allowable under the BC's tenancy law.

What other problems do women face?

Bernice Saunders of South Vancouver Neighbourhood house told of a Native woman with two sons living in downtown Vancouver on Granville Street. The boys have to bus to Templeton School. Although she'd like to move closer to their school, the mother can't afford bus fare to find a decent alternative accommodation.

Saunders also spoke of how newcomers to Vancouver—especially from rural areas often don't know *how* to approach landlords. They don't have references from previous landlords, and are put off by the larger security deposits needed here than in many other areas of BC.

Mary Flynn, executive director of the Co-op Housing Federation of BC stated "Vancouver is becoming a childless city" and gave a brief synopsis of co-op housing in BC and the trend by the federal government to eliminate it. Last year, there were approximately 550 units developed in BC This year the number had been reduced to 158—what does the future hold?

Alderman (sic) Sandra Wilking and Gordon Price were at the meeting representing city council, but were unable to give any definite proposals for more affordable housing.

When faced with questions Gordon Price's most noteworthy comment was that "he can guarantee there will be no problem getting social housing in Concord Pacific lands."

Linda Ervin from the church housing sector (Mustard Seed Group) retaliated with a wish for a firm commitment from the City of Vancouver for a demolition control bylaw.

A very poignant comment by Joan Morelli was to the effect that mayor Gordon Campbell is rarely seen at public forum meetings on housing.

Karen Melady, a mother-to-be, gave the most memorable remark of the evening: "Babies are [only] valuable when they are selling tires and diapers."

Without proper housing, people cannot live decent lives.

While I entered the forum with thoughts and hopes of a future for better housing for all, the reality of the situation is frightening. The determination and unwillingness to be defeated of those fighting for the rights of women in our community deserves a lot of credit.

Charter from page 3

own arrangements with the children's father regarding his involvement in their lives. He has been providing practical assistance like baby-sitting and shopping.

But Farrell fears this arrangement could change as the government has already initiated a maintenance order against the father. Although Farrell has not authorized the government claim, it is in her name and the father believes she is closely associated with it.

In her statement, Farrell says she's afraid that if the father is forced to pay maintenance, he may stop helping with the more immediate care of the children or he may leave the country. Farrell requested a waiver to exempt her from the mandatory provisions of the act but the government refused her.

There are also women who *want* help enforcing maintenance order—and the plaintiffs argue the act doesn't help them either.

Plaintiff Lorraine Hyrnkiw of Burnaby wants help enforcing her son's father's maintenance payments but is frustrated by the backlog and the FMEP procedure. The father is now in arrears in the amount of $1,700 ($100 per month) and Hrynkiw applied for a court order one year ago. The government has not yet acted on her case. When Hrynkiw asked for a waiver to exempt her from the act so that she could go to court on her own, she was refused.

Plaintiff Gus Long of the FAPG says, "I don't have anything against helping women with enforcement of maintenance orders, but the program [FMEP] doesn't seem to be working well."

Long says the program should be better staffed and funded and should be voluntary for all people including those on welfare. She also says the women should be able to choose their own lawyer. With the existing legislation, the ministry appoints a lawyer to enforce the order.

Brodsky says she hopes this challenge will set a precedent not only for women but for poor people generally. "It's important for these early poverty cases in the courts to help establish good precedents that will assist poor people in their efforts to secure their right to a minimum level of income."

A caring woman is lost to the community

photo by Sibyl Wagner

Lea Dawson

Lea Dawson chose to take her life on November 4th, 1989. The sense of loss her friends felt was great, but we also recognized that the communities Lea was involved with would feel the loss of this talented woman. Lorraine McKillop, James Johnston and myself, Cindy Filipenko, would like to share our remembrances of Lea Dawson.

Intelligent, eloquent, sensual ... these are a few of the words that best describe Lea Dawson. Her interests and concerns were without boundary. Whether you knew Lea as friend, co-worker, colleague, lover or political activist—you knew a person who was gentle, committed and caring.

There were times when Lea could be difficult to work with, but her attitude was not based in stubbornness, but rather integrity, such was the level of her convictions. Feminist, lesbian, socialist, activist: all of these labels fit Lea, but it is the sum of their total in their purest form that describe her.

Her political work was not restricted to concerns deemed lesbian-feminist, but rather she used the beliefs she had gained to expand her horizons. Much of her work was invisible, quietly working on the issues of poverty and battered women. Some of her work was silent and personal, work around ACOA and incest survival.

Despite the pain she had endured during her early life, she was able to reach out to men. Her support and education of her gay brothers was a wonderful thing to observe and a stimulating process to be involved in. She helped to bridge the gaps that separate the gay and lesbian communities through her work on the 4th B.C. Regional Gay and Lesbian Conference. A dedicated member of the AIDS Vancouver speakers bureau, Lea brought AIDS awareness to the lesbian community at a time when many of us believed we were immune.

A teacher to many people, Lea taught by example. She had the marvelous ability to make "hard stuff" easier and was quick to appreciate progress. When giving criticism she was aware of others' vulnerability and could make her point without compromising her honesty.

Lea did not live in the political arena, but would come forth when she felt it was necessary. While many people knew Lea, or knew of her, because of her political work, it is important to remember the well-rounded woman she was.

Trained as a marine biologist, Lea had a quick, sharp, scientific mind. She also possessed an artistic soul. She could explain the complexities of the HIV-virus as easily as she could weave threads into beautiful fabrics on her loom or help a friend draft a resume in her distinctive, block, printing script.

She loved the arts, as both artist and audience. She loved to dance in cavernous discos and listen to jazz in her livingroom. She spent hours walking forests and perfecting her herb garden. She whipped up some unusually savoury dishes and barbecued a mean Italian sausage. She had a gentleness to her voice that rang when she called her friends "sweetie."

She had left a long-term marriage to come into our community, a marriage which became one of the greatest sources of friendship/support Lea knew in her life. Her disappointments were many and coupled with the pain of her early life the emotional and intellectual drain became too much for her to carry.

She tried to get on top of her depression and almost succeeded.

At her memorial a woman told the following story:

I had a falling out with Lea in the context of some work we were doing. She came back and apologized, she said that her responses to the situation were the survival mechanisms of an abused child. I looked at her and said. "That's alright, I want you to survive."

And Lea does survive. She survives in the work she did and in our memories. She will be missed by many.

Carol Gran: Socred front-man?

by Joni Miller

Carol Gran is extremely pleased with her cabinet appointment as the part-time Minister for Women's Programs, but doesn't have a lot to say about it.

"I really don't want to be specific" the Social Credit Minister said. "I want to do the right thing—I don't want to make mistakes. I'm not willing to say *anything* just to have something to say." Gran spoke with *Kinesis* in late November, several weeks after her appointment.

The Women's Programs appointment falls under Gran's portfolio of government management services.

Darlene Marzari, NDP critic for women's issues calls the newly formed cabinet position "a half baked idea inside a reluctant woman who's willing to do the job." Marzari charges the new appointment is an attempt to make Vander Zalm look good to women.

"They're willing to do anything [to regain support] other than give women power" she said.

Gran said she is "certain" that more resources will be allocated to women's programs, but was vague about what these resources might be or where they might go.

Marzari, on the other hand, calls the ministry "pre-designed and prescripted."

"The budget is less than $250,000—and it's been pre-spent" she said. "There's no power in this position."

Gran appears to be long on good intentions and short on programs. She refused to express a position on abortion, equal pay or the legalization of midwifery and has no particular plans for legislative changes. She says that abortion is a federal responsibility. In the past, she has expressed the position that abortion should be allowable in cases of rape and incest only.

Gran plans to spend time "to get the ministry together." She will be travelling throughout BC during January and February talking to women. The Women's Secretariat will book appointments with virtually anyone who wishes to speak to the minister.

"I want to find out what the issues are and what regional differences exist," Gran said. "I don't think this has ever been done before—by any government.

"I want to talk to *all* women," she stressed, "not just organized women. I want to talk to men, too."

Gran has been the MLA for Langley since 1986. She is a born-again Christian, and a member of the Mennonite Church.

The *Vancouver Sun* calls her a "staunch free-enterpriser who favours cutting off welfare to young people who she says would rather collect government money than work at less-than-savoury jobs."

Prior to Gran's cabinet appointment, she paid a visit to the Ishtar Transition House in Langley, but stopped short of promising government funds. "We're at a planning stage," said Linda Dressler, coordinator of Ishtar. "We're looking into a new home with more space and better facilities. Carol Gran was very supportive and offered help. We're still waiting to see what will happen."

"'Feminist' is a term that has been widely misunderstood," Gran stated "If 'feminist' means caring about women, then I'm a feminist."

Gran sees her role "In simple terms—as an advocate for women." Her goal is to assist women in becoming economically independent.

"Women have challenges to face whether they are at home or at work," she said. "I wouldn't want to call a child an obstacle but the playing field is not completely level on account of the fact that women have most of the responsibility for childcare." One solution to the daycare crisis that Gran proposes is to press corporations to provide facilities. Gran sees no need for government involvement in daycare and cited the Simon Fraser University daycare, run by Penny Coates, as the 'best example she has ever seen.'

"If 'feminist' means caring about women, then I'm a feminist."

Carol Gran

Gran does not see the Social Credit party as male dominated. "There are lots of women in the Social Credit party," she said, "as many women as men." She agrees that men outnumber women in elected positions but points out,"There are not enough elected women in any party.

"Women are still hesitant to aspire to those positions."

Gran agrees this needs to change.

Property rights—or wrongs—after divorce

by Erin Shaw

Sweeping changes to the laws governing the division of property upon divorce are recommended in a working paper recently released by the B.C. Law Reform Commission (LRC). If these proposals become law, they will do nothing to curb the feminization of poverty, say feminist lawyers and academics.

Under the current *Family Relations Act* (1979), spouses are required to divide their property equally—regardless of ownership—when their marriage breaks down. Property is equally divided if it is a "family asset" or a "business asset" to which the non-owning spouse has contributed.

Family assets are those which are ordinarily used for a family purpose such as the family home and car. Business assets are divided equally if the non-owning spouse has contributed directly or indirectly through effective management of the home and child care.

Courts have discretion if a strictly equal division would be "unfair," with regard to a number of considerations including the needs of each spouse to become or remain economically independent.

The LRC has very little good to say about the existing legislation. Its chief criticism is that the ability of judges to reapportion on the basis of unfairness gives them far too much discretion and results in unpredictable and inconsistent decisions.

The problem lies, the LRC says, in the failure of the law to reflect a single coherent philosophy about the nature of marriage. Is it a union of body, soul and property, a union that does not affect property rights, or an economic partnership? According to the LRC, the *Family Relations Act* has been interpreted to reflect each of these philosophical approaches. This lack of clarity, the LRC argues, has left the door wide open for judges to decide cases based on their own value-laden view of the nature of marriage.

"Beware of judicial systems bearing gifts."

The recommendations of the LRC—this *is* a working paper—are that marriage ought to be viewed as an economic partnership and family property legislation should more clearly define what is to be divided and how, in order to limit judicial discretion. They recommend the adoption of a model which determines what will be divided based on a calculation of the "fruits of the marriage." Such legislation is already in place in a number of provinces including Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario.

Under their recommendations, the value of the property owned by both spouses—and not the property itself—is divided. Each spouse makes a balance sheet of the current value of all their assets. Debts, liabilities and assets brought into the marriage are then subtracted from the total. Then, an "equalization payment" is made to the spouse whose assets have less value. For example, if the woman's assets are worth $20,000 and the man's are worth $40,000, he will pay her $10,000 so each is left with a "net worth" of $30,000.

As the LRC phrases it, "How much wealth must one spouse transfer to the other so that each will have received equal financial benefit from the marriage?"

Courts will have no discretion to vary the size of the equalization payment in the absence of "unconscionability"—a term which the courts interpret to mean more than mere unfairness. Unconscionability is to be determined with regard to a number of specific factors including length of cohabitation and economic conduct.

"Beware of judicial systems bearing gifts," says Vancouver lawyer Ruth Lea Taylor in response to the apparently progressive thrust of the reforms. According to Taylor, who represents women in family matters, "You are bound to have conflicting decisions because every family is different. I want to be able to argue that my client is different because she has eight kids and no training and 50 percent is not enough." She warns that the recommendations must be carefully studied to determine their impact on women.

The Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) is studying the working paper and will be submitting their response to the LRC. Westcoast LEAF coordinator Janet Kee says that the paper does not acknowledge the poverty of women and children *after* marriage. "It is a formal equality regime," she says, "LEAF's response will point out that marriage is *not* an economic partnership of equals." LEAF would like to see law reform which recognizes this and ensures equality of results.

According to York University law professor Brenda Cossman, the most troublesome aspect of Ontario legislation—on which the LRC's recommendations are based—is the shift away from support.

"Under the Ontario act, support awards have been reduced tremendously," says Cossman. "This is especially unfair to women from poor families where there are few or no assets to divide."

Concerned groups and individuals can make their reactions to these proposals known to the LRC: the deadline for responses is Dec. 15, 1989. For a free copy of *The Working Paper on Property Rights on Marriage Breakdown*, or a shortform summary, contact the Law Reform Commission of B.C., #601-865 Hornby Street, Vancouver B.C. V6Z 2G3. Telephone 604-660-2366.

WHAT' S NEWS?

by Linda Choquette

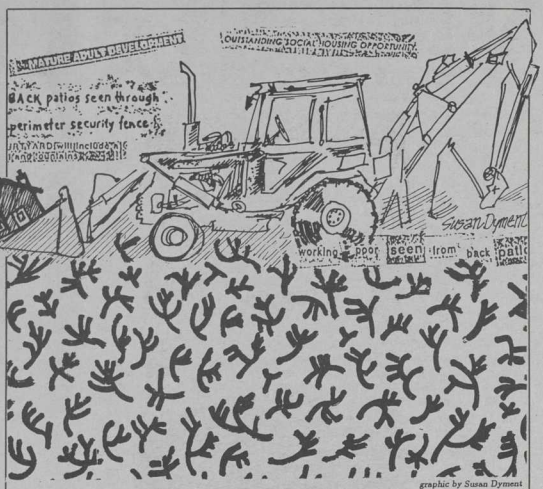
Pay equity breakthrough

Nurses in an Ontario county will be able to compare their work and wages to those of local police officers during pay equity negotiations, according to an Ontario Supreme Court ruling in late November.

The significance of the ruling, said labour lawyer Mary Cornish, is that workers who have been excluded from Ontario's pay equity legislation may now be included because they will be able to look beyond their own workplaces for male job classifications with which to compare themselves. Pay equity is also known as 'equal pay for work of equal value.'

Cornish represented the Ontario Nurses Association in its negotiations with Haldimand-Norfolk county. The county had challenged a pay equity tribunal's ruling allowing the comparison. The Supreme Court's favourable decision means, says Cornish, that there is support for the tribunal's intention to "interpret the [Ontario] pay equity act in a broad fashion so the maximum number fo people benefit."

Without the ruling, women whose workplaces lack male-dominated job categories—and hence, no jobs/wages to compare—would have been unable to pursue pay equity adjustments.



graphic by Susan Dyment

Homeless get welfare

For the first time in Canada, homeless people will be able to get welfare under a breakthrough agreement announced early November in Montreal. Anti-poverty groups across the country call it an important first step and hope it will help end the cycle of homelessness—people with no address cannot get welfare and, with no money, they cannot find somewhere to live.

The agreement, concluded between two community advocacy groups, the City of Montreal and the province of Quebec will give about $400 monthly for two consecutive months to recipients who agree to job counselling and a housing search.

Josianne Wanono, director of Montreal's Native Friendship Centre, welcomed the "far from perfect" deal, but noted that among other problems, finding low-cost housing within two months was unrealistic.

Havi Echenberg of the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) said the agreement should "serve as a precedent to encourage other provinces and municipalities". Spokespeople for Vancouver's End Legislated Poverty said they would publicly call on the Socred government to follow Quebec's lead.

NAPO estimates that there are about 250,000 homeless Canadians.

Victory for Mossman et al

A group of women lawyers, law students and legal academics (in one action) vindicated a peer, honoured the first woman in Canada to be called to the bar and obtained a $1 million pledge to improve the status of women at Toronto's Osgoode Hall Law School.

The group had lodged a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission contending that Osgoode Hall professor Mary Jane Mossman had been discriminated against on gender grounds when, in 1987, a man was hired as dean of the law school.

In return for suspending the complaint, the group extracted an agreement from the school last September to tangibly express its support for women with a commitment to a large scale program designed to enhance gender equality and improve the status of women.

Highlights of the agreement include a commitment to expanding the female/male faculty ratio, ensure equitable employment conditions, ensure a learning environment responsive to women's concerns, and recognize that women should participate in the leadership of the law school.

And, Clara Brett Martin (1874-1923) who struggled for six years to become a lawyer almost 100 years ago—braving the Law Society of Upper Canada—was richly recognized, thanks to Mossman and her supporters. As part of the settlement, Osgoode Hall has opened the Clara Brett Martin Institute, a feminist centre for the study of gender issues.

Mossman will have a $15,000 scholarship named for her; the annual scholarship is for graduate work in feminist legal study.

Understaffing at daycare

Bad communication and bad faith on the part of the directors of Saskatoon's Crisis Nursery has employees, fired in August, still trying to alert the public that children are in potential danger because of understaffing at their former place of employment.

The Crisis Nursery, operated by the Saskatoon Society for the Protection of Children (SSPC) take in about 10 children at a time. The children typically have been abused, abandoned, neglected or have families in crisis.

The board would pay for only one staff member per 12-hour shift, where responsibilities include caring for the children, cooking, cleaning, dealing with parents, answering the phone and attending to emergencies.

In early August, the staff met with the board and outlined their concerns about understaffing. They decided to present an ultimatum stating that no one would work until staff was increased to two people per shift (a total of five new positions). The board maintained staffing levels were adequate and made no commitment to hiring additional workers.

On August 24 the full-time workers refused to show up for their shifts and nursery director, Debbie Hughes, was instructed to fire them and hire new people. She refused and was also fired. Subsequently all the casual staff quit. The board has since hired six replacement workers and casual staff.

The board has answered the understaffing by insisting that staff can and should control the number of children accepted at any one time—by closing the door. Hughes asked, "What does a worker do when a woman shows up in the middle of the night, injured and fleeing from an abusive husband, with a six-month-old baby in her arms?"

Several Saskatoon groups and individuals have come out in support of the fired workers.

"Blood ties" upheld

A 19-year-old father was granted interim custody of an infant boy by a B.C. Court of Appeal decision which recognized the rights of the natural father over those of the natural mother and the adoptive couple she selected to parent the child.

The natural mother, 18-years old and separated from her boyfriend before the infant's birth, decided that neither she nor he were financially or emotionally capable of raising the child. In the interests of the baby boy, she chose adoption as his best chance and selected the adoptive couple from prospective parents' resumes provided by her doctors. Apparently, the natural father was not notified of the adoption.

"To deny the natural father his claim," said appeal court justice Charles Locke, is to deny blood ties "which cannot be disregarded." He then ordered the adoptive couple to deliver five-month-old Jason to his natural father (and the father's parents) pending a permanent custody hearing sometime in the new year.

Dalkon Shield: last round

Women's efforts to receive fair compensation for the damage they suffered from the Dalkon Shield intra-uterine device were stymied one last time when the US Supreme Court rejected a challenge to the settlement offered by the IUD's manufacturer, A.H. Robins.

Dalkon Shield Action Canada, a victim's advocacy group, had challenged Robin's offer of a $2.5 billion trust fund, arguing the settlement wrongfully banned future lawsuits and was insufficient to cover all possible claims.

The Supreme Court ruled against the challenge in early November. Said Action Canada spokesperson Elaine Cumley: "To hear that, finally, there is no further recourse for us is frightening, because we all use medical devices and we all take medicine."

The Dalkon Shield, marketed in the 70s and used by an estimated 100,000 Canadian women, caused infertility, miscarriages, pelvic inflammatory disease and death. Robins was aware of the device's defects, yet allowed millions of them to be distributed world-wide.

The administrators of the trust fund have 20 years to deal with damage claims."I think they will take all the time they can," said Cumley.

Gay rights to conjugal visits

For the first time, a Canadian court has accepted sexual orientation as a constitutional ground of discrimination. On November 6, ruling for an Ontario penitentiary inmate denied conjugal visits with his common-law partner, Federal Court of Canada judge Mr. Justice J.E. Dube said that homosexuals had been victimized through history because of prejudice and that the inmate had as much right to conjugal visits as a heterosexual.

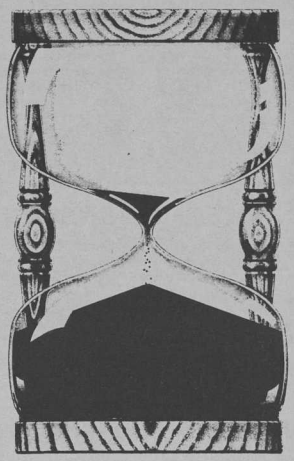
Elizabeth Thomas, a prison law specialist who charged Correctional Service Canada (CSC) with discrimination, successfully argued that the stated purpose behind conjugal visits—helping prisoners maintain family and community ties— was violated.

"Should the [CSC] commissioner be able to decide which relationships are more worthy of preservation than others?" Thomas asked. Lawyers for the government argued that conjugal visits between homosexuals would provoke violent reactions among the other prisoners. Thomas produced affidavits from several prisoners stating they had no objections.

Sexual orientation remains an unprotected right under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms despite recommendations for its inclusion by a 1985 parliamentary committee, and its inclusion in human rights legislation in the Yukon, Manitoba and Quebec.

Sources: *The Globe and Mail; The Vancouver Sun; Briarpatch*

TIME IS RUNNING OUT



CONCERNING GLOBAL PATRIARCHY TODAY

AN INTERNATIONAL NIGHTMARE

We believe patriarchy is contrary to the well-being of women and children and has therefore brought disgrace to Vancouver and the rest of the planet. "I am a feminist because I feel endangered, psychically and physically, by this society and because I believe that the women's movement is saying that we have come to an edge in history when men—insofar as they are the embodiment of the patriarchal idea—have become dangerous to children and other living things, themselves included." – Adrienne Rich (1979)

FEMINIST VALUES

"Feminism is the political theory and practice to free all women: women of colour, working-class women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement." – Barbara Smith (1979)

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF PATRIARCHY

"According to the book of Genesis, God first created man. Women was not only an afterthought, but an amenity. For close to 2,000 years, this holy scripture was believed to justify her subordination and explain her inferiority; for even as a copy, she was not a very good copy. She was not one of His best efforts." – Elaine Morgan (1972) We will make no effort whatsoever to refute biblical or any other explanations of male primacy, except to observe: "No one is more arrogant towards women, more anxious or scornful, than the man who is anxious about his virility." – Simone de Beauvoir (1948)

THE PATRIARCHAL FRONT CALLED MARRIAGE

"Marriage laws, the police, armies and navies are the mark of human incompetence." – Dora Russell (1927). We believe that marriage in patriarchal societies is little more than a relationship in which women give and men get. "Marriage is primarily an economic arrangement, an insurance pact [whose] returns are insignificantly small...a woman's premium is her husband [and] she pays for it with her name, her privacy, her self-respect, her very life." – Emma Goldman (1911). The accumulated losses women have suffered in marriage have not gone unnoticed: "Women and elephants never forget." – Dorothy Parker (1931)

SEX UNDER PATRIARCHY

"I'm sure it's no coincidence that so many people have bad sex. It goes along with general disregard for human pleasures in favour of the logic of making profits." – Nancy Mann. We believe that lust is good and need not be associated with shame, coercion, deceit and fear—the qualities which most distinguish it under patriarchy. "I have an inalienable constitutional and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can, to change that love every day if I please." – Victoria Woodhull (1871). We will no longer tolerate myths about female sexuality: "I used to be Snow White but I drifted." – Mae West (1967)

WHO REALLY LOVES THE FAMILY?

"Being a mother is a noble status, right? Right. So why does it change when you put "unwed" or "welfare" in front of it?" – Flo Kennedy (1973). We believe patriarchal societies are, by their very nature, incapable of loving, teaching and caring—the real role of a family. In fact, the patriarchal family is a danger zone: "Many women and girls directly experience female sexual slavery without going out of their homes. For them, home replaces brothel: they are wives or daughters who are the victims of husbands and fathers instead of pimps." – Kathleen Barry

ALL WORK AND NO PAY

"A woman's two cents worth is worth two cents in the music business." – Loretta Lyn (1930). We believe patriarchal values are inextricably linked to female poverty: "The sexual division of labour and society remains intact even with women in the paid economy. Ideology adjusts to this by defining women as working mothers. And the two jobs get done for less than the price of one." – Zillah Eisentstein (1979). We are tired of working too much for too little, just because we are women: "Very few jobs actually require a penis or a vagina. All other jobs should be open to everyone." – Flo Kennedy (1974)

THE POWER OF ORGANIZING

We believe that earnest feminist organizing is our most powerful tool against patriarchy. Our many sisters before and around us have taught us the ways: "Feminism is a many-headed monster which cannot be destroyed by a single decapitation. We spread and grow in ways that are incomprehensible to a hierarchical mentality." – Peggy Kornegger (1979). "A conservative estimate would be that 90 percent of politicians patronize public women. Imagine the wealth of information available for bringing "undercover" pressure to bear regarding passage of certain legislation concerning...political freedoms." – Margo St. James (1972). Well, that's one idea.

A PUBLIC STATEMENT

WE THEREFORE WITH ALL IRREVERENCE AND SERIOUS INTENTION, IN OUR OWN NAMES, MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT: THAT BECAUSE GLOBAL PATRIARCHY BRINGS DESTRUCTION AND MISERY TO ALL IN THIS CITY AND THIS PLANET—ESPECIALLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN—WE THEREFORE FORBID IT TO CONTINUE. SO CUT IT OUT, RIGHT NOW.

FEMINIST INSURRECTION

We believe these times give a clear signal for women to shed any inhibitions and tell the truth of our lives. We therefore urge all feminists to observe every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday as days of unrest and agitation: "There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that receives it." – Edith Wharton. Women: be your own candle and each other's mirror. "Progress affects few. Only revolution can affect many." – Alice Walker (1979).

A Girl Whose Spirits Have Not Been Dampened By Inactivity, Or Innocence Tainted By False Shame, Will Always Be A Romp Mary Wollstonecraft (1792)

The above declaration was initiated by feminists in response to the homophobic claptrap published in Vancouver's dailies on November 4, 1989. It didn't cost us a cent.

Quebec feminists say:

Don't leave Québec Meech-less

by Lisa Schmidt

Autumn. The leaves are falling, the rain sets in and Canadians are fed a diet of Meech Lake reports, opinions and letters to the editor in daily papers across the country.

First come the reports from Manitoba and New Brunswick, the two provinces that have yet to formally approve the accord. Both want changes, but disagree about what should be changed.

Newfoundland joins the two-province "just say no to Meech" movement at the November First Minister's conference. This gathering of the would-be Fathers of Confederation was the latest step in the Meech Lake shuffle.

Yet in spite of all the talk about Meech, concerns held by Canadian women remained undiscussed by the First Ministers and relatively unmentioned in the media.

Outside Québec, the feminist quarrel with the accord has two focuses: firstly, the interpretive nature of "distinct society" potentially threatens women's equality within Québec and in the rest of the country; secondly, the opt out provision may mean the end of national programs in areas of health care, education and public housing.

Opting out of cost-sharing with the federal government opens up almost all social services to the whims of the provinces. Under the guise of reducing the public debt, provinces may introduce privatization initiatives in lieu of offering needed services. Already in B.C., government-sponsored daycare has been displaced by privatization.

More controversial, however, is the possible risk to women's rights under the "distinct society" clause.

Janet Kee, a Vancouver lawyer with the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), demonstrates the potential threat with a hypothetical example: If Québec passes an act forbidding married women with children from working nights and the act is judged to be discriminatory by a court of law, Québec could use its "distinctiveness" to justify the law and consequently, override the judgement.

Once a legal precedent is set, it becomes difficult to win other cases of the same nature—hence the threat to women across the country.

But women in Québec do not agree.

In reference to the anti-Meech position held by feminists in other parts of the country, Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) president Charlotte Thibault declared: "We contest that point of view" in a November interview with *Kinesis* .

The FFQ is a feminist organization in Québec that represents over 45,000 women throughout the province and the FFQ is a staunch Meech supporter. In a brief released in 1987, shortly after the accord was negotiated, the FFQ stated that respect for women's rights is becoming more and more a part of political culture in Québec.

Stressing the interpretive nature of the clause, the federation emphasizes that "distinct society" encompasses the equality of women and that progressive attitudes in education, social services and health care have evolved in Québec in a tradition of upholding women's rights.

Québec has, in fact, little to learn from the rest of the country when it comes to women's concerns in health care, says Thibault. Abortion has been widely available in that province since Henry Morgentaler opened his first clinic in the early 70s, long before any other province offered this service. And recently, Québec has changed its social welfare legislation to allow the homeless to receive benefits.

"We (the FFQ) sat down with constitutional experts and came up with every possible case in which there could have been ambiguity concerning the infringement of women's rights," says Thibault. "We found that there is nothing in the accord that changes women's equality."

Thibault adds that in order for Québec to uphold a discriminatory judgement, the provincial legislature would have to prove before the Supreme Court that it was "demonstrably justifiable in a free and democratic society." This comes from the first section of the Charter of Rights which allows any other section to be overruled if sufficient proof is presented.

But how likely is it, Thibault asks, that any blatant discrimination would be determined justifiable? "If any government tries to do such a thing, they will be beaten in the following election." Historically, says Thibault, Québec has certainly used the vote to make very clear what it will not tolerate from its current premier. In 1976, a very unsatisfied populace voted overwhelmingly for a party that would stand up to English Canada and assert that French was the official language of the province. Robert Bourassa learned a valuable lesson.

Similarly any government in Québec that attempted to tamper with women's rights would suffer at the polls, says Thibault.

Fast food or balanced diet?

Hailed by some as a balanced and flexible legal document, denounced by others as "the fast food of constitutional agreements," the Meech Lake Accord has not escaped the attention of the Canadian public since it was first negotiated in the summer of 1987.

The central purpose of the accord is to unify Canada by bringing Québec into the constitution: since then-premier René Levesque's refusal to sign the Constitution Act in 1982, Québec has been "left out." The accord is a legal document that has equal weight with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. All provincial legislatures must ratify the accord by June 1990 in order for it to become law: to date, only Manitoba and New Brunswick have withheld ratification.

Five major clauses form the heart of the accord:

- Québec is granted the status of a "distinct society" within Canada
- the unanimous consent of federal and provincial governments is required for Senate reform or the creation of new provinces
- provinces can opt out of federal cost-shared programs in areas of provincial jurisdiction (eg. education, daycare) and will receive cash compensation to set up "equivalent" programs
- Senate and Supreme Court appointments will be made from lists submitted by provinces
- annual constitutional conferences will be held to discuss matters such as Senate reform and the fisheries.

Domestic workers

Good enough to work – and to stay

by Diane Breti

A major review of Canada's Foreign Domestic Worker Program is currently underway in Ottawa. Canada Immigration intends to restructure the program to increase the number of domestic workers in Canada and reduce administration costs. Of primary concern to the more than 80,000 foreign domestics working in Canada is the fact that the review could result in the removal of their right to apply for permanent resident status. Yet domestic workers' concerns are being ignored by the review committee, which has met with only two of the five domestic workers' organizations across the country.

"If the employer treats us well, we will stay."

At present, the Foreign Domestic Worker Program admits women to Canada on renewable work visas to work as live-in domestics. After two years' continuous employment, domestic workers can apply for permanent resident status. They are the only class of immigrants who can apply for permanent residence from within the country.

Since they must be employed as live-in domestics to remain in Canada, any attempt to negotiate better working conditions means risking not only their job but their place of residence and immigration status.

The national shortage of domestic help promoted Immigration to strike a review committee to determine why the labour market demand for live-in domestics is not being met by the program in its present form. The review committee began studying the program six months ago, without seeking input from domestic workers. Vancouver domestics first learned the review was underway on September 17, and forwarded a petition to Minister of Employment and Immigration Barbara McDougall, demanding a public review. When the minister visited Vancouver in late September, she met briefly with Christina Davidson of the West Coast Domestic Workers Association and assured Ms. Davidson there would be a public review and that domestic workers would be given an opportunity to participate.

Thus far, participation in the review has been limited to one October meeting between the Association and the review committee.

According to the committee, the main problem with the current program is that domestic workers change jobs "without good reason". They offered as proof the fact that Immigration has received letters of complaint from employers whose domestic worker quit to work for another employer who paid a higher salary. "Employers are the victims here," said George Davidson, head of Foreign Worker Recruitment at Immigration's Ontario Regional Office. "They wait months for a domestic and pay their airfare to come here. Then these domestics quit their jobs just so they can move down the street to be closer to their girlfriends."

Ottawa Program Specialist Ann Booth criticized domestic workers who leave domestic work after gaining permanent resident status, although she admitted there are no statistics to indicate whether this is a common occurrence.

The response from domestic workers is simple: improve our working conditions and we will stay in domestic work. They reject the claim that the only reason domestic workers change jobs is for money. "The relationship with the employer is more important than how much we are paid," said domestic worker Mary Banasen. "If the employer treats us well, we will stay."

Poor working conditions are also the reason domestics seek other types of employment once they are permanent residents. But Immigration will not monitor or enforce working conditions in the employment relationship its program creates, since employment standards fall under provincial jurisdiction. Instead, the review committee intends to recommend changing the Immigration regulations under which domestics are admitted to and remain in Canada.

Committee member John Maffett stated that the three possibilities under consideration are "pure visa, pure immigrant, or mixed."

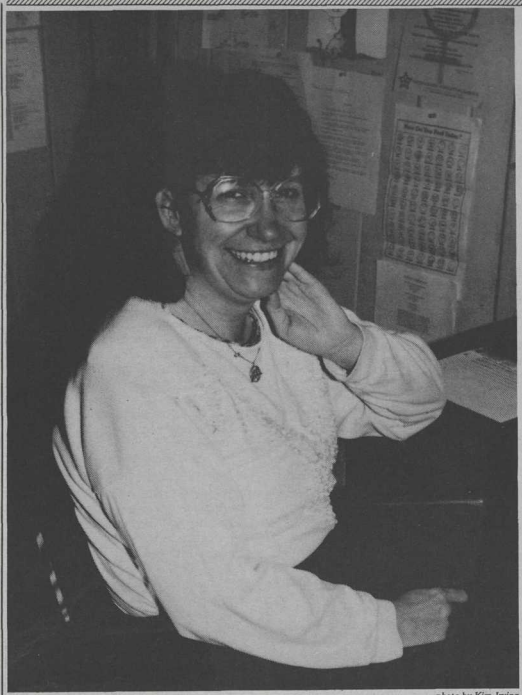
A "mixed" program is essentially the program in its present form: domestics enter Canada on a temporary work visa and can apply for permanent residence after working a designated length of time. Under a "pure immigrant" program, women would arrive in Canada as permanent residents on the condition that they work as domestics for a year or more.

Since Immigration is primarily interested in providing greater numbers of foreign domestics to Canadian families, it will likely favour the third option: eliminate permanent residence from the program and implement a "pure visa" system. Under such a system, women would be admitted to Canada on temporary work visas to work as live-in domestics for three or four years and then be sent home, thus providing an answer to the national shortage of affordable child care by using women from developing countries as an endless supply of cheap labour.

The advantages to Canada of the temporary work visa system are considerable. Importing labour power enables Canada to avoid both the cost of developing a labour force and the necessity of supporting them when sick, unemployed or old.

There are also political advantages to employing workers without citizenship rights. Workers on employment visas cannot vote. Since they are dependent on their employers not only for employment but for their continued stay in Canada, they are expected to create a docile and acquiescent work force. In addition, the creation of a "temporary" work force, separating workers into citizen and non-citizen, helps to legitimize inferior conditions and fewer rights for the non-citizen group.

By treating both the need for and the presence of foreign domestic workers as temporary, the Canadian government can continue to avoid doing anything permanent either to improve their working conditions or to find other solutions to the child-care crisis. Domestic workers demand equality with other workers in Canada: if they're good enough to work here, they're good enough to stay.



Barb Goode

photo by Kim Irving

Barb Goode

Self-advocacy worker helps ease transition to community living

as told to Kim Irving

Over the past few years, provincial governments across Canada have pushed for the de-institutionalization of the mentally handicapped (as well, for the mentally ill). The closing of BC's major institutions, Glendale, Woodlands and Tranquille, have forced thousands of mentally handicapped people into communities that have few resources to accomodate their needs.

As the provincial government wipes its hands clean of responsibility for the welfare and rights of the mentally handicapped, a movement of self advocates is rising to help ease the adjustment to community living.

At the head of BC's movement is Barb Goode, a 35-year-old woman who now lives in North Vancouver. Since her early 20s, when she moved out on her own, Goode has been involved in self-advocacy work. She is employed at present with the Burnaby Association of the Mentally Handicapped to assist promoting self-advocacy.

Goode is also president of the Board of Directors of the recently formed Lower Mainland Community Based Services Society (LMCBSS), an association involved with the integration of the mentally handicapped. This is believed to be the first association in Canada whose board comprises 60 percent mentally handicapped people as self-advocates.

Kim: How would you describe yourself?

Barb: As a self advocate. Wanting to see other's to get as far as they can reach. Helping others.

Kim: Do you see yourself as a feminist?

Barb: I haven't thought about it much. I guess you can call me one if it means talking about women's issues, doing things that involve women.

A few years ago I was at a DAWN meeting [Disabled Women's Network]. There, a man in a wheelchair came in. We told him that we wanted to talk about our issues and he got upset, couldn't understand why we needed to talk [alone as women]. He said our issues were the same. But I believe women need to talk about these issues alone. Especially disabled women. We've been on our own for so long.

There's all different types of women—physically disabled, mentally handicapped, gay/lesbians & more—why should we be separated? We are all fighting for [women's issues].

Kim: How has it been organizing with other disabled women?

Barb: Exciting! But something that worries me is that mentally handicapped people are not as noticeable.

When I'm around a physically handicapped person I feel they have more power because their brains are more with it. They're able to do things with (their minds). Yet, I've heard the opposite from [physically handicapped people]—that they feel mentally handicapped people are able to function better than them.

Kim: But isn't that true for all of society, that mentally handicapped people are unnoticed?

Barb: Yes, I think so. But I think mentally handicapped people, physically disabled and hearing impaired people and all people with disabilities are all striving for the same thing. Like, some people see me as only having the problem. To me, everyone has a handicap. And everybody has a label. Sometimes it's difficult understanding people.

Kim: Is that one of your fears—not being understood?

Barb: I know I'm understood by handicapped people. What gets to me is I'm told sometimes that I'm pretending to be handicapped. That I really don't understand the issues. To me, that's an insult. A friend of mine has the same problem. He's married, has a job, but he was in an institution for 18 years. So now, people think he's over it—and that now he is not handicapped. How can we be pretending? How can someone be something they're not? Seeing as pretending is a common problem for mentally handicapped people. And what about physically handicapped—do we expect that some day they will just get up and walk? Like, I've accepted the fact that I'll never be Einstein. Why can't people accept other people for who they really are, despite the labels.

Kim: What about the label 'Mentally Handicapped?' Some are now saying it's incorrect . . .

Barb: I don't think it's a correct label. I like the word self-advocate. A few years ago, the North Shore Association for the Mentally Retarded changed their name to the North Shore Association for the Mentally Handicapped. And one day it will be something else. Now, "Community Living" is used instead of mentally handicapped. [Change] is what I'm a part of. I think people want to change—not always be called the same things. People say to me—"Oh, if you say Community Living people won't know what you're talking about." But they said that when we changed it to Mentally Handicapped.

"What gets to me is I'm told sometimes that I'm pretending to be handicapped ... to me that's an insult."

Kim: What have been some of your own experiences?

Barb: I remember a few years ago, with friends in a restaurant. I usually take a long time to decide what I want—so the waitress turned to the person next to me and said "What would your friend like?" [It was as if] I wasn't there!

Another time, I took a friend who is nonverbal to a restaurant. She would just point to everything on the menu. She didn't understand. She had been in an institution and never had choices [over food]. The waitress would always ask me what she wanted. Why should people talk for someone else? Maybe there was just too many things [on the menu] and it needs to be narrowed down to two or three. The waitress used to get so mad at us! Now, after a year and a half going to a restaurant with her, she can sign what she wants.

Sometimes when I answer the phone people will say: "Oh, is your mother home?" That really gets to me. They think I'm a little kid because of my voice. Sometimes I'll say, "oh, just a minute . . . " and I'll leave [the phone] and come back and say: "She's not home right now, can I help you?"

Sometimes with my friends we will talk about different issues. I feel I want to jump in and talk about it but I don't feel like I have the information. I don't feel I can talk about what they are talking about. And then they say: "Oh, Barb, you're so quiet." And I think to myself—"Well, it's because you're not talking about issues that I'm interested in." Sometimes I try and jump in but it feels like . . . like you're here and I'm over there and there's this wall in between us. And I don't know how to get over [the wall].

Kim: Sounds like self-advocacy starts with your friends?

Barb: Yes, even changing some people's attitude. For example, sterilization. Some believe all handicapped women should be sterilized. And I say "But why should we be sterilized?" Some people say we are not responsible to look after our own bodies or that we can't look after kids. Why sterilize all mentally and physically handicapped people because of these lables? Why sterilize anyone?

Maybe you heard of the 'Eve' case in Ottawa? Actually, the woman was from P.E.I. Her mother saw her holding hands with a man and wanted her sterilized. Me and others took it to court. It went on and on. It went to the Supreme Court. [The court] said

See **Goode** page 10

Subversion: feminism in the classroom

by Tarel Quandt

The need for this conference is obvious. "Transforming Tomorrow: Women's Studies in the Secondary Schools" was a 3-day conference in early November which discussed the nature of feminist pedagogy and the need for content change in the school curriculum. While the conference title suggests the focus was on the secondary school level, teachers from elementary, junior high and universities, plus a few school administrators and high school students attended.

Young women in secondary schools today have unrealistic ideas about the future. Recent national studies show that 45 percent of female teens consider marriage as their future goal. Young women believe that a loving, satisfying relationship is, along with economic prosperity, a future guarantee. Maureen Baker's study of the aspirations of young women in 1985 illustrates this:

> When I'm 22, I'll be married to the same boyfriend as now. We'll live in Toronto in a house ... I'll be owning or managing a store ...
> *What Will Tomorrow Bring*

Kinesis file graphic

In our society math and science knowledge are necessary for an increasing number of careers. However, when girls reach senior level high school, many opt-out of these subjects. This trend is supported by the lack of female math and science teachers, which deprives young women of role models.

Research also shows that the school curriculum supports sexist attitudes and simply ignores women's participation in society. And finally, the school system itself inhibits female self-actualization by channelling its resources disproportionately toward male student endeavors.

Young women are not prepared to cope with the world they will find upon leaving school. This was the impetus for the conference. The focus was on ways educators can transform the present condition of young women ... quite a tall order.

Women's Studies Are Not Enough

It quickly becomes obvious that educating young women about women's situation in society and helping them to acquire skills to cope cannot be accomplished by simply integrating a women's studies course into the school curriculum. More to the point, if we wait for the school system to accept such programs as a means of addressing sexism, we may all be dead and gone.

For more than a decade, there have been attempts to introduce women's studies courses into high schools. At present, however, few courses exist throughout British Columbia and when feminism is taught in the schools, it is usually a section within an established course such as Family Studies. So where to go from here?

While women's studies courses can definitely have a positive effect, the teachers attending the conference had a much larger agenda—revolutionize the entire school system. A re-evaluation is needed of the content taught in our schools, the process by which it is taught, the nature of the extra-curriculum activities (eg. emphasis on winning in sport teams), and the functioning of the school administration. Much of the conference focused on developing a more elaborate vision of feminist pedagogy, with the hope that teachers would acquire new tools to continue making changes in their own classrooms.

Adopting feminist pedagogy is a challenge for each teacher, since many of them are isolated within their schools because of their feminist consciousness. Teaching methods, the role of the teacher and the curriculum must all be drastically altered. One example of methodological change is the need for teachers to break down the hierarchical relationship that exists between them and their students, and to create a cooperative learning atmosphere where everyone can learn from each other. Classroom dynamics can be organized so that the teacher becomes more of a facilitator in the group's pursuit of knowledge. In this context, as long as the teacher is attentive to the (learned) dominating behaviour males have in groups, young women will be given better opportunities to interact in a meaningful way, inevitably gaining self-confidence and knowledge.

As conference speaker Greta Nemiroff explained, rather than standing up in front of a classroom and "shoving young women's rights down their throats," teachers should allow young women to investigate their own understanding of life in order to come to feminism. An example Nemiroff gave was to have students analyze fashion. This could create fertile ground for discussions about female/male stereotyping, fad diets, consumerism and so on.

When a teacher becomes a self-conscious practitioner, her role changes. As she explores the oppressive nature of our society with students, she must be responsible and cope with the inevitable consequences. When a teacher introduces topics of abuse to the class, for example, there are bound to be students who will react because of their own suffering. The teacher must be committed to providing assistance to students by giving emotional support as well as having information about social services offered in the community. Also, teachers must remember that "becoming aware" is a painful process and that students need encouragement.

Teaching from a feminist perspective obviously affects the content of what is taught, and sexism will not be the only issue that demands attention. Racism, homophobia, ageism and other forms of prejudice will need to be explored. Changing the curriculum to include the voices of other oppressed peoples, past and present, is imperative—as is eliminating material which in itself supports oppressive attitudes.

When I began attending this conference I was not aware I was participating in planning a revolution but that is exactly what the conference was about. I wonder if all of us there really knew how subversive our ideas were. As Greta Nemiroff suggested, teaching young women to become capable, confident and independent is just that—subversive.

Goode from page 9

no one should be sterilized without their consent. [Eve] was not in the court when the decision was made. People told us she couldn't talk and could only make small decisions. She still doesn't realize how important she is.

Then last month I met her. It was unbelievable. She could walk. She could talk. Like, I had all these ideas about her—that she had to rely on people. No way! Maybe she couldn't do some things on her own—but that's okay. But I don't accept people saying she couldn't talk or walk or decide whether to have a baby.

Kim: How do you deal with your anger?

Barb: Sometimes I deal with it, sometimes I don't. Sometimes I just want to go home and scream. Sometimes I get angry. I get frustrated. And my big fear—for myself and all my friends—at any time, if we get angry or upset on the street, we could be thrown back into the institution. People say I'm crazy—but that's my biggest fear in life. People telling me I can't get angry.

It scares me because I can't really be myself. I don't know how to explain it except, I remember once when some friends were acting up—like being funny and they said "come on and join us!" And I said: "I can't." I was afraid someone would come along and say "you can't do that."

I would like to be able to throw off my cover and say this is the real me. Sometimes I can do that with people but not on an ongoing basis.

Kim: Why can't you?

*Barb:*Because of the label. I might be seen as just seeking attention or even crazy. People tell me not to worry about it. It's hard to explain why—I'm not sure I can exactly tell you what I'm thinking.

Kim: It seems to me that you're a very patient person.

Barb: I try to be. I try to walk in other peoples' shoes. I've met many different people. There's a side of me that understands when people don't talk. For example, people like Terri [a mentally handicapped, deaf, blind woman] have taught me a lot. Sometimes I feel really frustrated that I can't communicate with her as well as I want. And sometimes she gets angry—we both get angry!

Sometimes we sit in a room and be quiet with each other. That's okay. I don't mind being quiet and I don't think she does—although I don't want to presume how she feels. We just sit and it's wonderful. Yet people say: oh, you're not communicating with each other ... but we are!

Kim: How do you feel about the institutions closing?

Barb: It's wonderful that they are closing—but it's going too fast. There's not enough support for the people [moving into the community]. Some take a long time adjusting. If you lived in an institution for 40 years and then you come out, well ...

Kim: Do you think it's right to be moving people from one community to another?

Barb: I don't necessarily think it's right. We may think we're doing the right thing—but what if we're not? Why are we not asking [institutionalized people] where they want to live?

One woman, who had lived in every institution in B.C. over the past 40 years—she's out, but her father told her she would never make it. Yet, she's been out five months and she loves it! Only thing is, she's lonely. In the institution she could go around to the wards visiting. But now, she's confined to a house —not knowing anyone.

Kim: Is this society accessible for institutionalized people?

Barb: No, it isn't. And we need to make it accessible. Another man, who has lived in Woodlands for something like 50 years: when he went in, there were cars, but not as many as now, as busy as now, with big roads. They took him out for two weeks—but he had no support. What happens? He went back. They said: two weeks was enough [to see if he could adjust]. Two weeks is *not* enough. Two years is *not* enough.

Another fear I have for people like him is that he will be put in a group home for a couple of years, maybe his health will fail and then he'll be put into another institution—an old folks home.

Kim: What do you enjoy about your work with LMCBSS?

Barb: I do a lot of different work. Sometimes I feel like I have too much. It's hard to keep it all in my head and if I don't keep it in my head then I can't help other people.

I think I'm seen as a role model. I sign papers that go to the government. I help look at houses, make a deal, go to the government for more money—we do many things. To go from the time we bought the house to the time when the new people move in is exciting. With my job with the Burnaby Association we're trying to open a co-op. Things are happening!

Sometimes I think it goes too fast, but then, life goes too fast anyways!

Salvadoran women's clinic raided

by Jo Anne Walton

Vancouver's Action Committee for Women in El Salvador fears the lives of women treated at El Salvador's only clinic for physically and sexually abused women may be at risk.

Lower mainland representative Nora Patrich says Salvadoran police raided the office of CONAMUS, the National Coordinating Council of Salvadoran Women, and stole the files of all women who had received treatment at the clinic.

They also destroyed typewriters and took a computer the Action Committee had purchased for the CONAMUS project a month ago. (*See* Kinesis, *November 1989 for a detailed report on CONAMUS.)*

Patrich says the Action Committee has not been able to confirm any reports of the safety of the CONAMUS women. She says they are, however, in hiding because of threats or harassment by the military.

The women's lives are feared for because the Salvadoran treasury police have been gathering names to later detain, interrogate and torture people, or to put their names on death squad hit lists. Disappearances and human rights violations have been stepped up in the confusion of the civilian bombing campaign by the Salvadoran Air Force on the country's capital.

The bombing has been levelled against San Salvador's poor districts in an attempt to crush a first stage insurrection begun November 11 by the popular opposition group, the Farbundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

Hundreds of people have been killed and thousands wounded by the government's indiscriminate bombings of the city and many have taken refuge in emergency shelters set up by church and international aid workers.

Religious leaders say centres for the displaced are being harassed by searches and requests by soldiers for lists of names of everyone taking refuge there.

One week after the fighting began, death squads issued an order to decapitate all leaders of popular organizations, says Patrich. This came the same day six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her 16-year-old daughter were tortured and murdered.

Also that day, *The Globe and Mail* reported that nine of the Co-Madres women belonging to the Mothers of the Disappeared human rights group had been detained by Treasury police.

"Women are paying a high price for their rights in El Salvador. They're paying with their blood to have the possibility of a better life," says Patrich.

The FMLN attacks on the capital come in the aftermath of the bombing of the FENASTRAS office, the largest trade union in El Salvador. The bombing was a clear sign by the US-backed extreme right-wing ARENA government that human rights violations would be increased against members or leaders of Salvador's community groups and grassroots organizations.

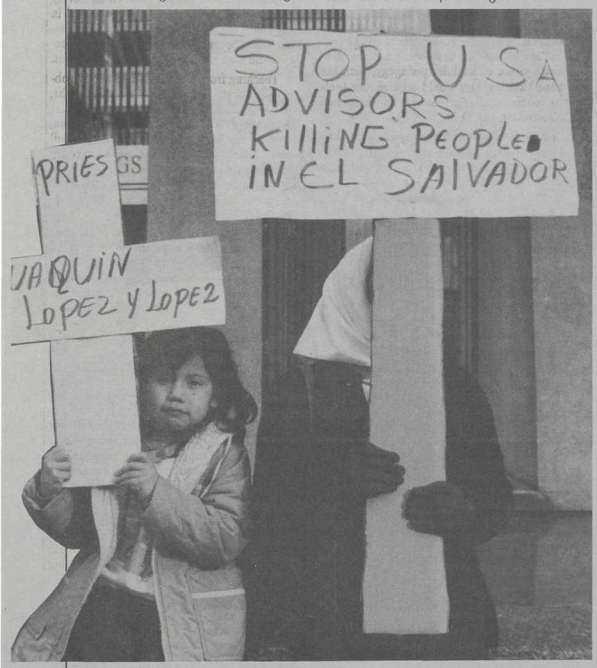
In the bombing, the highest-ranking woman trade union leader in Latin America, Febe Elizabeth Pelasquez, was murdered, along with nine other union members. The home of the head of CONAMUS, Hena Flora Pena, was also bombed, although Pena was unhurt.

In Vancouver, the women's action committee, Salvaide, and the El Salvador Refugee Association have joined efforts to launch an emergency response for medical aid to the civilian population. In December, the Action Committee will hold a fundraising event with local women's groups to raise more money for emergency response and to help re-build the clinic.

"We're asking for donations, we're also asking people to write to External Affairs minister Joe Clark asking him to stop bilateral aid to El Salvador, and to pressure the United States to stop funding the war in El Salvador. We also want to ask Clark to stop funding a government with such high levels of human rights violations," says Patrich.

"We as Canadians can have different values around torture," she says. "And if the US feels it can support these governments, Canada can still say no. We don't always have to dance to the Americans' message."

photos by Jan



Here's how to help

The people of El Salvador need our support—financial *and* political.

For information about December's fundraiser (see accompanying article) and to send much-needed donations, contact the Action Committee for Women in El Salvador at 734-6558; write to P.O. Box 1092, Station A, Vancouver V6C 2T1.

Donations may also be made to the Network for El Salvador. An "Emergency Response" account has been set up at Canada Trust— just go to your local branch and make a deposit to Account #527067 at the Canada Trust Branch 035 in Ottawa.

To protest Canada's aid to the government of El Salvador, write to External Affairs minister Joe Clark, House of Commons, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0A6.

Kid's rights ratified

by Kinesis Staff Writer

On this planet, where over 38,000 children die every day from hunger, inadequate shelter or lack of health care, the United Nations has seen fit to pass a Convention on the Rights of the Child.

On November 20, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention which establishes the first comprehensive international protection treaty for the world's children.

The document brings together existing international protocols affecting children, as well as new positions on sexual exploitation and drug abuse. Other issues covered by the Convention include adoption, torture, separation from families, hunger and the use of children in combat.

Originally proposed by Poland, the 54-article Convention went through contentious debates and numerous changes as various nations vied for clauses which reflected their particular cultural values.

Not surprisingly, anti-abortion forces attempted to influence the document by lobbying for references to "fetal rights."

They were only partially successful. A paragraph in the Convention's preamble speaks of the right to legal protection before as well as after birth, but other references to the unborn child were eliminated from the operative articles.

Chile and Paraguay argued against this omission, but protests by the United States were surprisingly weak despite heavy pressure from the anti-abortion lobby.

Another hotly debated item was the minimum age for military service, which was set at 15 years of age. Scandinavian countries had argued the age should be raised to at least 17 but the United States, disregarding protests by its own citizens' groups, hid behind the legalistic argument that any such change would undermine a 1949 Geneva convention on the matter and was, therefore, "not to be discussed."

graphic by Lisa Schmidt

Women gather to end violence

- 50 percent of married women are regularly battered by their partners in Bangkok, Thailand (Worldwatch Institute report).
- An estimated 1,000 women are burned alive each year in dowry-related incidents in the state of Gujara, India alone (Ahmedabad Women's Action Group report)
- 78,000 female fetuses were aborted after sex determination tests between 1978 and 1982 (a study of a Bombay clinic).
- In Mexico, a woman is raped every nine minutes (Doble Jornada, Nov. 1987).
- More than half the Nicaraguan women beaten by their partners had been beaten for more than a year before laying charges. (Oficina Legal para la Mujer de Nicaragua, 1986).

On November 25, 1960, Patria, Minerva, and Maria Teresa Mirabel were forced from their jeep on a deserted road less than two kilometres from the city of Puerto Plata. What followed was one of the most horrific examples of torture and murder ever reported to the people of the Dominican Republic.

The Mirabel sisters were not random victims. As organizers of the Movimiento 14 de Junio, a grassroots movement against the country's political and military leaders, both Maria Teresa and Minerva had been previously arrested.

All three became targets in their particular struggles to create social justice for women and for the poor. Their death, however, brought certain martyrdom and served to strengthen the efforts of their companions in their fight for social change.

The brutal circumstances of their murder has never been forgotten. In 1981, the 21st anniversary of the Mirabel sisters' deaths, women at the first meeting of Latin American and Caribbean feminists in Bogota, Columbia, declared November 25 "International Day to End Violence Against Women."

Over the years, increasing numbers of women have begun speaking out in unison. In Latin America alone, millions of women have taken to the streets in demonstrations and marches to protest the victimization of women.

And they've turned their outrage into concrete strategies for action. The Ecuadorian Centre for Women's Promotion and Action, for example, has launched a national education campaign on violence against women. In Brazil, officials set up a police station staffed entirely by women who deal specifically with domestic violence. And Sistren, a women's theatre collective in Jamaica celebrated November 25 this year by distributing thousands of bumper stickers which read "Real Men Don't Beat Women".

In Canada, too, the day did not pass unnoticed. The Latin American Women's Congress in Ottawa targeted local libraries and book stores to carry their posters which read, "Violence Against Women to Me Means ... " Passersby were encouraged to fill in their responses in an effort to heighten awareness of the prevalence of violence in our daily lives.

Source: MATCH International, #1102-200 Elgin St., Ottawa, Ont. K2P 1L5.

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photo by Jan

Protesting Cory's Visit

Just before President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines visited Canada in early November, some Mounties made a point of visiting local Filipino activists—just for a check-up. They had their reasons: while Aquino wooed Canadian business and was feted in Ottawa, some of her compatriots and their supporters made sure the message about human rights violations and widespread poverty in the Philippines was also heard.

A policy of "total war" against the New People's Army has lead to military arrests and detentions of an indiscriminate nature: the women's organization GABRIELA reports on several women imprisoned "merely for reasons of their political conviction."

Ms. sells out for the last time

by Kinesis Staff Writer

Ms. isn't.

The four-colour, glossy symbol of American yuppie feminism published up until this fall—and then bit the dust. While details of the magazine's demise have been hard to come by, *Ms.* appears to have fallen victim to corporate balance-sheet publishing, and pressures from right-wing Christian fundamentalists.

In continuous publication since 1972, *Ms.* changed hands several times in the last two years. In the fall of 1987, editors Gloria Steinem and Patricia Carbine sold the magazine to the Australian corporation, John Fairfax Ltd. Fairfax had promised to inject substantial capital into *Ms.* which, at the time, was faltering after years of losses.

Brought in by the Fairfax corporation, publisher Sandra Yates and editor-in-chief Anne Summers were blunt about their goal of making *Ms.* more palatable to advertisers: "We're certainly going to be less strident," said Summers. The magazine had long since lost readers who identified feminism with political—rather than lifestyle—issues: the new cigarette, alcohol, diet, fashion, pantyhose and perfume ads were, in fact, nothing new.

In 1988, Fairfax created a baby sister for *Ms.*: even glossier, *Sassy* reflected the quintessential boy-and-fashion-crazy teenage girl stereotype, and *Sassy* became a big—and a lucrative—hit.

When the Fairfax corporation decided to sell off its two American publications due to financial problems in Australia, Yates and Summers bought them. Their plan: *Sassy* would provide the bucks to keep the still-ailing *Ms.* afloat.

Enter the fundamentalists. *Sassy* ran an article on contraception and the Moral Majority (MM) took note. According to Yates and Summers, the MM launched a campaign to discourage advertisers from supporting *Sassy*, the campaign proved effective and *Sassy* suffered a serious loss of revenue.

With *Sassy* injured and *Ms.* weak, the women sold the two publications to the former publisher of McCall's (the quintessential homemaker's magazine) who, in short order, closed them both down.

While the loss of *Ms.* may not cause many feminist tears to fall, mainstream media commentators have been quick to interpret the magazine's failure as a sign of "post-feminism."

The Symposium

Challenging, unmasking, healing...

by Terrie Hamazaki

"The In Visible Colours Festival is an opportunity to hear women of colour, First nations women, and Third World women challenge and unmask the white-male supremacist forms of control in the production and distribution of films throughout the world."

With these words, Viola Thomas, a woman from the Secwepemc Nation (part of the Interior Salish tribe in south-central British Columbia), introduced the festival's three-day symposium, in which the issues of politics, production, distribution and economics surrounding the film and video industry were addressed.

Day one was divided into three distinct panels: "Celebrating Our Cinema" offered women of colour, First Nations women and Third World Women the space needed to talk about their successes and challenges in creating new images; "The Risk of Self- Determination" examined the risks women of the Third World film and video makers face in their work; and "Voices and New Visions" allowed these women to voice their dreams, hopes and visions. Following are highlights from that day.

photos by Jan

Loretta Todd

"Our voices of affirmations of resistance"

Pratibha Parmar, a Kenya-born Indian woman raised in England noted that although the women participating in the festival came from a diversity of racial, sexual, cultural and class identities, they share a fundamental link: each woman represents those whose voices, experiences and visions have been systematically marginalized and displaced from the centres of cultural industries in the countries where they work.

Parmer added that this systematic marginalization and invisibility has deprived women all over the world of access to the skills and resources of actual film technology—skills essential for having a means of control over their own representation.

Loretta Todd, a native filmmaker in Vancouver, echoed these sentiments and described how people in her community, by choosing to ignore the false aura of eliteness and exclusivity which surrounds film and video and which somehow makes it available only to some, are making their own videos with no regard to so- called technique.

Calling these videos "our voices of affirmations of resistance," Todd said that they represent to the dominant (white) culture its failure to assimilate, destroy and annihilate Native peoples and their cultures.

Ayoka Chenzira, an Afro-American woman based in New York, spoke of the importance of memory in her work. She explained that because North Americans live in perpetual denial—we deny that people are hungry, we deny that we consciously choose to kill people—we cannot begin to heal ourselves because we consciously try to forget. In contemporary terms, she said, processing the memories of a sexual assault allows a woman to go through her healing process and come out as a survivor—not as a victim. Memory is both painful and powerful.

Chenzira added that women are the healers of the world and she means to heal with her work. Yet she resists being labelled as a "feminist filmmaker" because of its identification with a white woman's movement which has been devastating to Afro-American people, by its educating of one group—black women—while telling the others—black men—that they don't matter.

She was clearly angry when she said "there is a systematic attack on Black Americans in the USA: police come into our communities and kill our men and our male children. This is *real*. And this cannot be denied in the name of a women's movement. I will not allow it."

Miriam Patsanza, the first Black woman to run a production house in Zimbabwe, spoke of women's need to find ways of supporting one another without exploiting each other. Ideally, she would like to see an international network of independent filmmakers and distribution systems set up to help bridge the gaps.

Liu Qing, a screenwriter and director in exile from China, agreed that an international support network is crucial—even more so because of the scarcity of women's voices in her environment.

Qing explained that Chinese writers and directors face two special restrictions: one derived from the political values of the dictatorship of the Chinese communist party; and the other derived from the moral. In Chinese art circles, there are restrictions on what constitutes sanctioned and unsanctioned behaviour, and too many laws on what's right or wrong, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary.

The moral restrictions emanate from the concept of human nature and sexuality that pervades the society. Expressions of human sexuality that don't fit the norm are labelled "spiritual pollution"—yet authorities don't know what the "unpolluted spirit" looks like. Qing reported that since the tragic events of June in Beijing, everything has become stricter and, increasingly, films are being banned.

Soyoung Kim, the first member of the Korean National Academy of Film Arts, said that although film has a 80-year history in Korea, women's lives are not revealed even in the independent, radical films. Thus, in March 1989, she and 14 other women filmmakers formed a woman's filmmaking group, whose works to date, include: *X*, a story about a woman brought up as an androgynous being by her parents and who faces conflicts with the gender roles put out by society; *A Place For Eve*, which depicts the problems of Korean women at home and in the workplace; and *You're a Sex Paradise, Korea*, in which the prostitution business in Korea is related to Confucian ideology and American imperialism. Kim added that the woman who created *X* also plays the key character and is a lesbian. She is also a new member of their filmmaking group.

Kim said that while the women feel positive about their work, they should be ready to go to jail or pay fines if their films cause a disturbance. And she asked for support from international women filmmakers at the Seoul women's film and video showcase that is being planned for April 1990.

Gloria Ribé, director of an independent film production company in Mexico, disliked the term "Third World" women because it implies "third class-ness". She said that women of the so- called Third World are usually seen as impotent, when the difference lies in the lack of financing and quality of tools and resources available to them—not in the work they are capable of producing. Ribé wants the outside world to stop viewing so- called Third World women as victims, but as women getting empowered because their reality forces them to do so.

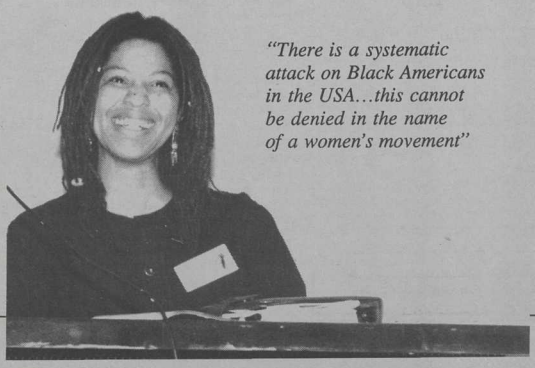
Manjira Datta, founder of the media section of the British consulate in New Delhi, has but one vision: open-air festivals where artificially-constructed walls are torn down between the filmmakers and the audience. She stressed that the most important thing we have to clarify is our audience; without an audience, our films don't live.

Datta criticized the lack of commitment by In Visible Colours Festival organizers to the people whose voices shape the films and videos presented there.

She spoke of class-consciousness by explaining that festivals should be for all people, and not necessarily just the middle-class, or art communities, students and the media, all of whom she considered well-represented at her screenings and the symposium. Datta believed that the venues selected for the festival were accessible and welcoming only to a few, and shut out those it claimed to reflect. "You have to reach the people," she stressed.

Women of colour, Third World women and First Nations women have emerged as a powerful force in the cinematic world. While striving to create their own images of representation, they face tremendous obstacles which are often bigger than their desires to produce: lack of financing, access to equipment and skills, and distribution systems—and personal and political risks.

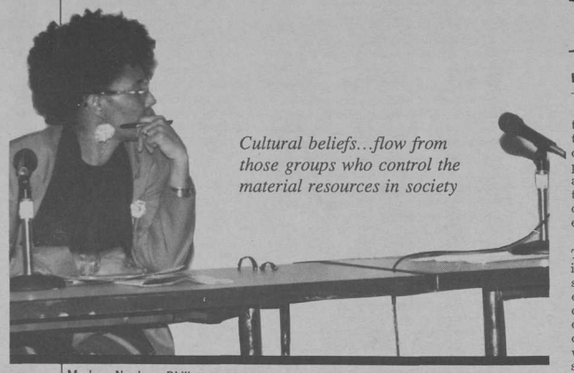
But as a Brazilian camerawoman said while filming *Aze*, one of the festival's many offerings, "I'd rather carry the weight of the camera for many days at ten hours a day, than carry the weight of the judgment that says women aren't capable."



Ayoka Chenzira

"There is a systematic attack on Black Americans in the USA...this cannot be denied in the name of a women's movement"

In Visible Colours



Cultural beliefs...flow from those groups who control the material resources in society

Marlene Noubese Philip

Censorship

Much more than state control

by Andrea Fatona

Censorship has been much debated, and the In Visible Colours Symposium attempted to provide a forum for women of colour to address the issue. Panel participants were from China, India and Canada, and it appeared that the organizers of the festival intended the workshop to focus on state actions which limit filmmakers'/artists' access to resources.

Moderator Marlene Nourbese Philip from Toronto contextualized the issue by outlining James R. Bennett's definition of censorship, a definition drawn from his experience in the Reagan administration. Political or state censorship can be viewed as "the deliberate act by federal government officials to prohibit or curtail ideas and actions which the officials view as harmful to themselves or the people. " Implicit in this definition is the notion of cultural censorship.

Cultural beliefs are mediated through a social structure, and, to a great extent, flow from those groups who control the material resources in society, as well as those who control institutional and communication structures. Philip briefly touched on media's role in censorship, her point being that media has become one of the most effective, informal means of propogating, and disseminating Western culture. Besides omitting or including information, the media has the capacity to limit—and confine—the socio-cultural imagination of a society.

The speakers from India and China graphically related to the audience how the bureaucracy in their countries dictates the content and form of art and how official ideology has to be expressed if an artist wishes to be legitimized.

Peng Xiaolian of China whose film *Women's Story* is banned in her country, spoke to the personal aspect of censorship. (See Rita Gill's review, this section). Time and time again, she emotionally expressed that her foremost concern while making the film was to document the social, political and economic realities of rural women in her country—even though she knew the images she was portraying ran counter to what her government wishes to present the world.

Moral and social responsibilities become major factors influencing the content and form of the art, said Peng. Her strong personal belief in the images she portrayed in *Women's Story* led her to take a position of non-compromise with the government. The government's refusal to fund her work due to direct or indirect contradictions with ruling ideology forced her to seek outside sources of funds.

(As the audience at the film's Saturday night screening learned, Coca-Cola became one of Peng's funders—in exchange for a scene featuring a can of Coke.)

Manjira Datta of India also described the barriers to funding, as well as the lack of access to film stock needed to make documentaries. "In a country of 850 million people where 2000 short films and documentaries have been made," said Datta, "there are only 10 documentary filmmakers."

Filmmakers who work with 16mm film are undermined and discriminated against due to import-export restrictions. In order to obtain film stock, a filmmaker has to apply to the National Film Development Corporation who monitors how much raw stock is being consumed.

"Very recently," said Datta, "there has been a lot of controversy about documentaries, especially those made on 16mm. They have brought in new clauses in the raw stock application form. If the filmmaker wants the application to be facilitated quickly, and if it is a documentary, the following have to be enclosed: a synopsis, a client letter or contract, the days on which the shooting will take place and locations. At the end of the shoot and processing, a lab completion certificate has to be submitted in order to obtain a new lot of films."

The government not only steeply taxes film stock, they constantly question the intent of the documentary filmmaker. Due to these barriers, Indian documentary filmmakers are now challenging the government and its policies.

The Canadian representative Premika Ratnam brought the discussion to a local level, as well as explored the non- formalized aspects of censorship. She began by addressing the structure of the panel as outlined in the official program, her concern being that the panel focused on those areas of the world where censorship is mediated through state run agencies. She saw this as a denial of the insidious forms of censorship in liberal democracies such as Canada.

The institutionalized ideology of multiculturalism in Canada obscures the lack of access to institutions and resources experienced by people of colour, said Ratnam. She pointed to the inconsistency of this ideology: the symbols which are generally used to characterize the Canadian identity abroad—for example, the Mounties. This type of symbolism negates the diversity of cultures present in Canadian society and this exclusion and invisibility of people of colour, reveals the racism inherent in Canadian society.

Censorship in areas of funding and distribution is an important concern to Canadian women filmmakers said Ratnam. Funding and distribution are based on the dictates of mainstream society with its conception of aesthetics, form and content. The positive portrayal of women of colour is limited, and the images made of people of colour reinforce stereotypes based on eroticization, exoticization, and degradation.

People of colour become caught in a profound paradox, said Ratnam, where they are denied access to creating and viewing positive, non-coopted images of themselves, yet they are called upon to be"resource people" for mainstream artists.

The time constraints of the panel did not allow for an in-depth look at how women of colour could strategize around the issue. The panel did provide, however, space for women to discuss and share their experiences, and one can only hope this will lead to unity in confronting censorship without denying particular ethnic and cultural diversity of expression. As the panel illuminated, censorship is firmly rooted in people of colour's lack of access to economic resources and lack of representation in the ruling apparatus.

photos by Jan

Premika Ratnam, Manjira Datta and Peng Xiaolian

Against burning, against exile: strong statements of resistance

FROM THE BURNING EMBERS
directed by Media Storm
India: 1988
WOMEN'S STORY
directed by Peng Xiaolian
China: 1987

by Rita Gill

Two outstanding films from Asian shone out recently at the In Visible Colours Festival. Both films dealt with how Asian women struggle against the social expectations of women in Asian cultures and with the bureaucratic systems of these societies.

Created by a group called Media Storm, *From the Burning Embers* explores the ritual of Sati in India: the ceremony of burning the widow in the cremation ceremony of her husband. A documentary, *Burning Embers* depicts the attitudes of people who have practiced the ritual for thousands of years: to turn from this cherished tradition would be heresy to them.

Burning Embers is based on the death of Roop Kanwar, an 18-year-old woman who was publicly—and recently—burned on her husband's funeral pyre. The film examines the silent stand the government has taken: one woman declares the government is not interested in protecting women's lives because it does not want to offend those fundamentalist movements who openly advocate Sati, for fear of losing their votes.

The film has many insights into the attitudes of this male- dominated society, and shows the revival of the Sati ritual. There are growing numbers of people within fundamentalist movements, and they strongly resist the new laws restricting the practice of Sati. Government officials remark that if there are any loopholes in the new *Sati Prevention Act*, it will be amended. In this Act, a crucial paragraph states there will be no protection offered for the women who refuse to sacrifice themselves in the practice of Sati. As one feminist points out in the film, this is a big loophole.

The film shows a staged satire scene in which the chanting of men: "A woman is worthless, she eats for free, she lives in your house for free," is interspersed with scenes of women working in the fields, feeding babies, performing chores.

From the Burning Embers does not provide us with any explanations for women's apparent support of Sati. There is a scene in which women are chanting to the widow to sacrifice herself and, clearly, there are a lot of women in India who do support the burnings. This oppression of women by one another stems from the hierarchical structure of power within Indian society. At the top, we have the men with power over women. Next, we have the older women, the mother-in-law who may use her power over the bride within the extended family unit. From this hierarchy grows the division among women.

From the Burning Embers is an enlightening video which shows the injustices towards women, by men and women and by fundamentalist and governmental organizations in India.

Women's Story

Women's Story tells a story inspired by a letter its director received from her friend living in rural China. Award-winning director Peng Xiaolian shows the oppression of women in China created by the social expectations: in particular, the pressure to bear male rather than female children. In one central scene, a woman is found in a back lane hiding from the police because she is pregnant with a third child. According to state laws, a rural family is only allowed two children, and hers have been girls. This woman is desperate for a son, so she can return to her husband's family and end her banishment.

The Chinese government judged this scene to be a threat to their birth control policies, and *Women's Story* was banned in China.

Here, we see the oppression of women through forced marriages and the exile of women who fail to birth sons. In the opening scene, Jeng is forced into an arranged marriage, but she soon runs away from her husband and joins two other women on their journey to the city from their destitute village. We not only see the physical journey, but also the inner journey of their souls to a new understanding of and support for each other.

In the big city, these women enjoy the new freedoms not offered to them in the countryside—fashionable clothes and other pleasures. But their ultimate discovery is in the strength and support they find in each other and the notion that they could lead their own lives and ultimately control their own destinies.

Women's Story

Challenging concepts of chastity and morality

INDIA CABARET
directed by Mira Nair
India: 1986

by Pervis Rawji

"Sleazy" says a friend of mine about Mira Nair's *India Cabaret*. Another friend labels this movie "pathetic", while someone else says "depressing."

The fact is, nobody comes away cold from this very powerful movie about the lives of cabaret dancers. With simplicity and honesty *India Cabaret* sets out to portray the lives of two or three prostitutes, without the hype of Indian hollywood. In all the squalor we see, we are forced to examine our own values and to re-define our concept of beauty, wealth and happiness.

This film sets out to shock our sensibilities, for there is no attempt made at beautifying or softening the harsh contents with any pleasant scenes of the Indian countryside. Only the reality of the lives of these women is portrayed: the dark nightclubs where they work in appalling conditions; their apartments overlooking the slums; the seemingly endless application of makeup; their cheap costumes and bodies defying the standards of beauty defined by West and East alike; the narrow passage, kitchen and hallway where they dress, smoke, eat and drink. All these images jar one but eventually allow one to go beyond, to look on the optimistic side.

India Cabaret challenges concepts of chastity and morality. Rekha tells us that she was married at the age of eight and when she turned fourteen, she went to live with her husband.

The man she married sells her to other men, in short, becomes her pimp and keeps the money, of course. When Rekha turns to her family, she is rejected. So she runs away to the anonymity of big, bustling Bombay, where she becomes a dancer in a nightclub. Here Rekha learns to drink, please men and make money. She desperately dreams of being a wife and mother, surrounded and accepted by family.

Then we are taken into the "respectable" home of a businessman whose wife, children and parents are securely tucked away in a clean, well-run haven of domesticity, worlds away from Falkland Road, Bombay's red light district.

Here, the wife—the good woman—slaves away for children, husband and in-laws all day long. While this gives her a feeling of satisfaction, as she says in Gujarati, her desires remain locked in her heart—unspoken, unuttered. Cloistered within four walls, she lives like a bird in a gilded cage, her wings clipped. She is not exposed to new worlds or new ideas; she is bored and unfulfilled.

Of course, her husband frequents the cabaret on the pretext of business, while she waits up until all hours for him to return to her warm bed. His insensitivity comes through when he replies that that is her job, what she married him for. One wants to bop him on the head for the smug smile on his face.

Money brings the cabaret dancers independence, financial security and some sort of confidence, but in India their line of work means they are rejected by their families and despised by society. They do not belong to Hindu society. Nobody wants to associate with a hooker, a bad woman.

Rosy is a childlike, fun loving dancer who becomes wistful when she sees a wedding car drive by. We follow Rosy to her village where she is going to contribute a huge sum of money towards her sister's wedding which, by the way, she is not going to attend because she does not want to pollute the family and dishonour them in front of their guests.

When Rosy goes up the steps to her mother's house in the village, she takes the older woman's hand in greeting. The mother remains cold and unresponding. Rosy says that with the money she earns, she can support twenty family members in the city—but nobody wants to accept that offer. They accept her financial help but resent being dependent on her. Mira Nair outdid herself in *Salaam Bombay*, but this earlier film *Cabaret* is successful too.

Thousands of women trying to bring change

by Nora Nadir

Riding the skytrain five, six or eight times a day is tiring, but it's deadly confusing if you don't even speak English. Because the venues were so far apart, quite a few women attending this festival felt helpless and lost and ended up missing most of the screenings or panels. They just couldn't figure out how to get around things. Paradoxically, a festival dealing with women's issues wasn't structured according to their needs.

Let's say that it was the first time and mistakes will be overcome in the future. Still, shouldn't an event for women of colour and the Third World focus more on the urgent necessities of people and less on Gala Openings and elegant dinners?

Too much time spent on formalities and not enough on realities . . .

Happily, the realities depicted by the films were far stronger than these circumstances. The language of the oppressed came up in a rich variety of forms. I will try to summarize only one field—the Latin American cinema.

Oracion a short film by Marisol Trujillo of Cuba, is a visual interpretation of Ernesto Cardenal's prayer for Marilyn Monroe. A Nicaraguan priest, he sees in Monroe the suffering and solitude of the young girl who was turned by Hollywood into a "sex symbol". She dies of sleeping pills, asking for love. In Latin America, we die of hunger and bombs, but those who created the idol and killed Monroe are the same who create our dependance and kill our people.

And they're the same people who produce sterilization campaigns and arms for the contras, the same who kill and torture . . .

"After a massacre by the contras in my town, I saw breasts of women hanging from the trees. They had cut the most rebellious women into pieces. How could I not become a revolutionary and a feminist?" asks a Nicaraguan in *Pregnant with Dreams*, a documentary film by Julia Barco of Mexico.

In *The Operation*, another documentary, Ana Maria Garcia shows the practice of mass sterilization of Puerto Rican women as a method for birth control. This genocide is presented by the authorities as a harmless way of achieving the ideal family. "At school they used to show us pictures of beautiful houses—ones we didn't own—occupied by small families with two kids.," says a woman in the film. "Later on, the doctors told us that we had to stop having so many children and they convinced us of the need of 'the operation.' We believed them and lined up for it."

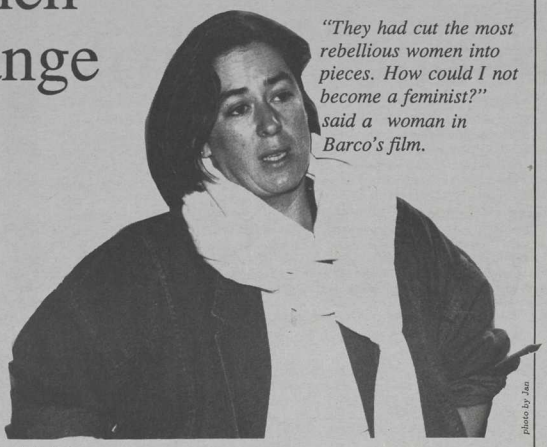
She is only one of the thousand voices of women who suffered the lies of the powerful. A voice-over states: "They sterilize to prevent revolutions, revolutions that would go against the multinationals' planning and interests."

We experience exploitation but we often don't realize it. Macabea, the main character in *Hour of the Star* by Suzana Amanal of Brazil is the prototype of women who are acted upon and don't have a sense of themselves: "I'm a typist, I'm a virgin and I drink coca-cola." Lack of self perception doesn't help much in a world where discourse and power belong to men and their vision of what a woman should be. "You are a hair in my soup", asserts Olimpico, her boyfriend.

A clairvoyant reads Macabea's future: a happy love and marriage with a rich and handsome gringo. The gringo doesn't actually exist, he only passes by and runs over her in the street. The dream continues, though. The happy ending is alive in the fantasy of thousands of women and in the screen: she hugs the young man with a smile, running out to her death.

There are other types of women, of course: thousands of them aware of themselves and trying to bring about change. *Pregnant with Dreams* documents the fourth Encuentro Feminista Latinamericano y de Caribe (Fourth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Conference in 1987) where 1,200 women gathered in Mexico City. They argue and discuss, they pose questions and problems, but basically they have fun together. One of them parodies a Latin American husband: "All that crap is for gringas, sweetheart; you are hot, you've got big tits, you are latin . . . "

Conflict at the Conference starts when a speaker suggests a division: the next conference should be for the real feminists. The ones who support feminism but do not consider it the main issue, should have a different meeting. "We are all feminists," the crowd screams, "we are all feminists."



"They had cut the most rebellious women into pieces. How could I not become a feminist?" said a woman in Barco's film.

photo by Jan

Julia Barco

The independence to show what is real

by Roxanne Lee

During the In Visible Colours Festival, I was privileged to speak with a few visiting directors. These women were unlike any other women I've met: they had a strength, a determination to succeed, even in the face of obstacles.

It wasn't a steel strength, though. Their strength was as water, which flows subtly over obstacles. Yet water, over time can break down even the mightiest of mountains. Time was an element that each of the women had dealt with—each in her own way.

Manjira Datta, whose feature film *The Sacrifice of Babulal* was shown at the festival, was born in Calcutta. She started out as a still life photographer—her career of choice—and trained in London. From a middle-class family, Datta made her way into one of the best photography schools in London with the first roll of film she shot, on a camera which was a gift from a rich uncle. This training was not, however, enough to land her a job in the already male-dominated field in her homeland of India.

Film was a natural second choice for Datta, although she entered the field "accidentally." Little was she to know that her "accidental" forage into films would win her an award from the National Film Board of India, the equivalent of the American Academy Awards.

As a fledgling filmmaker, Datta secured a job with the British Consulate in New Delhi where her first task was to set up a media department. She produced television programs and educational videos, but soon tired of the environment. "I was frustrated because I couldn't make the films I wanted to make," said Datta. "I had no freedom to express my views.

"Instead, I had to do what the government wanted me to do. That is why I became an independent [filmmaker]."

And make her own films she did. Datta was trekking in the northern foothills of India with a friend when she came up with the idea for her first award-winning film, *All Roads Closed*.

A documentary about the bonded slaves who live in the foothills of northern India, the film revealed the lives of people who were literally chattels of the rich land owners in the area. "The land owners actually "owned" these women and used them as their prostitutes," said Datta.

"*All Roads Closed* was very controversial, and still, it was a box office hit. Even the mainstream media liked it. They presented me with an award for it."

Datta prefers to documentaries over features: "In [shooting] a documentary you must use all your resources— all your feelings, all your knowledge and conviction—to direct others. I enjoy getting the communities involved in the filming. For my first film, I used real men and women, not hired actors. After all, it was these women's stories I was communicating, and who could better relate to their situation but themselves?

"Each film I make is a learning experience. I'm learning about others and their struggles, but not only that, the people I'm filming learn about me. I become familiar to them and they to me. Through this we reach an understanding."

Afi Yakubu, a filmmaker from Ghana, Africa, spoke at a workshop on community development; her video *Vea Tomatoes* screened a the festival. Yakubu went to film school in the southern region of Ghana and, like Datta, her first job as a filmmaker was with the government.

Yakubu's first task as an audio-visual officer was to set up an audio visual division to produce government educational videos and television programs and, like Datta, she too soon tired of this. She didn't see the point of making so-called "educational" videos and mainstream televisions shows for the city populace, when both she and the government knew that ninety percent of Ghana's population lives in the northern, rural areas of Ghana.

"All they [the mainstream] wanted was to make money. I wanted to help people, to inform them , to better their quality of living," said Yakubu. After a year at her government job, she applied for a job with ICOUR (Irrigation Company Of Upper Region), a semi-private organization. She was hired to set up an independent audio-visual division which would travel to communities in the northern region—about four thousand hectares in area. ICOUR creates irrigation projects, and Yakubu's videos are the company's information tool.

All of her videos are shot in VHS and the shooting is "very manual:" Yakubu has only two recorders. Also, ICOUR lacks an established studio, so the whole process is extremely slow. Yakubu writes her scripts in English and then travels to sixteen villages. There, she meets with the villagers who offer criticisms and either approve or disapprove the script. A different translator accompanies Yakubu to each village because no two communities speak the same language. It is often very difficult for Yakubu to obtain the right translator.

Yakubu has been working in this field for four years and says that response to her work is growing. Last year, a government official came with her to a ICOUR family day in one of the communities.

"The official was standing in the same room as some of the Zaare women's group. The women saw the official and began to chant a song:

What are you doing
We are the farmers of the land
We are the weavers of baskets
We produce pottery
Yet we drink dirty water

"They chanted this over and over again. The official didn't understand. He didn't want to understand. This story I have told you illustrates best the situation of women in Ghana. This is what it is like to be a woman in the upper [northern] region of Ghana.

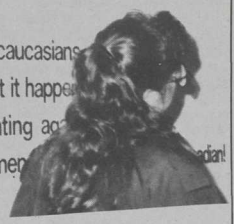
"That is what I want to show in my videos—the real people of Ghana. That is all I have to say."

photos by Barbara Henning

Back row, from the left: Sher Azad Jamal, Yoly Garcia, Chin Yuen, Jin-me Yoon, Janice Wong and Shani Mootoo. *Front row:* Susan John and Haruko Okano.

OTHERS AMONG OTHERS

Isolate... divide and rule... racism is not the particular privilege of caucasians
We have two enemies: the oppressor and the people who let it happe
It's the perfect form of compliance: to get the people discriminating ag
I have a problem with the terms "Third World Women" and "Women
This is not a glorification of our ancestry.



Others Among Others *is a show of multimedia and collaborative works by eight Vancouver artists: Yoly Garcia, Shani Mootoo, Haruko Okaro, Susan S.C. John, Chin Yuen, Janice Wong, Jin-me A. Yoon and Sher Azed Jamal. Others Among Others is on display at Women in Focus, 857 Beatty Street, until December 3rd.*

The following article is a collaborative work by the artists.

In August of this year we were approached by Women in Focus Gallery with the idea of a show that would coincide with In Visible Colours Film/Video Festival. After some discussions, we agreed this could be an opportunity to address concerns we shared, as well as to celebrate the work of women from the so-called "visible minority."

As our meetings unfolded, it became increasingly apparent that in spite of our common experiences in a dominant culture, there remained vast differences among us: our respective ethnic and class backgrounds, education and individual experiences. This realization took the shape of a strong, common will: the resistance to being labelled as one blanket group—"women of colour."

The process of jointly organizing the exhibit has been a valuable one. We have discussed and disagreed, laughed, made important discoveries and sought to articulate a vision that is ours. We present this process here in a collaborative piece consisting of excerpts from the audio tapes of our discussions.

We hope the following transcripts, however crudely condensed, will convey some of the challenges we feel were central to the process of articulating the experience of coming together (for many of us the first time) as women, as artists and as members of the so-called "visible minority." The concepts of race and representation/culture and individual identity are complex and multi-layered. We do not claim to have found all the answers nor, for that matter, all the questions, but we are finding a voice of our own.

With initial wariness we came together, with determination we stuck it out and with sincerity we hope to keep, as the saying goes 'the home fires burning.'

Sher Azad Jamal: Living with a culture that's not ours, there is a sense of walking on a tight rope, one foot in two places, trying to discover a kind of balance point. Each of us has our own manifestation. It's so fundamental to who we are, to our conditioned situation.

Haruko Okano: We're trying to dance this step on this big white square . . .

Susan John: It's the Canadianism—multiculturalism melting pot—it's a game of 'how to' retain some kind of ethnicity and . . . yet sometimes I feel this . . . baggage . . . forced in front of my face. I feel uncomfortable . . . I still feel this disillusionment, it's hot everywhere I stand.

Haruko: There is a difference between multiculturalism and discrimination. Multiculturalism doesn't address the damage . . .

Sher Azad: I have this friend at school who can not understand why I am so absorbed and caught up by my own experiences. It's like, "why do you keep insisting you've been victimized, that people have been racist on you."

Haruko: Get on with your life?

Sher Azad: Yeh, "Why can't you turn around and make that positive." It's easy for someone who doesn't have to struggle on a daily basis. We had numerous conversations . . . he went off to Japan . . . now for the first time he experienced racism.

He's French and German. Dark hair, blue eyes. Just the idea of walking down the street and hearing people whispering 'round eye' in Japanese was a bit different. So he came back . . . and said to me: "Now I know what you're talking about." Ha, am I supposed to say 'thank you?' Only four months of his life and he's back . . .

Jin-me Yoon: . . . to the privileged world.

I have had my share of discrimination but we had class behind us—privileged background. My understanding comes from slightly different angles, from my own personal experience. There's much more . . . multiculturalism in the more progressive school.

We have to change—who wants to stay the same race. I don't have a problem with that . . . my kids are not going to be pure Asians or anything like that. And besides, times are changing, no matter how superficial . . . it's trendy to be ethnic now . . . it's even reflected within fashion.

Susan: The fashion of ethnic is superficial. In the greater world cultural context it is not desirable to be ethnic.

Jin-me: No, but we live in this society and that's the perspective I speak from. I don't speak the world . . . I have no desire to return back to the current of cultures.

Yoly Garcia: We should show as 'women of colour.' We have different roots and we work for different reasons. For myself, I was a peasant and I feel good. I am poor and I like popular work. Why? Because it comes from people who are suffering in our country and you can see the truth, the realities.

Jin-me: I am a woman of colour but I'm also Canadian. I don't know what it means to make 'Women of Colour' kind of work and that's who I am.

Susan and Sher Azad: I have a problem with 'Third World Women' and 'Women of Colour.'

Shani Mootoo: There is a big class thing we are not looking at. There is the individual cultural thing. We are not addressing a lot of important things like education, background etc. We've been educated in a very intellectual North American way.

Susan: We're also working in English. We're working in the context of an Art Gallery and the context of an institution. I am suspicious of its homogenizing gluttony.

Yoly: Personally, I think I can take authority and subvert it and use it for my own good. I think we are spending too much time going around and around the same topic.

Susan: Then why are we here?

Jin-me: That's the politics: because we were asked by white people to get together because of our colour.

Shani: Then how do we then give form to what we want to speak about as a group when we don't all agree?

Susan: We're running into walls and the walls seem to be having to deal with the 'other.'

Haruko: There's an expectation that we'll make political statements [that's a] way of stereotyping us. We're human and we have everyday difficulties . . . I'm just an ordinary human being and the racial issues?

I'm not trying to deal with just one issue—it's everything, you can't get away from it and somehow by making a political statement it only distorts and creates illusions.

Shani: Society pulls us all together and makes us an obvious minority.

Sher Azad: Isolate . . . divide and rule . . . get all the coloured people or all the people that want to try something different and get them all marginalized and feeling inadequate 'cause they want to try something different and maybe they'll stop this nonsense and reflect the vision of the majority.

Haruko: And it's a perfect form of compliance with the philosophy—to get the people from the inside discriminating against themselves and then half the job is done . . . in our native community.

Our perspectives are so different than the Caucasian men who are making statements against racism. I kept trying to bring them off the intellectual. I said, it's here, it's here. Let's talk about here. "Well, marxism, marxism in Germany, in Germany." No. No. No. It's out there. It's out there. "I can't be racist." And feeling frustrated, air caught in my lung, keep wanting to say . . . to grab Maurice and going . . .

All laugh.

Haruko: Most importantly we have survived. We are positive about ourselves in a way you people can't understand. You insist on seeing us as victims and although victimization is out there, it is an act. It is not me.

Jin-me: Then are we further perpetuating our own marginalization? The situation seems to be similar to the issues addressing a number of groups: the feminists—their lack of support to women of colour . . . a conflict happening within . . . their own internalized patterns of racism. The major concern is whether we are going to focus directly on race and representation, about the fact to never say that we're all the same, because we are not, we have very different experiences, because of our ethnic background, our colour—whatever difference that makes us individual.

So in this show we didn't want another chance for white people to say "oh, they're all the same. Okay, you can have the show, we can give you this space, isn't that nice?" We want to make sure that somehow this idea of us being different . . . obviously because we are a physical minority in this culture we suffer certain consequences and although the consequences are quite often

See **Others** page 18

Validating the working class experience

by Janet Patterson

HEY WAITRESS
and other stories
by Helen Potrebenko
Vancouver, Lazara Press, 1989

Nobody ever plans to be a waitress, Ginny. They're all doing it only temporarily.
- Hey Waitress

The men who decreed that alcoholism was an illness decreed also that the whole family was diseased. So Phyllis and Billy became co-alcoholics from the day that Louie found he could no longer just have a few drinks any more.
- Co-Alcoholic

Helen Potrebenko's new book of short stories, *Hey Waitress*, is about definitions as the sites upon which women fight their daily battles for identity. Potrebenko's vision is unswervingly focused on working-class women—usually women who are immigrant, or old, or marginalized in some respect. Increasingly as a writer, Potrebenko has explored a confrontation between women's actual experiences and the ideas and ideals the world has about them.

In this juxtaposition, she has created a literature which is not only dramatic and comic at the same time, but one which is highly subversive and is meant to be so.

Potrebenko, herself from a working-class Ukranian background, has expressed an acute awareness of the distance between the myths, images and expectations of middle-class society and her own experiences as a working-class woman since her first novel. *Taxi* / New Star: 1975. What is unique about Potrebenko is her commitment as an artist to validating the spectrum of working- class experience—traditionally left untouched and unspoken by society in general and art in particular—and perhaps more importantly, her commitment to forging the artistic forms necessary to the portrayal of working-class women's experience.

Potrebenko's vision is not in tune with current trends of literary criticism and academic feminism. One major trend, which may be loosely termed "cultural feminism," looks at the ways in which gender is socially constructed, and in particular how women's subjectivity is constructed through language and ideological activities such as art.

Speaking through her character Odessa in the novel *Sometimes They Sang* (Press Gang: 1986), Potrebenko states that we do not need such explanations: we are too busy with "self- defense":

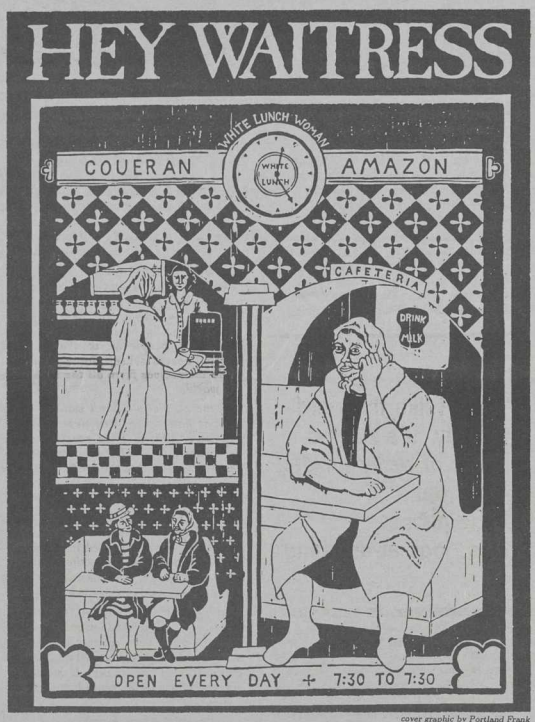
> Theory was further irrelevant because the women were unable to agree on any positive theory. They were too involved in self-defense. They had to defend themselves and their children; they had to bring up their children; they had to fight for control of their own reproductive organs; as cheap labour they had to try to keep from becoming cheaper labour. That was theory enough.

Indeed, within her earlier books of prose and poetry, Potrebenko has been working out a politics of identity which directly challenges the assumption of cultural feminism—that subjectivity (and its construction) is the proper focus for women concerned about liberation. For Potrebenko, women's identity is constructed by their struggle for physical and spiritual survival in the narrow spaces left by the coercive forces around them. And those coercive forces are more likely to be low pay, long working hours, dehumanizing work, sexual harassment, poverty, loneliness, physical pain and abuse—rather than ideas.

In other words, patriarchy's (or capitalism's) definitions are not simply discourse; they are social practices with a naked element of coercion.

As a writer, Potrebenko has also been looking for an aesthetic consistent with this view. On the one hand, the coercive forces need to be identified with great particularity—the cost of rent, the minutes on a coffee break, the number of tables to be waited on. On the other hand, a particular woman's strategies for surviving these forces may have no recognizable shape according to our present middle-class norms. Such an existence just *is*, without a beginning or ending or significance of leading somewhere. Its significance lies in the endurance—the self- defense—of the particular individual, a truth which is impervious to the imposition of other's efforts to shape it into something meaningful. Potrebenko has had to leave aside usual narrative forms with "happy endings" and search for something else.

With the publication of *Hey Waitress*, Potrebenko has given us the precious materials of a fully developed working- class women's literature. In some of the 11 stories, she continues to use the ironic perspective of a highly conscious working-class woman to delineate the world unknown to those who have never suffered the coercive forces of "women's work."



cover graphic by Portland Frank

In "Diary of a Temp," there is an entire paragraph on how to correct a typo on a multiple-copy policy document. From the banal, even hilarious description of this every day task, Potrebenko has extracted a profound sense of the destruction of a human being, leading her character to the conclusion, "There is something intricately evil about a company where people can type policies for four years or five-and-a-half years."

In "RSVP," a party crasher warns a naive female articling student at the law firm's party " ... be careful how you read fairy tales ... the ones who weren't princesses, or had crooked teeth, or the wrong build for the times—if they didn't get burned as witches, they were just left to do all the work for no pay." Such characters are at war with their surroundings: they are carrying on a one woman deconstruction of their work places.

On a more optimistic note, in the title story "Hey Waitress," Stella Sutcliff is well attuned to the determinants of her life- - the quantification of her labour as a waitress (numbers of tables, numbers of places, types of sauces, numbers of trips back and forth) and its physical toll on her body and those of her friends. But she has made a life within these constraints and the story is about how her daughter, Ginny, comes to share this "place" and to make an alternate institution—a family tradition of waitresses—to the usual patriarchal institutions.

In her tenacious chronicling of the details of these women's lives—making the fact of their survival extraordinary and subversive—Potrebenko is joining the ranks of the very few women artists who work in the working-class artistic tradition. In the self-deprecating and amusing monologue "Almost Morningside," Potrebenko's character states:

> But very definitely, everyone in the world should get one book. They don't have to write it themselves, of course, because a lot of people don't like writing, but it would be their book and would have in it what they want, even if they got someone else to write it.

Potrebenko is writing for a lot of women and *Hey Waitress* may be their book.

Others among others continued from page 17

negative, we're also very proud of our heritage. I don't think of it in a romantic way.

Shani: Then how do we give form to what we want to speak about as the 'other?'

Haruko: It doesn't have to be a gut-wrenching autobiography. It can be about as simple as the habit of going to the toilet and wishing that it was a squat toilet instead of an upright.

This is not a glorification of our ancestry—It's not an either/or or ... to negate that experience—forced assimilation, pressurized. That choice is very different. They pick the dominant one ... to marry a winner, if that's what it takes to become more acceptable.

Jin-me: For myself I realize I was isolated within the white male ideal ... with Asian men I was looking at it from a white perspective. I would not mix with Asian men because they did not meet with the Caucasian aesthetics in which I was raised. But when I went to the orient it was my face I saw on Buddha ... then suddenly you develop an aesthetic for Asian men.

... I don't see the solution as marrying someone from your background, because that could be just as oppressive.

Haruko: But the question is what is behind that choice? It is an issue of the politics of dominant culture versus the immigrant culture ... of marrying outside your race and ancestry. The way you find your internalization is your first response ... your need to survive ... to integrate. The internalized effect of racism is very spontaneous. Your immediate reaction shows.

We've gone through inclusion/exclusion—all these 'sions'—and the other is disillusion ... not illusion. When the whole of what you are ... you strive to find balance in the dominant culture/class. As a result, you assimilate way beyond their expectation: within three generations of the Japanese community, the GoSai will be white.

Sher Azad: My brother's kid—she's six, she's at home putting on white powder on her face 'cause she doesn't want to be brown.

Haruko: This is dissolution. It is not intellectual ... if you give your child two choice and don't say either/or, look what she's choosing. It's not that your children are going to try to be Asian 'cause they're not, but there is a part of that culture that you would like them to retain. What I mean is that dissolution is the full negation ... the relief that I'm white finally.

Jin-me: But racism is not just about whites doing to ... I mean; Koreans are so racist.

Haruko: I never claimed racism to be a particular privilege of the white class. It's a power struggle using biological difference ... the intolerance ... No one's ancestry is pure and pristine.

Yoly: We have two enemies. The oppressor and the people that let it happen. We have to ask for our rights.

Riis impressive, so's her latest book

Sharon Riis

photo by Riis McNinch

by Cy-Thea Sand

I am delighted to interview Sharon Riis. She is the author of one of the most powerful novels I have ever read, so meeting her in person is an honour. Riis is in town for the Vancouver Writers Festival and to celebrate the launching of her new novel. Those of you who have read *The True Story of Ida Johnson* can imagine my excitement at the publication of Sharon's second book. I have waited since 1976 for this.

Midnight Twilight Tourist Zone is a kaleidoscope in print, a lucid dream set in a filthy northern Alberta cabin in which three people share a journey best described as out-of-this-world, surreal, fantastic, erotic. To get to the cabin I had to stop wanting something to happen. To get to the cabin I had to suspend my mental "abstractions which allow my forebrain to chatter" (Lawrence Durrel).

Imagine a middle-aged, no-nonsense district health nurse visiting a reclusive elderly man, ending up in a *menage a trois* with two dead people. If you can imagine the three individuals changing character within a fantastic web of memory, nuance and drama, you are with Sharon Riis as she explores the reason why she writes prose: to figure out what people are about.

Sharon: *My daughter is eight years old, almost nine. She is a wonderful person. Since the age of 18 months what she likes to do is dress like a slut. When she was young I wore jeans and t-shirts. I lived in the bush so there was no highly visible, sluttish high fashion around. Where she got her role model from I don't know. Where does this fit into anything? What theory explains her love of high heels and stockings?*

Before leaving to come to Vancouver, which is the beginning of my book tour, I kept wondering how I was going to answer the question about what Midnight Twilight Tourist Zone *is about. But if I could say what this book is about—succinctly—I would not have had to write it.*

But I can come up with some things to say. It has to do with sex. That the way we get off can never be politically correct. You cannot control sex with your brain. Some people try to live in a politically correct way in terms of their relationships, but you can't transfer that over to sex.

I think people should leave it alone. I don't know if I thought that before I wrote the book but I think it now. Of course I am writing from a state of extreme repression. This is all loose talk.

In a review of *Midnight* for *The Reader* Shelley Roberts asks if the book's fantasies are pornography or erotica. She claims that the answer to this question holds the key to an assessment of the book. My answer is based on the simple test of whether or not the sex in the novella feels life-affirming and celebratory or mechanical, cold and controlling.

The sex in this book is as sensual and provocative as anything that appeals to the senses relentlessly and lovingly. I am amazed—being a bit of a clean freak—that Riis can make sex in a filthy bed in a freezing cold cabin so appealing. The novel is sensual in the best sense of that word: the everyday ordinary things like dishes, woodsmoke and having to pee are made extraordinary by a writer in awe of "the inherent mystery of all things."

"I don't like the word morality. It's more a matter of really looking at the options. Some people never look at anything"

Sharon: *I lay awake thinking about Roberts' question. But I think she may have just been nervous, that she wasn't sure what to think about it. My friends who have read the book have been a bit worried too. But there is no degradation and humiliation in the fantasies.*

The segment of *Midnight* that Riis chose to read at the Writers Festival Panel, "Women Speak Out" concerns a memory Rosalie (the nurse) has about her adolescence. Rosalie recalls time spent with her boyfriend up in the hills shooting bottles and tin cans. Her boyfriend is oppressive to her and Rosalie is tempted to shoot him everytime he turns his back on her to set up new targets.

In the novel, Rosalie's interpretation of why she doesn't shoot him reflects an idea Riis was keen to talk about. In her novel she writes: "After that summer I understood the notion of choice. I understood it as the key to vitality. It's a dead zone out there because too many people turn their backs on even the possibility of choice. "Goodness" achieved out of habit or fear is no achievement at all. It's a ticket to atrophy and ignorance."

Sharon: *When you make a choice it's not enough to do so out of habit or because you are afraid. Like not committing adultery because you haven't had the opportunity to do so. It doesn't mean anything if the opportunity has not come up. It has to be a conscious choice.*

My children have their own confusions and agendas that I don't know anything about. But that is the growth process. No one has this thing about making choices down. But you can get better and it has to do with growing up, with maturity, with self-awareness.

I don't like the word morality. It's more a matter of really looking at the options. Some people never look at anything. Some people can't bear to watch my film Loyalties *because they can't bear it that some people are like that [the film is about sexual abuse]. Some people exclude themselves from all the trouble in the world.*

Some people just don't want to know what is going on. They never want to look at anything. They see themselves as separate and different from others. They make me want to weep. They are not alive.

Some of the fascinating aspects of *Midnight* is its dramatization of the essential connectedness of all people and things. Rosalie's loneliness is expressed in her memories and in her sense of rejection and abandonment when the other characters—Josef and Wanda—seem to exclude her.

But other memories Rosalie conjures up underscore her essential oneness with others and we see how her sense of being excluded is based on her limited imagination. When she loses track of her self and her circumstance, wonderful things happen:

Sharon: *Cold mountain air wafted down over the hot prairie and I could not distinguish, for a moment, between me and the hot dry land, me and the cool mountain air. I was filled up with the scent of clover and the homely sound of coyotes whining about their lot in life and I did not know* what *I was, never mind* who. *Still, I wasn't frightened. I felt both peace and exhilaration. I felt blessed.*

People seem to grow spiritually when they have the experience—brief as it may be—that we are essentially one but have to move about in the world on our own. The opposite of this awareness seems to be loneliness and alienation, a feeling of not belonging, of having been abandoned.

Rosalie talks a lot about her loneliness and in the cabin a great healing takes place for her. She gets to experience being more than herself. She literally moves out of her character as do Josef and Wanda. This transformation gives the novel its aura of wonder as well as its message of hope.

Sharon: *The story that Josef tells Wanda and Rosalie at the end of the novel—about the bear and the young woman—says it all. It says we are each other. We are really all one.*

That's the thing about all of us being one. You might get it in a flash when you have that feeling, when you have that sense. Then it goes.

I was really interested in what Leslie Hall Pinder said on the panel at the Writers Festival about writing from a place of exile. I thought: you too? I write from a pathetic place within me, a pathetic place. I don't know how else to say it. I was delighted that she said that. It seemed so clear that that is where we write from.

If you get to have this sense of oneness and connection you have to go away again. It doesn't stay. When we write we pull back into our isolation and loneliness. That is the only way to find your voice. Otherwise you use other people's voices.

This intricate dance of communion and aloneness is what *Midnight Twilight Tourist Zone* is all about. Delight and despair shuffle around together but at the heart of the story lies the passion and hope of Rosalie's words to her children: "Listen to your hearts, choose kindness over cruelty, love over everything.

Riis is working on a screenplay called *The Liberation of Sigmund Hef* and has written a script for *The True Story of Ida Johnson*, which she hopes will be made into a film soon.

Sharon: *I cannot bring myself to enter into the long hard lonely slog of writing a novel unless I've got something built up in me to say. Writing for film is like writing a short story. It is more at a distance from me. I like the camaraderie. I like the parties. I like putting sequins on and the champagne. My motives are really very sleazy.*

I'm not sure which pleased me more about this interview—spending time with a generous and humorous woman or discovering that *Ida* may well be made into a film in the near future. Riis signed my copy of *Midnight* with affection from a fellow (sister) traveller and I left feeling connected. Not a bad morning, eh?

Midnight Twilight Tourist Zone *is published by Douglas and McIntyre.*

WWB Vancouver Women's Bookstore
315 Cambie St., 684-0523
December Hours
Mon.-Wed. 11am-5:30pm
Thurs.&Fri. 11am-7:30pm
Sat. 11am-5:30pm

Existential?

Whew, that's a relief

by Elizabeth Nutting

When Victoria artist Phyllis Serota heard her latest group of paintings described as "an existential series" she started to feel nervous. Concerned that her work had been miscast, she looked up the word "existential" in a dictionary. "Having to do with existence," the definition read. Serota was instantly relieved, and now feels comfortable when that label is applied to her *Rope Climbers*series. "That's quite simple," says Serota, "and that's really what the series is all about."

There are twelve large paintings and two sculptures in the series, all depicting figures engaged in the act of climbing a rope. There is a hint of the circus about the paintings—climbing the rope is clearly a test of bravado as well as physical strength. With no safety net, horizon line or destination in sight, the rope climbers dangle precariously in mid-air. Some of the climbers appear to work their way up the rope cautiously, pulling hand over hand, while others lean back and swing freely. Each painting communicates a distinct mood, and whether the atmosphere is joyous or melancholy, Serota's *Rope Climbers* have emotional impact.

"The *Rope Climbers* are a metaphor for life," Serota says. "There are all kinds of Rope Climbers, just as there are all kinds of people. Some are triumphant, some are in terrible struggle. There are those people who very easily work their way through life, and no matter what happens to them, they always seem to have that sense of balance about them. And then there are people who struggle all the time."

Inspiration for the *Rope Climbers* came from Serota's own struggle to redirect her energy and overcome physical problems which had plagued her during the past year. After her 1986 *Family Series*, she lacked a sense of direction and had difficulty finding a unified theme for her paintings.

"I couldn't figure out where to go," recalls Serota. "I was painting this and that but nothing had a connection." During a physical therapy session, Serota envisioned a focal point for the series.

"I was doing a lot of work on my body," she says. "Along with having my back worked on, I had been having Alexander training. The words "letting go" started to come into my brain—the idea of just physically letting go—and I realized that I was holding on too tightly to things. I was even washing dishes with too much energy. I remember being on the table having my back worked on when I started to visualize just letting go of a rope."

Serota's work as a professional artist has come a long way from her first encounter, as a young housewife, with a paint-by-number set.

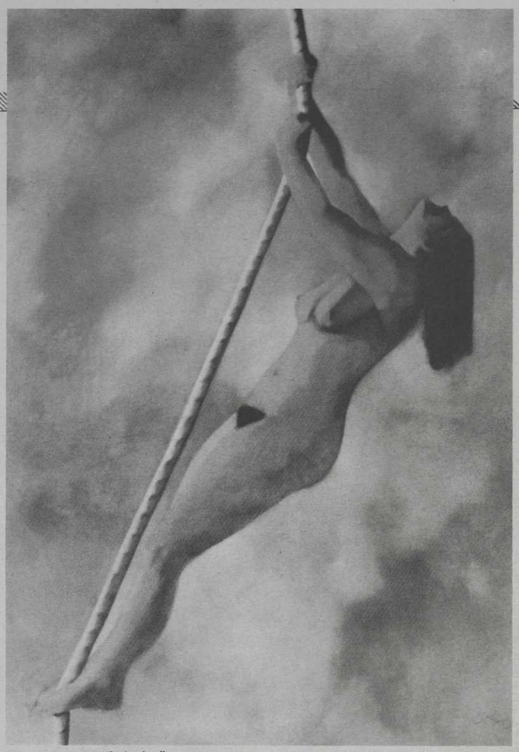
"I like to mention that, because it gives people who are just starting out some hope," she says. From that beginning, Serota's strong interest in art propelled her through a series of night school courses, six years of painting still-lifes, a teaching job at a community college and a university degree in painting and photography.

In spite of her feeling that Victoria is "the hardest city of its size in North America in which to make a living as an artist," for the past 10 years, Serota has managed to do just that. She supports herself by selling her paintings from her home in James Bay, and by teaching private art classes once a week.

"The most important thing that you can do as a teacher is to inspire," Serota states, "and I think that's the most important thing you can do as an artist, as well. I teach in a very positive way. I'm not negative with my students because I really feel that negative teaching can be very harmful. Getting people to try different things which they normally wouldn't try is important, too."

Trying different things is Phyllis Serota's theme song. Letting go, it seems, is as essential to the creative process, as it is to the art of rope-climbing. Only by letting go of the rope can the climber reach new heights.

Phyllis Serota is giving a series of colour workshops in Vancouver in January. Call 253-7624 for information.



Phyllis Serota's "Swinging"

Women in View

Action-packed weekend of performances

by Amy Melmock

A challenging line-up of performances, workshops and forums combine to bring women's issues to the fore at the second annual Vancouver Women In View festival, Jan. 29th - Feb. 4th.

An action-packed weekend unites more than 60 performances as theatre, dance, music, storytelling, cabaret, play reading and interdisciplinary events occur simultaneously from dawn-til-dusk. This year Women In View spreads to four venues located in and around the Firehall Arts Centre.

The popularity of the 1989 festival has inspired many leading performers to return to Women In View. Margo Kane, creator of the highly successful *Reflections in the Medicine Wheel*, presents her new work "Moon Lodge," a story of contemporary Native women. Nora D. Randall and Jackie Crossland return with a new intimate narrative, *Great Explanations - Four Lesbian Stories*. Caitlin Hicks introduces a fresh comedy piece *Just a Little Fever*, and Nana Gregory and Melanie Ray individually share their story-telling expertise.

Evelyn Roth's VIEW mask

photo courtesy Women in View

Women In View accommodates the great diversity within the performing arts. Suzie Payne's *Calender Girls*, an examination of women's reproductive rights, and Theatre Energy's *Survivors*, a study of the themes of incest and sexual abuse, are two of four special play readings which offer theatre-in-the-making.

Two non-traditional theatre companies will stage their works. Clerical Health and Safety Workers Project invite audience participation in a *Not Just Nine to Five*. Nelson's Light and Power Theatre Company stages *The GQ Factor* with a cast of mentally and physically challenged performers.

Political oppression provides a common theme for many plays. In *Bad Dollies* Franca Rame and Dario Fo reveal the courage of women held down by the triple force of family, state and society. In *Puente II*, which received rave reviews in the 1989 festival, members of the Puente Theatre project use story and song to depict the hardships faced by Latin American immigrants.

The presentation *Dance Matriz* combines the work of some of Vancouver's leading dance innovators. Participating choreographers include Gisa Cole, Mary Louise Albert and Su-Fe Lee and hopefully Montreal dance sensation Lee Saunders.

Musical contributors include Lori Freedman on bass clarinet, and Montreal's Wondeur Brass, an avante-garde group that redefines the boundaries of women's music, is tentatively scheduled to appear.

Like other disciplines within Women In View, Reading Writers draws attention to both established and emerging artists. Vancouver author Evelyn Lau, Victoria poet Dorothy Livesay and Prince Rupert writer Jean Rystaad are among the dozen B.C. women sharing their literary works.

Festival week opens Jan. 29 with workshops and forums. The proposed Artist's Code for Canada and racial and sexual discrimination in the arts are this year's forum topics. The three workshops source creativity through innovative listening, improvisation and communication techniques.

The 1990 Women In View festival promises to be another enormous success.

Gift certificates to the Festival are available; certificates for Day Tags and Super Tags go on sale Dec. 4th at the View office, #14-2414 Main Street, 875-6210. Programs and individual tickets will be available after Jan. 3rd.

photo by Lincoln Clarkes

Sheila Gostick

Taking aim at just about everything

by Lorraine Chisholm

Sheila Gostick says that pro-lifers who chain themselves to clinic doors are wasting good bicycle locks. To the thousands of people who rallied in Vancouver on the National Day of Action on Abortion, the Toronto comic asked, "Who ever heard of anyone trying to steal a right-wing Christian? You can't give 'em away!"

If you were fortunate enough to catch one of Gostick's full performances in town this November, you heard her dish out 90 minutes of brilliant, tightly constructed, provocative monologue in which her subjects were eviscerated with surgical precision. Corporate "environmental" schemes, world debt, homophobia, Toronto developers, cops, Canadians, Salvation Army Bands, the media, medical establishment, art curators, politicians, collectives—they all come under the knife.

Gostick is an anomaly in the world of comedy, a very funny woman who ingratiates herself with no one—a politically radical intellect in a genre often characterized by mindless misogyny.

Gostick has been trading in laughter for over 13 years. She made her debut at Yuk-Yuks in Toronto decked out in Anita Bryant costume, complete with rotten fruit. Eventually, what she refers to as "guy stuff" began to exact a toll and she struck out on her own.

"I had to make my own shows because they wouldn't give me the two-bit work that they give boys. It was not because I couldn't do it," Gostick lowers her voice, "It was because they didn't like gyrls [her spelling]."

Unlike many feminist performers, Gostick draws a line between the personal and the political. "I don't want to hear about someone's mucous membranes, or whatever they do in their spare time." Her humour takes aim at social institutions and attitudes, and in that realm, Gostick is a crack shot.

She tells me that she's read America's most popular tabloid for 17 years. "The *National Enquirer* has gone really right-wing in the last couple of weeks. They've changed their format and they've realized they have such power. I know that sounds redundant to call it right-wing, but now they have these moral articles and they have articles saying acid rain doesn't exist. Everything is a loudspeaker of the system. But the appalling part is, do people even care?"

Gostick incorporates clippings from the mainstream press into her act, and stand-up media critic is one of her most brilliant roles. She demonstrates the obstacles involved in deciphering news. "Just take a picture of George Bush with a dog: the dog likes him, so he must be an okay guy."

I spoke with Gostick the afternoon following her performance at the Railway Club. She was annoyed that she'd missed full page newspaper ads over the weekend which declared "spiritual warfare" against the upcoming Gay Games. She considers this a mortal sin of omission, as her scrutiny of the news generates some of her best material. Having spent a few days at the home of some friends in Mount Pleasant, she blamed the oversight on the fact that she'd been isolated in the "suburbs."

I was curious about the role of country music in her act: her tortured wailing of bizarre lyrics. She says country music is her hobby, the thing that gives her pleasure. She's attracted to country music because you don't have to think about it.

"I'm more emotional . . . even though the stuff I do is supposed to be about thinking." She draws a comparison with the *National Enquirer*. Gostick likes the fact that in both forms the redneck stuff exists up front where you can deal with it.

Her dedication to her craft is apparent in the skill with which she delivers her material. "It's all work. It's an incredible amount of hard work to do shows because I do it differently every time.

"I work it really tight. I like to do 90 minutes without stopping, without taking a breath, and leaving no space for laughing. I like to work it really, really tight."

"You've got to work it out, out loud. You have to do it out loud over and over and over. It's all sound."

"So," I ask, "How do you know it's funny?"

"I know because it's my job."

Gostick's Vancouver shows were spiked with her reactions to current issues—logging in Stanley Park, Vander Zalm's foray into the world of comedy, (his racist breakfast jokes) the recriminalization of abortion. In person, I was impressed with her powers of observation and her sensitivity to what's happening around her. She's intensely critical of the consumer mentality and its anaesthetic effect on our experience.

"Shocking how little people do pay attention to what is going on. They can live in a place for a 100 years. Like in France, where they went crazy over my travelling clothes [made out of drapes]. I was wearing flowers in my hair and they go, Where are those from? You've worked under these flowering chestnuts in this market for the last thirty years, probably, and you've never looked up?"

She describes living in Toronto as a hideous nightmare of land deals and development and the razing of neighbourhoods. "When I say homeowner it's now kind of synonymous with millionaire in Toronto." On stage, she defines a good friend in Toronto as someone who charges less than a three dollar cover.

"I lived down by the trains. I found mint growing in the parking lot. A wild bunny on the train lines. I appreciated the little things that fucking shoppers don't even fucking see. I knew how to hunt and gather in the city. Literally.

"I went on the radio here as an environmental comedian. The host asked, 'Do you have to change your lifestyle?' No. The problem is people who have a lifestyle! Hey you! with the lifestyle. Consumers are the problem."

She describes her own "lifestyle" as the lowest level of consumption. "I've never even owned a hi-fi." She does, however, boast about having the best wardrobe in Toronto for 5 cents.

The simplicity may not be strictly voluntary. Getting hired has been a problem for a woman who pulls no punchlines in her critique of the status quo. She figures that had she been doing politically radical work in another medium—as well and for as long—she would have more to show for it. As it is she is "just eeking along."

She confides that some unusual occupational hazards have plagued her career. She once hired a video instructor to tape her show who laughed so hard she dropped the camera. "I went to a sound symposium in Newfoundland and I was the only one with no sound on my tape." Less humorous are the cases of people ripping off her work—taping it and broadcasting without permission.

"If people want you to work for free, they can always find you. If people have money to offer you they somehow can never get in touch. Volunteer work, boy, they find me."

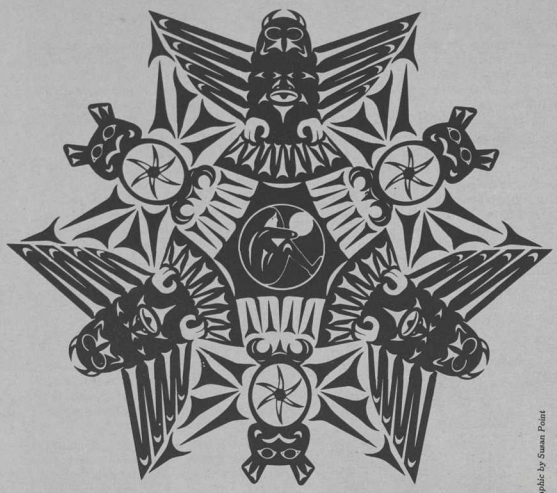
In Gostick's opinion, comedy is relegated to the fringe among progressive and alternative audiences. "Comedy, valued? No. For instance, the first time I came here I was doing it at this art place. And, people were going, comedian...groan. Then after they see me they're using my name in their performance art class."

"See, I attract a crowd who doesn't like comedy anyway. I think that's who my audience is. Because I don't like comedy.

"I do very street stuff and it's not comfortable. I mean that's where I'm from, and that's where I want to stay [while in Vancouver], down on Hastings Street. But people who have investments and stuff aren't comfortable with that.

I'm comfortable where comfortable people don't want to go."

Misogyny primary threat to the eco-system



graphic by Susan Point

by Susan Prosser

HEALING THE WOUNDS
The Promise of Ecofeminism
edited by Judith Plant
Toronto: Between The Lines, 1989

The idea that some people are better than other people, more worthy and intelligent, inhibits interdependence amoung modern people...An ecosystem is a web of differences, we tend to hold ourselves and other chosen companions above others ... If one species eats all its food–that is, "dominates"—it soon must leave that neck of the woods or die.

Judith Plant

Healing The Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism is a challenging anthology of writings by feminist women about ecological concerns. Its editor, Judith Plant, is a B.C. activist, writer and editor of *The New Catalyst* a quarterly. Plant has organized the anthology inside four sections which explore ecofeminist meaning, politics, spirituality and community. The writings—predominantly by North American women, are largely theoretical but Plant's use of personal account and her inclusion of some poetry, stories, myths and interviews create a narrative tone ideal to the book's subject matter: the connections between the destruction of the earth and the oppression of women; how women are using this perspective to change their own lives and to guide their work in their communities.

If male ... scientists fail to deal with misogyny ... they are not living ecological lives.

Part one of *Healing The Wounds* titled "Remembering Who We Are: The Meaning of Ecofeminism," explores the process of shifting out of the prevailing western dualities of mind/body, technology/nature and First World/Third World, into the flow of life. As Susan Griffith writes, "the civilization which has shaped our minds is also destroying the earth."

"It is this culture (women raped, nature exploited) and the politics of abstraction which women are talking of changing, of bringing into accountability in human terms," quotes Ynesta King from Adrienne Rich. King expands: "If male ecological scientists fail to deal with misogyny—the deepest manifestation of nature-hating in their own lives—they are not living the ecological lives or creating the ecological society they claim."

Remembering who we are is a struggle in which most western women (and men) must overcome over 2,000 years of socialization, silence and invisibility. But, as Corrine Kumar D'Souza points out: "Scarcely twenty years were enough to make two billion people define themselves as underdeveloped ... a universal worldview ... has subsumed the civilizations of the Third World." The western universalization of economics, military, science and cultural development "recognizes poverty but refuses the feminization of poverty; science, but denies the genderization of science; development, but is blind [sic] to sexual economics." D'Souza says our remembering must define a new order (not a new dogma) which is the "plurality of the struggles of the people and the pluralism of civilization."

Ecofeminism is the analysis and praxis of feminists who believe it is not just nature that is being destroyed and the psyche of women with her, but that existence itself is threatened. Part two, "Healing All Our Relations: Ecofeminist Politics," depicts the diverse ways in which women the world over are struggling for a voice, are demanding ecological sanity.

Gwaganad, a Haida woman, speaks her physical and spiritual experience of the herring spawn, of how her life is intimately related to the not-other life around her. Pamela Philipose tells three stories of direct action in India where women worked to save forests, protect fish stocks and make connections between rural and urban concerns. Rachel Baby writes about a feminist conference "created" to reach parity between white women and women of colour and gives a moving description of a session in which the women began healing their relations by each telling all the women not of her colour what she never wanted to hear form those women again.

It is in this section that the only direct criticism of the term ecofeminism is heard. Anne Cameron rails against middle-class, mealy-mouthed new ageism and ecofeminism as a watered-down feminism calculated to appease the boys that can't face hardnosed feminists.

"Ecofeminism is an insult to the women who put themselves on the line, risked public disapproval, risked even violence and jail ... who made rape openly and publicly unacceptable," says Cameron who argues convincingly that feminism has always urged anti-war activity and environmental protection.

Vandana Shiva underlines this (without reference to ecofeminism) in a discussion of the euphemism Third World "development." Development, she writes, "destroys sustainable lifestyles and creates real material poverty" and it is largely women who are impoverished, excluded and displaced by it. In many countries the feminization of poverty has always been seen in terms of dislocation from and destruction of the environment.

Many of the voices from the first two sections *Healing the Wounds* are echoed in the third section: "She is Alive in You: Ecofeminist Spirituality." This section contains some of the strongest and definitely the weakest writings in this anthology. Without exception, the writings which use the term ecofeminism repeat material already covered and shed little spiritual light on ecofeminist theory; the pieces which deal with spirituality, feminism and the environment are however, strong and provocative.

In particular, Margo Adler writes about neopaganism: how it challenges the idea of any transcendental deity; how it celebrates divinity immanent in nature; how it is based on what one does not on what one thinks; how you can have "the juice and the mystery, without the totalitarianism."

Dolores LaChapelle, with a delightful perspective on sex, gives an encapsulation of human sexual evolution, then goes on to detail old and current community sexual rituals used by cultures which live(d) in isolated or fragile environments. These rituals served to bind the community and to maintain its physical and spiritual survival in the environment.

"The core meaning of feminism ... lies at this point, in its relation to earthly life's survival," writes Dorothy Dinnerstein in the final section, "The Circle is Gathering: Ecofeminist Community." Hers is one of several strong articles which make it clear that this book is aimed specifically at women with power who must transform their use of power. Argo Adair and Sharon Howell write, "Naming power begins our process of reclaiming it."

These two articles as well as an interview with Marie Wilson of the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en, urge community responsibility rather than the patriarchal ideal of individual freedom. "We have obligation and control and the responsibility that goes with it. 'Rights' to us is a very selfish word," says Wilson, speaking about Native community. Caroline Esters, in the final article in the section, discusses consensus decision making as a fundamental community tool for dealing with power relationships.

I would recommend *Healing The Wounds* to women interested in exploring issues of feminist ecology. As well, it is a useful place to begin reading or to be referred to further readings on feminist community and spirituality. I think Judith Plant has accomplished something worthwhile: she places diverse writings side-by-side; and through section titles which imagine process and the inclusion of brief introductions to each section, she creates a thread—more, a weaving of ideas and action which is ecofeminism.

Naming power begins our process of reclaiming it.

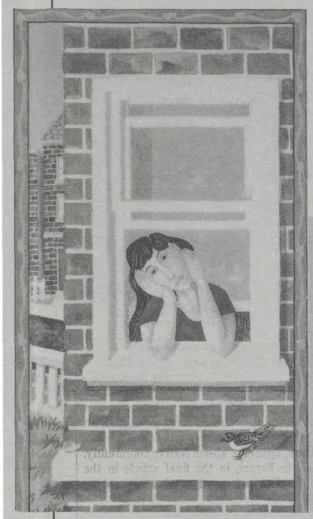
My main criticism is of the term ecofeminism itself. I was disappointed there was no article examining where the term arose and why we need it. Ecofeminism has an "otherness" about it which I find disturbing; and many of the writings in this book do not even use the term ecofeminism, especially those written by non-North American women and by Native women. But *Healing The Wounds* gives the reader exposure to new and old ideas. It does create promise. It is not a polemic, but that is perhaps another antholgy.

The Holocaust:
Interviews with survivors lead to novel

by Penny Goldsmith

THE LAST ENEMY
by Rhoda Kaellis
Vancouver, Pulp Press, 1989

When Rabbi Victor Reinstein of Temple Emanu-El in Victoria asked Rhoda Kaellis to interview local Holocaust survivors in order to create an archive of their histories, she thought the assignment would take her a couple of months. After all, she was an experienced interviewer and she was only going to talk to 15 people.



Nine months later, Kaellis still wasn't finished and she realized there was something else waiting to be written. And so Sarah and Lilly came into being and *The Last Enemy* was born.

Sarah is a 12-year-old girl living in New York at the end of world war two. She has no brothers or sisters, and when she learns that her cousin Lilly has been discovered in a Catholic orphanage in Brussels and is coming to live with their family—Lilly's parents have been killed in a concentration camp—she is thrilled to be able to perform this mitzvah (good deed) and have a ready-made sister besides. Sarah has been warned that survivors of the Holocaust are "damaged" but she is confident she will be able to make Lilly feel at home with her friends and her life in New York.

graphic by Michael Bender

From the moment that Lilly arrives, Sarah's generous but naive cocoon of safety starts to unravel. Lilly is not pleased to be in New York, she is not impressed with her half of the bedroom which Sarah has carefully prepared for her, she does not want to go to synagogue or come down for the family Friday night Shabbat dinner. She is a very frightened 11-year-old who wants to go back to the Catholic orphanage where she felt some degree of safety and protection, and where no one except the nuns knew she was Jewish.

What becomes clearer and clearer as the story unfolds is that Lilly is coping with the betrayal of everything that matters to her. In her eyes, her English mother abandoned her because she chose to stay with her Belgian father in Europe rather than escaping to England with her. In Belgium, her parents were captured and killed for being Jewish. At one point in the orphanage, the Nazis arrived and she stood in a line with all the other children, terrified she would be picked out as a Jew. Lilly was taught by the nuns that although what was happening in Europe was "unfortunate," the Jews after all *had* killed Christ. And this is reinforced by the few Catholic girls she chooses for friends at the predominantly Jewish public school she now attends in New York.

Lilly does not survive. She eventually leaves her new family, briefly converts to Catholicism and goes to live with Catherine, one of her Catholic friends. Catherine's family does not really want her, but grudgingly takes her in to "protect" her from her Jewish family. Lilly finally kills herself when she realizes she cannot come to terms with being a Jew and there is nowhere else for her to go.

Sarah is left with a sudden and real understanding of what she has to deal with for the rest of her life as she begins to try and grasp why the Holocaust happened and what it means for her. Her own sense of safety and security has been shattered forever in the bitter nights of Lilly's fear.

Although *The Last Enemy* is not based on a single survivor's story, Kaellis has used incidents from her Victoria interviews to tell Lilly's story, as well as her own observations of what it means to be on the run. Sarah discovers at one point that Lilly has been hoarding food in her dresser drawer; Kaellis remembers that when she took in draft dodgers in Saskatoon in the late 60s, she discovered one of them had been doing just that. Lilly at first cannot eat in front of the rest of the family; a survivor Kaellis interviewed told her she found it impossible to eat in front of anyone else after her experience of being concealed in a private home during the war.

It is these stories which make this book such a powerful and moving indictment of anti-semitism, not just the anti-semitism of the Holocaust itself, but also the day-to-day anti-semitism that Sarah has never experienced in her sheltered life until Lilly arrives.

This book is not easy to define as far as its readership goes. It does not really fit into the "young adult" genre, because this precludes the adults who will read it. And yet the young adults with whom I have talked who have read it, find it a powerful novel. Perhaps it is not a book that can be boxed, any more than its two heroines can be.

The title of this book comes from the New Testament: "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." In a final confrontation with Lilly's Catholic friend Catherine after her cousin's death, Sarah begins to realize it is not only Jews who have been the Holocaust's victims, and it may not be death that is the last enemy to be destroyed.

Women naming and defining the world

by Carol Read

MEATLESS DAYS
By Sara Suleri
Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989

"There are no women in the Third World," Sara Suleri responds when asked why women writers do not have equal space in her Third World writing course. An English professor at Yale University, Suleri grew up in Pakistan, in an intellectual environment created by her Welch mother and Pakistani father.

With her first book, *Meatless Days*, Suleri constructs with language a place for women to inhabit. As the patriarchal Adam named the animals, so do women name and define the world in Suleri's autobiographical memoirs of Pakistan.

Her poetic language is an elegy for her sister Ifat, murdered for political reasons; her mother, killed by a rickshaw; and her grandmother Dadi. When recounting how Ifat learned the Punjabi dialect of her husband's family, Suleri mocks the precise status the dialect assigns each family member. In a stream of gossip, there floats a small reference to someone having his wife killed for adultery.

In *Meatless Days*, language can give or take power. Suleri's mother, an English professor, was an immigrant in the post-colonial world of Pakistan: "For a woman who liked to speak precisely, she must have hated her sudden linguistic incompetence."

Suleri's father was often jailed for his newspaper articles criticizing the government and the family moved house many times. Suleri writes of being homeless or displaced. When she was in her mother's womb, she visited her father in jail. Her sense of continuity comes from living in the womb once inhabited by her older sister Ifat.

According to Ifat, "men live in homes, and women live in bodies." Suleri describes the pregnant Ifat, amidst her husband's family, "making a dwelling of her demeanor, a startling place in which to live."

Suleri's writing is body-grounded. She talks of breast-feeding, cooking, eating testicles and kidneys, and changing the bandages over Dadi's burnt breasts, abdomen and groin. The displaced Mustakori confesses she tried to drink from a Coke bottle with a rubber nipple.

The book's title refers to a loss of nurturance. To conserve resources, the government forbade selling meat on certain days, although the rich would horde meat in their refrigerators. Suleri dreams of a refrigerator truck carrying her dead mother, whom she tastes in her mouth.

The richness of Suleri's writing is itself nurturing. Suleri is fluent in Urdu, a language where one can eat grief. This poetry is part of Suleri's craft. She has created a book like the "magical reticules" Dadi sewed: "palm-sized cloth bags that would unravel into the precision of secret and more secret pockets."

Ifat and her daughter

cover photo by Fawzia Mustafa

Sci-fi offers wealth of diversity

IN OTHER WORLDS
by Melanie Conn

Sometimes when I think about which books to review for *Kinesis*, I'm struck by the diversity of science fiction. There are the thinly-disguised feminist warnings (or promises) about the future. And of course, there are those irresistible alien-contact stories with the embarrassing covers. Some authors also write SF that is poetic, experimental, mysterious. As usual, this month's choices represent the spectrum.

THE GATE TO WOMEN'S COUNTRY
by Sheri Tepper
New York: Bantam, 1988

A friend of mine enthusiastically recommended Sheri Tepper's book and I settled down to read it with anticipation. The setting is quickly established: Earth, 300 years in the future. Women and men live separately, the women in placid, walled, agricultural towns and the men in primitive, army garrisons. The women provide food to the garrisons, the men are ever-ready to protect "women's country." Regularly held carnivals provide the opportunity for reproduction, but otherwise contact between the sexes is minimal.

The children live with their mothers—except for the boys who at age five are ceremoniously delivered to their fathers at the local garrison. At 15, the boys decide if they will remain with the men or return through the Gate to women's country.

For the mother of a teenage son, this was a painful beginning to a bedtime read. And, in fact, as the plot unfolds, Tepper's book turns out to be a tragedy of the first order, much more than a melodramatic battle of the sexes. The story centres on Stavia who, as an adolescent in love with a garrison boy, struggles to come to terms with "the biggest chink in her female armour—misplaced nurturing."

As an elderly wanderer wisely explains:

> It is hard when your own female nature betrays you into believing the ones who abuse you need you or love you or have some natural right to do what they do.

And what of "male nature?" Although most of Tepper's cast of male characters are addicted to violence, their sensitivity squelched under the pressure of surviving in the brutal garrison atmosphere, there are several mysterious exceptions.

The book takes many surprising turns and the conclusion is a sobering one: the price of peace is often intolerably high.

SERPENT'S REACH
by C.J. Cherryh
New York: Daw, 1980

Cherryh is a prolific writer whose books range from space-age adventures to fantasy time-travel. She does not shy away from the bizarre and *Serpent's Reach* is a good example of her ability to present a believable alien race. (Well, believable to me and probably to other hard-core SF readers.)

The world constructed by Cherryh includes the human Kontrin, near-immortals who are involved in eternal galactic power struggles and the cloned *betas* and *azi's*, the result of sophisticated genetic manipulation. The alien *majat* complete the picture: giant, ant-like, hive creatures who participate in a telepathic collective relationship with their Queen.

The book focuses on Raen, the sole surviving member of her massacred Kontrin Family and her search for revenge. Raen's only hope for success is to enlist the *majat* to her side, a long-shot, even though Kontrin are bonded to certain hives.

What's interesting is that the alien *majata* are almost easier to relate to than the human Kontrins. Cherryh describes the hive-life with great care, providing details that fascinate, even though the strangeness never completely vanishes. The absolutely steadfast loyalty of the *majat* to the hive, for example, and their engrained ability to act in unison have both positive and negative aspects which are thoroughly explored.

The Kontrin, on the other hand, are individualistic, imperious and treat their cloned inferiors with utter disdain. Raen is typical of her class and for much of the book, I was more irritated by her heedless behaviour than engaged by her story.

The *azi* clones, programmed for servitude and an early death, emerge as the richest characters. The evolution of Raen's *azi* Jim into self-awareness is particularly moving. Cherryh herself was captivated by the *azi* who appear in much more developed form in her recent *Cyteen* trilogy.

MACHINE SEX
by Candace Jane Dorsey
Victoria: Porcepic Books, 1988

The publication of a new SF title by Porcepic Books is an event to celebrate. The Victoria-based company has published a number of SF books by Canadian authors, including *The Silent City* by Elisabeth Vonarburg and two short story anthologies, *Tesseracts 1* and *2*. Putting content aside, it's clear even from the look of the books that the publisher takes this series seriously. The paperback editions are securely bound, their covers glossy and evocative, the typeface chosen for its "gracefulness and legibility." A far cry from the usual pulp!

As it happens, the quality of writing in Porcepic's SF series is also superb and *Machine Sex* is no exception. Dorsey is an Edmonton writer whose short stories have appeared in reviews and anthologies, but this is her first collection. Dorsey has an effortless, gentle style that leads the reader straight into the deepest thoughts and feelings of her characters. So the action in her stories evolves naturally, even when there are unexpected twists.

One set of stories, "The Prairie Warriors" and "Rumours of War," has a theme strikingly similar to Sherri Tepper's. In Dorsey's version of gender incompatibility, the women are both warriors *and* providers, claiming young females from the smug villagers every six or seven years.

Like Tepper, Dorsey also explores the nature of violence, particularly its impact on women. The stories follow the experience of Sparrow, one of the young "prisoners," as she is helped to unravel the knots of internalized aggression created by years of abuse. Dorsey's stories sparkle with humour and affection, though, leaving the reader with a sense of women's strength and more than a hint of hope.

But you're waiting to hear about the title story It's about Angel, "a woman who builds computers like they have never been built before outside the human skull." And uses them to gain elegant revenge before she's twenty. The story is richly layered with witty puns and the sex will probably surprise.

More great news is that Dorsey is at work on another short story collection and an SF novel. For more information about Porcepic Books, write them at 4252 Commerce Circle, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 4M2.

LETTERS

Ads suggest child abuse

Kinesis:

To the Globe and Mail:

We object to your publishing of the very inappropriate ads for Versace perfume in recent issues of *West* and *Domino* magazines. Both ads are sexually exploitive and use a child for the purpose of erotic titillation to sell a product. One ad portrays an adult male, viewed from above the waist, embracing a very young child. At least, that's what the advertiser would say—perfectly innocent; men nurture children too, don't they? Except, this image is promoting perfume, the man and the child appear to be naked, the man's face is buried in the child's hair, his eyes closed, and his fingers are sensuously playing with the childs' hair.

The other ad is similarly repulsive with a woman included. In both ads the child's face is hidden and lowered, appearing to be a helpless participant.

Why are such images being used to sell perfume, a product inextricably linked to sexuality? Could it be that the creators of these ads are completely oblivious to the preponderance of sexual abuse of children by men? We think not. For years women have been objecting to portrayals of women and children which encourage us to be viewed as sexually submissive and to use those images to perpetuate a male view of sexuality that is exploitive and self-serving. This imagery goes hand in hand with the ugly reality of sexual exploitation of women and children by men.

Advertisers know this and so we can only conclude that they are using this knowledge and the awareness of the arousal it engenders to sell the product. It is grossly irresponsible.

Please do not send us any more of your special Friday magazines. We are subscribers to the newspaper only. Should it be too difficult to remove the offensive publications from our newspaper, we would like our subscription cancelled. We would appreciate a response to this letter within two weeks.

Judith Lynne
Janet Fraser
Vancouver, B.C.

Not a lousy area for kids

Kinesis:

I am writing about the "No Vacancies, No Kidding" article (October 1989). It is very important that such articles about the plight of women and their families seeking decent, affordable housing appear in *Kinesis* . However, I am upset about the reference to the Downtown Eastside community as a lousy area to raise kids and that women wouldn't do it if they had any other choice.

Like other neighbourhoods in the city, the choices for housing in the Downtown Eastside can be of poor quality. This has been identified as an ongoing problem. Many residents and community groups in the area have fought tirelessly over the years for more, better and improved affordable housing. The Downtown Eastside is one of the last areas in the city of Vancouver where a relatively abundant low rental housing stock exists. Consequently, a crisis will arise when the entire city faces a critical rental shortage. People who would previously never think of moving here, do.

This does not mean the community becomes an undesirable area or a poor choice for families. That is a stereotype of the Downtown Eastside that I would not expect to be reinforced by *Kinesis* .

Over five years ago I moved into this neighbourhood by choice. I am fortunate enough to live in a wonderful social housing development. Of course this makes a big difference in my personal life and how I am able to view my neighbourhood but that's the point, isn't it? Better housing can change all of our lives and neighbourhoods significantly. That's why residents and community groups in the Downtown Eastside have fought so hard for this kind of change.

They also continue to fight for a whole range of better services from improved funding for schools, parks, medical services, youth programs, crime prevention ... the list goes on and on.

The point is there is a very active and vibrant community here. I am proud to be part of it and would not hesitate to raise a family here. Families have always lived in this area and raised their children here. They will continue to do so. As a woman living in this community, I would appreciate it if you would be more careful to avoid the common stereotypical images of my community.

Sincerely,
Joanne Hochu
Vancouver, B.C.

Author Noreen Shanahan responds:

Presenting a stereotypically negative look at your community was certainly not my intention in writing the article, and I apologize for inadvertently doing so.

My specific criticism, backed by credible sources, was with the hotels in the Downtown Eastside, where women and children are facing insecure and very often unsafe housing. My intention, in writing the article, was to show the extent and severity of Vancouver's present housing crisis, which is forcing families out of their homes and into these single rooms. I doubt very many workers or residents in the area would leap to the defense of scurillous hotel landlords.

Finally, the warmth and supportive environment I found from women at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, as well as in the housing developments in the area, was tremendous and encouraging. I would applaud any efforts to expand this community.

BULLETIN BOARD

Read this

All listings must be received no later than the 18th of the month preceding publication. Listings are limited to 75 words and should include a contact name and telephone number for any clarification that may be required. Listings should be typed or neatly handwritten, double-spaced on 8 ½ by 11 paper. Listings will not be accepted over the telephone. Groups, organizations and individuals eligible for free space in the Bulletin Board must be, or have, non-profit objectives. Other free notices will be items of general public interest and will appear at the discretion of *Kinesis*.

Classified are $6 for the first 75 words or portion thereof, $2 for each additional 25 words or portion thereof. Deadline for classifieds is the 18th of the month preceding publication. *Kinesis* will not accept classifieds over the telephone. All classifieds must be prepaid.

For Bulletin Board submissions send copy to *Kinesis* Attn: Bulletin Board, 301-1720 Grant Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2Y6. For more information call 255-5499.

EVENTS

TENANTS RIGHTS FREE LAW CLASS

More than ever tenants need to know their legal rights. The peoples law school is holding a free seminar Tue. **Dec. 5**, 7-9 pm, West End Community Ctr. 870 Denman (at Haro) Please pre-register by calling 689-0571.

SOCIALIST FEMINISTS CONFERENCE

National Office of Radical Women (U.S.) is sponsoring a conference to chart a course for militant feminist organizing. **Feb. 17-20**, Santa Monica, CA. Wheelchair accessible. Call (415) 864-1278 or write, 523A Valencia, San Francisco, CA, 94110.

WOMEN IN VIEW

The second annual Festival of women's performances takes place **Jan. 29 - Feb. 4** in Vancouver. (See page 20 for details.) The Festival needs volunteers. To get involved, call Wendy at 875-6252

LEAF ANNOUNCES SPEAKERS BUREAU

West Coast LEAF provides volunteer speakers to address groups on equality rights for women. LEAF takes women's issues into the courts, sponsors test cases, educates and provides representation. For general info and speaker info call Susan Hayne, 684-8722.

JAMMIN' AT THE RAILWAY CLUB

Women's Jam Night is every **3rd Tues.** until Dec. 19. hosts are Vicki Gibson and the All Star Women's Jam Band. 579 Dunsmuir, upstairs. Be there or be square.

'TIS THE SEASON POT LUCK SUPPER

Hot Flashes Women's Cafe invites all to a seasonal supper **Dec. 15**, 7-11 pm, $2.00. 106 Superior St. in Victoria. You put on the ritz, we put on the coffee.

JULIE DUSCHENES AT THE VAG

Part of the BC Contemporary Artist Series, this exhibition of recent works brings together "industrial mountain" paintings and still lifes of international communication systems. **Dec. 18 - Feb. 12** Vancouver Art Gallery, 750 Hornby, call 682-5621.

EVENTS

EVELYN J. MIELKE ART SHOW

Moments in Movement, series of figure forms and abstract landscapes shimmering in hazy colours. **Nov. 27 - Jan. 7**, Van. East Cultural Centre Gallery, open 12 noon to 6 pm daily. For info call 254-9578.

MARTHA ROSLER

Martha Rosler will be in town as artist-in-residence at Video Inn, 1102 Homer, **Dec. 15 - Jan. 19**. Her work critiquing the culture covers every perspective. For schedule of events call 688-4336.

RANCH ROMANCE

A unique blend of country, western, swing and the blues, Four women recently voted top country act in the Pacific Northeast. **Sat. Dec. 16**, 8:30 pm at the W.I.S.E. Hall, 1882 Adanac St., Tix $8. Call 736-3022 for reservations.

SAM WEISS ON GUITAR

From Seattle, Sam Weiss and her 12-string slide guitar and great voice. Plus Vancouver's Nyetz. **Sat., Dec. 2**, 8:30 pm at the W.I.S.E. hall, 1882 Adanac St. Tix $8. Call 736-3022 for reservations.

WANNA GET INVOLVED

With Kinesis? We want to get involved with you, too. Come to the news group meeting and help plan our next issue. **Tues. Jan. 9** 1:30 pm at our office, #301-1720 Grant St. If you can't make this meeting, call Nancy at 255-5499 to arrange another time. No experience necessary.

VSW HOLIDAY GATHERING

Come and be social at an informal gathering to celebrate the season at 301-1720 Grant St., the Vancouver Status of Women and Kinesis office, on Thurs. **Dec. 14** from 4-7 pm. There will be food, music, fun—and Nora is bringing gingerbread women. The draw for the VSW Raffle will be held. You could win a dinner for two at Isadora's, music from Festival Records, free passes to Bloedel Conservatory, the Van Dusen Gardens and Stanley Park's Miniature Train, a basket of handmade soaps, lunch for two at the Alma St. Cafe, or gift certificates from the Van. Women's Bookstore and from Beckwoman's. All women and children are welcome.

BOYCOTT SHELL DEMO

Shell Oil is the largest multi-national operating in South Africa. Join an international boycott against Shell for their support of apartheid. Gather Wed. **Dec. 6**, 4:30 pm at 2103 W. Broadway (at Arbutus). For more info call 876-1465.

CHRISTINE LAVIN, SONGWRITER

From hilarious satire to sharply-etched portraits of contemporary life. Performing **Jan. 7**, 8 pm at Van. East Cultural Centre, 1895 Venables, Phone: 254-9578. Tickets $12 General.

WOMEN'S JAM NIGHT

Nite Moves magazine/Women in Music presents a Women's Jam Night at the Railway Club, 579 Dunsmuir upstairs, the 1st Tues. of every month

COMMUNITY HOUSING

The Tenants' Rights Coalition reminds you that a Community Housing meeting will be held the 1st Wed. of every month at 7:30 pm, #203-2250 Commercial Dr. For more info call 255-3099.

GROUPS

LA QUENA

Volunteers urgently needed by La Quena, a non-profit Coffee House at 1111 Commercial Dr. Only 4 hrs. a week time commitment. Please contact Erika at 251-6626 or 251-5580

LESBIAN DISCUSSION GROUP

Group meets regularly **2nd Sun.** of every month, 2-4 pm, and **last Mon.** of every month, 7:30-9:30 pm. For info contact Port Coquitlam Women's Centre, 941-6311.

GAZEBO CONNECTION

Lower Mainland lesbian organization offers monthly social events for members and guests, newsletter and special interest groups. Privacy is absolutely ensured. For info, leave a message at 734-8729, or write 382-810 W. Broadway, Vancouver V5Z 4C9.

NORTH SHORE WOMEN'S NETWORK

A social group for lesbians. Want to make friends? Come for coffee and a chat. Call Irene at 986-8907.

REDEYE WANTS YOU

The Sat. morning arts and public affairs show on Co-op Radio needs your help, whether it's once a week or once a month. For more info, call Jane at 255-8173

JOBS AND HOUSING

The Vancouver Status of Women has a large bulletin board outside their office at 301-1720 Grant St. with space for upcoming events, jobs and housing vacancies. Drop by with your notices or mail them to the above address (postal code V5L 2Y6).

WORKSHOPS

COLOUR WORKSHOP

Phyllis Serota a colourful, powerful Victoria painter (see story page 20) will be doing a series of 4 workshops on colour in the new year. Four hours each session for $25. a session. For more info contact Janet 253-7624.

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SUBMISSIONS

ARTISTS?

Ten slides plus artist's statement wanted from lesbians working in the area of sexual imagery, for workshop at lesbian conference in Australia, Jan. 1990 (soon). Workshop presented by Kiss and Tell (producers of Drawing the Line). Write Kiss & Tell C/O Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell St., Vancouver V6A 1H2.

BLACK LESBIAN ANTHOLOGY

Literary anthology for, by and about Black Lesbians seeks poetry (any form or length) and short fiction (25 pp. max.) Send unpublished submissions and queries with SASE to: Terri Jewell, 211 W. Saginaw—#2, Lansing, Michigan, USA 48933. Deadline **April 1990**

BLACK STAGE WOMEN

Call for nation-wide submissions from Black Women Playwrights. One Acts, Full Lengths, Dramatised Prose/Poetry to be included in anthology. New and already-produced scripts and works-in-progress will be considered. Send submissions to: "Black Stage Women," c/o Sister Vision Press, P.O. Box 217, Stn. E, Toronto, Ont. M6H 4E2

MOTHERS' WRITING

Wanted for radio show: diaries, journals, poetry, essays, stories, tips etc. Please send copy (not original) to: Dragu (Editor), Van. Main Post Office, Box 4618, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4A1

DISABLED WOMEN

Short stories, essays, poems, quotations, graphics and B&W photos are sought from women with physical (hidden or visible), mental or emotional disabilities. Object: a book which displays the courage and desires of women with disabilities. To send a contribution or request more info, write to Kelly at Disabled Women's Anthology, 15165-88th Ave., Surrey, B.C. V3S 2S6

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From previous page

SUBMISSIONS

EROTIC CONDITIONS

Lesbian feminist magazine seeks poetry, short fiction, novel excerpts, drama and esp. non-fiction prose for "Conditions: 17, The Erotic." Only writings previously unpublished in the U.S. will be considered. Photos and visual art also welcomed. Deadline: **Feb. 1, 1990**. Send submissions and SASE to: Conditions, Box 159046, Brooklyn, N.Y., USA 11215-9046. (716) 788-8654

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CAREER IN TRADES FOR YOU?

BCIT offering 10 week course (1 night per week) to familiarize women with trades and help with career choice. Starts Wed. **Jan. 10** at Burnaby Campus. Tuition $100. For info call 432-8233.

WELLS BOOK GROUP

Autobiographies, biographies, books by and about women. Adams, Barrett-Browning, Brontes, Carr, Dinesen, Davis, Farraro, Earhart, Freidan, Gonne, Greene, Hickok, Joplin, Laurence, Mandela, Millett, Roosevelt, Rhys, Roy, Sackville-West, Stein, Suyin, Steineim, Wilson, Wolfe ... are just a few of the books for sale. We also sell Arctic and Sea materials. To order write: Diane Wells, The Wells Book Group, 958 Page Ave., Victoria, B.C. V9B 2M6. Women Booksellers

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ACCOMMODATION SOUGHT

Woman, 29, non-smoker, seeks accommodation in West End (would move elsewhere with right opportunity). Employed, a part-time student, quiet and accustomed to living with others. Would like a friendly, woman-oriented environment where I can really feel at home. I'm a responsible, easy-going roommate, respectful of privacy and looking for same. Hope we don't just co-exist, but genuinely like each other! **Dec. or Jan.** Rent to $400. Call 685-7662.

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Judy's pies on the drive. Fresh baked, deep dish apple pie delivered to your door for just $7.00. (Commercial Drive Area) Leave a message day or evening. 255-3352.

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Our All Women's Caribbean Beachfront Guesthouse awaits you. Beautiful, LF owned Spanish style villa on long, secluded beach in the Dominican Republic. Small tropical gardens, oceanside pool, spacious comfortable common areas with large balconies and magnificent ocean view. Private, large, airy guestrooms, sumptuous meals and drinks, relaxing massages and healing crystal readings. Room rates: $300 single; $400 double per week. For reservations call our Toronto friend, Suzi, at (416) 462-0046, 9 am to 10 pm.

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Dreaming of summer sun in the dreary winter rain? I'm taking reservations now for July/August holidays on Saltspring Island. Enjoy a peaceful getaway in a self-contained women's guest cabin with fully equipped kitchen and bathroom, close to lakes, hiking trails and the sea. $35 single, $50 double. Special rates by week or month. Write Gillian Smith, C85, King Rd., RR1, Fulford Harbour, B.C., V0S 1C0 or call (604) 653-9475.

PEACEFUL RETREAT

Bed and Breakfast located on Salt Spring Island. Close to Fulford Harbour and Ruckle Park. Cozy rooms with private entrances. A comfortable setting for women in a feminist home. Phone Maureen at 653-4345 for info and reservations.

OFFICE CLEANING JOB

Non-Profit Society seeking person willing to do general office cleaning. 20 hrs./mth. $5.00/hr. - working days negotiable. Please call 732-4611 for further information.

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GOLDEN THREADS

A contact publication for lesbians over 50 and women who love older women. Canada and U.S. Confidential, warm, reliable. For free info send self-addressed envelope (U.S. residents please stamp it). Sample copy mailed discreetly. $5 (U.S.) *Golden Threads*, PO Box 3177, Burlington VT, 05401.

READ LESBIANEWS:

Monthly events, information, ideas from Victoria's lesbian feminist community. Sample issue/back issues $2 each. Yearly subscription (mailed in plain lavender wrapper) $15 in '89, $18 in '90. Cheques to Debby Gregory, LesbiaNews, PO Box 5339, Station B, Victoria, BC, V8R 6S4.

EMILY'S PLACE HOT FLASH!

Emily's on the move! The land and cabins that the Emily's Place Society has focussed its energy on for the last five years has been listed for sale. However, until the land is sold the society will continue to operate the retreat, and we invite you to use and enjoy it. Members of the board look forward to your continued support as Emily explores other places, other possibilities for women's empowerment.

LAND AND CABINS FOR SALE

Secluded Vancouver Island property, 10.2 acres of sweet rolling valley land on French Creek in Coombs. Southern exposure, with two well-built, fully equipped cabins, outbuildings, and bath house. Alternate systems, 500 gallon/day water license, power available. Asking $116,500. Call Cindy or Caitlin at (604) 248-5410.

CHARLES SQUARE CO-OP

Charles Square, a 36 unit housing co-op in East Van has an open waiting list for 1, 2, and 3 BR units. Rents are $460, $570 and $705 with $1,000 share purchase (financing can be arranged). Near park and community centre; meetings run by consensus. To get on waiting list, send SASE to Membership Ctee., 1555 Charles St., Van. V5L 2T2

WOMEN'S DROP-IN BASKETBALL

Runs from **Sept. 16-Dec. 9** (except Nov. 11) Saturdays, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm, at Britannia Gym B, (opposite the parking lot), 1661 Napier St. Emphasis on participation and fun. Cost for ten sessions $10., or $2 per drop-in visit. For further info call Britannia, 253-4391 or Esther, 255-6554.

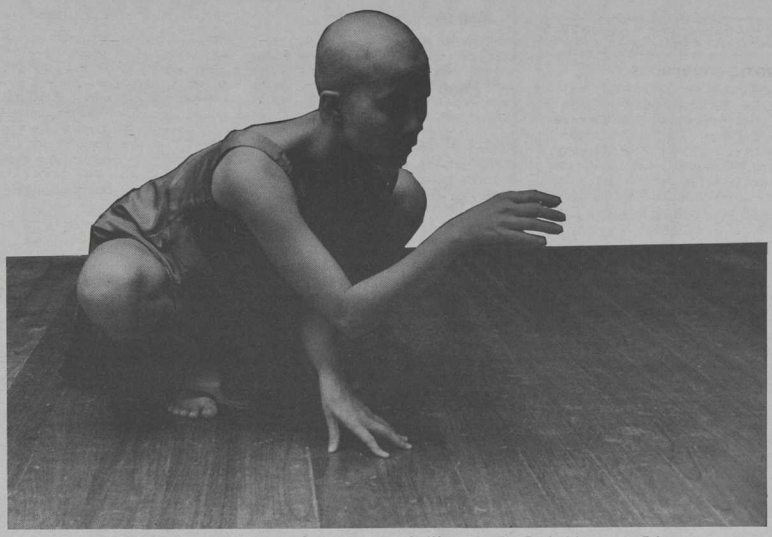

photo courtesy Women in View

Lee Su-Feh is featured in the dance performance *Ground Bound* at the Women in View Festival January 29-February 4, 1990. See page 20 for details.

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RECOLLECTING OUR LIVES:

Women's Experience of Childhood Sexual Abuse, by the Women's Research Centre. *Recollecting Our Lives* is a book about the challenges women and children face in breaking free from the consequences of childhood sexual abuse. Based on first person accounts of adult survivors and mothers of children who have been sexually abused, the book describes the circumstances and consequences of child sexual abuse, the steps women and children take in stopping the abuse and living beyond it, and the interconnections among issues of violence against women.

Recollecting Our Lives is intended for adult survivors and mothers of sexually abused children, as well as for support groups, counsellors, social service agencies and others working with survivors and their families. 272 pages, $5\frac{1}{2}$" x $8\frac{1}{2}$", $14.95 paper.

Available at your local bookstore, or for direct ordering information contact: PRESS GANG PUBLISHERS 603 Powell Street Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1H2 (604) 253-2537.

Gathering strength Gaining power:

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***January 31*: Out of Sight Out of Mind No Longer**
Native women speak on self-determination.
Rosalie Tizya, Florence Hackett, Gloria Nicholson, Amanda White, Elaine Herbert.

•

***February 7*: Making Ends Meet: the 90's**
Economic survival strategies for the next decade.
A short play on domestic workers by the Phillipine Women's Centre; speakers Marjorie Cohen, and Melanie Conn

•

***February 14*: New Ideas for a New Decade**
A look at feminism and political change from the perspective of women of colour who were born in Canada but whose parents/grandparents weren't

•

***February 28*: New Reproductive Technologies**
In our best interests? A critical feminist exploration of what the application of reproductive and genetic engineering means for women in the future, as well as women here and now.

•

For further information phone: 255-5511

Best Wishes & Seasonal Solidarity from the folks at Eastside DataGraphics

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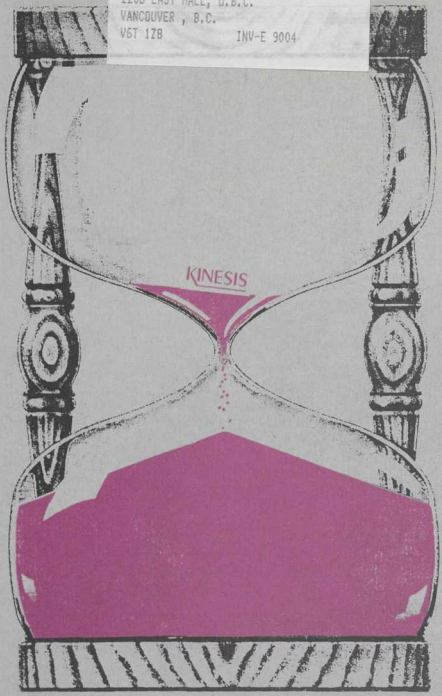

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