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ANOTHER INSTALLMENT IN THE TRUE-LIFE SAGA:

The RETURN of TRUDEAU

The scene: a luxury hotel in downtown Vancouver. The doors open into a convention meeting room, its chairs marching from wall to wall in neat, ordered rows facing a gold covered table. Sixty women enter. They take away the table, move the chairs into a circle and sit down, leaving one seat vacant. Men jam the doorway, watching as the women begin to sing militant protest songs. Pierre Elliot Trudeau pushes his way through the crowd in the doorway, an apache scarf around his neck, and takes the empty chair in the circle. . .

It all began that afternoon, Sunday June 14. The telephone rang about 1pm during the regular Pedestal meeting at the Women's Caucus office. A voice said (approximately) "I'm with the Prime Minister's office and we were talking about you on the plane. We thought *a representative group of your members*, say six or eight, should meet with the Prime Minister". . .!!!

In a later conversation, when told that twenty or more women would be attending, the voice said "Well, could you please select half a dozen spokesmen with one main spokesman who could be introduced to the Prime Minister and whom we could refer to by name."

The voice suggested three alternative times for the meeting: late Sunday evening, early Monday morning or Monday afternoon before Trudeau caught his plane. Since both Monday times excluded working women, the Sunday time was fixed on by a frantic series of phone consultations between the women at the office and those active women who happened to be home Sunday afternoon. Even though the short notice presented great difficulties in contacting people and making plans, we suggested a meeting at 9pm that evening. However, *Trudeau's dinner engagements made it more convenient* for him to meet with us at 10:30 instead. (The irony of this is the sympathy P.E.T. got in the Vancouver press because VWC was being mean to him at such a late hour in the night.)

The voice, by the way, belonged to Vic Chapman, former football hero, now using his talents as Trudeau's bodyguard.

A meeting hastily called for 7pm that evening drew about 40 women to plan strategy for the confrontation with Trudeau.

We realized we had several problems to deal with. We understood at least some of the reasons why Trudeau called the meeting. It was obviously partly due to the pressure we had managed to exert in Ottawa, where our militant actions had embarrassed the government. Without any formal invitation, we had spoken to the Prime Minister two weeks earlier at a press conference in Vancouver, and he had avoided the issues. Combined with the refusal of the federal government to meet at all with the women who had travelled across the country to present our case, Trudeau probably felt that these incidents had undermined his image as "a man of the people". The major question of his motivation still remained: was he merely meeting with us to refurbish his public image and to win votes, or was he responding sincerely to the real need of Canadian women?

We knew we had to deal with his ability to manipulate groups, to isolate individuals and charm them with the force of his personality and to avoid discussion of real issues by going off on tangents: taking one word out of context and going on at great length about something which is essentially irrelevant.

We were somewhat surprised that he would attempt to use masculine charm against the women's liberation movement. But clearly this was one object of the request that we appoint one main spokesman, whom Trudeau could address by name. (Another result of this tactic would have been a TV image of a warm Trudeau relating on a human level to the militants in women's liberation.) We didn't want to single out one or two women who would individually relate to the Prime Minister. All of us were representatives; all of us were involved; all of us *were angry*. We had to force Trudeau to deal with us as a movement, and we wanted to *try* to force him to deal with issues, not personalities.

We knew we had to control the meeting. We had to control the physical structure, and the direction of the discussion. We wanted to make it possible for all of us to participate actively in the meeting without having chaos. To do this, we decided we needed three chairwomen: one to introduce the meeting and its purpose; one to read the brief that the government refused to hear in Ottawa; and one to chair the discussion. We decided to structure the discussion around the brief, with a lead-off speaker on each of the three main points, and to conclude the discussion on each point before going on to the next.

We also decided: to try to be specific, to avoid rhetorical slogans, and to insist that Trudeau stick to the point.

After PET took his seat, the meeting began according to plan with the first chairwoman stating that he was there to answer our questions. The brief was presented demanding:

- repeal of all existing abortion laws and the pardoning of anyone presently charged under these laws.
- free, safe, effective birth control for all women.
- construction of women's community-controlled clinics to provide free birth control, free abortion on demand, and free pre- and post-natal care.

These points were then discussed in order.

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H.E.U.'s FOR WOMEN?

The activities of the Women's Caucus in the area of equal pay for equal work and the repeal of the abortion laws showed their effect at the convention of the Hospital Employees Union, Local 180, held in June at the Royal Towers Hotel, New Westminster. The H.E.U. represents 8500 workers from over seventy B.C. hospitals.

At the Vancouver General Hospital unit of the Hospital Emplcyees Union, Andrianne Mundreon and I (a member of Women's Caucus) had run against four men for the office of Trustee basing our campaign on "equal pay for equal work".

Before these elections, the Women's Caucus helped us by distributing leaflets and issues of the Pedestal. We did not win, but got many votes. Because the program of Women's Caucus has been so oriented towards the abortion campaign, little energy was left to pursue the problems in the area of working women. But even the small amount of action done by Women's Caucus around "equal pay for equal work" was effective in that, at the convention, the 160 delegates unanimously passed an amendment to the constitution stating that the H.E.U. supports "equality of treatment of the sexes in hospital employment in regards to wages and job opportunities."

This constitutional amendment could remain only a paper amendment unless there is action taken to make it effective.

In hospitals, especially at the Vancouver General Hospital, it is very difficult to get a group of women together to work effectively in the struggle for equal pay because of the large turnover of staff. Also, because of the dual role women workers are forced to take as both workers, and housewives and mothers, it is difficult for them to get the evening off from their home work and get baby sitters so that they can attend meetings. Women are *generally discouraged* from taking an active role in the union by their husbands, friends and sometimes even by the union itself. Eighty per cent of the hospital workers in the H.E.U. are women — on the provincial executive only 3 positions of the 14 are filled by women.

The Women's Caucus could help us to bring women workers together to begin to make the union more effective in working towards the needs of its women members (who are in the majority) such as day care, equal pay, equal job opportunities.

By bringing women together, around their common problems as working women, we can begin to break down the phoney divisions (i.e., classifications, job categories) the employers impose upon us.

The abortion campaign has had a wide ranging effect. At the convention of the H.E.U., the delegates passed a resolution stating that "the H.E.U. local 180 support any responsible campaign to have the present federal laws governing abortion *modified and take whatever steps are necessary in* order to remove this form of discrimination against women which contributes to the source of psychological, economic and social problems, to make it a private matter between the patient and her doctor."

Although the resolution passed was not as good as the one originally proposed, many delegates told Women's Caucus members that they saw it as a declaration of support for our abortion campaign.

By BOUK ELZINGA

WOMEN in HISTORY

Isabella Hall was born in Lindsay, Ontario in 1878, and spent much of her childhood in Brandon. Her life spanned athe development of the Canadian West, and the birth of the Canadian labor movement. Bella Hall first became involved in social issues in 1905. In Brandon and Winnipeg, she was able to express her humanitarianism by helping newly arrived immigrants to find jobs, homes, and a place in their new country.

It was her experiences in social relief work in Winnipeg that first convinced her that poverty was a consequence of social conditions, and not the fault of the actual victims. She became convinced also that there had to be a better method of dealing with social ills than just the random trial-and-error practices of the churches and the Salvation Army.

In Montreal, a group of women graduates of McGill were attempting to deal with these problems. They instituted the University Settlement of Montreal, to provide a downtown drop-in centre for single, working women. It was based on Jane Addams' Hull House, and adopted her theories that the working class had a right to its own cultural activities, and that the personnel who would work with working class people would have to get fully involved, living where they lived, and in a style not much different from the people in the neighborhood. The Montreal group provided the initial impetus but lacked direction; Bella Hall was invited to become the director. Putting in an 18 hour day, Bella was able to co-ordinate the myriad activities of the Settlement. And as day after day she was called upon to face up to the problems and humiliations of poverty, of hand-outs and second-hand clothes, she began increasingly to dream of solutions, not bandages — a way out of poverty and its distress, a way out for all.

She was beginning to understand that the answer for poverty could not be an individual one, but that it was essentially a social one. As this realization grew, so did differences with the University Settlement, for there the major orientation was one of charitable helpfulness, which could not lead to any real solutions. Bella's search for a deeper understanding took her to the Rand School in New York in 1919. In the fierceness of the debates between workers and intellectuals, between Social Democrats and Communists, Bella's own political views were sharpened. She went back to Montreal in 1920 with a firm conviction that the way people related to each other in their jobs, in the production of goods and services, in the economic system, was the key to understanding and changing social relations and furthering the lot of humanity.

With Annie Buller and other labor leaders, she organized the Montreal Labor College in the spring of 1920. The rest of her life was spent always in trying to advance the union movement, which for her was the movement for socialism.

Bella Hall Gauld

The Montreal Labor College drew in trade unionists, and intellectuals who identified themselves with the new movement. Study courses covered Marxist economic theory, labor history, current events, and related topics. Bella was the main worker, organizer, and full-time co-ordinator. She raised funds, spoke to other groups about the college, taught courses herself on trade unionism, and helped arriving immigrant workers as a "sideline"!

After the First World War and the October Revolution in Russia, a counter-revolutionary drive began in the West. As the 14-nation military intervention in Russia failed to crush the revolution, there was an increasing concern on the part of the capitalist countries involved (including Britain, France, the U.S. and Canada) to consolidate their position vis-a-vis the workers at home. There were vicious attacks on the organizing attempts of labor in this country and the U.S.

The witch-hunts had the desired effect. They split the working class movement into two: the revolutionary movement and a subdued union movement which accepted the fundamental assumptions of capitalist society. The Montreal Labor College felt this pressure, and with a badly divided leadership, began to fade away. Bella, with the majority in the College, joined the Communist Party of Canada when it was organized in 1922.

In 1925, Bella married Alex Gauld, a fellow Communist Party member, and her life took on many of the more traditional female roles. Her work became much more centred around her home — keeping 'open house', helping people in immediate need, and raising funds for the Children's Camps, the Young Pioneers, and, during the 1930's, organizing soup-lines for the unemployed. Her major political undertaking during this period was the campaign to repeal Section 98 of the Criminal Code, which outlawed radical trade unionism and independent labor political activity, strikes, and mass demonstrations. In 1935 the law was repealed, and Bella shared in that victory.

In all Bella's political work, her most significant efforts were probably centred around the Montreal Labor College. The practical functioning of the College, and the direction of it, owed much to the women who devoted their entire energies to it, as workers, teachers and fund-raisers. Some of those at the Labor College referred to the committee as the "matriarchy".

It is clear from the account of Bella's life, from what was *not* said as much as from what was, that the fundamental contradictions in trying to be an independent political person and a woman caught Bella up, and that her capacity to do independent political work was greatly reduced after her marriage. It is not clear whether Bella was aware of this change in her relation to politics, and how she and her husband tried to deal with it, and whether the limited political role she played after 1925 was their compromise in a situation where no solution is possible. PAT HOFFER

MORE TRUDEAU

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However, during the discussion it was, as we had feared, impossible to get concrete answers from Trudeau or to keep him to the point. When asked why the government would not act to remove abortion from the Criminal Code, he tried the whole series of dodges, including passing the buck to the doctors. We pointed out that under his law, not only are doctors being *charged* for giving abortions, but also that there was an underlying assumption in the law that it was not a woman's right to have an abortion — that, unlike any other medical procedure, an abortion presently must be sanctioned by a committee, and involves enough red tape to prevent the overwhelming majority of Canadian women from obtaining one.

Cornered, he then switched to another dodge — "public morality". That was the "real" source of the problem, he said. We stated that abortion was not a question of "public morality" but rather of individual choice, the right of every woman to decide whether or not she will terminate a pregnancy. And that women die every year trying to exercise this right because the law forces them to obtain unsafe, illegal abortions. Showing the hypocrisy of his position, we added that neither "public morality" nor his law prevents rich women from getting abortions since they have the money to fly to New York, Britain and so on or pay $300 to $1000 for safe, illegal ones here in Canada.

Trudeau admitted this last point, and saw nothing contradictory or unjust about it. He said, "You are saying that the law doesn't fall equally on the poor and on the rich. But this is true — it doesn't apply only to abortion laws." So much for Mr. Trudeau's 'Just Society'!

Finally, Trudeau agreed to introduce a repeal bill into the House of Commons "if the Opposition would agree to pass it in one day." When pressed, however, he had to admit that the repeal of such murderous laws was important enough to warrant more than one day of debate — though this point was never picked up in the press, and Trudeau has subsequently shown no signs that he takes his responsibility to the Canadian women seriously.

We then moved on to birth control and the drug companies, demanding to know why the Canadian government did no independent research into the side-effects of the Pill, and allowed the vital drug industry to be based on profit, rather than on human needs. We demanded that the Food and Drug Directorate be immediately allotted funds to do such research, and to research alternative safe effective means of birth control. We also demanded that he make public all hitherto suppressed information on the side-effects of the Pill. To this latter point, Trudeau agreed to act — but once again, Ottawa has done nothing. When asked why he would not nationalize the drug industry, all he could say was a weak 'I don't know'.

As for our demands that women's clinics be established, all that Trudeau could do was to point to speeches he has made about the problems of women in Canada, and promise to continue making speeches on the subject. Again no concrete answer. His 'concern' obviously is not great enough for him to do anything to alleviate those problems.

One fact that rapidly emerged from the meeting with Trudeau was that he and the federal government are totally unprincipled in their efforts to retain their position of power. For example, at one point Trudeau agreed that it was a woman's right to have an abortion, and yet he refuses to act to establish this right because, by his own admission, he is afraid that he would, as a result, not be re-elected. All his speeches about 'concern' suddenly begin to ring hollow in light of this ruthless electioneering. We suggested that "if he were a man of justice, he would act on justice" and not on an unprincipled drive to win the next election.

continued on page three

ALL POWER TO THE CHILDREN!

Lori Rotenberg, Anna Ingre

In order to persuade the government (and society at large) that universal day care is as necessary to the freedom of women (and men in this case) as abortion on demand, non-discrimination in work opportunities and pay etc. many changes will have to be made in the attitudes and prejudices of people regarding the "proper place of women in our society". We have lived for hundreds of years under the assumption that a woman's place is in the home, that a woman's only role is to carry and care for children. Translated into political terms, this means that it has been the function of women to maintain the state in respect to population needs (some have called it the supply of cannon-fodder) and in respect to the family unit (today the nuclear family).

Women have not generally been allowed to participate directly in the social, economic, and political direction of the state. Political suffrage has been acquired only recently. Women are not trained, from infancy, as are men, that it is not only their right and privilege to participate actively in political decisions, but that it is also their duty as members of the state to contribute to the decision-making of the state.

Universal day care assumes several fundamental concepts. It assumes that the society has some interest in the child, that the producing of children is of importance to society, and that the government, therefore, has some responsibility to the child. It assumes that every child has the right to the benefits of the society (regardless of the parents' condition), to a rich childhood, to competent care. Universal day care assumes (just as universal schooling) that the full responsibility for the upbringing of the child cannot be *forced* onto the parents. That in most cases the parents, as individuals, are unable to provide for all the needs of a child.

Universal day care, on a group basis, assumes that the model of the nuclear family is not necessarily the only model of interpersonal relationships to which the child should be exposed. It supposes that group experiences and a sense of belonging to a larger community are not incompatible with the proper upbringing of children; that biological relationships are not the only truly profound relationships. It does *not* mean that parent-child relationships should be denied or lessened, but that the child has the right to other adult-child relationships as well.

For mothers, universal day care means that they have a right to participate in the economic and political growth of the society, that they have the same right as men to work and contribute to society, that the care of children is not their only role.

Ideally, both men and women would participate in the decisions affecting their children and not completely delegate all authority concerning environment and content to a few impersonal administrators. Schools, today, have become largely *impersonal and unrelated* to the communities in which they exist and from which they draw children. If care were taken and proper planning done day care centres could be set up and operated without these difficulties arising.

On a practical and immediate level it is imperative that the government be forced to provide adequate day care facilities for the families who require them. There are far too many unlicensed places, especially of the family day care variety, which provide inadequate and often damaging (physically as well as emotionally) environments. Too many parents, especially single parents, face the choice of working and placing their child in unsuitable surroundings, or going on welfare. In theory, the government offers day care subsidies on a needs basis. The government does not advertise this and it is unknown to a large number of parents who desperately need it. Consult your friendly social worker or phone Women's Caucus at 684-0523 or Unemployed Citizens Welfare Improvement Council at 731-0131. The only catch is that the government will subsidized only licensed day care and there are not sufficient places to meet the need, although, because they are not advertised, there are some vacancies.

Following is a tentative outline for the goals and political direction of a campaign to get adequate day care facilities.

Day care is the right of every child!

There are now only 22 group day care centres in Vancouver propoer. They offer 664 places.

In 1966 the estimated need was 1132 places. The city has grown since then. Even at that time there was less than half the number of places needed.

* * *

There should be free adequate day care facilities for all who want them.

Up until now, the government has shown gross irresponsibility in meeting the need for day care.

The government must change its priorities and reallocate funds to day care instead of spending money on less important areas like MacMillan Bloedel and B.C. Hydro.

In failing to provide adequate day care facilities the government has refused to recognize the rights of women to fulfill roles other than that of wife and mother.

* * *

We propose two models for group day care centres:

1. Co-operative day care centres. These require participation by both parents in both policy matters and actual care of the child. Government regulations do not provide for co-operative day care centres.
2. Standardized government controlled day care centres responsible to a community controlled board at the municipal level.

At present the Community Care Facilities Board, which has powers of licensing, inspection and revision of policy, is made up of seven appointed civil servants. These are: three members of the Department of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement; three members of the Department of Health Services and Hospital Insurance; one member of the Department of Education. continued page 14

If you are interested in working with a group attempting to obtain adequate day care facilities, please phone Women's Caucus at 684-0523 or U.C.W.I.C. at 731-0131 for further information.

NEXT MEETING: Tues., July 21, 7:30, Caucus office.

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Taken as a whole, the encounter was a devastating expose of the gross irresponsibility and dishonesty of the federal government and its chief spokesman, Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

Our pre-confrontation strategy paid off, insofar as he was *not* able to single out women. With a few exceptions, we did keep together and help each other, and our structure enabled many of the women there to speak out.

In retrospect, we know now that statistics on the number of women murdered each year by the abortion laws will not move Trudeau, nor will meetings in the Bayshore Inn. We know too that he had no intention of doing anything about abortion; the June 26 deadline has been and gone, and Trudeau did nothing.

The meeting worked to Trudeau's advantage, in that he identified himself (with the help of his friends in the press) as being concerned with human problems. However, it was to our advantage for a number of important reasons: first, it pointed up the power of the women's liberation movement as a group with whom the Prime Minister asks to meet; second, it gained publicity for our movement and for an important social issue; and third, it illustrated clearly the value and necessity of militant action.

PEDESTAL EDITORIAL ← DISSENT

Discussion and criticism of the Pedestal has focussed on two key and interconnected areas: (1) the nature and purpose of the paper and (2) the manner in which it is written, edited and produced. At the conference and at the general meeting immediately following, a position paper written by some of the Pedestal workers served as a starting point for a full analysis of the newspaper by Women's Caucus as a whole. It is now possible to develop a statement on where the Pedestal goes from here.

(1) It seems easiest to begin by establishing what Women's Caucus does *not* want the Pedestal to be. We do not want it to be a fact sheet about the Caucus activities in Vancouver, which would be of minimal interest to those women who have participated in those activities, to women involved in women's liberation outside Vancouver, and to new women everywhere. We do not want it to be a hodge-podge of unrelated items and stories tossed together without any frame of reference. We do not want it to be composed of articles of such a general nature that they fail to relate to our experiences and knowledge. We do not want it to be so tightly bound by any one editorial line that it fails to represent the wide range of ideas of the Caucus itself. We do not want it to deal only with certain aspects of women's liberation at the expense of others, nor do we want it to adopt an equal time-equal space doctrine to such an extent that the paper fails to reflect the direction and priorities of the Caucus. Obviously, all of these negative criticisms arise from errors and failures of the newspaper in the past; how to overcome them?

The key to our view of the Pedestal is the word "represent". The movement for women's liberation is growing, learning, developing, changing, making mistakes and gaining knowledge from them, achieving successes and gaining strength from them. It is constantly discovering and declaring itself more fully. It is a process – quite literally a movement – not a static thing. The Pedestal must represent this process, this movement.

In an article about a specific action we should not simply state what we did where and when. We should say why we took the action, state its aims, to what extent they were achieved, what we did right and wrong in the process, and what we learned. In an article on a large subject or issue, we must not limit ourselves to statements of such broad application as to be clichés, but relate the general theory to specific situations or events of current importance to us in order to increase our understanding of them. As we learn through our actions, discussions, disagreements, meetings, organizing, planning, campaigning – in short all our activities – so we should learn through the representation of these activities in the Pedestal.

Since the movement for women's liberation is going forward in many different areas, the newspaper must accurately represent this development by dealing with all these areas in the manner just described. It must also act as a connecting agent, to relate the different areas to one another and to the movement as a whole, place specific actions and programs in perspective, and help us to see where in the long run we are heading.

We believe that an orientation of this sort towards our newspaper will enable us to increase its value for ourselves and for women new to the movement. The problem of how best to achieve this orientation leads on to point (2).

(2) In order that the Pedestal may truly represent the membership of Women's Caucus, it is essential that more women involve themselves in all stages of the preparation of the paper. Pedestal meetings, each Sunday morning at 11, are open to everyone; arrangements are being made to co-ordinate the technical side of preparing the paper so that as many women as possible can learn the skills involved; and our new headquarters downtown will have space for a permanent Pedestal area where it will be convenient for many women to work on our paper. The Pedestal is not to be considered as somehow separate from Women's Caucus or each individual woman in the Caucus. It is an integral and organic part, and must be recognized as such by all of us. Full discussion and criticism of the Pedestal, at our general meetings and in various work areas, is also of very great importance if the newspaper is to fulfill its role successfully.

The proposed editorial board, which was approved in principle at our last general meeting, is another means of making the paper more representative. To edit means essentially to make choices – this story is better than that, this paragraph is important but that one can be cut, this article belongs on page one with a picture and that one on page nine in six-point type. Every page of every newspaper is a reflection of choices that some person or some people made. We believe that an editorial board, representative of the general membership and responsible to it, would help to ensure that the paper develops along the lines indicated under (1).

BOARDS
MAKE WALLS
AND
WALLS CONFINE
AND THAT'S
WHY I
WILL NOT
BE GLAD
WHEN
WOMEN'S LIB.
BECOMES ENCLOSED
WITHIN
A BOARD
OF EDITORS

By Nikki Bergseth

STAFF LIST

THE PEDESTAL is published monthly by Vancouver Women's Caucus, 511 Carrall St., Vancouver. It is typeset by voluntary labor, printed by union labor.

This issue was produced by the following sisters: P. Hoffer, J. Rands, D. Schrenk, C. Flood, E. Law, A. Ingre, N. Bergseth, B. Etzinga, B. Huxley, B. Gibbs, D. Liberson, A. Lebowitz, L. Rotenberg, J. Stoddard, M. Rudd, M. Benston, M. Trew, J. Campana, C. Stone, D. Weppler, R. Smythe, K. Curtin.

Hi. . .

Thought you might be interested in this piece of direct information from the Quebec Voice of Women's bulletin on this particular subject. [the Morgentaler trial – see article page 12].

Do hope that last weekend's conference finally concluded with the constructive analysis and work projects for the future that it was slated for, as announced at the beginning. . .

I also hope that, whatever the philosophical differences expressed, that some way was found to *work* together on the various projects, whether abortion clinic, day nursery, strike or welfare demonstrations, rather than *compete*, or worse still *weaken* the overall efforts.

Maybe one day set aside, per week or per month or per anything, to let off all the steam from the various groupings, would make it possible to come to grips on the work that needs to be done, and perhaps lessen the personal hostilities that build up, to everyone's shame. . .

And this time, I *do not* apologize for pointing to the strongest weapon of all in the arsenal of the only people who have so far succeeded in putting the most serious dents in the U.S. War Machine – and that is knowing how to set aside personal differences and beliefs in order to join together to knock off the most urgent danger *first*, namely to end the war and throw out the Americans. Nothing wrong, that I can see, with that way of working. . .

To join forces with *everyone* who agrees in principle with abolition of Section 237 (the abortion law), and win *that* victory would be about the most concrete step towards gaining the revolution that any woman can do in Canada today – considering how impossible that was considered just a few short years ago – And then on to more revolutionary gains. Right?

As you can see from the enclosed, there is much more to be done in women's work here in Quebec (where they only got the provincial vote in 1946) but with the lifting of the anti-demonstration law which has been on the City books since last November and now ruled unconstitutional by the Federal courts, there should be even more happening.

I am on my way to the lion's den (Babylon-USA) to make my contribution, hopefully, in areas not yet reached. See you again in September.

All the best in all efforts.

Right on!

Claire Culhane

Dear Madam:

After reading about the abortion protest and subsequent meeting with the Prime Minister, I knew I had to join Women's Caucus and work alongside those women.

The phone book showed no listing, so I called Information. The operator couldn't find a listing either. Uncertain that I had the right name, I checked with the Vancouver Sun. One of the editorial desks suggested I try their Press Library Information. Yes, they had a file on the group but, sorry, no address, phone number or names of officers.

Success this time with Information. Women's Caucus, 307 W. Broadway, 879-9722. A little excited, I dialed the number -- no answer. Tried again, waited -- still no answer.

That night, the next day, AND the day after -- no answer. I ignored that female feeling of helplessness, and doggedly continued to dial without response. Finally, what the hell, I quit!

Two weeks later I decided on another tactic. There could be someone at Simon Fraser University who might know something, or someone.

I got the same number!

"Can you give me another phone number?" I pleaded.

She obliged, and, again a little excited, I dialed the new number. You guessed it – no answer. Off and on, I dialed. No answer.

Four days later, Thursday, just for kicks, I called the Women's Caucus number again. Suddenly a female voice was on the other end. In my confusion, I recall asking vaguely about a meeting I could attend. The voice informed me steadily of a convention to be held on the weekend; however, an abortion workshop was scheduled that evening at 8:00. Did I have the address?

Quarter to eight found me at the Caucus office. No other women, the door was locked. Too early yet, I sat on the steps and waited. And waited. AND waited. 8:30 came but the women didn't.

With the stubborn determination of a frustrated feminist, that following Monday, I tried again. Was told of a meeting that night, same time, same place. I was there, of course.

Now two weeks old in Women's Caucus, could I make a suggestion or two? A: Caucus: Please make yourselves more available. B: Newcomers: Keep trying, it's worth it.

Mrs. Joan Stoddard

NOTE: New Caucus Phone No. – 684-0523

women are having an impact on the n.d.p.

By Diane Schrenk
(Member of Women's Caucus and ran on the Waffle slate as a women's liberationist in the last B.C. N.D.P. Convention)

The NDP is finding it necessary to rise to the challenge which women are presenting, more and more strongly, across the country.

Women members of the NDP presented their paper, "An Introduction to NDP Women's Liberation," to the provincial convention held on June 5-6-7 in Chilliwack. The paper was a call to NDP women to come together to make a concerted and collective effort to solve their problems as women within and without the party, by motivating the party to embrace the cause of women and to be their political voice, and by working directly in the community on issues affecting women. The last issue of the Pedestal printed this statement in full. Pedestal sales of 110 at the convention indicated the strong interest in women's liberation; about 70 women's liberation buttons were also sold, and a great number of people stopped at the literature table to ask questions and talk.

The biggest impact the women at the convention had was in the passing of a resolution to remove abortion from the Criminal Code and to provide free abortion and birth control through public clinics. When this resolution came up for debate, women from all over the convention floor streamed to the microphones to speak in its favour. An amendment stating that abortion should be treated as a purely medical and personal matter, and that the decision to abort should rest solely with the woman in consultation with her doctor, passed by an overwhelming majority.

The idea of organizing a women's liberation movement in the NDP was presented at a noon-hour meeting, which about 40 women attended. The feature speaker, Grace MacInnis, began her talk on general issues which women can work on, such as pollution, but the discussion quickly turned to the immediate issues in which the women were really interested, such as abortion, day care, equal pay for equal work, etc. The group showed great interest in the plan for organizing women in the NDP, and signed up to participate. Others expressed interest in helping to co-ordinate the group's efforts to get off the ground. The production of a newsletter was suggested to keep in touch with women throughout B.C. and to establish a working relationship with them.

A member of the Waffle Caucus, Dawn Carrell, ran for the position of Party President, and based her campaign speech on women's liberation. Four other women members of the Waffle Caucus, who identified themselves as women's liberationists, ran for members-at-large on the Executive. Dawn Carrell was elected as member-at-large.

Recently, in Toronto, about 35 women from the Toronto area met at an NDP women's liberation conference, to map out resolutions and strategy for the upcoming NDP provincial convention. Strong demands were worked out on a series of questions including abortion, day care, women and the law, and education. The group decided to meet as an open caucus throughout the convention, and to demand that one-third of the members of the incoming provincial executive be women and be elected by women only.

Last Saturday, in Regina, Blakeney came under attack for his exploitation of women during his campaign for the leadership of the Sask. NDP. Blakeney had about 20 Regina high school students running around the Hotel Saskatchewan in vivid green mini dresses with scooped necklines as hostesses for his "hospitality suites". The brunt of the attack came from Waffle supporters and, in particular, Don Mitchell, the unofficial Waffle candidate. One militant woman attacked Blakeney for his "disgusting exploitation". The uproar all this caused was sufficient to cause him anxiety as to the damage this would have on his campaign. As it turned out, he ran second on the first two ballots, but managed to win on the third. Needless to say, Blakeney's embarrassment may serve as warning to others in the party who attempt to gain through the sexual exploitation of women.

When Grace MacInnis brought up the question of eliminating abortion as a criminal offense in the House of Commons on June 22, she was ruled out of order on the grounds that she had raised this issue repeatedly before. She must raise it again; she and other NDP MP's will find it increasingly necessary to be as persistent as the women whom they represent, because women's liberation within the NDP is now a strong, firmly-established, and growing movement.

OPPORTUNITIES LTD.

By Anna Ingre

According to the brochure put out by the opportunities office, "the Opportunities Program is an opportunity for persons on low income to be of service in their neighborhood on a part-time basis while receiving training". The aims of the Opportunities Incentive Allowances are: (1) To provide opportunities for people who are on social assistance to assist in neighborhood programs to operate self-help activities and to train and move into employment; (2) To enrich service in neighborhoods and in social agencies, schools and recreation centres by using trained neighborhood people as assistants to professionals.

The Opportunities Program was initiated by a group of women on welfare who were attempting to find a way out of welfare for women forced into it through lack of training, lack of funds, and lack of adequate day care. Also involved, was the idea that self help programs — community people helping each other — might be a means of developing a more aware and unified community which would be able to solve its problems collectively and successfully.

The program was divided into two phases — pre-employment adjustment courses consisting of night or (on special arrangement) day school courses plus work in the community paid for at the rate of $50.00 per month for 30 hours work, and the second phase — employment training for the group or individuals as needed to equip them with the necessary skills and qualifications for a job.

The ideas were good.

Unfortunately, what could have been a means to get off welfare and into meaningful employment has been manipulated and subverted by governmental indifference and pressures into a program to provide $50.00 per month for a few lucky individuals chosen by the Opportunities personnel and staff.

There are many reasons why the Opportunities Program constitutes a fraud. Some are based on a completely unrealistic view of the economic realities of the labor market, others are based on an attempt to exploit cheap labor.

It is a fact that most jobs reserved for women are underpaid. Clerical, secretarial, and various service types of jobs usually not only pay poorly but pay women less than men for the same job. (Many of the women working in these fields come from middle class homes. They become part of the working poor while their brothers maintain their original economic standing.) Most of the positions for which training is supplied by Manpower simply do not pay enough to support a mother and child. Medical and dental benefits to parents and children are usually better for those on welfare than for those who are too poor to afford insurance or pay for drugs and dental costs. For those women who would be able to continue on a university program, welfare will not pay, except, sometimes, for elementary school teaching certificates. They prefer to keep a woman with children on welfare for 12 to 15 years or more rather than pay for her training for four or five years and allow her to become independent. For those women not able to or interested in taking university training, there are scarcely any decently paying jobs, and the government will not supply these people with subsidies or income supplements so that they could be at least partly independent.

The lack of adequate and inexpensive day care is one of the chief reasons why single mothers are forced onto welfare. Most licensed day care centres do not operate for the summer months. Although subsidies are available on a need basis, full time day care is difficult to find. Besides, or perhaps because of the lack of adequate full time day care facilities, there is little publicity given to the subsidies available. There almost seems to be a conspiracy to keep the woman in the home 24 hours a day even if

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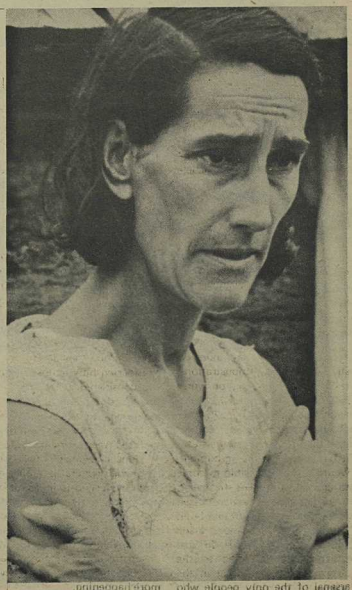


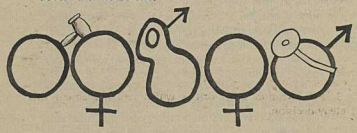
GRAVELLINGS

Most non-sectarian, anti-racist, unchauvinist quote of the week:
"We shall witness the complete removal of discrimination in the Catholic church on the day when there is a pregnant Pope who is either African or Asiatic."
Rev. Joseph H. Fichter

Women's Rights or Women's Liberation?

Special privileges for women were demanded by the communist delegates at the last meeting of the United Nations commission on the status of women. Canada's representative, Sylva Gelber, was "flabbergasted" by their stand and after asking around behind the scenes concluded that equal job opportunities in the Soviet Union have in no way changed general sexist attitudes.

And in Sweden sexual freedom seems to have done even less for women's lib. According to sociologist Inger Becker Swedish women are just not making use of their freedom. She points out that they still tend to take easy courses in school and stopgap jobs afterwards, ultimately ending up married mothers. Seems its still easier to marry a doctor than to be one.



Bernadette Devlin was re-elected last month, in her mixed Protestant-Catholic constituency, with an increased majority. Right now she is serving a six-month sentence in Armagh for conspiring to riot (translation: fighting for basic civil rights) but once she's sewn the statutory number of mailbags and got all the other prisoners radicalized she'll be back on the front lines in Westminster and the Bogside.

The U.S. Red Women's Detachment is calling upon all revolutionary women everywhere to abandon the liberation symbol now blindly worn by so many sisters. They claim it was used by "reactionary feudal victorian physicians" to represent female sex organs in medical texts.

Despite all promises to the contrary, Trudeau did not bring up anything resembling abortion repeal legislation during the last session of parliament. According to the local press Pierre's argument is that because of Creditiste opposition he did not want to bring up the subject and risk wasting the MPs' time – as happened when the present abortion law was passed (it took 40 days to get through). So more women will die, more mothers will be maimed, and more orphans will wait and wait to be adopted while the government takes its summer vacation.

Joan Baez on women's liberation: I can't take it seriously. I mean, if I'm carrying my guitar and my baby, and my husband's in jail, I'm not going to yell at some guy who holds the door open for me. Joan Baez on what?

Re: Abortion – from some letters in Redbook. . .

"I found one of the doctor's statements confusing. He states that if abortion on demand were made a reality, the physicians' load would increase tremendously. . . How is it possible that a twenty-minute surgical procedure can place more of a burden on the medical profession than nine months of prenatal care. . . labor and delivery. . . and continuing medical care for the child."
(or how to lighten the poor doctor's work load by applying the medieval "illegal operation" stamp.)

"a virus is a disease; it is also a form of life."

Reading, Rights, and Role Theory

A women's studies program was offered at Cornell University in New York last year. More than 200 students, men and women, took the course and in the words of one "it was probably the most interesting course I've ever taken." Topics discussed ranged from women as sexual objects to family power relationships.

Anne Koedt, founder of the New York Radical Feminists, is working on a whole book about female sexuality. Anne achieved a somewhat limited fame last year with her paper "The Myth of the Female Orgasm." Her contention is that the conventional techniques of sexual intercourse have been dictated by men in this male dominated society and can in no way lead to female orgasm. Opposition abounds. Like what could a woman possibly know about women's wants and needs?

Recent action by the Redstockings – Denmark's women's lib. – had them crowding onto streetcars and refusing to pay more than 70% of the fare on the grounds that women earn 30% less than men. Even the male passengers cheered them on until police arrived.

WANTED
IMAGE GIRLS
for
IMAGE!

she's CURVY
GROOVY
VIVACIOUS
+
INTELLIGENT

(apply 661 Hornby St.)

Wonderful World of TV

Campbell River residents live in constant fear these days of losing their entire evening's worth of chauvinist commercials. As the result of a one hundred per cent strike vote by the two women office employees of that city's cablevision office, none of the important dirty work is getting done. AND, wonder of all wonders, the technicians – male – have refused to cross their picket line. WOMANPOWER!

The campaign being waged by the clothing industry to maximize profits by manipulating skirt lengths is now in full swing.

If anyone has any doubts as to the conspiratorial nature of this full-scale effort to persuade women to discard last year's short dresses in favor of the midi, consider the following revelations from an article by Bernadine Morris on the fashion page of the New York Times.

According to Morris, their strategic plan is to first break down women's resistance by selling her a long coat. "The feeling is," she reports, "that most women will be tempted by the midi-coat. After all, it's likely to keep them warm. And having acquired the proper coat, women will likely buy a long dress, the theory goes."

Another ploy is to get rich women who can better afford it to switch first to the midi on the grounds that the rest of us will follow. Stores catering to the wealthy – Bonwit Teller, Lord & Taylor, etc. – are stocking no short skirts.

The advertisers are even attempting to pacify those who are worried that women won't be as effective as sex objects if they wear the longer lengths. An ad in a recent Times magazine announces: "Leg watchers relax. . . The midi may well be the sexiest skirt ever. Leg-conscious designers are slitting it (skirts) up the front or sometimes up the side – thigh high."

And there is still another angle. At Bonwit Teller all sales women are required to be wearing the midi lengths by August 3.

From "The Militant"

IT'S WHAT'S UP FRONT THAT COUNTS IT'S WHAT'S UP FRONT THAT COUNTS IT'S WHAT'S UP FRONT THAT COUNTS

DEAR ABBY–I think I am too flat for my age. My measurements are 27-22-27. I am eleven years old and am 4 feet 9. I have friends who are not much taller than I am, and they are wearing a 30AA cup bra.

I wish my mother would get me a bigger bra so I would look more like my girl friends. I asked her once, and she said she would get me a bigger bra when I need it, and not until.

Abby, I wouldn't want a bra that looked too padded for a girl my age, but don't you think just a little padding would look better?

–FLAT AS A PANCAKE

DEAR FLAT: Be patient. And when you get a little older, if you are still conspicuously "flat", ask your mother to take you to a good lingerie shop, and let the authorities there be the judges and make recommendations. In other words, at the proper time, what nature has forgotten stuff with cotton.

PROFESSIONAL CURE

According to Dr. Robert Franklyn, a Hollywood plastic surgeon, teflon is the greatest yet for enlarging women's bosoms. He says it's the softest, most natural, synthetic imitation of body fat ever discovered. One shot and you'll move, jiggle and shake just like the real thing.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The strategy conference held June 20-21 in the new headquarters was long, hot, and confusing. The agenda kept changing and occasionally people shouted at each other. But by Sunday afternoon matters were beginning to be clearer and, late Sunday afternoon, we adopted a new set of priorities which will guide our work in the next period. These priorities will centre around two areas: problems women face when seeking jobs and when working; and the educational system.

Although the Caucus has achieved many victories in the past (the abortion Caravan, confrontations with Trudeau, general publicizing of the movement for women's liberation), it has also made many mistakes. First was the failure to offer a basic, coherent analysis of women's exploitation and an organized program for changing the situation. As a result the Caucus *as an organization* seemed to be no more than "a sum of its the parts" of its various issue-oriented projects and sub-groups. Thus, in spite of the political analysis of individual members, the Caucus effectively was an issue-oriented women's rights group, which organized women into specific actions but did not offer them a clear understanding of how various examples of women's oppression are linked together and related to our society's social, political and economic institutions.

The Conference decided that we must come to a basic analysis of women's liberation which clearly defines it as more than a single or multi-issue movement. This will be incorporated into the new Women's Caucus program, which will clarify our position on why women are exploited in this society and how different examples of this exploitation are linked together. This will make it clear that women's liberation involves much more than the attainment of a series of reforms.

Another implication of the strategy decision at the Conference is the realization that mobilizing women around single issues, like abortion, is inadequate. In spite of the educational work which is done to link the particular issue to other aspects of women's oppression, women will be involved primarily in acting around that issue rather than in confronting their individual oppression in all its aspects. Thus it was decided that the Caucus should be *constituency oriented* – we should organize women around their places of work, school, etc., so that *they* can define their main problems and begin to work towards solutions.

The goal is *not* to mobilize large numbers of women who can be called out to demonstration, but to organize and to help women to become political women who can confront the institutions and people who oppress them. Although we naturally wish to involve as many people as possible in the Caucus, our main goal will be to organize women to fight for their liberation in the places where they live and work.

It was also argued that this was the best way to involve new women, since they would now be integrated into small action groups as active participants. Our experience shows that this is a much more successful way for women to become active than through educationals or general meetings. In smaller groups women can take a more active part ; also, the workshops are action-oriented unlike the more passive educationals which "explained" women's oppression to new people without involving them in combatting that oppression.

The small workshops will develop plans and strategies to be reported to the general meetings. With the clarification of our program and direction, the general meetings *must* become a forum for political debate and decision-making. The Co-ordinating Committee, composed of members from each workshop, will assess the actions taken by the Caucus and individual groups, and present critiques to the general meetings for discussion and debate. The meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee will be open to all. The Caucus will continue to implement a strategy until a full strategy conference decides to alter the priorities.

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT ON OUR JUNE STRATEGY CONFERENCE !

Start on Page 7 with The Majority view -- the decisions taken on priorities and strategy at the Conference;

Then see Page 8 for (1) A Statement From The Women Who Left, and (2) An Alternative Within VWC;

Next Page 9 for (3) The Young Socialists' Position, and (4) A Strategy For Organizing;

And Page 10 for A Proposal For Organizing: Working Women's Union.

Priorities

Although we recognize that all women are exploited in this society, we also recognize (1) that some women are more exploited than others and (2) that as an organization we have limited resources. We attempted to set out priorities which would use our resources most effectively. Working women are one of the most exploited groups in this society, while women in schools are being socialized to accept and perpetuate the inferiority of women.

Working women cannot be limited only to women presently employed. The area includes women on welfare and social assistance, and women such as housewives who have been in or will enter the work force. It is important to work with unemployed women since they can be even more isolated that working women, and also they may have more free time to contribute. Projects immediately under consideration are a legal aid clinic, a working women's organization or union, and day care. The educational project should include not only students and teachers, but also mothers with children in schools.

The projects undertaken by subgroups will have two functions: to organize women to organize themselves, and to serve immediate needs that these women have, such as day care, abortion information, birth control information, legal aid, etc. Although the conference decided not to make the abortion issue a priority, it should be understood that the Caucus has not abandoned work around abortion; rather, in future, abortion will be raised as one of the demands of the work areas rather than as a separate issue. Abortion demands are being carried forward by other groups, and the Caucus decided that it was unnecessary to duplicate this effort. Rather, the Caucus will concentrate on working women and education.

Results

The strategy conference resulted in:

1. the realization of the immediate need for a clear statement on what is meant by the movement for women's liberation, and
2. a change of strategy from issue-orientation to constituency-orientation, with
3. the selection of priorities which will implement this strategy decision.

General Meeting

The general meeting of June 24 discussed some of the work necessary to implement the decisions of the conference. We discussed the working women's workshop, the work in the educational system, and the abortion information service.

The working women's workshop reported on a proposal it is preparing for presentation to the next general meeting, that a working women's organization or union be set up. It would be flexible enough to include women who are not in a position to organize their workplace, as well as women who are working within existing unions to raise the needs of women members. It would be chartered as a union in order to be able to undertake struggles which the existing unions are not prepared to carry. Organizing would be done around demands relevant to women workers. (see article page 10)

Other proposals from this workshop included the creation of subgroups to work on vocational training and re-training; a series of noon-hour discussions at Vancouver Public Library which will be directed toward women working in the downtown area, and support to women workers on strike.

The discussion of the educational system focussed on students and teachers. A high school workshop is being organized, which is calling a conference of high school women for August 8 and 9 to plan for action in the fall. A group of women teachers, interested in women's rights but not a part of Women's Caucus, are planning a campaign at UBC Summer School which is largely attended by teachers. More detailed plans for action in education will be developed by the education workshop, meeting on alternate Wednesdays (next: July 15).

With the clarification of the strategy of the Caucus, it was possible to discuss the function of the *Pedestal*. (see page 4)

The Co-ordinating Committee will begin to draft the new program at its July 20th meeting. It will be presented to members for discussion, and the final version will be ratified by a general meeting. We agreed that the Committee must be more than a communication system and a body for setting agendas for general meetings. Although the Committee must perform these functions, it must primarily involve itself in a continuing analysis and criticism of the activities of the Caucus.

Since the Caucus no longer has the abortion campaign as a priority, the general meeting discussed what should be done in this area. The clinic, which is being run by the women who left the Caucus, also includes workers from the Caucus. Since we are in agreement with the strategy of the clinic, we agreed that it was unnecessary to create another; we should work in the existing one. This is necessary not only for the success of the clinic, but also to encourage co-operation between the two groups. Any other abortion activities would be part of the strategy of the subgroups, with the exception of quickly-called public actions around specific events (such as the recent death of a Vancouver woman from a self-induced abortion).

STRATEGY CONFERENCE JUNE 20-21

1 A STATEMENT FROM THE WOMEN WHO WITHDREW

For those of us who are withdrawing from Women's Caucus, our leaving does not represent a rejection of Women's Liberation; rather, it is a positive statement of our seriousness in organizing for the liberation of women, our understanding of the centrality of women's oppression to the capitalist system, and out of that, our realization that Women's Caucus cannot be the vehicle for struggling against that oppression.

In Women's Caucus it is said over and over again that women's liberation can not be won without a socialist revolution and that unless there is a strong women's movement the revolution will serve only half the population. And yet Women's Caucus continues to organize around abortion, day care, equal pay as isolated issues. They have not drawn out honestly and acted upon the revolutionary implications of day care, of equality in work, etc. and have not developed a strategy for winning the revolution or an organization that reflects these politics.

Strategy vs. Pragmatism

Let's take the demand for equal pay and equal job opportunities for women as an example. Job discrimination is deliberate; it is built into the structure of capitalism. Capitalists have always profited off the sweat and blood of ethnic and racial minorities. And so too with women. The revolutionary potential for women comes from the duality of their oppression; women are both oppressed as women and exploited as workers. Struggles for equal pay and equal job opportunity are only meaningful within a revolutionary context. Given this, revolutionary women can not stand back and merely respond to situations as they arise (this has been the case thus far in Women's Caucus). We must build a movement of working women that is strategic rather than pragmatic and which reflects the needs of women rather than the needs of capitalists and establishment trade union bureaucrats. We must provide leadership in developing new forms of struggle — leadership that is collective and leadership that comes from the people. We have been told often that women are turned off and intimidated by words like revolution and communism, that these words are only used by university students and academic Marxists. And yet Panther women and Vietnamese women understand revolution and communism; they are their daily life and bread. They must become ours too. We must follow the example of those women who are leading the struggle against the system that oppresses us all.

Holding Women Back

Women who come to Women's Caucus because of a real understanding of their own oppression and some sense of the basic structural nature of the whole question are faced with an organization which does not build upon that understanding and strengthen those women to be strong revolutionaries but which holds them back. People may get involved in one task or another but have no general understanding of what the organization is about or how they personally can fit into it. They have little chance to work through their own oppression in an organization that works primarily through meetings. It is important when we talk to women, whether it is about abortion, day care, or equal pay that we talk about the totality of our oppression and rebellion, as well as about the specifics of how we can organize in any situation. We can not compartmentalize or water down our analysis, if we hate the roles and structures that oppress us, if we want to define ourselves in opposition to society — we must act on what we know. Not to show women what we understand about the absolute necessity of revolution is dishonest and unfair to the women who want to involve themselves in the struggle for women's liberation. The effect of the bureaucracy and the depoliticization of Women's Caucus in the last while is to turn many women off the excitement and centrality of the women's struggle.

Women as Leaders

The women who have split from Women's Caucus understand that it is necessary for women to take leadership in the general movement. The contradiction between men and women is a contradiction amongst the people, not a contradiction between enemies. We must challenge the male left that excludes us from their revolution so that their revolution can become our revolution. We must help our brothers struggle against elitism, competition, and individualism so that they can be better communists. We can only do this if we are not liberal or protective with each other as women. We understand the structure of male chauvinism and male supremacy because it oppresses us. We understand that to be a man you must be able to compete in a man's world and that women are a tool in this process. We are the prize — as long as we are young, pretty, blonde and blue-eyed.

We must challenge each other as sisters when we let ourselves be used in ways that divide us and make us weak. We must stop using our emotions and sensitivity to human situations to cool things

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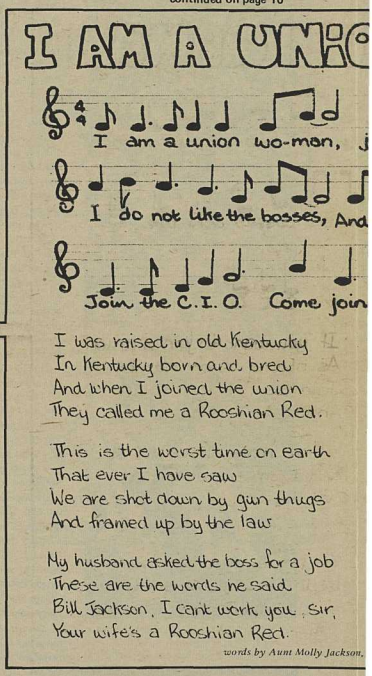

2 THE ALTERNATIVE WITHIN WOMEN'S CAUCUS

The majority reply to No. 1

Bev Gibbs

The Saturday session of the conference was spent discussing the differences which resulted in a group of 24 women leaving Women's Caucus. These differences focussed essentially on three main issues: (1) whether a separate revolutionary women's liberation organization is necessary; (2) the relation of Women's Caucus to other oppressed groups in Vancouver; (3) the effectiveness of work collectives as a priority in organizing women. Although the discussion was often heated and personal, the experience was a necessary preliminary to Sunday's deliberations on priorities for Women's Caucus.

The women who withdrew from Women's Caucus maintained that, although many of the women working in the Caucus were Marxists and revolutionaries, the Caucus as a whole was reformist. For example, the group argued that in our abortion campaign we had failed to link the oppressive abortion laws and the right of women to control their own bodies with the need to have control over their own lives, the myth of motherhood, and eventually with capitalism. The group's paper also stated that the women's rights movement would continue to grow, whether or not revolutionaries participated in it. They argued that this spontaneous growth demanded a distinct revolutionary women's liberation movement, which would link women's oppression directly with capitalism, in order to attract women who understood the total Marxist analysis of society.

The majority wholeheartedly agreed that making links between specific aspects of women's oppression and the total social oppression of women is essential. However, the majority strongly disagreed that we can rely on the women's rights movement to grow spontaneously; rather, it is the duty of women revolutionaries to participate in, build, and lead the entire women's movement. Also, Women's Caucus rejected the notion that there exists a perfect "total analysis" of the strategy for women's liberation. We in the Women's Caucus have already learned, and will continue to learn, through our common struggle.

Vancouver Liberation Front

The women who split allied themselves closely with the Vancouver Liberation Front, which they see as the only white revolutionary movement in Vancouver. They insisted that, since Women's Caucus has friends in other oppressed segments of the population such as Blacks, Indians and street people, it is imperative that the Caucus recognize its moral responsibility to identify publicly with these groups. The majority felt that such a formal unity would not be productive at this time. Rather, it is our responsibility to organize women around our own very real oppression. Women must first move on their own oppression. For too long, women in the movement have been taught by radical men that our own oppression is secondary, when in reality the subjection of women is rooted in the structure of capitalist society, and the struggle for women's liberation challenges its very foundations. Meaningful alliances with other revolutionary groups will come when we are both strong and powerful in our own rights.

Work Collectives?

The last disagreement was over the usefulness of work collectives as a tool for organizing women. The majority strongly disagreed with placing a priority on their establishment. First of all, work collectives (which involve women living together in cooperative houses) effectively exclude the large majority of married housewives and working women with children. Rather than countering this argument, the group which left merely acknowledged the fact that the leaders of women's liberation would be young women who had chosen not to marry.

Those of us who remained in Women's Caucus stressed that such an approach emphasizes individual rather than social solutions for women's problems. As long as the social pressures remain which lead women to seek their sole fulfillment as wives and mothers, and as long as women remain a super-exploited section of the workingclass, the option of living in a work collective will be a reality for only a small percentage of women. To adopt work collectives as a priority would therefore turn women's liberation into an elitist organization, which would emphasize individual commitment rather than social struggle. Women must seek to overthrow the society which pressures women into the restrictive nuclear family. Women's Caucus rejects the notion that living in work collectives is a test of a person's political understanding. Communal and co-operative living cannot be superimposed on the individualistic and competitive society.

In summary, women's liberation is an essential part of the revolutionary struggle to liberate humanity. The fight for our liberation must of necessity involve large numbers of women who presently reject the idea that they are oppressed, and some who see only single and isolated areas of their own oppression. Our task is to reach these women, through action and education, to encourage them to join in the struggle for our freedom. We can do this only if we keep a firm grasp on the realities of women's oppression in this society.

3 THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS' POSITION

There were two general questions underlying both days of discussion for the approximately 60 women who attended the Women's Caucus Conference held in Vancouver the weekend of June 20-21. The first centred around the nature of the movement we are building, how it defines itself and who it orients to. The second was, "How do we build the movement? What is the best way forward at this point?"

On the first day discussion revolved around the group of women who were leaving the Caucus; who had, in fact, already set up a second women's liberation group in Vancouver. Calling themselves the Vancouver Women's Liberation Movement (VWLM — as opposed to Women's Caucus), these women in part helped to define what many Caucus members felt a women's movement should *not* be. The paper they presented outlined the concept of an organization of women that defines itself as "revolutionary communist" and attracts women on that basis, and that operates through "work-living collectives" in which women would live, engaging in "projects" that would provide the setting up of "communist alternatives" within the present system. The premise of their paper was that the movement for women's liberation was growing and would continue to grow without our help or leadership, and that women were already aware of their oppression, and no longer needed to be convinced of that oppression. They declared themselves opposed to campaigns as a method of building women's liberation, seeing the continuation of the abortion campaign as a dilution of politics and an insult to women. These women left at the end of the Saturday session.

On Sunday, we who remained in the Caucus turned to the task of deciding priorities of work for ourselves. Unfortunately, in large part discussion of the question of the character of the movement and how it would be different from that of the VWLM was avoided. It was clear that there were differences within the Caucus itself on this vital question.

For A Mass Movement

A position paper submitted by the Young Socialist members of the Caucus called for an outward-oriented, non-exclusionist movement, in which all women who agreed with the general aims of women's liberation could participate. YS women stressed the importance of the abortion campaign that has been carried so successfully to date. The best way to continue to build the movement at this time, said the YS'sers, was to continue to build the abortion campaign, to lead it forward to victory. Most women are not yet convinced that they are oppressed, but in growing numbers they are supporting our fight for free abortion on demand. This, YS spokeswomen maintained, was the best road to mobilizing large numbers of Canadian women against the abortion laws, drawing them into a greater understanding of their over-all oppression within society and into the movement which is struggling to end that oppression.

It is extremely unfortunate that Sunday's debate was marked by persistent attempts by some women in the Caucus to bait and misrepresent the YS position. Decrying what they termed a "single-issue" approach, they accused the YS women of trying to turn Women's Caucus into one big abortion committee. In fact, a whole scare campaign was launched against the YS women, accusing them of attempting to "manipulate" women present, and even charging that the YSers viewed the struggle for women's liberation as somehow not of prime importance.

This is rather hard to substantiate given the facts. For years, YS women have been writing and organizing around the oppression of women. From the beginning of the conference with the presentation of the position paper *"The Way Forward — How to Build a Mass Movement for Women's Liberation"*, the YS women openly and honestly put forth their views for the entire conference to debate. YS women, at the end of the conference, felt that their position had been misrepresented in the course of the discussion; that they had been put into an abortion "slot" to the exclusion of anything else. The atmosphere which was created only resulted in greater confusion, clouding the discussion and impeding a frank and rounded debate that could have been to the benefit of every woman present, and could have honestly clarified differences.

Abortion Affects Every Woman

For clearly what the YSers were saying was that abortion is not an isolated issue; that it cuts across the basic divisions of women — it draws together those in the work force, those at home, students, in fact, all women. It is an elementary, initial question all women face, an integral part of women's liberation as a whole; for a woman it is the first vital step toward control of her body, without which she can have no control over her life. More than that, this demand is a motor which sets the whole apparatus into motion. It leads directly to all

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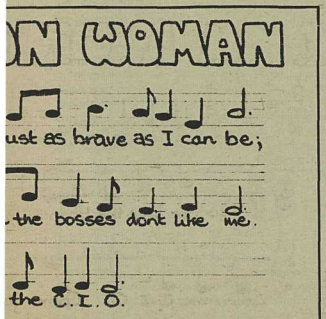

If you want to join a union
As strong as one can be
Join the dear old C.I.O.
And come along with me.

We are many thousand strong
And I am proud to say
That we are getting stronger
And stronger every day.

The bosses ride big fine horses
While we walk in the mud
Their banner is the dollar sign
And ours is stripped with blood.

early union organizer

4 A STRATEGY FOR ORGANIZING

The majority reply to No. 3

Jean Rands

On the second day of the conference, two proposals were made for action in the next period. We eventually adopted the proposal that our main objectives should be to organize women in relation to their situation in the work force and in the educational system, and that action around specific issues like abortion should take place within this context. Counterposed to this was the Young Socialists' proposal that we continue the abortion campaign as our main priority, specifically through a National Day of Protest in the fall.

The conference decision comes out of our experience, and our analysis of the position of women in this society.

Women today are expected to play two roles: as cheap labor in the work force and as unpaid labor in the home. Working women confront this contradiction most directly, and have the potential power to confront those who benefit from the exploitation of women — corporations and the government. The success of the movement for women's liberation depends on the organization of those women.

The educational system is the main tool used by the government (and the corporations) to channel women into their appropriate slots in the home and in "women's jobs". Women teachers, who suffer discrimination as women themselves, are used to teach myths about women, to train boys and girls to perpetuate the present sexual division of roles, and to convince girls to see themselves as future wives and mothers. The oppression of all women in this society depends on the educational system which trains us to be incapable of being independent economically, mentally, emotionally.

The abortion campaign made thousands of women aware of women's liberation for the first time, but it did not *involve* them. The priorities adopted at the conference represent a different approach to organizing. If women are organized around their workplaces or their schools, actions around specific issues, like abortion, will become part of a struggle against their oppression as a whole. If a group of high school students demonstrate at a high school demanding birth control and abortion, this can lead directly to actions around the stereotypes of women presented in the texts, the channeling of women into the home and into low-paying jobs in the work force. One reason that the abortion campaign did not bring many new women into Women's Caucus was that each action on abortion led simply to another action on abortion; we *talked* about the links between abortion and other aspects of women's oppression, but we did not *organize* around them.

Women can only be involved in a day-to-day way if Women's Caucus becomes an organization which confronts their day-to-day oppression — in all its aspects. The movement must explain that oppression and its causes, and develop a strategy for liberation.

The abortion campaign provided valuable lessons about the kind of strategy we need. It took us to provincial and federal governments, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Medical Association, the hospitals. The closed doors of the medical profession opened only when we forced them open; governments listened only when we confronted them with our own strength, independent of the 'proper channels'. If our aim is to include "reformists and conservatives", as the YS said at the conference, we will have to deny the lessons of our own experience. If we can't win abortion through lobbying, through talking nicely and going through the proper channels, clearly we can't win our liberation without challenging the whole system. We need a movement that is strong, militant and understands the reasons for the exploitation of women in this society — a movement that is not afraid to draw the conclusions of its experience.

The YS agrees that the fight for abortion teaches us about the nature of this society. But, their position is that we should learn these lessons as individuals, rather than as a movement. Carole Oleniuk stated their position at the conference: Through participation in Women's Caucus, "women will develop politically very unevenly." As they come to understand the causes of their oppression as women they will "develop politically and join other movements (the NDP, Marxist groups, etc.)."

In other words, the YS's position is that Women's Caucus should "mobilize as many women as possible" around abortion, with the understanding that those women who are looking for general explanations and a strategy for women's liberation as a whole will go to other political organizations, like the YS. They see the women's liberation movement as a means to radicalize women, but not as a movement which deserves the total commitment and involvement of women.

In Sunday's discussion 13-14 members of the YS were present. The final vote of 24-17 shows that only a few other women agreed with their analysis.

To say that Women's Caucus should include women with many different analyses is to say that the movement itself can have no analysis. This approach would limit us to single-issue campaigns, or very general educational work. When we begin to talk about actual organizing, disagreements about analysis can no longer be ignored. This was clear in the more specific discussion about the proposal for a working women's organizing committee (see page 10).

NUMBER 1 continued from page 8

out so that the system can keep functioning. Our sensitivity to human experience comes from oppression; let us use this strength to build the revolution. To be in Women's Liberation is to define ourselves in opposition to society, in terms of our oppression, for that is our strength and our anger. We can only find this anger if we face our oppressor. We will always be terrified of men and hence of the world if we hide from our feelings. The terror of our oppression is our weakness, the excitement of self-realization our strength. As long as we do not speak what we think and feel, we will not be part of the revolution.

In the past we have defined our political differences in terms of personal antagonism and in terms of life style alternatives. Let us stop this depoliticization. It is an insult to us all!

We have only begun to organize as Women's Liberation. We have set up one work collective with four women and three children. For now this house *is a centre for our organizing and all women are* welcome to come visit to rap with us. The address is 1030 East 13th; phone 879-5836.

Many of us are working in the abortion clinic and the experiences we share with these women convince us even more than ever of the correctness of our politics. In the clinic we discuss the politics of the abortion system by general raps. We encourage the women to challenge this openly. We hope to set up further projects around abortion, welfare, rights of juvenile (under 18) women so that we can continue to serve the needs of our sisters and challenge the structures that keep us down.

NUMBER 3 continued from page 9

aspects of women's oppression: freeing a woman to spend less time as a reproductive unit, it opens up questions of her position in the family and in the work force. It leads directly to the question of day care for the children she has. Far from being a restricted "single issue", the abortion question reaches out to women and draws them to an ever-widening awareness of their over-all position in society and teaches them to question the basis of that society which has oppressed them for so long. And it's a battle we can win.

To Mobilize, Involve & Integrate

This, the YS women said, was an excellent way to make gains for the women's liberation movement as a whole. They stressed that it must be accompanied by better-run, clearer and more educational general meetings with a more democratic process of decision-making, and an immediate attempt to welcome and involve newer women. The YS women felt that this internal education and involvement was a necessary and important part of the development of the movement.

In the latter part of the afternoon, discussion polarized into two opposing positions, that of the YS and their supporters and the second a proposal presented by Jean Rands, who seemed in close agreement with the VLWM conception of what the movement should be and who it should orient to. Her proposal for solving the problems of the Caucus was different from theirs, however. Jean's proposal was that the Caucus should establish as its priority the organization of working women — primarily, it was suggested, through the formation of a women's union, chartered as an official trade union, and that the abortion campaign would be played down. Those who opposed this position pointed out the dangers inherent in it — that a small and isolated women's union could well end up victimizing those very women it was attempting to defend, that organizing women was, indeed, an important task, but that the main thrust must be to challenge the awesome power of organized labor to respond to and defend the needs of women. At this point, this means continuing to make contact with women in unions and working to raise the question of women's rights within the union movement.

We must not neglect work in this area, YSers said, or fail to respond to any struggles around women in the work force, such as fights around equal pay for equal work or day care, but carrying the abortion campaign at this time more accurately reflects our most immediate task.

However, the conference finally endorsed by a vote of 24-17, a proposal that work in the educational system and with working women be established as priorities, over the abortion campaign.

Certainly the conference did not resolve all the questions facing the movement at this time. What it did was begin the process of clarification, open up the debate that has been simmering for some time. This is important for now we can all honestly and searchingly think out how best to build the movement we are so involved in, so concerned about — how best to struggle for our liberation and that of everyone.

A PROPOSAL FOR ORGANIZING: WORKING WOMEN'S UNION

About 85% of working women in Canada are completely unorganized. They have no union protection, no job security, lousy wages.

Even those women who are in unions are hardly organized. Few of them participate actively in their unions, or are represented in the leadership, because the labor movement itself does little to overcome the problems of working women, particularly those with children.

The organization of working women must be a major long-term task of the women's liberation movement. Discussion was begun at the conference on one specific proposal in this direction.

The proposal is for an organization of working women, registered as a union so that it can fight for union agreements in specific work places, but much more flexible than existing trade unions. The organization's membership would include those who support the major demands of working women: *including women who are members of existing* unions, women who have no immediate hope of organizing their workplace, and women who are not working at the moment. This kind of organization could bring together the different kinds of work we do with women workers. Groups of women fighting within unions to make them responsive to the needs of women members could be brought together with women attempting to organize unorganized offices, stores, etc. Most important, our educational work would be immediately related to action; to the possibility of organizing and actually winning victories.

This proposal is based on an analysis, and it is important that this be discussed clearly. The fact that women can be used as cheap labor is a result of our situation as women. The role of women in the home means that women can be brought in and out of the labor force, and that there is a constant supply of women in the home to maintain the low wages of working women (just as unemployed workers help keep wages low). The definition of women in this society as primarily wives and mothers encourages us to see our participation in the labor force as temporary, and to look forward to something "better" in home and family, rather than to fight against our exploitation on the job. The fact that women can be hired and fired on the basis of our decorative qualities (as sexual objects) forces us to compete with one another for the boss's favors, rather than working together to improve our situation.

This means that the problems of women workers cannot be solved without challenging the oppression of women throughout this society. The demands that working women must make in their own self-interest cut across the present structure of the trade union movement. The major issues — equal pay and equal job opportunity, control of hiring and job classifications, day care, an end to sexual objectification on the job — are questions that cut across plants and offices, trades and occupations.

We cannot win even immediate demands unless we are prepared to go beyond them. For instance, a major issue for working women is equal pay for equal work. Yet, experience shows that where this demand is won *as a single issue* the companies often just stop hiring women. This struggle can only be won by a movement that sees women's oppression *as a totality*, that sees the fight for equal pay as only one part of the battle that also includes the fight against discrimination in hiring, for free day care, and against the dehumanization of women into sex objects.

where the power lies

The YS constantly refers to the "awesome power" of the trade union movement, and insists that only the organized labor movement has the power to organize working women. This is a mystification. We have to look at where that power comes from, what that power consists of.

The trade union movement has no power in itself. Its power comes only from workers who are prepared to act. So long as workers in different unions are not prepared to act in solidarity with one another, the "power" of the Canadian Labor Congress remains a potential power; their membership of hundreds of thousands remains a meaningless figure.

We are not proposing to compete with the existing unions, but to undertake a task which they are clearly not prepared to do. If industrial workers had felt, at the beginning of this century, that only the existing unions had the power to organize the unorganized, they would never have built organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies). If they had stood in "awe" of the power of the American Federation of Labor (the craft union organization), industrial workers would still be unorganized today. There are more recent examples: The farm workers of California (now in the official trade union movement — AFL-CIO) would never have been organized if people had waited for existing unions to do it.

The most effective way to put pressure on the existing unions to begin to organize women workers is by acting independently of them, while working together with groups of women within those unions. We need not be cut off from the potential power of the organized working class so long as we are prepared to go to those workers, through their unions or simply where they work, and talk to them about the necessity for solidarity with our struggle.

victimization?

The other argument against the proposal is that to organize women independently will lead to their victimization.

Of course, one of the problems most women workers face is that their lack of union protection means that they can be fired for any reason: the kind of shoes they wear, the way they wear their hair, or their "attitude". Hundreds of women are likely victimized that way every day in Vancouver, and they have no way of fighting back.

The argument that women will be victimized is a traditional argument of conservatives against any action at all. The struggle to organize unorganized workers is bound to involve defeats. Women will undoubtedly be fired for union activity. But women are being fired now. The question is how can we minimize those defeats, and how can we learn from them.

There is no reason to believe that women are more likely to be victimized if they organize independently of the existing unions. Our experience in the working women's workshop has, if anything, indicated the opposite. When women have come to us for help in organizing, we have been able to give some advice, but ultimately we had to refer them to one of the existing unions. The business agent (always male) says "leave it to us"; the woman is fired; no one is organized. This is aside from the fact that we have been distributing hundreds of leaflets, to women we may never see again, telling them the advantages of organizing, and leaving them with no alternative except to go to the existing unions.

The *only* way to avoid unnecessary victimization is to understand that we are relying on our own strength; that we will only be organized if we organize ourselves. So long as we stand in "awe" of the 'experts' — business agents, professional negotiators — we will face victimization helplessly. — *J. Rands*

discussions on **WOMEN'S LIBERATION**

TUESDAYS 12 – 1 noon at the LIBRARY (robson & burrard)

JUL. 21 - IMAGES OF WOMEN: slides & discussion
JUL. 28 – MALE-FEMALE ROLES IN OFFICES
AUG. 4 – NATURE vs. HISTORY: women in other times & cultures
AUG. 11 – WORK & FAMILY: women's role at home & in the work force: day care, abortion etc.
AUG. 18 – THE MOVEMENT: the women's liberation movement – its relevance for working women
AUG. 25 – OPEN: topic to be decided by the participants

INFORMAL DISCUSSION ... bring your lunch

STAR WEEKLY TORONTO JUNE 9, 1945 10 CENTS

WANDA the WELDER

"The fact that women can be used as cheap labor is a result of our situation as women. The role of women in the home means that women can be brought in and out of the labor force, and that there is a constant supply of women in the home to maintain the low wages of working women. . ." (see page 10, Working Women's Union).

During the war, women were encouraged to leave their homes and work for the war effort. In order to persuade us to do these "masculine" jobs, an effective propaganda effort was mounted to change the image of women to include welding, and mechanics, and airplane assembly worker as valid and important roles for women. This picture, from a war-time *Star Weekly* is an excellent example of this type of propaganda.

After the war, women were no longer needed in such large numbers in the labor force, and counter-propaganda was introduced to re-define our image as the happy housewife and mother, happy to return to the comfort and security of her home, with her brave, soldier'husband.

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she and her children are miserable.

Another factor militating against women being able to enter the labor market after spending some time on welfare is the high cost of clothes. Because most offices employ women as much for the way they look as for the way they work, it becomes quite expensive to play the role successfully.

The Opportunities Program assumes that women will be able to find work, that the $50 per month is temporary, that better times will come. For most women, they don't. The program exploits women by giving them false expectations. It is impossible for most women to become self supporting if they rely only on the meagre handouts of welfare. Aside from the fact that there are almost no decently paying jobs available, that the training for these few jobs is long and expensive, that welfare will not provide this training, aside from all this, there are very few jobs available whatever the pay. And the unemployment rate is increasing. Women are being laid off work, not hired.

The jobs in which Opportunities people are being placed are supposed to be specially created positions which fulfill a community need. In most cases, these are jobs which can and are done by adequately paid employees when the institutions concerned can acquire funds from the government. The Opportunities Program, however, allows an institution to receive free of charge a part time employee, and the government foots the $50 per month bill — considerably cheaper. Many women fulfill semi-professional roles, many professional roles. Why aren't they paid for them?

Many women are dropped from the Opportunities Program after the six month initial period because they are for various reasons unable to go on to further training. For most it means $50 per month less than before and at $157.50 per month for a mother and child that's quite a drop. For these women, the additional sense of security, if they had it, goes at the end of the six month period.

There are approximately 200 women on Opportunities Incentive Allowances. They are selected by the social worker according to the social worker's estimate of how successful they will be. Many social workers don't even bother to tell clients that this program exists, let alone recommend women for it. When advertising was tried a short time ago, and letters mailed to people served by the South Unit, the response was so great that positions could not be found for all those applying. Advertising had to be stopped because they said, they could not process all the applicants. If women on Opportunities could set up the program, why couldn't more be hired to process the applicants? And if there are no jobs available, why doesn't the government pay everybody $50 more per month rather than making this hypocritical claim of helping those who really want to get off welfare?

Quite recently, a men's opportunities program was started. Unfortunately, single men have been dropped from the program, allegedly because one individual, while on the program, refused to take a job. It's a pity they won't stop collecting taxes because someone tries to cheat.

The Opportunities Program was initiated by a group of women on welfare. They organized it, they ran it, until money became a factor. Then the government decided that social workers must make the important decisions. The Opportunities Program works through two controlling groups: the steering committee consisting of opportunities women and two social workers — they make decisions on policy matters and perform most of the bureaucratic functions. Personnel and staff, composed mostly of social workers, make decisions on who is to go on to the opportunities program, that is, social workers make the decision about whether a person is suitable for training etc. What this means is that the majority of individuals do not have a fair chance to obtain training or retraining for future employment even if it did exist. Budget disbursements must be approved by Victoria. Thus the women on welfare have no control of their program. Doesn't the government trust people on welfare?

If the Opportunities Program were available to everyone on welfare, even at present rates of payment, it would be still very expensive to the government. To a government which pays a single person $95 per month and a mother with a child $157.50 per month, laying out a lot of extra money on "deadbeats" as Gagliardi refers to welfare recipients, is unlikely to interest them.

Morgentaler: 'ABORTION LAW UNJUST'

By Cynthia Flood

Dr. Henry Morgentaler, President of the Humanist Society of Canada and an active campaigner for abortion law reform, was arrested in Montreal early in June on charges of conspiring to commit, and the performance of, an abortion. He claims that he was held overnight without being charged, that the police roughed him up, and that his files and equipment were seized by the police. His preliminary hearing was closed to the public; after this hearing, Dr. Morgentaler's lawyer announced that he would seek writs to challenge both the court's jurisdiction and the judge's objectivity.

Morgentaler's arrest had an immediate and devastating effect on the abortion situation in Montreal. Numerous Montreal doctors who had been performing abortions ceased to do so. Admissions to hospitals as a result of complications from illegal abortions quadrupled. At least one woman died.

Reaction from the medical profession and the general public was very strong. A group of Montreal doctors met Minister of Justice Turner to demand that a moratorium be declared on abortion charges against doctors until the present abortion laws are repealed. A committee headed by Dr. Eric Saibil, Chairman of the Committee for Abortion Law Repeal, is doing research to determine the number of women admitted to four major Montreal hospitals to date this year because of complications from illegal abortions. 180 doctors took a full-page advertisement in the Montreal Star on June 20th, calling for repeal of the abortion laws, and similar advertisements were planned for the city's French dailies.

Women's liberation groups in Montreal held a demonstration of about 250 outside the building where Morgentaler's preliminary hearing was held, and a major demonstration was planned for July 3. Morgentaler is pleading guilty of performing abortions; he says that he has violated an unjust law but has not violated his Hippocratic oath. Irony of the year: if the case goes to trial — a trial which would essentially concern the right of women to control their own bodies — there will be no women on the jury...that's how Quebec law goes.

On June 16, the Montreal Star ran an editorial urging that the Canadian government pass abortion legislation similar to that now in effect in New York State. The editorial concluded, "So long as Canadian law makes it difficult to obtain legal abortions from qualified physicians, quacks will continue to thrive, and women will continue to die or be permanently maimed. Surely that is not what Parliament intended."

Well, Trudeau, what about it?

C.Y.C. 'deselects' W.C.

The Company of Young Canadians considers women's liberation outside its area of work. CYC volunteer Anna Ingre was recently "deselected" (CYC euphemism for fired) for working in Women's Caucus because, as staff Orval Strong wrote, "I do not believe that placing a volunteer with Women's Caucus is the best use of the company's resources." Members of VWC met with Strong to discuss the situation, but were unable to obtain any explanation, let alone a satisfactory one, of why the "deselection" had taken place.

Claude Vidal, executive director of CYC, met with VWC and UCWIC members on June 22 for another attempt at clarification. Like Strong, Vidal indicated that VWC work was outside the terms of reference of CYC. When pressed to define those terms he was totally unable to do so, for the simple reason that they do not exist.

What happens now? Women's Caucus wrote to CYC Council, explaining our view of the situation and requesting an explanation from CYC? no answer has been received. Vidal agreed that an independent arbitrator would be called in; latest word is that there will be no such arbitrator. No procedure for appeal, no terms of reference, no adequate explanation, no justice. Just "deselection."

another woman dead
FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND

By Katie Curtin

Gwytha Pierce, a 34-year-old mother of two, died in VGH on June 20th of complications from a self-induced abortion. Her husband said that legalized abortion in Canada would probably have saved his wife's life. The brutality of the present laws was revealed once again.

In response to this woman's death, Women's Caucus demonstrated in front of the Federal Building at noon on June 24th. Many stopped to watch, listen, and talk to the demonstrators, and there was good media coverage as well. A press release was read, which placed the responsibility for this death and thousands of others on the Federal Government. "They have the power to act and they do nothing...Ottawa shrouds itself in its indifference." A telegram sent to Trudeau, Munro and Turner was also read, which called for the extension of the Parliamentary session past June 26th and as along as necessary to remove abortion from the Criminal Code and to make free abortions available to all women.

The demonstration marked the launching of a compaign to solicit the open support of the medical profession in the form of a public statement calling for repeal of the abortion laws, similar to those issued by doctors in Montreal and by the Canadian Psychiatric Association. Cross-country, increasing pressure is being put on the Federal Government, by the NDP and by many organizations. Trudeau must realize that we will not be satisfied until free abortions are available to all women; our struggle continues to draw in greater numbers of women from every sector of Canadian society, and we will win.

Students!

HIGH SCHOOL WOMEN'S LIBERATION CONFERENCE
call 684-0523 for info re time & place

Aug. 8-9

what is Women's Liberation?

To find out
GET A SPEAKER FROM WOMEN'S CAUCUS
for your class
club
organization
or whatever!

CALL 684-0523

THE ADVENTURES of BRENDA LADY COAL-SAMPLER

By Brenda Huxley

"Coal-sampling? Who, me?"

"Yeah, why not? Look, they need a couple of part-time people, and the pay's not bad — $2.20 an hour. And hey, they never had a woman coal-sampler before. It would be a gas!"

"Well, what do I have to do?"

"All you gotta do is scoop out some coal out of each load, put it in a sack and that's it ... oh, and a couple other things .. it takes about three minutes of intricate discussion. I'll show you when we get out there. O'K'?"

"O.K."

In the morning:

"Nope. No way. This is going too far."

"What's going too far?"

"Look - a person like you can't work there. It would set a precedent that the company would not want set."

"What do you mean, a person like me?"

"Well, ... um, ... er ... (giggle). I can't allow this. The company wouldn't approve."

"Let her go out, since she's already here, and then when the assistant manager arrives, I'll tell him and he can deal with it.

At the Docks in Port Moody

"The assistant manager says to call him back, but not to do any work."

"Call him back? What for?"

"He wants to talk to you and you're to go back and fill in an application."

"That's not the usual procedure for casual workers, to fill out applications and have interviews in Vancouver. Anyways, he's not in, so I'll start working."

"No! You can't work until he's talked with you."

"This is ridiculous. If there is a question of my ability to handle this work, I should try the work now, before I talk to him."

"You're not to work."

"Why not?"

"The longshoremen might not like a woman working on the docks, and besides, you haven't filled out your application form or had your interview."

"O.K. Here, I'll follow the normal procedure for working out here. Here's my completed application form; there's never been any interviews before so that's out. And now I'll go and ask the longshoremen's union about a discriminatory policy in their contracts!"

"Wait!"

"No! You've slandered this union and I'm going over to find out ..... "

"I'd like to see the shop steward here, to inquire whether or not any men here are bothered by a woman working on the docks."

"Certainly not. I'll call him in right now."

"The company that hired me to work today discovered that I'm a woman and refused to allow me to work. One of their reasons is that the longshoremen wouldn't like me to work here. I've never heard of any discriminatory policy in this union ..."

"Who said this?"

"The assistant manager of the company."

"I'll straighten this out right now ....."

* * *

"Who are you?"

"Well, er um, I'm sort of the supervisor for the coal samplers here."

"You're a worker here, right?" In other words, you're not management, right?"

"Well ..."

"Well, what?"

"Well, you see, the assistant manager says she can't work until she's filled out an application form."

"What's this about her not being able to work out here because the longshoremen wouldn't approve?"

"Well, that's what the assistant manager ...."

"Look, that's discrimination. In fact, there are women in this union. This could cause a lot of trouble, if you want. Where are you, anyways? You better get your head straight on just what your position is. A person like her could cause a lot of trouble. Do you know what that means? We close these docks down in a second. Understand?"

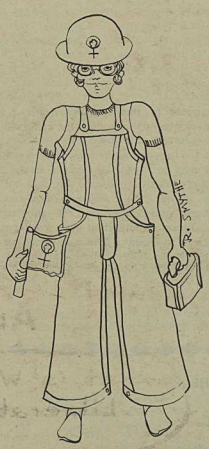
"Well ...."

"Labour Relations would take a very dim view of this."

"Right. It's people like you, not her, that shouldn't be working down here."

"I'm just carrying out instructions ..."

"From who?"



"From the company you WORK for ! And that does not include, supposedly another worker down here, preventing *her* from working ... Let me know if you have any more trouble."

"Thanks."

"O.K. I'll go in to Vancouver, but I'll go alone, which means that I'll drive the truck in and I'll have the keys, so I'll have to drive it back."

"No!"

"Yes!!"

Back in Vancouver

"I'm here to fill in an application form, and have an interview."

"O.K. I'll get an application form. Oh, where are they? Oh dear, I've misplaced them ... it'll take me a minute or two to find them ... and the manager wants to meet you."

"Why does he want to see *me*?"

"Well, he wants to see what kind of person we have working for us."

"Why me? This is not the usual procedure that the company follows for casual workers."

"You must agree this is a rather unusual case."

"No. What's unusual about it?"

" ..... you don't agree, eh? Oh, here's the manager ... "

"Why do you want to work out there? It's dirty."

"It's a job, and I'm unemployed."

"Couldn't you find something else?"

"No. Jobs are very scarce right at the moment."

"Well, I don't see why she shouldn't work out there for the next few days while this shipment is in - but none of the night shifts.

"Well, that would be nice if I don't have to work nights, but why should *I* not have to work at night?"

"We don't want to find a corpse out there in the morning on the docks."

"What!?"

"Well, the men out there drink at night, and get pretty aggressive, and I'm sure that neither you nor your husband would like anything like that to happen to you."

"I doubt very much that what you're implying would happen."

"Well ... "

"But I'll agree to it right now."

Back at the Docks

"The manager said I could work out here, much to the disappointment of the assistant manager, who thought he was doing the company a favour by trying to persuade me I shouldn't work out here by using scare tactics that I could be raped, molested and murdered by the kind of men who work out here - implying that the workers are the bad guys and the managers are the good guys, or that the workers are all animals, whereas the managers are gentlemen - which, from my own previous experience working as a secretary to management, is NOT TRUE."

"Typical of management tactics."

Two weeks later

"Hey, how come I'm only getting $2.00 an hour, when the men start at $2.20? The union's gonna hear about this .....!"

Watch for the continuing saga of Brenda, the Lady Coal Sampler, in future issues of the Pedestal!

DIVORCE?

CANADIAN STYLE

By Elizabeth Law

It's not every day you agree with Justice Minister Turner. He played tennis when Canadian women tried to talk with him about abortion deaths. Nor do his statements on the LeDain Drug Commission report provide common meetinggrounds But he was right on when he said, "Yesterday's order, if it is oppressive, becomes tomorrow's oppression." Thousands of Canadian women know exactly what those words mean. In 1961 272,215 female heads of Canadian families earned an average of $2,128, and recent estimates place the number at 500,000.

In 1969 two Vancouver lawyers, Linda Ragon and Hope Hyslop, did a study on the need for divorce among people on social assistance in Vancouver, for the Inner City Service Project. About 850 women qualified for a divorce under the new act of 1968, mostly on desertion or separation grounds. These women are big business for the legal profession, since even a simple "Friday ten-minute special" divorce ranges from $350 to $500.

The B.C. Legal Aid Society stipulates that a woman must have a doctor's certificate (rarely, a social worker's will do), stating that she is under severe mental strain and that her well-being and that of her children is therefore threatened. Only then will the Society make use of one of its lawyers. (The Society's Board of Directors is all male; a minority would like to do something about the situation.) Some women with doctor's statements are turned down, and in all Legal Aid does only about 2 or 3 divorces a week. It is overworked with the existing caseload of criminal

matters, and funds — from the Socred Government allocation — are limited. These funds enabled a full-time staff og three lawyers and a clerical support staff to come into existence a few months ago. Last year only twelve volunteer lawyers handled approximately 554 referrals over a nine-month period, receiving about $130 per case.

The Bennett Government must be pressured by those most concerned with equal access to the courts for all classes of society. As Miss Hyslop said, "...since the majority of problems affecting persons who did not have money to employ lawyers were in the matrimonial area should not legal aid be tackling the matrimonial problem instead of treating legal aid in matrimonial matters as an exception to the general rule." (Minutes, Directors of the Legal Aid Society, April 16, 1970.)

Neither Legal Aid nor the B. C. Bar Association have cracked down on the do-it-yourself divorce kits now selling from $40 to $75, though some of them are incomplete and misleading. Both these institutions thus seem to recognize that the problem is massive and urgent, and that other solutions are necessary.

Legal fees are set in order that lawyers, like all others, may make a profit. Nevertheless it is every Canadian citizen's right, in theory, to have equal access to the courts. However, in practice the Divorce Court functions almost exclusively for those wealthy enough to pay steep legal fees. Fewer than 10% go through with do-it-yourself kits. The best, according to the legal profession, is the *B. C. Divorce Guide* by Wayne R. Powell. It's accurate, contains step-by-step instructions, and sells for $5.00. It's a move in the right direction but it's not enough, not nearly enough. Ultimately the government of the people of British Columbia should ensure that all income classes in the Province have equal access to the courts. That won't happen easily, however, if the present social assistance administration is representative of where the government is at in B.C.

Women's Caucus here and elsewhere could help a great deal. We have been trying to set up a system of educating and assisting women through the divorce courts and in the period of adjustment afterwards. We need help from people who have been through it themselves and who, with social workers, legal stenos, and lawyers, could act as resource people. We should be able to cope with those ten-minute specials (uncontested , on grounds of desertion or separation) by ourselves, with the help of law students or lawyers to advise on the technical details. We could set up a referral list of lawyers willing to do an occasional divorce free, or at minimum cost. We would need to set up mutually supportive groups afterwards to share job, education, and child-care information, and to help counsel those women just beginning the long climb to freedom.

I shall ask that this matter be placed on the agenda of the next general meeting of Women's Caucus. Please call me at 738-6971 or 879-0477, if you are interested in equal access to the courts for women. Huelga!

ABORTIONS: MORE CONFRONTATION

On Thursday, July 9, 15-20 members of Women's Liberation confronted Dr. Termanson, the Head Psychiatrist at Vancouver General Hospital. The confrontation grew out of the case of a woman who was screwed around by the medical system when she applied for a legal abortion. In Vancouver, the therapeutic abortion situation has really opened up since the women from the abortion counselling service have applied pressure on the hospitals.

The woman who was screwed around by VGH had a good case for an abortion. She went into the psychiatric clinic on June 22 and saw a student psychiatrist who told her to come back the next day to see a resident psychiatrist. Both doctors agreed that she had psychiatric grounds for an abortion. For the second signature, necessary at VGH, the woman went to Gynecology. She was told to be ready to enter hospital on July 2. She phoned July 2, as she had heard nothing, and was told that the head nurse was on holidays; she should report back to Psychiatry. She did so and was interviewed by Dr. Termanson, who told her she could not have an abortion: it was not fair to her nor to the doctor, as the baby was alive, according to evidence from Gynecology that she was 16 weeks pregnant.

In light of the inconsistencies and the pure bullshitting involved in the case, with the encouragement of the woman concerned, 15 women rushed into into Dr. Termanson's office on Thursday afternoon July 9. (His nurse had previously informed us that he did not have five minutes to spare).

Termanson agreed that he would speak with two women. In this meeting, he agreed that the case had been held up until very late in the pregnancy, but said 'If you don't agree with my decision, take her someplace else.' We pointed out that this was no solution; she had already wasted 4 weeks on 'his' channels. We said that he considered her so unstable that she could not make the decision herself (only he had the power and knowledge to make it!) and yet she was not unstable enough to be eligible to take the 'great risks' involved in the termination of the pregnancy. (Risks which his clinic had intensified by stalling such a blatantly serious case.) We also challenged his theory that 'the baby is alive'; the New York cut-off date for legal abortions is 24 weeks, Oregon's 20 weeks, and certainly infanticide is not condoned in *these* states. He responded that the operation becomes more serious later in pregnancy. This is true, of course, if Canadian hospitals continue to use such out-dated methods as hysterotomy (removal of the foetus through the uterine wall), rather than a simple D&C which is used up to the 12 week period. Termanson stated that the more modern method (saline injection inducing natural miscarriage) was once used in VGH when the only 2 deaths by therapeutic abortions occurred. Is it possible that these doctors did not know how to use this new method properly since they were not taught it in medical school?

Termanson refused to reverse his decision, and said that if we kept coming back we would prejudice any subsequent cases. He said that the woman could be interviewed by another psychiatrist on Monday; if he agreed, Termanson would sign the form. We left his office after pointing out that Termanson was merely passing the buck.

Any women willing to help, phone the women's collective at 879-5836 or Women's Caucus.

HELP!

we need paint, furniture, etc.
so we are having a

BENEFIT PARTY !

with music and, we hope, beer . . .

FRIDAY, JULY 24, 9:00 PM
at 511 Carrall (at Pender)

BRING A DOLLAR!

plus any old furniture, typewriters etc.
you may have lying around

DAY CARE

continued from page 3

This board is responsible to the Minister of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement, the Hon. P. Gagliardi.

We feel that policy should be determined by elected members of the community and that professional civil servants should act as an advisory board.

We also feel that an Appeal Board, independent of the policy making board, should be established to deal with grievances regarding inspection, licensing etc.

* * *

We feel that in co-operative day care centres the training of the staff should be left to the discretion of the parents.

In government controlled day care centres training of staff should be determined as follows:

That course content be decided by elected representatives of the community, by professionals and by those taking the course.

There are at present only two training facilities for group day care centre supervisors: Vancouver City College and Capilano College. We feel that training should be offered to a larger number of people than at present.

* * *

The day care facilities in Vancouver for children with special needs (i.e., emotional and learning disorders, retardation, deafness, physical disabilities, etc.) are grossly inadequate.

In Vancouver proper there are only four such facilities. They have places for approximately 60 children.

* * *

Many day care centres are closed during the summer months. Full time day care centres are urgently required to meet the needs of working parents who cannot leave their jobs for two months in the summer to care for their children.

Child care centres are required also for parents who work evening and night shifts.

Day care facilities should make it possible for single parents on welfare to have some leisure time, to develop community contacts and to meet their own personal needs.

GIVE US BREAD BUT GIVE US ROSES

WOMAN

by Melody Rudd

Society you mock me

You take my body and hang it from every billboard and postcard and magazine
My gonads you throw to the crowds in movie houses and restaurants and nightclubs
And my genitals dangle on the cars and cigars and books you sell

Ah but the power of my sex is only an illusion

We are not to use this power
We are to be reduced and toyed with and ultimately impregnated

Birth Control — your innocence astounds me
The primitive hocus-pocus of your ways
is an insult to the biological needs of people
And the alternative of abortion is locked securely under Criminal Acts

And now you say to me
Sex is Fun
Fuck you society
Sex is a crime
Ask any prostitute
Ask any woman with an unwanted pregnancy
Ask any unmarried girl
because if you don't execute your crime right
you will not only get fucked, but fucked up as well

Yes
Take my body and use it to raise the GNP
because if you give it to me
there won't be so many people
masturbating all over their new homes and flashy cars

because if you want to be
it will become not a body but a person's body
and when you deal with that body you will have to deal with that person too

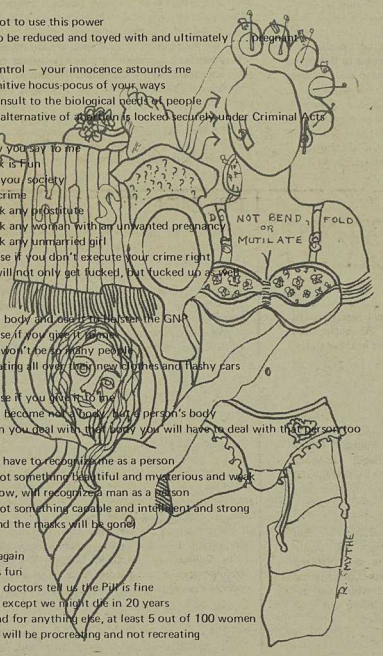
Men will have to recognize me as a person
and not something beautiful and mysterious and weak
And I, now, will recognize a man as a person
and not something capable and intelligent and strong
(and the masks will be gone)

Tell me again
Sex is fun
As doctors tell us the Pill is fine
except we might die in 20 years
And for anything else, at least 5 out of 100 women
will be procreating and not recreating

Tell me again
Sex is Fun
As two thousand women die each year
from incapable profiteering abortionists
And twenty thousand more are hacked up

Yes
Take our sex and hang it in our faces
as fun
but don't let us do anything but procreate
don't give us the control of our bodies
and fear us if we have minds
for with our mask down, we can see thru yours

Society you mock me
but that doesn't mean I have to



KNOW YOUR ROLES: LESSON ONE

Airport. Universal Pictures. Produced by Ross Hunter, Directed by George Seaton.

This movie's got everything — the long-suffering wife of the philanderer, the long-suffering, social- climbing-wife of the big executive married to his job, the young, pregnant mistress, and the career woman dying to give it up for love. And that's only the Beautiful (Airport) People. Among the not-so-beautiful lumpenpeople, there's the long-suffering martyred wife of a mad failure, the oafishly proud mother of a monster, and a sweet, little ol' lady stowaway (she's the one — see the movie to discover 101 ways to bilk an airline and ride for free — it's almost worth the rest).

* * *

"Helen, you've got to do something. You must know what's going on (as Vince, or Fred, or whoever rushes off to see his mistress before taking the flight).

"You mean, Vince (or Fred, or whoever) coming home only long enough to change clothes? Oh, I know, I know — but I *understand* him. And I *know* he'll always come back to me. Those others, they're just a passing fancy. He always comes back to me (to change clothes). It might have been different if we'd had children. . . (sigh)."

In the meantime — glamourous pilot Vince or Fred or whoever, with glamourous stewardess Gloria at Gloria's glamourous pad:

"Vince (or Fred, etc.), I've got to tell you something — I'm pregnant. Now, I don't want you to feel obligated — I got into this by myself (immaculate conception?), and I can get out of it by myself."

"Oh Gloria, are you sure?"

"Yes Vince, I'm sure."

"Well, I can't just stand by. There must be something I can do."

"Oh Vince, I really do think you *care* for me, just a little."

"Of course I care (stoutly). Uh, maybe we can find a doctor..."

"Well Vince, I've thought about . . . an abortion (with catch in throat), and I thought, well, I would be sophisticated and just snap my fingers and say: Right, I need an abortion, just like that . . . but now, well (with faint smile), I don't want to get all mystical about this, Vince (getting all mystical), but, now, I know there's a life inside me, Vince, and we created it, Vince (so it wasn't immaculate conception — that's a relief). I dunno — maybe I'm just an old-fashioned girl at heart..."

* * *

"Audrey. . . Audrey?"

"Right here, Mr. Smith."

"Audrey, we're in the middle of the biggest crisis this airport's ever faced, you and I. The citizens are protesting about noise pollution, and the Board of Trustees want to close the airport right down. It's up to us to *keep those planes flying*.

"Right, Mr. Smith."

"There's a plane stuck on Number 22 runway, and the snow's getting deeper by the minute. We're going to make some of the most important executive decisions of our careers tonight."

"Yes, Mr. Smith."

"Fine. I knew I could count on you. You're the best executive director this airport ever had."

"Thank you, Mr. Smith."

"Don't mention it, Audrey. . . Oh, could you make me some coffee? And how about a few of those super sandwiches with the tuna fish? You sure know how to pamper a man. . ."

* * *

And get this, folks: What with the big executive running off with his executive director, and the pregnant stewardess capturing the heart and mind of playboy Vince, plus the endless possibilities for rehabilitating long suffering Helen, there's enough stuff and momentum for a sequel: *Son of Airport*. Miss it!

P. HOFFER

CALENDAR

JULY

14 P WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, 8pm, office
Current projects are a series of disc ussions at the Library for downtown office workers, and support for women on strike. Plans for a women's union are also being discussed. Call Jean McLaren (327-2524) for general information, Bouk Elzinga (254-6673) for hospital workers info and Jo Storms (298-1674) for info on office workers.

15 3 EDUCATION WORKSHOP, 8pm, 8232 E. 16th, S. Bby - Meeting to continue plans for a conference of high school women. Call Heather Fiedler (522-6101) for info about high schools, Carol Mortenson (876-5894) for info about teachers and Esther Phillips (299-9671) or Andrea Lebowitz (255-6987) for general information.

16 F INFORMAL DISCUSSION, 8pm, office
Coffee and discussion for people who want to know more about women's liberation.
STRIKE SUPPORT, 8pm, office
A subgroup of the working women's workshop specifically for actions in this area. Call Sharon Boylan (435-1289).

19 ♂ PEDESTAL MEETING, 11am, office
Meeting to plan content and sales. Open to everyone interested. Call Pat Hoffer (731-5412).Diane (874-4874).

20 I CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE, 8pm, office
Includes representatives from each group; open to everyone. Proposes agenda for General Meeting, exchanges and evaluates info from each group. This meeting also begins rewriting the Women's Caucus Program.

21 P WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, 8pm, office

23 F GENERAL MEETING, 8pm, office

24 ♃ BENEFIT PARTY!!!!! 9pm office
To raise money for renovations and furniture. Bring your friends. Lots of music and fun. Donation: $1.

25 ♃ GIANT CLEAN-UP & PAINTING WORK PARTY all day, office

26 ♂ PEDESTAL MEETING, 11am, office

28 P WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, 8pm, office

29 3 EDUCATION WORKSHOP, 8pm, office
General discussion of actions around educational system. Also, if possible, a sub-meeting of university women to make plans for Fall. Call numbers listed under July 15 & Sharon Boylan, 435-1289 for university info.

30 F INFORMAL DISCUSSION, 8pm office
STRIKE SUPPORT, 8pm, office??????

AUGUST

2 ♂ PEDESTAL MEETING, 11am, office

4 P WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, 8pm, office

6 F INFORMAL DISCUSSION, 8pm, office
STRIKE SUPPORT, 8pm, office??????????

8 ♃ HIGH SCHOOL WOMEN'S LIBERATION CONFERENCE
Place not decided yet.

9 ♂ HIGH SCHOOL CONF. CONT'D
PEDESTAL MEETING, 11am, office

10 Σ CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE, 8pm, office

11 P WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, 8pm, office

12 3 EDUCATION WORKSHOP, 8pm, office
More overall discussion of actions in and around the educational system.

13 F GENERAL MEETING, 8pm, office

16 ♂ PEDESTAL MEETING, 11am, office

18 P WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, 8pm, office

20 F INFORMAL DISCUSSION, 8pm, office
STRIKE SUPPORT, 8pm, office

23 ♂ PEDESTAL MEETING, 11am, office

24 I CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE, 8pm, office

25 P WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, 8pm, office

26 3 EDUCATION WORKSHOP, 8pm, office

27 F GENERAL MEETING, 8pm, office

30 ♂ PEDESTAL MEETING, 11am, office

SEPTEMBER

1 P WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, 8pm, office

3 F INFORMAL DISCUSSION, 8pm, office
STRIKE SUPPORT, 8pm, office

★ THE ABORTION INFORMATION SERVICE
operates in the office:
Saturdays 10:30-12:00 a.m.
Mondays 5:00-7:00 p.m.
Wednesdays 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Call the Women's Collective (879-5836) or the office (684-0523) or just come down during these hours, if you want to get involved in counselling.

★ A MEDIA PROJECT is to begin soon at the Women Artists' Co-op.
If you are interested, call Pat Hoffer (731-5412).
For photography: learning developing, printing photos and doing slide shows call Catherine Stone (874-1338), or Brenda Huxley (684-9087).

★ ABORTION PETITION CAMPAIGN
(see Demonstration Story, p. 12)
For more information call
Betsey Meadley 926-3571
Mary Trew 685-2755

THE ABORTION CLINIC: SIX MONTHS LATER

After the October Conference, we set up an abortion workshop and had a month of meetings before presenting the plan of an abortion counselling service to the General Meeting. It was approved and we began.

With only an obscure idea of how the therapeutic abortion process functioned (or didn't), a few names of sympathetic doctors (later we found out that meant they had lots of sympathy and that's all – No help), and two illegal abortion sources, we advertised in the Georgia Straight and university papers. Four women showed up the first night. They were given a questionnaire to fill out anonymously that helped us counsel them, and also gathered some relevant statistics.

Those who wished a pregnancy test were given one then. We had had long debates on whether we should "risk" being charged for practicing medicine without a license by giving these tests. The rationale for them in the first place was that women were not able to find out for themselves if they were pregnant. They were forced to see a doctor, who then sent them to a laboratory. The laboratory would only give the results to the doctor and this involved several days' delay and money. Since we all expected to be arrested any time under Section 237 for procuring abortions, we felt the former risk was not worth considering. What we had hoped to do would be to get as many women through for therapeutics as possible; and those that failed or couldn't get them had an out through illegal channels.

Previous to opening the counselling service, a questionnaire was sent out to all the lower mainland doctors to find out their position on birth control and abortion. The majority were in favor of both. A follow-up letter was sent to those doctors who gave the most favorable replies, inviting them to a meeting.

It was essential to have as many doctors as possible who would support abortion on demand, so that the pressure for obtaining therapeutics would not fall on a few doctors as it was then doing. No doctor wanted to become known as being "easy", readily available to push therapeutic abortions, for fear that his entire practice would be swamped by desperate women wanting abortions. Then too, the greater number of doctors pushing for therapeutics, the greater the pressure.

Five doctors showed up to the first meeting, and their numbers have gradually increased. There were discussions about the difficulty of obtaining therapeutic abortions, and many of the doctors were very outspoken regarding the severity of the problem.

During the first weeks of the service, we felt great. We were finally confronting the system and bringing about change – and we were getting women abortions. But the elation we felt soon changed to cynicism. The therapeutic abortion process was so elaborate that few women could afford the time and anxiety necessary to go through with it. They preferred illegal channels which were much simpler and, at that time, relatively cheap. Doctors were referring their pregnant patients to us, rather than pushing for therapeutics, and the illegal sources were closed down one by one (by this time there had been at least 4 or 5). Our telephones were ringing all the time. The doctors' group was growing too slowly to help. At least 50 women were being counselled a week and we had nowhere to send them. *We realized that the abortion counselling service was not only not confronting the system, but that it was helping the system continue by removing the pressure for abortion from the doctors in the hospitals.* Women were being refused pregnancy tests at the Women's Clinic at Vancouver General Hospital and told to go to the Women's Caucus. Doctors were phoning counsellors and asking how they could directly refer to individual counsellors, social workers were unofficially sending women to us and a quack abortionist came down and offered to do a cheaper job than the doctors we were sending people to (ugh!). Well, we were back to – "confronting the system" or else applying for a grant as a social welfare agency!

The abortion counselling service had no more options for obtaining abortions. The choice was either a therapeutic abortion or a quack abortionist, which was no choice at all.

We came to a general meeting and said that the abortion clinic could no longer function as it had. We were exhausted, and we knew for the service to be effective it would require strenuous effort. After 6 months of this already, we couldn't go on.

We saw that the Counselling Service would have to enter a new phase, now that the alternatives for women were so reduced. We saw that we would have to go directly to the hospitals with pregnant women demanding abortions. This would require a continued assault – not a one-time effort. We also saw that many women would be reluctant to do so, but would realize it was their only hope. Many of us felt it was a slim hope at best, given the irresponsible response from doctors to our demonstrations at the B.C. College of Physiscians & Surgeons, and the Vancouver Medical Association. Most of the doctors we confronted seemed to think that there *was* no problem, or that we should go bug the politicians and leave them alone to practise their "value-free" medicine. The women from the Abortion Caravan had just returned and were enthusiastic about continuing the clinic. They began counselling women in groups, explaining that their only recourse was a therapeutic abortion, and that it might be necessary to confront the hospitals directly. However, Psychiatric Out-patients' Clinic has become more open and responsive to the women's needs. It has not been necessary to confront VGH as a group yet, since so far they have been doing as many as 3 abortions daily.

Some of the doctors (feeling strength in their numbers) have begun to exert pressure, favourable to the Service, and have been making contacts for women with new doctors who will push for therapeutics. However, the same problems are frustrating the counsellors now, as before. Many of the new doctors who say they are sympathetic, use the situation to moralize, keep the women waiting for weeks and then refuse to help. But they are being called down by several of their own colleagues – finally taking some of the responsibility out of our hands. Still, the situation is far from satisfactory. Many women haven't enough time to go through the "proper channels" and some won't. The hospitals are still doing barbaric and unnecessary hysterotomies (cutting through the stomach and uterine walls) on women over 3 months pregnant.

The entire abortion campaign has exerted much pressure and influence. Many other, more liberal, groups have taken up the crusade. It is obvious that, even given sympathetic doctors and hospitals, the bureaucracy is degrading and time consuming, and that this present system for obtaining abortions must be removed finally.

SUBSCRIBE!
This could be your last chance to receive The Pedestal at the astounding! low price of $1.50 /yr.
NAME.....
ADDRESS.....
CITY..... ZONE..... PROV.....