a women's
liberation
newspaper

Pedestal

.15

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VICTORY AT RAYMUR PLACE p 2-3
OFFICE WORKERS p 8-9
ROYAL WEDDING p 10
DEEDS OF OUR FOREMOTHERS p 14
BIRTH CONTROL INFO IN SCHOOLS? p 13
& LOTS MORE

May Day

1886

May Day is celebrated around the world as a day of solidarity of all oppressed people.

It originated as the focus of the monumental struggle for the 8 hour day in North America. Organized labor in the U.S. and Canada resolved to hold a general strike on May 1, 1886 to force the employers to reduce the working day from the usual 14 or 16 hours. On the first May Day, industry was paralyzed as 350,000 workers across the continent downed tools. It is estimated that 185,000 workers gained the 8 hour day through that first great struggle.

The "Eight Hour Song" summed up their feelings:

We mean to take things over;
We're tired of toil for nought
But bare enough to live on: never
an hour for thought.
We want to feel the sunshine;
we want to smell the flowers;
We're sure that God has willed it,
and we mean to have eight hours.
We're summoning our forces from
shipyard, shop and mill:
Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest,
eight hours for what we will!

1971

May day will be celebrated this year in Vancouver after many years of passing almost unnoticed.

Representatives of over thirty groups met last week and decided to organize a mass mobilization and people's festival. There will be a celebration-fair in Stanley Park to coincide with Trudeau's opening of the new whale pool. This will be followed by a march to the Hotel Vancouver where Trudeau will attend a $50-a-plate Liberal Party dinner. A poor people's feast will be held at the court house.

Today the working people and youth of Vancouver face unemployment and repression, to a large extent due to the Trudeau government's policies. May Day 1971 will be a celebration in the tradition of demonstrations of solidarity like the marches of 1935.

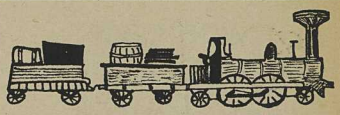
Anyone interested in helping in the May Day plans should contact the May Day Project through the YIP office at 509 Carrall Street.

1935

The cover this issue is a photo of the massive May Day march and demonstration in Vancouver in 1935. Fifteen thousand took part in the march in support of the longshoremen's strike, as well as in support of the 4000 single unemployed men who had struck and evacuated the 137 labor camps in remote areas of BC.

The longshore union's women's auxiliary played a very active role throughout the strike. They organized tag days which raised thousands of dollars for the strike fund by collecting nickels and dimes throughout the city. The women also took part in the actual picketing.

Throughout the Depression, women demonstrated at city relief (welfare) offices against their own oppression as women trying to support families on a mere pittance, as well as in support of the unemployed relief camp strikers.



The CNR tracks run between the Raymur housing project and the school that the Raymur children must attend.

The Raymur mothers first blocked the railway tracks in January. The CNR at that time verbally and in writing agreed not to run trains while children were going to and from school (8:30-9:00, 11:30-1:00; 2:30-4:00). Since then the company has violated the agreement several times.

Last month the women occupied the tracks on a 24-hour basis. They refused to leave until the company posted a $50,000 bond to keep to the terms of the original agreement and proof was produced by the Canadian Transport Commission and the City of Vancouver that an overpass would be built.

The company attempted to get an injunction against the women who were sitting on the tracks, but the judge declared that the document would be binding on both parties if issued. The Burlington Northern Railroad (which leases the tracks from the CNR) has agreed to have two permanent flagmen on the tracks from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. and no trains travelling during an hour before and after school and at noon. The CNR has up to now refused flagmen but has agreed to the hourly restrictions. The City has acquired the property on which to build the overpass. The women agreed to accept the injunction against them and have ceased to obstruct the trains because the train companies will be in contempt of court and liable to heavy fines if they violate the terms of the injunction.

The mothers of Raymur Place fought a hard battle against big-business arrogance and bureaucratic delay, and they won; but their greatest victory is one you couldn't see in the TV coverage or pick out of the news stories. It's a victory over apathy, suspicion, defeatism – the whole poverty cycle.

Raymur has been notorious among public housing projects in this city as one where a tenants' organization could not be formed, where police were reluctant to enter in the small hours of the morning, where the tenants themselves were slow to make friends and quick to take offence with one another. There are about 260 family units in Raymur, most of them occupied by women alone with their children. Most of them just existing, ignoring as far as possible their situation, waiting for a chance to get out.

Last November I took an anti-noise petition concerning the train whistles door-to-door for signatures. I was amazed at the uniformly friendly and enthusiastic response I got. Although many of the women I talked to didn't believe the petition would do any good (it didn't) they signed willingly and talked freely. I thought, there should be some way to tap all that womanpower. Not just on the noise issue, but for other improvements.

The chance came in January when Carolyn Jerome called me and told me about the train sitting across the tracks while the children crawled under it on their way home from school the first day after Christmas holidays. She was upset; she got me upset too. (The previous April I had taken my nine-year-old son out of school for two weeks because he was riding the trains as they crawled through Pender Street.) We got a small group together in my apartment and planned the first sit-in.

Originally it was planned for the following day but had to be postponed – we had no paper for notices to be distributed door-to-door in the project, we had no cardboard for posters, one of the mothers had had a death in the family. We finally got the notices, sat up very late Tuesday night making up slogans for our posters and safety signs to post on the track. Wednesday morning we launched the sit-in. It was icy cold and still dark when I went out that morning. I remember dragging the signs down the fire escape and thinking, what a nut I am. Nobody else is going to show. The whole idea is absurd anyway, and who do

MOTHERS STOP TRAINS

we think we are, challenging the railways? But I went on down, because of my son, because I had said I would. And they did show. The first people I met were two girls from a women's liberation group who were waiting outside my building. They volunteered to take the stop signs up the track and hold them – the loneliest and least exciting job. One by one the mothers trickled out of their homes. Within half an hour there were perhaps a dozen of us – some I had asked personally to come, remembering them from casual conversations in elevators and from their response to the anti-noise petition. Others, Carolyn had found the same way. Some had heard from their neighbors. Some of them I didn't know by name.

It is interesting that of the thirty-odd mothers who put in an appearance that day nearly all of them had been reached by personal contact, either by Carolyn or myself or someone we had talked to. Hardly anyone came in response to our notice alone. And they all said the same things. "I've been wanting to do something about the trains for a long time, but I didn't know anyone else cared," "If only I'd known that someone else was thinking the same thing I was." It seems incredible in a high-density development like Raymur, filled with women who have many problems in common, that there should not have been more contact between us. But there was suspicion and a need to maintain what little privacy we could salvage, and these things blocked communication for three and a half years.

The second sit-in three weeks later brought out a slightly smaller group of women, some new ones, more old faces. By then we knew each other better and did not resent as much the absence of others. We knew who was sick, who working, who had small babies or other domestic reasons for not being with us. We knew, too, that whether they were there or not, they supported us. It helped.

The third and last sit-in was a different kind of thing. We had achieved some degree of organization in spite of ourselves. That sounds funny, but it isn't meant to be. We resisted all along the idea of a power structure; we had no executive, no official leadership although inevitably leaders did emerge from the group. We wanted to keep it with, of, and by the mothers.

But we knew that for a continuous demonstration we would need outside help, and lots of it. Phone calls and more phone calls. At eleven o'clock Tuesday night, the first day of the tent-in, I counted seventy people on the track. There were about twelve mothers, and an equal number of teenagers, who were actually from the project. The rest were from all over the city – women's lib members, students, social workers, personal friends and relatives of the mothers, tenants from other housing projects, a minister, two dockworkers whom our demonstration had laid off – a fantastic mixture of people and interests. We were not alone.

The support poured in during the three days and five hours of the tent-in. We received a ten-dollar donation from Inner City Services to feed ourselves – the first part of the money bought flashlight batteries for the lamps loaned to us to light the tent Tuesday night, the rest went for ingredients for a huge stew one of the mothers cooked – this same mother kept the sandwiches and coffee coming out to us every few hours for the whole time. Another mother made sausage rolls and coffee and brought them to us, paid for out of her own pocket. Others brought milk and sugar and cups and apples and cookies. To appreciate the value of their contributions you must understand that these are women on welfare, giving of their own groceries the week before their cheques come. From outside the project we received donations of money, and the loan of sleeping bags and lamps and even – bless Inner City – the loan of the Now bus for three nights and the last day. The tent itself belonged to Jean Amos, one of our mothers. She volunteered it and her stove and lamp, and the use of her car for the many errands that had to be run. Many people gave us more than they knew just by driving by and wishing us good luck. One night, I think it was Wednesday, two police officers stopped and had a cup of coffee with us outside the tent.

Unbelievable things began to happen within the project. Women who were known chiefly by the noise they made during their domestic battles, women who were seldom seen outside their homes, women who were known by reputation as drunks – they came out. Some of the hardest workers in the group were women whom none of the rest of us would have thought of asking. They came voluntarily. The tent-in gave them a cause and they rallied round it. I saw two women who have been fighting for months standing quietly in a group policy discussion. I saw another woman who generally talks in a very defensive, neurotic way, gently explaining to a group the problems of a neighbor who couldn't join us. One of our most faithful track-sitters, down with influenza, had to be literally bullied into going home to bed. One very shy woman, who has participated silently all along, suddenly opened up and poured out a lot of darned good ideas.

The good feelings grew along with our support. Of course we got tired. Few if any of us got more than two or three hours sleep at a stretch between Monday and Friday. Occasionally there were flare-ups between us. The group came close to splitting over policy decisions many times; I think what prevented any serious splits was the newness, for most of us, of being part of a group. We were willing to ignore angry words and deal patiently with unreasonable attitudes because we wanted so badly to keep together, to win the fight for the overpass, to preserve the new spirit of Raymur Place. Now that it is over, we can talk out the differences we had, the sharp things we said to one another when we were just too tired to care.

It would be nice to be able to say that we won because our cause was just: like hell we did. We won because we really meant what we said; because every time the railway came down to talk to us and try to manoeuvre us off the track, both literally and figuratively, we stuck to our insistence that safety for our children came first. We won because it was a real and pressing crisis; you can't get that kind of dogged support for a manufactured political issue (politicians take note). We won because we had wonderful outside support, and partly just because we were lucky. In a sense, our strength lay in pure ignorance. We didn't know when we began how far-reaching the consequences of holding up one railway line could be; they were far beyond our expectations. We didn't know how to form a strong, efficient organization; to the end we ran a half-organized, word-of-mouth, voluntary sit-in that worked far better than the strict scheduling of chores and shifts would have done. The women of Raymur have had it with organization, with being at the bottom of chains of command, with being pushed around by bureaucracies. I do not believe that they would have done the wonderful job they did if there had been any authority, however informal, over them. We asked one another favors; we never issued orders.

The dangers in this system were that the CNR could have divided such a loosely knit group; they tried. Or we could have divided ourselves; we nearly did, several times. We had shouting matches more than once. But we shouted at one another and got it all out in the open for the group to work on; for the most part we avoided the trap that dissatisfied members of organized groups fall into. There was very little whispering behind backs and attempting to disrupt authority; we had no authority to disrupt. We each did our own thing, but into the group what we could. It worked.

We do not have total co-operation in Raymur. We'll never get that. There are a few who feel that our actions have "degraded" Raymur and "embarrassed" the people who live here. Most of us feel quite the opposite, that for the first time we are not ashamed to say we live in Raymur Place. We have a sense of community pride that is hard to find in a modern city and even harder in a low-income housing development. We intend to hang onto that pride and develop it. The night before the tent-in began, Carolyn Jerome and Jean Amos were sitting up late drafting possible future projects for us to exercise our group spirit on. It needs exercise: that way we feel it will grow. And we need the projects. We already have a co-operative grocery store operating; we are thinking now of day-care to free our neighbors of the crushing depression continuous mothering can cause; we need better recreation facilities for our children. We need to involve our old-age pensioners in more activities. One of the first things we are going to do is go door-to-door and talk to our neighbors to find out just what they do want. More good ideas for the future will come from them. And we have learned one important thing: we need to keep on talking to one another. If we can manage that, we can keep our project a good place to live in.

–JUDY STAINSBY

EDITORIAL

Between 1961 and 1966, 600,000 men and 500,000 women joined the Canadian labor force. The number of women working for wages in Canada, BC and Vancouver is large and growing larger. The majority of women have at some time in their lives worked for wages. Many of us will spend most of our adult lives working. Only a tiny minority of women have never known the work-world of the office, the department store, the hospital, the classroom, the restaurant, the assembly line, etc.

The North American women's movement has not yet effectively confronted the special forms of oppression that we face on the job. Yet the potential power of women as workers must be realized if we are to reach our objectives.

Working women acting together could force society to meet many of our demands because of our roles in the functioning of the economy. Can you imagine business as usual without the cooperation of secretaries, telephone operators, key punch operators, file clerks, teachers, hospital workers. . .?

Women workers at the turn of the century used their collective power to stop production to force an improvement in their working conditions (see p. 14). We are kidding ourselves if we think we will be able to transform chauvinist attitudes and institutions without developing similar forms of collective strength. It is not enough to read up on the struggles of working women of the past and present. It is not enough to offer token support on a few picket lines. Women who do paid labor and women who do unpaid labor will have to struggle together to end our exploitation and degradation (see p. 3 and 8-9).

This year we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Paris Commune and the first workers' government in history. The role of women in this momentous event is described (though briefly) on p. 12. With this issue we also commemorate May Day (cover and p. 2), a day for celebrating the solidarity of working people.

We have included stories of women's struggles, past and present. A knowledge of these struggles should dispel any doubts that women can struggle together, learn together, and win together.

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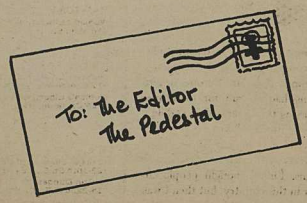


from windsor

Dear sisters:

February 12th and 13th, 1971, signified the first meeting of Women's Liberation with the citizens of Windsor and district. Our booth at the Devonshire Mall attracted much attention. We had the opportunity of talking to the public, telling them about ourselves, and enlisting their support in promoting free abortion, the establishment of a family planning clinic and pressuring for a Federal Council to prod the government regarding implementation of the recommendations of the Status of Women Report.

Reactions were varied. A lot of people simply shunned our booth. Others made rather negative remarks as they hurried by. Many stopped to talk, and some remained for an hour or two and engaged in all-out debate.

The booth was well manned (pardon me!) at all times, and we were kept busy. We discovered that many citizens were indeed sympathetic to our aims, and as a matter of fact, we ran out of petition forms early Saturday afternoon and had to write extra forms by hand right on the spot. (Petition forms regarding abortion law repeal and the family clinic petition.)

Regarding our three petitions – 503 signatures were collected on the abortion law repeal petition and these were forwarded to Hon. John Turner, Justice Minister, Ottawa. 468 signatures were collected for the Family Planning Clinic for Windsor and these were sent to Mrs. Kishkon, Chairman of the F.P.C committee, Windsor City Hall. We collected 284 signatures for the Federal Council petition and this has been forwarded to the Prime Minister, P.E. Trudeau.

from the Windsor Women's Liberation Newsletter

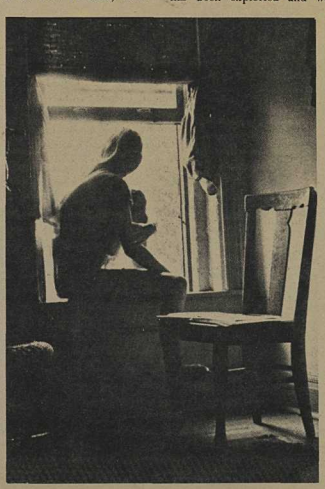
Editor:

Michel Chartrand on Saturday, March 13, was hissed by some women in the audience without just cause. This incident started when a woman stepped up to the microphone to ask a question. Michel greets her; among his words are "Let's talk of love." This is greeted by hisses apparently generated by some women in the audience and perhaps a few men. He speaks a few words, delivered with a tone of sadness and disappointment, of woman's liberation. The rebuttal from the audience was more hisses and accusations of "male chauvinist". In many or even the majority of cases (most noticeable in public life is M. P.E. Trudeau) such words are the result of male chauvinism. Many things Michel Chartrand may be, but not a chauvinist. Anyone who listened to him and understood him or who knows of Simone Chartrand should realize this fact. Here the women involved were ignorant of Michel.

Why have women denied and tried to erase any mention or proclamation of love in public or private? It is claimed that men only see women as sex and love objects. Not so with Michel. He declares equality for all, but why should equality deny love between men and women? He realizes the fact that both intellect and love can be compatable which is what many women appear to have denied can exist. Many men, true, do deny love and intellect the chance to co-exist possibly because of reactionary conditioning based on primitive and ancient requirements and presently promoted by the establishment because of its fear of enlightenment of women and the subsequent disruption of the status quo, which, to business, and to a lesser extent, government, can be expensive to them if disrupted.

Surely love between man and woman has been exploited and warped but certainly not by such people as M. Chartrand. Again the culprit, as many have pointed out and as Michel singled out for other crimes, is the capitalist establishment. This real criminal cannot be underemphasized and must continue to be exposed, explained, and proclaimed until it is realized by all. This way we will stop threatening the symptoms and be ready to treat the disease.

peace and love (all types)
Neville Wallbank



The following is a letter from Ingrid Szabo who is attempting to organize a newspaper that will provide information about existing low-cost or free services (educational, medical, recreational, daycare, etc.) in Vancouver. In outlining the objectives of the paper, she says, "The 'Helpful Neighbor' shall be positive in its approach to social problems, proposing ways to organize and the relief of the situation ourselves by humanitarian help toward each other. . ."

The Royal Commission on Women's Rights could result in a welcome change on the economic and social scene.

Are we women expecting too much? Not in my opinion. This would only mean the enforcement of some common sense laws, which would make women no more than equal; also most of these requested laws are geared to protect her children.

Up to now laws of child support, equal pay and equal chance for job training are given only lipservice, just as we get the "Ladies first" treatment: the men carry our bags, open doors for us and give us roses. To the sheltered or young, inexperienced woman this gives the feeling of being something special, but when it comes to the nitty-gritty of getting by in life, we are much less sheltered than a man, because we bear, rear and try to protect our offspring, and fight an oldfashioned stigma of society.

Often to men's regret, we have become educated enough to see the economic situation, and aggressive enough to say: "give us bread instead of roses". We have even acquired a defensive attitude just as any suppressed minority group has. But we can back up

with sound reasoning every one of our demands, for example:

Equal chance for employment: As it stands now many employers don't hire us because of discrimination. Their excuse: "Women get married, women have babies, women quit. . ."

Equal pay for equal work: This is perfectly workable in most jobs which are done with machinery replacing musclepower.

Equal chance for job training: It should be proven first that women are unable to learn what men learn, before there should be discrimination in job training.

Enough subsidized day care centres, also for children under three years of age, continuing all year through: This service is badly needed by wives of poor earners or disabled husbands, as well as mothers without husbands. This would help many families off the welfare roles.

Wives' ownership of half the estate: Here would never have to be a law, if the woman would remain happily married and all husbands kept providing life's necessities for their families. But statistics show that one out of three marriages break up. Years of absence from her job often make it impossible for the wife to find employment. The estranged husband is in most cases working at an average wage of $3.50 per hour, and yet a very few keep supporting their families. They know they can get away with it! Equity in a home jointly owned with her husband is made inaccessible to her, unless her husband agress to sale and settlement. In order to force division of property the costs were quoted to me to be 20% of the house's value.

During the years of raising a family and putting in her time in service to the upkeep of the home and wellbeing of her husband (statistics show married people live 5 years longer than single ones) she should have – I don't mean necessarily a salary – but a share in the estate for her efforts.

The financially independent wife should also be equally responsible for the children, for the husband (if disabled) and the upkeep of their estate.

More independent women will result for a few years in an increase of divorces: the now abused, unhappy wife would not have to stay to have a roof over her head. There would also be fewer marriages: the divorced or unwed mother would not rush into another marriage for economic reasons. And a prospective husband would examine himself first if he wants to face responsibility while as situations are now, he attempts marriage with the attitude: "If it doesn't work out, I just leave, welfare can take care of them!"

I trust that in most marriages the man has a conscience and sense of responsibility, but for the many who won't only laws can protect the wife's rights. This could even change men's outlook and raise the next generation into having a more responsible attitude.

As a comparison I recall a situation in my home town in Europe, where pedestrians had to run for their lives when crossing the street – drivers didn't even slow down. When coming to Vancouver I was pleasantly surprised over drivers' courtesy toward pedestrians. First I thought people are just nicer in this country, but then I was told the reason for this courtesy: the law is rough on a driver who hits a pedestrian!

Once the legal status of women has changed the outlook of society toward them, people will also enter marriage with more respect toward each other and try harder to keep it that way.

–INGRID SZABO
437-5878

across Canada

MARITIMES
Pat Beresford
6124 Pepperell, HALIFAX
Carol Hamilton-Smith
748 Forest Hill Rd., FREDERICTON

ONTARIO
Shirley Greenberg
5 Commanche Dr., OTTAWA
Janet Rogers
c/o ANIS, KINGSTON
Ellen Hunter (745-7442)
774 George St., PETERBOROUGH
Women's Liberation
373 Huron St., TORONTO
New Feminists
Box 597, Sta. A, TORONTO
Toronto Women's Caucus
c/o Deirdre Bekerman, 11 Pinewood
HAMILTON & District Women's Lib
297 Wentworth North
R. Feiler (821-9393)
Apt. 4-86 Yarmouth, GUELPH
Pat Dewdney
38 Craig St., LONDON
Toni de France
565 King E., KITCHENER
Women's Liberation
Box 461, SUDBURY

MANITOBA
Women's Liberation, Ste. 606B
416 Main St., WINNIPEG

SASKATCHEWAN
Women's Liberation (242-5830)
517 Lansdowne, SASKATOON
Women's Liberation (525-6252)
2259 Cameron, REGINA

ALBERTA
Lorna & Linda Rasmussen
722-10th St. S., LETHBRIDGE
Jo-Ann Dundas
215-22nd N.E., CALGARY
Sybilline House (432-7685)
11113-83rd Ave., EDMONTON
Women's Liberation (429-4463)
Rm 10-10168-100th St., EDMONTON

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Women's Caucus (Pedestal)
511 Carrall St., 684-0523
Women's Liberation
Fanshen House 879-5836
Women's Alliance
684-3535
Terry Inglis (384-5894)
1278 Centre Rd., No. 4, VICTORIA
Bonnie Ann Dukwa, Chem. Dept.
NDU, NELSON

thinking back . . .

Being a white middle-class liberal female, I, like a lot of other white middle-class liberal females,did not think much about my status as a woman until the movement called Women's Liberation began making a lot of noise about a lot of issues. Nor was I even aware of the movement until the media began giving it more and more frequent coverage. My interest in the movement, and what it was saying, began around the fall of 1969. I can recall having a long discussion with a friend and being very defensive about babies and housework and other "domestic" activities. My attitude was "Well, what's wrong with cooking and babies anyway?" And hers was "I'm not saying anything's wrong with them per se, so why are you getting up tight?" I was getting up tight because somehow I felt I had to defend a certain notion of "womanliness" or "femininity".

That conversation I suppose was really the beginning of a hell of a lot of observation and questioning of many accepted modes of behavior and attitudes pertaining to my status as a woman. I also began thinking about the ways in which I related to both men and other women, in both personal and work relationships; and to what extent this was determined by how I thought of myself as a woman. This was what I'll call "stage one" of my interest/involvement.

Stage two involved a slightly different consciousness, as I became almost hyper-aware of the myths which have perpetuated and reinforced the beliefs and attitudes of so many people. Also I began to sort out some of my own "hang-ups" and became more confident of what I felt to be true. Once I had identified with the movement, I tended to take any incident pertaining to it very personally. For example, every advertisement asking *me* to buy a certain product in order to become sexually attractive (and therefore happy) made *me* feel exploited; every time I heard a man laugh about some "dumb broad" or "spinny chick" it reminded *me* that *I* was thought to be intellecturally inferior and emotionally weaker; and of course every time I heard a snide, crude or facetious remark about women's lib., it was just another comment on the fact that *I* as a woman, was not to be taken seriously.

With Stage Three came a better sense of perspective, the return of a temporarily lost sense of humor and a decision. Making a scene every time a door is opened for you isn't going to solve a great deal. Men are becoming aware that women are people and wish to be treated as such. They are an oppressed group, largely through no fault of their own, and obviously attitudes of any kind never change overnight. Things like abortion and equal employment are really the easiest things to win. The attitudes which underlie such injustices are the hardest to fight because they are very ingrained and often very subtle. Attitudes can't be changed by laws; it's a slow process requiring patience and tact.

The decision mentioned was whether or not to become actually involved in a women's liberation group. By Stage Three I considered myself a "theoretical" feminist and knew that I was avoiding active participation. I have always shied away from "organizations" because I dislike the inevitable bureaucracy which goes along with them, but the main reason was political. For me, women's liberation, like any other liberation movement, is inextricably bound with politics. I knew that I stood somewhere to the left of centre, but now explicit geography was hazy. Also, like other liberation movements, this one ranged from moderate to extremist groups, and I wasn't sure just how the extremes were divided. I mentioned this to Pat one lunch hour and she suggested I come along with her to a general Caucus meeting. That was just last month, and although I'm still feeling things out, going was a good move on my part. I met quite a cross-section of people, all of whom were friendly and very open to my questions and interest. I have a friend who is fond of saying – If you aren't part of the solution, you're part of the problem. I suspect he's right and I suspect I've been part of the problem long enough.

–HEATHER MACANDREW

women in teaching

"To strike is unprofessional. . ."

"This action will damage teachers' public image. . ."

"A teachers' strike is against the public interest. . . depriving children of an education. . ."

On March 19, BC teachers staged the first province-wide teachers strike in Canada, protesting teachers' low pensions. Although the one-day strike was a token effort in itself, it reflects the fact that thousands of BC teachers are beginning to challenge the myths that are used to keep them in their place.

The teachers are under a major attack by the provincial government. Under the guise of a "war on inflation," the government has cut back spending on education to the detriment of students as well as teachers. Now, they have attacked the teachers' organization, the BC Teachers' Federation. By changing the law to make BCTF membership optional, they lay the basis for challenging the right of teachers to bargain collectively through the BCTF.

In Vancouver, women have begun to organize within the teaching profession. The following article by women teachers gives some of the background to the current situation, and this month's teachers' convention.

Since the formation of the BC Teachers Federation in 1917, the members have been predominantly women. Yet the executive officers and policy making bodies have been almost entirely men. In 1931, women occupied 78% of teaching positions in Canadian public schools. This majority has been steadily declining as higher wages and greater job security make teaching more attractive to men. In spite of the fact that women still make up a majority in the profession (66% of Canadian teachers), they have never played a strong role in decision and policy making in the union.

Not until 1954 was there a woman president of the BCTF. To date, of 51 presidents only 3 have been women. In 1968, 56% of BC's teachers were women. Yet today only one woman is on the 11 member executive council, and executive committees consist almost entirely of men.

Many factors have made it difficult for women to participate in the affairs of the organization. Many women were unable to sustain a career because of provincial legislation which, before the second world war, disallowed women from teaching after marriage. Even now that these barriers have been overcome, many women are still faced with the dual responsibilities of home-maker-mother and full-time teacher, which doesn't allow the time and energy to become involved in BCTF or local association affairs.

In addition, women have on the whole accepted certain myths about their position in society as well as their profession. Women's jobs are seen as temporary or supplementary in spite of the fact that only 54.1% of teachers are married, and that the median years of experience for women is higher than that of men who hold comparable positions.

While the teaching profession has been regarded as "something you can always fall back on" most women don't use it this way. Many women teachers are self supporting and even support families on their own.

One of the greatest attractions of the teaching profession is that women enjoy "equal pay for equal work" (or equal qualifications). But this also turns out to be a myth since most women are channeled into elementary or primary fields where work loads and class sizes are often twice as heavy as in high schools. Women have not had access to jobs with authority and higher incomes. In Vancouver, there have been only two women principals since 1935, both appointed in the last two years.

While women make up the majority of the membership, the BCTF does not represent the interests of its women members or even "the profession" as a whole. The executive heads do not provide leadership or try to open up channels of communication with rank and file members They respond very reluctantly to pressure from local associations.

Last year at a large rally of teachers from all over the lower mainland to demand strong action on salary negotiations, BCTF leaders pleaded with the membership to cool it. Various associations were calling for more militant action; some waving strike signs, others calling for work stoppages.

At the last annual general meeting several local associations tried to move the federation to make a stand against the government's new finance formula. They had already begun to experience staff cut-backs and heavier loads, and to see educational standards deteriorating. They got little support from the "leadership" and the resolutions passed were totally ineffectual.

Women in the teaching profession are in a particularly significant position to work against their own oppression as women, and against the institutions' socialization of boys and girls into their traditional roles.

From the first reader to the final guidance textbook (which stresses their 'natural' roles as wives and mothers) a girl is taught what is expected of her. She is channelled into clerical courses, home economics, or literature classes. A girl who wishes to take industrial arts, for example, is regarded as a "freak".

Women teachers must recognize this special problem and work to overcome it by demanding a truly representative voice in decision-making at all levels of the educational system. Parity with men on all committees at every level (local to executive) would offer the opportunity for women to elucidate these previously ignored problems.

Readers, textbooks and guidance books are not the only means of teaching boys and girls their place in society. The structure of the school itself shows children how the system works. Men are principals and department heads; women are teachers at the lower levels with no decision-making power over course content or any other aspect of the education system.

The educational system is part of the larger social system and inculcates its values. Children are presented with a prettied-up picture of the status quo and discouraged from asking questions. Direct punishment is necessary only a few times before children learn that dissent is not acceptable. Obedience and acceptance are the main duties of school children even when this includes acceptance of racism, male chauvinism, imperialism and other characteristics of the social system.

In the past, the BCTF has failed to even recognize, let alone take action on, vitally important issues such as channelling, day care and kindergarten facilities. Women are beginning to organize and work together around these demands.

Groups like WIT (Women in Teaching) in the lower mainland have formed to discuss and take actions to challenge discriminatory practices in job hiring and job opportunity, and channelling of students. Actions included circulating questionnaires to get the reaction of other women teachers, setting up a display at UBC summer school which documented evidence of how textbooks and courses channel students and what contributions women have made to society which are ignored in school. The display also presented biases and myths that are accepted as facts. Panel discussions were held at UBC and leaflets have been distributed throughout some districts in the lower mainland. Some members have been successfully making changes in their job situations, such as dress restrictions for teachers and students.

Recently WIT submitted to two local associations four resolutions regarding pupil and teacher dress restrictions and textbooks showing women in stereotype roles, and asking the BCTF to demand that the Department of Education develop social studies units examining women in history. These were passed by both local associations and will be discussed and voted on at the annual general meeting of BCTF in April.

The response to WIT has been good. WIT plans to continue working to effect changes in curriculum, textbooks, guidance and counselling courses, and to have a more representative voice in decision-making.

UNION WOMEN COME TOGETHER

Last month about thirty trade union women met to discuss the problems that women experience both within trade unions and within their places of work.

The first meeting was called by a man, David Gilbert, a UBC student in the Dept. of Social Work, whose motives appeared to be twofold: that he is a social democrat concerned with the plight of oppressed groups, and that he could use us as guinea pigs for his studies.

The meeting was held under the asupices of the BC Federation of Labor, which meant that many women in unions not affiliated with the Federation were not informed of the meeting.

The Federation locals were informed of the meeting only a few days before the meeting, but about twenty-five women turned up in spite of lack of notice. The turnout is indicative of the interest of working women in such a group.

The meeting was very successful in terms of the participation of working women. We have been very isolated and were very glad to finally be able to discuss our problems as women within the union movement.

Discussion was somewhat hampered by the fact that Mr. Gilbert occupied the chair but the enthusiasm of the women over-rode most of his resistance to going beyond his narrowly-defined topics of interest. There was a clear emphasis on the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women both by Mr. Gilbert's prepared statements distributed at the beginning of the meeting and by the presence at the meeting of "Status Committee" women, some of whom were obviously of the University Women's Club/garden party type and who found it difficult to relate directly to the problems of working women.

The union women at the meeting were aware of the gist of the contents of the Report and were of the opinion that it said a lot of good things but wanted to discuss "where do we go from here?"

The women were eager to discuss how to increase the awareness of fellow women workers on such needs as equal pay for equal work, equal job opportunities, day care centres, as well as finding out how the women at the meeting could work together as a group to improve our lot. Everyone felt that a second meeting was imperative as many of these questions had been only touched on.

The next meeting was held on Saturday, March 27th. It was smaller than the first and about half the women were new.

The first item on the agenda was electing a new chairman. We felt that it was important now that the women of the group assume its leadership. Phyllis Young was elected chairman and Mr. Gilbert kindly stepped down from the chair and became recording secretary.

In this meeting, membership of the group was discussed and it was decided that it was important that we not spread ourselves too thinly and that we would confine our membership to those working women who are in trade unions.

We discussed affiliation with the Status of Women group but felt that they were not too sure where they were going yet and we would only offer to work together with them and not affiliate yet. Two women volunteered to meet with them and discuss common problems.

It was felt that our purpose was fundamentally threefold:

1) to provide support for one another in dealing with our individual problems in our unions and in our places of work.

2) educational work to increase the awareness of working women in the trade union movement throughout the Lower Mainland, both with respect to what their present rights are, and what they should be.

3) to engage in active struggle as a group where called for.

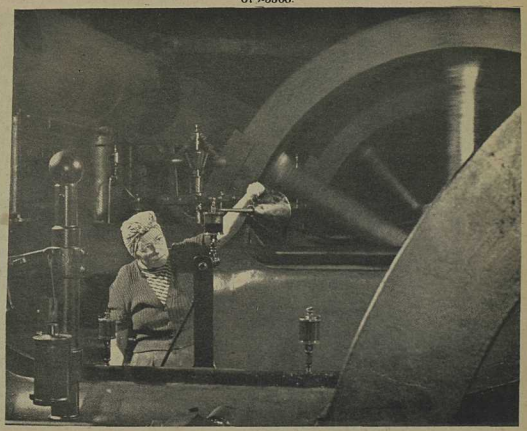
It was felt that one of the most important vehicles for furthering our aims would be to establish women's committees in the locals to discuss and press for equal rights, and each member of the group decided to go back into their locals to try to organize such a group.

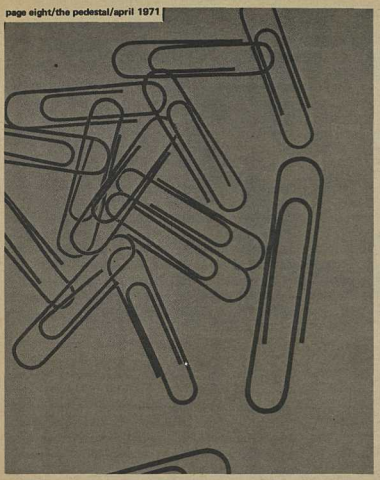
It was decided to commence the educational work with an investigation of the rights and lack of rights of working women in provincial legislation. Two women volunteered to do the necessary research into the Factories Act, Minimum Wage Laws, etc. and to present the gathered information to the next meeting.

Possible collective campaigns were talked about around a four-day-week, equal pay for equal work, and day care, but it was felt that we had to have knowledge of our general position as working women before we could determine strategies.

We decided that BC Federation of Labor sponsorship would severely limit the group and that we would function autonomous of any group at the present time, calling ourselves the Trade Union Women's Workshop for want of a better name.

Everyone was very enthusiastic about the group and the next meeting will be held on the main floor of 517 East Broadway on Sunday, April 18th, 1:30 pm. All trade union women are encouraged to come. If you'd like further information, please contact Phyllis Young, a member of the Office and Technical Employees Union who works in the B.C. Fed. office, 879-3568.





I sit at a typewriter writing a boring letter in the stereotype business language. Half way through the letter one of the bosses pokes me in the back and asks "love, would you type a few letters for me and put these files away." I think for a moment and answer: "Look at my desk loaded with work; there's no reason you can't put the files away yourself. As for the letters they will have to wait until tomorrow. If you don't like it do it yourself." Then he leaves without a word, drops the work on my desk and goes off for a second coffee with one of the other bosses. Then I continue typing a few more words when the damned phone rings and answer it with a forced cheery voice.

One of the regularly purchased items kept in our office supplies cupboard is aspirin.

". . . it has been established that the average office uses only about 35 footcandles whereas a minimum of 100 are needed for most work. . .

"As for the effect which heat has on employee efficiency at various temperature levels, the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers established the following relationship:

AT	OUTPUT DROPS
85 degrees	10%
90 degrees	22
95 degrees	38

The above figures cannot be taken lightly when consideration is given to the fact that it only requires about a 1.5% increase in office productivity (seven minutes of extra work a day per person) to pay for air conditioning. . .

"One large office ran a metabolism test on a group of typists and found that, when the work was performed under noisy conditions (i.e., in the 60 to 70 decibel range), 19% more caloric energy was expended."

Why do the
the office? Why
jokes, or their t

"Go!" I started typing as fast as I could. I'd already spent an hour writing arithmetic, spelling, and clerical skills tests. My chest was so tight with tension I could hardly breathe. My stomach was filling up with acid. I was typing "As an 'Overload Girl' you like working for Office Overload. The variety and challenge give you an enthusiasm for your job. . ." "Stop!"

A few minutes later. . . "I'm sorry but it should be better. Would you like to try again?" I muttered something about trying with the electric typewriter. It was faster but with more errors. So I had to try again with the manual. "I'm sorry but we promise our clients better than this. Perhaps you'd like to practice tonight and come back tomorrow. . ." I was beside myself with fury. "For $1.75 an hour, 40 words-per-minutes is good enough!" and stormed out the door.

Personal Appearance

Your personal appearance is a tremendous asset in business. It is even more important than exceptional typing or stenographic skills. We really cannot stress this point enough. Clients do expect Office Overload girls to look clean, tidy, well-dressed – above average.

Deodorant

There are many good inexpensive brands on the market and this item is a must.

[. . . and likewise under the following headings: Hair; Hands; Make-Up; Clothes; Smile. . .From "All about your pay cheque," a brochure for Office Overload "girls"]

inter-
OFFICE
mem

This page was put together from s
dividual experiences in offices and s
thoughts about changing the situation.

Sometimes we think maybe we're
$300 a month is good pay for a woma
is basically a nice guy. . . So we were
find statements by employers, and
tants", which describe the situation al
it. The difference is that we try to s
human beings; they so clearly see us

But the situation we find so oppr
duals can be changed if we act tog
women organized will have tremend
hope these ideas will lead to more dis
we can organize ourselves as office w
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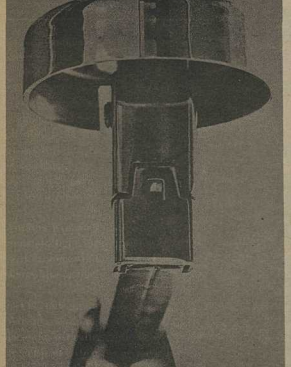


Without any job security or union protection at all, women are forced to compete with one another for jobs which demand not only skill, responsibility, hard work, but – almost always, and often most important – sex appeal or at least "excellent grooming" as well.

The trade union officials who complain that office workers are difficult to organize are generally incapable of dealing with many of our real problems. It is true that women office workers would be better off with any kind of union – in terms of job security, and pay – but it is difficult to defend existing office workers' contracts which provide for different pay scales for men and women doing the same work.

Women office workers are supposed to be working mostly for the fun of it. Rushing around doing personal favors for the boss(es), smiling good morning, apoligizing for his mistakes. The rewards are in the people you meet (particularly prospective husbands, but even just the *small talk with the big wheels), in your opportunity to show off* that smart new outfit, hairdo or cosmetic combination. The money you make is just a special little extra favor that they do you – and something that one doesn't talk about, sort of a secret between you and the head office (who would want to give up their special relationship with the powers that be?). An office worker is first and foremost a woman (ever notice how surprised they are that you can type although it's in the job requirements? – "All this and she types too!"). You are supposed to act like mother, sister, potential sweetheart, general all round housewife.

Of course it doesn't really work that way. Nobody quite believes the whole thing. Most people just believe it a little. And when you get beyond the myths, the reality is ready. If you do talk about your paycheck (that precious secret), you are told about it. If you don't take the opportunity to show off the latest styles, you can be out on the street. You don't have to talk union to be told that you have a "bad attitude" to your work.

Office workers are generally regarded as unskilled: but only because we have no control over our skills. (Just as we are considered unorganizable because we are not yet organized.) In fact, office work is skilled work; those skills can be measured; and yet the kind of job we get, and our pay, are determined completely arbitrarily by individual employers. Union hiring, with workers' control over job classifications, and with the relationship of wages to skills determined by collective agreement, could mean the beginning of real dignity for office workers

In many ways, the situation of women wor
that of the industrial working class before th
industrial unions we know today. We can lea
some of the early labor organizations (see page 1

The kind of organization we need is one
possible, that can include women who are indiv
position to organize their entire workplace; t
bargaining rights and win victories in one or an
plant, etc. Most of the early labor organizations
included individual membership, many pe
successful in establishing a collective agreemen
work.

What is required is a women's union (perhaps
Organizing Committee"), certified as a union so
bargaining rights in specific struggles. Unlik
organization would cut across divisions of bl
unemployed/employed, etc.

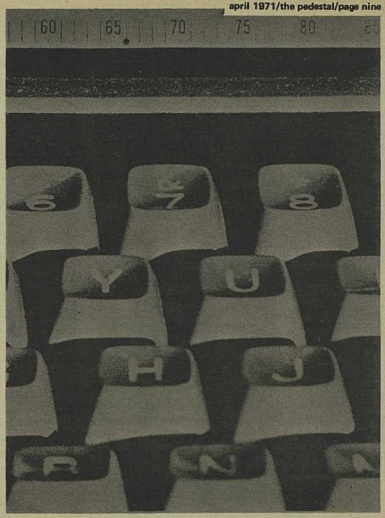
Union hiring and control of job classi
important to cut across the hierarchy in office
to establish job security for women workers,
part-time and temporary employment agencies
workers, and to end the situation where wome
on the basis of personal appearance, and are
one another as sexual objects.

I'd been looking for a job for three months. Here I was again sitting in the office of another self-assured boss. "I suppose you think we here at Westinghouse only make light bulbs, fridges and stoves. . ." (No, I thought to myself, I'm sure you produce all sorts of much more impressive products like jet bomber engines and infrared detectors. . .) "It's Mrs. isn't it? I'm sure a young newly wed like you would really enjoy working for Westinghouse. You would be eligible for our special employee discounts on washing machines. . . What evidence can you give me that you would be able to handle the tension and the heavy work load? We're a young, fast-growing company and our girls are real go-getters. . ." That night I dreamed I bombed Westinghouse.

"There are several things which can be done to minimize employee turnover. First, careful interviewing and the use of a 'weighted' application blank can help to keep drifters or the like from being employed. Second, it has been proven that good indoctrination procedures play an important part in making a favorable impression on new employees and in encouraging them to stay. . ."

From "Reducing Office Expenses: 8 Fertile Areas by James J. Hickey, Management Consultant

[All quotes, unless otherwise indicated, are from this priceless source. . .]



After six months we're finally beginning to know each other. At first I was always afraid somebody would squeal on me if I look a longish break or wrote a grocery list at work. But now we're beginning to work more as a team. Some days we work really hard; some days we just take it easy.

men have to tell me what they think of other women in
do they assume that I will find their comments, their
easing somehow complimentary?

"Employees of the Nanaimo Realty Company (Nanaimo, B.C.) are paid $2.50 for each pound of 'excess' weight that they lose. As for the results, the press quoted the management as follows: "Since the staff started reducing, sales have gone up 18%, the efficiency of the office has increased 20% and absenteeism has declined one-fourth. . .

". . . by feeding each employee of a plant in New Haven a glass of milk and a banana in the mid-morning and again in the afternoon, productivity rose 4% and errors dropped 8%."

"A study performed by the Fatique Laboratory of Harvard University established that an employee whose job has variety will generally turn out more work than a person who is required to perform, hour after hour, the same routines. . .

. . . The problem of boredom can be further combatted by periodically reassigning employes. Another reason for doing this lies in the fact that, when employees are kept together for long periods, they tend to stagnate and perform less well. . ."

OS

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We will have to challenge the role definitions and job classifications established by the bosses. Job classifications in offices are fantastically flexible. The title "clerk-typist" can mean almost anything. This is extremely convenient for employers since it means that they can extend the job content to fit the abilities of the employee, pile on more and more work and different kinds of work as an employee gains experience, lose nothing on sick leave since other workers fill in when one is sick. This cuts down on total employment. As the work expands, they simply spread it over the existing work force, gradually, and no one even notices. If it piles up too much, they can hire cheap temporary help and still avoid increasing permanent staff. Workers' control over hiring and job classification is essential for job security in office work. This would also make it possible for women who want to work part-time to do so without threatening the jobs of other working women, or providing super-profits for temporary agencies.

A woman's union would deal with the other problems that affect all women workers, including office workers: equal pay, day care, maternity leave, etc. This kind of flexible organization would enable us to fight for these demands on a city- or province-wide, or a community level (i.e. day care) as well as in individual workplaces.

Our objective is not to build a traditional union structure, but to organize working women. The union charter would enable us to carry out struggles that the present unions will not undertake. But any unit which achieved bargaining rights would have complete autonomy and be free to affiliate to any existing union, or to remain independent. The women's union would not consist of affiliates, but of individual voluntary membership.

This means that we would not be competing with the existing unions. In fact, from the beginning the women's union should include women members of other unions. Women who already are members of unions have experience, and flexibility (because of greater job security) that will be desperately needed in the struggle to organize the unorganized.

As well, women within unions also need organization – to force unions to begin to meet the needs of their women members, and support new organization. The meetings of women unionists, called by the B.C. Federation of Labor (see page 7), can begin to overcome the isolation of women unionists from one another and lay the basis for organization.

It is true that working women are not "unorganizable"; but it is also true that it won't be easy. Again like the early labor movement, there will be more defeats than victories in the beginning. Women will be fired, strikes will be lost. But the only chance of surviving those defeats and learning from them lies in an organization which is prepared to struggle, which understands the common problems of all women workers and can bring us together.

The Royal Wedding

BY GEDDA GOBBLER

Well, well, well, my dears, aren't you SO relieved that we've finally rid ourselves of that menace to home and hearth – a PLAYBOY prime minister. I'm sure that we all want to thank dear Margaret. Why it was getting positively worrisome to have that man running loose about the countryside. Of course, one can't help but wonder what she saw in him – a man fully two and a half times her tender years. But never mind, let cynics sneer, we know, my dears, that love is blind and conquers all.

Now, of course, my dears, it has to be admitted that it's quite a relief to have sweet Margaret settled down as well. You remember how positively frightening it was when she was running about unchaperoned at that dreadful place, Simon Fraser. And to make things positively horrid, she was in that *radical* anarchist department ASP – I mean PSA. Dear little Margaret was very nearly ruined. She was so young then... It's said that she was actually keeping company with one of those rabid radical T.A.'s...

Of course, the thing that was really frightening was that she was in danger of losing her womanliness. Can you imagine. She was actually thinking of becoming a career girl! Well, it certainly gave her parents a fright. After all, our Mr. Sinclair is a very important man in the Liberal Party – you remember when he was Fisheries minister – and you know he's on the board of directors of all those big companies. Well, of course, when you only have daughters and no sons to carry on, the best you can hope for is that you can groom your daughters to become wives for other important men. A career girl, no matter how successful, is just bound to be a terrible disappointment.

But thank goodness she's stopped all that nasty competition with men. We all know that she'll be so much more powerful as the woman behind the great man. And her degree in Political Science really fits her for a life as the companion of a politician. Now I know that you were just thrilled to know that she baked her own wedding cake and sewed her own dress. I can honestly say that our Margaret has become a true woman. What a *marvellous* model for Canadian school girls.

My dear friend George W——— was telling me that B.C. was becoming angry with Ottawa. And now it's just like the wonderful old days when Princes married Princesses in order to bring peace to troubled lands. But really I mustn't ramble on about politics; they really aren't my strong suit. But people's intimate lives – ah! how wonderful to describe.

Well, dear readers, it was a glorious wedding – perfect in every respect. Now we only have to look forward to the welcomed heir. And as we well know – that blessed event will touch the heart strings of the nation – and assure Pierre the next election.

FROM PERU: PEASANT WOMEN IN UNIONS

These comments on the role of women in the peasant unions of Peru are taken from an interview in The Militant, U.S. socialist weekly, of March 19, 1971.

Hugo Blanco is a leader of the peasant unions in the Valley of la Convencion in the Cuzco region of Peru. In the early 1960's, the peasants peacefully occupied the lands that had been taken from them by the landlords. Between 1961 and 1963 more than 300 such occupations took place.

The landlords used police, troops and private armed goons against the peasants. The unions responded by creating self-defense units. After a massive manhunt, Hugo Blanco was captured in 1963, charged with shooting several policemen. He was sentenced to 25 years in jail. After serving 7½ years, he was released as part of a general amnesty for political prisoners on December 22, 1970.

Militant: We noticed pictures of all-women demonstrations organized by the unions you led. Could you explain why all-women marches were organized?

Blanco: We had a special women's commission to deal with the special problems that the women had. They were exceptionally exploited on many haciendas. The woman question is rather interesting because the combativeness of the women peasants was exceptional. The first to get arms was a peasant woman who disarmed a policeman in a confrontation with the police and brought his gun back to the village. This act was symbolic of the combativeness of the women.

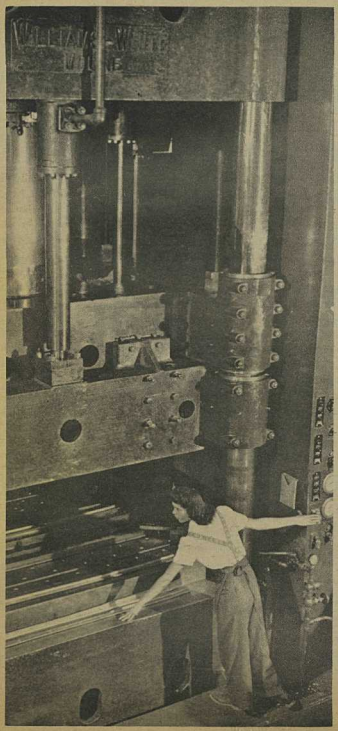
Later we put out a picture of an armed peasant woman. We were attacked by the Communist Party and other groups for the "provocative picture," but to us it was a very symbolic picture.

Among the peasants, there was a general prejudice against women. I recall one particular incident in Huadquina. The peasants there complained that they had no militant leaders. One woman peasant especially complained strongly about the lack of leadership. I told them they were wrong, that they had a very qualified leader among them whom they could elect as their president – the peasant woman who was complaining the most. I already knew of her militancy and ability. The first to object was the peasant woman. The rest remained dumbfounded; they had never thought it possible to elect a woman president.

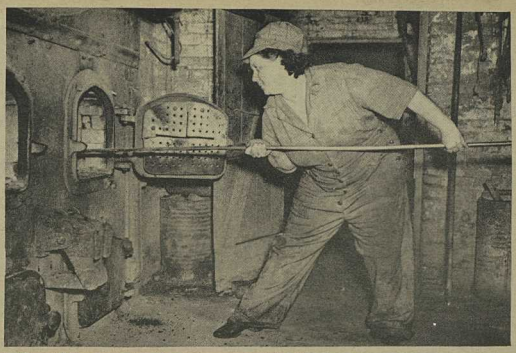
I told them it was up to them to decide but that they were incorrect if they claimed they lacked a leader. Well, they finally resolved to make the peasant woman assistant secretary of the union and a male, of course, secretary, in spite of his worthlessness. The next year, without any intervention by me, the peasants of Huadquina elected the peasant woman general secretary of their union.

For many years this union, led by the peasant woman, struggled very militantly...

There were many examples like this one. The prejudice against women hurt the struggle in many ways. But in another sense the oppression itself made the women rebellious. The truth is that the women peasants are more rebellious than the men.



And there *are* some "natural" women mechanics. "Like Joan," said the supervisor, pointing to a girl working over a big hydraulic shaper, "who should have been a boy. Except that she's better than most of them." Joan was trimming a bore for a 6-inch anti-aircraft gun to a tolerance of .001. She said she had always loved machines, but never had a chance to get her hands on anything like *this* before.

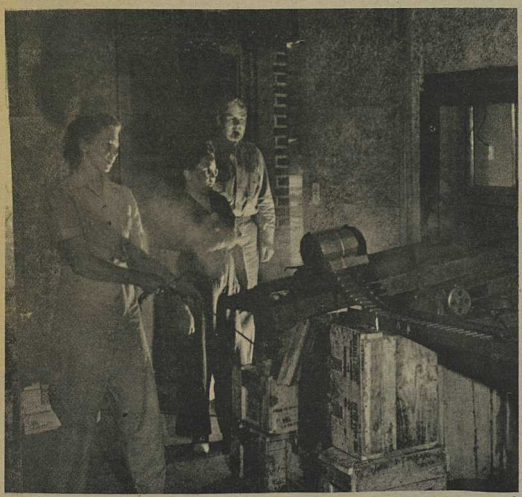


Men said there were jobs that our women wouldn't do – hot, heavy, unglamorous jobs in steel mills and oil refineries and on railroads. They are in all of them today.

Repairing a Scout Car – One of the Many Necessary but Unglamorous War Jobs

The weaker sex?

Excerpts from an article in The National Geographic Magazine of August 1944 – in the good old days when all the propaganda was aimed at driving women out of the home and into the work force. . .



They said women's nerves couldn't stand the noise of the big guns, that their frames wouldn't take it. Women ordnance workers can stand anything.

"It's really simple to build a ship," she explained. "You get your plan, cut out your pattern, prefabricate it, fit it together, and launch it. Men have always made such a job of it!"

Women in The Paris Commune

The Paris Commune, the first example of working class power, began on March 18, one hundred years ago.

The participation of women in the struggle that led to the establishment of the Commune is an important historical example of women's recognition of the need to fight for their own liberation. The actions of the male Communards during the two months of the Commune's existence in initiating programs beneficial to women indicates their recognition of women as an integral part of the working class. They realized that measures which aid women's ability to participate can only increase the effectiveness of the working class struggle.

The Paris Commune was not the result of a planned revolution. Late in 1870, the Prussian army had defeated the French and besieged Paris. After withstanding tremendous hardship to aid first Napoleon III, then the bourgeois government of Alfred Thiers, to defend their city, the people of Paris found themselves deserted.

Thiers fled to Versailles and there negotiated a surrender. In attempting to consolidate his power following this capitulation to Bismarck's terms, Thiers suppressed the left wing press. The revolutionaries, Blanqui and Flourens were sentenced, in their absence, to death.

The French Empire had fallen. No one but the workers had sufficient energy to try to save the nation: thus, the people of Paris were the only ones willing to defend Paris. They armed the National Guard (all able-bodied men) through public donations. Thiers had to disarm the workers in order to remain in power, but the workers feared betrayal and a restoration, and would not give up their arms.

On March 18, Thiers ordered the French troops into the working class districts to retrieve the cannon; to remove the artillery that defended Paris against the Prussians. When dawn broke on March 18, milkmaids, who were the earliest risers in Montmartre, discovered the troops preparing to remove the cannon. They roused others and a large crowd formed a solid human blockade against the troops. It was a victory for the people: the troops refused to fire and fraternized with the other workers. Louise Michel reported: "That triumph of the popular cause is perhaps chiefly due to the intervention of the women, who covered the artillery with their own bodies, and even placed themselves at the muzzles of guns, to prevent the latter being fired." The army retired to Versailles and the National Guard, finding themselves in power, called an election to form the Commune.

Most of the Communards' energies were directed towards defending the city. They ultimately failed and Thiers army invaded Paris. The ruling class took its revenge on the workers: fifty thousand people were executed and seventy thousand more fled the country or simply disappeared. Women were rounded up, tried and executed along with the men.

During the two months of its existence the Commune passed many decrees. Although most of them could not be implemented, the decrees are interesting for what they indicate about working class interests and the position of women in the working class.

Women had taken an active part in the revolution all along. Before the Commune, they worked thirteen hours a day for a pittance. They were excluded from citizenship, deprived of an education, defrauded of what little wages they did get, duped by the clergy, and often forced into prostitution. The organizations set up during the seige of Paris laid the foundation for the Commune. Women set up their own Vigilance Committee in Montmartre, the political centre of the working class. Soup kitchens were organized by Nathalie Lemel and Louise Michel, two members of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International, founded by Marx). Previously, Lemel had organized La Mermite, a cooperative which provided thousands with meals and political education during the winter of 1871.

While women could not vote in the Commune, and many Communards held backward views on women, their participation was recognized as essential and a series of decrees were passed to improve the conditions of women's lives. A 600 franc pension was granted to the widow of any National Guard who had been killed defending the Commune with a smaller pension for each child whether or not there had been a legal-clerical marriage. Another decree stated that any woman separated from her husband could get a food pension.

Many of the Commune's decrees which were designed to improve conditions of the working class in general were especially valued by women: for example, the decree that tenants could not be evicted for a period of time.

A commission of three men and three women was set up to make proposals about education. There was to be free education for all children. They recognized that women should get an education, academic and technical. There were plans to reorgnize day nurseries so that they better served the needs of the children.

The Commission on education also proposed that teachers' salaries be equalized "seeing that the necessities of life are as numerous and imperative for women as for men, and, as far as education is concerned, women's work is equal to that of men."

During the seige of Paris a number of cooperatives and workshops were set up to provide work for unemployed women. These workshops were transformed into medical units when work ran out. Clubs, many of them for women alone, had been organized during the seige and disbanded for a short time under the Thiers government, but were reopened during the Commune. Some other women's organizations were the women's section of the Montmartre Vigilance Committee, the Union des Femmes (a section of the International) and a variety of local committees and societies. Their activities included agitational work and recruiting women to the medical units.

All of the programs of the Commune came to an end when Thiers' army entered Paris on May 21. The Commune had been having internal problems; nevertheless, it took another week to break the people's resistance.

During the life of the Commune, Andre Leo pointed out that women had not helped to dethrone the Emperor and God simply to let men take that place themselves. She said, "The revolution means – since we must take its side – liberty and responsibility for every human being, with common rights as their only limit and without any privilege of race or sex."

This article is based mostly on an article in the International Socialist Review (U.S.) of March 1971. It is really sketchy, but the following books are available for further reading.

History of the Commune of 1871. by Lissagaray. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967.

The Civil War in France. by Marx. New York: International Publishers, 1940.

Memoires. by Louise Michel. Paris: Roy, 1886.

The Women Incendiaries. by Edith Thomas.

The State and Revolution. by Lenin. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.

Leon Trotsky on the Paris Commune. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971.

FREE THE HOTEL VANCOUVER 5 !

By spending all your time and money on clothes, you, too, can become a liberated woman!??

This was the theme of a fashion show sponsored by Eatons, CP Air and Empress Wings (ex-CP Air stewardesses) at the Hotel Vancouver March 10. A (surprise!) guerrilla theatre performance was added to the show, following which five women were arrested for singing in the library.

How this came about is that police received reports of women with white faces in the library washroom. Thither they therefore betook themselves and told the women they were being investigated on the suspicion of littering; then six policemen escorted the women to a paddy wagon. Due to the horrendous situation they found themselves in, the women burst into spontaneous song. They were then charged with Section 160 of the Criminal Code: creating a disturbance by singing in a public place.

While at the city jail the five women were intimidated by a constant parade of policemen trying to get a look at the Women's Liberationists". They appeared quite amazed at the 'girl next door' look of the arrestees. The women were then subjected to being photographed and fingerprinted: an illegal procedure. After several hours, they were released on $50 bail each.

Five days later, additional charges of creating a disturbance by shouting and using obscene language in a private place, as well as three counts of assault, were laid against all five women.

The alleged assault had taken place during a scuffle with security guards after the guerrilla theatre performance. The theatre, a parody of fashion shows, was staged in protest of the attempt to co-opt the women's movement by the media and clothing industry. At the end of the performance, used kitty litter carried in Eatons shopping bags was to be disposed of on the runway; however this had been forgotten outside the doors and was dumped in the hotel lobby instead.

On March 18, a Fashion Show for the Woman on Welfare was staged outside the Bayshore Inn by a group of women protesting another fashion show taking place inside the Bayshore Inn and expressing solidarity with the "Hotel Vancouver Five". The Bayshore show (the one inside) was sponsored by Simpsons Sears and the University Women's Club (remember the people who organized a conference about the Royal Commission Report and charged $10 admission?). Co-optation, hypocrisy, or screw the working women? Police were waiting and the women protestors were forced off PRIVATE PROPERTY: one huge square block of prime downtown waterfront.

FASHIONS FOR THE LIBERATED WOMAN

The Liberated Woman will be the theme of a luncheon fashion show to be held March 10 in the B.C. Ballroom of the Hotel Vancouver.

Presented by the Empress Wings Association, the show will begin with an historical collection of airline stewardess uniforms, then proceed to glimpses of "now" fashions as well as those in the future.

A no-host cocktail hour will begin at 11:30 a.m., with lunch at 12:15 and the fashion show at 1 p.m. Sun Fashion Editor Diana Ricardo will commentate.

Tickets are available at Eaton's or by calling Lois Dempster, 987-2404.

principals, pills and politics

Women organized a fashion show; women protested it. Men removed the women; men charged them with assault and other things; men are the judges and the lawyers. Men will call it justice.

The High School Students Birth Control Rights Committee is an ad hoc committee formed for the sole purpose of getting suitable, better than adequate birth control information into the high schools. This means distributing the McGill Birth Control Handbook, freely, openly inside the high schools and holding birth control and abortion assemblies in school time. Birth control and abortion assemblies or classes are discussions on birth control and abortion with speakers coming into the schools and presenting the facts and both sides of the issues. Considerable time for students' questions and discussion must also be allowed. That is why one lunch hour or one guidance period is not long enough and why it should be a whole morning or one afternoon. Completely irrelevant subjects are taught in school; practical useful ones like birth control are not.

We are all high schoolers, independent, members of the Women's Liberation Alliance, members of student councils, or members of school Women's Liberation clubs. We have wide support from the students across the lower mainland from New Westminster to North Vancouver to West Vancouver. We have people in over ten schools.

Our first action was in New Westminster Secondary School where we approached the student council and the principal for permission to distribute the handbook inside the school. We were referred to the school board who of course after just a few minutes of discussion told us no. But we distributed 350 handbooks we got from SFU, anyway, off school grounds (6 inches). Women receiving the handbooks were very enthusiastic.

That campaign was followed by a similar one in Vancouver. The first School Board meeting we attended (after talking with school principals and student councils) we were told we couldn't speak, after we already had, but were "cordially invited" to stay for coffee afterwards. We distributed our brief and press release afterwards. We also set up a meeting with a committee of the school board – "education and student services committee". The committee meeting was questions thrown at us by the various members of the school board – questions like "what kind of political hay are you trying to make?" and accusations of making up the issues. We certainly didn't make up all those pregnant high school women and the need for birth control information. They told us to come back to the next general meeting. We did, and of course they denied us our right, the right we were asking for. They told us the book was too political.

UBC has given us the money for 10,000 handbooks and we intend to distribute them when they arrive, off school grounds.

As for the birth control and abortion assemblies they told us that this type of class wasn't practical, but they would encourage students who have the courage to ask, to try to bring in speakers. They also said they would make their pamphlet "Family Planning" more easily available. That really means taking it out of the school counsellor's bottom drawer and putting it in the top. Students still have to face the embarrassing task of asking for it.

The press coverage we received was incredible. We had CBC TV interviews, radio interviews and innumerable newspaper articles.

The struggle is an on-going one, though. We haven't distributed the handbooks and we haven't organized their distribution through the schools, either.

The committee is calling a conference of all interested high school women to decide how it should be done, to discuss how the educational system oppresses women in other ways, like channelling them into the secretarial courses and telling them that they have to be a wife and mother when they finish school.

The conference will be held Sunday, April 4, 1971 from 12:00-5:00 at 1895 Venables, in the Inner-City Seminar Room.

All high school women are invited to attend. For further information phone 731-0655 or 684-3535.

–Lynn Christie

deeds of our FOREMOTHERS

"There once was a union maid
who never was afraid. . ."

During the past 150 years, there have been thousands of scared but courageous working women who have organized their sisters for higher pay and better working conditions. The shadow of their history, excluded from our textbooks, can be dimly perceived from bits in many books; but most of their effort, their names, even the occasions of their fights have been forgotten.

In an 1891 essay by Alice Hyneman Rhine there is a moving description of the conditions that drove women to desperation – and that sometimes sparked organizing efforts:

> . . . women sat at work under the directions of sweaters. In size the room might possibly have measured twelve by fourteen feet, and perhaps nine feet high. The atmosphere was next to suffocating and dense with impurities. On one end of a table, at which four of the women sat, was a dinner-pail partially filled with soup and a loaf of well-seasoned bread. These two courses, served with one spoon and one knife, satiated the thirst and hunger of the working women. In an adjoining side room, without means for ventilation or light, the deadly sewer gas rose in clouds from a sink. . .

Such conditions led to strikes and walk-outs, such as those in Pawtucket, R.I. (1824), Dover, New Hampshire (1828); Patterson, Pittsburgh, Manchester, Lowell, and numerous other industrial centers and company towns, but often the demonstrations were too spontaneous to be more than outpourings of frustration. A few days or even hours later the women would return to their machines, usually without their newly-blacklisted leaders.

Even in the 1860's, when nationally organized men's unions were being formed, the women's unions were in a state of relative disorganization. Some independent women's unions existed, and some women were organized into existing male unions, but it wasn't until 1868 and the Working Women's Association that large-scale women's organization began. Susan B. Anthony printed an ad in her weekly paper, *The Revolution*, inviting women to a meeting to be held at the paper's office "for the purpose of organizing an association of working women, which might act for the interests of its members in the same manner as the associations of workingmen now regulate the wages, etc., of those belonging to them."

One of the first locals of the Working Women's Association was the Women's Typographical Union No. 1. The established men's printing union, Local No. 6 of New York City, pledged its support and helped Local 1 apply for a charter from the National Labor Union. But the union men, although they accepted the support of the women who refused to scab on the men, often refused to work with the union women and condoned the employers' discrimination. At the same time, they were often discriminated against in non-union shops for being union members; in 1878 the women's local went out of existence.

After the demise of Local 1, the Working Women's Association stopped encouraging the formation of women's locals, and urged women to join the established unions where men continued to hold all positions of leadership.

Nevertheless, women continued to form their own unions in those industries where women were predominant: capmakers, collar and laundry workers, tailoresses, textile operatives, shoe-binders and stitchers, umbrella sewers and salesladies. One of the more famous women's unions was that of the collar makers and laundry workers of Troy, New York. In 1863, they won a wage increase and gained much publicity about the conditions of their labor – long hours in temperatures approaching 100 degrees. Three years later they were sufficiently well organized and class conscious to donate $1000 to assist the locked-out Iron Moulders Union.

But it wasn't until the 1880's and the heyday of the Knights of Labor that women began to organize systematically. The Knights of Labor organized men and women on an equal basis; unlike the former National Labor Union, they recognized separate women's unions. By 1886, one hundred thirteen women's assemblies had been chartered and in Massachusetts one-seventh of the Knights of Labor members were women. Most of these women's assemblies were organized by the women workers themselves, but women were consistently under-represented in the leadership of the Knights of Labor, according to either their dues-paying or their membership strength.

Although the Knights of Labor succumbed to terminal disunity, women continued to organize during the 1890's and early 1900's. Some women's unions were completely independent, others were "federal locals" chartered by the American Federation of Labor and limited to women in one trade, still others were affiliated with or organized by established AFL unions. The AFL itself, however, was an association of rather autonomous unions organized on craft lines and disinclined to spend money organizing workers in unskilled, low-paying trades.

In 1903 a number of prominent women in the labor movement met with Jane Addams, Lillian Wald and Mary McDowell at the AFL convention. They discussed the failure of the AFL to organize women and decided to found the National Women's Trade Union League.

The National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL) was the only feminist working women's association in America. It included feminists, socialists and the most oppressed sectors of the working class. It was therefore more radical than the AFL.

The AFL refused to recognize affiliates restricted to women, but the NWTUL continued to organize women into the existing AFL unions. As a result women found themselves in unions led by men, even when women were a majority of the membership.

Probably the most significant strike in the history of the NWTUL – or even in the history of American working women – took place in 1909 and 1910 among the shirtwaist makers of New York and Philadelphia. Simultaneous strikes at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company and the Leiserson & Company shops escalated until a mass meeting was called. During the meeting, Clara Lemlich, a militant Leiserson unionist who had had several ribs broken during a police attack on the picket line, called for a general strike.

Clara Lemlich's call precipitated the Uprising of the Twenty Thousand. Seventy-five percent of the strikers were women of a dozen nationalities. The NWTUL hired meeting halls, raised $60,000 for bail and strike relief, organized and served on picket lines and recruited as many as 1000 new members a day.

By 1907 the NWTUL leadership was entirely working women. Many powerful leaders emerged through the League: Mary Anderson and Emma Steghagen of the shoe workers, Rose Schneiderman of the cap makers, Agnes Nextor and Elisabeth Christman of the glove workers, Melinda Scott of the hat trimmers, Josephine Casey of the railway ticket takers, Stella Franklin of the department store clerks, Elizabeth Maloney of the waitresses, Maud Swartz of the typographers.

The NWTUL was involved in almost every strike of women workers in the next decade. On January 12, 1912, a general strike erupted among the textile workers of Lawrence, Massachusetts. Local 20 of the Industrial Workers of the World called on the national organization for help and some of the most famous Wobbly leaders – Joe Ettor, Arturo Giovannitti, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Big Bill Haywood – responded with help. The IWW forged an alliance not only of the twenty-seven ethnic groups involved, but also between the skilled and unskilled workers. On March 1 the employers capitulated. But the NWTUL had withdrawn from the strike and could not share in the victory.

The NWTUL had helped establish a relief headquarters in the early days of the strike, but when the AFL refused to sanction the strike because of IWW involvement and ordered the NWTUL to cease its relief activities, the League obeyed.

The withdrawal of the NWTUL from the Lawrence struggle was perhaps the clearest indication in working women's history of the dangers inherent in subordinating working women's interests to the demands and perspectives of the established trade union bureaucracies. This period, from the beginnings of trade union history to the First World War, is the only time when autonomous women's unions organized by women for women predominated. Although there were many failures, it was a period of impressive gains for women workers.

The two major sources for this history were: Everyone was Brave, by Eugene O'Neil; and Century of Struggle, by Eleanor Flexner.

1909–Office of the New York Women's Trade Union League at a meeting during the Shirtwaist Makers' strike.

"we are doubly prisoners..."

from the Montreal Star, March 3/71 By Susan Altschul

An incident during which seven women occupied a court jury box on Monday, receiving one-month contempt of court sentences, was "the start of a concerted attack on the injustices of Quebec's society and laws," a group of militant feminists stated yesterday.

The group, members of the Front de liberation des femmes, said the incident was not an isolated one.

"We're fighting injustice, not just for the right of participation in judicial systems made by and for the rich, but because we are resolved to attack all forms of discrimination against women," they told a press conference.

The court incident occurred Monday during the Paul Rose murder trial, as Lise Balcer was awaiting sentence for contempt of court for refusing to testify. The women stormed the vacant jury box to support her claim that she should not be required to testify before a jury from which the law excluded women.

Quebec's jury act says jurors must be male, over 21, a Canadian citizen and either a property owner or a tenant paying more than a certain sum of rent.

Six women, acting as spokeswomen for the Front de liberation des femmes, told the press conference: "We consider that we are doubly prisoners in a society made for men and the rich."

Their stand was supported by a communique from an English speaking group, – Montreal Women's Liberation. "It is not enough to simply add women to a system that would remain unjust. We don't want to be part of the government's railroading of political prisoners for the 'crime' of defending the interests of the people of Quebec.

"Our sisters are fighting for all women in Quebec. We demand their immediate release."

Meanwhile, the judge who issued the contempt of court sentences, Mr. Justice Marcel Nichols, stated in court yesterday that he, too, was in favor of women serving on juries.

"But I will never allow such noisy demonstrations in court," he added.

The Front de liberation des femmes told the press conference they saw discrimination against women as merely part of the oppression of the capitalist system. They said they were working for an Independent Quebec, in which the administrative, economic and political structures were changed.

Asked what they envisaged as the ideal situation for women, they said: "One in which we can work that out for ourselves."

Indo-Chinese women arriving at Vancouver International Airport to meet (April 2-5) with delegates from U.S. and Canadian Women's Liberation and Anti-War groups.

ARE you shamed by your lack of knowledge about Canadian history? Do your friends talk about you behind your back because you know nothing about the PORK & BEANS WAR?

Well folks, now there's a surefire remedy for all those social ills, and it's guaranteed to cure melancholia & ignorance about Canada---

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Canada.

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for meeting dates see Calender

MEDIA PROJECT
Learning to do propaganda *for* women–mixed media, slide shows, photography, media guerrilla attack
PAT 731-5412

ABORTION INFORMATION
Joint project with Van. Women's Liberation to help women through the therapeutic abortion system. If you'd like to counsel, call the office, or D.J. at 879-5836.

THE PEDESTAL
Always needs more people for writing, layout, proofreading, typesetting. ANNE 988-0950

OFFICE
Everyone can help in the office – answering mail & phone, mailings, etc. Call BARB 738-2073.

EDUCATION
UBC–Mostly general education around women's liberation –
JANE RULE 224-0557
SFU–Bonnie 937-7130
VCC–Cathy Wilander 433-0290
High Schools –
TRUDI 939-7713,
ROBIN 987-5048.

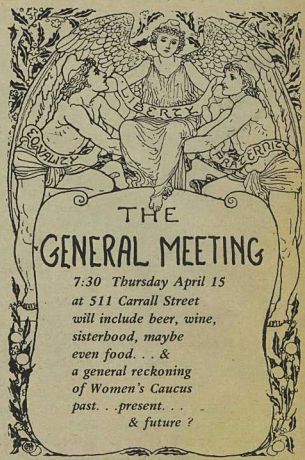
CHILD CARE
A small group, needing members. Now planning to go to several areas of Vancouver to ask people about their day care needs. This info will be used for a propaganda campaign, and in considering the possibility of setting up Children's Houses
If you can help, call ISOBEL 732-7059.

WORKING WOMEN'S WORKSHOP
Last summer the workshop organized a series of noon hour meetings at the Public Library. The discussions were great, and over 100 office workers attended. The problem was that they didn't really lead anywhere. Soon (maybe starting May) we hope to have another series, this time with the objective of actually recruiting women to the Working Women's Organizing Committee. Everyone is welcome at workshop meetings (we really need people who aren't working at the moment) or call Pat 681-3964 or Jean 298-8430.

STAFF THIS ISSUE

This issue of the Pedestal was put together without many of the usual hard core. They are only absent temporarily, working like mad on the conference with the Indo-Chinese women and on the Canadian history primer (see p. 15).

STAFF THIS ISSUE included: Helen Potrebenko, Anne Goldstein, Pat Uhl-Howard, Cheryl Filipchuk, Sherry Dunham, Sharon Koshman, Carol Phillips, Barbara Todd, Cathy Walker, Andrea Lebowitz, Jean Rands, Robin Boal, Trudi Gallant & Colette.



THE GENERAL MEETING

7:30 Thursday April 15
at 511 Carrall Street
will include beer, wine, sisterhood, maybe even food. . . &
a general reckoning of Women's Caucus past. . .present. . .
& future ?

No matter how you make your living,
the Caucus desperately needs your spare dollars–

I enclose ..... monthly post-dated cheques for $.....each

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CITY..... PHONE.....

please clip & mail to Women's Caucus, 511 Carrall Street, Vancouver, B.C.

APRIL CALENDAR

meetings at 511 Carrall St. UNLESS Otherwise NOTED

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 INDO-CHINESE CONFERENCE	2 INDO-CHINESE CONFERENCE	3 INDO-CHINESE CONFERENCE
4 INDO-CHINESE CONFERENCE	5 INDO-CHINESE CONFERENCE — UBC 8:00 2449 BIO-SCI.	6 WORKING WOMEN 8:00	7 ABORTION COUNSELLING 6-9:00	8	9	10
11 PEDESTAL 11 a.m.	12 UBC 8:00 2449 BIO-SCI	13 WORKING WOMEN 8:00	14 ABORTION COUNSELLING 6-9:00	15 PARTY!! GENERAL MEETING 8:00	16	17
18 PEDESTAL 11 a.m.	19 UBC 8:00 2449 BIO-SCI.	20 WORKING WOMEN 8:00	21 ABORTION COUNSELLING 6-9:00	22	23	24 PEDESTAL LAYOUT: PEAK SFU.
25 PEDESTAL LAYOUT: PEAK SFU.	26 UBC 8:00 2449 BIO-SCI.	27 WORKING WOMEN 8:00	28 ABORTION COUNSELLING 6-9:00	29 INFORMAL DISCUSSION 8:00	30	

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